

Syria and *Bilad al-Sham* under  
Ottoman Rule

Essays in honour of Abdul-Karim Rafeq

*Edited by*  
Peter Sluglett  
with Stefan Weber



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THE UPRISINGS IN ANTAKYA 1918–1926: GUIDED BY THE  
CENTRE OR INITIATED ON THE PERIPHERY?

DALAL ARSUZI-ELAMIR

Modern Syrian historiography has paid little attention to the uprising in Antakya, probably because most research has concentrated on the national movement and the uprisings and events around the main cities while neglecting the periphery.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary commentators have tended to consider Damascus or Aleppo as the main focus of the rebellions; hence the uprisings in northern Syria have been analysed from the Damascus point of view while ignoring the independent role played by Antakya, which is treated as largely peripheral. This is even more true of the Arabic secondary literature. It is not only that any objective analysis of political defeats in the past<sup>2</sup> stands in the way of the over-arching national myth,<sup>3</sup> but it is also inevitable that interpreting the past always means interpreting the present, a potentially dangerous political undertaking. Most accounts of the early years of the Syrian state are based on the assumption that power was concentrated

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<sup>1</sup> Many authors have reduced the uprisings in northern Syria, which spread over entire northern and western Syria, to Hananu's uprising in northern Syria, which is presented as a regional Sunni-religious uprising against the French. In general events in the country are presented as being initiated at the 'national centre' and ending at the centre. Research on the periphery has begun only recently: see Dalal Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus in Syrien: Zaki al-Arsuzi und die arabisch-nationale Bewegung an der Peripherie Alexandretta/Antakya 1939–1938*, Münster, LIT, 2003, in which the author demonstrates the important independent role played by the periphery of Antakya in influencing and shaping Arab nationalism. Recent studies on other peripheral regions include: Birgit Schäßler, *Aufstände im Drusenbergland: Ethnizität und Integration einer ländlichen Gesellschaft Syriens vom Osmanischen Reich bis zur staatlichen Unabhängigkeit 1859–1949*, Gotha, Perthes, 1996, Nadine Méouchy, 'Le Mouvement des 'isabat en Syrie du Nord à travers le témoignage du chaykh Youssef Saadoun (1919–1921)', in Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett, eds., *The British and French mandates in comparative perspectives/Les mandats français et anglais dans une perspective comparative*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, pp. 649–72, and Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism*, Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The Alexandretta region was occupied by Turkey on 5 July 1938, and annexed on 23 June 1939. See Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus*...

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 'Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so'. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 12.

in Damascus, which sits well with the national myth of a single monolithic Arabism representing the interests of the nation. Thus the internal structures, differentiations, and developments in specific regions of Syria are seldom mentioned.

To understand the background of the causes of the uprising in Antakya and the way in which it functioned as the starting point of all uprisings in northern Syria, it is necessary to consider the political and social conditions of the region as a whole.

### *The Administrative, Social, and Economic Structures of the Region*

Around the end of the sixteenth century, several decades after the Ottoman conquest of Greater Syria in 1516, the *wilaya* system of administration was introduced, under which Antakya, or rather the region of Alexandretta, became part of the *wilaya* of Aleppo.<sup>4</sup> Under the Law of Wilayas of 1864, the region of Alexandretta continued to be assigned to Aleppo. The entire region of Alexandretta was included in the Blue Zone which was designed to come under French influence (according to the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916). On 27 November 1918, the French High Commissioner, General Gouraud established a new political and administrative unit—the *sanjak* of Alexandretta—in French-occupied western Syria,<sup>5</sup> and this separate status created the circumstances which made possible the cession of Alexandretta to Turkey in 1938/39. In the 1920s, Antakya, Qirqkhan, and Alexandretta were formed into sub-provincial units (*qadhas*) with Alexandretta as the administrative and political centre of the region and the seat of the local Delegate of the High Commissioner.<sup>6</sup>

The Ottoman Land Law of 1858 facilitated the creation of private property in land, and most peasants became sharecroppers on large estates, while the landowners were generally absentees, living in the cities. Graduates of foreign and Ottoman schools, mostly from the

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad 'Ali Zarqa, *Qadiyat liwa' al-Iskandaruna. Watha'iq wa-shuruh*, 3 vols., Beirut, Dar al-'Uruba, 1994, vol. 1, 18.

<sup>5</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kayyali, *al-Marahil fi'l-intidab al-faransi wa nidalina al-watani, min 'am 1926 hatta nihaya 'am 1939*, Aleppo, Matba'a al-Dad, 1958–60. vol. 4, 407.

<sup>6</sup> Zarqa, *Qadiyat...*, vol. 1, 237.

*effendi* class, formed the new administrative and professional elite.<sup>7</sup> The Christian population lived mostly in the towns and in the coastal areas. The majority of the rural population consisted of landless peasants or very poor small farmers, and many peasants were obliged to leave the land because of the heavy burden of taxation and debt.<sup>8</sup> The Sultan's forces intervened repeatedly to put down desperate spontaneous peasant uprisings, which flared up regularly in all the Arab provinces.

The ethnic, social, and religious composition of the population in the region was diverse. It had a fairly large Turkish population, and some Kurds, but the majority were Arabs, members of a variety of Christian and Muslim sects, with a substantial number of heterodox Muslims, mostly 'Alawites. In the late nineteenth century, religion or religious sects rather than ethnicity still formed the main marker of identity in the Ottoman Empire. This was one of the reasons why members of particular sects did not rebel against the large estate owners for whom they worked if they belonged to the same sect as the landowner.<sup>9</sup> If class stratification was reinforced by members of different classes belonging to different religious communities, what were essentially socio-economic conflicts could be diverted into religious quarrels.<sup>10</sup>

In general, only Christians and Jews enjoyed the status of legal minorities within the Empire, while the various heterodox Shi'i sects, particularly Isma'ilis, Druzes, and 'Alawites were not officially recognized. In general, the Alawites, who form about 12 per cent of the population of modern Syria, did not occupy government posts<sup>11</sup> and

<sup>7</sup> Dhuqan Qarqut, *al-Mashriq al-'arabi fi muwajahat al-isti'mar: qira'a fi ta'rikh Suriya al-mu'asir*, Cairo, al-Hay'a al-Misriya al-'amma li'l-Kitab, 1977, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Melzer, *Philosophische Grundlagen der nationalistischen Theorien Zaki al-Arsuzi, eines Mitbegründers der Ba'th-Bewegung*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Leipzig 1978, 25ff.

<sup>9</sup> Qarqut, *al-Mashriq al-'arabi*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> For a sophisticated discussion of sectarianism and the general conclusion that outbreaks of sectarian violence can almost always be traced to specific external historical conjunctures, see Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> However 'Even before the Tanzimat we... find individual Nusayris serving as Ottoman bureaucrats and sometimes attaining high office', especially Kara Mehmed Pasha who became 'warden of the Bosphorus with the rank of full vezir' and died in 1828 after having served as governor of Ankara and Çankırı. See Stefan Winter, 'The Nusayris before the Tanzimat in the eyes of Ottoman provincial administrators, 1804–

were treated with contempt by the members of the government and the leading groups in the cities. They originally lived in the 'Alawite Mountains, the range stretching from the mountains of Alexandretta in the north to the mountains of Lebanon in the south, but many had migrated to the plains in search of work. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they were often forced to pawn their lands to town dwellers to be able to pay taxes and to buy protection.<sup>12</sup> Those who rose up against the system fled to the mountains and sought protection with their fellow believers. The state carried out punitive expeditions in which there were exemplary executions and whole villages were sometimes destroyed.

The social structures in the region of Alexandretta showed their own specific features: the population consisted of Arabs, Turks, and Armenians, and smaller numbers of Kurds and Circassians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the total population was estimated at 125,042.<sup>13</sup> Geographically, the various groups were unevenly distributed.<sup>14</sup> For instance, 40 percent of the population of Antakya were Turks, and about 50 percent Arabs, while the population of the surrounding countryside was about 70 percent Arab (mainly 'Alawites). In Alexandretta the Arabs represented 70 percent of the population, 80 per cent in Rihaniya, and 90 percent in Suwaydiya. Most of the Sunni Arabs lived east and southeast of Antakya in the villages of al-Qasir and al-'Umq. 90 percent of the Christian Arabs were Greek Orthodox, living mostly in the towns of Antakya and Alexandretta. In

1834', in Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann, eds., *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, Beirut and Würzburg, Orient Institut der DMG, 2004, 97–112, here 110–11.

<sup>12</sup> The origins of the 'Alawites as a religious community dates back to the ninth century when they split away from Imami Shi'ism. Alawite doctrine is considered to originate from the Shi'i theologian Muhammad ibn Nusayr al-Namiri (lived c. 850), and then more substantially from the writings of Husayn ibn Hamdan al-Khasibi (d. 957 or 968); see Yaron Frieman, 'al-Husayn ibn Hamdan al-Khasibi: A Historical Biography of the Founder of the Nusayri-'Alawite Sect', *Studia Islamica*, 93, 2001, 91–112. See also Dick Douwes' article in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> Ministère des Affaires Etrangères/Nantes, Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation en Syrie et du Liban 1921–1936. In the year 1936 the total population was 219,080, composed of: Turks 85,242 (38.9 per cent); 'Alawite Arabs 62,062 (28 per cent); Sunni Arabs 22,461 (10 per cent); Christian Arabs 18,051 (8.16 per cent); Armenians 24,919 (11.36 per cent); others 3 per cent. In both sets of statistics (from the 1920s and from 1936) the groups were listed according to ethnic criteria, e.g. Sunni Turks, Armenian Catholics etc., while the Arab groups which were included according to their religious sect but without an ethnic label, e.g. 'Alawites, Sunnis, and Christians.

<sup>14</sup> See the map in Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus...*

addition, some villages in al-Qasir and as-Suwaydiya were entirely Greek Orthodox; 90 per cent of the inhabitants of the villages of Jabal Musa and some of the villages of Baylan and Qirqkhan were Armenians. All the inhabitants of the nineteen villages in al-Harbiya were 'Alawite Arabs, who also formed the majority of the inhabitants of the Wadi al-'Asi, between Antakya and as-Suwaydiya on the Mediterranean. Most of them were peasants working for Sunni landowners living in Antakya.<sup>15</sup> Only a few 'Alawites were urban notables, and some members of their families worked as civil servants.<sup>16</sup>

*The Uprising in Antakya against Ottoman and French Rule  
1918–1926: the Origins of the Arab National Movement in the  
Region of Alexandretta*

As in the rest of Syria, the origins of the Arab national movement in the Alexandretta region first emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. The Tanzimat, the gradual process of secularisation in the fields of law and education which began in 1839 and lasted for much of the nineteenth century, led to the rise of new elites whose knowledge and secular political thinking contributed to new developments in the Empire. However, this secularisation also contained elements which would gradually lead to the further dissolution of the empire: the decisive fact was that non-Muslims were, at least in theory, to be treated on the same legal basis as Muslims, which meant that the latter lost their privileged legal status. The idea was that if all subjects were treated equally, then individuals from all communities would want to be incorporated more fully into the structure of the state. In fact, especially in southeastern Europe, the policy tended to strengthen the separatist aspirations of the non-Muslim minorities, who formed into autonomous ethno-linguistic groups which began to organize themselves more efficiently and to demand more rights for themselves. In the end, however, the military and economic superiority of Europe in the nineteenth century would be the decisive factor behind the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *al-Qabas*, Damascus, 19 August 1936.

<sup>16</sup> Zarqa, *Qadiyat...* vol. 2, 52.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Philipp, 'Der Aufhaltsame Abstieg des Osmanischen Reiches', in Helmut Altrichter and Helmut Neuhaus, eds., *Das Ende von Grossreichen*, Erlangen, Palm und Enke, 1996, 214–20.

In the last decades of the Empire, the influential families in the larger cities were part of the Ottoman 'aristocracy of service', meaning that they identified themselves to a greater or lesser extent with the ruling elite of the empire, and sent their sons to Istanbul for civilian or military training. Initially, since they were of course almost all Muslims, they believed in the possibility of Arabs and Turks living together on the basis of equal rights under the symbol of a liberal, constitutional Ottomanism. In 1908 the Young Turks, mostly from military backgrounds, seized power in a coup supported by Arab officers, who were promised equal rights. Over time the Young Turk leaders leaned more and more towards a Turkish nationalist perspective and began to direct the structures of the state towards greater centralisation, ignoring Arab demands for cultural autonomy and political and administrative decentralisation. The more the Young Turks replaced the Syrian notables in the provincial administration with their own supporters, and the more they insisted on the almost exclusive use of Turkish in schools, the law courts, and all aspects of the administration, the more Arabism became popular among the Arabs of Syria. Between 1909 and 1914, the embryonic Arab national struggle increased in intensity and organisation, particularly in Damascus and Antakya, partly supported by the personal ambitions of influential men who hoped to strengthen their own political positions.<sup>18</sup> In Aleppo, on the other hand, there was far less opposition to the Ottoman state, partly, perhaps, because Aleppo merchants had long standing commercial relations with Anatolia. In general, the large landowners were content to leave power in the hands of the Ottomans, provided that they themselves could retain their local economic and political power.<sup>19</sup>

During the years before World War I, a number of organizations, both public and secret, had come into existence, each of with different aims. The majority wanted more rights for the Arabs within a

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Schölch, 'Der arabische Osten im neunzehnten Jahrhundert 1809–1914', in Ulrich Haarmann, ed., *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, 3rd edition, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1994, 365–432, here 426. See also C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism; essays on the origins of Arab nationalism*, Urbana IL, University of Illinois Press, 1973, and for a more nuanced perspective, Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908–1918*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> See the various articles on Ottoman Land Law in Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1984.

decentralized Ottoman empire, while a minority aimed for complete Arab independence. Various secret societies were formed by dissatisfied Arab officers (in the Ottoman Army) from Syria and Mesopotamia to advance these goals. When the Ottoman Empire joined World War I on the side of the Central Powers on 30 October 1914, a new situation presented itself for these groups; if the Central Powers were to be defeated, there would be a realistic possibility of Arab political independence, although this would almost certainly require the support of the Western Powers.<sup>20</sup>

The main manifestation of activity on the part of the 'Arab nationalists' was their participation in the British-funded and initiated Arab Revolt of 1916. The declared aim of the Revolt was to create an independent, united Arab state, which would include the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. On 1 October 1918, the Arab army under Faysal, the son of the *Sharif* of Mecca, marched into Damascus,<sup>21</sup> and on 5 October Faysal announced the formation of an Arab government in Damascus.<sup>22</sup> In brief, British and French interests gradually destroyed Arab hopes for independence.<sup>23</sup> The mandate system, a form of international trusteeship (arguably colonialism in disguise), under the auspices of the League of Nations, was devised to 'assist' the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire to independence.<sup>24</sup> In

<sup>20</sup> Schölch, 'Der arabische Osten...', 427f.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Ulrich Scupin-Breslau, 1940. 'Das französische Mandat über Syrien und das Alexandrette Problem', in *Zeitschrift für Völkerrecht*, 26, 1, 1–30; Nizar al-Kayyali, *Dirasat fi ta'rikh Suriya al-siyasi al-mu'asir, 1929–1950*, Damascus, Dar Talas li'l-Dirasat wa'l-Tarjamah wa'l-Nashr, 1997, 33.

<sup>22</sup> Hasan al-Hakim, *al-Watha'iq al-ta'rikhiya al-muta'alliqa bi'l-qadiya al-Suriya fi l-'ahdain al-'arabi al-Faysali wa'l-intidab al-fransi 1915–1946*, Beirut, Dar al-Sadir, 1974, 35. The standard account in English is by Malcolm B. Russell, *The first modern Arab state: Syria under Faysal, 1918–1920*, Minneapolis, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1985. See also Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1869–1920*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, 'Gesellschaft und politische Macht in Syrien 1918–1925', in Linda Schatkowski Schilcher and Claus Scharf, eds., *Der Nahe Osten in der Zwischenkriegszeit, 1919–1939: die Interdependenz von Politik, Wirtschaft und Ideologie*, Stuttgart, F. Steiner, 1989, 449–81, here 440. See also C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: the Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion 1914–1924*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1981. Faysal's government was not as popular as official Syrian historiography would have it: see James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> See 'Les mandats/les mandates; Some reflections on the nature of the British presence in Iraq (1914–1932) and the French presence in Syria (1918–1946)', in Peter Sluglett and Nadine Méouchy, eds., *The British and French mandates in comparative*



April 1920, at San Remo, Britain was awarded the mandate for Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan, and France the mandate for Lebanon and Syria. Under the (eventually unratified) Treaty of Sèvres, what was left of the Ottoman state recognized Alexandretta and some of Cilicia as Arab territory, and thus as part of the new state of Syria. On 24 July 1922, the text of the mandate for Syria set out the duties and rights of the mandatory power more precisely, particularly France's obligation to guarantee the territorial integrity of the state and to protect it against the encroachments of foreign powers. Furthermore, the text of the mandate also determined the Syrian border, which, apart from the inclusion of Mosul in Iraq, generally coincided with what had been defined under the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>25</sup>

On 17 June 1920, the French High Commissioner in Beirut gave Faysal an ultimatum, demanding that he should recognise French mandatory authority over the whole of Syria. After the defeat of the Arab army at the battle of Maysalun on 20 July, Aleppo and Damascus were occupied by French troops. The ensuing struggle was strongly influenced by the socio-economic structure of society, so that while in the main cities it took the form of a struggle for political power, in the more distant provinces and in the rural areas the rebels were more or less fighting on their own against the French authorities. At the beginning of the occupation and mandate the urban opposition was largely restricted to intellectuals and members of the rising bourgeoisie, initially organized in secret societies.<sup>26</sup> Many of the more 'aristocratic' nationalists, on the other hand, were politically moderate, and were induced to change sides by being offered high positions in the administration and by having their privileges guaranteed by the French. Furthermore, in contrast to the situation on the rural periphery it was not difficult for the French to establish peace in Damascus, as many nationalists had fled from the capital.

*The Course of the Uprising in Antakya 1918–1926*

Faysal's march into Damascus triggered various spontaneous local uprisings which were generally not directed or initiated by his government in Damascus. Uprisings in northern Syria, first against the Ottomans, and then against French rule, began in Antakya and were restricted to the surroundings of the city until the autumn of 1919. Around Alexandretta, there had been a number of supporters of Arab nationalism among local army officers and high ranking former Ottoman civil servants.<sup>27</sup> In 1914 Najib al-Arsuzi<sup>28</sup> had accompanied the Arab officer Amin Lutfi al-Hafiz to Aleppo where he joined *al-'Ahd*,<sup>29</sup> and later founded a branch of the society in Antakya.<sup>30</sup> Most of the members of *al-'Ahd* in Antakya were 'Alawites and Christians, hoping to achieve the same rights as all other religious communities by opting for Arab nationalism, but the movement also included Sunnis opposed to the Young Turk policy of wholesale Turkification.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Christian and Muslim intellectuals, officers, and notables contributed to the development of Arab nationalism. The activities of the organization were discovered in 1916, and Najib al-Arsuzi and two of his sons, Nasib and Adib, who had taken part in its political activities, were sent into exile, while Amin Lutfi al-Hafiz was hanged in Beirut on 6 May 1916.<sup>32</sup> al-Arsuzi reported every detail of the rising in Antakya:

Despite the different religions of her inhabitants, Antakya was the first Syrian town to strive for the revival of the Arab nation.... My father told me that an Arab commander in the Ottoman army, named Amin Lutfi al-Hafiz, had come to Antakya... aiming to re-establish Arab rule. My father had been the leader of the union (*al-'Ahd*) in Antakya, and

*perspectives/Les mandats français et anglais dans une perspective comparative*, Leiden, Brill, 2004, 103–28.

<sup>25</sup> For the political and economic history of the mandate, see Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French mandate; the Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920–1945*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1987.

<sup>26</sup> For example the Society of the Iron Clasp (*Jam'iyyat al-Qabda al-Hadidiya*) in Damascus and the Iron Party (*al-Hizb al-Hadidi*) in Aleppo. See Rafeq, *Gesellschaft*..., 453.

<sup>27</sup> Adham Āl al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawra al-suriya fi 'ahd al-intidab al-fransi*, Damascus, Mataba'a al-Ittihad, 1960, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Najib al-Arsuzi, Zaki's father, was born in 1868. He lived in Alexandretta before attending a grammar school in Adana and then graduated after having studied law. At the beginning of the twentieth century he hid in the 'Alawite mountains as he had been accused of carrying out activities against the Ottoman state. Zaki al-Arsuzi, *al-Mu'allafat al-kamila*, Damascus, 1972–76, Matabi' al-Idarah al-siyasiya li'l-jaysh wa'l-Quwat al-Musallaha, vol. 6, p. 489.

<sup>29</sup> al-Zarqa, 59-page unpublished manuscript written on the anniversary of al-Arsuzi's death; Damascus 1969, pp. 19f. A picture of Amin Lutfi al-Hafiz in the Syrian National Archives in Damascus identifies him as the chairman of *al-'Ahd* in Aleppo.

<sup>30</sup> Samun, *Qadiyat al-Iskandaruna*..., 13; Zarqa, *Qadiyat*..., vol. 2, 20ff. See also Ibrahim Fawzi and Nadim Shamsin, *Qadiyat al-Iskandaruna wa'l-siyasa al-faransiya fi Suriya 1918–1946*, Damascus, Wizara al-Thaqafa, 2004, 23ff.

<sup>31</sup> Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat*..., 23ff.

<sup>32</sup> al-Zarqa, manuscript, 20.

Nafid Bey,<sup>33</sup> the local military commander, was also a member of the union... But the behaviour of the members of the union aroused the suspicion of Ahmad Bey Turkman Zada, a member of the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul. When Anwar Pasha and Cemal Pasha [later the notorious military governor of Damascus] came to Iskenderun to inspect the troops, ... Ahmad Bey Turkman went to Baylan and told them that the behaviour of the Arab upper class of Antakya was suspicious... The only thing happening then was that members of the union, my father among them, were sent first to Damascus, then to Konya.<sup>34</sup>

Before the end of World War I the Turkish military governor, Cemal Pasha al-Kabir was moved to a different region. He was replaced by another officer, Cemal Pasha al-Saghir, who pardoned those still awaiting execution.<sup>35</sup> After the Armistice of Mudros on 30 October 1918, there was a demonstration in Antakya in which Subhi Barakat,<sup>36</sup> Muhammad al-Atali,<sup>37</sup> and Najib al-Arsuzi took part.<sup>38</sup> The Turkish flag was hauled down in front of the government building and the Arab flag was hoisted instead. The demonstrators later announced that they intended to establish a local government to administer the region.<sup>39</sup> This step was undertaken by members of the Antakya elite, including Najib al-Arsuzi and his two sons, Nasib and Adib, who were very much influenced by the general mood in the country.<sup>40</sup> al-Arsuzi

<sup>33</sup> These names, as well as the *qa'immaqam* of Antakya, Ibrahim Adham, are identified as members of the Arab Union in several sources. See Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat*, 23f.

<sup>34</sup> al-Arsuzi, *Sawt al-'uruba...*, in *al-Mu'allafat al-kamila*, p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> al-Zarqa, manuscript, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Barakat was born in Alexandretta and was of Turkish origin. After the occupation of Aleppo he deserted to the French. Yusuf al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*, Harim 1955, mss. in the Syrian National Archives in Damascus, 19ff.; (see Nadine Méouchy, 'Le Mouvement des 'Isabat en Syrie du Nord...', which makes extensive use of this manuscript); al-Arsuzi, *Sawt al-'Uruba*, 27. Barakat was made president of the Syrian Confederation in 1923 and speaker of parliament in 1925. After the Turkish invasion of Alexandretta in July 1938, and after the proclamation of the 'State of Hatay' on 2 September 1938 until the proclamation of Turkey's decision to annex the region on 23 June 1939, he became a member of the Turkish parliament. Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus*, 186.

<sup>37</sup> His name is mentioned in other sources. See Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat...*, 23.

<sup>38</sup> According to al-Zarqa, al-Arsuzi, Barakat and al-Atali were the main leaders of the uprisings in Antakya and in the vicinity. Interview with Zarqa, Damascus, 1 April 1999; Sa'dun only mentions Barakat: *Mudhakkirat...*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Lajnat ad-Difa' an al-Iskandaruna, *al-Liwa' 'arabi bi-haqq al-quwwa wa quwwat al-haqq*, Vol. 4, Damascus 1956, 24.

<sup>40</sup> al-Zarqa, manuscript, 23.

described the pioneering role played by Antakya in the foundation of the Arab state:

One day the leading people of the town were meeting in the Khan at-Tujjar. They decided to change the situation and called upon the people to support them. Their demonstration moved from the centre of the town to the seat of government. From every market and from every quarter people came in masses and joined them. When the crowd had come into the government building, my father announced the unanimous decision to bring down the Ottoman government and to proclaim an Arab state. Then he threw the Ottoman flag to the ground and hoisted the Arab one instead (...), even before it flew over Damascus when Faysal was marching in.<sup>41</sup>

Although al-Arsuzi's account of the timing of these events does not fit the facts as far as Faysal's march into Damascus was concerned, this does not reduce the significance of Antakya, its leading role in the fight for Arab independence, and its unwillingness to be controlled by outsiders.

Faysal's deputy in Aleppo sent a delegation to Antakya to observe the uprising and to ask the citizens there to give him authority to act on their behalf at the peace conference. Faysal wanted to bring the uprising under his influence and tried to control it from Damascus, to make it seem as if it had originated there and to give the impression that Damascus was the centre of Arab nationalism, of 'Arabism', and of all national aspirations. Accordingly, 'Abd al-Ghani Ghazzal was sent to Antakya with a delegation to collect letters of support.<sup>42</sup> The people of Antakya had prepared a petition with 18,000 signatures recognising Faysal as King of Syria, including Alexandretta.<sup>43</sup> There was also a referendum in Antakya in which many civil servants took part, and the results were sent to the peace conference at Versailles.<sup>44</sup>

The Arab government in Antakya held power for some six weeks. The Turkish army, which was stationed at Baylan and had the support of the Turkish nationalists there, was able to capture Antakya, suppress the uprising, and arrest, drive away, or execute the Arab leaders of the uprising. Antakya stayed under its control for one week.

<sup>41</sup> al-Arsuzi, *Sawt al-'uruba...*, 19ff. Compare Ali Sultan, *Ta'rikh Suriya, 1918-1920: hukm Faysal ibn al-Husayn*, Damascus, Dar Talas, 1987, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Zarqa, 'Adam shar'iya...', 23.

<sup>43</sup> Samun, *Qadiyat al-Iskandaruna...*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 20ff.

al-Arsuzi described this development, deplored both by himself and the Arab inhabitants of Antakya, and gave the reasons for the fall of Antakya.

As the Turkish army mounted a surprise attack, and the Arabs were unprepared for it, some of them, like my father, fled to the Syrian heartland. The others, including Subhi Barakat, were put in prison in Antakya. The Turkish army stayed in Antakya for only one week, and then left the Arab territories and retreated behind the Taurus mountains because it feared to be attacked in this foreign and hostile area far away from its supply line. Thus, it withdrew as rapidly as it had come. In those days also the central committee [of *al-'Ahd*] began to meet again and coordinated its activities for the new state. It started to build up relations with Aleppo and the other towns around, such as Jisr al-Shughur. Arab volunteers streamed into Antakya from everywhere.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, General Gouraud asked Faysal for permission to send troops via Rayaq-Homs-Aleppo in order to reduce pressure from the Turkish troops at Baylan which were still resisting the French forces. Faysal tried to take advantage of this and demanded the regular payment of customs duties as well as the recognition of Syrian independence, but Gouraud refused, and his troops landed in the harbour of Alexandretta on 24 November 1918.<sup>46</sup> Some days before, members of Faysal's army had come to Antakya and had been welcomed with great popular enthusiasm. Despite Turkish pressure, the majority of the Arab inhabitants of Antakya, or rather more generally of the region of Alexandretta, wanted to join the Arab state. Turkish troops from Baylan tried to reoccupy Antakya but did not succeed, and were attacked by French aircraft and resisted by the inhabitants of the town.<sup>47</sup> Immediately after French forces marched into Alexandretta, there was a revolt against the French in the Alexandretta region (Antakya, Qirqkhan, al-

<sup>45</sup> al-Arsuzi, *Saut al-'uruba...*, 26ff.

<sup>46</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bitar, *Qadiyat liwa' al-Iskandaruna wa'l-wahda as-suriya min taqsim al-dawla al-'uthmaniya hatta taslimihi ila Turkiya 1918-1939*, Damascus 1997, 16. At the end of 1919 the occupation of the Syrian coastal zone by the French (the British had evacuated their troops in September) resulted in the division of Syria into three districts: the Western Zone (between Ra's al-Naqura, south of Tyre, and Alexandretta, i.e. from Lebanon and Latakia as far as the Gulf of Alexandretta) under French mandate; the Southern Zone (Palestine) under British administration; the Eastern Zone (Damascus, Aleppo, Jabal Druze, and Jordan) to Amir Faysal. See Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920*, London, Athlone Press, 1969, especially the map on page 75.

<sup>47</sup> Lajnat ad-Difa' 'an al-Iskandaruna, *al-Liwa' 'arabi*, 24; Longrigg, *Syria...*, 107f.

Hamamat, al-'Umq and Bab al-Hawwa).<sup>48</sup> These uprisings in northern and western Syria which took place at various times between 1918 and 1926 inflicted heavy casualties on the French before they were put down.

On 7 December 1918 French troops stationed in the region of Antakya, Qirqkhan, as-Suwaydiya, and Alexandretta attacked the headquarters of the Arab government in Antakya. They took the building and replaced the Arab flag with the French one.<sup>49</sup> This did not end the Antakya uprising, but shifted its focus from the town to the countryside, to the regions of al-Qasir, al-Harbiya. Nasib al-Arsuzi went to the village of al-Darsuniya, 5 km away from Antakya and made contact with leaders of the uprising in other regions, such as Jisr al-Shughur, to win their support.<sup>50</sup> During this time there were a number of military actions.<sup>51</sup>

Gouraud was aware that pressure on his forces had increased, particularly in the Antakya region: from there the revolt spread as far as the Euphrates, where the rebels occupied the railway stations.<sup>52</sup> Because of this he refused to permit Faysal to travel to Europe, a trip which had been planned to begin at the end of May 1919, saying, 'First, he must cease his hostile actions against France'.<sup>53</sup>

The Arab government in Damascus changed the military rules in favour of the rebels and accepted the resignation of several officers who wanted to join the rebels.<sup>54</sup> At the end of 1919 it sent two civil servants from the region, Subhi Barakat and Ibrahim Hananu,<sup>55</sup> who

<sup>48</sup> Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat...*, 64ff.; Ghalib 'Ayyashi, *al-Idahat al-siyasiya wa-asrar al-intidab al-firansi fi Suriya*, Beirut, Matabi' Ashqar Ikhwan, 1955, 181.

<sup>49</sup> Samun, *Qadiyat al-Iskandaruna...*, 14.

<sup>50</sup> al-Zarqa, manuscript, p. 24. Also Nasib's father and his brother Adib al-Arsuzi took part in this uprising and took over leadership of certain groups in the region of Antakya.

<sup>51</sup> Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat*, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Sultan, *Ta'rikh Suriya 1918-1920...*, vol. 2, 241; Longrigg, *Syria...*, 152. The attacks at al-Suwaydiya and at Harim should be mentioned (April/May 1919). Ihsan al-Hindi, *Kifah al-sha'b al-'arabi al-suri, 1908-1948*, 2nd edn., Damascus, Idarat al-Shu'un al-'Amma, 1962, 69.

<sup>53</sup> Sultan, *Ta'rikh Suriya 1918-1920*, vol. 2, 338.

<sup>54</sup> al-Hindi, *Kifah...*, 31; al-'Ayyashi, *al-Idaha al-siyasiya...*, 185.

<sup>55</sup> Hananu was a former Ottoman civil servant, born at Kafr Takharim in the district of Harim west of Aleppo in 1869, the son of a rich landowner. He gained two diplomas from the famous *Madrasat al-Malikiya* in Istanbul, and also studied law. See Khoury, *Syria and the French mandate...* 105. He held the position of *qa'immaqam* in the *wilaya* of Erzurum. When the Arab revolt started in 1916, he joined Faysal's Arab army as an officer and marched into Aleppo with the allies in 1918. He joined

were charged with extending the Antakya revolt.<sup>56</sup> They wanted to prevent the French from advancing from the coast to the interior and to establish themselves there, after the French army had replaced British troops in Cilicia and the western regions of Syria under an agreement of 15 September 1919 in which the British essentially dropped their support for Faysal.<sup>57</sup> Before this, Franco-British relations had cooled because France claimed that Britain was supporting Faysal and seemed reluctant to evacuate its troops from Syria. On orders from Damascus, Hananu called upon seven persons from his home, Kafr Takharim, to come to Aleppo and form a group which he supplied with bombs and rifles. Ibrahim al-Shaghuri brought the rebels of Kafr Takharim into contact with the government in Aleppo. There the number of rebels fast increased to 40 so that fast moving small groups were formed, able to inflict chaos on the French troops.<sup>58</sup>

On 13 March 1920, the rebels in the Antakya region were able to take Antakya and hold it for several weeks. In response the French bombed the town from the air for about 17 days until the rebels had to retreat to the village of Narlija. As the London *Times* reported, these events were described by the Arab newspapers in Damascus, which called the rebels 'Isabat al-Fida'iyin al-'Arab (bands of Arab guerrillas).<sup>59</sup> In protest at the dispositions of San Remo (April 1920), the uprisings in Antakya, Harim, al-Qasir, Qirqkhan, in the Alawite region, in the 'Amil mountains, at al-Buja, and Kafr Takharim became more substantial.<sup>60</sup>

*al-'Arabiya al-Fatat* and in the summer of 1919 was appointed representative of the district of Harim at the conference in Damascus. See Nizar al-Kayyali, *Dirasat fi ta'rikh Suriya...*, 54. He left Damascus and went to Idlib at the beginning of October, 1919. al-Hakim, *Suriya*, 168f. In July, 1921, he fled to Jordan, where the British surrendered him to the French. He spent six months in prison in Aleppo but was released in March 1922 after having been cleared of the charge of rebelling against the French.

<sup>56</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 8ff. al-Hindi only mentions Hananu: *Kifah...*, 70.

<sup>57</sup> For details of the British agreement to withdraw troops from Syria see Nevakivi, *Britain, France...*, 172–96.

<sup>58</sup> al-Hindi, *Kifah...*, 70; al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 9. Ibrahim al-Shaghuri, *Mudhakkirat*, (unpublished memoir in the Syrian National Archives, Damascus), p. 2. al-Sa'dun writes about Hananu's role in starting the uprising at Kafr Takharim but not about his leadership. al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat*, 32f.; Méouchy, 'Le Mouvement des 'Isabat...'

<sup>60</sup> Abdulla Hanna, 'Die nationale Befreiungsbewegung in Syrien von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1920.' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leipzig, 199; Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat...*, 32.

In the course of the fighting the French were evidently not able to deal with all the rebels at the same time. They conscripted soldiers from the local population who were not always reliable when fighting their own people. The French tried to gain the cooperation of the large landowners, whom they paid to recruit militias whose task was to defend the roads against the rebels. They also knew the value of good relations with the Turks in their attempt to weaken the Arab resistance movement in Syria, as the rebel units operating in northern Syria frequently retreated across the Turkish border.<sup>61</sup> On 11 May 1920, General Gouraud claimed that France did not have sufficient resources to take action against the Turks and the rebels at the same time. In a report on 21 September 1920, he mentioned that 600 armed men had attacked the police station at Hamam, six kilometres east of Qirqkhan, and that the Amanus region, Antakya, and the road from Aleppo to Alexandretta were all under rebel control.<sup>62</sup>

The French had already taken Aleppo on 23 July 1920 without any resistance, which provoked bitter criticism from al-Sa'dun and 'Al al-Jundi.<sup>63</sup> Two days later, after their victory over Arab troops at May-salun, the French occupied Damascus and put an end to Faysal's rule. With that, the rebels lost their urban base. In the same year the French guaranteed the large landowners their privileges, and the merchants of Damascus, following their economic interests, were not willing to continue the fight against the French.<sup>64</sup>

Barakat called a meeting at al-Qasir to discuss the new situation. Some proposed to lay down their arms, some to fight on, and others wanted to make contact with the Turkish rebels to win their support. The next day Barakat fled to the French. After both Barakat and the local Turkish elements had withdrawn from the uprising in Antakya, the rebels in the region of Alexandretta began to reorganize.<sup>65</sup> Troops

<sup>61</sup> al-'Ayyashi, *al-Idahat...*, 198ff.; Rafeq, *Gesellschaft...*, 473.

<sup>62</sup> Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat...*, 34f. Details of the constant fighting in the vicinity of Harim, al-Qasir, and Antakya can be found in al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 8, 6ff.

<sup>63</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 16; 'Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat...*, 70; for information about the 750 insurgents attempting to take Aleppo from the French, see al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*, 8 and 16ff.

<sup>64</sup> Hanna, *Die nationale Befreiungsbewegung*, 221.

<sup>65</sup> al-Zarqa, manuscript, 24; al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 19. 'Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat...*, 70ff. al-'Ayyashi, *al-Idahat*, 82ff.; according to al-Hindi, Barakat's quitting the uprising suggests that he was working for Turkey. al-Hindi, *Kifah...*, 69.

under Yusuf al-Sa'dun gathered in the region of al-Qasir.<sup>66</sup> After Aleppo had been occupied, Hananu fled to Baruda, intending to carry on the fight against the French. When the rebels from Harim, al-Qasir, and Antakya heard about this, they rallied around him.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the uprising in northern Syria had four centres: al-Qasir or rather Antakya under Yusuf al-Sa'dun with more than 400 volunteers, Kafr Takharim under Najib 'Uwayd with 250 volunteers, Jabal al-Zawiya under Mustafa al-Hajj Husayn with 200 volunteers, and Sahyun<sup>68</sup> under 'Umar al-Bitar with 150 volunteers. On 17 August 1920, Hananu went to Mar'ash with a group of his followers to ask the newly forming Kemalists for their support. On 7 September he signed an agreement with the Kemalists, the latter recognizing him as the representative of the Arab government in Syria and promising him military support. Some days later, Salih al-'Ali, who had started his uprising in the 'Alawite Mountains in 1919, announced his readiness to work alongside the northern rebels.<sup>69</sup> The most important fighting during the second half of the year 1920 took place at Harim, al-Isqat, Kafr Takharim, Jisr al-Shughur, Tall Kalakh, Jisr al-Hadid, and Darkush, especially around al-Qasir and Antakya.<sup>70</sup>

Arab resistance intensified against the French policy of *divide et impera* which was supposed to weaken national resistance by dividing Syria into different autonomous districts. After the turn of the year 1920/21 some popular militia groups known as *chetehs* joined the forces in the Antakya region, raiding villages and fortresses in the mountains behind Alexandretta. Sometimes they succeeded in occupying parts of towns for several days or weeks. After the Kemalists had moved in reinforcements, and the French had set the different

<sup>66</sup> al-Sa'dun was born in 1888 in the village of Jisr al-Hadid which belonged to the *qadha* of Antakya. He served in the Ottoman army and fought against the British in Iraq during the First World War. He was one of the leaders of the uprising in Antakya, and commanded the area of al-'Umq as far as Darkush and south of Jisr al-Shughur and Kassab. At the end of 1921 he fled to Turkey with his family and lived in 'Aintab until 1926. He was sentenced to death *in absentia* by the French. In the 1930s he came to Aleppo and lived there in hiding. He was subsequently cleared of the charges but lived under house arrest until 1940. See Méouchy, 'Le Mouvement des 'Isabat...'

<sup>67</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 16ff.

<sup>68</sup> The uprising at Sahyun started at the beginning of 1919 and came to an end in 1922/23. 'Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat...*, 14ff.

<sup>69</sup> al-Hindi, *Kifah...*, 72; al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat...*, 34ff.

<sup>70</sup> Nizar al-Kayyali, *Dirasat...*, 55; 'Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat...*, 81. For the locations of the uprisings, see al-Hindi, *Kifah...*, 76.

groups of the population against each other, the situation in the region changed especially after the French won over some large landowners who had previously supported the rebels. Hence Antakya became divided between followers of the *chetehs* and sympathizers with the French, that is, those notables and high-ranking civil servants who distributed positions to their own people under the protection of the mandate authorities.<sup>71</sup>

During the negotiations between Hananu and the French, which took place in the village of Kurin in April 1921, the French had to admit that the districts of Antakya, Harim, Jisr al-Shughur, Idlib, and Ma'arrat al-Nu'man were under rebel control.<sup>72</sup> In order to defuse the uprisings along the northern and western borders on the coast, General Gouraud decided at the end of June 1921, that the four regions—Damascus, Aleppo, the 'Alawite area and the Druze area—should form *al-Ittihad al-Suri* (the Syrian Union) under the presidency of Subhi Barakat.<sup>73</sup>

France knew that it had to make concessions in order to obtain a ceasefire with the Kemalists. On 20 October 1921, the 'First Ankara Agreement' between Turkey and France was signed, ending hostilities between the two countries, particularly in Cilicia.<sup>74</sup> Under this agreement France ceded 18,000 sq. km. of Syrian territory (Cilicia) to Turkey, including Mar'ash, Kalas, Urfa, and 'Aintab.<sup>75</sup> Article 8 of the agreement ignored the previous border between Turkey and Syria and defined a new frontier between the two states. Khadduri wrote:

According to Article 8, the border between Turkey and Syria was shifted towards the south. The frontier begins on the Gulf of Alexandretta, at a place to the south of Payas, which would later be defined more precisely, and continues eastwards as far as Midan Ikbas. (...) At first the line runs

<sup>71</sup> al-Zarqa, *Qadiyat*, vol. 1, 25f. and vol. 2, 73. Longrigg describes the *chetehs* as 'irregular Turkish groups'. According to him, they were active between 1922 and 1924. He confirms the difficult situation of the French troops, suffering from heavy losses due to the massive attacks of the *chetehs*, whom they were only able to fight with the help of fighter planes and local troops. Longrigg, *Syria...*, 154.

<sup>72</sup> Longrigg, *Syria*, 155; Rafeq, *Gesellschaft*, 470. There was an Alawite majority in the *qadhas* of Jisr al-Shughur, Tal Kalakh, Misyaf, Tartus, al-Husa, and Safita: al-Hakim, *Suriya wa'l-ahd al-Faysali...*, 94. Many areas in which the rebels were strong were inhabited by Christians, Alawites, and Sunnis.

<sup>73</sup> Munir and Nadir Ashrafi, *Suriya 'l-mustaqilla*, Aleppo 1936, 26ff.; al-Hindi, *Kifah*, 83f.

<sup>74</sup> According to Longrigg, *Syria...*, 156, the uprisings ceased at the end of 1921.

<sup>75</sup> Khadduri, *Qadiyat...*, 7.

to the east, then to the south of the town of Ikbās, with the Baghdad Railway staying within Turkish territory. Then the line turns to the east again until it meets the Tigris at Jazīra Ibn 'Umar.<sup>76</sup>

The French motivation for the 'First Ankara Agreement' was the realization that in order to bring some sort of peace to Syria it would first be necessary to establish order in the north. One of the clauses of the agreement says that Turkey would cease military actions against France on the Turkish-Syrian border and would stop supporting the uprisings there.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the rebellion in Syria was doomed to fail; after the expulsion of Faysal and the occupation of the major cities, the last source of support for the rebels was lost. Turkey supported the uprisings in northern Syria only to put pressure on France, in an attempt to get France to cooperate with Turkey against the British, who occupied the Straits, and against the Greeks, who held Izmir.

To fight the rebels, France transported 50,000 men from the front in Cilicia to Syria. When the rebels could no longer obtain supplies, when treachery was spreading among them, and when the French authorities proclaimed martial law and every village whose inhabitants supported the rebels was burned down and the inhabitants themselves arrested or executed, some decided to negotiate with the French and finally surrendered. On 11 or 12 July 1921 Hananu went to Jordan. Yusuf al-Sa'dun and Najib 'Uwayd wanted to carry on the armed struggle, fleeing first to the mountains with some of their followers, then to Turkey at the beginning of December 1921, basing themselves near the frontier, from which they carried out raids into Syria. In the summer of 1922 Yusuf al-Sa'dun came to Jabal al-Zawiya with about 100 men to punish anyone who had betrayed the uprising.<sup>78</sup> On 26 August 1922 he attacked a postal convoy in the village of al-Darakiya between Antakya and Darkush. Between December 1925, and August 1926, his followers carried out several attacks on French troops and outposts. The last and most important fights were at the beginning of April 1926, at Tall 'Amar and on 8 August 1926 in the region of al-

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 7; al-Kayyali, *al-Marāhil*, vol. 4, 400.

<sup>77</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, Bonn, Abteilung III Türkei/Frankreich, (R 78498), 26 February 1926. The Turks went so far as to order their people, like 'Asim Bik, to attack villages in the name of the rebels to spoil the reputation of the uprisings among the inhabitants and thus to distance themselves from the rebels. 'Asim Bik's followers destroyed Sqilbiya and killed many of its inhabitants. As a result, he was executed by Najib 'Uwayd. al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 80; al-'Ayyashi, *al-Idahat*..., 226.

<sup>78</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*, pp. 95–113; al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 78.

Qasir. When pressure on the rebels increased, when they were short of weapons, and when the Turkish government threatened them with persecution and to hand over their families living in Turkish territory to the French if they did not immediately return to Turkey or if they tried to return to Syria, they gave up their resistance.<sup>79</sup> Thus, after seven years of fighting, the uprising in Antakya, or rather in the Alexandretta region, came to an end.

#### *Structures, modalities and goals of the risings*

Social, religious, and nationalist groups took part in the uprisings. Influential persons, officers and intellectuals—who also came from outside the areas of the uprisings such as Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus—supported the rebellion. Some were sentenced to death and others exiled for their participation.<sup>80</sup> Indications suggest that even women were deeply involved in the fighting. According to al-Hindi, several women died in the course of the fighting at Jabal al-Zawiya.<sup>81</sup>

The fact that the different resistance groups restricted their activities to specific areas contributed to solidarity among the rebels of each region, united by affiliations to family, village, urban quarter, or religious community. While this secured both solidarity among the fighters and the fighters' loyalty to the leaders, it made central control of the uprising difficult. The uprisings did not develop into a struggle for the socio-economic freedom of the rural population, since the leadership consisted mostly of large landowners. The fighters were helpers, called *musanada* (supporters), or volunteers recruited from the villages. In the course of time reserves were assembled in each village, consisting of units of 29–30 persons. After it became apparent that French agents were increasingly infiltrating the rebellion, every volunteer was thoroughly checked by the local committee, and had to present a

<sup>79</sup> In 1923 al-Bitar was killed in an attack on French troops in the vicinity of Idlib. 'Aqil al-Saqati arrived with ten of his followers and carried out several attacks on the French: cf. his attack on the government building at al-Safira and his occupation of the police station at Jisr al-Hadid. al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 81f. 'Al al-Jundi confirms that the fighting in the north continued until as late as August 1926: *Ta'rikh al-thawrat*..., 115 and 285.

<sup>80</sup> al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 53.

<sup>81</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*..., 7; al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 78.

guarantor of his loyalty to the revolution.<sup>82</sup> The rebels under al-Sa'dun dealt with the lack of recruits by conscripting 12–14 year old youths. The villages provided the recruits with supplies and Syrian officers trained them. All in all it is difficult to gain an accurate picture of the number of rebels; taking part in the rebellion depended on possessing arms, so that whoever bore arms was a rebel.<sup>83</sup>

The geographical conditions in the different regions, alternating between plains, valleys, and mountains, and the variety of ethnic and religious communities in the region made dividing into small groups the most effective way to organize the rebellion. Each guerrilla group knew the geography of its region and was ready to defend the latter at any price. Mostly the rebels attacked at night. But if they were not able to escape direct confrontation with the enemy they kept in fighting order, just like a regular army. The rebels mostly operated independently from each other, but they would work together during major offensives. Contacts with other groups and uprisings were maintained by the local commanders. Two aims were crucial: to inflict as much damage as possible upon the French troops, and to demonstrate the rebels' determination to resist.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to seizing the weapons left on the battlefield by defeated French troops and donations by wealthy supporters, the rebels obtained weapons and money from the Kemalists and the representatives of urban elements, as long as this served the latter's political purposes. The rebels of the early period considered themselves a part of Faysal's Arab government and claimed to have Faysal's support, even after he had left Syria on 25 July 1920. The agreement of 7 September 1920 between Hananu and the Kemalists referred to the *i'ana* (assistance) which Turkey was supposed to provide to the Syrian rebels, including weapons, ammunition and general military cooperation.<sup>85</sup>

Religion does not seem to have been more important than pan-Arab feeling. Clearly, the rebels' motivation was fundamentally nationalist, even if there was some reference to religious terminology. Religious

<sup>82</sup> Rafeq, *Gesellschaft*..., 466ff.; al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 53f.

<sup>83</sup> al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 53f.

<sup>84</sup> See Fawzi and Shamsin, *Qadiyat*..., 23ff.; Al al-Jundi, *Ta'rikh al-thawrat*..., 14 and 66f.; al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*..., al-Hindi, *Kifah*..., 53f.; Rafeq, *Gesellschaft*, 469ff.

<sup>85</sup> al-Sa'dun, *Mudhakkirat*, 20; Jamil 'Ulwani, *Nidal sha'b wa-Sijill khulud*, Damascus 1973, 50.

solidarity between the rebels and the Turks did not prevent the latter from withdrawing their support from the rebels after the signature of the 'First Ankara Agreement'. Equally, this solidarity did not prevent the Arab national movement from working against the Turks when each group was pursuing different goals for the future of Alexandretta during the 1930s.<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusion

As we have seen, Faysal's capture of Damascus triggered the rebellion in Antakya, just as the latter triggered further uprisings in northern and western Syria. The uprisings in southern Syria were part of the same phenomenon. But it must be clearly emphasized that each of these uprisings was the result of local initiatives, at least in the beginning. There were always attempts on the part of the government in Damascus to instrumentalise and monopolise such movements, just as there were a number of partly successful attempts at coordination between the various local risings in the regions where they had started and after which they were mostly named. This was clearly the case with the uprising in Antakya, because it was evidently supported and carried on by the entire population, even after some leaders—such as Barakat—had abandoned it. This was in contrast to Hananu's rising, which started with him and was doomed to failure after his departure, since it was intimately connected with his name.

The social, political, and religious structures in Antakya were extraordinarily complex. Different structures competed for the loyalty of each individual, and were partly inclusive and overlapping, and partly exclusive. Almost all the Arabic-speaking members of the 'Alawite community were small farmers or farm labourers, while the large landowners were Sunnis, some Turks, some Arabs. In both cases social class and religious affiliation overlapped. But nationalism was trying to establish new (national) identities. Like most of the Arab-speaking Christians of the urban middle class, the 'Alawites eagerly supported the idea of Arabism, as they hoped it would enable them to free

<sup>86</sup> See Arsuzi-Elamir, *Arabischer Nationalismus*...

themselves from religious discrimination and isolation. They had supported the resistance from the beginning, as they wanted to free themselves from injustice and from the severe economic discrimination which they faced as a powerless rural population. Very soon the goals of this protest were pushed aside by national goals—certainly not without the influence of the Arab-speaking large landowners and urban elements. By identifying the Ottomans or the French as the main enemy, national independence became a more important goal than social justice. The fight for national freedom in Antakya differed widely from that in Damascus for a variety of reasons. In Ottoman times Antakya had been on the periphery of the Syrian heartland and closer to the Ottoman centre of power, always ruled by a Turkish/Ottoman elite, and a substantial Turkish minority had always lived there. In Antakya the issue was not only Arab identity, but the even more basic question of whether the Arabs had any legitimate claim to the territory. Hence the tactical goals and the intensity of the struggle in this part of the Syrian periphery were not identical with those in the centre.