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## CIRCISSIAN REFUGEES AND THE MAKING OF AMMAN, 1878–1914

### Abstract

In the final decades of Ottoman rule, several waves of refugees from the Russian Empire's North Caucasus region immigrated to Transjordan, where they founded Amman and other agricultural villages. This article examines the economy of Amman in its formative years as a Circassian refugee settlement. By exploring connections between North Caucasian refugees, Syrian and Palestinian merchants, and Transjordanian urban and nomadic communities, this study posits refugees as drivers of economic expansion in the late Ottoman period. I argue that the settlement of North Caucasian refugees and their active participation in the real estate market in and around Amman contributed to the entrenchment of the post-1858 property regime in Ottoman Transjordan. Through a study of an upper-class Circassian household and its legal battles, this article also illustrates the rise of refugee elites who benefited from the commodification of land and the construction of state-sponsored infrastructure in the late Ottoman Levant.

**Keywords:** merchants; Ottoman Empire; political economy; refugees; settlement

In 1912, Gül'azar bin Hamid, along with her six female and two male relatives, sold six shops and a sixteen-room residence, the largest house in Amman at the time, to Yusuf al-Sukkar.<sup>1</sup> Gül'azar bin Hamid came from a wealthy Circassian family, part of a community of Muslim refugees, or *muhajirs* (Arab.: *muhājirūn*; Ott. Turk. *muhacirler*), from the Russian Empire's North Caucasus region who were dispersed across the Ottoman Balkans, Anatolia, and Greater Syria.<sup>2</sup> Having arrived in Transjordan only a few decades prior, these refugees established agricultural villages that, with time, became major urban economic centers; in fact, three out of the four largest cities in modern Jordan—Amman, al-Zarqa', and al-Rusayfa—were founded by *muhajirs* from the North Caucasus.<sup>3</sup> The buyer, Yusuf al-Sukkar, was a prominent merchant from Salt and an elected Greek Orthodox representative to the Ottoman Assembly.<sup>4</sup> The commercial transaction between the two parties reflected a rapid growth of *muhajir* settlements and the expansion of Levantine mercantile capital to interior parts of Greater Syria.

This article examines the process of settlement of Circassian refugees-turned-immigrants and the integration of Amman into local networks of capital. I focus on the registration, sale, and purchase of property by North Caucasian *muhajirs*, Syrian and Palestinian merchants, and Transjordanian communities in the period from 1878, when

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Amman was established as a Circassian refugee settlement, to 1914, when Amman acquired the status of a district center. This study is based on an analysis of Ottoman land registers and court records, underutilized types of primary evidence in the scholarship on Ottoman refugees.<sup>5</sup> It makes three arguments. First, in the 1890s, North Caucasian *muhajirs* actively utilized an Ottoman land registry and the court to register land, thus entrenching a new property regime, based on the 1858 Ottoman Land Code, in the Balqa' region in central Transjordan. Second, the opening of the Damascus–Amman section of the Hijaz Railway in 1903 accelerated the influx of Syrian and Palestinian capital, creating a vibrant real estate market in Amman. Third, the convergence of *muhajir* labor, Levantine capital, Ottoman infrastructure, and access to the bedouin economy led the transformation of the village of Amman into an important economic outpost on the nomadic frontier—a status that allowed Amman to be considered a viable option for the Jordanian capital city after World War I.<sup>6</sup>

Refugees of the late Ottoman era were victims of nationalism, sectarianism, and colonialism. In the last half century of Ottoman rule, several million Ottoman and foreign Muslims were displaced and resettled throughout the Ottoman domains due to Russian imperial conquests and independence movements in, and conflicts between, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria.<sup>7</sup> In the same period, several million Ottoman Christians lost their lives in genocides and massacres, were forcibly displaced, or emigrated, and tens of thousands of eastern European and Yemeni Jews sought refuge in Palestine. One scholar recently suggested viewing “Ottoman refugees” as victims of globalization and capitalism.<sup>8</sup> The commodification of land and an increased competition over resources contributed to sectarian upheavals that turned numerous communities into refugees in the late Ottoman period.<sup>9</sup> I adopt yet another lens to explore forced migrations and their role in transforming the late Ottoman state. This article examines the settlement of refugees after their displacement and regards refugees as facilitators of the expansion of Ottoman networks of capital. Circassian *muhajirs*, supported by the state, established bustling frontier villages, engaged in agriculture, boosted regional trade, and attracted outside investment.

By emphasizing the economic aspect of refugee resettlement, this article explores the process of integration, of which we know very little, and positions the village of Amman as part of the economy of the Balqa' region and the broader Ottoman Levant. While the historiography of Amman often stresses the British Mandate period, I investigate the emergence of an economically vibrant urban community in the 1900s and 1910s, integrating Circassian and interior Levantine (Transjordanian/Syrian/Palestinian) lineages of the city.<sup>10</sup> This article further challenges how we view the relationship between Muslim refugees and the late Ottoman state. *Muhajirs* are often regarded as “imperial pawns” or instruments of Ottoman centralization. According to different narratives of refugee resettlement, the Ottomans employed *muhajirs* to alter the demographics of Christian-majority and frontier regions, especially in the Balkans and eastern Anatolia, or to impose state control on nomadic areas, particularly in central Anatolia and Syria.<sup>11</sup> Such frameworks often rely on a retrospective analysis of how Muslim *muhajir* communities behaved in times of crisis and overstress the agency of the state in refugee histories. I hold the state to have been of primary importance for *muhajirs*' settlement in Transjordan, but in a less direct way, by means of providing legal frameworks and infrastructural investment, which refugees employed to their advantage.

The settlement of *muhajirs* was part of the broader projects of Ottoman agricultural expansion and land development, and this study focuses on how Ottoman refugees utilized the 1858 Land Code and its generated market opportunities. The changes in land tenure and property sales in the eastern Balqa' were different from those in other parts of Greater Syria that did not experience *muhajir* immigration.<sup>12</sup> Areas settled by *muhajirs* witnessed increased contention over land between newcomers and established communities, high rates of state-sanctioned land registration, and a prevalence of communal farming and small land ownership. Moreover, market forces, namely the penetration of nonlocal capital, drove the registration and sale of property in the region.<sup>13</sup> The confluence of Salti, Damascene, and Nabulsi mercantile capital and Circassian real estate resulted in the growth of commerce and urban development in *muhajir* villages. Commercial transactions within and outside of *muhajir* settlements stimulated further land registration by local Arab and immigrant communities, thus reaffirming the new Land Code-based property regime.

#### REFUGEES AND LAND IN TRANSJORDAN

The arrival of Circassians in Transjordan constituted a part of the mass displacement of Muslims from the Russian Empire's North Caucasus region. In the final years of the protracted Caucasus War (1817–64), over one million Russian Muslims arrived in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Most of them, especially western Circassian and Abkhaz communities from the Northwest Caucasus, were expelled or prompted to flee in the course of the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Russian military.<sup>15</sup> Muslim communities from the Northcentral and Northeast Caucasus, such as Kabardins (eastern Circassians), Chechens, Ossetes, and Daghestanis, emigrated throughout the 1864–1914 period. Their exodus combined elements of forced and voluntary migration, but economic and political transformations brought by Russian rule served as “push” factors for most *muhajirs*.<sup>16</sup> During the 1863–64 Circassian refugee crisis, the Ottoman government resettled most *muhajirs* in Anatolia and the Balkans.<sup>17</sup> Following the 1877–78 Russo-Ottoman War, Circassian *muhajirs*, who had previously been resettled in territories now part of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, became refugees for the second time and had to move to Anatolia and Greater Syria. The Damascus province, including the subprovinces of Hawran and Balqa', emerged as the southernmost area of refugee resettlement in the empire.

