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DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Abstract
This article traces a conflict that erupted in the late 19th century between the Armenians and the Süryani. This conflict, I argue, precipitated nothing less than the creation of the Süryani community itself. The dispute began over the key to a closet in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but it quickly evolved. Soon, the Armenians and the Süryani were clashing over holy places all around Jerusalem. The dispute centered on an Ottoman administrative arrangement which had been institutionalized nearly 400 years earlier: *yamaklık*. The Ottoman investigators, however, were unfamiliar with this archaic arrangement and had to be reeducated as to its terms and its history. The Süryani and the Armenians offered divergent accounts. Where the Armenians furnished hard documentation, however, the Süryani could produce only claims to tradition and local practice. In this article I argue that, through this protracted conflict, the Süryani came to understand the importance of the documentary record in a post-Tanzimat Ottoman world. They thus turned to an alternative strategy that would conform to this documentary sensibility and render their community visible to the state: a series of petitions with thousands of Süryani signatures from around the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Christianity; community; Ottoman Empire; millet; petitions; Süryani; *yamaklık*

On the final day of January 1882, Bishop Jirjis Sadadi sat in a monastery in Jerusalem. He penned a letter in Garshuni, or Syro-Arabic, to Süryani[1] Patriarch Ignatius Peter IV in Mardin, some 500 miles away in southeast Anatolia. A crisis was at hand, and the bishop's letter narrated its development in detail. The Armenians had affixed a lock to the door of a small closet (*khazāna*) in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that had traditionally been reserved for the Süryani.[2] When the Süryani demanded the key, the Armenians refused. The Süryani complained to the Armenian leader (*rayyis*) of the church, but to no avail. They then took the matter to the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem, who explained, "I told His Excellency your patriarch: if you have papers (*awrāq*) such as imperial orders and juridical documents (*firmānāt wa-ḥujaj*) stating that the property (*al-māl*) is yours, show them." Jirjis continued, "At that time the flame of jealousy (*nār al-ghayra*) ignited within us for the rights of our denomination (*ṭāʾifa*), which they want to subordinate to [the Armenians]."

The conflict over a closet key quickly turned violent. One Sunday after Mass, the Armenians, Jirjis claimed, attacked a group of Süryani worshippers. The Süryani

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immediately informed the church's Rumi leader (*rayyis*) who apologized profusely and condemned the Armenians' belligerence. He inquired as to the "terms" (*shurūṭ*) between them. The Süryani responded that there were no terms. The Rumi leader instructed them to take the matter to the Rumi patriarch, which they did. The Rumi patriarch reassured them and promised assistance. Emboldened, the Süryani returned to the church the following Sunday to conduct Mass. After the Süryani had finished the ceremony, the Armenians attacked once again, this time with sticks and iron tools. The reason for this attack might have been prompted by the Süryani appearing at a time not designated for their worship or by the Süryani again demanding the key. It might have been because the Armenians were generally annoyed at the assertion of Süryani authority. Whatever the immediate reason, there would be injuries on both sides. The Rum came to the Süryanis' aid and soon the provincial government—including the army captain (*yüzbaşı*), the police (*żabṭiyye*), and the governor of Jerusalem (*mutaṣarrıf*)—arrived at the scene.[3] The empire had stepped in.

Upon hearing of the incident, the Süryani bishop made immediately for the Ottoman governor's office. The governor explained to him that the Armenians claimed they had imperial orders (*firmānāt*) from the Ottomans according them the closet. "If this is true, let them produce them," Jirjis replied. The governor asked if they too had papers or orders (*awrāq aw awāmir*) for the closet, to which Jirjis responded that yes, they did. "Prepare them for when the time requires," the governor advised. At the time Jirjis was writing, the crisis had not yet been resolved. In fact, it was only just beginning. Although Jirjis could not have known this at the time, he understood that the community was being tested: "For war (*al-ḥarb*) does not happen by the strength of one or two (*bi-quwwat wāḥid aw ithnayn*)," he concluded. "Nor is it won with chatter (*al-ghalaba*), but only by the power of God and uniting (*al-jamʿ*)."[4] The problem of Armenian authority over the Süryani and their sacred places would organize the next decade of correspondence and conflict in these intersecting communities.

Eleven years later, a series of petitions arrived in Istanbul bearing not tens, not hundreds, but thousands of Süryani stamp-signatures. The petitions arrived from all over Anatolia and the Arab world: Mosul, Urfa, Aleppo, and elsewhere still. The sheer physical size of the petitions was overwhelming, and more striking were the seemingly innumerable personal stamps impressed side by side. On certain petitions, they spilled over onto the back. This was a full-scale communal mobilization, a declaration of collective identity that the Süryani community had never made before. From the contents of the petitions, it is clear that the scope of the crisis had grown considerably since the 1882 skirmish about church access. As the petitions made clear, the Armenians were contesting Süryani rights not simply to the closet but to churches and shrines all around Jerusalem as well as, most controversially, a shared cemetery.

To restore their traditional rights to these sacred places, the Süryani petitioners demanded an end to an Ottoman administrative arrangement heretofore obscure in Ottoman historiography: *yamaklık*. This was the system by which the Armenians served as the Süryanis' representatives to Istanbul; the Süryani were petitioning for its discontinuation. "Please," the Süryani petitioners concluded,

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ask the other millets in the aforementioned places, such as the Rum of Jerusalem, about our rights in the shrines and churches. Give an end as soon as possible to this *yamaklık* that is being taken by the Armenians as a pretext to plunder and tyrannize us [*üzerimize tahakküme*].[5]

The Süryani were no longer satisfied with the hierarchical administration of Ottoman Christians as defined by *yamaklık*.

This article traces the conflict between the Süryani and the Armenians over this little-known Ottoman administrative arrangement. In the petitions, the Süryani complained to the Ottomans that the Armenians were using the arrangement as a pretext to infringe upon their traditional rights in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and elsewhere. As will become clear, the late 19th-century Ottoman state had no patience for such nebulous claims to tradition. They preferred the hard evidence of documentation; this, the Süryani lacked. The Süryani did not cede their claim to traditional rights, however. Rather, they made the claim in a new form, one which conformed to the Ottomans' concern with documentation and to Tanzimat-era modes of representation. The result was a series of petitions that amounted to nothing less than the creation of the Süryani community itself.

My aim is to account for the new form of Süryani communal articulation represented by this series of petitions. As we shall see, the petitions were an assertion of rights as well as of presence, one that perhaps surprised the Ottomans but doubtlessly piqued their interest. This was a time in which the Ottomans were seeking more and more information on what was still a largely obscure populace.[6] The Süryanis' contested relationship with the Armenian millet had already made them rather difficult to classify, a situation analogous to the problem of census-taking in Ottoman Macedonia in the aftermath of the Greek–Bulgarian schism.[7] In the Ottoman yearbooks (sg. *salname*) from the second half of the 19th century, the Süryani were sometimes listed as tied to or included in the Armenian millet, and sometimes not.[8] This documentation was contested. In 1874, the Süryani patriarch had appealed to the Ottomans to recognize his community as an independent millet.[9] He was no doubt aware of the 19th-century proliferation of millets and was likely looking to the formation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 as a recent precedent for the Süryanis' own separation from the Armenians.[10]

It was not until the series of petitions in the 1890s, however, that the Süryani collectively announced themselves to the Ottoman bureaucracy with such force. By that time, the Süryani had waged a protracted bureaucratic battle with the Armenians over access to holy places in Jerusalem in the broader context of a dispute over the nature of the administrative relationship between the two communities. This bureaucratic encounter, I wish to suggest, was the context in which the Süryani came to identify themselves textually to the Ottoman state through a series of petitions. My argument is that the 19th-century bureaucratic reforms known collectively as the Tanzimat generated a particular conception of history that forced the Süryani community to document and render itself differently than it had previously. In particular, the bureaucratic primacy of the documentary record compelled the Süryani to produce a textual community through petitions. These petitions inscribed the Süryani community into a Tanzimat bureaucracy in which legibility was essential to securing imperial rights and protections.

