

# Socio-Economic Relations in the Şālihiya Quarter : Sharia Court Registers in 19th Century Damascus (2)

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The main purpose of this article is to elucidate socio-economic relations of the people in the Şālihiya Quarter by examining five volumes of the Şālihiya court registers during the period of 1290-95/1873-78, including one newly found volume.

1. Among all transactions registered, purchases occupy one-third of them (275 cases), while lease contracts are 7.9% (64 cases), much fewer than the former. Half of purchase documents deal with houses (149 cases, 46.3%), though lease contracts of houses are very few (only four cases). More than two-thirds of lease contracts refer to agricultural gardens/orchards (51 cases, 73.9%). Shops are sold in 22 cases (6.8% of the total) and leased only in three cases (4.3%).

2. Houses are mostly under private ownership (*milk* property). The average price of houses sold with land is 236.0 piastre per *qirāt* (entire house may have cost 5664 piastre).

3. The main body (land/building) of shops and gardens/orchards were usually leased from waqf properties, at low prices averaging 4.21 piastre per *qirāt* for agricultural land, while capital assets for production at shops/farm land under private ownership were sold or leased at a much higher price.

4. Average inheritance amount was 3510.5 piastre per case (784.2 piastre per inheritor). Though properties inherited by non-adults were usually lent to their guardians and other relatives with interest amounting to 15% of the debt, their properties decreased year by year in spite of interest income, for their expenses had to be deducted from their total properties.