

AN EXAMPLE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTERACTIONS IN THE SANJAK OF ALEXANDRETTA IN THE MANDATE PERIOD (1921-1938): AN EVALUATION OF THE DOCUMENT IN KESHISHIAN FAMILY HERITAGE

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Öz

Demographic composition forming of the multi-ethnic and religious subjects can be a serious challenge for imperial powers especially in the time of dissolution. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, this reality was experienced deeply throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. After collapsing of the Ottoman Empire, movement of the population increased and varied. The Sanjak of Alexandretta (hereafter Sanjak) can be an interesting case to show movements of population in the first half of the 20th century. After the First World War, the region was occupied by following the agreement of Sykes-Picot. Following the French national interests, the providence of the Sanjak was changed demographically and administratively. It could be argued that demographic engineering in the Sanjak has been treated marginally in historiography. From the Turkish records and archives, there are not enough record on the settlements of Armenians and their exodus from the Sanjak. This paper is about interactions of the Armenians in the Sanjak between 1921 and 1939.

This paper seeks to put forward a snapshot of socio-economic activities of Armenians from the micro-history point of view. It consists of two sections. Firstly, a historical transformation of the Sanjak will be summarised. Despite Sanjak's short history, political power changed several times. Change in political power emerged out dramatic demographic shifting. This section will provide an overview of the Sanjak's political history from the mandate regime to the independence. Secondly, it will focus on the history of ordinary people. A document showing the debtor-creditor relationship between Agop Keshishian and Yusuf, a son of Mohammed will be transcribed. From the micro-history perspective, it argues that focusing on casual documents will be important in two ways. It not only shows socio-economic activities of Armenians in the Sanjak between 1921 and 1939, but also it helps us to evaluate the Armenian properties from a different point of view. Before members of the Armenian community left from the Sanjak, some properties had passed into other hands due to commercial disputes, which is ignored by "genocide scholars" claiming that the Turkish state seized the Armenian properties. Overall, this paper can show that polarisation between Armenians and Turks at the ground level of socio-economic life was not depth. They did not hesitate to trade with each other.

Key Words: Sanjak of Alexandretta, Armenian, Migration, Resettlement, Micro-History

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Introduction

Demographic composition forming of the multi-ethnic and religious subjects can be a serious challenge for imperial powers especially in the time of dissolution. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, this reality was experienced deeply throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The Ottoman Empire not only shrunk geographically, but also it had to deal with movements of mass migration. In the early years of the 20th century, Anatolia could be described as a large terminal which witnessed cruel refugee flows. As a result of defeating of the Ottomans in the Balkan, the North Africa, and the Caucasus, Muslim subjects began to flee to Anatolia. These increased numbers of the Muslim population gradually in Anatolia.¹

After collapsing of the Ottoman Empire, movement of the population increased and varied. The Republic of Turkey appeared as "an eventual homeland" for Turkish and Muslim populations who were forcefully deported from their homelands. The relocation of Armenians in 1915, the population exchange between Greek and Turkey (1923), migrations from Bulgaria (1925-1949) and Yugoslavia-Macedonia (1924), the events of Thrace (1934) and participation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta (1939) are popular events impacting on the distribution of the population in Anatolia. Accordingly, non-Muslim communities in rural areas began to decrease. According to the first census results in 1927, proportions of Christians (including Armenian and Greek) and Jews were 3 percent in the total population (around 13 million).²

In this framework, the Sanjak of Alexandretta (hereafter Sanjak) can be an interesting case to show movements of population in the first half of the 20th century. After the First World War, the region was occupied by following the agreement of Skyes-Picot.³ Following the French national interests, the providence of the Sanjak was changed demographically and administratively. The French mandate not only changed borders of the Sanjak but also allowed Armenians from Cilicia to settle down. In this way, they sought to sustain its historical mission which was protecting of the Christians in the Levant.⁴ It could be argued that demographic engineering in the Sanjak has been treated marginally in historiography. From the Turkish records and archives, there are not enough record on the settlements of Armenians and their exodus from the Sanjak.⁵ Their migrations were mentioned briefly in the literature. Historians in the Turkish literature preferred to study the subject of Sanjak from the perspective of political history.⁶ Thus, stories of the ordinary people and family

¹ Ferhat Berber, "19.Yüzyılda Kafkasya'dan Anadolu'ya Yapılan Göçler," Karadeniz Araştırmaları, no. 31, 2011.

Sezer Arslan, "Balkan Savaşları Sonrası Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri ve Osmanlı Devleti'nde İskânlar," n.p., 2008, <http://193.255.140.18/Tez/0069688/METIN.pdf>.

² The population of Christians was 317.814 while Jewish was 78.000. Most of them lived in Istanbul and the Western cities of Turkey. Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar*, İstanbul: Ceviyazıları, 1999, p 55–62.

³ Oral Sander, *Siyasi Tarih İlkçağlardan 1918'E*, 12th ed., Ankara: İmge, 2003, p. 282.

⁴ Berna Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," in *Turkey beyond nationalism towards post-nationalist identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, by Hans-Lukas Kieser, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 59.

⁵ Serhan Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005, p 223.

⁶ From the political history point of view, following works can analyse the issue of the Sanjak in detail; Yücel Güçlü, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, Ankara: Turkish historical society,

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heritages about everyday life, migration, social relations among people of Sanjak have remained unstudied areas. The history of migration from/to the Sanjak can be rewritten by focusing on these materials.

This paper is about interactions of the Armenians in the Sanjak between 1921 and 1939. Under the responsibility of the French mandate, Armenians who were mainly from Cilicia were settled down in different regions of the Sanjak and joined to socio-economic life. As a result of the socialisation, it was observed that they developed various interactions not only with members of the Armenian community but also with other residents having different ethno-religious identities. Throughout the mandate years, they not only lived in camps, but also they were able to have lands and properties in various sizes. Indeed, some Armenians were established small businesses whereas they were hired as ploughman. In this social environment, Armenian traded with other people of the Sanjak. Even though they had difficulties, they made profits. Sometimes they got into debts. Also, disputes among them were brought to trial. These sorts of events show that Armenians were more than refugees in the Sanjak. It could be claimed that interactions of Armenians have academic values encouraging researchers to discover traces and heritages of them in the Sanjak.