The Süryani–Armenian conflict over holy spaces in Jerusalem necessitated recourse not simply to history but, crucially, to archival research. The Armenians searched for

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documentary evidence of the Süryanis' official subordination to their millet while the Süryani struggled to produce evidence of what they claimed to be their traditional rights. The Ottoman investigators, for their part, took to the paper trail to understand: what was this archaic arrangement known as *yamaklık* to begin with? They did not know, or else had forgotten. The Süryani found that the documentary record was not on their side and consequently had to rely on a nebulous claim to traditional rights. But they understood that this claim had to come in a particular textual form. By the 1890s, the Süryani had come to understand the new importance of documentation in relation to communal rights. This was not all, though. More than that, the Süryani had realized that the community itself was facing an existential threat. For when the Armenians claimed in the late 19th century—the age of the census—that the Süryani were simply an extension of their millet, it was a direct challenge to the possibility of a Süryani collectivity, a threat to the category of Süryani itself. The petitions thus did multiple things. First, they did not so much document the Süryani community as much as they generated a conception of the Süryani community as documented. Second, the petitions gave documentary life to the otherwise undocumented Süryani claim to traditional rights. In this sense, these petitions brought both the Süryani community and its past into being in conformity with the 19th-century Ottoman bureaucracy's documentary conception of history. This was a powerful act, one that reverberated, as we will see, at the highest levels of the Ottoman state.

A word on the term "community" is in order before proceeding. In their petitions, the Süryani referred most often to the collectivity they claimed to represent as a "millet." As noted earlier, the usage of this term should be understood as an assertion of those same rights that other recently established millets—such as the Armenian Catholic and Protestant millets—had achieved earlier in the century.[11] Elsewhere in the petitions, however, they refer to themselves as a *cemaat* (Arabic: *jamāʿa*), which can be translated generically as "group." In the bishop's initial letter to the patriarch he refers to "our *ṭāʾifa*" which, in the local context of intra-Christian competition in Jerusalem, we should understand as "denomination." But as Ussama Makdisi reminds us, the meanings of such terms were not simply evolving but were actively contested in the 19th century.[12] What exactly constituted a millet, furthermore, has been the subject of decades of Ottoman scholarship.[13] My use of the terms "community" and "communal" is not meant to serve as a translation of millet or of any other of the terms found in the documents. Rather, "community" as well as "communal" should be understood to refer both to the higher order of collectivity to which the petitioning Süryani aspired as well as to the dialogic and discursive process by which that collectivity could be conceived and articulated. The term is unstable for it contains within it the changing meanings of text, history, and identity particular to this late 19th-century Ottoman moment.

This episode of inter-communal conflict highlights a feature of the Tanzimat reforms which has heretofore received scant attention: the consequences of the new bureaucratic practices themselves. The traditional literature focused primarily on the shifting balance of power between the sultan and reformist statesmen and portrayed the Tanzimat reforms as a one-directional process of top-down imposition.[14] More recently, scholars have turned their attention to how Ottoman subjects responded to and negotiated the reforms.[15] This article takes inspiration from this revisionist literature in considering how the Süryani reacted to the Tanzimat reforms. It furthers this literature not simply by

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examining a particular feature of the Tanzimat bureaucracy—concern with the documentary record—but also by demonstrating how this documentary sensibility precipitated a reformulation of Süryani communal identity. The insights of this article build on Selim Deringil's pioneering work on the late 19th century. Deringil has demonstrated that, faced with a legitimacy crisis, the Ottomans of the second half of the 19th century realized that they would need more than simply the passive compliance of their subjects. The empire had to insert itself more directly into the everyday lives of Ottoman society to cultivate a loyal citizenry.[16] The epistemological change traced in this article should be interpreted as part and parcel of this late-Ottoman conquest of its population, though perhaps as one of its subtler manifestations. Indeed the primacy that the Tanzimat bureaucracy accorded to the documentary record was not enforced institutionally through law or education.[17] Rather, it was something that late-Ottoman subjects encountered in their everyday bureaucratic dealings, something to which they had to adapt if they were to be successful in their claims on the imperial state.

It is important to underscore that the transformation I have identified should not be understood as bureaucratization. The Ottoman Empire had long been a bureaucratic one. As the empire expanded over the course of the 16th century it developed an increasingly large and professionalized bureaucracy to manage its territory.[18] Heather Ferguson has recently argued that in the early 17th century, the Ottomans employed legal commands in textual form to create a "grammar of rule" that idealized an Ottoman vision of order.[19] Bureaucracy and paper had thus long been central to Ottoman imperial rule. But if, as Ferguson argues, the Ottomans created texts and genres of text to enforce a vision of order in the early modern period, the late 19th-century Ottomans' relationship to text was somewhat more "historical." Those who could substantiate their claims on the imperial state with documentary evidence would receive its blessing. In the case at hand, official Ottoman bureaucrats had to be reminded by the imperial subjects themselves what the documentary record was. The 19th-century transformation is therefore not in the level of bureaucratization but rather in the bureaucratic practices themselves. The meaning and function of text within the bureaucracy had changed.

If the heightened importance of the documentary record was new in the 19th century, the institution of petitioning the sultan certainly was not. The right of any subject to petition the sultan had long been a fundamental component of the Ottoman idea of justice.[20] Historians have demonstrated that Ottoman subjects made extensive use of petitions to the sultan as a form of politics throughout the history of the empire.[21] With the proliferation of new forms of political and legal recourse in the 19th century, such as the *Nizamiye* courts, one might expect that the relatively antiquated practice of petitioning would have become obsolete.[22] As Yuval Ben-Bassat has argued, however, petitions to the sultan in fact increased in number in the late 19th century, due in part to technological advances such as the telegraph.[23] But the institution of petitioning, long a bolster of the notion of Ottoman justice, also acquired elevated importance amidst the legitimacy crisis described by Deringil.[24] What is more, Ben-Bassat has argued that late Ottoman petitions reflect a more citizen-like approach to governance, with petitioners expecting the state to provide redress for an increasingly diverse array of issues, such as inter- and intracommunal affairs, which had not been the subject of petitions in the past.[25] All this is to say that if the Süryani petitions harkened back to an age-old pact of justice

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between ruler and ruled, they were also invested with new meaning particular to their political—and, I would add, epistemological—late 19th-century context.

For some historians of the late Ottoman Empire, petitions signify the emergence of the public sphere, class formation, and incipient democracy. Thus in Beirut dignitaries' petitions to Istanbul from the later 19th century, to take one example, Jens Hanssen finds evidence of a "bourgeois urban revolution."[26] In his study of late Ottoman Nablus, Beshara Doumani points to peasant petitions to the sultan as evidence of the disintegration of the vertical organization of provincial society. Doumani detects the characteristics of "class struggle" and sees the peasants as modern subjects who represent themselves as "tax-paying citizens" deserving "equal protection under the law."[27] This article takes a different approach to late Ottoman petitions. I seek to highlight the documentary epistemology that undergirded the Süryani petitions in their particular social context rather than their evidence of class formation or democratic aspirations. If these documents are one key archive for late Ottoman reform, finding incipient democracy is not easy to do. Instead, what one finds in abundance is the desire to use bureaucracy to articulate a concept of community coordinate with a concept of history. One crucial feature of the petitions is the new bureaucratic positions, such as *muhtar* (headman) and *aʿżā* (councilman), with which the Süryani signatories identified themselves. These positions—creations of the Tanzimat—were intended to multiply the representatives of an Ottoman society that was meant to shed its corporate and local loyalties and turn toward the state. But while the various Süryani signatories accepted these new powers of representation, they used them not as representatives of the broader Ottoman populace but to consolidate an incipient Süryani community.