North Caucasian *muhajir* communities founded several settlements in Ottoman Transjordan. Circassians set up villages in Amman (1878), Wadi al-Sir (1880), Na'ur (1901), and al-Rusayfa (1904) in the Salt district and Jerash (1884) in the 'Ajlun district.<sup>18</sup> Chechens established settlements in al-Zarqa' (1902), al-Sukhna (1905), and Sweileh (1906) in the Salt district, and, in 1932, settled near Druze refugees from Syria in the al-Azraq oasis to the east.<sup>19</sup> The overall Circassian and Chechen population in Ottoman Transjordan never exceeded 5,000 to 6,500 individuals, and the population of Amman equaled around half that number.<sup>20</sup> Other immigrants in the area included Turkmen settlers in al-Ruman and al-Lajjun.<sup>21</sup> *Muhajirs'* settlement contributed to a broader process whereby sedentary cultivation expanded at the expense of pastoralism.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Muslim and Christian urban dwellers from Salt and Karak and nomadic and seminomadic bedouin tribes established a host of wheat-producing villages in the Balqa' in the final decades of Ottoman rule.<sup>23</sup>

Refugee migration into the Ottoman state came under the general framework of immigration, in accordance with the 1857 Ottoman Immigration Law.<sup>24</sup> The Ottoman Refugee Commission (Ott. Turk. Muhacirin Komisyonu), established in 1860, managed the process of resettlement.<sup>25</sup> *Muhajirs* were eligible for Ottoman subjecthood, received free land for cultivation, and were temporarily exempt from taxation and military service.<sup>26</sup> The allotment of land to refugees unfolded within the framework of the 1858 Ottoman Land Code, which provided an updated and centralized system governing land ownership.<sup>27</sup> The government's long-term economic objective was to increase its tax revenue by enlarging its tax-paying sedentary population, ensuring state control over real estate transactions, and opening up more areas for agricultural development.

The transition to a new land regime proceeded unevenly across the empire, and a land registry in Salt only opened in 1891. The new institution recorded land registration in the Balqa' region in two types of registers: *yoklama* and *da'imi*. Refugees completed the *yoklama* registration following the allotment of land and paid no initial taxes.<sup>28</sup> *Da'imi* registers recorded transactions on the property that had already been registered, followed by a tax payment.<sup>29</sup> At the sale of urban property—houses, gardens, stables, and wells—registered in the *mülk* category, a seller transferred the right of ownership to a buyer. During the sale of agricultural *miri* land, refugees merely transferred the right of usufruct to the land because the legal title belonged to the state. *Muhajirs* were allowed to sell or transfer usufruct rights to the land that was given to them for free only after twenty years of cultivation.

In Transjordan and elsewhere across the Ottoman realm, North Caucasian refugees played a crucial role in implementing the transition to a new land regime. *Muhajirs* increased the area of cultivated land and the number of small-scale title holders in the empire. In places like the Balqa', the authorities typically allotted *muhajirs* agricultural lands and pastures in the *miri* category, which previously laid uncultivated but were claimed by local communities, often leading to communal contestation over land.<sup>30</sup> In other parts of the empire, such as Çukurova, the government allotted *muhajirs* “dead,” or uncultivated and often malarial, land in the *mevat* category.<sup>31</sup> Through refugee resettlement, the government sought to “reclaim” the land from non-tax-paying communities or from nature and turn it into a profit in the long term. Refugee resettlement also led to the “defensive registration” of land, whereby local communities sought to preempt *muhajirs*' claims on the land by formally registering their real estate in new Ottoman land registries.<sup>32</sup> In doing so, they not only paid all taxes to the state but also tacitly accepted the stipulations of the 1858 Land Code that regulated their usufruct rights.

#### AMMAN AS A REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

Circassian refugees founded Amman shortly after the end of the 1877–78 Russo-Ottoman War.<sup>33</sup> At the time, the Ottoman government prioritized colonizing the Balqa' and even considered creating an “Amman province,” when Amman still lacked a permanent population.<sup>34</sup> The chief attraction of Amman was its water resources. The young agricultural settlement had two sources of water: the Amman springs, or Ra's al-‘Ayn, and a stream in the valley, Sayl ‘Amman, which ran through the village.<sup>35</sup>

Ottoman Amman was far from a homogeneous settlement; it was divided into four quarters—Shapsugh, Qabartay, Abzakh, and Muhajirin—founded when different waves

of Circassian refugees arrived in Amman.<sup>36</sup> The spatial division was reinforced by ethno-cultural diversity within the Circassian community and the nature of *muhajirs*' migration: some were displaced from the Balkans, others came from older refugee settlements in Anatolia, and many arrived directly from their homeland in the Caucasus.

The first settlers in Amman were of a Shapsugh subgroup of Circassians who settled among the ruins of the Roman theater and used its stones in the building of their first homes in what became the Shapsugh quarter. Displaced from Circassia in the 1860s and then from Ottoman Bulgaria during the 1877–78 Russo-Ottoman War, this first wave of Circassians constituted "double refugees."<sup>37</sup> Kabardin and Abzakh Circassians, who arrived in 1880–92, formed the next refugee wave. They established the Qabartay and Abzakh quarters, and, in the Ottoman period, came to be referred to as *ahl 'Ammān* (people of Amman) to differentiate them, the core population of the town, from all others.<sup>38</sup> The youngest Circassian quarter was founded by new Kabardin immigrants who came from the Russian Empire around 1902. They settled near the Amman springs, which gave the name to their neighborhood, Ra's al-'Ayn, also known by local communities as the Muhajirin quarter.<sup>39</sup>

The timing of arrival mattered for the economic prospects of each community. Thus, Shapsugh *muhajirs* laid claim to the best rainfed plots of land in the valley. In 1901–3, the average market price of a *dönüm* of agricultural land held by residents in the Shapsugh quarter was 103 *kuruş*, compared to 33 *kuruş* in the Qabartay quarter and 52 *kuruş* in the Abzakh quarter; in 1904–9, the respective average prices for land sold by residents of these three Circassian districts of Amman were 186, 37, and 30 *kuruş*.<sup>40</sup>

The arrival of Kabardin newcomers set in motion a conflict over land within the Circassian community. The earlier waves of Circassian refugees had already claimed the land surrounding the Amman springs in the *yoklama* survey of 1893, when fourteen households received on average 57.5 *dönüm* each, and in 1896, when seventeen families claimed on average ninety-seven *dönüm* each.<sup>41</sup> Some of the 1902 immigrants were ejected from the village and had to go to Damascus to complain to the provincial governor about their mistreatment by their coethnic *muhajirs*.<sup>42</sup>

The settlement in Amman also became a focal point of contention between Circassian refugees and bedouin over the rights to water and fertile lands in the eastern Balqa'. Before the arrival of *muhajirs*, two rival tribes—the 'Adwan, who led the Balqawiyya tribal confederation, and the Bani Sakhr—used the springs.<sup>43</sup> Within a year of the arrival of the first refugees, the al-Hadid clan of the Balqawiyya confederation, with the support of Salti notables, attempted to register lands around Amman, but this preemptive registration was never formalized, perhaps due to high tax obligations.<sup>44</sup> The expansion of the Circassian settlement towards the Amman springs jeopardized access to water for nearby bedouin clans, which led to several armed confrontations between *muhajirs* and local bedouin communities.<sup>45</sup> In 1910, Circassian immigrants fought the so-called Balqawiyya War with the Balqawiyya tribes, widely regarded to have been a contestation over land and water access.<sup>46</sup> This localized conflict was mediated by the Bani Sakhr, with whom the Circassian community had established a military alliance in the late 1890s.<sup>47</sup>

Shortly after the establishment of the settlement in Amman, *muhajirs* turned to the Salt shari'a court, the oldest Ottoman institution in the region, to facilitate their economic interests.<sup>48</sup> In their first years of going to court, Circassians primarily attended

to the business of marriage. Legal matrimony, affirmed by the court, was an economic instrument of wealthier immigrant families to solidify business alliances. By the first decade of the 20th century, *muhajirs* actively used the court to legitimize their economic transactions. Thus, out of all court cases involving Balqa' Circassians in 1901–3, 34 percent concerned inheritance and dower, 25 percent the repayment of loans, and 23 percent usufruct rights or ownership of farm animals.<sup>49</sup> North Caucasian *muhajirs* in Transjordan treated the court as an extension of the state, crucial to affirming their rights to property. Similar to other communities in the Balqa', they continued to regard the shari'a court as an official record keeper of their real estate history even after the Salt land registry took over the court's historic function of registering land. *Muhajirs* often registered changes in ownership and transfer of land in both the shari'a court and the land registry.<sup>50</sup>

