

HANDOUT # 2

New York's Syrian Quarter, Cromwell Childe. New York Times. New York, NY, August 20, 1899, Excerpts.

Let it not be thought that this quarter is devoid of charm, that is not worth a visit, and more than one. This forward is written merely to disabuse the minds of those who have read that it possess extraordinary romance. Syria down in Washington Street show nothing beyond a fez and again an occasional headdress of black on the part of women. The dancing girls...are few in number.

Michael Kaydouh meets me at the doorway of Sadi's shop at the corner of Rector street where I have been sipping Syrian arak...A wonderful shop, this of the liqueurs, American groceries, swords, lamps, glass bracelets of many colors, Oriental embroideries, water pipes... and their fixings.

There are plenty of low grade groceries and restaurants for the colony's 3,000 Syrians are poor. But, many of those Orientals are well off, comparatively. Kaydouh, save for his olive skin and his cast of features, scarcely seems a Syrian at all. His English is pure and has little foreign accent. He is a wholesale merchant on this self same block with his uncle, Tadrose, of Syrian wares, and young as he is, he is becoming a sort of "godfather" to the poor of the colony. Americanized completely already he may yet become a political leader to the quarter, and swing the Syrian vote.

There are about a half dozen and more of these restaurants, the greatest of which is perhaps Arta's. Arta is a magnificent specimen of the modern Syrian, broad shouldered, massive 6 feet tall, in his stockings, far over 200 pounds... They call Arta the "Mayor of Washington Street" a title of great honor. A man of mark in this colony, he yet does not speak a syllable of English. It is not necessary. He comes into no touch with the outer world, and none but Syrians wander to eat and drink into his store.... Chess is a game much resembling checkers which provides the amusement of those cafes, and in their dimly lighted depths, many of them being more burrows in basements, roughly clad men, peddlers returned from a journeying, may be seen playing for hours.