Finally and at the broadest level, this article highlights the transformative nature of the 19th-century Ottoman Empire. The article thus goes against a trend in Ottoman historiography which has criticized the narrative of 19th-century rupture. Whereas the Tanzimat had previously been understood as having emanated from an imperial center after exposure to 19th-century European influence, this revisionist literature has demonstrated, for instance, that the reforms had their roots in the provinces as well as in the 17th and 18th centuries.[28] The reforms, in other words, were as much the product of longue durée internal transformations as they were of external pressure and influence. This was no doubt the case. But when we shift our focus from the *origins* of the reforms to the *consequences* of the new bureaucratic practices themselves, the rupture is plainly evident, attested in part by the sheer quantity of paper produced in the 19th century as compared to earlier periods. What is more, scholars of the 19th century have long argued for the decidedly modern roots of new forms of communal identification such as nationalism and sectarianism.[29] The episode of Ottoman-Süryani history that this article addresses, and the need for communal documentation that it exposes, will perhaps illuminate the relationship between the Tanzimat reforms, regardless of their origins, and a range of modern forms of communal identification.

The remainder of the article is divided into three sections. In the first, I give an account of the origins and development of the Ottoman administrative arrangement that stood at the center of the Jerusalem crisis: *yamaklık*. The second section narrates this crisis of the 1880s and 1890s, the Ottoman bureaucratic investigation that followed, and the Süryani communal petitions the crisis engendered. This section draws heavily on Ottoman Turkish primary sources from the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Ottoman State

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Archives) as well as Syro-Arabic primary sources from the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Archive of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran (Dayro d-Kurkmo), near Mardin. In the final section, I consider the changes that occurred to religious communal identity in the 19th-century Ottoman Empire and the implications of the bureaucratic reforms for how we understand them.

YAMAKLIK: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

The experience of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire has garnered great scholarly attention. Yet for all the scrutiny the Christians and Jews of the Ottoman Empire have received, we know remarkably little about non-Muslim communities outside of the three major millets: the Jews, the Armenians, and the Greek Orthodox.[30] What is more, while relations between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as those between non-Muslim communities and the state have been well documented, much less consideration has been given to relations *within and between* non-Muslim communities—this is true of the historiography of the modern Middle East as well as the Ottoman Empire.[31] Perhaps because of this lacuna in the literature, it is commonplace to note that there existed no coherent, overarching administrative policy toward the empire's non-Muslims. Rather, the notion goes, Ottoman relations with their non-Muslim subjects were varied and locally specific.[32] In this section I demonstrate that while there may have been no overarching administrative policy, we can discern a certain logic of Ottoman governance of non-Muslims. I illuminate this logic through an exposition of a little-known Ottoman administrative institution: *yamaklık*.[33]

In modern Turkish, *yamaklık* translates loosely to "apprenticeship" or "assistantship." The term *yamak* was originally used in an early Ottoman military context to denote a particular rank, and it later found usage amongst craft guilds.[34] In the context of Ottoman intra-Christian relations, it meant something closer to "dependent" or "subordinate." As we will see, *yamaklık* was the system through which all the Christians of Jerusalem—not just the Armenians and the Rum but also the Ethiopians, the Serbs, the Copts, the Georgians, the Süryani, and others still—were meant to be represented to the state. This arrangement was institutionalized after the conquest of Jerusalem in 1516, when the Ottomans formalized the pre-existing intra-Christian relations they found there. Each of the smaller Christian communities would be represented to the Porte through either the Armenian or the Rumi patriarch: *yamaklar* ("dependents," sg. *yamak*) to the larger communities, millets within a millet, as it were.[35] While *yamaklık* was initially confined to Jerusalem and its environs, its logic and application developed and eventually extended to far corners of the empire.

With the Ottoman conquests of Constantinople, Anatolia, and the Balkans, many non-Muslims of different faiths came under their dominion. The conquest of Jerusalem in 1516 made the Ottomans guardians of some of the holiest sites in Christianity as well as the panoply of Christians who lived in the area. A formal arrangement was required—*yamaklık* was the result. By the time the Ottomans arrived, of course, the Christians residents in Jerusalem had previously existing arrangements in place. A century after the Christological decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Jerusalem saw a schism between the dyophysite and miaphysite churches. Thereafter, the hierarchy of the see of Jerusalem was split in two, with the Greek Orthodox

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patriarchate exercising jurisdiction over all the dyophysite churches and the Armenian patriarchate exercising jurisdiction over the miaphysites. These latter included the Ethiopians, the Copts, and the Syriacs (known in Ottoman times as the Süryani).[36] Thus did Caliph ʿUmar find the Christians of Jerusalem when he entered the city in 637. When Sultan Selim I and the Ottomans conquered the city some 900 years later, the same hierarchy was apparently still intact.[37] True to form, the Ottomans sought by and large to preserve social relations in Jerusalem as they had always been (*kadimden beri*). To that end, they issued a firman to the Jerusalem Armenian patriarchate on 8 November 1517 specifying the churches, monasteries, shrines, and other holy sites which were to be controlled by the Armenian patriarchate and allocated for Armenian use as well as the use of their *yamaklar*, or dependents. "The churches, monasteries, and other shrines inside and outside [of Jerusalem]," it stated, "shall be the formal possessions of the Armenian patriarch and shall be used for the rites of the Armenian patriarch and its *yamaklar*, the Ethiopian, Coptic, and Süryani millets."[38] No one from another millet, it continued, had the right to intrude on Armenian holy places nor interfere with Armenian *yamaklar*. The Ottomans apparently issued a contemporaneous firman to the Rumi patriarchate of Jerusalem.[39]

Whereas this initial firman stated that the Süryani, the Copts, and the Ethiopians were *yamaklar* to the Armenians, the firman given to the Rumi patriarch of Jerusalem stated that the Süryani and Ethiopians, in addition to the Georgians, were subject to the Rum.[40] Who was *yamak* to whom? For the Rum and Armenians of Jerusalem, vying for power and influence, this would be a source of great conflict in the centuries that followed. In the 17th and 18th centuries, sultanic firmans and *hüküm*s (rulings) gave contradictory information. In a document issued to a Jerusalem judge in 1638, the Ethiopians, Copts, and Süryani were recorded as subject to the Armenians. Just nineteen years later in 1657, another document indicated that the Georgians, Ethiopians, Süryani, and Copts were all subject to the Rum.[41] One scholar claimed to have found authoritative documents clearly demonstrating that the Ethiopians, Copts, and Süryani were *yamaklar* to the Armenians while the Georgians, Serbs, and Russians were *yamaklar* to the Rum.[42] Given such frequent conflict, it seems all we can say for sure is that *yamaklık* was a system by which all the Christian denominations of Jerusalem were meant to be represented to the Porte. The internal workings were subject to change and appeared to have had primarily to do with power struggles between the Rum and the Armenians. The significance of *yamaklar* to the influence, self-image, and identity of the larger Rum and Armenian communities has not yet been studied.

The logic and implementation of *yamaklık* would not be confined only to Jerusalem. As intra-Christian conflicts cropped up around the empire, the concept of *yamaklık* would be periodically invoked. In 1839–40, for instance, the sultan issued a firman to the Armenian patriarchate concerning the Süryani, both "Jacobite" (Orthodox) and Catholic, resident in the provinces of Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo, Diyarbakir, and Mosul. The firman forbade them from interfering in each others' affairs. By imperial order, the Armenian Catholic metropolitanate (*merhaṣa*) would manage the administration of the Süryani Catholics while "the rest [of the Süryani], as before, shall remain under Armenian *yamaklık*" (*ve mā ʿadāsı kemā fī-s-sābiḳ Ermeni yamaklığında kalmak üzere*).[43] To give another example: a century earlier, the Süryani patriarchate wrote to Istanbul requesting that Nestorians in Aleppo attend their churches rather than those of

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the Franks. This request was denied in a firman which held that, because the Nestorians were not *yamak* to any Christian community, the Rum, Armenians, and Süryani had no right to interfere in their affairs.[44] At times, then, *yamaklık* served as an organizing principle for intra-Christian relations not only in Jerusalem but more widely across the empire.