#### LEVANTINE INVESTMENT IN THE BALQA'

The *muhajir* settlement in Amman soon attracted Arab investors and was integrated into the Levantine networks of capital. The chief attraction of the Balqa' for regional merchants was cheap grain that they could resell at higher prices in Jerusalem, Nablus, and Damascus. In the decades prior, the grain market of the Levant centered around the plain of Hawran, to the north of the Balqa'. The production of Hawrani wheat went up in the wake of increased European demand during the Crimean War (1853–56).<sup>51</sup> Syrian landowning notables and coastal merchants made a profit from the rising cost of grain on global markets. However, the end of the US Civil War (1865) and the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) precipitated the arrival of cheaper American, Indian, and Australian grain in Europe. Then came the Long Depression, which suppressed global prices for grain in the 1870s and 1880s. These developments crushed a prior price advantage of Syrian grain for export and lowered prices for cereals on the Ottoman market. By the 1890s, the demand for grain increased again, especially in the booming Levantine ports, such as Jaffa, Haifa, and Beirut, and the great interior cities of Nablus and Damascus.<sup>52</sup>

Cereal harvests from the Damascus hinterland had long been accounted for by the leading Damascene landowning families.<sup>53</sup> The Hawrani grain cultivators were locked in a complex system of dependence on, and resistance to, Damascene merchants and local Druze shaykhs.<sup>54</sup> A fierce competition amid an unfavorable economic climate in the 1870s and 1880s pushed small-scale grain merchants to develop new supply chains, especially in the Balqa'. Urban Levantine merchants were previously wary of investing in the Balqa', with its sparse and mostly nomadic population and meager agricultural surplus. It was the establishment of wheat-producing villages by North Caucasian *muhajirs* and others, as well as the expansion of Ottoman administrative power to Salt, that raised the "investment grade" of the Balqa'.

The first Arab merchants in Amman came from Salt, from both long-settled Christian and Muslim communities and recently arrived Nabulsi and others, known locally as *aghrāb*.<sup>55</sup> Thus, in the early 1890s, Raghib bin 'Abd al-Qadir Shammūt, a Salti merchant, bought four shops in the Shapsugh quarter for 2,300 *kuruş* each.<sup>56</sup> Shammūt was among the leading moneylenders in Salt and played a part in the Ottoman administration of the district.<sup>57</sup> Many Saltis and *aghrāb* made their fortunes and assembled their real estate portfolios through money-lending to Balqa' villagers and tribes, some of



TABLE 1. *Shops purchased in Amman, 1891–1912*

Buyers	1891–95	1896–99	1900–3	1904–9	1910–12
Circassians		6	2	9	4
Arab merchants totals	4		5	21	15
From Salt	4		5	3	6
From Damascus				13	7
From Nablus				1	2
From elsewhere in Palestine				4	
Totals	4	6	7	30	19

*Note:* All sellers are local Circassians; some of the shops purchased by Circassians were resold to Arab merchants in later years. Calculations for this and Tables 2 and 3 are based on Ottoman land records in DLS Defters 5/1/1, 7/1/1, 10/1/1, 18/1/1, 19/1/1, 30/1/2, 31/1/2, and 32/1/2.

whom eventually defaulted on their obligations and handed over their land.<sup>58</sup> Saltis extended their services to *muhajir* communities. The Salti commerce was linked to broader networks of capital in central and northern Palestine, and merchants operating in the Balqa' had benefited from Nablus's growing economy in the late Ottoman period.<sup>59</sup>

The commercial significance of Amman increased after the construction of the Hijaz Railway, which connected Damascus to Medina, operational in central Transjordan since 1903.<sup>60</sup> The train would leave Damascus at 8:00 a.m. and arrive in Amman at 9:00 p.m.<sup>61</sup> A route that once took several days in a heavily guarded caravan could now be completed in one day, with Turkish coffee served on demand. The southernmost North Caucasian refugee settlements in the Ottoman Empire became connected to the emerging Levantine railway grid. The Hijaz Railway bolstered regional trade and delivered solid advantages to Amman over the old administrative center in Salt, which was not serviced by the railroad. Merchants could now send Balqa' grain and other produce directly to Damascus by train. From Damascus, through the French-built railway network, products of the Balqa' could be delivered to Beirut, Homs, Tripoli, and Aleppo. Amman was also linked to Haifa, the fastest growing port in Palestine in the final decades of Ottoman rule, via a branch of the Hijaz Railway.<sup>62</sup>

The Ottoman-built railway came with the much sought-after telegraph that tied Amman closer to the Levantine communication networks and facilitated regional commerce.<sup>63</sup> Amman further benefited from the good roads that *muhajirs* built between their chief town and its surrounding villages.<sup>64</sup> The settlement prospered. In 1905 an American traveler wrote that her group was "utterly unprepared, after six hours of riding across a lonely tableland, to find an orderly town," like Amman, "of an aspect so superior to anything we had seen since leaving Jerusalem."<sup>65</sup>

After the opening of the Hijaz Railway, Amman experienced a boom in the construction of shops and their sale to Syrian buyers. Between 1904 and 1909, Damascene merchants alone purchased thirteen shops, or 43 percent of all transactions (see Table 1). The average price of a shop in the Qabartay quarter rose from 543 *kurus* in the 1890s, to 1,580 *kurus* in 1901–3, to 4,086 *kurus* in 1904–9, and to 6,839 *kurus* in 1910–12.<sup>66</sup> The sale of houses to non-Circassian buyers also increased after 1904 (see Table 2). Notably, Arab merchant families who bought shops and houses in Amman did not belong to the

TABLE 2. *Houses purchased in Amman, 1889–1912*

Buyers	Sellers	1889–94	1895–99	1900–3	1904–9	1910–12
Circassians	Circassians			4	2	4
Arabs	Circassians	2	2	1	8	11
Arabs	Arabs			2	2	3
Totals		2	2	7	12	18

old Syrian and Palestinian political or commercial elites but represented “new money.”<sup>67</sup> Many of them made their wealth in the Hawran grain trade, having benefited from the high prices in the 1850s and 1860s and the 1858 Ottoman Land Code, which eased their expansion into the southern Hawran and the Balqa’.<sup>68</sup> Most Syrian merchants came from the Maydan area of Damascus, a premier Levantine marketplace that was oriented towards southern Syrian markets.<sup>69</sup> Damascene merchants, with a wealth of experience in the Hawran and a history of trade with Druze and bedouin communities, regarded Transjordan as an extension of their already existing market of supply and demand.

It was common for Damascene merchants, such as Muhi al-Din al-Sa‘di,<sup>70</sup> Abu al-Khayr, Salih and Muhammad al-Hatahet, Muhammad Darwish, and Ibrahim and Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Qattan, to enter into partnerships with each other when buying shops, houses, and stables.<sup>71</sup> Other Syrian mercantile families included al-Bustanji, al-Humsi, al-Shami, al-Wahhab, al-Sahadi, al-Raghib, and al-Habib. The arrival of Syrian capital and an increase in general security in the area accelerated an influx of capital from elsewhere. The al-Qabsiyya<sup>72</sup> and al-Mushrish<sup>73</sup> families from Salt, al-Saymani<sup>74</sup> and ‘Asfur<sup>75</sup> from Nablus, and al-Samadi<sup>76</sup> from Fuheis bought shops in Amman in the 1900s. Furthermore, some bedouin leaders purchased property in the booming settlement, most likely as guest houses for their tribal members who would visit Amman for business. Thus, in 1912, shaykh Idris Effendi, son of shaykh Rajab Effendi, bought a house in the Abzakh quarter for 5,340 *kuruş*.<sup>77</sup>

The purchase of Circassian real estate by Arab buyers was part of the broader phenomenon of the expansion of Syrian and Palestinian capital in Transjordan. In 1912, for example, Hanna Effendi bin Fransis Batatu, a Jerusalemite Catholic merchant, purchased a share in the 12,500-*dönüm* plot of land in the Bani Sakhr village of Tunayb, in the vicinity of Amman, from the Nabulsi Abu Jabir family, who previously registered thousands of *dönüm* of land around Amman.<sup>78</sup> These and other families belonged to the Syrian and Palestinian landowning class that by the early 20th century came to dominate economic life in Salt and, to a lesser extent, Irbid and ‘Ajlun.<sup>79</sup> Their economic power often translated into political power in the Ottoman administration, and vice versa, cementing their position at the helm of an emerging Transjordanian society.<sup>80</sup>

