

ARMENIANS IN 19TH CENTURY ALEPPO

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INTRODUCTION

Aleppo was a major Armenian business center prior to the arrival of the Armenians caused by the genocide during the First World War period.

Located at the crossroads of the Mediterranean-Levant route and Anatolia, Aleppo was one of the Ottoman Empire's major long-distance trade cities. Sophisticated facilities for travel, trade, commerce, and manufacture were clustered in the city center, while the presence of a diverse religious and ethnic population made the city a place for cosmopolitan merchants.

Recorded Armenian presence in the city dates back to the 13th century. Historically Aleppo was one of the prelaties of the Cilician Catholicosate of the Armenian Church. During turbulent decades the Catholicos (whose seat was in Sis/Kozan, Cilicia) took refuge in Aleppo, where, particularly during the 16th-17th centuries, a vibrant Armenian cultural life blossomed. In another vein, for the Armenians, one of the conspicuous trading diasporas of the world, Aleppo was one of their bridgeheads to extend their network. Thus the historical importance of Aleppo for the Armenians is very obvious.

Based mostly on Ottoman registers preserved in Istanbul, this paper intends to explore the reality of the Armenian society of Aleppo in the middle of the 19th century, describing:

- first, the size of the Armenian population,
- second, the population's distribution within the city,
- third, the Armenian migrants' places of origin,
- and fourth, the Armenians' jobs.

A.- THE SIZE OF THE ARMENIAN POPULATION IN ALEPPO

There exist several population estimates not only of the Armenians, but also of the Christians of Aleppo in general. The detailed statistical data of Aleppo's population for the year 1845, published in 1853 by ex-French Consul Henri Guys, indicate Orthodox and Catholic Armenians together constituted 4,953, approximately 29%, of the Christians in Aleppo.¹ In 1848, another French Consul in Aleppo made an estimate of the number of Armenians, at 4100, 26%.² In 1856, Maronite Bishop Yusuf Matar reported the social conditions of Christians in Aleppo, giving the population by sects, and Armenians were 5500-5700, 31% of the Christian population of the city. ³ (See Table 1)

I have compared these estimates with documents preserved in the Turkish Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi). There are two *jizya* registers of the relevant period. These are the registers of

1844 and of 1849.⁴ Besides, there are three other registers of 1849, which are population survey registers used for the preparation of military conscription for Muslims and direct taxation of Christians and Jews. One of them covers the details of Muslim outsiders, and the second covers the details of Christian outsiders. The third covers all residents, though not in detail, counted by neighborhoods and religions (Muslims, Christians, and Jews: Thus, Armenians were not differentiated).⁵

Table 1. Estimated Christian population in Aleppo

Community	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
	1845 (published)		1848		1856	
Rum (Greek) Orthodox	718	4%	500	3%	500	3%
Rum (Greek) Catholics	6,490	38%	7,000	44%	7,000	38%
Armenian Orthodox	1,903	11%	600	4%	1,500	8%
Armenian Catholics	3,050	18%	3,500	22%	4,000–	23%
Syrian Orthodox	17	0.1%	-	-	200	1%
Syrian Catholics	2,107	12%	2,000	12%	2,200–	12%
Maronites	1,645	10%	1,500	9%	2,000	11%
Latins & Chaldeans	986	6%	900	6%	500+	3%+1%
Protestants	21	0.1%		-		-
Total	16,937		16,000		18,100-18,500	

Sources: see Notes 1, 2, and 3.

The *jizya* was levied on Christian and Jewish male adults, and from the 1840s, during the period of Tanzimat, the poll tax was collected literally from persons directly, not from communities all together. Thus the *jizya* is regarded as a reliable source for estimates and other data. The total number of *jizya* payers in 1849 was 5,198. Of these *jizya* payers there were 966 Armenians. Another 726 were listed as outsiders, with no confessional distinctions between them; however, a detailed examination of the names of these outsiders revealed that most of them were Armenians. Indeed, some 650 names of the outsiders were Armenian (approximately 90%). Therefore, the total number of male Armenians who paid the *jizya* would be 1,616 out of a total of 5,198 *jizya* paying Christians living in Aleppo in 1849. Thus, it is possible to assume that the Armenians constituted around 31% of the Christian population of Aleppo, according to the poll tax register (Hereunder abbreviated as MZ Cizye 1177, see Table 2).

As mentioned above, there exists another document for the population survey, though it covers only Christian outsiders (NFS.d 3725). This survey was conducted also in 1849. But there is a discrepancy between the two documents, MN Cizye 1177 and NFS.d 3725, which lies in the number of outsiders. NFS.d 3725 puts the total number of outsiders (which includes a majority of

Armenians) at 472 (see Table 3), in contrast to the first survey which put the number of *jizya* paying outsiders at 726 - almost a 30% difference, a total of some 250 males. The reason is supposed to be that outsiders were counted only at special places such as *khans*, bakeries, and mills, for the population survey for NFS.d 3725. People making up the difference may have lived in residential houses and engaged in other jobs so were not counted in the survey. However, for the *jizya* collection, they were covered.