This paper seeks to put forward a snapshot of socio-economic activities of Armenians from the micro-history point of view. It consists of two sections. Firstly, a historical transformation of the Sanjak will be summarised. Despite Sanjak's short history, political power changed several times. Change in political power emerged out dramatic demographic shifting. This section will provide an overview of the Sanjak's political history from the mandate regime to the independence. Secondly, it will focus on the history of ordinary people. A document showing the debtor-creditor relationship between Agop Keshishian and Yusuf, a son of Muhammed will be transcribed. From the micro-history perspective, it argues that focusing on casual documents will be important in two ways. It not only shows socio-economic activities of Armenians in the Sanjak between 1921 and 1939, but also it helps us to evaluate the Armenian properties from a different point of view. Before members of the Armenian community left from the Sanjak, some properties had passed into other hands due to commercial disputes, which is ignored by "genocide scholars" claiming that the Turkish state seized the Armenian properties. Overall, this paper can show that polarisation between Armenians and Turks at the ground level of socio-economic life was not depth. They did not hesitate to trade with each other.

2001., Serhan Ada, Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939), İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005, Hamit Pehlivanlı, Yusuf Sarıay, and Hüsam Yıldırım, Türk Dış Politikasında Hatay (1918 - 1939), Ankara: ASAM, 2001..or from the memories of statesman, Rıza Soyak, Atatürk'ten Hatıralar, Hasa Rıza Soyak, Atatürk'ten Hatıralar, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2016., Mehmet Tekin, Hatay Devlet Reisi Tayfur Sökmen, Antakya: Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, 2002. also, Mehmet Tekin, Atatürk'ün Vazgeçilmez Davası Hatay, Antakya: Mehmet Tekin yayınları, 2009. can be useful works.

From Mandate to Independence

The region of "Levant," a loose historical, geographical term referring to "the eastern part of the Mediterranean with its islands and neighboring countries,⁷ was joined to the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century as a result of the Eastern expansion of the Yavuz Sultan Selim. Throughout the ages, the region was a cradle of international trade from the East to West. Beirut, Alexandretta, Tartus, and Latakia are important ports making the Levant a strategic place. It can be said that controlling shores and ports of the Mediterranean provided significant advantages for the Ottoman Empire to reach trade routes and to maintain its supremacy in the Mediterranean.⁸ However, influences of the Ottomans began to reduce gradually in the 18th century. Discovering new trade routes and innovations in the West increased political and economic powers of the European states.⁹ Accordingly, territories of the Ottoman Empire were perceived as potential colonies where they could maximize their 'national interests'. Throughout the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire lost a significant number of lands because of wars with the European powers.¹⁰ Eventually, it started to be called as "sick man of Europe."¹¹ A series of conferences such as the Congress of Vienna (1815), the Conference of Berlin (1878), the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the San Rome Conference (1920) not only sought to maintain power balance among the European powers but also they tried to prepare a guideline how territories of the Ottoman Empire should be shared. To succeed in their political aims, they did not hesitate to mobilize ethnic and religious subjects of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, the Imperial Russia and France declared themselves as a protector of non-Muslim subjects (Orthodox and Catholic mainly); on the other hand, nationalist movements among Muslim subjects were supported to diminish the influence of the Ottoman government in the Middle East.¹²

Breaking out of the First World War (1914-1918) provided a suitable atmosphere for the Great Powers to establish their dominances over the region. Right after the Ottoman Empire joined the war as an ally of the Germany, they began to occupy strategic places which had been already decided across the Levant. During the occupation years, they followed certain rules and agreements to prevent clashing of interests. The agreement of Sykes-Picot, which were signed by the British and French foreign ministers in 1916, designated how to share the Ottoman territories in the Middle East. According to the agreement, the Middle East was divided into two regions as "Blue" and "Red" parts. The western Syria, Lebanon, Cilicia and the South of Turkey were given to France while the Britain took a region from the central

⁷"Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World (Online, 2013), s.v "Levant" by Peter N. Stearns, ed., accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195176322.001.0001/acref-9780195176322-e-900>.

⁸Oral Sander, *Anka'nın Yükseliş ve Düşüşü*, Ankara: Ankara SBF yayınları, 1987, p. 44-46.

⁹ Sander, *Anka'nın Yükseliş ve Düşüşü*, p. 60-62.; Sander, *Siyasi Tarih*, p.88-116.

¹⁰ Sander, *Siyasi Tarih*, p. 289.

¹¹ Sander, *Siyasi Tarih*, p. 306.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 316.; Omer Kürkçüoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti'ne Karşı Arap Bağımsızlık Hareketi 1908-1918* (Ankara Üniversitesi: Ankara, 1983), p. 102.

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Iraq to the southern Iraq.¹³ Both paid attention to obtain enough numbers of ports.¹⁴ This agreement allowed them to establish either direct or indirect administrations.¹⁵ Although the agreement of Sykes-Picot was revised a few times throughout the war, it was used as an initial agreement for the occupations. Additionally, it is seen that borders of the countries which revolted from the Ottoman Empire reflect principles of the Sykes-Picot. By standing on this agreement, France, and the Great Britain began to occupy territories.

Differently from other parts of the Levant, French confronted a serious resistance of the locals in Maras, Antep, and Urfa. The resistance was tougher than the French government expected.¹⁶ Even though the Ottoman government capitulated due to the lack of the German supports, and signed the Armistice of Mudros in 1918, the conflicts between the French Army and the national forces (Kuvay-i Milliye) lasted 1921. The national forces inflicted serious causality on the French army. The resistance of the national forces led the French government to reconciliation opportunity with the Treaty of Ankara, so they sought to protect "occupied territories" in other parts of the Middle East.¹⁷In agreement with the Treaty of Ankara (1921, it is also known Franklin-Bouillon), the French forces withdrew from the Anatolia. In this way, the Ankara government could shift troops (including volunteers) from the southern front to the western front.

At this point, it should be stated that the Ankara government was not utterly happy with the Treaty because some territories which had the within the national pact (Misak-I Milli) had to remain in the French mandate. The Sanjak of Alexandretta, lies in the northernmost part of the eastern Mediterranean coast, bordered by Syria on the south and east¹⁸, was one of these places. This situation caused heated debates among the members of parliament. They began to complain and to criticise the government. However, it is understood from the speech of Mustafa Kemal as a president of the Parliament and a leader of the national forces; the government aimed to gain time to concentrate on battles on the western front. In the secret meeting at the Turkish Assembly (16 October 1921), Mustafa Kemal stated that "...there is not a certain border in our national pact, it will be shaped by our power and capability."¹⁹Standing by his words, there was an implication which the borders would be expanded in accordance with circumstances. Later on, benefits of the Treaty of Ankara were seen shortly. Not only did the Ankara government send the troops to the Western front, but also the Ankara government became a representative of the Turkish nation in the

¹³ Yusuf Sarınoy, "Atatürk'ün Hatay Politikası-I- (1936-1938)," Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi 22, no. 34, 1996, p.2, accessed October 14, 2016, <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-34/ataturkun-hatay-politikasi-i-1936-1938>.

¹⁴ Iskenderun, Latakia, Beirut and Basra are important ports in the region. These were shared by France and the Great Britain respectively.