The *muhajir* settlement in Amman offered Levantine merchants relative security in what was still a largely nomadic region and, at the same time, an additional access point to bedouin communities. The alliance between Circassians and the Bani Sakhr bolstered the security of Amman as a trading post and provided new opportunities for trade with the bedouin tribe, whose territories lay to the east of the railway. Furthermore, the construction, maintenance, and protection of the railway necessitated the arrival



TABLE 3. Average price of agricultural land in Circassian settlements in the Balqa', 1891–1912 (kuruş per dönüm)

Residence of Registrants	Yoklama				Da'imi
	1890s	1901–3	1904–9	1910–12	1910–12
Amman					
Qabartay quarter	60	42	64	84	56
Shapsugh quarter	72	53	174	281	134
Wadi al-Sir					
Bzhedugh quarter	40 <sup>a</sup>	51	56	61	53
Abzakh quarter	67	49	63	72	48
Na'ur	NA	34	53	101 <sup>a</sup>	61

Note: The *yoklama* prices are government-estimated prices at the time of the initial registration of land. The *da'imi* prices are dictated by the market and represent monetary transactions.

<sup>a</sup>The number of transactions on record for some periods is too low to serve as a reliable estimate.

of Ottoman troops, who were stationed outside of Amman, thus guaranteeing further protection to the town, its inhabitants, and its growing wealth. By the 1910s, Circassian *muhajirs* had secured a peace agreement with most of their bedouin neighbors and, under the leadership of Circassian officer Mirza Wasfi, established a volunteer force.<sup>81</sup> These developments bolstered the security of property in the eastern Balqa', further entrenching the post-1858 land regime.

Within one generation, prices of agricultural land increased in *muhajir* settlements throughout the Balqa' (see Table 3). Market prices, as reflected in sales transactions, did not always match the government's estimates of land value through the *yoklama* process. Thus, in the early 1910s, the average sales prices of land lagged behind the average *yoklama* price by 33 percent for the residents of Amman's Qabartay quarter and Wadi al-Sir's Abzakh quarter, 52 percent for Amman's Shapsugh quarter, and 13 percent for Wadi al-Sir's Bzhedugh quarter. The prices of land in Circassian villages, despite a considerable hike over a few decades, were low for regional and Ottoman standards, stimulating an influx of Syrian and Palestinian capital to the Balqa'.<sup>82</sup>

#### MUHAJIR ECONOMIES

Members of the Circassian community were active in not only selling their original land allotments but also building up capital to purchase more real estate, some of it for further resale. For example, Ahmad bin Ya'qub Lukhud, a Circassian, registered a group of houses, shops, gardens, and a cave in his name; he sold three shops to the al-Bustanji family and a house to the al-Habib family from Damascus.<sup>83</sup> The Ottoman period witnessed an emergence of a nascent Circassian bourgeoisie, such as the Khurmas,<sup>84</sup> the Khutats,<sup>85</sup> and the Qurshas,<sup>86</sup> that invested in shops and houses and conducted business with Arab merchants. As early as 1895, Emruz Bey, a Circassian, bought into a business with several Transjordanian Arabs to purchase four mills near Amman.<sup>87</sup> The mills, constructed prior to the refugees' arrival, served local wheat-producing fellahin communities.

In modern Middle Eastern history, North Caucasian *muhajirs* are associated with agriculture and the military, not trade. One of the reasons *muhajirs* found it difficult to occupy the commercial niche is that they lacked financial and social capital for the establishment of successful trading operations. Merchants from neighboring Salt, Nablus, and Damascus who moved to Amman commanded sizeable cash resources and access to established markets in Palestine and Syria. Well into the Mandate period, Levantine merchants managed businesses across the British- and French-drawn borders and could reinforce their capital in Amman with cash from elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Circassians, who were not well integrated into regional trade networks, could not deliver manufactured goods to the Balqa' market as easily as Syrians and Palestinians. Nor were they in a position to deal directly with the largest grain buyers in Damascus, Haifa, and Beirut.

Nevertheless, Circassian *muhajirs* did engage in local and regional trade. These vendors remain largely invisible in the historical record because they served local immigrant villages, rarely conducted long-distance and bulk trade, and had little interaction with the authorities. A large part of their trade was artisanal. Circassians had advanced skills in jewelry, carpentry, and metalwork and introduced oxen-drawn wheel carts to the region. European travelers in the late 19th century commonly praised Circassians' artisanal skills, especially when compared to those of Transjordanian and Palestinian peasants.<sup>89</sup> *Muhajirs* also established a profitable trade in timber. Upon Circassians' arrival, forests of pine and oak trees grew around Amman and Wadi al-Sir. *Muhajirs* sold timber and charcoal to settled Transjordanian and Palestinian communities.<sup>90</sup>

Circassian Amman gradually became a regionally important hub for agricultural produce. By the 1910s, Circassian settlements in Amman and Wadi al-Sir had already produced a surplus of grain for sale.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Circassians served as intermediaries who marketed the bedouin agricultural or artisanal production for export. The Bani Sakhr, for example, stored their grain harvest in a Circassian Wadi al-Sir.<sup>92</sup> Circassians also bought cattle from the Bani Sakhr and wheat from semisettled bedouin tribes in the Balqa'.<sup>93</sup> A British traveler to Amman wrote that in 1893 "most of the corn of the Balqa [was] brought here and afterwards sent in charge of Circassians to Jerusalem."<sup>94</sup> Oral history confirms that local Circassians established direct trade links with buyers in Jerusalem and traveled there for business to trade in wheat and barley; those ties survived into the Mandate period.<sup>95</sup> By the early 20th century, the Circassian population, Syrian and Palestinian merchants, and Transjordanian urban, rural, and nomadic communities turned Amman and its environs into an interior marketplace of growing importance for the expanding Levantine economy.

#### GÜL'AZAR'S FAMILY HISTORY

This article opened with the story of Gül'azar, a Circassian heiress who sold her house and shops to a Salti merchant-turned-politician. Through land and court records, I reconstruct her family history, which demonstrates the consolidation of property within a well-off *muhajir* household and its economic engagement with other residents of an expanding Amman. In 1901, the patriarch of a Circassian family, Hajji Islam bin Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah, died. He had fathered two children: a daughter, Khadija, and a son, Hamid. The latter predeceased his father and was survived by his widow, Sayetkhan, and their

two underage children, a five-year-old girl, Gül'azar, and a two-year-old boy, 'Azir. Upon the death of their father sometime in 1896–97, the two children inherited four plots of land around Amman, totaling 100 *dönüm* with a government-estimated value of 10,370 *куруş*, as well as half of the shares in seven more plots of land totaling 1,158 *dönüm*, with the children's combined shares estimated at 20,120 *куруş*.<sup>96</sup> The family likely bought these lands directly from bedouin or Salti fellahin using the cash capital that it had brought to Transjordan from either the Russian Kabarda or the earlier Circassian settlements in the Golan Heights, where the two children's mother came from.

The demise of their grandfather further increased Gül'azar and 'Azir's wealth.<sup>97</sup> They and their aunt came into possession of the late Hajji Islam's household property, estimated at 25,581 *куруş*. The court ordered a detailed inventory, which listed all debts, cash, cattle, household items—from a Circassian dagger to thirty-three pillows—and a slave girl.<sup>98</sup> The stored harvest of wheat, barley, and burghul comprised 58 percent of the total value of the inheritance. Despite its upper-class status, this family, like most *muhajirs* in Transjordan, derived much of its income from agriculture, the surplus of which it exported.

The death of the patriarch unraveled familial dynamics. A male relative, 'Amr Effendi, accused Sayetkhan of having concealed a part of the inheritance after the death of her late husband, and the court temporarily stripped her of guardianship of her children.<sup>99</sup> 'Amr Effendi then initiated a lawsuit against the imam of Amman's Circassian community, Hajji Sha'b Effendi. 'Amr Effendi alleged that the children's late grandfather had given the imam sixty Ottoman liras and twenty French francs as *zakat* for those in need. He claimed that the late family patriarch was insane (*ma'tūh*), recognition of which would render the transaction invalid and the money returned. The imam denied that the community's benefactor was mentally incapacitated. 'Amr Effendi called forward two witnesses, whose sole role was to put in doubt the sanity of the late Hajji Islam. They both recalled how "the late Hajji Islam entered the running stream, by his village, naked. People who were passing by, old and young, told him that it was shameful. He replied to them that it was not shameful."<sup>100</sup> The judge eventually dismissed the unflattering testimonies and ruled in favor of the imam. This scandalous lawsuit, reclaiming *zakat* from the imam and accusing a prominent deceased member of one's own family of skinny-dipping, certainly challenged social norms within the Circassian community.

Sayetkhan soon regained legal guardianship of her children after having remarried to Muhammad Agha, a distant relative from 'Aziziye—the heart of the North Caucasian settlements in the Sivas province, in central Anatolia—who arrived to oversee the family finances. Muhammad Agha became the sole custodian of the children's wealth.<sup>101</sup> He engaged in moneylending by loaning a share of the children's inheritance, first to two business partners, an Arab merchant from the Damascene al-Khayr family and a local Circassian, and then to the Circassian family lawyer.<sup>102</sup> While married to Muhammad Agha, Sayetkhan sued him to settle a long-standing dispute over her dower of 240 Ottoman liras from her first marriage, which she claimed she had never received and was therefore entitled to claim out of her late husband's financial estate now controlled by her new spouse.<sup>103</sup>

Sometime towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Sayetkhan and her son 'Azir passed away. Sayetkhan's only surviving child, Gül'azar, inherited most of their shares in movable and immovable property.<sup>104</sup> With the death of a distant family

member, Gül'azar further increased her property portfolio. She received over two-thirds of shares of a sixteen-room house, valued at 12,500 *куруş*, and six shops, each estimated at 3,000 to 5,000 *куруş*.<sup>105</sup> At the time, Gül'azar was one of the richest women in Amman and the eastern Balqa'. Gül'azar re-registered all her properties in the land registry, with cross-referenced records of prior court-sanctioned transactions, because she wished to establish a legally traceable history of succession should she find a prospective buyer. In 1912, Gül'azar and her family sold their sixteen-room house and six shops to Salti merchant Yusuf al-Sukkar, who paid them 98,340 *куруş*, almost triple the estimated price in the land registry.<sup>106</sup> Al-Sukkar must have appreciated the strategic importance and economic potential of Amman, which was still several times smaller than Salt, and moved in to secure prime real estate in the up-and-coming town.

During the preceding decade, various members of Gül'azar's family utilized two Ottoman institutions in the area—the Salt shari'a court, to increase and consolidate their liquid capital, and the Salt land registry, to ensure their legal titles to the land and other real estate holdings. Through these two institutions, North Caucasian *muhajirs* affirmed their property rights and negotiated their position as equal partners within the socioeconomic fabric of the Balqa'. Gül'azar's family history is not a typical refugee story. Neither is it atypical, as dozens of *muhajir* families prospered during the economic rise of Ottoman Amman, similar to other immigrant families across the country that, through land registration and real estate speculation, managed to forge a fortune in the final decades of imperial rule.

#### CONCLUSION

Amman expanded from a town of 3,000 to 5,000 residents on the eve of World War I to an urban sprawl of over 4 million people by 2015.<sup>107</sup> Over the past century, Amman grew thanks to an influx of new, larger waves of refugees and immigrants: Armenians after 1915, Palestinians in 1948 and 1967, Iraqis since 2003, and Syrians since 2011. Yet the economic basis laid out by Circassian *muhajirs*, together with Levantine merchants and first Transjordanian residents, was pivotal to the growth of the eastern Balqa' region.

In the late Ottoman period, Circassian refugees established lasting urban settlements, created new chains of supply and demand, and served as intermediaries for bedouin produce in regional markets. Their settlements prompted registration and resale of land by Transjordanian communities and attracted Syrian and Palestinian merchants, who invested their capital in commerce and set up cash-oriented agricultural estates. The state was crucial to the success of *muhajirs* because it provided a legal-economic framework, based on the 1857 Immigration Law and the 1858 Land Code, that was favorable to new agricultural settlers. Facilitated by the land registry and the shari'a court in Salt, this framework proved functional in central Transjordan. The construction of the Hijaz Railway, which was funded by the state, was also instrumental in bringing Syrian capital to Amman. In other words, *muhajirs* were successful in the Balqa' region because, through their agricultural and artisanal labor, they tapped into the needs of the Levantine economy and because the empire created institutions that allowed an emerging real estate market to flourish.

The Circassian settlements in the Balqa' were but a southernmost patch of a vast network of *muhajir* villages across the Ottoman Empire. In the marshes of Çukurova,

the plateaus of Uzunyayla, and the mountains of Kurdistan, North Caucasian *muhajirs* built agricultural settlements on the land granted to them by the government. Their villages—and those of Crimean, Cretan, Bosnian, Albanian, Balkan Turkish, and other refugees—took up the cultivation of cereals and various cash crops, engaged with interior and coastal merchants, and, whether they thrived or failed, altered the economic dynamics within their host regions. The participation of *muhajirs* in the registration, transfer, and sale of land or usufruct rights to land, in accordance with the government's requirements, entrenched localized variations of the post-1858 property regime, which opened up the empire to new forms of capital accumulation.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Land and Survey (Da'irat al-Arabi wa-l-Masaha, Amman; henceforth cited as DLS) Defer 10/1/1, f. 40, #7–20, f. 47, #22, 24–35 (July–September 1912).

<sup>2</sup>*Muhajirs* were Muslim immigrants, most of them refugees, from the Crimea, the Caucasus, the Balkans, North Africa, and Afghanistan. The term *muhajir* draws on the long legacy of *hijra*, or Muslim emigration, in Islamic history. In the late Ottoman period, it acquired anticolonial and Pan-Islamic sentiments. The term encompasses and overlaps with the English-language terms *refugee*, *immigrant*, and *emigrant*.

<sup>3</sup>Jordan Department of Population Statistics, 2015 Census, accessed 19 June 2017, [http://census.dos.gov.jo/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/04/No\\_of\\_pop\\_depard\\_on\\_gov.pdf](http://census.dos.gov.jo/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/04/No_of_pop_depard_on_gov.pdf). On North Caucasian *muhajirs* in Transjordan, see Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 96–123; Raouf Sa'd Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan: The Frontier of Settlement in Transjordan, 1850–1914* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1989), 197–216; Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91–133; and Anastasiia A. Ganich, *Cherkesy v Iordanii: Osobennosti Istoricheskogo i Etnokul'turnogo Razvitiia* (Moscow: ISAA MGU, 2007). For Jordanian-Circassian accounts, see Mohammad Kheir Haghandoqa, *The Circassians: Origin, History, Customs, Traditions, Immigration to Jordan* (Amman: Rafidi Print, 1985); Shawkat Mufti, *Heroes and Emperors in Circassian History* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1972); Jawdat Hilmi Nashkhu, *Tarikh al-Sharkas (al-Adigha) wa-l-Shishan fi Liwa'i Hawran wa-l-Balqa' (1878–1920)* (Amman: Lajnat Tarikh al-Urdun, 1998); and Muhammad Khayr Mamsir Batsaj, *al-Mawsu'a al-Tarikhyya li-l-Umma al-Sharkasiyya "al-Adigha": Min al-Alf al-'Ashir ma qabla al-Milad ila al-Alf al-Thalith ma b'ada al-Milad*, vols. 4 and 5 (Amman: Dar al-Wa'il, 2009). For an excellent anthropological study, see Seteney Shami, "Ethnicity and Leadership: The Circassians in Jordan" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982).

<sup>4</sup>On the al-Sukkar family, see Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 118–19.

