

RESHAPING DAMASCUS: SOCIAL CHANGE
AND PATTERNS OF ARCHITECTURE IN
LATE OTTOMAN TIMES

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Reshaping Damascus: social change and patterns of architecture in late Ottoman times¹

Stefan Weber

Cities are heterogeneous structures of social organization. Thousands of men and women carry out their daily lives within this complex urban system and leave their mark on the city's appearance. Cities are an expression of the collective action of their inhabitants, corresponding to cultural traditions, given urban and natural environments, people's understanding of urban space, historical developments, and concepts of cultural identity. Cultural changes, often accompanied by shifts in individual and collective identities, can be observed where human action takes place: in public and private architecture as well as in the general urban fabric. Urban centers are shaped by conventions and organization of a society in the same way that houses are influenced by individual tastes and the requirements of organization of private life. In this sense the physical appearance of cities provide a rich source for the study of urban culture – especially in

¹ I would like to thank Steven MacPhillips for his patient help with the English text and Jens Hanssen and especially Marianne Boqvist for their critical reading.

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The Syrian National Archives (Markaz al-Wathā'iq al-Tārīkhīyya) will be abbreviated as MWT, S for *sijill* and W for *wathīqa*. The Public Record Office in London as PRO (FO = Foreign Office) and the Politisches Archiv of the Auswärtiges Amt in Bonn as AA. The yearbook of the Ottoman Province of Syria (Sūriyye Vilāyetini Sālnāmesi) will be abbreviated *Sālnāme* volume (year *hijrī* / year *milādī*) page.

times of cultural change. This is also true for the interpretation of collective and individual identities.

Four hundred years of Ottoman rule (1516-1918) have left a distinctive imprint on the urban centers of Syria. Ottoman concepts of architecture have had a tangible influence on the institutions of Syria's cities. The capital of the Ottoman province of Syria (*eyâlet Shâm-e Sharîf/wilâyat Sûriyya*), Damascus, was significantly modified by the construction of public buildings and houses, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The aim of this chapter is to analyze some of the changing aspects of urban layout and architecture and try to understand whether they are manifestations of cultural change and identity.

Building modern Ottoman Damascus

Following the Tanzimat and the efforts of centralization and modernization during the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the city of Damascus, like many other Ottoman cities, witnessed far-reaching changes in its urban texture.² The return of Ottoman central power through its enlarged facilities of administration, transportation (new streets, steam boats, and later railways), and communication (telegraph) connected the town to a new international network and had an overwhelming impact on Damascus. The urban texture of the city changed rapidly during the decades after the provincial reforms of 1864 right to the end of Ottoman rule in Damascus in 1918. The city itself became the object of extensive town planning carried out by a completely new administrative body.³ A new water system, electric streetlights and tramways were installed throughout the city between 1906 and 1907. Many streets in the old town, *intra* and *extra muros*, were enlarged and various new

² See, for the urban development of Damascus at that time, D. Sack, "The Historic Fabric of Damascus and its Changes in the 19th and at the Beginning of the 20th Century," in *The Syrian Land. Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilād al-Shām from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. T. Philipp and B. Schaebler, Stuttgart 1998, 185-202; D. Sack, *Damaskus, Entwicklung und Strukturen einer orientalisches-islamischen Stadt*, Mainz 1989, 38 ff.; S. Weber, "Ottoman Damascus of the Nineteenth Century: Artistic and Urban Development as an Expression of Changing Times," in *Art Turc/Turkish Art, Tenth International Congress of Turkish Art, Genève-Geneva 17-23 September 1995*, Geneva 1999, 731-740.

³ For the new administrative system which introduced administrative councils (*majlis/majālis*) on many levels of urban organization and which had very strong integrative powers, see 'Abd al-'Aziz M. 'Awwād, *al-Idāra al-'uthmāniyya fī wilāyat Sūriyya 1864-1914*, Cairo 1969, 61 ff.; Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*, Princeton 1980; Carter V. Findley, "The Evolution of the System of Provincial Administration as viewed from the Centre," *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. David Kushner, Jerusalem, Leiden 1986, 5 ff.; Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840-1861. The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society*, Oxford 1968, 31 f.; Mahmud Yazbak, *Haifa in the Late Ottoman Period, 1864-1914: A Muslim Town in Transition*, Leiden 1998, 28 ff.

streets were built throughout the city. Due to an enormous demographic growth, new urban areas were settled and whole new quarters of the city founded (e.g. Muhājirīn, 'Afīf, 'Arnūs, Shuhadā', Hijāz, Barāmka and Qaṣṣā': see fig. 1).

With the laying out of Marja Square a new public center was founded close to the first Ottoman *sarāy* of the sixteenth-century Darwīshiyya Street (see fig. 2). Numerous administrative buildings, (such as the municipality building, two *sarays*, police headquarters, law court etc.), hotels, and modern transport facilities (railway stations and tramway headquarters) were built.⁴ Public places such as parks, coffee houses, and theaters were located there and provided a space for growing public life and discussion.

The new Ottoman society

Within the Damascene elites this adoption of new principles of shaping public and private architecture was accompanied and represented by titles, fashion, and higher education; the best known example of this new fashion was the *ṭarbūsh* (fez) which replaced the turban. Images of Damascene street scenes at the beginning of the twentieth century indicate that throughout different social classes the *ṭarbūsh* had become the most prominent headwear. Other elements of clothing changed as well, and became a sign of a new style of living. Moreover, titles like Bey (Bik), Efendi, and Pasha were lavishly granted. Damascus society was changing, not least because of education reforms and new print media. In the last five decades of Ottoman rule, more than seventy schools were founded in the city – expanding the intellectual horizons of their pupils by new curricula. Newspapers, magazines, and the increasing number of printed books played an important role in an intellectual innovation. The middle- and upper-class career paths, characterized by academic, military, and civil service, are evidence of a vivid and unprecedented exchange between Damascus and Istanbul. Ottoman state schools, military and administrative institutions, and new transport and communication links between the two cities facilitated the increasing exchange that developed between the center of the empire and one of its most important provincial capitals. Even before the new law of citizenship in 1869 people in the empire were no longer Ottoman subjects (*re'āya/ra'āyā*) but Ottoman citizens (*teba'a/taḥa'*): People from Damascus who had profited from the new system or worked in the enlarged administration, and Syrian graduates from the Mülkiye in particular, became protagonists of modernization within

⁴ See, for the Marja Square, S. Weber, "Der Marja-Platz in Damaskus – Die Entstehung eines modernen Stadtzentrums unter den Osmanen als Ausdruck strukturellen Wandels (1808-1918)" *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998), 291-344, Taf. 77-88; and a summary in Weber, "Ottoman Damascus," 732 ff.

Ottoman society.⁵ Dressed as modern Ottomans they introduced patterns of a new style of living and of urban organization to the provinces of the empire.

The continuously growing Ottoman character of the townscape had started with the modernization of the urban fabric of Damascus. But who built modern Ottoman Damascus? What ideas influenced and motivated the owners of the buildings? Was it only the Ottoman administration that was modernizing the city, or were private individuals and groups of people belonging to other social classes involved as well? The example of the *sūq* will help us to answer these questions.

The modernization of a traditional urban institution: the late Ottoman *sūq* (bazaar)

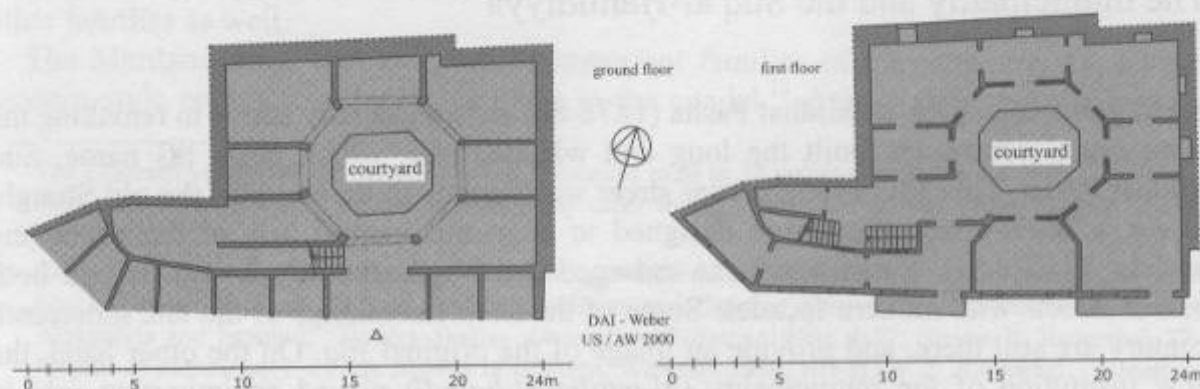
The *sūq*, the commercial center of the city, is a good example of how urban institutions changed. The building activities in the *sūq* districts, *intra* and *extra muros*, were particularly impressive. Nearly everything was rebuilt and, unlike bazaars in other towns of the empire, several bazaars in Damascus conserve their late Ottoman structure. Starting in the west at Marja Square, new or renovated bazaars connected the new city center with the old markets at Taht al-Qal'a. In this quarter huge new *sūqs* were built to the south and west of the citadel and led from there to the Umayyad Mosque and its surrounding markets (see fig. 3). In addition, the traditional Ottoman bazaar area to the south and southwest of the Umayyad Mosque was heavily restructured. *Sūqs* such as al-Hamidiyya, al-Khayyāfīn, al-Buzūriyya and *Sūq* Midḥat Bāshā were widened, and wide shopping streets now connected the old city center to the new one in the west of the city.⁶

⁵ See, for the new social and intellectual elite, Corinne Lee Blake, *Training Arab-Ottoman Bureaucrats: Syrian Graduates of the Mülkiye Mektebi 1890-20*, Princeton 1991. See further David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform. Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria*, New York, Oxford 1990; Caesar E. Farah, "Reformed Ottomanism and Social Change," in: *La Vie sociale dans les provinces arabes à l'époque ottomane*, ed. A. Temimi, Zaghouan 1988, 139-149; Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of the Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, New York 1996.