¹⁵ Omer Kürkçüoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti'ne Karşı Arap Bağımsızlık Hareketi*, p. 102.

¹⁶ Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, p.37-38.

¹⁷ Occupation of Syria and Lebanon lasted the 1940s.

¹⁸ Yücel Güçlü, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001, p. 3.

¹⁹ Ercan Karakoç, "Atatürk'ün Hatay Davası," *Bilig*, no. 50, 2009, p.101.

international community.²⁰ The parliament and the government were recognized by France officially.

Although some claim that Turkey gave up rights over Sanjak once they agreed with the French government and any official claims were not seen until the 1930s²¹, it is not exaggerated that the Sanjak issue was always in the minds of Turkish political elites.²² They paid attention to developing relations with Turks of the Sanjak and encouraged them to establish organisations within Turkey and the Sanjak.²³ It can be said that the Ankara government always emphasised autonomy and existence of Turks. For instance, correspondences between Mustafa Kemal and Tayfur Sokmen, was the president of the Sovereignty Society of Hatay, show that Sanjak was confirmed as a part of the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli).²⁴ In addition to correspondences at the political level, it was tried to introduce the Sanjak as a “national matter” among citizens. The existence of Turks in the Sanjak and their historic ties with Turkey was always pronounced in public meetings.²⁵ Therefore, the Treaty of Ankara should be seen as the first step which seeks to emphasise the presence of Turks in the Sanjak rather than it jeopardised unity of the national pact.

Throughout the mandate era, the Sanjak saw a couple of administrative and demographic transformations. Initially, it joined to the province of Aleppo with its four sub-districts; namely, Alexandretta, Antioch, Beilan and Harim as a single unit.²⁶ However, the Sanjak obtained special administrative regime (SAR) once the provinces of Aleppo and Damascus became parts of the Syrian state. According to the SAR, Turkish was accepted as the second official language. It was aimed to establish the board of governors.²⁷

In addition to the administration transformation, the Sanjak experienced demographic engineering. After ratification of the Treaty of Ankara, the French Army withdrew from Cilicia. Armenians were also taken along. It is hard to know exact numbers of Armenian refugees. It was estimated that between 20000 and 30000 Armenians came to the Sanjak. According to the census of 1938, the population of Armenian community was 27,500. Under the provision of the French mandate, over 20000 numbers of Armenian were settled down in

²⁰ Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, p.151.

²¹ Nevzat Onaran, *Cumhuriyette Ermeni Ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1920-1930)*, İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2013.; Peksen, “The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s”, p. 59.

²² Hamit Pehlivanlı, *Türk Dış Politikasında Hatay (1918-1939)*, Ankara: Asam, 2001.

²³ Intellectual roots of the political elites of the Sanjak can be found in Turkey. Since they were exiled, Adana became a centre for them and welcomed a couple of organisations seeking to protect rights of the Turks in Sanjak. Antakya Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti played significant roles to mobilise people throughout the mandate period. Additionally, there were various newspapers which were printed by Turks. People of Sanjak followed events in Anatolia closely. As Hatipoglu and Tekin state that they celebrated the victory of Büyük Taaruz in 1922. Therefore, relations between Turkey and the Sanjak, as well as interests of political elites of Turkey, did not start in 1930. Süleyman Hatipoğlu, “Hatay’ın Kurtuluşunun Fikri Temelleri,” in *Anavatan Katılışının 60.Yıldönümünde Hatay*, ed. Berna Türkoğlu, Ankara: ATAM, 2001. Mehmet Tekin, *Hatay Devlet Reisi Tayfur Sökmen*, Antakya: Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, 2002, p. 45.

²⁴ Tekin, *Hatay Devlet Reisi Tayfur Sökmen*, p. 32.

²⁵ Public speeches and visiting of Mustafa Kemal were significant examples how the issue of Sanjak occupied in the minds of Turkish political elites. Tekin, *Hatay Devlet Reisi Tayfur Sökmen*, p. 45-59; Karakoç, “Atatürk’ün Hatay Davası,” p. 103.

²⁶ Güçlü, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, p. 3.

²⁷ Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, p.82-93.

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various parts of the Sanjak.²⁸ Alexandretta, Antioch, and Kirikhan consisted of the intensive Armenian population.²⁹ It could be argued that resettlement of Armenians was not the simple event. It had political messages for Arab, Armenian and Turkish political elites. As a feature of the colonial mentality, France sought to govern colonies by highlighting ethnic and religious differences.³⁰ They aimed to establish the balance among different groups. Although Ada argues that the French mandate was not successful because of the French mentality and political priorities about the Levant, the Armenian population was a crucial step to balance desires of the Arab nationalists at the minimum.³¹ It was implied that Arab nationalists could have their national state, but they would not have absolute power to govern the country. Armenians, as well as other minorities, were considered as potential partners in this coalition. For the French authorities, Armenians were natural allies to protect interests of the mandate regime.³²

Furthermore, the resettlement of Armenians gave a direct message to Armenian political elites. Throughout the 19th century, the French government tried to increase its influences on the Ottoman Empire by using Christian minorities (mainly Catholics) as an excuse. They paid attention to developing various relations with political elites. Accordingly, France was introduced as the protector of Christians in the Levant across the Europe.³³ In this framework, bringing Armenians into the Sanjak demonstrated that historical mission of France over the Christians was still continuing.

Moreover, the French government tried to give a political message to Turkey by collaborating Armenian political parties. From the Turkish point of view, the resettlement of Armenians nearby borders of Turkey was considered as a threat to the existence of Turks in the Sanjak because of the mutual conflicts between Armenian rebel groups and the national forces during the WWI.³⁴ Undoubtedly, the Armenian refugees impacted on demographic, social and political balances in the Sanjak. The proportion of Armenian within the whole population increased while the rate of Muslim decreased relatively.³⁵ Although it is hard to access a reliable census data, according to the French document, the population of the Sanjak

²⁸ Numbers of Armenians are not accurate, which can be changed in accordance with sources. In the earlier of French documents do not show numbers of Armenian refugee population. They tend to mention only indigenous population. Greenshield, "The Settlement of Armenians..." p. 132.

²⁹ According to Greenshields, there was not any reference stating Armenians lived inside the Alexandretta town. Rather, they lived outskirts and refugee camps.

³⁰ Şerife Yorulmaz, "Fransız Manda Yönetimi Döneminde İskenderun Sancağı (Hatay) 'Nin Sosyo-Ekonomik Ve Siyasal Durumuna İlişkin Bazı Kayıtlar (1918-1939)," Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi, no. 22, 1998, p. 238.

³¹ Ada, Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939), p. 81-82.

³² Yorulmaz, "Fransız Manda Yönetimi Döneminde İskenderun Sancağı..." p. 246.

³³ Berna Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," in Turkey beyond nationalism towards post-nationalist identities, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, by Hans-Lukas Kieser, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 59

³⁴ Yorulmaz, "Fransız Manda Yönetimi Döneminde İskenderun Sancağı..." p. 246.

³⁵ Melek states that the population of Armenian was 40000 once the Treaty of Ankara was signed. In addition to Armenians from Cilicia, the Sanjak received another Armenian population from Cyprus. They were originally from Musa Dag, but they had gone to Cyprus in 1916 (p.7).

was 224.505. The proportion of Turks as a majority was 38.9 per cent. The sum of the Alawi/Nusayri (28%) and Sunni Arabs (10 %) was lower than Turkish population.³⁶ Additionally, the Christians including Arabs (8 %), Armenians (11 %) and Greeks (9 %) were rest of the population.³⁷

Even though there is an on-going debate over the reliability of the census data, a few points should be underlined to understand socio-economic aspects of the Sanjak. Turks not only were the majority in the Sanjak but also they had a large quantity of the lands. Yorulmaz mentions that lands which were over 100 hectares belonged to Turks.³⁸ Similarly, Ada highlighted the importance of Turk in the socio-economic system of the Sanjak and cited that 47 percent of the lands were possessed by Turks. To show the importance of Turks, Ada states that the economy of Sanjak declined because Turks were reluctant to cultivate since high taxes did not motivate them throughout the mandate. In addition to the majority of Turks in the Sanjak, Armenians were able to establish various communities between 1921 and 1939. Kirikhan, Antakya, and Iskenderun consisted of the considerable Armenian population.³⁹

Throughout the mandate regime, political groups in the Sanjak developed various collaborations to maximise their national interests. It was seen that Armenian political actors not only became allies of the French mandate but also they met with Arab nationalists in common point.⁴⁰ Both sought to diminish the influence of Turk and to keep the Sanjak within Syrian state. It should be noted that Armenian political elites found a room to maximise their interests whereas many of Turkish nationalists were exiled.⁴¹ They had to organise outside of the Sanjak, mainly within Turkey. As a result of political cooperation between Arab and Armenian political actors, Armenian candidates were nominated in areas where Turkish candidates might have won in the election of 1936.⁴² Arab voters supported them. Additionally, notable members of the Armenian community conveyed their requests to the mandatory regime from time to time. The mandataries also did administrative changings in accordance with their requests. They were positive to carry out desires of the Armenian community. Changing of administrative status of the Kessab town by demanding of Armenian community can be a good example showing relations of Armenians with the French authorities. In the past, Kessab used to be a town of the Sanjak, but the notables of

³⁶ However, it was not mentioned which languages Alawites spoke. For the critique of the census; Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, p. 87.

³⁷ Moreover, 954 Circassians, 474 Jews and 130 others were counted. Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," p. 61.

³⁸ Yorulmaz, "Fransız Manda Yönetimi Döneminde İskenderun Sancağı...", p. 236.

³⁹ Thomas Hugh Green Shields, "The Settlement of Armenian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon, 1915-1939," n.p.: Durham University, 1978, p. 132.

⁴⁰ Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," p. 61-63.

⁴¹ Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, p. 88-90.

⁴² Haktan Birsal and Olcay Özkaya Duman, "Le Sandjak Est Turc (Sancak Türktür) Broşüründe İskenderun Sancağı Sorunsalı," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 13, no. 50, 2012, p. 351.

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Armenian community asked the French authorities to join Kessab to the province of Aleppo.⁴³

However, the presence of Armenians in the Sanjak ended up shortly. In the eve of the Second World War, the French government had to terminate mandates in the Levant because of Hitler's expansion in the Europe. Accordingly, territories in the Levant began to change hands one more time, from the French mandate to national governments. Throughout the mandate period, it was planned to divide the Levant into two countries; namely, Syria and Lebanon. Since France did not promise independent state for Armenians, they were considered either part of Syria or Lebanon. Once Syria's map was drawn in 1936, the Sanjak was seen as a region having autonomous status within Syrian state.⁴⁴ Despite the French proposal, the Turkish government stated that considering the Sanjak as a part of Syria could not be accepted since the French proposal was a violation of the Treaty of Ankara. The special administrative regime in the Sanjak would be abolished eventually if the Sanjak was left within Syrian borders. In an alternative to the French proposal, the Turkish government insisted that people of the Sanjak should use the right of self-determination in similar to Syrian and Lebanese.⁴⁵

The proposal of Turkey was not admitted at first place. The French mandate organised the first election to elect members of Syrian parliament in 1936 instead of waiting for the decision of the League of Nations. They set up polling stations in the Sanjak as well. However, this election was protested by Turks to prevent domination of Arab nationalists and Armenian candidates. As is explained above, Arab nationalists and Armenian political parties decided to act jointly.⁴⁶ From the Armenian point of view, the election was an opportunity to maximise their interests and benefit from 'the independent Syria.' It can be said that the decision of Armenians was highly political. Instead of being neutral or supporting the liberation of the Sanjak, they chose to support Arab nationalism. Undoubtedly, goals of the Armenian political groups and traumas during the World War I (particularly the deportations in 1915) were crucial factors to support Arab Bloc.⁴⁷

Despite efforts of Arab and Armenian political elites, the majority of Turks did not attend the elections. Sarıay states the French authorities tried to bring Turks from villages and towns to vote forcefully.⁴⁸ Representatives of Turks in the Sanjak were jailed, and Yenigün newspaper was shut down. Some Turks who came from other Turkish cities were also deported.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, suppression of the mandatory regime did not work as they wished.

⁴³ Yaşar Demir, "Keseb Nahiyasının Toplumsal Yapısı Ve Fransız Manda İdaresince Antakya'Dan Koparılması," *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12, no. 31, 2015.

⁴⁴ Bırsel-Ozkaya Duman, "Le Sandjak Est Turc (Sancak Türktür) Broşüründe İskenderun Sancağı Sorunsalı," p. 347.

⁴⁵ Guclu, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, 2001, p.113-114.

⁴⁶ Bırsel-Ozkaya Duman, "Le Sandjak Est Turc (Sancak Türktür) Broşüründe İskenderun Sancağı Sorunsalı," p. 351.

⁴⁷ Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," p. 62.

⁴⁸ Yusuf Sarıay, "Atatürk'ün Hatay Politikası-I- (1936-1938)," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 22, no. 34 (1996), accessed October 14, 2016, <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-34/ataturkun-hatay-politikasi-i-1936-1938>.

⁴⁹ Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939)*, p. 117.

As could be understood from the election results, they were unable to have the majority. The proportion of protesters was 79 per cent in Kırıkhan, 88 per cent in Belen, 91 per cent in Reyhaniye and 96.5 per cent in Iskenderun.⁵⁰

The suppression of the mandatory regime caused tension among people of the Sanjak between 1936 and 1939. At the same time, it helped political elites of Turkey to bring the issue of Sanjak into the League of Nations. It was negotiated at the League of Nations finally. Turkish and French governments tried to compromise the status of the Sanjak in 1937 by citing "the Sandier report."⁵¹ By standing on this report, it was accepted that Sanjak was a separated entity. Both agreed its status, unity and the borders of Syria. It can be argued that the Sandier report legitimate Sanjak's independence theoretically (de jure). In June 1938, Turkish and French governments decided to supervise upcoming elections together.⁵² In order to maintain the order and safety, the Turkish Army entered to the Sanjak. According to Melek, this was an unusual event for Turks. In order to show their greetings, a hundred and thousand people poured out into the streets.⁵³ The election was held eventually on 1 August 1938. The parliament consisted of 22 Turkish, 9 Alawi, 5 Armenian, 2 Sunni Arab, and 2 Greek members. Furthermore, the Sanjak's name was changed to "the Republic of Hatay" officially, and the national anthem of Turkey was played.⁵⁴ Tayfur Sökmen, the president of the Sovereignty Society of Hatay, was elected as the president of the new republic. In the following year, the parliament of Hatay decided to join Turkey and abolished itself.⁵⁵ In this way, it became the 63rd city in Turkey.

The exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak

As Greenshields states, the exodus of Armenians began in June 1938. Armenian families, which their numbers fluctuated between 400 and 750, left from the Sanjak. Leaving of Armenian families can be seen as the first movement impacted from the atmosphere of panic and rumours about the Turkish Army and the annexation. The size of migration was limited. It was conducted own their accord. However, it could be argued that the exodus of Armenians begin in real terms once the Turkish Army entered to the Sanjak. Ada states that their anxieties caused panic and accelerated the fleeing from the Sanjak. Indeed, the French authorities did not want Armenians to leave from the Sanjak until the permanent places would be found.⁵⁶ It could be said that the French government was also doubtful to manage any mass migration. As is mentioned above, France was dealing with the expansion of Hitler. Therefore, they sought to slow down Armenians' migrations from the Sanjak. In addition to efforts of the French government, the governor of Hatay, Sökmensüer, said: "Turkey do not concern what people of Hatay acted in the past, she concerns their futures."⁵⁷ However, their

⁵⁰ Birsal-Ozkaya Duman, "Le Sandjak Est Turc (Sancak Türktür) Broşüründe İskenderun Sancağı Sorunsalı," p. 351.

⁵¹ Guclu, The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations, p. 164.

⁵² Abdurrahman Melek, Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1991, p. 59.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 61.

⁵⁵ Ada, Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu: (1918 - 1939), p. 213.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 222.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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efforts were unable to change Armenians' decisions. From mid-October to June 1939, Armenians continued to leave. Thus, 8000 Armenian were evacuated to Syria and Lebanon. In addition to these two stages, the exodus of Armenians has another step. Once the agreement between France and Turkey was signed on June 23, 1939, most of the remaining Armenians were evacuated by the French authorities. Besides, some Armenians those who had not wanted to wait for emigration convoys left of their accords. It was estimated that the last migration movement consisted of 14000 Armenians.⁵⁸ It could be said that numbers of Armenian fluctuated between 22.000 and 27.000.⁵⁹

It is possible to argue that the exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak derived from a few reasons. First of all, "to remain or not" in the Sanjak after the Turkish dominance was considered as an existential issue.⁶⁰ Since Armenian political actors considered that Turkish political elites as rival and independence of the Sanjak did not suit their national interests, they chose to leave. In other words, they believed that Armenian national identity would be jeopardised if they opt to live under Turkish rule. Secondly, it could be said that articles on citizenship and also uncertainty about the compulsory military service in the arrangement between France and Turkey⁶¹ accelerated the exodus of Armenians. For this agreement, people of the Sanjak could choose Syrian and Lebanon citizenship within six months, but this decision made them as foreigners in the Sanjak. Accordingly, they had to move their places out of Turkey if they do not choose Turkish citizenship within 18 months. Alternatively, they could obtain Turkish citizenship ipso facto if they did not continue to stay in the Sanjak. It should be noted that many Armenians thought that the second option could bring a compulsory military service even though the final version of the agreement do not consist of anything about military service.⁶² The issue of military service can be considered another factor behind the migration of Armenians.

⁵⁸ Greenshields, p. 62-63.

⁵⁹ Regarding Armenian refugees, there are not certain statistics. Their numbers were mentioned in different sources. By following these sources, it is possible to reach rough numbers. For instance, Sanjian states that "...According to the 1932 census, Armenians constituted about 4.5 percent of Lebanon's total population of 782,415. In 1944, only months after Lebanon had gained independence from France, this proportion had risen to over 6 percent, partly as a result of a new wave of Armenian immigration to Lebanon after the French mandatory authorities had transferred the Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay) from Syria to Turkey in 1938-1939". Differences (approx. 11.000) between two periods can be considered as numbers of Armenians from the Sanjak. Ara Sanjian, *Armenians in the Midst of Civil Wars: Lebanon and Syria Compared* [in English], 2016, accessed November 13, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/17939611/Armenians_in_the_Midst_of_Civil_Wars_Lebanon_and_Syria_Compared_in_English.

Additionally, Greenshields states that the population of Armenians in the Sanjak was 27,500 according to the census in 1936 (p. 132). Furthermore, Ada also states 26.500 Armenians left once the Hatay become independence (p. 223). Moreover, Guclu argues that 172.000 Armenians were brought by the French mandate. 80.000 of them were settled down in Syria while at least one quarter came to the Sanjak (p.23). short, it could be argued that population of Armenian refugees less than 30.000.

⁶⁰ Peksen, "The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s," p. 64.

⁶¹ It is officially known as the Franco-Turkish arrangement for the final settlement of territorial question between Turkey and Syria of June 23, 1939. For further info, Guclu, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta: A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations*, p. 355-359.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 355-359.

Finally, “experiences in the past” motivated Armenians to leave from the Sanjak. Because of the Armenian uprisings in Anatolia throughout the 19th century as well as mutual conflicts in earlier of the 20th century, both nations lost their ability to living together in harmony. Some of the political groups in the Armenian community did not want to support the Ottoman Empire during the First World War and fought against the Ottoman Army.⁶³ To put it differently, the reconciliation process between Turks and Armenians was not completed in 1939. Armenians of the Sanjak considered that they would always be disloyal and distrustful in the mind of Turkish people.⁶⁴ For these reasons, Armenians those who were influenced by the Dashnak party mainly preferred to migrate to Syria and Lebanon under the French mandatory.

By standing on these factors, it is possible to highlight characteristics of the Armenian exodus. The Armenian migration from the Sanjak was different from other cases which were observed in times of collapsing of the Empire. Their migration can be seen as voluntary. As is mentioned above, the majority of Armenians were not native to the province of the Sanjak. Rather, they had been moved by the French mandate from different parts of the Anatolia. Similarly, they were evacuated under the provision of the French mandate. Neither their arrivals nor departures were forceful. Therefore, their journey can be categorised “voluntary migration” regarding the Diaspora Studies.

Secondly, the Armenian exodus was a product of the political decision. Armenians those who were affiliated with Dashnaks preferred to leave from Sanjak. Undoubtedly, it was a collective action against the Turkish authorities and a political decision. In accordance with the political ideology of Dashnaks (seeking to establish independent Armenia)⁶⁵, they did not want to live in the Republic of Hatay. Even though the majority of Armenians backed this decision, some Armenian families those who differed from Dashnaks politically chose to remain.⁶⁶ They settled down in Vakifli village.⁶⁷

Thirdly, the Armenian migration reflects mutual interests between the French mandate and the Armenian political elites. When Armenians convoys (mainly from the Musa Dagh) arrived in Ras al-Basit, they found small and poor camps. At first place, they built shelters and decorated with French flags.⁶⁸ These practices of Armenian also show how they

⁶³Even though Armenian political representatives; namely. Dashnaks stated that they were neutral in the war between the Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire; some Armenians between 5000 and 8000 changed their sides and joined the Russian Army. Attending of Armenians to the Russian Army was considered as disloyalty by the Party of Union and Progress. Günay Göksu Özdoğan and Füsün Üstel, *Türkiye’de Ermeniler Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009, p. 154.

⁶⁴ Peksen, “The Exodus of Armenians from the Sanjak of Alexandretta in 1930s”, p. 64-65.

⁶⁵ Anahide Ter-Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Zoryan Institute, 1984.

⁶⁶ Vahram Shemmassian, “The Exodus of Musa Dagh Armenians: From the Sanjak of Alexandretta to Anjar, Lebanon,” Special Reports December 2, 2012, accessed October 14, 2016, <http://armenianweekly.com/2012/12/02/the-exodus-of-musa-dagh-armenians-from-the-sanjak-of-alexandretta-to-anjar-lebanon/>.

⁶⁷ The Village of Vakifli is known the only Armenian village in the Modern Turkey. It is a part of the province of Samandag in Hatay. According to the census in 2012, 135 people lived in the village. http://www.vakiflikoy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=68&Itemid=186

⁶⁸ Shemmassian, “The Exodus of Musa Dagh Armenians: From the Sanjak of Alexandretta to Anjar, Lebanon,”

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internalised the French mandate. It could be argued that displaying the flag is a type of method serving their loyalties. Armenians were also supported by financially. French authorities paid 25 Syrian Lira for each adult and 10 Syrian Lira for a child.⁶⁹ Under the provision of the French mandate, Armenians started to develop a social life in the camp. Later on, they decided to find a permanent place for Armenians. The Bekaa valley was thought one of the suitable options. Accordingly, the French mandate bought lands from a Turkish landowner and paid for 10 million FF.⁷⁰ In this way, Armenians had their permanent houses. It should not be forgotten that the French mandate was responsible for the exodus of Armenians primarily because they were taken along since the French troops withdrew from Cilicia. It is a fact that majority of Armenians considered that the future of the Armenian community would be with the French mandate.

Finally, the exodus of Armenians created nostalgia. Its effects can be seen clearly in the resettlement of Armenians in new places. Establishing of the Armenian community in Anjar can be a good example how nostalgia affected Armenian refugees from the Sanjak. According to Boym, nostalgia is "...attempts a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home."⁷¹ While Anjar was being constructed, Armenian paid attention to using names which remind them of the past. Names of the streets in Anjar were chosen among Armenian villages in Sanjak and Armenian militia (*fedayi*). Bitias, Haji Habibli, Yoghunluk, Kheder Beg, Kabusiye and Vakef were known as Armenian village. Moreover, Anjar was also decorated with symbolic monuments such as "Musa Dagh," "Remembrance of 1915" and "Khachkar." These monuments remind Armenians who they were and whom they fought against symbolically. From this point of view, the construction of Anjar is not a simple event. Rather, it not only made "strange lands" to be Armenian but also the heritage of Armenians remaining from the Anatolia could be exhibited publicly.

Even though Armenians migrated from Sanjak a long time ago, the debate over Armenian properties has not finished yet. By ignoring the existence of Turks and Turkishness, some scholars assume that the deportation of Armenians was necessary and planned in advance to achieve Turkification.⁷² For this point of view, Armenian properties were seized by the state and Turkish notables after Armenian were forced to leave in parallel to Turkification policies. Later on, properties of Armenians became an essence of the Turkish capital.⁷³ As will be demonstrated below, however, properties of Armenians might pass into other hands because of trading activities with non-Armenians.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review* 2007, p. 13. Accessed October 14, 2016, http://www.iasc-culture.org/eNews/2007_10/9.2CBoym.pdf.

⁷² Onaran, Cumhuriyette Ermeni Ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1920-1930).

⁷³ Ibid.

Transcribing of the document

While conducting a fieldwork in Lebanon in 2012, Hrair Keshishian invited to meet his grandfather. Once we met Hayrig Keshishian in Fanar, he was 87 years old. He shared his personal archives consisting of a couple of documents and photographs. The documents could be seen as heirlooms. All remained from his father Agop Keshishian who used to be a resident in the Sanjak. In 1939, Agop and his family immigrated to Lebanon through following Reyhanli routes.⁷⁴ In his collection, the documents were either written in the Ottoman Turkish or the modern Turkish.

One of these documents, which will be transcribed below, is a statement showing the debtor-creditor relationship between Agop Keshishian and Yusuf, a son of Muhammed. As is understood from the transcribing, the document can be examined in six points. First of all, it was mentioned what the dispute had been among parties. As is understood, Agop Keshishian had borrowed 30 Syrian Liras at interest from Yusuf. That can be considered the main dispute. However, the document does not have any information when he borrowed or the rate of interest. The document only states that the debt was not paid on time, so the charge of interest was applied without mentioning any amount.

Secondly, it is understood that Agop and Yusuf had agreed on a solution earlier in order to compensate the debt. For this, the land and house of Agop in Kirikhan, Yenimahalle were given to Yusuf. It was needed to describe the location and features of the land. According to Yusuf's description, the land is surrounded by Osmaniye on the East, by Kirikor's place in the West, by Artin Efendi's place on the South and by the street on the north. It was also mentioned that features of the house. It had two rooms. It was built from stone and mud-brick. Its roof was covered by grass. As can be seen from the description, specific names related to the location (possibly names of neighbours or owners) were referred while describing the location. It was not mentioned any number of parcel or plot, so the description was very loose once it was compared to today's understandings. For this reason, the document differs from certification of land registration.

Another point is the statement of Yusuf. As can be seen clearly, it was stated that Agop was a real owner of the properties. Later on, Yusuf made an undertaking and stated that the properties would be returned if his debt was paid within one year. However, this statement was enlarged in the next sentence. It was paraphrased again by Yusuf. Even if Agop paid his debt after one year, Yusuf was agreed to give back him to the properties. Moreover, he gave a promise not to abandon the properties. He accepted that he was responsible for taking care of the properties. In a case of any damage, he was agreed to compensate in advance. This point shows that negotiation among them depended on certain conditions. Not only did it try to compensate the debt, but also it sought to protect personal rights of Agop on the properties.

⁷⁴ Greenshields, p.101.

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Furthermore, Yusuf's fingerprint, date, and his short information can be accepted as the fifth point. It is understood that he was from Deli Bekir village of the Sanjak.⁷⁵ It was signed on the 1st November 1938. In order to increase the credibility of the paper, the Syrian stamp was attached. Before moving on to the final point, it should be mentioned that attaching stamp used to be a common habit in the Middle Eastern countries. By this means, the paper was gained formality.

Finally, the document consisted of signatures of witnesses. This is also known "şuhudü'l-hal."⁷⁶ The document was signed in the presence of two Muslim and two Armenian witnesses. Regarding signatures, there is different tendency among witnesses. Armenians preferred to use the Latin alphabet. L. Hacik and Sarkis can be read easily. Also, Sarkis wrote his name and surname (Kalustyan) in the Arabic script. However, Muslim witnesses used the Arabic script to sign the document. Furthermore, it could be assumed that fingerprints on the paper can be indicators of illiteracy. Ilyas and Yusuf signed the paper with their fingerprints. As a result of high level of illiteracy in remnants of the Ottoman Empire, it was another popular practice if they might not know how to write.

Before moving onto the conclusion, it should be mentioned that the writing style and the language of the paper are also interesting points. This document shows us Turkish was a primary language in the Sanjak. Turks, Armenians, and other Muslim groups used Turkish in official records.⁷⁷ Even though the Sanjak depended on the province of Aleppo administratively, disputes among people of the Sanjak were resolved at the "Turkish courts." As was explained above, this derived from articles of the Treaty of Ankara. Due to the Treaty of Ankara, the Sanjak had an autonomous regime, and Turkish was accepted as an official language. Thus, the Turkish community was able to protect their political and cultural rights by the time of the independence of the Sanjak. It can be said that the document which has been analysed is a fine example to understand how official bodies were working in 1938.

Furthermore, one might consider why the document was written as in the Arabic script even though authorities of the Sanjak had decided to use the Latin script in 1929 by following modernisation reforms in Turkey. It should be noted that this is open to discussion and manipulation because of the lack of strong proofs. It could be assumed that a reason for using the Arabic script related with their habits. Even if the majority of Turks endeavoured to learn new alphabet⁷⁸, using the Arabic script was highly common particularly in certain age groups. Putting it differently, they might feel comfortable while they were writing or note

⁷⁵ It currently belongs to Kirikhan district. It is 7 km away from the centre.

⁷⁶ Haydar Çoruh, "2. Mahmud Döneminde Kıbrıs'ın İdarî, İktisadî Ve İctimai Yapısı (1808-1839)", n.p., 2008, p. 492. It is possible to consider that the document might be an expression given to the court since it had the statement of şuhudü'l-hal.

⁷⁷ As cited in Jebejian's work focusing on the language practices of Armenian in Lebanon, the numbers of Armenian speakers in the first generation were limited, and they did not have any education in Armenian. For this reason, they got used to speaking Turkish in their everyday life. They were mainly from Cilicia. Jebejian, "Changing Ideologies and Extralinguistic Determinants in Language Maintenance and Shift Among Ethnic Diaspora Armenians in Beirut," Leicester.: Doctorate, 2007.

⁷⁸ Vedi Münir, Yeni Mecmua, n.p., 1928, in Süleyman Hatipoğlu, "Hatay'ın Kurtuluşunun Fikri Temelleri," in Anavatana Katılışının 60.Yıldönümünde Hatay, ed. Berna Türkoğlu (Ankara: ATAM, 2001), p. 57.

taking. Alternatively, using the Arabic script might be an indicator of the opposition groups against modernisation reforms in the Sanjak. As Melek states, political elites of the Sanjak followed secularist reforms closely and supported joining to Turkey.⁷⁹ Therefore, they were called “Kemalists or Şapkalılar” by the French mandate. In order to weaken ties with Turkey, they were set a target by French mandate and Arab nationalists. Additionally, they were not welcomed among conservatives. It was stated that they had serious disputes between these two groups.⁸⁰ In this atmosphere, using the Arabic script could be considered as a reaction to modernisation reforms. However, it should be underlined that we need more solid evidence to support this argument because there is not any information about signatories’ political and religious orientations. For this reason, the former option seems to be a realistic one why it was written in the Arabic script.

These points bring forth two important questions; namely, *how does the document elaborate our understanding exodus of Armenians and their properties in the Sanjak? , and what does not the document say?* First of all, it could be argued that Armenians those who had come from the Cilicia were able to participate in the socio-economic life in the Sanjak. Throughout the mandate period, the Armenian community had various properties in different sizes and values.⁸¹ More importantly, they interacted with the non-Armenian population of the Sanjak. Both Arab nationalists and the French mandate were seen as strategic partners helping Armenians to maximise their interests. More importantly, they did not hesitate to interact with Turkish population even though both perceived each other negatively because of the events of 1915. From the general point of view, this document shows intimacy between the Armenian and Turkish population in the Sanjak in terms of economic relations. As can be seen in the case of Agop, he borrowed money from (most likely) his Turkish neighbour instead of borrowing from members of the non-Turkish population. Especially, it shows that some properties of Armenians in the Sanjak changed hands because of economic activities between Armenian and Turkish people. In the case of Agop, his land and house were handed over to his Turkish neighbour Yusuf. However, this document also demonstrates that not only rights of the debtor but also creditor were protected. By standing on this document, it could be argued that negotiation between Agop and Yusuf not be wild. Therefore, it will not be realistic evaluation if one argues his properties were seized.

Secondly, it should be pointed out what the document does not say about the Armenian properties. As is explained above, the document should be seen as so-called “handing over statement.” By referring this document, it is hard to claim ownership even if Yusuf had accepted Agop as a real owner. It does not give the specific location, parcel numbers or size. It is entirely different from a certificate of land registration. Therefore, it should be underlined that one cannot draw the location of the property by referring this document

⁷⁹ Melek, Hatay Nasil Kurtuldu, p. 20-22.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ According to Greenshields, Armenians mostly lived in camps or outskirts of the towns (490-497). Furthermore, Guclu emphasises that Armenians were welcomed by landlords of the Sanjak because they were hired as ploughman and crop-sharers (p.23). Yorulmaz also states that Armenian craftsman while describing the socio-economic structure of the Sanjak. As she cites, 78 Armenian craftsmen were working in 862 shops (p. 241).

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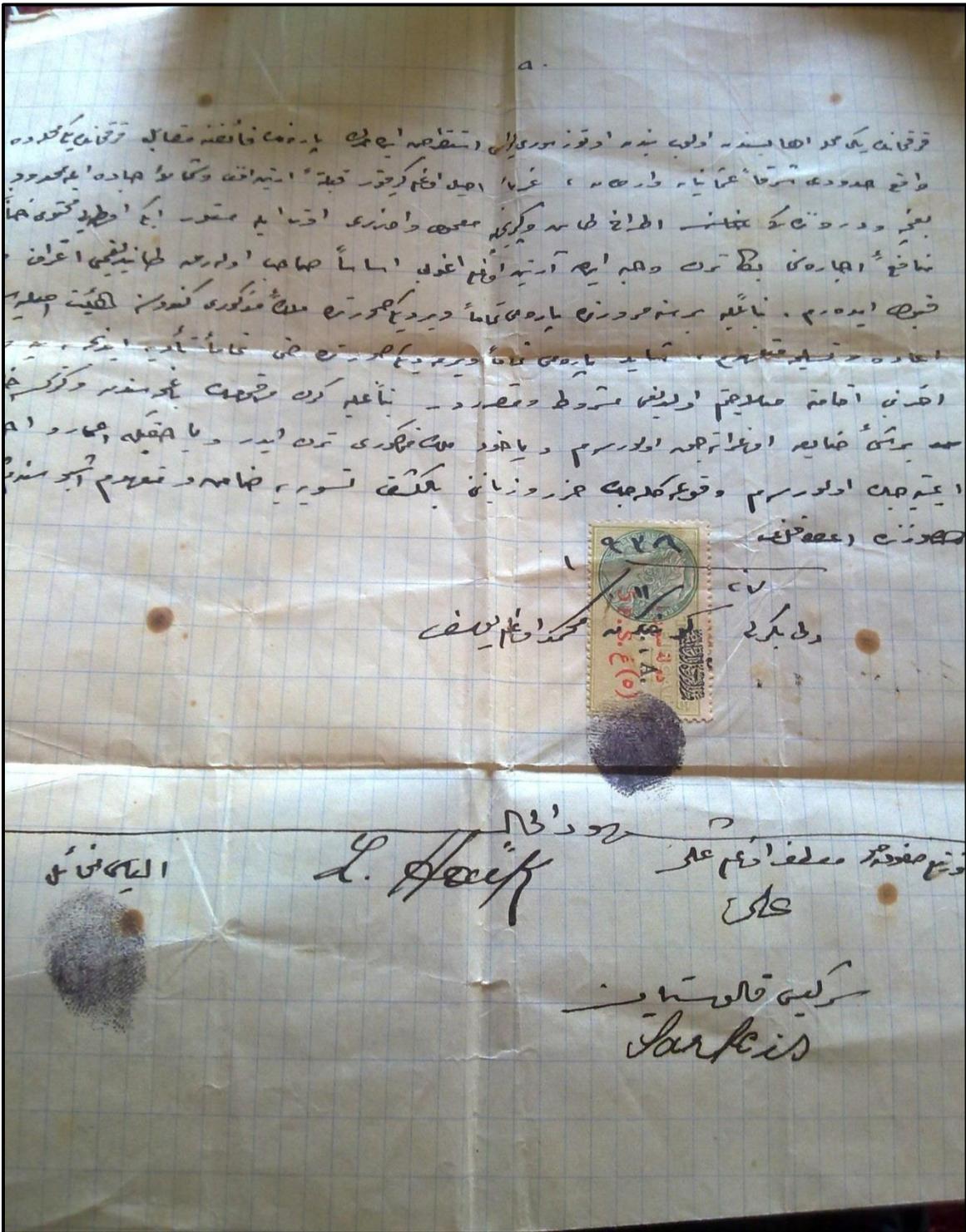
solely. Moreover, the Keshishian family is unable to provide any further document. For this reason, this document cannot give an answer for following questions; did they have a further agreement? Did Agop pay his debt before leaving from the Sanjak in 1939? Did Agop chase aftermath of his properties after the independence of the Sanjak? Our understandings could be changed if additional documents can support claims. As it stands, contributions of the document to “the issue of Armenian properties” might be seen limited because of lack of strong proof. However, accepting the paper as a historical example how relations between debtor and creditor work in the Sanjak of 1938 will be more beneficial.

Conclusion

Movement of populations is inevitable in times of collapsing of empires which consist of multi-ethnic and religious communities. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, various migration flows were observed from one corner of the Empire to another throughout 19th and 20th centuries. The Sanjak of Alexandretta, as a part of the Empire, also experienced mass migration movement twice. Once the French mandate occupied it in 1921, it was transformed demographically and administratively. As was explained above, Armenians from the Cilicia were brought to the Sanjak under the provision of the French mandate. Their migration obviously increased numbers of Armenians in the Sanjak, and impacted proportions of communities in the total population. Furthermore, the Sanjak was attached to the province of Aleppo in accordance with French national interests. Although Armenians were settled down in different parts of the Sanjak and integrated to socio-economic life, they decided to leave from the Sanjak when the state of Hatay emerged out. As was discussed, their decisions were highly political. They did not want to live under the Turkish authority. Political elites of the Armenian community considered that the future of the Armenian community would be with the French mandate. The exodus of Armenians mostly is neglected by historians those who focus on the political history of the Sanjak.

In this paper having micro-history point of view, the document which had been obtained from Keshishian family in Lebanon was transcribed and analysed to understand relations in socio-economic life in the Sanjak of 1938. The document, between Agop Keshishian and Yusuf (a son of Mohammed), can be a good example how socio-economic relations worked in the Sanjak. It also can be accepted as a historical document how their disputes resulted under the Sanjak's socio-economic conditions. More importantly, it could be argued that relations between ordinary Armenians and Turks in the Sanjak not be broken completely. Despite political disputes and mutual conflicts throughout 19th and 20th centuries, they did not hesitate to interact with each other. Further works that are designed with micro-history point of view would change understandings of Turkish and Armenian relationships in earlier of the 20th century.

Appendix



The document showing debtor-creditor relations between Agop and Yusuf

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