<sup>5</sup>Ottoman land registers for the Salt district are kept at the DLS in Amman. For a catalogue of land registers, see Hind Abu al-Sha'r, *Sijillat al-Arabi fi-l-Urdun, 1876–1960* (Mafraq, Jordan: Jami'at Al al-Bayt, 2002). On prior work with Salt land registers, see Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*; Michael R. Fischbach, *State, Society, and Land in Jordan* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); and Martha Mundy and Richard S. Smith, *Governing Property, Making the Modern State: Law, Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007). Copies of Arabic-language court records for the Salt district are preserved at the Center of Documents and Manuscripts (Markaz al-Watha'iq wa-l-Makhtutat, henceforth cited as CDM), University of Jordan, Amman. For a catalogue of court records, see Muhammad 'Adnan Bakhit, *Kashshaf Ihsa'i Zamani li-Sijillat al-Mahakim al-Shar'iyya wa-l-Awqaf al-Islamiyya fi Bilad al-Sham* (Amman: Jami'a al-Urduniyya, 1984).

<sup>6</sup>See Khayr al-Din Zirikli, *Aman fi 'Amman: Mudhakkirat 'Amayn fi 'Asimat Sharq al-Urdun* (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-'Arabiyya, 1925); and Eugene Rogan, "The Making of a Capital: Amman, 1918–1928," in *Amman: Ville et Société*, ed. Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami (Beirut: Cermoc, 1996), 89–107. On Mandate-era

Transjordan, see Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>7</sup>See Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); and Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup>Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878–1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), esp. 17–42.

<sup>9</sup>See Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000); Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>For a seminal study of Amman that integrates the Ottoman and Mandate periods, see Marwan D. Hanania, “From Colony to Capital: A Socio-Economic and Political History of Amman, 1878–1958” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2010). See also Hind Abu al-Sha’r and Nufan Hamud, *‘Amman fi al-‘Ahd al-Hashimi*, vol. 1, 1916–1952 (Amman: Greater Amman Municipality, 2004); Nufan Hamud, *‘Amman wa-Jiwaruha Khilal al-Fatra 1864–1921* (Amman: Business Bank Publications, 1996); Rogan, “The Making of a Capital”; ‘Abd Allah Rashid, *Malamih al-Hayaa al-Sha’biyya fi Madinat ‘Amman, 1878–1948* (Amman: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1983); and Jane M. Hacker, *Modern ‘Amman: A Social Study* (Durham: University of Durham, 1960).

<sup>11</sup>On the demographic-sectarian thesis, see Mark Pinson, “Demographic Warfare: An Aspect of Ottoman and Russian Policy, 1854–1866” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1970); it also constitutes a dominant paradigm in the Balkan and Armenian historiography. On the centralization thesis with respect to nomadic territories, see Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*.

<sup>12</sup>Martha Mundy, “The State of Property: Late Ottoman Southern Syria, the Kaza of ‘Ajlun (1875–1918),” in *Constituting Modernity: Private Property in the East and West*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 214–47; Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*; and Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*.

<sup>13</sup>Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 90–92.

<sup>14</sup>Estimates for Muslim emigration from tsarist Russia vary. See Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 27, 69–70; McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, 36, 53n45; and Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 25–26.

<sup>15</sup>See David C. Cuthell, “The Circassian Sürgün,” *Ab Imperio* 2 (2003): 139–68; Kemal H. Karpat, “The Status of the Muslim under European Rule: The Eviction and Settlement of the Çerkes,” *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1 (1979): 7–27; and Georgii A. Dzidzariia, *Makhadzhrstvo i Problemy Istorii Abkhazii XIX Stoletii* (Sukhumi: Alashara, 1975). Since the 1990s, several Circassian organizations within Russia and in diaspora called to recognize the expulsion of the Circassian population as a genocide; see Walter Richmond, *The Circassian Genocide* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2013).

<sup>16</sup>See Dmitrii Iu. Arapov et al., *Severnyi Kavkaz v Sostave Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), 155–83; and James H. Meyer, “Immigration, Return, and the Politics of Citizenship: Russian Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, 1860–1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 15–32.

<sup>17</sup>See Abdullah Saydam, *Kırım ve Kafkas Göçleri, 1856–1876* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997); and İzzet Aydemir, *Göç: Kuzey Kafkasya’dan Göç Tarihi* (Ankara: Gelişim Matbaası, 1988).

<sup>18</sup>Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, 115–16.

<sup>19</sup>I use dates from *ibid.*, 116–17; and Abujafer, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 215. Hanania dates the establishment of Sweileh and al-Sukhna to, respectively, 1907 and 1912; “From Colony to Capital,” 69–70. Al-Zarqa’ and Sweileh became mixed Chechen-Circassian settlements already in the Ottoman period. On al-Zarqa’, see Hind Abu al-Sha’r and ‘Abd Allah Mutlaq ‘Assaf, *Al-Zarqa’: al-Nash’ah wa-l-Tatawwur, 1903–1935* (Amman: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 2013).

<sup>20</sup>Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 76n26.

<sup>21</sup>See Eugene Rogan, “Turkuman of al-Ruman: An Ottoman Settlement in South-Eastern Syria,” *Arabic Historical Review for Ottoman Studies* 1–2 (1990): 91–106.

<sup>22</sup>On sedentarization of tribes, a major project that went in hand with refugee settlement, see Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup>Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 45–47.



<sup>24</sup>“Arrêtées par le Gouvernement Impérial au Sujet de la Colonisation en Turquie” (25 February 1857), in *Législation Ottomane, ou Recueil des Lois, Règlements, Ordonnances, Traités, Capitulations et autres Documents Officiels de l’Empire Ottoman*, by Grégoire Aristarchi Bey (Istanbul: Frères Nicolaïdes, 1873–88), 16–19.

<sup>25</sup>See David C. Cuthell, “The Muhacirin Komisyonu: An Agent in the Transformation of Ottoman Anatolia, 1860–1866” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2005); and Ella Fratantuono, “Migration Administration in the Making of the Late Ottoman Empire” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2016).

<sup>26</sup>The 1857 law specified exemption from military service for twenty-five years and from taxes for six years in Rumelia and twelve years in Anatolia. By 1878, military service and taxation exemptions went down to ten and three years, respectively, and were further cut to six years and one year in 1881. An exemption from military service for North Caucasian *muhajirs* was removed altogether in 1888; see Nedim İpek, *Rumeli’den Anadolu’ya Türk Göçleri, 1877–1890* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), 221–23; and Fasikh Baderkhan, *Severokavkazskaia diaspora v Turtsii, Sirii i Jordanii: vtoraiia polovina XIX–pervaia polovina XX veka* (Moscow: IV RAN, 2001), 66.

<sup>27</sup>See Quataert, “The 1858 Land Law,” in *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2:856–61; Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*; and Huri İslamoğlu, “Property as a Contested Domain: A Reevaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858,” in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. Roger Owen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3–61. For the text of the Ottoman Land Code, see Stanley Fisher, *Ottoman Land Laws: Containing the Ottoman Land Code and Later Legislation Affecting Land* (London: Oxford University Press, 1919).

<sup>28</sup>On the *yoklama* registration, see Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*, 70.

<sup>29</sup>The buyer paid a valuation tax in the amount of 3 percent of the purchase price of the property, alongside the cost of a title deed, which ranged from four to 7.5 *kuruş*, and an administrative fee of one *kuruş*. If property had not been registered, the seller was required to obtain a title first through the *yoklama* and pay relevant taxes and fees before selling it. The land registry then charged a vendor and a buyer a 1.5 percent tax each.

<sup>30</sup>See Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “Landlords, Nomads and Refugees: Struggles Over Land and Population Movements in North-Western Anatolia, 1877–1914” (PhD diss., Birkbeck College, University of London, 2003); and Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, 99–101.

<sup>31</sup>See Chris Gratien, “The Ottoman Quagmire: Malaria, Swamps, and Settlement in the Late Ottoman Mediterranean,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 583–604.

<sup>32</sup>The term is coined by Rogan; see *Frontiers of the State*, 85–92. For a similar process in western Anatolia, see Terzibaşoğlu, “Landlords, Nomads and Refugees,” 134–35, 137.

<sup>33</sup>Although Amman lacked a permanent settlement by the time the Circassians arrived, it was not uninhabited. The al-Hadid clan of the Balqawiyya tribal confederation long claimed and cultivated some lands around Amman; see Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 195, 203–4. By the 1870s, the al-Fayiz clan of the Bani Sakhr camped out by the springs in summer and owned a mill there; see Mustafa B. Hamarneh, “Amman in British Travel Accounts of the 19th Century,” in *Amman: Ville et Société*, ed. Hannover and Shami, 66. By 1872, the Damascus provincial government knew of 200 households tilling the land in Amman; see Nufan Hamud, “Amman fi Awakhir al-‘Ahd al-‘Uthmani: Dirasa fi Tatawwur Awda’iha al-Idariyya wa-l-Iqtisadiyya wa-l-Iqtisadiyya,” in *Amman: Ville et Société*, ed. Hannover and Shami, 85. In 1876, an English traveler confirmed that Salti residents set up farms a few miles from the ruins of Amman; see Charles M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888), 1:18.

<sup>34</sup>See a report produced by Kamil Paşa, an Ottoman official, and dated 6 October 1878 in Halil Sahillioğlu, “A Project for the Creation of Amman Vilayet,” in *Studies in Ottoman Economic and Social History*, ed. Halil Sahillioğlu (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1999), 175–88; and Hanania, “From Colony to Capital,” 43, 46–52.

<sup>35</sup>Haghandoqa, *Circassians*, 33, 38. By the 1950s, the stream resembled open sewers and was encased in a culvert and buried underground. One of the few contemporary reminders of the stream is the name of a popular street in downtown Amman, Saqf al-Sayl, meaning “ceiling of the stream.”

<sup>36</sup>Seteney Shami, “The Circassians of Amman: Historical Narratives, Urban Dwelling and the Construction of Identity,” in *Amman: Ville et Société*, ed. Hannover and Shami, 303–22; and Hanania, “From Colony to Capital,” 52–55.

<sup>37</sup>Two contemporary observers made different prognoses of the Circassians’ chances in Transjordan. Laurence Oliphant expressed optimism about the survival of the Circassian agricultural settlement in Amman;

see *Land of Gilead, with Excursions in the Lebanon* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1880), 221. Claude Reignier Conder expected them to “die out by degrees or become scattered among the indigenous population”; see *Heth and Moab: Explorations in Syria in 1881 and 1882* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), 162.

<sup>38</sup>Shami, “The Circassians of Amman,” 308.

<sup>39</sup>Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 199.

<sup>40</sup>My calculations are based on transactions registered as *da'imi* in DLS Defters 5/1/1, 7/1/1, 30/1/2, and 31/1/2. In Ottoman Syria, including Transjordan, a *dönüm* measured 939.9 square meters and was divided into four *evlek* or 1,600 *arşın*. A hectare amounts to 10.64 *dönüm*. One hundred *kuruş* equaled a gold lira, and a *kurş* was divided into 40 *para*. British pounds were also in circulation, and French francs were a currency of choice, especially in land transactions in and around Amman.

<sup>41</sup>DLS Defter 18/1/1, ff. 123–30, #25–77 (November–December 1893); 19/1/1, ff. 43–46, #28–44 (December 1896–January 1897).

<sup>42</sup>Shami, “The Circassians of Amman,” 310–11. On earlier cases of intra-Circassian contestation of land, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives), BEO 251/18789 (5 August 1893) and 277/20728 (16 September 1893).

<sup>43</sup>The ‘Adwan were dominant in the western Balqa’ until the late 1860s, but lost many lands due to the Ottoman-led land registration. The Balqawiyya alliance included the ‘Adwan, ‘Ajarma, Balqawiyya, Bani Hasan, Bani Hamida, Da’ja, al-Hadid, Saltiyya, and other tribes and clans. The Bani Sakhr were a dominant tribe to the east of the pilgrimage route, or the Hijaz Railway; see Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 29–30; and Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 68, 184–85, 203–4.

<sup>44</sup>Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 203–10. On bedouin’s management of land in the late Ottoman Salt district, see Nora Barakat, “An Empty Land? Nomads and Property Administration in Hamidian Syria” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2015).

<sup>45</sup>Rogan cites bedouin attacks on Amman and Wadi al-Sir in 1894; *Frontiers of the State*, 75. Anzor Kushkhabiev cites armed clashes between *muhajirs* and bedouin in 1904 and 1907, both over land; *Cherkesy v Sirii* (Nalchik, Russia: El’-Fa, 1993), 83–85.

<sup>46</sup>Haghandoqa, *Circassians*, 44–46; Shami, “The Circassians of Amman,” 312–15. Mufti cites 1900 as the date of the conflict; *Heroes and Emperors*, 275–76. Abujaber cites 1904; *Pioneers over Jordan*, 211.

<sup>47</sup>Haghandoqa, *Circassians*, 44–45.

<sup>48</sup>For a foray into the historiography of the late Ottoman justice system, see Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006); and Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The Salt shari‘a court exercised jurisdiction over all types of legal inquiries due to the absence of a Nizamiye court in the Balqa’.

<sup>49</sup>CDM Defters Salt 6 and 7 (August 1901–February 1903).

<sup>50</sup>For published court records from Ottoman Amman, see Salah Yusuf Qazan, ‘*Amman fi Matla’ al-Qarn al-‘Ashrin: al-Sijill al-Shar’i al-Awwal li-Nahiyat ‘Amman, 1319–1326 H/1902–1908 M, Dirasa wa-Tahqiq* (Amman: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 2002).

<sup>51</sup>Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, “The Hauran Conflicts of the 1860s: A Chapter in the Rural History of Modern Syria,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981): 159–79.

<sup>52</sup>The incorporation of the Levant into global markets was intertwined with the evolution in the practice of the 1858 Ottoman Land Code; see Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*, 51–52, 101–3; and Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, “Railways in the Political Economy of Southern Syria, 1890–1925,” in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation: Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaebler (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1998), 97–112.

<sup>53</sup>See Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 26–28; and James Reilly, “Status Groups and Property-Holding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828–1880,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21 (1989): 517–39.

<sup>54</sup>Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, “Violence in Rural Syria in the 1880s and 1890s: State Centralization, Rural Integration and the World Market,” in *Peasants and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Farhad Kazemi and John Waterbury (Miami, FL: Florida International University Press, 1991), 50–84; and Schilcher, “The Hauran Conflicts of the 1860s.”

<sup>55</sup>On the history of Salt, see Jurj Farid Tarif Dawud, *al-Salt wa-Jiwaruha* (Amman: Jordan Press Association, 1994); on Salti merchants, see Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 99–102; and on non-Circassian migration to Amman, see Hanania, “From Colony to Capital,” 75–79.

<sup>56</sup>DLS Defter 18/1/1, ff. 78–79, #13–16 (1891–95).

<sup>57</sup>Shammut served on the Education Council; see Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 118.

<sup>58</sup>Eugene Rogan, “Moneylending and Capital Flows from Nablus, Damascus, and Jerusalem to Qada’ al-Salt in the Last Decades of Ottoman Rule,” in *The Syrian Land in the 18th and 19th Century: The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience*, ed. Thomas Philipp (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1992), 239–60.

<sup>59</sup>The economy of the Balqa’ was closely tied to that of Nablus. The connection between Salt and Nablus remained strong enough for the two towns to be included, in 1867, within a new subprovince of Balqa’. On the shared history of Jabal Nablus and Balqa’, see Ihsan al-Nimr, *Tarikh Jabal Nablus wa-Balqa’*, 4 vols. (Damascus and Nablus, 1938–74); and Gad G. Gilbar, “Economic and Social Consequences of the Opening of New Markets: The Case of Nablus, 1870–1914,” in *Syrian Land*, ed. Philipp and Schaebler, 281–91.

<sup>60</sup>Murat Özyüksel, *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Modernity, Industrialisation and Ottoman Decline* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 123–24; and Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 160.

<sup>61</sup>Özyüksel, *Hejaz Railway*, 124.

<sup>62</sup>Michael E. Bonine, “The Introduction of Railroads in the Eastern Mediterranean: Economic and Social Impacts,” in *Syrian Land*, ed. Philipp and Schaebler, 53–78; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 66; and Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 53.

<sup>63</sup>Eugene Rogan, “Instant Communication: The Impact of the Telegraph in Ottoman Syria,” in *Syrian Land*, ed. Philipp and Schaebler, 113–28.

<sup>64</sup>Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 62.

<sup>65</sup>Adela Goodrich-Freer, *In a Syrian Saddle* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905), 101–2.

<sup>66</sup>My calculations are based on the price of transfer of usufruct rights (*bedel-i ferağ*) in CDM 5/1/1, 7/1/1, 10/1/1, 18/1/1, 19/1/1, 30/1/2, 31/1/2, and 32/1/2.

<sup>67</sup>On the old Damascene elites, see Khoury, *Urban Notables*; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1985); and Albert Hourani, “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>68</sup>Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 26–27; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 99–112; and Gilbar, “The Case of Nablus.”

<sup>69</sup>Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 21.

<sup>70</sup>The Sa’di family was among the early Syrian merchants trading on the Transjordanian nomadic frontier. Muhammad Khayru al-Sa’di, from the Maydan area of Damascus, came to Transjordan in the 1860s, trading in cattle and then selling clothing to bedouin for wool and butter; see Abla M. Amawi, “The Transjordanian State and the Enterprising Merchants of Amman,” in *Amman: Ville et Société*, ed. Hannover and Shami, 112.

<sup>71</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 235–38, #25, 28–30 (1908–10), ff. 283–84, #7 (March–April 1905); 32/1/2, ff. 57–58, #44–45 (March–April 1910), ff. 81–82, #4–5 (July–August 1910).

<sup>72</sup>DLS Defter 32/1/2, ff. 23–24, #154 (March–April 1910).

<sup>73</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 375–76, #60–61 (1903–10).

<sup>74</sup>DLS Defter 10/1/1, f. 4, #34 (1910–12).

<sup>75</sup>The ‘Asfurs established a prominent mercantile dynasty in Jordan. Yusuf ‘Asfur was the first president of the Amman Chamber of Commerce. In the Mandate period, Mithqal ‘Asfur, with other merchant families, established the Jordanian cigarette industry; see Abla M. Amawi, “The Consolidation of the Merchant Class in Transjordan during the Second World War,” in *Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modern Jordan*, ed. Eugene Rogan and Tariq Tell (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 179. DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 237–38, #31 (1908–9); 32/1/2, ff. 125–26, #28, ff. 153–54, #34 (1910–12); 10/1/1, f. 40, #67 (1912).

<sup>76</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 332–33, #35 (1903–10).

<sup>77</sup>DLS Defter 32/1/2, ff. 345–46, #91 (November–December 1912).

<sup>78</sup>DLS Defter 32/1/2, ff. 315–16, #40, ff. 341–42, #78 (September–October 1912). Batau engaged in money-lending across the Balqa’, providing his services to the Bani Sakhr shaykh Rumayh ibn Fayiz, which

resulted in Batatu's obtaining land in Bani Sakhr territories; see Fischbach, *State, Society, and Land in Jordan*, 57. On the Abu Jabir family, see Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*.

<sup>79</sup>Amawi, "The Consolidation of the Merchant Class," 165; Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*, 100–102.

<sup>80</sup>Syrian and Palestinian mercantile families came to dominate the Amman Chamber of Commerce, the country's first and major economic association, which was established in 1923; see Pete W. Moore, *Doing Business in the Middle East: Politics and Economic Crisis in Jordan and Kuwait* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57–81; and Amawi, "The Consolidation of the Merchant Class."

<sup>81</sup>See Mohammad Kheir Haghandoqa, ed., *Mirza Pasha Wasfi: Kitab Watha'iqi, Marhala min Tarikh Bilad al-Sham min Khilal Watha'iq Mirza Pasha* (Amman: Royal Scientific Society, 1994).

<sup>82</sup>On land prices in central Palestine and the 'Ajlun district, see, respectively, Ruth Kark, "The Contribution of the Ottoman Regime to the Development of Jerusalem and Jaffa, 1840–1917," in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1986), 46–58; and Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*, 143.

<sup>83</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 326–27, #1–3 (July–August 1893); ff. 332–33, #31–33 (1909–10); 32/1/2, ff. 221–22, #162–63 (July–August 1893), ff. 246–47, #20–22 (1911–12); 10/1/1, f. 37, #20–21 (February–March 1912).

<sup>84</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 275–76, #40, ff. 341–44, #82, 95 (1903–10); 32/1/2, ff. 55–56, #33 (1910–12).

<sup>85</sup>DLS 19/1/1, ff. 43–44, #29 (December 1896–January 1897), ff. 361–62, #98–101 (1898–99); 32/1/2, ff. 81–82, #74 (June–July 1910).

<sup>86</sup>DLS Defter 32/1/2, ff. 127–28, #41–51 (July–August 1893, December 1910–January 1911), ff. 271–74, #47–50 (April–May 1912).

<sup>87</sup>DLS Defter 18/1/1, ff. 98–101, #69–85, ff. 142–43, #83–98 (1894–95). Eugene Rogan argued that water mills were usually held in joint ownership in the Salt district because they required significant investment. See "Reconstructing Water Mills in Late Ottoman Transjordan," *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 5 (1992): 753.

<sup>88</sup>See Amawi, "The Enterprising Merchants of Amman."

<sup>89</sup>See George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, Especially in Relation to the History of Israel and of the Early Church*, 10th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), 19–20, 668; Freer, *In a Syrian Saddle*, 104–6; Ganich, *Cherkesy v Iordanii*, 64–69; and Hanania, "From Colony to Capital," 61–67.

<sup>90</sup>Freer, *In a Syrian Saddle*, 104–5; Ganich, *Cherkesy v Iordanii*, 68; Kushkhabiev, *Cherkesy v Sirii*, 95.

<sup>91</sup>Abujaber, *Pioneers over Jordan*, 108.

<sup>92</sup>See Musa 'Ali Janib, *Muwatin Sharkasi Yatahaddath 'an Masqat Ra'sihi* (Amman: al-Mu'allif, 2006); and author's interview with Janib, Wadi al-Sir, 11 August 2014.

<sup>93</sup>The purchase of wheat by Circassians from bedouin "tent-dwellers," most likely of the Hamida tribe from around Salt, is attested in court documents. The bedouin were represented in court by a member of the al-Sahadi family, Damascene grain merchants who moved to Salt and bought houses in Amman. See CDM Defter Salt 7, #19, 53; Salt 11, ff. 53–54 (August–October 1903); DLS Defter 32/1/2, ff. 129–30, #1 (1907); ff. 173–74, #36 (1910).

<sup>94</sup>The "corn" may have referred to wheat or barley in this period. See Lees, "Journey East of Jordan," cited in Hacker, *Modern Amman*, 17; see also Khalil al-Khatib in Hanania, "From Colony to Capital," 76.

<sup>95</sup>Interview at the Circassian Charitable Association, Amman, 14 August 2014.

<sup>96</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 353–54, #50–60 (1897–1898).

<sup>97</sup>On women and Ottoman law, see Judith Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). On women's claims of land ownership, see Mundy and Smith, *Governing Property*, 167–77.

<sup>98</sup>CDM Defter Salt 6, f. 53 (15 November 1901).

<sup>99</sup>CDM Defter Salt 6, ff. 6–8 (12 August 1901).

<sup>100</sup>CDM Defter Salt 6, ff. 49–50 (14 November 1901).

<sup>101</sup>CDM Defter Salt 7, #54 (8 March 1902).

<sup>102</sup>CDM Defter Salt 6, f. 70 (6 December 1901); Salt 9, f. 159 (10 February 1903); Salt 7, #237 (19 February 1903). The Khayr family established itself in Salt, when Muhammad Khayr Abu Qura bought shares of Balqawiyya tribal lands in al-Rajib and Abu 'Alinda in 1883; see Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 111n50.

<sup>103</sup>CDM Defter Salt 7, #198 (13 October 1902).

<sup>104</sup>DLS Defter 31/1/2, ff. 355–58, #61–71; ff. 357–60, #72–82 (December 1909–January 1910).

<sup>105</sup>DLS Defter 10/1/1, ff. 46–47, #15–21 (July–August 1912).

<sup>106</sup>DLS Defter 10/1/1, f. 40, #7–20, f. 47, #22, 24–35 (July–September 1912).

<sup>107</sup>Shami, “Ethnicity and Leadership,” 50; Jordan Department of Population Statistics, 2015 Census.