⁶ See, for the *sūq* of Damascus, Nu'mān Qasā'ilī, *al-Rawḍa al-ghannā fī Dimashq al-Fayḥā*, Beirut [1879] 1982, 100 ff.; Nāṣir al-Rabbāt, "Muqaddima li-dirāsāt taṭawwur al-sūq fī madīnat Dimashq min al-qarn al-sābi' ḥattā l-qarn al-tāsi' 'aṣḥar millādī," *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 38-39 (1988-1989), 75-104; 'Abd al-Qādir al-Rihāwī, "Khānāt madīnat Dimashq," *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 25 (1975), 47-82; G. Saba and K. Salzwedel, "Typologie der Chane in der Altstadt von Damaskus," Ph.D. thesis, Hamburg 1981; Sack, *Damaskus*, 33, map 11; Mohamad Scharabi, "Der *Sūq* von Damaskus und zwei traditionelle Handelsanlagen: Khān Jaqmaq und Khān Sulaimān Pāshā," *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 1 (1983), 285-305; Qutayba al-Shihābī, *Aswāq Dimashq al-qadīma*, Damascus 1990; Stefan Weber, "The Transformation of an Arab-Ottoman Institution: The *Sūq* (Bazaar) of Damascus from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century," in *Seven Centuries of Ottoman Architecture. A Supra-National Heritage*, ed. N. Akın, A. Batur and S. Batur, Istanbul 2000, 244-253; Fouad Yahia, "Inventaire archéologique des cara-

The layout of the modernized *sūqs*

The new *sūqs* looked quite different from their predecessors. With their modern design – their regular *façades à la mode* on two floors, large shops with glassed showcases, stylish barrel-vaulted metal roofing, and their new construction materials such as steel beams – they corresponded more to the modern arcades than to the image of the old narrow, dark bazaars. The *Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya* is a good example of this new style of commercial building (see figs. 4, 5). In this almost straight bazaar street, nearly 450m long, the 8.70m to 9.90m distance between the two rows of shops is much wider than in a conventional *sūq*. The structure of the *façades* is regular for hundreds of meters. The shops are much more spacious than before, when they were not meant to be entered – the customer was served by the shopkeeper while standing outside. Now the window displays and showcases of glass tempted the client to come in. Several shops had a second-floor storeroom while others were open on two floors. The traditional, mainly plain or gabled wooden roofing was replaced by huge barrel-vaulted wooden constructions in the 1870s and 1880s. Later, after a devastating fire in 1912, these were succeeded, by order of the governor Nāẓim Pasha, by the barrel-vaulted metal roofing that we know today (see fig. 5).⁷



Plan 1: Wakālat al-'Ashshā, ground plan, ground floor and first floor

vansérails de Damas," Ph.D. thesis, Aix-en-Provence n. d.; Fu'ād Yaḥyā, "Jard atharī li-khānāt Dimashq," *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes*, 31 (1981), 67-106.

⁷ PRO (FO 618-3/April 30, 1912). Compare, for the new roofing as well Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, *Wulāt Dimashq fī 'l-'ahd al-'uthmānī*, Damascus 1949, 94, fn. 3; Qutayba al-Shihābī, *Dimashq, tārikh wa-ṣuwar*, Damascus 1990, 146; Aḥmad Waṣfī Zakariyyā, *al-Rif al-sūrī*, 2 vols., Damascus 1957, II, 345.

It was not only the bazaar streets themselves that were changed. The organization of the whole commercial district altered as well. No new baths (*khāns*) were built. Instead, a type of *wakāla* appeared for the first time, which was different in function to the *khāns*. Changes in transportation, especially the introduction of steamboats and trains, meant that huge storage capacities were no longer needed. The little storage rooms of the shops in the second story of the modern *sūqs* provided sufficient space. The new style hotels at Marja Square, some of them with commercial and storage units, such as the building of Aḥmad 'Izzat Pasha al-Ābid (1851-1924), drew the former clients of the *khāns* for overnight stays.⁸ Consequently the *wakālas* from the turn of the century do not have the function of depots or of hotels. They were built specifically as shopping malls, and have very small courtyards, modern façades, and glass-fronted shops (see plan 1).

But who built the new commercial buildings? Who changed the shape, function, and style of *sūqs* and *khāns* in order to correspond to shifts in the trade systems and new tastes? Who modernized the commercial center of the city? In my survey of more than fifty *sūqs*, *khāns*, and *wakālas* built or rebuilt in this period, I could find no traces of building activity by foreigners. All these buildings (except banks) were erected by Ottoman governors, administrative councils, or local individuals. In the following pages I will provide some examples to demonstrate who was involved and how these changes happened.

The municipality and the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya

Some governors, such as Miḍḥat Pasha (1878-80) were especially active in remaking the commercial center. He built the long and widened *sūq*, which bears his name, Sūq Miḍḥat Pasha. This 470m-long bazaar street was directly to the north of the old Straight Street, a street-piercing measure designed to align this central axis of the street (the ancient Via Recta). Furthermore, he enlarged the Sūq al-Buzūriyya and framed both bazaar streets with modern façades. Some of the shop furnishings of the late nineteenth century are still there, and provide an image of the original *sūq*. On the other hand, the new institution of the municipality (*al-majlis al-baladī*) played an important role in creating the modern texture of the city. The municipality was introduced in Damascus following the provincial reforms of 1864. This modern urban institution, consisting of elected members of the public, was responsible among others things for urban planning, based largely on new principles. Owing to Ottoman yearbooks (*sālnāme*) we are well

⁸ See Scharabi, "Sūq von Damaskus," 289, fn. 23; al-Shihābī, *Dimashq*, 60 f.; Weber, "Marja-Platz," no. 31. See, for Aḥmad 'Izzat Pasha al-Ābid Weber, "Zeugnisse," 48 ff.

informed as to who was elected to this council.⁹ Unlike in Istanbul, Alexandria, or Jerusalem, the municipality of Damascus was not controlled directly or indirectly by foreign interests or non-Ottomans.¹⁰ By law only an Ottoman subject of at least 30 years, who was not employed in a foreign institution, had full civil rights, and only a citizen who paid a yearly tax of at least 100 *ghirsh* on his property had the right to put himself forward as a candidate for the municipal elections.¹¹ The *sālnāmes* indicate that the 142 persons who were elected members of the municipality between 1871 and 1900 originated from about a hundred different Damascus families. It appears that no foreigner sat on the council during this time. This is an important consideration for the modernization of Damascus' urban structures such as the *sūq*.

The enormous and famous Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya, for example, was erected due to this publicly elected council of urban notables. Its eastern part was started in 1301/1883-1884 and was finished in 1304/1886 or 1889 when it was first covered by a barrel-vaulted wooden roof and connected the narrow Sūq al-Jadīd with the Sūq al-Miskiyya next to the Umayyad Mosque. It was cut through a former residential quarter as a street-piercing measure. The Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya and other new commercial buildings – such as *wakālas* or smaller *sūqs* branching off the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya – were erected on house plots. The new bazaar street was a very significant urban project, because now the old city center of the Umayyad Mosque in the east was connected with the *sūqs* of the new city center at Marja Square in the west. It was not only members of the municipality who seem to have been involved in the planning process of the *sūq*, but members of other families as well.

The Mardam Beks, one of the most important families of the time, erected several modern-style commercial buildings close to the citadel.¹² Among them are the Sūq al-

⁹ The Ottoman yearbooks for the province of Damascus exist in 32 volumes between the years 1285/1868-1869 and 1318/1900-1901. It lists among many other things some undertakings of this council and its members.

¹⁰ Compare Ruth Kark, "The Jerusalem Municipality at the End of Ottoman Rule," *Asian and African Studies* 14 (1980), 120 ff.; M. Reimer, "Urban Regulation and Planning Agencies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Alexandria and Istanbul," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* (1996), 1-27; Steven T. Rosenthal, *The Politics of Dependency. Urban Reform in Istanbul*, Westport 1980, 101 ff.; S. T. Rosenthal, "Minorities and Municipal Reform in Istanbul, 1850-1870," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. B. Braude and B. Lewis, Princeton 1982, 369-385.

¹¹ In the *al-Shām* newspaper, 74 (Rajab 27, 1315/1897). Every male Ottoman subject of at least 25 years, with impunity and all rights, and who paid a yearly tax of at least 50 *ghirsh* on his property had the right to vote. See also Kark, "The Jerusalem Municipality," 123; PRO (FO 618-3 / April 6.4.1903). For every polling a special council was set up to control the elections. Compare *al-Shām*, 73 (Rajab 21, 1315/1897).