Table 2. Aleppo *Jizya* Payers, 1849, based on MN Cizye 1177

Community		Number	%	% among Christians
Rums		2,013	39%	46%
Armenians		966	19%	22%
Suriyanis		386	7%	9%
Maronites		260	5%	6%
Unknown		23	0.4%	1%
Jews		824	16%	
Outsiders	Armenians	650	13%	15%
	Other Christians	76	1%	2%
Total of Christians		4,374	84%	100%
Total		5,198	100%	

Source: H. Kuroki, "Mobility of non-Muslims in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Aleppo," in *The Influence of Human Mobility in Muslim Societies*, H. Kuroki (ed.), 2003, London, Kegan Paul, p. 144.

One may presume that the local Aleppo Armenian *jizya* payers lived with their families, wife and children. If on average every local Aleppo Armenian family had two children, then we would have 966 *jizya* payers + (3 x 966) = 3864 Armenians. If we add the local Armenian clerics, the local Armenian elderly and blind, and those who were not capable of working, plus those Armenians who were under foreign protection, and the 650 non-Aleppine Armenians, then it would be fair to claim that the total number of Armenians in Aleppo was between 4,500 and 5,000 in 1849.

Table 3. Aleppo Outsiders, 1849, based on NFS.d. 3725

Armenians	411	5 Armenian Catholics included	87%
Rums	41	9 Rum Catholics included	9%
Suriyanis	9		2%
Maronites	4		1%
Protestants	1		0.2%
Unknown	6		1%
Total	472		100%

Source: H. Kuroki, "Migrants in Ottoman Aleppo, 1849: A Preliminary Analysis of Population Surveys on 'Outsiders,'" in *Human Mobility and Multiethnic Coexistence in Middle Eastern Urban Societies 1*, H. Kuroki (ed.), Tokyo, ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2015, p. 62.

B.- ARMENIAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The second point to be clarified is the residential areas of the Armenians, or their population distribution, among the city quarters.

From the *jizya* register of 1849 (MN Cizye 1177), we can infer several interesting points about Aleppo Armenian residences. Only three percent of the local Christians (not including outsiders) lived in the intramural areas of the city. The overwhelming majority lived in the northern suburbs, extramural neighborhoods of Aleppo. Along with the Greek Orthodox and Catholics, local Armenians spread into almost all neighborhoods in the northern suburbs. These included Saliba, Tumayat, Arba'in, and Hazzaza, where most of the Maronites and Suriyanis were concentrated.⁶ Interestingly, according to Nufus defterleri 3726, not a single Muslim or Jew was recorded at Saliba, Tumayat, or 'Abdul-Hayy.

Out of the total 817 *jizya* payer Christians who lived in Saliba, Tumayat, Arba'in, Hazzaza, and 'Abdul-Hayy in 1849, 51% were Rums, 20% were Maronites, 18% were Armenians, 9% were Suriyanis and 2% were unknown.⁷ A little more than 59 Armenian *jizya* payers lived in Hazzaza, some 40 *jizya* paying Armenians lived in Arba'in and an equal number in Saliba and some 10 lived in Tumayat.⁸ This brings the total number of Armenian *jizya* payers in these Christian areas to some 200, which implies that a large number of Armenian *jizya* payers, and therefore Armenian families, lived in residential quarters alongside Muslims.

A significant number of them had settled in the following quarters: 87 Armenian *jizya* payers lived in Aghyul, 59 in Hazzaza, 50 in Qastal al-Harami, 48 in Akrad, 47 in 'Atawi, and 41 in 'Abd al-Rahim. These constituted the six largest residential neighborhoods of Armenian *jizya* payers. Most Armenians were in the western half of the northern suburb area. In 18 *jizya* paying Armenians lived in 'Aqaba and 26 in Jubb Asad Allah. Indeed, the presence of Armenians is unique because alongside the Armenian residents, only two and one Rums respectively were recorded in these two Muslim-majority intramural-western neighborhoods. Small numbers of Armenians resided within the walls of Aleppo, particularly in the central neighborhoods of Jallum, where 5 *jizya* paying Armenians lived, and in Sahat Buza, where their number was 25.