How and why did the scope of *yamaklık* spread? From the two examples above, we might surmise that it was the Ottomans who dictated its expansion. *Yamaklık,* by this logic, would have been an administrative arrangement the imperial government could cite when it so chose. Having worked out intra-Christian relations in Jerusalem (incompletely, of course), *yamaklık* was a handy precedent for imperial consideration when sorting communal relations elsewhere in the empire. There is reason to believe, however, that Christian communities themselves made recourse to the logic of *yamaklık*. According to Armenian sources, on 8 August 1783, the "nation of the Assyrians," of their own volition, "fell under our [the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople] authority."[45] In that same year the Süryani Church saw a schism which resulted in two competing claims to the patriarchate—one Orthodox, one Catholic.[46] One suspects that the Orthodox Süryani, in the face of the Catholic threat, tied themselves to the Orthodox Armenians—a significantly larger community with close ties to Istanbul—to strengthen their position. *Yamaklık* was a tool for common use.

What can we conclude from our preliminary account of this heretofore little-known institution? *Yamaklık*, though not a creation of the Ottomans, was formalized in the Ottoman documentary record in 1517. It was first and foremost an administrative arrangement specific to intra-Christian relations and local to Jerusalem. The Christian millets—Armenian and Rumi—clashed over control of the *yamaklar* as they jockeyed for power and influence. Despite its local origins, *yamaklık* was referenced and invoked as an organizing principle elsewhere in the empire. Though we cannot speak of *yamaklık* as a coherent system, it appears possible to speak of a certain *yamak* "logic" that reconciled the generality of Ottoman Christian as a broad category as well as the Ottoman position that "unbelief constitutes one nation"—*al-kofr milla wāḥida*—with the reality of Christian denominational plurality across the empire.[47] Kemal Karpat has also discerned this logic, noting, for instance, that the Ottoman state "did not try to eliminate all the interfaith divisions stemming from the different ethnic characteristics of various groups so long as those ethnic characteristics were useful in consolidating the community and especially the state."[48] For the Ottomans, government was "the art of ruling the unruly, reconciling the irreconcilable, and creating harmony out of ethnoreligious discord."[49] *Yamaklık* worked toward precisely this end.

In his assessment of the "so-called *millet* system," Benjamin Braude judged, "it was not an institution or even a group of institutions, but rather it was a set of arrangements, largely local, with considerable variation over time and place."[50] This was no doubt the case. But *yamaklık* should push us to consider that these local arrangements could expand well beyond the locales of their genesis, and might even reveal a broad logic, if not a rigid institutionalization, of Ottoman governance of non-Muslims.

THE JERUSALEM CRISIS

In the years following Bishop Jirjis Sadadi's initial letter to the patriarch in 1882, the crisis in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre grew in scope and severity. It began with the

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closet, but by the end of the decade the Armenians and the Süryani were clashing over shrines, churches, and monasteries all around Jerusalem and, most importantly, a shared cemetery. By 1891 the crisis had a precipitated a full-scale Süryani mobilization as clergymen, lay leaders, and community representatives petitioned Istanbul not simply from Jerusalem but from around the empire. The conflict hinged on the precepts of *yamaklık*, which had been institutionalized nearly 400 years prior. What follows is a narrative of the crisis compiled on the basis of: the letter written by the Süryani bishop of Jerusalem to the patriarch in Mardin; Ottoman bureaucratic documents produced by investigations of the conflict; and Süryani communal petitions to Istanbul. Throughout the narrative I demonstrate the bureaucratic primacy given to the documentary record over local practice. The contrast with early modern bureaucratic practice will be evident. When the Ottomans incorporated new territories in the 15th through 17th centuries, they would call upon the local population to explain local practice, record that practice, and modify imperial rule accordingly.[51] The institutionalization of *yamaklık* in 1517 reflected this sensitivity to local conditions in early modern Ottoman imperial rule. By the time that the Süryani appealed to local knowledge and practice in the late 19th century, however, Ottoman imperial commitments had changed.

By the Süryani bishop's account, the Süryani first attempted to resolve the crisis locally. As we saw earlier, the Süryani initially approached the Armenians directly about the lock they found on the closet door. When the Armenians refused to surrender the key and after the outbreak of violence, the Süryani solicited help from the Rum. Here we see how parties to an interdenominational conflict might seek to involve a Christian third party. The Süryani bishop's account further reveals recourse to forms of local knowledge and tradition. For instance, the Süryani told the Rumi leader in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that there were no "terms" between them and the Armenians. Their respective rights, in other words, were simply known. Similarly, in their conversation with the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem the Süryani suggested, "Your Excellency can ask the other denominations about the truth."[52] The Süryani insisted on the salience of local knowledge. Everyone was aware of their communal rights, they reasoned, and everyone knew the Armenians were infringing upon them.

But a new regime of knowledge was taking hold. Even in this initial account we see flashes of the documentary hegemony over intercommunal conflicts that would forcefully come to the fore as the Jerusalem crisis developed. When the Süryani brought the conflict to the attention of the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem, he pointed them to the documentary record of imperial orders and juridical documents (*firmānāt wa-ḥujaj*), which accorded the Armenians the closet in the Holy Sepulchre. The governor, too, instructed the Süryani to consolidate their documentary standing by producing their own papers and orders (*awrāq aw awāmir*). Notably, the Süryani bishop did not reference *yamaklık* in this initial account (it is also not clear what the Arabic equivalent would be). In fact, in his response to the Rumi *rayyis* he maintained that there were not *any* terms between the Süryani and the Armenians. But as the Ottoman government involved itself, the crisis shifted from one of local knowledge and practice to one of imperial management and documentation. Networks of imperial connection were set into action, and Istanbul became central. Concluding, Jirjis wrote,

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The Rumi patriarch has written to his representative in Istanbul and to his patriarch, and is awaiting the response, as he informed us. We too sent a telegram to the Rumi patriarch in Istanbul and to the Grand-Vezirate [*al-ṣadāra*] and are awaiting the response. It has reached us that the Armenians, too, have informed Istanbul, the Grand-Vezirate, and their patriarch [in Istanbul]. We request your Beatitude's attention [*himmat ghubṭatikum*] that you contact the Sublime Porte and the Rumi patriarchate, as well as your Beatitude's representative in Istanbul.[53]

In the years that followed the bishop's initial letter to the patriarch, the Jerusalem crisis would grow and a variety of bureaucratic actors would become involved in its attempted resolution. The bureaucrats conducted investigations, crafted reports, and left a paper trail at every turn. By this time, the reforms of the Tanzimat were well underway and a massive bureaucratic apparatus existed to handle the crisis. At the imperial level, the reformers had created an office known as the minister of religious sects and justice (*ʿadliyye ve-mezāhib nāẓiri*). This minister was to manage intercommunal conflict across the empire.[54] Locally, there was the office of the governor (*mutaṣarrıf*). It was to this office that the Süryani made initial recourse in the bishop's telling. There existed many other bureaucratic offices and councils that investigated the conflict, as well. The Jerusalem administrative council (*meclis-i idare*)—a creation of the Tanzimat—prepared reports for the minister of religious sects and justice. A police council (*meclis-i żabṭiyye*) prepared reports for the foreign minister (*hāriciyye nāẓiri*) while the police undersecretary (*müsteşār*) prepared reports for the governor. These, too, were creations of the Tanzimat.[55] All together, these reports and correspondences constituted a modern network of bureaucratic administration and oversight.

Through their investigations, the bureaucrats learned of the old administrative arrangement known as *yamaklık*. It was clearly not something they had come across before. But the Armenians had produced documents that outlined the arrangement's parameters. *Yamaklık* was documented and thus legitimate, and the bureaucracy confirmed it as such. On 5 September 1892, for instance, the Jerusalem administrative council—along with the governor and representatives of the Armenian and Rumi spiritual councils (also Tanzimat creations)—composed a report to the Minister of Religious Sects and Justice. The report stated that the Süryani were unable to produce any documents proving that their cemetery was independent and particular to them (*mustaḳillan ve-mahṣūṣan*). Furthermore, the Armenians furnished a firman and juridical documents (*ḥucec-i şerʿiyye*) demonstrating that the Süryani were *yamak* to the Armenians, and that they were therefore required, like the Copts and Ethiopians, to ask the Armenian patriarchate for permission to bury their dead in the cemetery. And as specified in the original firman, they concluded, the cemetery's northern door was to remain open from morning until evening for the purposes of visiting the dead.[56] This was the documentary record, and it was paramount.

The bureaucrats were disciplined historians. What, they had to ascertain, was the Süryani–Armenian arrangement in Jerusalem? The Süryani and the Armenians had divergent answers to this question, and it was the bureaucrats' job to cut through the noise and parse the truth. But only some evidence was admissible. Local Süryani knowledge was dubious and held no sway. Hard documentation, by contrast—this, the bureaucrats could rely upon. Similar to that of the administrative council, a police report to the foreign minister from June of 1892 held that juridical documents demonstrated that the Süryani

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were allowed to visit the shrines in question on particular dates only. The investigator even cited the particular document on the basis of which he had reached this conclusion: a firman from 1269 hijri, some forty years earlier, the most recent such imperial edict. Thus did a bureaucratic logic of documentary history come to reformulate the Süryani–Armenian relationship in Jerusalem.[57]

The Armenians understood the epistemological change taking place. In October of the same year, they made their case to the grand vezir by way of a letter from the Armenian representative in Istanbul. His position was straightforward: the Süryani complaints consisted of nothing but lies and slander (*tezvīrāt ve-muftarayāt*). They were out simply to defame the Armenian millet and its honor (*nāmūs*). His tone was cool and confident as he plainly laid out the documented terms of the Süryani–Armenian *yamak* relationship.

> As was explicitly laid out even in the Süryani patriarch's and his predecessors' *berat*s . . . at specified times, the Süryani can come pray and conduct rites at the shrines which are independently owned by the Armenian millet in Jerusalem. They have gone beyond the bounds of their accepted status as *yamak* to the Armenian millet [*Ermeni milletinin yamağı ve Ermeni batrikliği dāhilinde bulunmağı ḳabūl etmiş olmalarından ilerü gelmiş*].[58]

For the Armenians, the documentary record was on their side. The Armenians furthermore had a long history of communal presence in Istanbul and were familiar with the workings of Ottoman imperial governance. They were cosmopolitan and connected, in stark contrast to the much more provincial Süryani community. Their millet status and documentary proof of Süryani *yamaklık* gave them the upper hand.

Several months later, the Süryani representative in Istanbul—a position they had achieved in 1885[59]—wrote the grand vezir to complain about this decision and the investigation more generally. The Jerusalem governor had not responded to his inquiries. The representative wrote that, in the meantime,

> the Armenians have left their cemetery, which is larger than their needs require [*ihtiyāçlarına kāfī miḳdārdan . . . vāsi*ʿ] and buried their dead in ours. They have taken their old headstones [*eski mezār taşlarını*] and moved them to our plot [*arsa*]. They have begun to turn our graveyard into an Armenian cemetery [*mezārlığımızı Ermeni kabristanı şekline vażʿ ve tebdīle başlamışlardır*].[60]

In response, the minister of religious sects and justice himself wrote to the grand vezir. The Süryani complaints, he held, consisted of slander (*muftarayāt*). He insisted that the investigations were repeated and impartial (*bī-taraf*).[61] This was not a battle the Süryani could win.

Amid the local investigations and bureaucratic correspondence, the Süryani turned to an alternative strategy: communal petitions. As early as April 1891, petitions began to arrive in Istanbul bearing, all told, thousands of Süryani stamp-signatures. I have come across four such petitions—there were likely more. One came from Mosul and included a comparatively modest eighty-five stamp-signatures.[62] The second, from Urfa (Edessa), featured 395 stamp-signatures.[63] Another petition from Urfa, which arrived nearly two years later, carried 419 stamp-signatures, some the same as from the earlier petition.[64] The largest, from Syria, carried an astonishing 688 stamp-signatures—this on a single petition (Figure 1).[65] These petitions demonstrate that the crisis had grown considerably. The content of each was by and large the same, and the question of *yamaklık* stood at the center. We will consider the petition from Syria as a demonstrative example.

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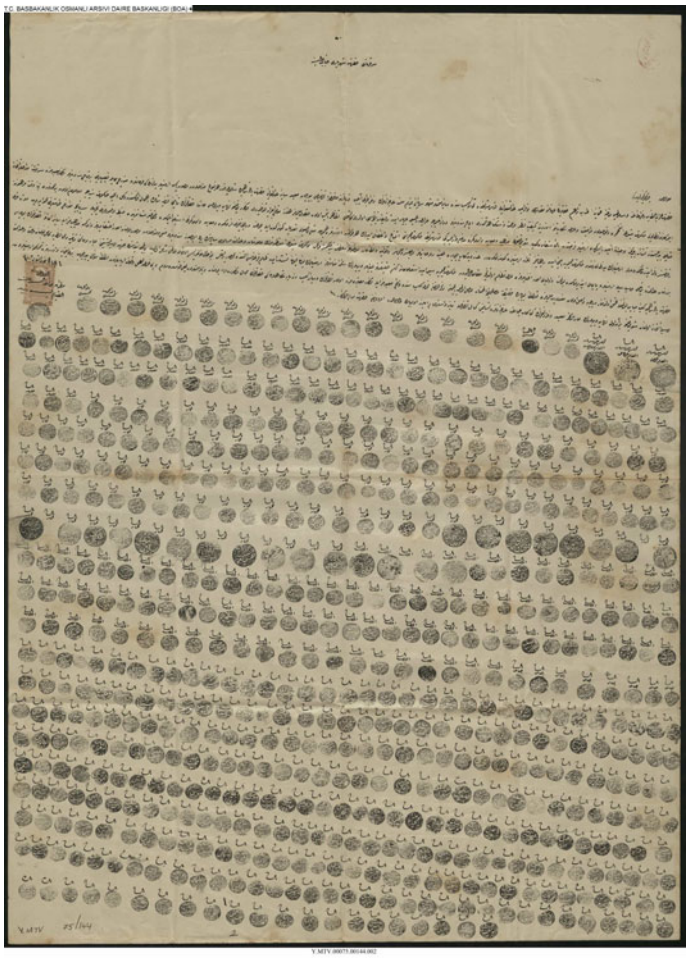


FIGURE 1. A Süryani petition to Istanbul with 688 stamp-signatures from the province of Syria (there are more on the back side). Courtesy of Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi.

After praising Caliph ʿUmar and the protection afforded the Süryani by him and all the Ottoman sultans, the petitioners identified the root of the crisis in Jerusalem. "For several years now the Armenians," the petitioners wrote, "have used the expression *yamaklık* as a pretext [*ser-rişte*] to seize and interfere [*ittihāz, mudāhale*] with our aforementioned places of worship." They continued: "They are profiting from the opportunity as if this *yamaklık* has anythıng to do with our *mezheb*, places of worship, and properties" (*fırsatdan bil-istifāde güya şu yamaklığın mezheb ve meʿābid ve emlākımıza medhalı var imiş gibi*). "The Armenians," they explained,

are crushing our monks and community daily [*güne gün ile cemaat ve ruhbānımızı ezmekde*]. They are occupying our places of worship and taking our property [*ve meʿābid ve emlākımızı istīlā eylemekde*]. They have seized our cemetery and are destroying our graves [*kabrıstanımızıda żabṭ ve*

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ḳubūrımızı tahrīble], effacing headstones engraved with Syriac [*Süryanice muʾerreh taşlarını maḥv idüp*], and they will not allow us to bury our dead without permission [*mevtāmızı ruhsatsız dafn ettirmemekdedirler*].

To conclude, they pleaded and begged that the sultan, "giving an end" to this *yamaklık* as soon as possible, return their shrine and place of worship to their humble community (*cemaat-i ʿācizānemiz*).

Beyond the sheer quantity of signatures, these petitions are significant for several reasons. For one, each of the 1,000-plus signatories (granted some duplicates from Urfa) had his own stamp. These were not just any Süryani in the community. The Ottomans took note of the petitioners' status in their investigative reports, observing that the complaints concerning the cemetery in Jerusalem were being lodged by Süryani "notables" (*muʿteberān*).[66] What is more, the petitions were arriving from all over. The four petitions considered were sent from three separate *vilāyet*s (Aleppo, Syria, and Mosul) in the empire. The Ottomans took note of this, too.[67] Crucially, the titles of the signatories reveal that this was an issue of both lay and ecclesiastical concern. Both petitions from Urfa, for instance, include signatories from the Süryani spiritual council (*meclis-i rūhānī*) in addition to the lay council (*meclis-i cismānī*), both creations of the Tanzimat.[68] More striking still, the petition from Syria included the stamps of 128 *muhtar*s, another creation of the Tanzimat. *Muhtar*s were communal headmen, two of whom were elected by community members in each village (*karye*).[69] At a minimum, then, this petition purported to speak for the Süryani of sixty-four villages in Syria, likely the ones around Damascus.

I want to suggest that there is a connection between the primacy that the 19th-century Ottoman bureaucracy accorded the documentary record and this novel form of Süryani communal expression. Through this crisis the Süryani came to realize that the Ottoman bureaucracy was narrowly concerned with the documentary paper trail. Their insistence on customary rights and appeals to tradition fell on deaf ears. No longer was the past a negotiation between local parties about that which had always been—*kadimden beri*. Rather, it was a record, a document, textual evidence. Thus, when thousands of Süryani impressed their personal stamps on petitions from around the empire they were instantiating themselves not simply in the present but also in the past. These petitions were a show of force and a demonstration of their mass, collective existence, but more immediately the petitions were the 19th-century bureaucratic creation of the Süryani community itself.

THE TANZIMAT REFORMS AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY

By way of conclusion, I wish to reflect on some of the implications of the Süryani petitions for our understanding of religious community in the late Ottoman Empire. But first, we should attend to the questions that would have most concerned the Süryani petitioners themselves: were they able to achieve independent millet status, and did they successfully regain access to their holy spaces? Concerning the latter, it appears that the Ottomans came to no satisfactory resolution. Disputes between the Armenians and the Süryani continued through the 1890s and even into the period of the British Mandate. Archer Cust, a British civil servant in Palestine, penned a report in 1929 on the holy places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Likely referring to the *khazāna* from the bishop's initial letter, Cust too

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found that the Süryani "have never been able to produce convincing evidence in support of their claim to the proprietorship of this Chapel."[70] Nor, it seems, were the Süryani ever able to achieve full millet status. While in some yearbooks (sg. *salname*) from the 1890s, the Süryani were listed as separate from the Armenians, one scholar found that as late as 1914 the efforts for complete separation were still ongoing.[71] Despite their apparent failure, however, these petitions succeeded in bring the Süryani cause to the attention of the highest echelons of the Ottoman state.

Just weeks after the largest Süryani petitions arrived in Istanbul, a report for the sultan was prepared by none other than famed Ottoman statesman, historian, and Tanzimat reformer Ahmed Cevdet Pasha. By then seventy years old, Cevdet Pasha had overseen the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms as inspector general in Bosnia-Herzegovina and later as the governor of Aleppo. He had headed the commission to draft the new Ottoman civil code known as the *Mecelle*, in addition to authoring a number of well-known works of history.[72] In 1875, Cevdet Pasha had been appointed as minister of justice and would go on to serve in various other ministries over the next fifteen years. By the time he prepared this 1893 report on behalf of the Council of Ministers (Meclis-i Vükela) for the sultan, he held no official post.[73] Perhaps the council had sought his historical expertise in this dispute which centered on competing narratives—and documentary records—of the past.[74]

Before recommending a course of action, Cevdet Pasha gave a concise history of the Süryani–Armenian administrative relationship. Upon the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmet Fatih had appointed a patriarch for the Armenians organized as they were, he explains, for "it was a time of emperors" (*imparatorlar zamanında oldığı suretde*). As for the Armenian episcopates elsewhere—in Sis, for instance—they would be represented through the Armenian patriarch in Istanbul. Similarly, when Selim conquered Kurdistan and the Arab world and encountered Süryani and Nestorians with no patriarch in Istanbul, he decided that their affairs would also be handled through the Armenian patriarchate. Over time, the Süryani had objected to interference in their particular denominational affairs (*umūr-u mahṣūṣa-yı mezhebiyyeleri*) and began to complain. The Armenian patriarchate, he notes, wished to list Süryani in the Armenian registers (*defterler*) such that the Armenian population appeared higher. In unison, a series of Süryani ecclesiastical rankholders (*silsila-yı merātib-i rahbāniyye*) had complained that, although the Armenian patriarchate served as their intermediary in Istanbul, their ecclesiastical ranks had in fact never been tied to the Armenians and that the Armenians were thus infringing upon their traditional rights (*hukuk-u kadimemiz*). The Süryani furthermore requested, Cevdet Pasha continues, that the Ministry of Religious Sects and Justice form a committee comprised of the leaders of the other denominations (*diğer mezhebler ruʾesāsından*) and resolve the dispute in this way, to which they were accustomed (*muʿtād oldığından*). In any case, he concludes, the preservation of the Süryanis' traditional rights was of the utmost necessity (*hukuk-u kadimelerinin muḥāfaẓası elzem oldığından*), and thus the Ministry of Religious Sects and Justice should carry out the necessary investigations.[75]

Cevdet Pasha's endorsement of the notion of traditional Süryani rights and the necessity of their preservation is remarkable, the results of the investigations notwithstanding. With their petitions, the Süryani had convinced this paradigmatic statesman of the 19th-century Ottoman reforms that they constituted a collectivity with claims to the

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past which had ramifications for the present. Their success lay in their ability to couch a claim about history within the production of a documented community in the present. More than that, though, this communal documentation drew on forms of representation created by the Tanzimat reforms themselves. This is a crucial point, one that was perhaps lost even on Cevdet Pasha. He observed that the petitions had been sent by a series of Süryani "ecclesiastical rankholders" (*silsila-yı merātib-i rahbāniyye*). But these were not all clergymen. Far outnumbering the bishops and monks were those who signed *muʿteber*, *muhtar*, or *aʿżā*. Although it is not clear what exactly *muʿteber* refers to beyond simply a "notable," *muhtar* and *aʿżā* refer to positions of 19th-century Tanzimat creation.

The creation of such positions was part of the reformers' attempt to redirect their subjects' allegiances away from their various religious communities and toward the state. Religious affiliation would be replaced by a notion of Ottomanism (*osmanlılık*) and Ottoman subjects would become something more like Ottoman citizens.[76] The *vilayet* law of 1864 worked toward precisely this end. In order to represent the empire's heterogeneous population and cultivate Ottomanism, the reformers created the position of the *muhtar*, or headman. Though institutionalized in 1829 for Muslim communities, the *muhtar* system was only applied to non-Muslim communities after the *vilayet* law of 1864. In each village, two *muhtar*s were to be elected for each religious community.[77] Here we see a tension within the ideal of Ottomanism: the reformers sought to cultivate an Ottoman identity irrespective of religious difference, but the only way they could conceive of the heterogeneous population that had to be homogenized was on the basis of membership in a religious community.[78] *Aʿżā* denoted a member of a council, or *meclis*, and these too were creations of the 1864 *vilayet* law. A similar tension existed here; in the administrative councils (sg. *meclis-i idare*) at each level of provincial administration, seats were extended to the local heads of the non-Muslim millets.[79]

But herein lay the problem for the Süryani. It was precisely the coherence of the religious community and its status as a millet for which they were fighting. Thus emerged a dialectic of community and representation: the *muhtar*s' and *aʿżā*s' claim to representation was based on the existence of the community, but they used their newly institutionalized powers of representation to bring that very community into being. This communal formulation was neither evidence of nationalism nor a repudiation of Ottomanism, however, for the Süryani supported continued Ottoman sovereignty.[80] Like the Sephardic Jews of Palestine, they envisioned an imperial future.[81] And besides, community, as noted above, was built into the structure of the Tanzimat reforms and its Ottomanist ideals, even if paradoxically.

What these petitions demonstrate is the confluence of a rising documentary conception of history and the proliferation of forms of representation. With these petitions, the Süryani produced a community that could not be ignored because the terms of their self-expression conformed to those of the 19th-century Tanzimat state. Insofar as the existence of the community required a documentary record, these petitions marked the birth of the Süryani community. The Ottomans were resolving the crisis in Jerusalem through a bureaucratic system in which the Süryani community did not exist. For the Süryani, of course, this absence was a problem. With the petitions, they wrote themselves into the bureaucratic record. The petitions furthermore reformulated the Süryani relationship to the past according to a bureaucratic conception of history to which documentation was central. It is not happenstance that a shared Süryani-Armenian cemetery and the

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headstones it contained featured so prominently in this conflict. The dead were now documentation for the living. Thus when the Süryani representative in Istanbul complained that the Armenians were replacing Süryani headstones with Armenian ones—analogous to the Armenian attempt to list the Süryani as Armenians in the population registers—there was a real sense of existential threat to the living Süryani community as well. Documentation collapsed the distinction between the dead and the living. The signatures did not simply resemble a graveyard; they were incarnating the past in present lives.

The Süryani explicitly connected their own separation from the Armenians to that of the Bulgarian Exarchate from the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate. They made the case to Istanbul that, given the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, the suitability of Süryani–Armenian separation was unambiguous. After all, the Bulgarians, they pointed out, shared the liturgical language, rites, and traditions of the Greeks, and even still they were recognized as separate. The Süryani's liturgical language was Syriac, not Armenian, and their rites were completely different. Why should they not also have complete autonomy?[82] The movement for Bulgarian autonomy, of course, would take a much different course than that of the Süryani.[83] But this moment of Süryani petitioning, and the connections the Süryani drew between their incipient community and others, should push us to reconsider the possibilities of communal articulation in the late Ottoman Empire. The consequences of the Tanzimat reforms and their associated conceptions of history and documentation demand closer attention.

NOTES

Author's note: I wish to thank His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II, who in January of 2017 granted me access to the digitized archive of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran (Dayro d-Kurkmo), near Mardin. Thanks to George Kiraz for arranging my meeting with the patriarch and for his efforts in digitizing the documents over the past dozen years, as well as for the guidance and insight he has provided throughout my research. Thank you to Alan Mikhail, Kathryn Lofton, Peter Conroy, Baki Tezcan, Masayuki Ueno, Madoka Morita, and the participants of the Western Ottomanists' Workshop at Portland State University in March, 2018, for their invaluable feedback on different versions of this article. Finally, many thanks to the anonymous reviewers of *IJMES* for their enormously helpful critiques and insights.

[1]In this article, the Turkish term Süryani refers to the Ottoman-era adherents of the church known variously as the Syriac Orthodox Church (no relation to the Greek Orthodox Church), the Syrian Orthodox Church, and (pejoratively) the Jacobite Church. Today, the descendants of the Ottoman Süryani identify in different ways: as Süryani, Syriac, Assyrian, Aramaean, some combination of these, or otherwise. I have chosen to use the Turkish term Süryani, derived from the Arabic, because that is the term most often used in the documents I have consulted for this article. Throughout Ottoman times, the Süryani were sometimes referred to as *Yaʿḳūbī Süryani* (Jacobite Süryani) and, later, as *Süryani-i kadim* (Old Süryani) to distinguish them from the Catholic and Protestant Süryani. For a detailed discussion on terminology, see Benjamin Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani from 1908 to 1914* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009), 4–9.

[2]The record suggests that the contents of the closet are not relevant to the dispute. The contents were most likely liturgical materials, but the Arabic word, *al-māl*, simply indicates that it was property. The dispute seems focused on Süryani access to an exclusive space within the church.

[3]These Ottoman offices were in all likelihood held by Muslims, though Christians continued to serve at various levels of Ottoman administration in this period. See Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolutions* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2010). Due to the frequency of intra-Christian conflict over holy places in Jerusalem, the Ottomans apparently looked to Muslims to arbitrate, such as when the Ottomans entrusted the keys of the Holy Sepulchre to a Muslim family. One therefore expects that the Ottoman provincial authorities involved would have been Muslim. See Robert Ousterhout, "Is Nothing

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Sacred? A Modernist Encounter with the Holy Sepulchre," in *On Location: Heritage Cities and Sites*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (New York: Springer, 2012), 131–50.

[4]The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Archive of Dayr al-Zaʿfaran (Dayro d-Kurkmo), near Mardin, Turkey: K05-0025, 0026, 31 January 1882. Per the archive's system, hereafter "K," as in Kurkmo, will denote the archive, followed by the document number (<year of digitization>-<file number>). The digital archive is held at Beth Mardutho: the Syriac Institute in Piscataway, N.J. The document is written in Arabic Garshuni, or Syro-Arabic—Arabic written in the Syriac script. All translations are mine. These documents are for the most part colloquial in syntax, vocabulary, and tone. To show this I have provided ample transliterations. It should be noted that transliteration from Garshuni to traditional Arabic is not a one-to-one process, and the proper transliteration is often ambiguous. This is especially true of the internal voweling.

[5]Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (hereafter BOA), Y.MTV, 75/144/2/1 and BOA, Y.MTV, 75/144/2/2. 30 January 1893.

[6]On broader Ottoman attempts to "know" the empire's population in this period, see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Kent Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); and İpek Yosmaoğlu, *Blood Ties: Religion, Violence, and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[7]İpek Yosmaoğlu, "Counting Bodies, Shaping Souls: The 1903 Census and National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 55–77.

[8]Canan Seyfeli, "Millet Sistemi ve-Osmanlı Devlet Salnamelerinde Süryani Kadim Patrikliği (1847–1918)," *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi* 15 (2017): 17–45.

[9]BOA, HR.ID 1597/53/1. 25 October 1874.

[10]On the proliferation of millets in the 19th century, see Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[11]Ibid., 7.

[12]See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), 60–65, 95.

[13]See Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the Millet System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 69–90; Joseph Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire: Its Scope and Limits. Jewish Courts from the 16th to the 18th Centuries," in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1994), 153–202; Daniel Goffman, "Ottoman Millets in the Early Seventeenth Century," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (1994): 135–58; Halil Inalcik, "The Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans," *Turcica* 23 (1991): 407–36; Paraskevas Konortas, "From Taʾife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community," in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1999), 169–80; Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Sophia Laiou, "Christian Women in an Ottoman World: Interpersonal and Family Cases Brought Before the *Shariʿa* Courts during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Cases Involving the Greek Community)," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History*, ed. Amila Buturovic and Irvin Cemil Schick (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 243–72; and Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy," *Ethnopolitics* 15 (2016): 24–42.

[14]Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963); Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), and Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789–2007* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010).

[15]Masayuki Ueno, "'For the Fatherland and the State': Armenians Negotiate the Tanzimat Reforms," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 93–109; Milen Petrov, "Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2004): 730–59; Milen Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864–1868" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006); Yonca Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local

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Groups: Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 107–38.

[16]Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire: 1876–1909* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999).

[17]Brinkley Messick, for instance, has argued that the Ottoman *Mecelle*, the civil code implemented in the late nineteenth century, transformed a formerly open and interpretive shariʿa into something more like codified law; Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996).

[18]Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[19]Heather Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things: Language, Power, and Law in Ottoman Administrative Discourses* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2018).

[20]Halil İnalcık, "Şikayet Hakkı: *ʿArz-ı Hal* ve *ʿArz-ı Mahzar*'lar," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 7–8 (1988): 33–54.

[21]Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayı, and Christoph K. Neumann, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2011); Suraiya Faroqhi, "Political Activity Among Ottoman Taxpayers and the Problem of Sultanic Legitimation (1570–1650)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35 (1992): 1–39; Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016), 117–56. For the republican period in Turkey and a helpful historiographical review, see Yiğit Akin, "Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in Early Republican Turkey: Politics of Petitioning," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 435–57.

[22]On the *Nizamiye* courts and the relationship between new and old forms of legal recourse in the late Ottoman Empire, see Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[23]Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 35.

[24]Ibid., 5.

[25]Ibid., 117.

[26]Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53. One historian of early modern England has similarly argued that the combination of petitioning practices and commercial printing gave rise to a democratic political culture. See David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[27]Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995), 180.

[28]Rifaʿat Abou-El-Hajj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Dina Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*; Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*.

[29]Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*; Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiʿism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Kemal Karpat, "The Ottoman Ethnic and Confessional Legacy in the Middle East," in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 739; Masters, *Christians and Jews,* 193.

[30]For work on the millet system and the Christians and Jews of the empire, see Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, 2 vols. (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982); and Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* (Istanbul: Klasik, 2004). For earlier takes on the millet system, see Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964); and Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). On millets and the question of legal autonomy, see Joseph Hacker, "Jewish Autonomy in the Ottoman Empire."

[31]For work on relations between non-Muslims and the Ottoman state, see Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*; and Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996). For work on minorities and the state in the modern Middle East, see Benjamin White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East: The Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria*

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(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016); and Laura Robson, ed., *Minorities and the Modern Arab World: New Perspectives* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2016).

[32]In his exposition of the myth of the millet system, Benjamin Braude wrote, "[the millet system] was not an institution or even a group of institutions, but rather it was a set of arrangements, largely local, with considerable variation over time and place"; Braude, "Foundation Myths," 74. M.O.H. Ursinus, while somewhat critical of Braude, holds nonetheless that "It rather looks as if the individual religious communities, which, on the local level, had to live under conditions which were varying according to place and time, in the perspective of the central government were seen as parts of religious and juridical communities which, under the leadership of their (ecclesiastical) heads, ideally had an empire-wide dimension"; "Millet," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*., edited by M.O.H. Ursinus, accessed 9 January 2019, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/millet-COM_0741?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=Millet.

[33]The only reference in English-language scholarship to *yamaklık* I have come across is in Raymond Cohen, *Saving the Holy Sepulchre: How Rival Christians Came Together to Rescue Their Holiest Shrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9. Turkish-language treatments of the concept can be found in:Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi;* and Canan Seyfeli, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin İdari Yapısı: Süryani Kadim Kilisesi Örneği," in *Süryaniler ve Süryanilik*, comp. Ahmet Taşğın, Eyyüp Tanrıverdi, and Canan Seyfeli (Ankara: Orient Yayınları, 2005), 251–67.

[34]"Yamak," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Feridun Emecen, *Islam Araştırmaları Merkezi*, accessed 3 May 2018, http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c43/c430174.pdf.

[35]For an account of Coptic Christians (*yamak* to the Armenians) in Jerusalem and the Ottoman Empire, see Febe Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[36]Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 96.

[37]Canan Seyfeli, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin İdari Yapısı," 255–57.

[38]Turkish original: "*içeride ve taşrada vaki olan kiliseleri ve manastırları ve sair ziyaretgahları ve kendilere tabi hem-milletleri ve yamakları Habeş ve Kıpti ve Süryani milletleri ayinleri üzere zabt ve tasarruf eyleye.*" This firman was reproduced in Yavuz Ercan, *Kudüs Ermeni Patrikhanesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 33–34.

[39]Seyfeli, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimlerin İdari Yapısı," 257.

[40]Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi,* 112.

[41]Ibid., 115.

[42]Kenanoğlu makes this claim on the basis of two documents from h. 1146 and 1171. See Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi,* 116–17.

[43]BOA, A.DVN.NMH 3/16/1/1. 1255 hijri (1839–1840 A.D.).

[44]P. Gabriyel Akyüz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Süryani Kilisesi* (Copyright: P. Gabriyel Akyüz, 2001), 49.

[45]Kevork B. Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 90n40.

[46]John Joseph, *Muslim–Christian Relations and Inter-Christian Rivalries in the Middle East* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983), 48.

[47]On the Ottoman idea that unbelief constitutes one nation, see Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 81.

[48]Karpat, "The Ottoman Ethnic and Confessional Legacy in the Middle East," 736.

[49]Ibid., 739.

[50]Braude, "Foundation Myths," 74.

[51]Molly Greene, "The Ottoman Experience," *Daedalus* (2005): 88–99. In the context of 15th-century Limnos, Heath Lowry argued that the transition from Byzantine to Ottoman rule was one of continuity rather than rupture. This was due to the Ottoman policy of *istimalet*, or accommodation, which served to garner the support of local Christian communities; Lowry, *Fifteenth Century Ottoman Realities: Christian Peasant Life on the Aegean Island of Limnos* (Istanbul: Eren Press, 2002), 1.

[52]K05-0025, 0026. 31 January 1882.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Carter Findley treats the curious history of this office, including its evolution from "Minister of Justice" to "Minister of Religious Sects and Justice" in Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 184–86.

[55]For detailed information on these particular administrative reforms, see Roderic H. Davison, "Provincial Government: Midhat Paşa and the Vilayet System of 1864 and 1867," in *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*,

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136–71; and Şerif Mardin, "Some Explanatory Notes on the Origins of the 'Mecelle' (Medjelle)," *The Muslim World* 51 (1961): 189–96.

[56]BOA, BEO 101/7570/6/1. 5 September 1892.

[57]BOA, BEO 17/1225/1/2. 7 June 1892.

[58]BOA, BEO 101/7570/3/1. 8 October 1892.

[59]Seyfeli, "Millet Sistemi," 20.

[60]BOA, BEO 208/15557/2/1. 17 May 1893.

[61]BOA, BEO 208/15557/3/1. 17 May 1893.

[62]BOA, Y.MTV 49/108/2/1. 17 April 1891.

[63]BOA, Y.MTV 49/108/1/1 and BOA, Y.MTV 49/108/1/2. 23 April 1891.

[64]BOA, BEO 208/15557/5/1 and BEO 208/15557/5/2. 2 February 1893.

[65]BOA, Y.MTV 75/144/2/1 and BOA, Y.MTV 75/144/2/2. 30 January 1893.

[66]In which they mention "*muʿteberān*": BOA, BEO 17/1225/21. 18 June 1893.

[67]The document reads: "*Süryani kabristanına Ermeniler'in taʿarużātından şikāyeti hāvī mahāl-ı muhtelefede muḳīm Süryani cemaatı taraflarından vurūd etmekde olan şikāyet-nāmeler*. . ." BOA, BEO 241/18015/1/2. 19 July 1893. For another document in which the Ottomans took note of the petitions' multiple places of origin, see BOA, BEO 208/15557/3/1. 17 May 1893.

[68]Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 130.

[69]Ibid., 147.

[70]Lionel George Archer Cust, *The Status Quo in the Holy Places* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1980), 26.

[71]Seyfeli, "Millet Sistemi." See also İbrahim Özcoşar, *Bir Yüzyıl Bir Sancak Bir Cemaat: 19. Yüzyılda Mardin Süryanileri* (Istanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2008), 62–66.

[72]"Cevdet Pasha, Ahmad," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, accessed 21 December 2018, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e415.

[73]"Cevdet Paşa," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*., ed. Yusuf Halaşoğlu and Mehmet Akif Aydın, *Islam Araştırmaları Merkezi*, accessed 21 December, 2018http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c07/c070320.pdf.

[74]Carter Findley notes that ministers without portfolio would sometimes serve on the Council of Ministers, though this practice declined in the late 19th century with Cevdet Pasha being the final person to have done so. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 246.

[75]BOA, Y.MTV 75/144/1/1 and Y.MTV 75/144/1/2. 8 March 1893.

[76]Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 8.

[77]On the *muhtar* system, see "Muhtar," in *Islam Ansiklopedisi*., ed. Ali Akyıldız, *Islam Araştırmaları Merkezi*, accessed 7 May 2019, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/muhtar; Mehmet Güneş, *Osmanlı Döneminde Muhtarlık ve İhtiyar Meclisi (1829-1871)* (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2014); Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 147.

[78]On this point, see Vangelis Kechriotis, "The Modernization of the Empire and the Community 'Privileges': Greek Orthodox Responses to the Young Turk Policies," in *The State and the Subaltern: Society and Politics in Turkey and Iran*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 53–70.

[79]Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 147.

[80]Assyrian nationalism did not develop amongst the Ottoman Süryani until much later. See Trigona-Harany, *The Ottoman Süryani*.

[81]Michelle Campos, "Between 'Beloved Ottomania' and 'The Land of Israel': The Struggle over Ottomanism and Zionism among Palestine's Sephardi Jews, 1908–13," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 461–83.

[82]Canan Seyfeli, "Millet Sistemi," 23.

[83]For an account of the schism, see Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 77–107. For an historiographical review of Bulgarian nationalism, see Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004).

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