¹² See, for the Mardam Bek family, Muḥammad Āl Taqī 'l-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī, *Kitāb muntakhabāt al-tawārikh li-Dimashq*, ed. Kamāl al-Ṣalībī, 3 vols, Beirut 1979, II, 891 f.; Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920*, Cambridge 1983, 41; Khālil Mardam Bek, *Kitāb waqf al-wazīr Lālā Muṣṭafā Bāshā wa-yalīhi kitāb waqf Fāṭima Khātūn*, Damascus 1925; Tamīm Ma'mūn Mardam Bek, *Tarājim al-Mardam Bek fī khamsat qurūn, 906-1419 h./1500-1998*, Damascus 1998, I, 2 ff.; Muḥammad Jamīl al-Shaṭṭī, *A'yān Dimashq fī 'l-qarn al-thālith 'ashar wa-nisf al-qarn al-rābi' 'ashar*, Da-

Būrṣ/Sūq al-ʿAṣrūniyya al-Jadīd and Sūq Mardam Bek/al-Ṭaḥḥān on the northern side of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya and two *wakālas* on the southern side. It is interesting to note that private houses and a garden had previously stood where the Mardam Bek buildings were located. A court record of 1286/1869 mentions two houses of Muḥammad Mardam Bek and his son, ʿUthmān Mardam Bek and a garden of the Kilānī *waqf* rented by the Mardam Bek family, exactly in this location.¹³ This is why the plots of the eastern Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya are not as regular as one might expect from such new-drawn planning. The edges of the commercial buildings most probably recall those of the houses and the garden (see fig. 4). The brothers ʿAlī (1225/1810-1305/1887) and ʿUthmān Mardam Bek (1235/1819-1820 - 1304/1886-1887) were two of the most important figures at that time and were among other members of the highest administrative council of the province, the *majlis al-idāra*.

It seems that the Mardam Beks were involved in the planning of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya in cooperation with the municipality. Certainly they could expect high profits from commercial buildings here in the largest *sūq* of Damascus, which became even more prominent in 1894. In that year the western part of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya – first known as the Sūq al-Jadīd – was opened to the public. To allow the construction of this new *sūq*, the older Sūq al-Jadīd, which ran parallel to the southern side of the citadel, was torn down and the moat in between was filled. Here, unlike in the eastern Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya, it then became possible to lay out the plots of land for the shops in a regular manner. In this way the impressive *sūq*, which was named after Sultan Abdülhamid II, was completed before the turn of the century on Damascene initiative.

The Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya had an enormous impact on the city and its new layout, recalling contemporary arcades, and became the model for other *sūqs*. Possibly the longest shopping arcade in the world at the turn of the century, it is an impressive example of the successful modification of a classical urban institution in the light of modernity.¹⁴ This change in design and redefinition of commercial buildings must have been a conscious effort. The famous journalist Khalīl Sarkīs (1258/1842-1333/1915) wrote proudly in 1898 comparing to contemporary buildings in Europe: “The *sūqs* of Damascus are so

mascus 1994, 316, 326; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics. Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Stuttgart 1985, 104 f., 211; Weber, “Zeugnisse,” 53 ff.

¹³ MWT (MSh) S598/W154 (1286/1869).

¹⁴ The 450m-long Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya is noticeably longer than any arcade in Europe. The famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan (1865-1877) amounts to a total length of 301.72m (longitudinal axis 196.62m, transversal axis 105.10m). The Passage du Caire in Paris (1799), the largest one in the city, consists of three branches that run up to a total length of 370m. The Passage Brady in London (1828) had a total length of 216m. For these arcades and others, see J.F. Geist, *Passagen: ein Bautyp des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München 1969, 228 f., 261, 284.

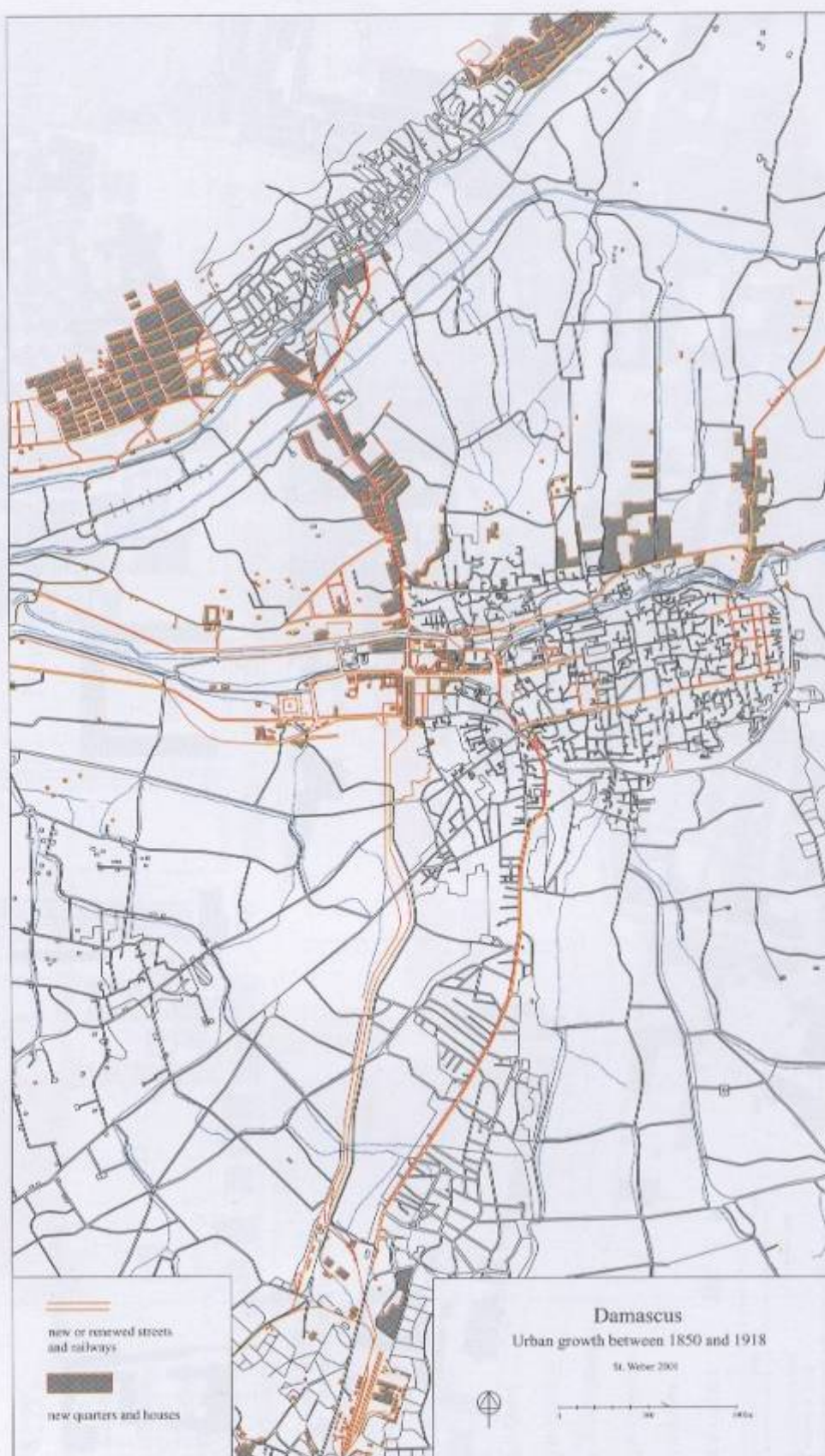


Fig. 1: Urban growth between 1850 and 1918

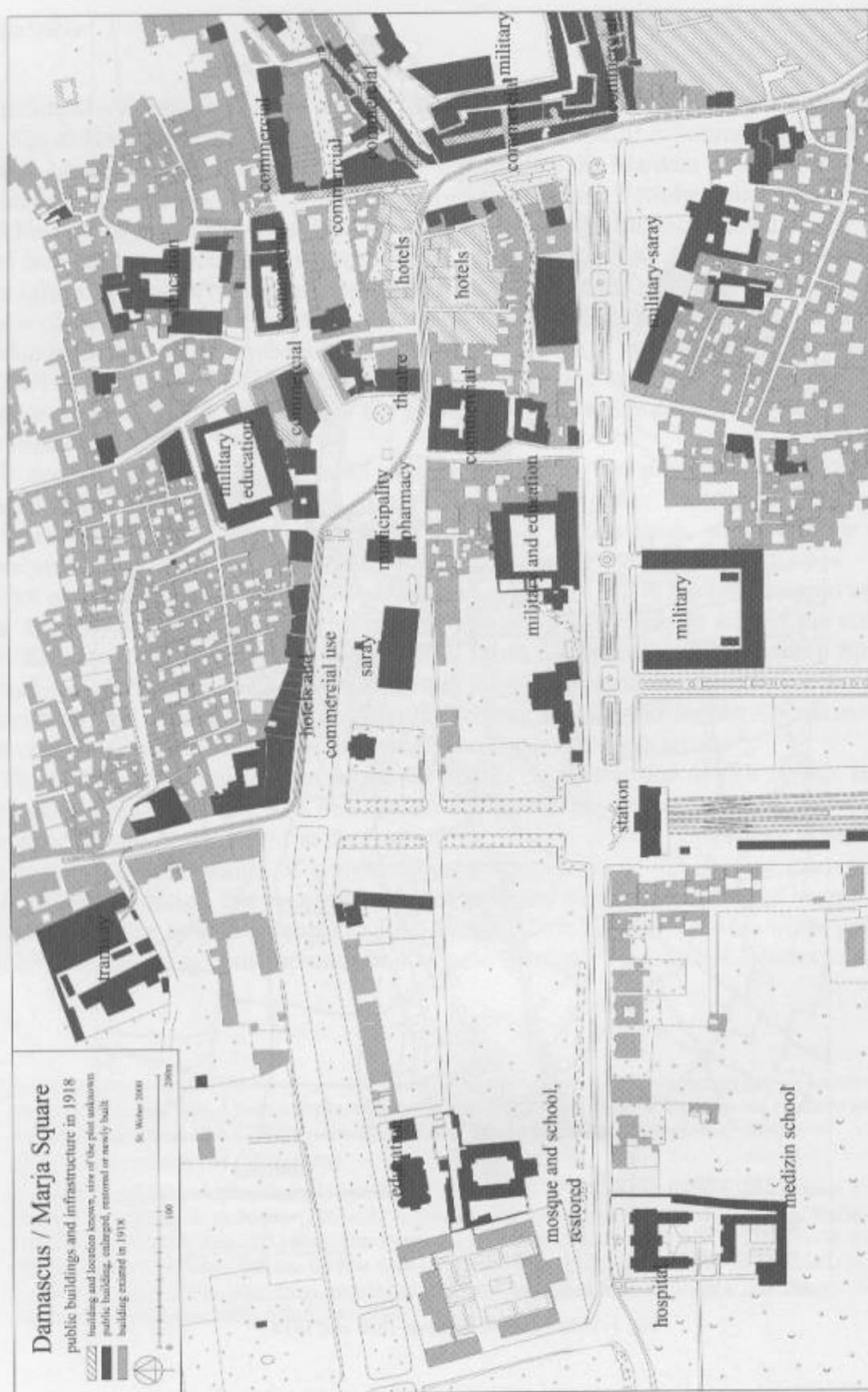


Fig. 2: Public buildings and infrastructure at the Marja Square 1918

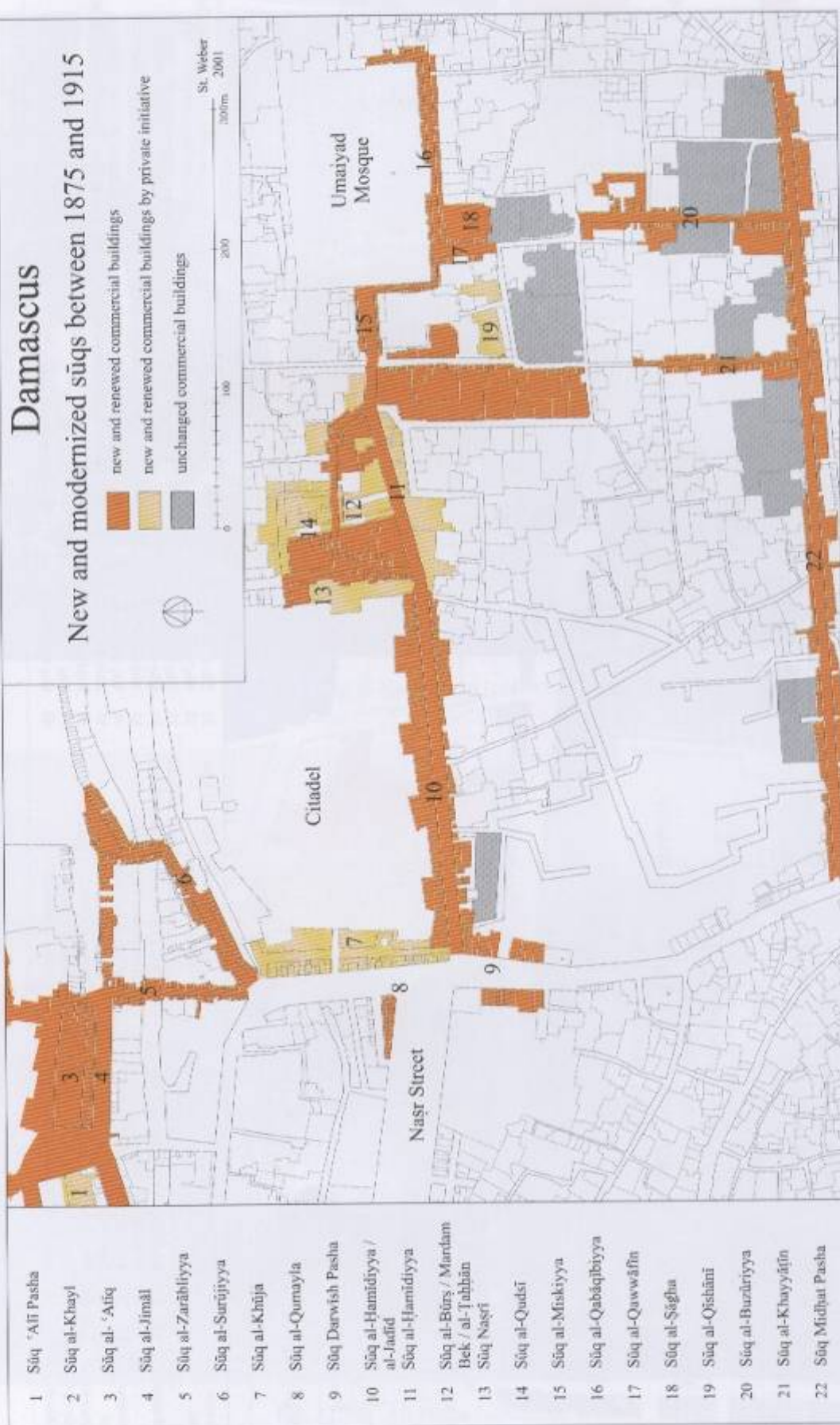


Fig. 3: New and modernized *sūqs* between 1875 and 1915

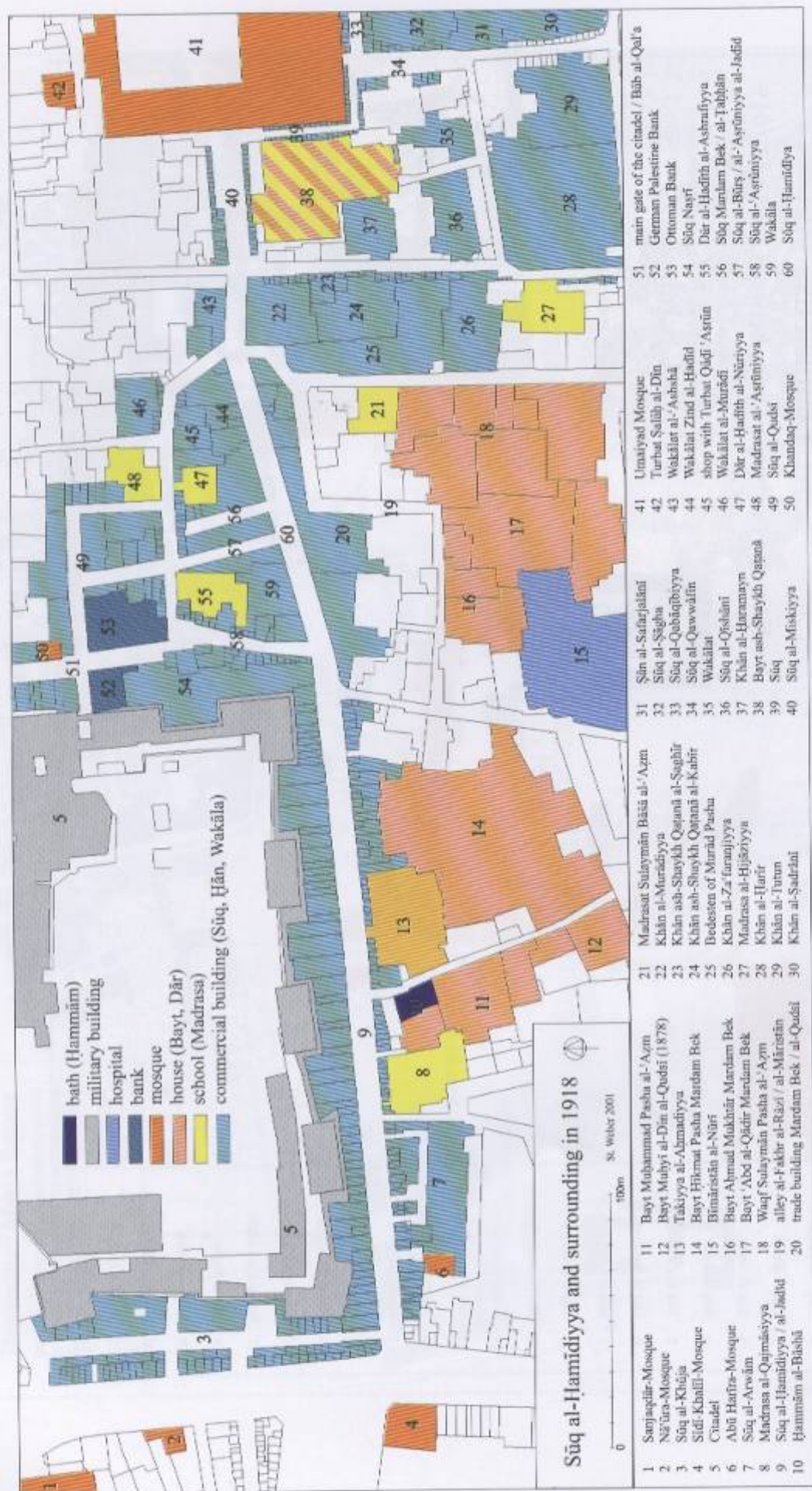


Fig. 4: Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya and surroundings



Fig. 5: Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya (collection Lemke)



Fig. 6: Sūq 'Alī Pasha (collection Weber)



Fig. 7: Sūq al-Qishānī



Fig. 8: Sūq al-Khūja
(source: IFAPO)



Fig. 9: Ottoman flagged steamboat and the Bosphorous in Bayt al-Qabbānī (~ upper middle class)

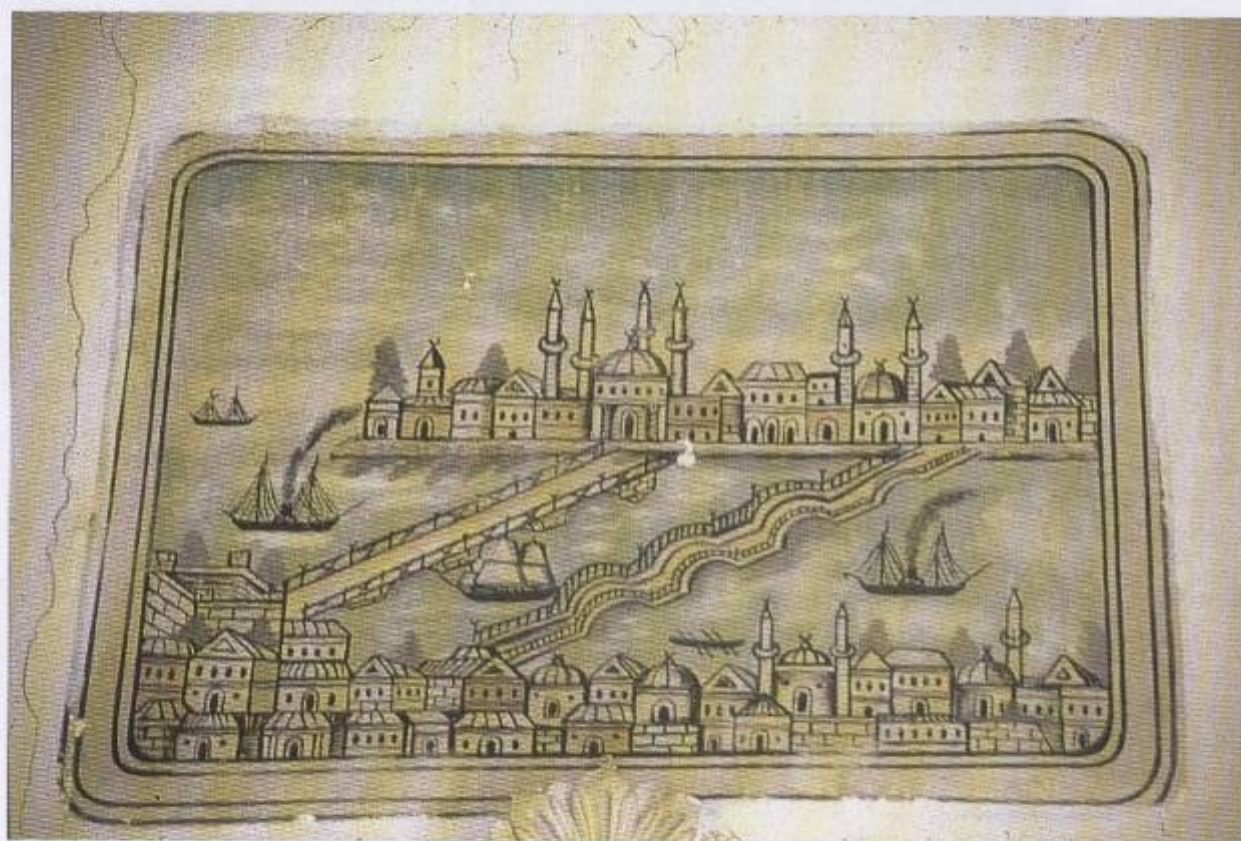


Fig. 10: Image of Istanbul in Bayt Dayrī / Murtaḏā (~ lower middle class)

famous for their dimensions and beauty, that some high European politicians claimed, that their like does not exist in their countries."¹⁵

The first modern *sūq*: the *sūq* of 'Alī Pasha

During the 1880s and 1890s the municipality also remodeled other *sūqs*, such as the *Sūq al-Surūjiyya*, the *Sūq al-Khayl*, and the *Sūq al-'Atīq*.¹⁶ Others, such as the *sūqs al-Khūja*, *al-Qīshānī*, 'Alī Pasha, or *al-Qudsī*, have their origins in private initiative only. The very first bazaar of a new type was built by 'Alī Pasha. Previously destroyed, the building measured 50m in length and it is known from some rare historical photographs (see fig. 6) and from its original donation document (*waqfiyya*). Concerning the *waqfiyya*, the *Sūq 'Alī Pasha* was endowed in 1292/1875 by Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha ibn Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad al-Mūrahlī as *waqf ahlī*.¹⁷ Like the later *Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya*, the *Sūq 'Alī Pasha* had an important urban function in connecting the Marja Square with the square of *Sūq al-Khayl* and brought the new town center within the commercial life of the city.

The *waqfiyya* gives us a detailed picture of what the *sūq* looked like. It was the first in Damascus to have elaborate façades on two stories, framing a wide and rectangular street with large shops. This layout then became standard for all *sūqs* that were built in the following decades. Most probably these *sūqs* were inspired by the new European-style arcades that were introduced in Istanbul around 1870 and matched the traditional Ottoman commercial buildings (*sūq*, *arasta*, *bedesten*, *çarşı*) perfectly.¹⁸

In Damascus a local Ottoman official initiated the first shopping street with a modern layout. 'Alī Pasha al-Mūrahlī (d. before 1881) held one of the most prestigious positions in the administration as trustee for the gifts to Mecca and Medina during the pilgrimage

¹⁵ K. Sarkīs, *al-Shām qabl mī'at 'ām. Riḥlat al-Imbirāṭūr Ghilīyūm al-Thānī, imbirāṭūr Almāniyā wa-qarīnatihi ilā Filasṭīn wa-Sūriyya, 'ām 1316 h./1898 m.*, [1898], cited after an edition by Ḥasan al-Samāḥī Suwayrān, Damascus 1997, 114.

¹⁶ The *Sūq al-'Atīq* burned partially down in 1265/1849. See As'ad al-Uṣṭuwānī, *al-Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Uṣṭuwānī: Mashāhid wa-aḥdāth dimashqiyya fī muntaṣaf al-qarn al-tāsī 'ashar, 1256-1277 h, 1840-1861m.*, Damascus 1994, 146. The horse market (*Sūq al-Khayl*) was moved outside the town in 1893-1894 and both *Sūqs* (*al-Khayl*, *al-'Atīq*) widely changed. See, for these changes *Sālnāme* ²¹(1306/1888-1889) 146, ²²(1307-1308/1890-1891) 155, ²⁵(1310-1311/1893-1894) 261 f. See for these *sūqs* Weber, "Marğa-Platz," nos. 36, 37, 39.

¹⁷ See for this *sūq* MWT (MSh) S670/W106 (1252/1875) [*waqfiyya*], S731/W155 (1298/1881), S1038/W128 (1314/1896); Weber, "Marğa-Platz," no. 35.

¹⁸ The most famous of the arcades in Istanbul (Beyoğlu/Pera) are presumably the Çiçek Pasajı (Cité de Pera, 1876) or the Avrupa Pasajı (Aynalı Pasajı, 1871-1872). One should note here that the European arcades were of course strongly inspired by the bazaar streets. See for the origin of European arcades, Geist, *Pasagen*, 40 ff.

(*ṣurra amīnī al-ḥajj*).¹⁹ Court records throughout the nineteenth century prove that the Mūrahlīs, who had been known in Damascus since the sixteenth century, lived in the city quarter of al-Qanawāt.²⁰

Different patterns can be distinguished in the modernizing of the bazaars of Damascus, reflecting the circumstances of ownership and building plot. The impressive Sūq al-Qudsī consists of three streets in an F-shape with a total length of approximately 120m that includes the Ottoman Bank.²¹ For this building the Qudsīs – as did the Mardam Beks in the case of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya some decades earlier – probably changed the parcel of their dwelling into a commercial used plot in 1912.²² During the process of reconstruction shortly after the big fire of 1912, which had destroyed many buildings between the Sūq al-ʿAṣrūniyya and Bāb al-Barīd, the Qudsīs and other individuals such as a certain Mr. al-ʿAshshā and al-Murādī undertook the erection of *wakālas*.²³ The attraction of the new bazaar district around the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya must have been enormous.

Changing a *waqf*: the Sūq al-Qīshānī

Other buildings apart from houses were converted to commercial use. The Ḥammām al-Qīshānī (981/1573-1574), which belonged to the *waqf* of the famous governor Darwīsh Pasha (d. 987/1579), provides a good example of functional changes. Court records give

¹⁹ MWT (MSH) S670/W106 (1252/1875) [*waqfiyya*], S731/W155 (1298/1881). For Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha al-Mūrahlī and his function as *ṣurra amīnī*, see also Randi Deguilhem, "Naissance et mort du waqf damascain de Ḥafīza Khānum al-Mūrahlī (1880-1951)," in *Le waqf dans l'espace islamique outil de pouvoir socio-politique*, ed. R. Deguilhem, Damascus 1995, 207 ff.

²⁰ MWT (MSH) S250/W234 (1217/1802), S636/W276 (1289/1872), S731/W155 (1298/1881), S1038/W128 (1314/1896). For the Mūrahlīs, see al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārīkh*, II, 870; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 154 f. and Deguilhem in her article on the *waqf* of the wife of ʿAlī Pasha, Ḥafīza Khānum al-Mūrahlī: Deguilhem, "Naissance et mort," 205 ff. In 1298/1881 she endowed several shops in the Sūq al-Arwām, Sūq al-Nisān, Sūq al-Jadīd (later al-Ḥamīdiyya), in Bāb al-Barīd and in Darwīshiyya Street. See MWT (MSH) S737/W245 (1298/1881) and Deguilhem, "Naissance et mort," 209, 214.

²¹ The Ottoman Bank was erected in 1313/1895 and enlarged shortly after 1908. See Banque Impériale Ottoman (Istanbul), Comité de direction (CDPV) 13, 16 février 1906; 14, PV 30 sep 1907; 14, 22 oct 1907; 14, 18 août 1908; 14, 12 oct 1908; 15, 27 jan 1908; PRO (FO 618-3/ 30.4.1912); Weber, "Zeugnisse," 181 ff., catalogue no. 49.

²² A court record mentions a house at the Sūq Bāb al-Qalʿa, which is the same spot, and neighboring real estates that were bought by Saʿīd al-Qudsī from his uncle Muḥyī ʿl-Dīn al-Qudsī in 1296/1878. See MWT (MSH) S724/W184 (1296/1878). Maps and panorama photographs before 1912 show only houses at this place.

²³ The British consul reports that the fire started on April 26, 1912 in the Khān al-Murādī and destroyed the area between Bāb al-Barīd and Sūq al-ʿAṣrūniyya comprising 370 shops, 4 khāns, 40 houses, 3 money changers' offices, and 1 mosque: PRO (FO 618-3/ April 30, 1912), (FO 618-3/ Oct. 2, 1912).

information about how the tenants of this *waqf*, Ḥāfiẓ Efendi al-Kharbūtlī and Shafīqa Khānum al-Arḍrūmī, developed the idea of changing the public bath, out of service since 1905, into a *sūq* (see fig. 7). Backed by a legal certificate (*fatwā*) of Muftī Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Qaṭanā they argued that in order to pay the rent to the *waqf* administration and to pursue the interests (*maṣlaḥa*) of the *waqf* the function of the building needed to be changed. Following this, a council of experts was set up by the *waqf* administration, consisting of the two carpenters Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tawwām and Saʿīd ibn Kamāl Aṣfar and the architect Khawāja Ḥabīb al-Mīʿmārī ibn Luṭfī Qarwashān who studied the case in 1324/1906. They confirmed the bad condition of the building and recommended it be changed into a *sūq*. After the case was decided positively and a request for ratification (*berāt/barāʿa*) sent to Istanbul, the Ḥammām al-Qīshānī was rebuilt in a fashionable modern style as the Sūq al-Qīshānī and opened to the public twelve months later.²⁴

Copying the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya: the *sūq* of Rāghib al-Khūja

Most of the *sūqs intra muros* were only enlarged and remodeled. Patrons had few opportunities to acquire appropriate plots of land for new buildings, and as a result they often had to change the function of structures instead, as seen in the case of the residences of the Mardam Beks, Qudsīs, and that of the Sūq al-Qīshānī. The direct surroundings of the citadel with its non-functioning, partially filled moats provided an exceptional opportunity, as mentioned above, with the municipality taking the initiative to enlarge and rebuild the Sūq al-Jadīd, transforming it into the western part of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya. Here, next to the citadel, private individuals were active too. The Sūq Naṣrī was erected above filled-in eastern moat around 1910, most probably through the initiative of a certain Bashīr Naṣrī.

The impressive 140m-long Sūq al-Khūja already occupied the western moat (see fig. 8).²⁵ This *sūq* was built in two stages by Rāghib al-Khūja and his partner Bishāra Efendi Aṣfar on the model of the Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya. The southern main building (the Sūq al-Khūja al-Barrānī) was started in 1313/1895-1896. The northern part (the Sūq al-Khūja

²⁴ See, for this legal case, MWT (MSh) S1275/W144 (1323/1906), S1275/W133 (1324/1906). For further information on the *sūq* MWT (MSh) S1378/W51 (1327/1909); al-Munajjid, *Wulāt Dimashq*, 6, fn. 1; Sack, *Damaskus*, No. 4.32; Akram al-ʿUlābī, *Khiṭaṭ Dimashq: dirāsa tārikhiyya shāmīla*, Damascus 1989, 461, 530; Karl Wulzinger and Carl Watzinger, *Damaskus, die islamische Stadt*, Berlin 1924, E/4-6.

²⁵ This corresponds to the dimensions of the 153m-long Friedrichstraßenpassage (1908-1909) and 128.75m-long Kaisergalerie (1871-1873) in Berlin and the total original length of 157.50m of the Passage in The Hague (1883-1885). See Geist, *Passagen*, 133, 143 f., 173, 176.

al-Juwwānī) was completed in 1323/1905.²⁶ Its Damascene owner, Rāghib ibn Rāshid ibn Muḥammad al-Khūja, worked in the military administration (*al-dā'ira al-'askariyya al-sultāniyya*). Like 'Alī Pasha al-Mūrahli (Sūq 'Alī Pasha) he lived in the city quarter of al-Qanawāt. His house, which we found with the help of court records, was by 1883 mentioned by al-Qāyyātī as one of the most lavishly decorated residences in the town.²⁷

In his enterprises he could most probably count on the help of his brother Maḥmūd Efendi al-Khūja, who was president of the municipality when the *sūq* was erected (1316/1898-1899 and 1317/1899-1900).²⁸ Rāghib al-Khūja's partner, Bishāra Aṣfar, had also established close contacts with the local administration. He worked as dragoman for the German consul and merchant Ernst Lütticke (1843-1904) and after his death even acted as administrator for the German imperial consulate. During his many years in German service (from 1877 to 1910) he became well known to the decision makers of the city.²⁹ It is likely that Rāghib al-Khūja was only able to gain access to the attractive building plots next to the citadel and to carry out this enormous building project due to his own position and those of his brother and his partner.

Private initiative: schools and other public buildings

It is interesting to note how many of these modern *sūqs* were constructed through individual initiative. Some, but not all, of those elected as local members of the Ottoman councils became active in urban construction. Other buildings for public use, such as hotels, restaurants, cafés, and mosques were erected through the private initiative of

²⁶ The history of this building, which was demolished in 1403/1982-1983, can be reconstructed due to court records and historical photographs. See MWT (MSh) S1232/W3 (1320/1902), S1378/W83 (1327/1909). For further information see al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārīkh*, I, 278; Sack, *Damaskus*, 41, 58, 5.14; Scharabi, "Sūq von Damaskus," 287, Tab. 64b; al-Shihābī, *Aswāq Dimashq*, 213, 219 f.; al-'Ulabī, *Khīṭaṭ Dimashq*, 462; Weber, "Marḡa-Platz," no. 38; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 166 ff., catalogue no. 208.

²⁷ MWT (MSh) S820/W2 (1303/1885), S1014/W106 (1311/1894); M.'A. al-Qāyyātī, *Nafḥat al-bashām fī riḥlat al-Shām*, Beirut 1981, 127. See, for Rāghib al-Khūja, al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārīkh*, II, 907 f.; MWT S819/W24 (1303/1885), S1008/W78 (1311/1894), S1017/W157, 190 (1312/1894); al-Qayātī, *Nafḥat al-bashām*, 127.

²⁸ Maḥmūd was elected into the Damascene municipality in 1315/1898 by 572 votes and in 1327/1909 by 508 votes. See, for Maḥmūd Efendi al-Khūja, al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārīkh*, II, 907 f.; al-Muqtabas, 68 (17. Šafar 1327/1909); al-Qāyyātī, *Nafḥat al-bashām*, 127; *Sālnāme* ³⁰(1316/1898-1899) 125, ³¹(1317/1899-1900) 124; *al-Shām*, 85 (24. Shawwāl 1315/1898).

²⁹ Bishāra Aṣfar was decorated several times with German medals and represented the German consul and the vice-consul of Austria-Hungary if he was absent. See, for Bishāra Aṣfar, AA (R141505, Aug. 5, 1890), (R141505, Aug. 2, 1894 to Aug. 14, 1894), (R141505, Dec. 8, 1898), (R141505, May 12, 1899-Oct. 10, 1899), (R141505, April 21, 1901-April 2, 1902), (R141505; Feb. 8, 1904-March 22, 1904), (R141506, Aug. 1, 1908-Nov. 24, 1908), (R141506, April 6, 1910). *Sālnāme* ¹⁷(1302/1884-1885) 98, ¹⁸(1303/1885-1886) 83, ¹⁹(1304/1886-1887) 72. For Lütticke see: Weber "Zeugnisse," 66 ff.

ordinary Damascene citizens. Private schools in particular bear witness of the Damascenes desire to reform and modernize their city and society.

Schools are of major importance to social and intellectual change, and are catalysts of modernization. Many schools were founded by missionaries (at least 12) or local Christian communities, with or without foreign aid (at least 13). Other educational institutions were founded by the state (at least 15), which increased the number of its schools especially in the period of Abdülhamid. The missionary school al-Madrasa al-'Azariyya of the Sœurs de Charité in Bâb Tūmā and the first government secondary school, Maktab 'Anbar, were of particular importance.³⁰ Both establishments played a distinctive role in the creation of a new intellectual elite.

In addition to the many missionary and state schools one has to mention the semi-governmental society of the Jam'iyya Khayriyya li-Inshā' al-Madāris (at least 15 schools) and the many private schools (*madāris ahliyya*, at least 15).³¹ The latter were mainly founded by religious scholars who did not consider educational reform to be fast enough and opened schools with new curricula in private houses or ruined *waqf* buildings. This movement is a very interesting demonstration of the local will to reform. The most prominent of these *madāris ahliyya* was the Madrasa al-'Uthmāniyya, founded by the Shaykh Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb (1873-1954) in 1329/1911 in the Dār al-Qur'ān wa'l-Ḥadīth al-Tankiziyya (728/1327).³² Important persons of the Damascene *Nahḍa* such as 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Inkilizī (1878-1916) or 'Ārif al-Shihābī (1889-1916) were teaching here. Thus the modernization of urban institutions carried out by local individuals was not limited to the *sūqs*. This, of course, gives us no information on individual or collective

³⁰ For the role of schools in late Ottoman Damascus society compare fn. 5 and, among others, Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-'Allāf, *Dimashq fi maṭla' al-qarn al-'ishrīn*, Damascus 1976, 196 f.; 'Awwād, *al-Idāra al-'uthmāniyya*, 254 ff.; Iskandar Lūqā, *al-Ḥaraka al-adabiyya fi Dimashq 1800-1918*, Damascus 1976, 44 ff.; Qasātilī, *al-Rawḍa al-ghannā*, 119 f.; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sāmī Bek, *Qawl al-ḥaqq fi Bayrūt wa-Dimashq*, Beirut 1981, 101 f.; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 134 ff. On the Maktab 'Anbar various articles and books have been published: see Farid Juḥā, "Maktab 'Anbar," *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 35 (1985), 389-403; Maṭī' al-Murābiṭ, *al-Nūr wa'l-nār fi Maktab 'Anbar*, Damascus 1991; Randi Deguilhem-Schoem, "Idées françaises et enseignement ottoman: l'école secondaire Maktab 'Anbar à Damas," *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 52/53 (1989), 199-206; Zāfir al-Qāsimī, *Maktab 'Anbar, Ṣuwar wa-dhikrayāt min ḥayātina al-thaqāfiyya wa'l-siyāsiyya wa'l-ijtimā'iyya*, Beirut 1964. Also compare Fakhri al-Bārūdī, *Mudhakkirāt al-Bārūdī, sittūna sana tatakallam*, 2 vols., Beirut and Damascus 1951-1952, I, 30 ff.

³¹ For the Jam'iyya Khayriyya li-Inshā' al-Madāris see al-'Allāf, *Maṭla' al-qarn*, 180 f.; Adnān al-Khaṭīb, *al-Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī, Rā'id al-nahḍa al-'ilmiyya fi Bilād al-Shām*, Cairo 1971, 105 ff.; Khālid Mu'ādh, "Madāris Dimashq qabl al-'aṣr al-'uthmānī," in *Dimashq: Dirāsāt tārikhiyya wa-athariyya*, ed. Muḍiriyya lil-Āthār wa'l-Matāhif, Damascus 1980, 119 f.; Qasātilī, *al-Rawḍa al-ghannā*, 119 f.; Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 199; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 136. And for the *madāris ahliyya*: al-'Allāf, *Maṭla' al-qarn*, 196 f., 200 f.; 'Awwād, *al-Idāra al-'uthmāniyya*, 263 ff.; al-Bārūdī, *Mudhakkirāt*, I, 21 f.; Lūqā, *al-Ḥaraka al-adabiyya*, 47 f.; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 137 ff.

³² See, for Shaykh Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb, al-Ḥuṣnī, *Muntakhabāt al-tawārikh*, II, 913; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām: Qāmūs tarājim li-ashhar al-rijāl wa'l-nisā' min al-'arab wa'l-musta'ribīn wa'l-mustashriqīn*, 8 vols., 14th ed., Beirut 1999, VII, 13.

identities, but it emphasises the fact that Damascene society, or at least part of it, shared actively or even initiated the reorganization of this Middle Eastern society and its urban structures in the late Ottoman period.

The role of foreigners in reshaping Damascus

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the number of foreigners residing in the city was small, unlike Beirut or Istanbul. John Bowring remarked in 1840 that "the European costume is scarcely ever seen; and, with few exemptions, I believe the Frank settlers have adopted the Syrian dress."³³ Some establishments were opened by non-Damascenes, for example a certain Ottoman-Greek (?) called Khawāja Dīmītrī al-Lūkāndajī ibn al-Khawāja Jūrjī ibn Dīmītrī Izmīr, whose family owned the first hotel in Damascus and a modern café at Marja Square.³⁴ Except for the missionary institutions one can find only a very few building of foreign origin such as the German Palestine Bank, which opened a branch in the Sūq al-ʿAṣrūniyya next to the citadel in 1910, but the director of the bank, Timotheus Wurst, only lived in Damascus for a few years.³⁵

Following the Tanzimat and the provincial reforms of 1864 foreign influence still remained limited. The British consul mentioned in 1870 that after the riots of 1860 only 20 foreigners were living in the town. At the same time 4,000 foreigners were permanently living in Beirut.³⁶ Qasātilī records in 1879 around 350 and Sāmī Bek in 1890 around 400 non-Ottoman subjects in Damascus.³⁷ A lot of them must have been protégés of consulates and individuals from the Balkans, Persia or North Africa. According to the *Kölnische Zeitung* the German community was in 1912 the largest among those of the Europeans and counted some 40 individuals.³⁸ In 1912 Hichens stressed what he saw as the non-foreign character of the town:

³³ John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria*, London 1840, repr. New York 1973, 92.

³⁴ This person is mentioned in MWT (MSH) S1275/W126 (1323/1905). for the two buildings, see Weber, "Marja-Platz," nos. 22, 46.

³⁵ See, for the bank, AA (R141506, Oct. 25, 1909), (R141506, May 22, 1912); Karl Baedeker, *Palestine et Syrie: Manuel du Voyageur*, 4th ed., Leipzig 1912, 295 (map p. 300); PRO (FO 618-3 / 4.4.1910); Weber, "Zeugnisse," 179 ff.; Wulzinger and Watzinger, *Islamischen Stadt*, E/3-2.

Wurst, born 1874 in Jaffa, held as well the post of the Dutch vice-consul and in 1913 became German consul for a short time. After the death of Ernst Lütticke, Wurst was the only German in Damascus for several years. In 1914 he left Damascus to become the director of the German Palestine Bank in Baghdad. See AA (R141505, May 31, 1905), (R141505, Dec. 18, 1905), (R141506, 11.11.1906 until April 10, 1907), (R141506, March 17, 12); (R141505, Jan. 14, 1914), (R141506, June 2, 1914).

³⁶ Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 68, fn. 37.

³⁷ Qasātilī, *al-Rawḍa al-ghannā*, 8 talks about "Afranji wa-Yūnān." Sāmī Bek, *al-Qawl al-ḥaqq*, 61 f. lists Europeans separately from Persians, Kurds, and people from the Maghreb.

³⁸ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 619, (June 1, 1912).

...still thoroughly Oriental. Cairo has become horribly official and cosmopolitan; Algiers and Tunis are very French; Jerusalem is the home of religious sects; Beirut contains numbers of Italians, Maltese, Greeks, and Americans; but the fez prevails in the streets and bazaars of Damascus, where once, during a four-hour walk through the principal quarters, I did not meet one man who was not an Eastern or see one house which looked European. Even the trams ... scarcely interfere with the Eastern atmosphere.³⁹

At the beginning of the twentieth century some foreign experts, such as P. Apéry, were employed by the authorities. Apéry was the highest municipal engineer at the turn of the century.⁴⁰ But the number of these experts remained limited until at least World War I. A modern Ottoman Damascus developed with little direct foreign influence and is therefore an important case study for investigating the change of a society and its urban organization in the period of reform. But how many people were involved in this process and how much self-awareness did the people of Damascus have when remodeling their city? Another urban architectural feature that may help us here is the private house, built more or less entirely by private initiative.

The new lifestyle

This reorganization of an entire Arab metropolis, its urban fabric, its architecture and a large part of its social organization is clearly visible in this most private aspect of urban architecture. Houses were extensively build or reconstructed during this time.⁴¹ Certainly a new era calls for a new style and the continuous building activities allowed the integration of new ideas. During this enormous reshaping of the city it was possible to rebuild in the latest fashion and to adopt new techniques of construction and decoration.

³⁹ Robert Hichens, *The Holy Land*, London 1913, 53, 79.

⁴⁰ See for example *Sālnāme* ³¹(1317/1899-1900) 125. The engineers of the municipality were mainly of Arab-Ottoman origin. Only a very few non-Arab names are given, such as Wāsilyādīs Efendi as second engineer. See *Jarīdat al-Shām*, 93 (27. Dhū l-Hijja 1315/1898); *Sālnāme* ²⁹(1315/1897-1898) 99, ³¹(1317/1899-1900) 98. And a certain Monseigneur Barsisū was a member of the offices of engineers of the municipality. See *Sālnāme* ¹³(1298/1880-1881) 84. During World War I Jamāl Pasha employed some foreign experts such as Max Zürcher, Karl Wulzinger, Theodor Wiegand, Mr. Mühlens, Mr. Salz, Mr. Wilbuschewitsch and Mr. Ströckle. The architect Fernando de Aranda (1878-1969), who lived his entire life in Syria and Turkey and who was of Spanish origin, drew the plans for some important buildings. See, for de Aranda, Eugenio García Gascón, "El arquitecto español Fernando de Aranda (1878-1969) en Damasco," *Awraq Estudios sobre el Mundo árabe e islámico contemporáneo*, 9 (1988), 67-100. For all the names mentioned here Weber, "Zeugnisse," 88 f.

⁴¹ See, for the changes of houses in late Ottoman Damascus so far, S. Weber, "Images of Imagined Worlds, Self-image and Worldview in Late Ottoman Wall Paintings," in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. J. Hanssen, T. Philipp and S. Weber, Beirut Texte und Studien vol. 88, Beirut 2002. More than three-quarters of the roughly 600 houses investigated during my survey were substantially rebuilt or were entirely new in this period. This corresponds to official numbers.

There is much to say about the layout and decoration of houses, which underwent significant changes and became closer to Istanbul models than ever before. With the central-hall house an entirely new house type was imported into Damascus from the Ottoman centre.⁴²

The depiction of "star and crescent" became widespread. In many houses belonging to Muslim, Christian, or Jewish merchants, scholars, officials, and others, one can find this Ottoman emblem in architectural decoration. The same holds true for military armory and the sultanic emblem (*tughrā*). This phenomenon is not seen before the Tanzimat period, nor were any official rules issued concerning the decoration of houses. Yet there was apparently a common idea of how an Ottoman citizen of that time would build his home. An investigation of the architectural decoration helps to reconstruct some aspects of this notion. Wall paintings in particular are very informative.⁴³ The most frequently painted motifs are imaginary views of the Bosphorus or of the capital itself. All over Damascus one finds imagined images of the Bosphorus. The sheer number of pictures provides evidence that the Bosphorus was a motif with a very special meaning.

The "sweet waters of Asia," the area around the Güzelsu and Küçüksu rivers next to the Bosphorus, became for European travelers in the nineteenth century a byword for the Ottoman high life. In Ottoman literature life on the Bosphorus was often celebrated. The images in the wall paintings give an idea of the place and a certain feeling of a time that everybody can recognize and connect to. It represents a way of life, probably adopted by most citizens of Damascus who had wall paintings in their houses. This might explain

⁴² See, for the central-hall house in Damascus, Weber, "Marğa-Platz," 317 ff., Weber, "Ottoman Damascus," 733 ff.; Weber, "Zeugnisse," 255 ff., 298 ff. In the last years the central-hall (*sofa*) house or *konak*-style house *sofa* was discussed widely especially by the Groupe de Recherche sur l'Architecture au Levant, a network by e-mail started by May and Michael Davie (URBAMA Tours). See so far: Hakki Sedat Eldem, *Türk evi osmanlı dönemi, Turkish Houses Ottoman Period*, 3 vols., Istanbul 1984-1987, I, A 33 ff.; Zeynep Mercy Enlil, "Residential Building Traditions and the Urban Culture of Istanbul in the nineteenth Century," in *Seven Centuries of Ottoman Architecture*, ed. N. Akın, A. Batur, and S. Batur, Istanbul 2000, 306-315; A.R. Fuchs and M. Meyer-Brodnitz, "The Emergence of the Central Hall House type in the Context of Nineteenth Century Palestine," in *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition. Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. J.-P. Bourdier and N. Alsayyad, New York 1989, 403-423; Reha Günay, *Türk Ev Gelenegi ve Safranbolu Evleri*, Istanbul 1998, 59 f.; Anne Mollenhauer, "The Central Hall House. Regional Community and Local Specificities: A Comparison between Beirut and al-Salt," in *The Empire in the City*, ed. J. Hanssen, T. Philipp and S. Weber; Alp Sunalp, "The Development of the Central Sofa-Hall Typology in the Nineteenth Century Galata and Pera Apartment Buildings," in *Seven Centuries of Ottoman Architecture*, ed. N. Akın, A. Batur, and S. Batur, Istanbul 2000, 324-328; Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu, "L'architecture domestique ottomane: évolution historique et étude de deux exemples situés à Istanbul," in *L'Habitat traditionnel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée*, ed. Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, III, Cairo 1990, vol 3, 703, figs. 11a und 11b.

⁴³ For the most important publications on Ottoman wall paintings, see Rüçhan Arık, *Batılılaşma Dönemi Tasvir Sanatı*, Ankara 1976; İnci Kuyulu, "Anatolian Wall Paintings and Cultural Traditions," *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*, 3 (2000), no. 2, 1-27; Claire Paget, *Murs et plafonds peints, Liban XIX^e siècle*, Beirut 1998; Günsel Renda, *Batılılaşma Döneminde Türk Resim Sanatı, 1700-1850*, Ankara 1977; Weber, "Images of Imagined Worlds."

why one finds the same view of the capital in nearly all wall paintings in Damascus in such a limited period of time (c.1820-1915). Moreover, the Bosphorus is always depicted crowded with ships – and from the 1830s onwards with steamboats. Damascus is not a harbor town, thus ships were not a part of everyday life. The hundreds of ships featured in wall paintings in Damascus are nearly always flagged with the Ottoman banner, as are the military buildings beside the water (see fig. 9). There are many imaginary mosques always easy to distinguish as being Ottoman.

From these paintings one can suppose that many people in Damascus did not have any particular problems in connecting symbols of Ottoman identity to their homes. Arab nationalism, at that time still restricted to a small part of the intellectual elite, did not yet find an expression in the material culture of the city. All other aspects of Damascene interior decoration point in the same direction of an Ottoman identity. A new style of decoration, usually featuring motifs with the star and crescent, was common in nearly all houses of that period. Modernization mainly reached Damascus via Istanbul, which orientated the “modern Damascene mind” in that direction. The Ottoman capital was the main source of inspiration and symbols of modernization, like the steamboats in the Bosphorus, flying the Ottoman flag.

Architectural decoration also gave evidence of an awareness of a new time, parallel to the time people in Istanbul or Europe were living and acting in. For example, one can find wall paintings in Damascus depicting events that happened in Europe, which is a creation of simultaneity and is a direct connection between the local realm and the world ‘outside.’

Conclusion

When examining the material culture of Damascus at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries one can state that the often-mentioned stagnation, or even decline, in urban societies under late Ottoman rule does not hold for Damascus, one of the classical cities of the Islamic world. The modern *sūq* and many other institutions in Damascus were not only the product of high-ranking Ottoman officials in Istanbul seeking to impose their desire for modernization on a reactionary and alien local society, nor were they initiated by a detached community of foreign missionaries and merchants. It is often said how important foreign influence was to the process of reshaping Middle Eastern cities such as Beirut, Cairo, Alexandria, Izmir, or Istanbul in the nineteenth century. This is certainly true, but not for the whole picture. The role of local urban societies in this process is generally underestimated. Damascus provides an example of how the modernization of an entire classical Islamic urban center was carried out by the Ottoman administration, and especially by the citizens of this town.

Regarding the buildings themselves, one can discern two main tendencies. On the one hand, traditional urban building types (such as the *khāns* and *sūqs*) were adapted to the new time. The new *sūqs*, for example the *Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyya*, were an outcome of an effort by people from Damascus to modernize their city and commercial buildings, such as the *Wakālat al-ʿAshshā*, and testifies that this is not only a question of taste. On the other hand, architectural decoration and comments to these buildings give us an idea of how the inhabitants of Damascus perceived themselves at that time. Obviously, many people in Damascus found access to the modern world through their identity as citizens of the Ottoman Empire. It seems that many people in Damascus considered themselves an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and the modern world. One reason for this was most probably that it could provide a specific role or a particular position in the modern world, which was drawing closer. Direct contacts and travels, personal anecdotes, books, postcards, newspapers, new curricula in schools all gave an idea of the world outside Damascus and the Ottoman Empire. One can observe a clear tendency towards a modern Ottoman character of town and society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on many different levels (clothing, housing, public life, administrative and urban organization, training, etc.). Many people in Damascus displayed symbols of Ottoman identity in their private architecture and dress. The initiative in reshaping modern Ottoman institutions (except administrative buildings) – as seen in houses, schools, and commercial buildings – came from local individuals and administrative councils rather than governors. Modern public spaces were created, such as the new *sūqs* or the new town center of the Marja Square with its parks, coffeehouses, and theaters (mainly initiated by the municipality or private individuals). Most Damascenes rebuilt their houses along the same modernizing Ottoman lines. Modernism and Ottomanism were closely connected. Ottoman symbols were deliberately displayed in houses all over the town and combined with diverse symbols of the modern world: steam-boats, factories, railways, and, later on, aeroplanes. Even in the intimacy of their homes, in their salons and vestibules, Damascenes displayed themselves as Ottoman citizens of the modern world.