To sum up, most of the Christians lived outside the walls of Aleppo. The Armenian proportion within the Christian residential neighborhoods, some 20%, was not high though they were more numerous than Maronites and

An American Protestant missionary in Aleppo recorded in his journal on June 21, 1847, as follows;

Yesterday, the second Sabbath since our arrival, we were visited by ten or twelve Armenians. Some of them were natives of Arapkir, some of Aintab, and one of Orfa. Bedros Vartabed, who has been in this region for two or three years, estimates the Armenian population of this place at three or four thousand, of whom not more than one hundred families are settled here, the rest being strangers from Arapkir, Orfa, and other places. These strangers, however, are not mere transient visitors. They come here and open shops and carry on their trades for years together; and when one returns to his native places, he is succeeded by a brother or a partner, who carries on the same business till he is relieved in his turn.¹¹

This explains the migratory movement of Armenian outsiders, though the numbers given here are not reliable.

Obviously some of these localities, like 'Ayntab and Marash are quite close to Aleppo, while others are to the north-west and north-east of the city. It should be noted as well that some of the *jizya* paying outsiders came from as far away as Bosnia and Ethiopia.

D.- ARMENIAN'S OCCUPATIONS

Aleppo is a city of long-distance trade, and many merchants were engaged in this very prosperous occupation. The *Jizya* register for the year 1844 (MN Cizye 401) recorded the payers' occupations. Around 130 males were registered as *tujjar*, trade merchants, and every one of them paid a high amount of tax. The confessional affiliation of these *tujjar* was as shown on Table 4. All of the outsider *tujjar* (23 men) were Armenians, and with local Armenians (23 men), they constituted the largest proportion of non-Muslim trade merchants.¹²

Several businesses were dominated by Armenians. Out of the 101 muleteers, 98 were outsiders, and of the 273 porters, 157 were outsiders, i.e. Armenians (mostly from Arappgir). Of the 59 gold and silver smiths, 34 were Armenians and 6 were outsiders. Of the 114 bakers 35 were local Armenians and 73 were outsiders. Of these, 71 came from Sassoun. Of the 46 bakery operators 4 were local Armenian residents and 36 came from Sassoun. Other Armenians were tailors, blacksmiths, cooks, servants, and assistants.¹³

Most of the outsiders lived in *khans*. An 1849 population survey register (NFS.d 3725), also records circumstances of coexistence or cohabitation of outsiders and local people (Muslims and non-Muslims) in the city center.

25 Armenians, a Maronite, a Rum and a Suryani constituted the 28 *dhimmi* outsiders who lived in Khan al-'Abasi (Sahat Buza). Their average age was 29.9, though their actual ages ranged from 10 to 60. They had come from

Chemeshgadzak (8), Marash (7), Arapgir (4), Derik (4), Diyarbakir (1), Mardin (1), Kharput (1), and Homs (1). Of these, 9 were traders, 4 were porters, 4 tailors, 4 sewers, a cook, a servant, and a blacksmith.¹⁴

Table 4. Aleppo Trade Merchants , 1844 and 1845

	1844 Jizya	1845 "Statistics" by Consul Henri Guys'	
	<i>Tujjar</i>	<i>Négociants</i>	
Rums	41	Orthodox	2
		Catholics	21
Armenians	23	Orthodox	3
		Catholics	11
Suriyanis	11	Orthodox	1
		Catholics	12
Maronites	10	8	
Latin Europeans	-	16	
Chaldean Catholics	-	1	
Protestants	-	3	
Muslims	-	36	
Jews	22	45	
Outsiders	23	-	
Total	130	159	

Sources: H. Kuroki, "Zimmis in Mid-Nineteenth Century Aleppo: An Analysis of Cizye Defteris," *Archiv Orientalní, Supplementa 8*, 1998, p. 228; H. El-Mudarris & O. Salmon, *Alep sous le consulat de Henri Guys (1838-1847)*, Aleppo: El-Mudarris, 2009, p. 62.

In Khan al-Wazir, the composition was different. There were only two Muslim outsiders in contrast to 44 *dhimmi*s (29 Armenians, 10 Rums, 4 Greeks and 1 Russian). Among them, the Greeks and the Russian were under foreign protection. Their average age was 33.1, though their actual ages ranged from 10 to 55. Some of the places they had come from were Chemeshgadzak (11), Garin (9), Bulgaria (3), Filibe (2), Arapgir (2), Ekin (2), Darende (1), Macedonia (1), Tokat (1), and Van (1). Of these 16 were traders, 10 were porters, 5 followers, 5 assistants, 2 watch makers, and a tailor, and so forth.¹⁵

The Khan al-Gumruk sounds most interesting, it had no Muslim outsiders in contrast to 14 *dhimmi* outsiders, who were all Armenians. Their average age was 28.4 though their actual ages ranged from 14 to 45. None had foreign protection. Some had come from Ekin (5), Chemeshgadzak (2), Arapgir (2), and Amasya (1). Among them 10 were customs officers, 2 were porters and 1 was a watch maker.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

We may conclude that Armenians were a major component of the population in mid-19th-century Aleppo. They were well spread out among both the Christian and Muslim populations, the percentage of outsiders who were Armenians was very high, and some businesses were widely run by Armenians.

ENDNOTES

¹ Hussein El-Mudarris & Olivier Salmon, *Alep sous le consulat de Henri Guys (1838-1847)*, Aleppo, El-Mudarris, 2009, pp. 58–59.

² French Consul to Guizot, Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Ambassade Constantinople, série D, Correspondance avec les consulats, Echelle du Levant, Alep, n. 51, 18 mars 1848. I once described this document “Guys to Guizot.” Hidemitsu Kuroki, “Mobility of Non-Muslims in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Aleppo,” in *The Influence of Human Mobility in Muslim Societies*, ed. H. Kuroki London, Kegan Paul, 2003, p.145. However, Henri Guys left Aleppo in 1847. The consul was either Louis-Félix Despéaux de Saint-Sauveur or Edmond de Lesseps. Hussein El-Mudarris & Olivier Salmon, *Le consulat de France à Alep au XVIIe siècle*, Aleppo, El-Mudarris, 2009, p. 473.

³ Ferdinan Taoutel (ed.), *Watha’iq Ta’rikhiya ‘an Halab*, 4 vols., Aleppo, al-Matba‘a al-Kathulikiya, 1958–64, vol. 2, pp. 83–84.

⁴ Maliye Nezareti: Cizye, vols. 401 and 1177 respectively.

⁵ Nufus defterleri: NFS.d 3724 (covering the details of Muslim outsiders); NFS.d 3725 (covering the details of Christian outsiders); NFS.d 3726 (covering all residents).

⁶ MN cizye 1177. Kuroki, “Mobility of Non-Muslims,” pp. 138-144. (Table 4. Distribution of *Jizya* Payers)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For further details check: Hidemitsu Kuroki, “*Zimmis* in Mid-Nineteenth Century Aleppo: An Analysis of *Cizye Defteris*,” *Archiv Orientalní, Supplementa 8*, 1998, pp. 205-250; Kuroki, “Mobility of non-Muslims,” pp. 117–150; Hidemitsu Kuroki, “Migrants in Ottoman Aleppo, 1849: A Preliminary Analysis of Population Surveys on ‘Outsiders,’” in *Human Mobility and Multiethnic Coexistence in Middle Eastern Urban Societies 1: Tehran, Aleppo, Istanbul, and Beirut*, H. Kuroki (ed.), Tokyo, ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2015, pp. 59–70. As for the third one, Hidemitsu Kuroki, “The Population of Aleppo in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Reconsidered” in *Human Mobility and Multiethnic Coexistence in Middle Eastern Urban Societies 2: Tehran, Cairo, Istanbul, Aleppo, and Beirut*, H. Kuroki (ed.), Tokyo, ILCAA, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2018, forthcoming.

¹⁰ Kuroki, “Mobility of non-Muslims,” p. 149.

¹¹ Kamal Salibi and Yusuf K. Khoury (eds.), *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819–1870*, 5 vols., Amman, Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1995, vol.4, p. 30.

¹² Kuroki, “*Zimmis* in Mid-Nineteenth Century Aleppo,” p. 228.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 228–232.

¹⁴ Kuroki, “Migrants in Ottoman Aleppo, 1849,” p. 68.

¹⁵ Ibid., 66–67.

¹⁶ The *khan* hosted 15 Muslim outsiders, too. Ibid., p. 68.

Հայերը ԺԹ. Դարու Հալէպի Մէջ (Ամփոփում)

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Մարդահամարը միշտ ալ կարեւոր խնդիր եղած է որեւէ խմբաւորումի մը ուսումնասիրութեան համար:

Օսմանեան հարկային տոմարները հիմնականին մէջ հողերու կամ տնային տնտեսութիւններու կը վերաբերին: Միայն օսմանեան թանգիմաթէն ետք էր որ սկսան կատարուիլ պետական մարդահամարներ Սուրիոյ մէջ՝ զօրակոչի եւ տուրքերու հաւաքման նպատակով:

Հեղինակը՝ հիմնուելով օսմանեան *ճիզիա* եւ բնակութեան արձանագրութիւններու տոմարներուն ու օտար ճանապարհորդներու թէ դիւանագէտներու տեղեկութիւններուն վրայ, կը վերականգնէ 1850ականներու Հալէպի հայ բնակչութեան թիւը, արհեստները, բնակութեան վայրերը, տեղաձին թէ (ոտրկէ)եկուոր ըլլալու պարագաները: Ան այս տուեալները կը համեմատէ հալէպաբնակ քրիստոնեայ միւս փոքրամասնութիւններուն հետ՝ այս բոլորը քննարկելով Հալէպի 1850ականներու բնակչութեան յենքին վրայ: