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The War of Famine:  
Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918)

by

Melanie Tanielian

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in

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The War of Famine: Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918)

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## Abstract

The War of Famine:  
Everyday Life in Wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon (1914-1918)

By

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World War I, no doubt, was a pivotal event in the history of the Middle East, as it marked the transition from empires to nation states. Taking Beirut and Mount Lebanon as a case study, the dissertation focuses on the experience of Ottoman civilians on the homefront and exposes the paradoxes of the Great War, in its totalizing and transformative nature. Focusing on the causes and symptoms of what locals have coined the ‘war of famine’ as well as on international and local relief efforts, the dissertation demonstrates how wartime privations fragmented the citizenry, turning neighbor against neighbor and brother against brother, and at the same time enabled social and administrative changes that resulted in the consolidation and strengthening of bureaucratic hierarchies and patron-client relationships.

This dissertation is a detailed analysis of socio-economic challenges that the war posed for Ottoman subjects, focusing primarily on the distorting effects of food shortages, disease, wartime requisitioning, confiscations and conscriptions on everyday life as well as on the efforts of the local municipality and civil society organizations to provision and care for civilians. Although all residents of Beirut and Mount Lebanon took part in the same war, their experiences were often different, mediated by existing gender and class differences and communal belongings, which the international conflict – and concomitant interventions by the state as well as international relief agencies – both exposed and exacerbated. The war aggravated the inequalities embedded in late Ottoman and European colonial definitions of citizenship, since class and communal affiliation determined people's access to food, their ability to avoid conscription, fight disease, obtain provisions, and secure relief funds. Moreover, mutual sacrifice, collective martyrdom and communal resistance rule loom large in state-sponsored national narratives about World War I. Post-colonial Lebanon is no exception. This dissertation reveals how attempts to construct a dominant 'collective' memory of World War I to promote national unity served to mask the continued perpetuation of social inequalities and contributed to tensions within post-independence Lebanese society.

This dissertation contributes to the general scholarship of World War I, which so far has dismissed the experience of civilians on the Ottoman homefront as peripheral. Second it shifts the historiographical focus of World War I in the Middle East as a political diplomatic event, toward it being understood as a dynamic social, economic and political process the outcome of

which was dependent as much on the immediate necessities of war, its political economy and strain on civilians, as on long-term historical developments that had left the region vulnerable to the wartime disruptions in the world market and hence more susceptible to famine. Third, this social history of World War I in the Middle East outlines interactions between the Ottoman military authorities, provincial representatives of the state, municipal council members, religious leaders, greedy merchants, bakers and local law enforcement agencies and their relations to the urban and rural poor, that force us to rethink common perceptions of Ottoman tyranny and ambivalence in regards to its civilians and poses a challenge to sectarian interpretations of the war experience on the homefront.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Politisches Archive des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, Germany
ACSAR	American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief
ARC	American Red Cross
AUB	American University Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon
BEY	Archive of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy, Beirut, Lebanon
Bkerke	Archive of the Maronite Patriarch, Bkerke, Lebanon
FKS	Fliedner Kultur Stiftung, Kaiserswerth, Germany
GCA	Archives of the Greek Catholic Archdiocese, Beirut, Lebanon
GCCA	Greek-Catholic Charity Association, Beirut, Lebanon
HL	Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, United States
HI	Hoover Institute, Stanford University, Palo Alto, United States
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
LNA	Lebanese National Archive, Beirut, Lebanon
NEF	Near East Foundation
NER	Near East Relief
NEST	Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon
PO	Archive Proche-Orient, Beirut, Lebanon
SKA	Stanley Kerr Archive, Zoryan Institute, Toronto, Canada
SPC	Syrian Protestant College
StPH	Archives of St. Paul, Harissa, Lebanon
USEK	Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, Lebanon
USJ	St. Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon



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## INTRODUCTION

### The War of Famine

*On October first, the year 1918,  
A wonderful sight in our village was seen:  
Guns popping, flags flying, sky rockets went up:  
We were so excited we hardly could sup:  
The Turks had all left us, the British were near:  
Our troubles were over, we knew peace was here.  
Hurrah for the Arab nations—three cheers!  
Away with all sorrows and sighing and tears:  
The people are happy because they all know  
That their Arab nation in freedom may grow.*  
(Anonymous ten-year-old American girl)<sup>1</sup>

On Sunday September 29, 1918, a violent earthquake like “a super-titanic Dog took the world by the scruff of its neck” and shook the city of Beirut as if to forewarn its inhabitants that great change was on its way.<sup>2</sup> Only two days later Ottoman officials stationed in the provincial capital fled under cover of darkness, marking the beginning of the end of the multi-ethnic empire that had ruled the region for four hundred years.<sup>3</sup> It is well known that the end of World War I (1914-1918) meant the division of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire by the victors of the war and years of colonial occupation to come. A group of European politicians and diplomats sat around tables in Paris in 1919 and made it their prerogative to draw a new political map of the Middle East based on British, French and Zionist interests and with the strokes of their pens determined the regions national futures.<sup>4</sup> The immediate concerns and requests of the region’s inhabitants, in the meantime, were buried at the bottom of piles of papers on the oak desks in Paris. The fact that for civilians of the vast Ottoman Empire the Great War was first and foremost a demographic and economic catastrophe of world-historical proportion was then and still continuous to be largely forgotten. Mass conscription, famine, deportations and genocide were the realities on the Ottoman homefront. In the course of four seemingly endless years of war, the Ottomans had mobilized the extraordinary number of 2,85 million men, between fifteen and fifty-five, to fight what—we now with historical hindsight know—would be a losing battle. By the end of the war, the empire had lost a fourth of that army and the civilian mortality in parts surpassed nineteen percent.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wadad Makdisi Cortas, *A World I Loved* (New York: Nation Books, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.17.2. Frederick Bliss “Retrospect: (1914-1919).”

<sup>3</sup> Ḥassān Ḥallāq, ed. *Mudhakkirāt Salīm ‘Alī Salām (1868-1938): ma ‘a dirāsah lil- ‘alāqāt al- ‘Uthmānīyah al- ‘Arabīyah wa ‘alāqāt al-Faransīyah al-Lubnānīyah* (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-Jāmi‘īyah, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> A secret agreement between the Russians, French and British that divided up the territories of the Ottoman Empire according to Entente interests had already been reached in form of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May of 1916. In addition, the British agreed to work for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, articulated in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. For an account of the negotiations in Paris, see Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> It has to be pointed out that casualty figures are educated guesses and there is no consensus among historians as to mortalities among soldiers and civilians. The historians Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker give some

Moreover, food shortages were so severe that civilians in the Ottoman territories saw their cost of living rise to unprecedented levels and at a much higher rate than civilians in for example Paris, London and Berlin.<sup>6</sup> For example, the price of wheat in Beirut, according to one account, rose from by a factor of eight from five *ghurūsh* per *roṭl* in February 1916 to forty *ghurūsh* in November of the same year, whereas in Paris and London prices doubled and tripled in Berlin.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the crisis of civilian provisioning in some regions of the empire—urban Beirut and rural Mount Lebanon most notably—escalated into a full-fledged famine; a famine (or *majā‘ah*) so cruel and relentless that it would dominate the memory of World War I as the “war of famine” (or *ḥarb al-majā‘ah*) for generations.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the effects of the “war of famine” were so severe that by its end in 1918, all that seemed to have been left were cities filled with starving refugees and villages emptied of their young men if not all their residents and drained of their political opposition and exhausted from hunger.<sup>9</sup> So that when the earthquake—the prologue to the grand drama of colonial occupation—woke Beirutis in the early morning hours of September 29, some felt as if nature desperately tried to bury the memory of four long years of starvation, disease and death under layers of rubble.<sup>10</sup>

Taking Beirut and Mount Lebanon as a case study, this dissertation focuses on the experience of Ottoman civilians on the homefront. The objective—in the broadest sense—is to shift the historiographical focus of World War I in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire from being merely a political diplomatic event, toward it being understood as a dynamic social, economic and political process that left its mark on the composition and structure of society and on the psyche of the individual. Therein, it focuses away from the cigar smoke-filled bureaus on the European continent and the horrors of Gallipoli, toward the streets, municipal and church

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reasonable estimates locating the total casualties of the war around 9-10 million most of which were soldiers. Proportionally the “smaller” countries, according to Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker—experienced much greater losses. For example, Serbia lost 37 percent, the Ottomans around 27 percent, and Bulgaria 22 percent. Among the Great Powers, France experienced the greatest, i.e. about 16 percent of its soldiers, Germany 15.4 percent, Austria-Hungary 12.2, Britain 11.8 and Russia 11.5 percent. See Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker *14-18; Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 21; James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?: The Transformation of Modern Europe* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 100.

<sup>6</sup> A *roṭl* is the equivalent of 2.566 kg. AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, February 1916 and November 1916.

<sup>7</sup> These assertions are based on government records recording the changes in costs of living in Paris, London and Berlin from 1914-1919. Unfortunately there are no government statistics for Beirut, however, individual accounts and press clippings account for the at least eightfold increase in grain prices, at times the increase would be much higher. Still it is difficult to make any relevant comparisons since the chronologies and the nature of the increases vary from city to city. For example, Paris experienced the smallest quarterly increases until 1916, and the increase was only marginally superseded by London and Berlin. Beginning in the summer 1916, the trajectories of the three cities were very different, with Berlin’s cost of living increased by thirty percent compared to ten percent in London and twenty percent in Paris. The rise of prices is dependent on countless factors in each of the cities and cannot be taken out of their historical, social and political context without losing their meaning. In addition, it would be a stretch to claim that official numbers recorded are accurate, because governments would under-represent inflation to avoid unrests and demands for higher wages. While the figures are overall unsatisfying, here they are to simply serve as indicators and provide a broad idea as to the divergences between the cities in Europe and Beirut. For a more detailed account on the rise of prices, inflation, etc. in the European capitals see Jonathan Manning, “Wages and Purchasing Power,” in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, eds. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, (New York, 2007), 258ff.

<sup>8</sup> I am using the transliteration system of Arabic terms and names used by the *International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES).

<sup>9</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.17.2. Frederick Bliss “Retrospect: (1914-1919).”

<sup>10</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.17.2. Frederick Bliss “Retrospect: (1914-1919).”

offices, headquarters of volunteer organizations and dinner tables of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Scholars generally agree that the outcomes of the ‘war of famine’ were widened cleavages between rich and poor, shattered families and households, fragmented citizenry—turning neighbor against neighbor and brother against brother—and sharpened rifts between Muslims and Christians.<sup>11</sup>

With these devastating results in mind, the key concern here are the effects of wartime privations in general, and famine in particular, on everyday life in urban Beirut and rural Mount Lebanon. What were the particulars, the processes, and practices triggered by war and famine that circumscribed everyday life on the homefront? What strategies of survival did civilians employ? What characterized civilians’ interaction with local and imperial government agencies? What changes and shifts in interpersonal and inter-communal relationships were effected by the war? And most importantly, how did communal belongings, such as confession, socio-economic status, class, and gender mediate civilians’ experience of the war years? In how far, exactly, did class, political and confessional affiliation determine people's access to food, and their ability to avoid conscription, fight disease, obtain provisions, and secure relief funds? The answers to these questions lie in the socio-economic challenges the war posed for Ottoman subjects, i.e. “the war of famine.” A detailed analysis of the ‘war of famine,’ its causes, its horrors and its, until now unexamined, powers in reshaping local social and administrative structures, will shed light not only on the experience of Ottoman civilians on the homefront, but more importantly present an alternative to one-sided interpretations of Ottoman tyranny and the complete collapse of society. Instead, this dissertation will reveal the paradoxes and uneven effects of ‘total war,’ giving due attention to both its destructive and formative powers.

## Beirut and Mount Lebanon

The upheavals of war were felt early on in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. It was in the end of June 1914—a time when most affluent Beirutis would have escaped the heat of the city, and the tourist season in the cool resort towns of the neighboring mountains would be in full swing—when the news of the assassination of Austria’s heir to the throne created a ‘fire-storm’ in Mount Lebanon.<sup>12</sup> Upon hearing the reports, vacationing Syrian and Egyptian families instantly gathered up their belongings and hurried down to Beirut to catch the next boat, train or carriage to their homes.<sup>13</sup> The swift flight confirmed the worst fears of the locals. War would be imminent. The fears would be substantiated by the Ottomans’ general call to arms on August 14, 1914, months before the government in Istanbul publicly announced its ill-fated decision to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, on November 1.<sup>14</sup> Still, regardless of the widespread fears of an Entente attack on the Syrian coast and

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Yūsuf Hakīm, *Bayrūt wa-Lubnān*, 131.

<sup>13</sup> The majority of the hotels in Mount Lebanon remained closed for the duration of the war. AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, September 19, 1916; AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>14</sup> The Ottoman Empire signed a secret agreement with the Central Powers—Germany and Austria-Hungary—in August 1914, openly acknowledged its alliance at the end of October 1914, and announced its entrance into the war on October 31, 1914. For a detailed account of the decision-making process see Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

unremitting uncertainties, we know from the extensive and time-honored work of military historians that the Ottomans' military engagement was limited to the peripheral regions of the empire. The so-called interior regions such as Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the area of my inquiry, with the exception of a few targeted aerial bombardments, did not see any direct combat.<sup>15</sup> The question then is why write a history of war, where no "war" took place? In response it needs to be stressed here that despite the absence of any direct physical contact with the enemy, violence and death during these four years were common occurrences in both urban Beirut and rural Mount Lebanon. The victimization of civilians in the region ranged from direct killings, such as the Ottomans' execution of local politicians and intellectuals, to everyday forms of violence including hunger, disease and humiliation. It was a more subtle kind of war that penetrated everyday life and defined every minute of existence on the homefront. It was not enemy guns, but starvation and exposure to disease that caused mass death.<sup>16</sup>

In recent years historians of World War I in Europe have shifted their focus toward the homefront, emphasizing the concept of "total war" derived from General Erich Ludendorff's statement "total war meant total mobilization of all human and material resources for unlimited warfare under the control of a military dictatorship."<sup>17</sup> Herein, scholars have partially equated civilians' experience with that of soldiers in the trenches engaged in *direct* violent conflict. The gradual erosion of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, it has been argued, is one of the characteristics of modern war that would be most complete during World War I. The erasure of the division, however, did not place in a linear trajectory. Indeed, it grew after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in Central Europe, and in particular after Napoleon repeatedly violated it attacking non-combatants during his campaigns in the nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, European diplomats and politicians were eager to assure the difference between soldiers and civilians in warfare and codified it in various international agreements.<sup>18</sup> Since the agreements as to the legal and just conduct of warfare were generally honored in conflicts taking place in Europe, the elimination of the difference between soldiers and civilians during the Great War came as a total surprise for most Europeans. While historians have raised questions about its proper chronology and debated extensively the validity and the utility of the concept of "total war", here it is simply used to describe a war demanding sacrifices not only the military, but also from civilians.<sup>19</sup>

On the most basic level, World War I was a conflict encompassing the lives of every man, woman and child in the belligerent states, and the Ottoman Empire was by no means an exception.<sup>20</sup> The sacrifices demanded from civilians in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, as we will

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2008). Preparation to carry out general mobilization had already been underway as early as July of 1914. Ahmed Ridā, *Mudhakkirāt lil-tārīkh hawādith Jabal 'Āmil, 1914-1922* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār lil-Nashr, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> French bombardments of Beirut's port took place in April of 1917 and again in May. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 314.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds. *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> See the multiple edited volumes of Roger Chickering and Stig Förster that address methodological, philosophical as well as chronological issues in regards to the concept of total war.

<sup>20</sup> Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany; Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

see, are emblematic of the distinction between battle and homefront. Civilian sacrifice, although quite different from that on the battlefield, would eventually contribute significantly to the outcome of war in general and World War I in particular. The various homefronts of the Great War were critical to the material and moral support of combat troops in all branches of the military. Consequently, the homefronts and in turn civilians became legitimate targets of military violence, enduring direct attacks and, more often, strategic blockades of people, money and materials. Survival behind the battles lines and whether or not civilians would face famine or disease depended each state's ability to mobilize, control, protect and provide for its civilian population as well as on civilians' access to local and international relief agencies unconnected with the state.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore necessary to examine how successful and capable the Ottoman state was in mobilizing resources and providing for its citizen/subjects in particular in its outlying provinces. And how did failures and successes of military and local government agencies to supply its population affect the interactions of civilians with the state and more prominently here its local representatives? Moreover, what were the specific sacrifices demanded from and volunteered by civilians in the Beirut and Mount Lebanon and what effects would they have on the communal relations and social ties?

It has been generally acknowledged that the first signs of change and disruption in civilian's lives, was legislation that—although varying from country to country—was announced in all belligerent states to regulate and control civilian behavior and sacrifices. In the case of Greater Syria, wartime legislation included the imposition of martial law, the reality of which was an increased Ottoman military presence in the Arab provinces and, violating the region's long-standing political traditions, the suspension of regular law and “the rights of the individual for reasons of state.”<sup>22</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, as in other belligerent states, civil courts gave way to summary military courts that adjudicated all real and perceived violations of law and wartime decrees issued by the military authorities.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the Ottoman Empire, however, these military courts were cruel instruments to suppress the civilian population. Their rulings more often than not were arbitrary and harsh. Any form of resistance could be, and generally was, treated as treason, and neither a regular court nor foreign consular officials could intervene, as it was the case before the war. Among the expected crimes persecuted by newly established military courts in and around Beirut were draft dodging, avoiding confiscation orders and speaking out against the state. But how deep did wartime legislation reach? How far would state and local authorities go to control and regulate civilians' behavior and more importantly in times of severe material shortages their consumption? An examination of the Beirut's and Mount Lebanon's experiences of this legislation, whether issued on state or local levels, exposes the social and administrative changes that facilitated increasing state intervention in the daily life of civilians. How deep this intervention would reach will be explored throughout this dissertation.

Lastly, considering the entirety of the empire, it is evident that Beirut and Mount Lebanon were especially hard hit during the war. Historians have shown that the civilian deaths

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<sup>21</sup> Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>22</sup> Engin Deniz Arkali, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 80.

<sup>23</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 79.

reached shocking heights in all of Greater Syria.<sup>24</sup> According to the historian George Antonius, the death toll in Greater Syria in its entirety was close to 350,000 people.<sup>25</sup> Based on German records, the historian Linda Schilcher has suggested that the number could be as high as 500,000.<sup>26</sup> The estimates of Antonius and Schilcher, based on an estimated pre-war population of four million, account for mortalities that ranges from 8.75 percent to 12.5 percent for the entire region of Greater Syria. But while the agricultural cities of the Syrian hinterland, like Aleppo, Damascus, and Homs, and the “breadbasket zones” of the central Syrian plains, the Haurān in Syria, the Beqa’ valley and the southern regions of Lebanon were affected by food shortages, it was the coast that suffered most. Deprivation and disproportional starvation were daily realities in the commercial coastal cities Latakia, Tripoli, Jaffa, and Beirut, and Mount Lebanon “experienced a famine of epic severity.”<sup>27</sup> Contemporary attempts at quantifying the loss of life in Beirut and Mount Lebanon fluctuate between 150,000 and 300,000. With a pre-war population ranging from about 414,800 to 630,000, the size of mortalities hence, floats somewhere between the large margins of one- to two-thirds of the inhabitants. Beirut alone, as its ports were closed, supply lines cut, and deadly diseases silently invading the city, lost approximately half of its residents. While some people fled, the extraordinary loss of people was first and foremost the direct result war calamities; its biggest killers were hunger and diseases.<sup>28</sup> The estimates given by historians and contemporary observers vary significantly. Not only are these numbers only educated guesses or broad approximations, but they also fail to account for divergences in mortalities according to district, city, or village, nor do they account for differences according to age, class or gender. While it is impossible to produce a comprehensive study of mortalities, this dissertation will offer a micro-level analysis and proposes some preliminary conclusions about regional, age and gender distribution of mortalities, based on—hitherto unexamined—parochial archives (Chapter 2).

### The Predicaments of Memory and War

The impetus for this study was my discovery of an uncomfortable discrepancy in the commemoration of World War I, which initially was going to be the subject of this project. My preliminary research revealed that state-sponsored memory of the war years chose to highlight the tyrannical rule of commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army Corps Jamāl Pasha as well as communal martyrdom. In 1915 and 1916, Jamāl Pasha—locally still referred to as the butcher—ordered the public hanging of 33 prominent Lebanese and Arab intellectuals, notables, and nationalist activists in Beirut and Damascus.<sup>29</sup> This horrifying public spectacle continues to be commemorated yearly on May 6 as a national day of mourning and a statue in honor of the “martyrs” has long become part of Beirut’s urban landscape. The memory of the “days of the

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<sup>24</sup> The term Greater Syria designates the geographic area that encompasses today’s Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the occupied territories of Palestine.

<sup>25</sup> See George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), 241.

<sup>26</sup> Linda Schilcher, “Famine in Syria, 1915-1918,” in *Problems of the Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, eds. John P. Spagnolo and Albert Hourani (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Tarif Khalidi, “The Arab World” in *The Great World War 1914-45: The People’s Experience*, vol. 2, eds. John Bourne, Peter Liddle, and Ian Whitefield (London: Harper Collins, 2001), 292.

<sup>28</sup> Beirut’s population was about 180,000 in 1914 and by mid-1916 had been reduced to 75,000. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto, 2007), 72.



Turks” since then has become central to a rewriting of history with a distinct anti-Ottoman sentiment. The culmination of Ottoman tyranny was the four years of military dictatorship of Jamāl Pasha in Syria that affected all segments of society. It was puzzling to me then that there was and still is no plaque, no monument, or public commemoration of the famine victims.

The experience of famine was clearly a catastrophe of gigantic proportions. Yet this collective trauma has left no trace in the public squares of official commemoration of Lebanon. Why? At the same time I found that while a state-sponsored amnesia has obscured the shameful, unheroic sufferings and deaths the war inflicted upon the majority, there were numerous accounts of the famine in the contemporary international press, diplomatic records, post-war literature<sup>30</sup> and film<sup>31</sup>, and as—mentioned above—the famine continues to dominate popular memory today.<sup>32</sup> However what has to be noted is that the social, cultural and popular famine memories—although we are talking about a collective experience—are different in their interpretations. The diverse understandings of the famine come from a variety of social and political perspectives, often with sectarian overtones, that function outside of the state-sponsored memory paradigm. The most obvious are the perceived divergences in the famine experiences of Muslims and Christians, Maronites in particular.<sup>33</sup> Historically Maronites have lived in the Northern regions of Mount Lebanon, a semi-autonomous province under the Ottoman regime, and make up the majority of Christians in today’s Lebanon. The Maronites, as Catholics, have nurtured a close relationship with France for centuries and it is well known that the Ottoman authorities viewed this relationship with suspicion. When the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman government took advantage of the war to abrogate the trade agreements (or Capitulations) with Europe in 1914, Maronites, in particular, feared that the privileges granted to their province would be eliminated as well.<sup>34</sup> Or even worse as the famine worsened, Christians increasingly thought and expressed their fears and suspicions that Muslim Turks deliberately caused the famine by cutting off supplies to Mount Lebanon with the sole intent of starving out

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<sup>30</sup> The famine is discussed post-war memoirs such as Anis Furayha, *Qabla an ansa...* (Ṭarābulus: Garrūs Press, 1979) as well as in post-war literature see Evelyn Bustrous, *Sous la baguette du coudrier* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1958); Nicolas de Bustrous, *Je me souviens* (Beyrouth: Librairie Antoine, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> One of the most successful films of the Lebanese Rahbānī Brothers was called *Safar Barlik*, a term referring to Ottoman universal conscription policies. The film starred Lebanese iconic singer and actress Fayrūz and recalls the heroic resistance of a Lebanese village against the “Turk.” The movie also hints at food shortages, wheat in particular and the attempts of villagers to smuggle grain from the interior.

<sup>32</sup> By ‘popular memory’ I mean an oral memory that is articulated in casual conversations and interviews.

<sup>33</sup> It is only after the Ṭa’if Agreement of 1989 that reforms of the Lebanese national education system sought to streamline educational materials under the auspices of the state. The agreement explicitly states that all texts on the “subjects of history” would be subject to a national education program, in an attempt to unify a national history. See Eric M. Dorrington, “Lebanese Historical Memory and the perception of National Identity Through School Textbooks,” (unpublished paper, 2005) [http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/flura2009\\_dorrington.pdf](http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/flura2009_dorrington.pdf) (accessed March, 25, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> The capitulations were certain clauses that were attached to treaties, granting a number of “special economic, commercial, legal and religious rights and privileges to representatives of foreign powers in the Ottoman Empire.” The granting of capitulations was beneficial for the Ottoman state in that they curried favor with the European states, increased customs revenues and allowed the Ottoman government to obtain goods for the empire. The overall economic policy of the Ottoman state was a provisionary one and if that meant the import of goods from abroad the state was willing to pay for it. This of course stands in stark contrast to the mercantilist economic policies of the European states. James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 48.

the Christian minorities in the empire.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the famine is often referred to in Syria as the "Turkish Famine." Some Muslim narratives are equally exclusionary, in that they accuse Christians of collaboration with the French enemy, spying and treason in order to undermine the Ottoman state as well as Arab autonomy. Whereas there are elements of truth in both these stories, they tend to be one-sided and blind to the multiple and complex factors that contributed to the famine.

The key to understand why there is no statue, no plaque, and no national commemoration of the famine memory, leaving it to linger as a differential cultural knowledge, I argue, is to be found in the experience of the civilians on the home front.<sup>36</sup> The suffering of civilians on the homefront was unequal and the experience of the famine mediated by class, gender and communal belonging. The differences were so great and accompanied by unspeakable horrors that the famine was unsuitable as a *lieu de memoire* for a collective national memory.<sup>37</sup> Hence, instead of examining the political process of the state-sponsored memory production, although a valuable exercise in itself, the focus here will be on *memory of experience* in an attempt not only to understand these concomitant discourses of silence and remembrance, but also to challenge sectarian interpretations of the event.<sup>38</sup> It is the goal of this dissertation to disentangle the explanation of the famine from nationalist and religious narratives. And instead, to examine its causes and symptoms in light of various famine theories and most importantly to place it into its historical context (Chapter 1 and 2).<sup>39</sup> This in turn demands an examination of the famine as (1) an event that accompanied World War I and defined life on the homefront, as well as (2) the outcome of long-term and short-term social, economic and political processes that exaggerated pre-existing divisions in society, i.e. a social history of World War I.

## Toward a Social History of World War I

The mention of World War I in the Middle East immediately evokes three particular diplomatic stunts, all three of which can account for a long-lasting legacy, as they sowed the seeds of continuous conflict in the region. Their significance in shaping the geopolitics of the

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<sup>35</sup> Youssef Mouawad, "Grande Guerre et Grande Famine," *Lebanus* 7 (2004).

<sup>36</sup> Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 1386.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Nora *Les Lieux de memoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), passim.

<sup>38</sup> By using the terms 'experiential memories' or 'memory of experience,' I hope to draw attention to complex connections between memory and experience. Memory is by no means simply experience stored away in a person's consciousness ready to be recalled at any given time. But instead memory may be seen as abstracted experience that is made up of selective impressions of an event. The impressions are shaped and reconstructed to form a coherent and meaningful representation of the incident. So even if there is a communal experience of a historical event its mental imprint will vary from person to person. What we are dealing with is not an objective collective form of experience, but rather the memory of experience on the 'home front' articulated in a broad range of primary sources, at the heart of which, as we will see, was 'famine.' This most certainly undermines the idea of the possibility of a uniform 'collective memory' in a purely Halbwachsian understanding of the term. Maurice Halbwach's understanding of 'collective memory' suggests that the need for an 'affective community' ensured that individuals remembered primarily those memories that were in harmony with those of others, thereby ignoring conflicting memories that—without group accord—would fade away. See Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates," *Oral History*, 32 (Autumn, 2004); Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca, 2004), 66.

<sup>39</sup> Thereby, I aim to expand on Linda Schilcher's work, which has most forcefully argued against Ottoman intent. Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 255.

region has made them the main focus of the historiography past and present. Scholars have filled library shelves with studies of what has been termed the Arab Revolt and the secret negotiations between the British High Commissioner Sir Henry MacMahon and the Sharif of Mecca Husayn Bin Ali, pregnant with false promises.<sup>40</sup> Second, scholars have emphasized the importance of the Sykes-Picot negotiations of 1916; this Russian, French and British diplomatic exploit divided the territories of the “Sick Man of Europe” based on the Europeans’ political, cultural and economic interests. The third maneuver—equally durable and damaging in its bequests—was the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised the Zionist movement a homeland for the Jews in Palestine.<sup>41</sup>

It is only in most recent years that scholars have begun to move away from this inherently Eurocentric approach to the history of World War I in the Middle East. Ottoman participation in and perspectives of the war have received growing attention from historians, working in the central Ottoman archives. The focus of these works is diplomacy, military strategies, and the experiences of soldiers on the battlefield or in captivity as they coped with starvation, death and disease.<sup>42</sup> However, there remains to be a serious lacuna in the study of World War I in the Middle East as a force of social and cultural transformations, in particular when it comes to the Arab provinces. The majority of Anglophone and regional historians continue to focus on the outcome of the war, which everyone agrees were “treacherous.”<sup>43</sup> For example, for the Lebanese historian Kemal Salibi World War I simply marked the end of Ottoman control.<sup>44</sup> Even the most recent history of modern Lebanon by Fawwaz Traboulsi dedicates only one page to what he calls the “Catastrophies of World War.”<sup>45</sup> The existing localized discussions of the period zoom in on political tyranny of the Ottomans and Arab resistance fueled by nascent nationalism or are counter narratives aimed at restoring the image of Ottoman leaders, in particular Jamāl Pasha.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, a few social and cultural historians of the Middle East have decided to take a fresh look at history of World War I in the region, and have set out to pay closer attention to

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<sup>40</sup> Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> See for example James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance 1914-1918* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> See for example Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War*; Hikmet Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army 1914-1918: Disease and Death on the Battlefield*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008); Oya Dagla, *War, Epidemics and Medicine in the Late Ottoman Empire (1912-1918)* (Haarlem, Netherlands: Sota, 2008); Yücel Yanıkdağ, “Educating the Peasants: The Ottoman Army and Enlisted Men in Uniform,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40, no. 6 (2004): 92-108; Yücel Yanıkdağ, “‘Ill-Fated’ Sons of the Nation: Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia and Egypt: (1914-1922)” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2002); Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Samir Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj* (London: Saqi, 2006), 61.

<sup>44</sup> Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (London: Tauris, 1988), 10.

<sup>45</sup> Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> See Nicholas Z. Ajay, “Political Intrigue and Suppression in Lebanon during World War I,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974):140-160; Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movement in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993). For a revisionist account, see Hasan Kayali, “Wartime Regional and Imperial integration of Greater Syria during World War I, in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation: Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th century*, eds., Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schäbler (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998).

war as a pivotal event that shaped society and collective memory in the region.<sup>47</sup> One of the most important works is that of Elizabeth Thompson, who takes World War I as the departure point for her study of Mandate Lebanon and Syria. According to Thompson, the famine not only circumscribed the social, cultural and popular memory of the war, as discussed above, but also had actual lasting socio-political effects on post-war Lebanese society. The war and its profound disruption of family households in combination with the subsequent creation of nation-states and French colonial rule encouraged reactions on the micro level “shifting household economies and gender roles” and on the macro level affected the reorganization of community and polity.<sup>48</sup> The disruption on both micro and macro level, consisting of both a destabilization of male authority in the house and in the larger community, are intimately linked and together define what Thompson has termed a ‘crisis of paternity’ that set in motion a long and drawn out and at times violent struggle to reassert male and distinctly paternal authority.<sup>49</sup> The focus of Thompson’s account of the war is its destructive force and devastating end results; the actual events are only marginally dealt with.<sup>50</sup>

It was the sociologist Salim Tamari who opened a new line of inquiry by focusing on everyday life of civilians on the Ottoman homefront. Based on wartime diaries of Ottoman civilians and soldiers as well as wartime photographs, his pioneering work emphasizes the social and cultural history of the war by unraveling everyday life in wartime Jerusalem. Most importantly, Tamari has pointed out the war’s “unanticipated emancipatory” and formative impact on society, which is not very often discussed in war literature, which tends to highlight the war’s “dehumanization and disruption of normalcy.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, Tamari argues, it is often in these moments of disruption that significant change occurred including urban development, modernization of health, communication and transport systems and in the case of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, for example, the consolidation and creation of a public health administration. Still, despite the laudable effort of Tamari and a number of his colleagues in Jerusalem, the historiography of the Ottoman city during World War I remains meager and an analysis of wartime municipal policies and practices in supplying food to urban residents, almost non-existent. An example is Keith David Watenpaugh’s superb study of Aleppo, *Being Modern in the Middle East*, which ends chapter four abruptly “on the even of global conflagration” in August of 1914 and (after a few pages introducing Section II) resumes his story, in chapter five, in 1921.<sup>52</sup>

It is easy to see why most historians of the early twentieth-century Middle East in general and Lebanon in particular have shied away from including World War I as a socio-economic

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<sup>47</sup> Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, and Stephan Dähne eds., *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Salīm Tamāri, *ʿĀm al-Jarād (Year of the Locust)* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> See Salīm Tamāri, "Jerusalem's Ottoman Modernity: the Times and Lives of Wasif Jawhariyyeh," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 9 (2000); Salīm Tamāri, "The Short Life of Private Ihsan: Jerusalem 1915," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 30 (2007); Abigail Jacobson, "Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War: Jerusalem During World War I Through the Eyes of a Local Muslim Resident," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008); Tamāri, *ʿĀm al-Jarād*; Salīm Tamāri, "Years of Delicious Anarchy; Crowds, Public Space, and New Urban Sensibilities in War-Time Jerusalem 1917-1921," *Institute of Jerusalem Studies* (2008); Robert Mazza, "Dining Out in Times of War: Jerusalem 1914-1918," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 41 (2010).

event in their historical analysis given the dearth of reliable sources. In the case of Lebanon the absence of a functioning central archive and the fact that many official and family records were destroyed in the most recent civil war (1975-1990) poses a great challenge to archival research and demands creativity from the researcher. It must be admitted here that autobiographical sources recounting the war years, so rich in depicting everyday life for historians of Western homefronts, are problematic for Lebanon and must be used with caution. Indeed for the most part they are useless when it comes to reconstruction of everyday life. Many of them were written by urban politicians, who—as Tarif Khalidi points out—were for the most part interested in the political happenings and their own meddling within them, and as members of upper class families, whose insights into the actual experience of the majority is rather limited.<sup>53</sup> For the most part the memoirs of political figures are useless when it comes to the reconstruction of everyday life. The paucity of readily available sources forced me to look beyond the conventional archive—knocking on the doors of churches, mosques, civil society organizations and homes—soliciting the smallest pieces of written or spoken historical evidence. At times my inquiries were welcomed with opened doors, curious questions about my research, and small cups of strong Arabic coffee, and at other times the key to the door of the past was never turned. Still, my analysis relies on a unique set of sources—collected in Lebanon, Germany, France and the United States—that combines unpublished and published memoirs, diaries, private correspondence, diplomatic and government records, the institutional diaries of local Lebanese and German charitable societies, the reports and correspondence of international relief organization, records of a number of religious institutions in and outside of Beirut as well as oral history.

The Arabic-language press is equally problematic. On the one hand, the reading of diaspora papers was prohibited in the Ottoman Empire; if caught it could mean forced labor, as in the case of a Beirut fisherman, who was found reading a paper from Cairo.<sup>54</sup> But though we now have access to it, it has been assumed that the diaspora press, while generally free of censorship (in Egypt for example), was not well informed about daily life in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The Syrian press, on the other hand, known for its numerous multilingual newspapers and journals and for participating in a public sphere in which the upper middle class found its voice prior to the war, is equally frustrating for historians of the war.<sup>55</sup> Already in November of 1914, Ottoman military authorities issued a warning that news about the war could only be published if it came directly from the War Ministry. The publication of information endangering the Ottoman war effort would incur a fine of one hundred to five hundred Ottoman liras, and the editor faced a prison sentence of one to three months.<sup>56</sup> Papers like the popular *Lisan al-Hal*, *al-Mufid* and the French publication *Reveil*, were shut down and those that continued to publish had to do so under close scrutiny by the authorities.<sup>57</sup> According to an article in Cairo's *Al-Muqattam*, by April of 1916 only three Beirut papers were still operating at the time: *al-Akhabār*,

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<sup>53</sup> Khalidi, "The Arab World," 289.

<sup>54</sup> PO: Diary of Father Loius Cheikho, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 63; Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 2.

<sup>56</sup> LNA: *Lubnān*, November 11, 1914.

<sup>57</sup> *Al-Mufid* had been founded in 1913 and was the organ of the Young Arab Society. The Young Arab Society had advocated reforms and decentralization in the Ottoman Empire and sought greater independence for the Arab provinces. The editor 'Abd al-Ghani 'Urayisi was one of the intellectuals hung by Jamāl Pasha in 1916.

*al-Balāgh*, and *al-Haḡiqa*. These policies, carried out under the strict supervision of Ottoman censors, when they did not silence the press altogether, have been seen as contaminating it as a source. Thus the historians have dismissed the Syrian press as propagandistic and useless for their work.

Moreover, censorship and the use of the press as a propagandistic tool further complicate any research of the Lebanese famine. In particular, when the aim is to unearth not only the events of the famine, but also to understand the famine as it was understood by the people on the ground as suggested by Alexander deWaal. DeWaal has urged famine scholars to pay attention to what he calls “insider definitions.” These definitions originate in the victims’ voice and at times, he argues, account for a different vision of what constitutes famine.<sup>58</sup> It comes to no surprise that the voices of famine “insiders,” intentionally or unintentionally, are all too often ignored. This neglect can be attributed to the fact that scholars, who have no immediate famine experience and often little or no access to the victims themselves, produce the bulk of famine literature.

The difficulty of discovering an “insider definition” of famine in the Lebanese case is further complicated, as we might expect, by the censorship, voluntary and involuntary, of the local wartime press and private correspondence.<sup>59</sup> While the Beirut press reserved a whole page for reports of the war and informed readers about all sides of the conflict prior to the Ottomans’ entry into the war, by November 1914 Howard Bliss wrote in a letter to Cleveland Dodge that no reliable news could be read in Beirut. He wrote that letters came “trickling through a beggarly half a dozen at the time—but no foreign newspapers appear. All letters are inspected and as this is under direction of the military authorities whose linguistic powers are apparently limited, the progress is slow.”<sup>60</sup> Bayard Dodge informed his family in the United States that their letters had arrived and would continue to do so if they were careful not to mention the political situation and if no mention of the Turkish government was made.<sup>61</sup> If truthful reports of the situation were composed, they had to be circulated in private. For example, Mary Bliss, wife of Bayard Dodge, wrote:

I am so glad that Bayard has written this very long full account of the splendid relief works that has been done and is being done with the money that came from America, for although it must be circulated in a private way (because of some of the plain truths he has

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<sup>58</sup> Insider definitions, according to de Waal, provide more nuanced and complex definitions of famine that are geographically and historically specific. For example, the case study presented by Bruce Currey of the Bangladesh famines in the 1970s demonstrates in Dafur “the concept of famine is primarily one of destitution, and not mortality and starvation.” De Waal concludes: “Europeans believe that famine implies death by starvation, Africans exposed to famine do not.” Alexander De Waal, *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan, 1984-1985* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>59</sup> As the war progressed censorship became harsher. On January 20, 1915, *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī* announced that a number of newspapers had published materials perceived to be harmful to the Ottoman war effort. Five days later a detailed set of instructions was published in the press listing the restrictions on communications via the postal and telegraph service, as well what would be allowed to be published in the news. AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī*, January 20 and 25, 1915.

<sup>60</sup> AUB: Bayard Dodge Collection; AA2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Howard Bliss to Cleveland H. Dodge, dated November 28, 1914.

<sup>61</sup> AUB: Bayard Dodge Collection: AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Bob (presumably his brother) dated January 5, 1915.

written of Turkish Officials! ) will give you an idea of its needs and opportunities and what is actually being accomplished.<sup>62</sup>

An examination of the remaining press as well as the available public and private correspondence of foreigners in Beirut and its hinterlands reveals that the word *majā‘ah* (or famine), a term that is commonly used in modern standard Arabic, was generally avoided.<sup>63</sup> The use of the term famine, as Cormac Ó Gráda has pointed out, is emotive in any language, i.e. it seeks to evoke not only sympathy, but also intervention. Ó Gráda argues that since all definitions of famine include some aspect of mass starvation, implying the death of innocents, they speak to a moral obligation of the individual as well as implying a responsibility of state intervention to preserve or restore the wellbeing of its citizens. The very act of publicly naming mass starvation “famine” presents a potential indictment of those in a position to provide relief. Thus it was in the interest of the Ottoman state to avoid the term, because it would expose its failure to provide for its population. Censorship of the term was inevitable, an attempt to avoid responsibility. As a consequence, the descriptions published in the local press reporting on the situation in Beirut and Mount Lebanon were limited to the “problem” of food shortages, scarcity (or *naqṣ*), or the failure to meet needs (or *iḥtiyjāj*). The inability of the poor to access adequate food might be referred to as a crisis (or *azmah*). All of these terms that are closely associated with famine, of course, but do not predicate it. The local headlines that hint at severe food shortages refer to a “crisis of flour” or “the problem regarding wheat.” Here too, the words famine (*majā‘ah*) and starvation (*māta jū‘ā*, i.e. death from hunger) are absent, so that there seems to be no potential to delineate an ‘insider definition’ as suggested by de Waal.

The term famine was also voluntarily avoided in correspondence as not to jeopardize relations with the government. For example, there is no mention of the word famine in the sizable collection of private letters of the president of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), Howard Bliss, and his American colleagues throughout the entire length of the war.<sup>64</sup> Reports published after the war, however, describe the famine years in great detail, including the mass starvation of civilians. A handwritten draft of the college's 51st Annual Report (1916-1917) shows their careful consideration of the words famine and hunger, which is crossed out on the draft and replaced with “insufficient food supplies” and “supperless” respectively. The entry reads:

The problems [of supplies to the college] were solved and we are profoundly grateful that no member of our large family of 700 have gone ~~hungry~~ supperless to bed during these long dark years of ~~famine~~ insufficient foodsupplies.<sup>65</sup>

It was in the interest of the SPC administrators to avoid the term famine, since maintaining their good standing with the Ottoman authorities, who opened and read every letter, postcard and telegram going in and out of Lebanon, guaranteed the continued provisioning of the college's employees and a reduced number of students for the duration of the war. There are, however, a

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<sup>62</sup> AUB: Bayard Dodge Collection: AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Mary Bliss to her Mother, dated January 10, 1915.

<sup>63</sup> According to Adel Allouche it might have been Arab philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldūn who first used the term. See Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Maqrīzī and Adel Allouche, *Mamluk Economics: A study and Translation of al-Maqrīzī's Ighāthah* (Salt Lake City, 1994), 11.

<sup>64</sup> The Syrian Protestant College (SPC) was renamed the American University of Beirut (AUB) on November 18, 1920.

<sup>65</sup> AUB: 51st Annual Report of the Syrian Protestant College, 1917.

few instances in which the term famine was used, but they seem limited to reports that were thought to be safe from the censoring eyes of the state. For example, the priests of St. Paul at Harissa recorded in their institutional diary that the increasing mortality, (“people die by the tens”) if not dealt with might end up being a “*majā‘ah*.” The emphasis was placed on the death as a marker of ‘famine.’<sup>66</sup>

The absence of the term *majā‘ah* in the local public discourse stands in stark contrast to the public discourse of the Syrian diaspora in Egypt, North and South America. The press headlines of the Arabic diaspora press read “The Famine in Syria and Lebanon”, “Between Hunger and Disease,” and are eager to inform their communities about the sufferings in their home country, in particular after 1915. The emphasis and frequent use of the term *majā‘ah* to describe the situation in Lebanon and parts of Syria here confirms the fact that it was Ottoman censorship that demanded the elimination of the term *majā‘ah* in the local Beirut and Mount Lebanon press. At the same time we have to take into account that the diaspora press probably used the term to imply an urgency to its readers and inspire them to donate funds to a locally organized relief committee (Chapter 6). For example a letter sent to a Syrian merchant in Brazil by his son living in the Lebanese coastal town of Jbeil, was published under the headline of “Famine in Syria” and defined the famine as being “death by starvation” and “outbreak of disease.”<sup>67</sup> It may also have been that the press was used as a mouthpiece for anti-Ottoman propaganda by locally stationed Entente forces or even voluntarily took an anti-Ottoman tone to secure its standing and continued publication in British occupied Egypt. And although the victims’ voices are still very few in the diaspora press, these publications offer the closest to what we might understand as an “insider definition” of the Lebanese famine. The victims’ narratives published here are either accounts based on interviews with famine survivors or in some cases private letters smuggled out of the empire to family members abroad.

Still, after a close examination I am convinced that the local and the diaspora press, if read carefully and in combination with other sources, is a rich and fascinating archive. Of particular value for this project were journalistic accounts preserved in the archives of the American University and the University of Saint Joseph in Beirut. Debates about food supply policies, health and sanitation, disease control and municipal actions were plentiful in the, albeit censored, Beirut and Mount Lebanon press. The local sections of newspapers, in particular, *al-akhbār al-baladiyyāt* (or city news) or *al-mahaliyyāt* (or domestic news) yielded detailed accounts of social, economic, and political processes circumscribing everyday life in the city and the mountains. Sifting through countless Arabic papers and journals published in Cairo, North and South America, revealed a number of personal letters that had been smuggled out of Syria—sometimes written into books or carried out by refugees—and printed in the diaspora press.

The historian of Germany Roger Chickering insists that because World War I was a ‘total war’ the only appropriate history would be ‘total history,’ a history that would include all political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the war. The value of such a comprehensive study of World War I in the Middle East is undeniable. However, we are still far from such an all-encompassing history and given the dearth of sources, difficulties in accessing archives and general obstacles to working in an area that continues to be torn apart by war and violence, we

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<sup>66</sup> StPH: *Sijl Yaumīyāt 1*, July 29, 1903 to December 31, 1930.

<sup>67</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, September 8, 1916.



have to ask ourselves whether such a project is even realistic. Chickering recognized that his proposition was daunting and suggested and eventually carried out a more moderately framed project, the ‘total history’ of the German city of Freiburg 1914-1918. His aim was to write an account that, because narrowly focused in time and place, could integrate all dimensions “of a society’s history at a given moment” in the form of a historical narrative encompassing “the experience of everyone who lived through the conflict.” While this study can by no means claim the same comprehensiveness as Chickering’s “total history” of Freiburg, his methodology of micro level analysis of everyday life informs this project.<sup>68</sup> But the goal here is far more modest. The aim simply cannot be to write a total wartime history of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Instead with the limitation of the sources in mind, I can only hope to fill some of the historical gaps left by the political, diplomatic, and military historians. What follows will be, I hope, the beginning of a social history of World War I in the Middle East.

### Why Famine?

There is no doubt that the most important aspect defining life on the ‘Lebanese’ homefront was famine. The supply of food throughout the war was the most pressing need, and “to most villagers and common city folk, the Great War was felt not in the pain of a patriot’s heart, but in an empty stomach.”<sup>69</sup> The Lebanese famine, besides causing havoc and suffering, was the prime mover for change, as it effected social and institutional adjustments that would significantly alter the lives of civilians. Whereas the famine may well serve as an indicator of deep-seated structural causes of deprivation—in this case economic and social changes of the nineteenth century—it was in the context of the seemingly endless “total war” that the famine as an event precipitated significant social change. The famine forced local agencies, such as the Beirut municipality, to deal with the daily challenges of food shortages (Chapter 4), and with the outbreaks of infectious diseases (Chapter 3) that accompanied deprivation and starvation. As a result, the practices and policies implemented by local municipal councils not only determined the realities on the ground, but also influenced state legislative measures. Not only did the Ottoman state incorporate local practices into its legal frame, but it also employed local municipal councils to carry out and enforce its policies (Chapter 4).

Famine, therefore, presents itself as a subject that allows for a close and intimate examination of everyday life on the homefront. It was food, or its absence, that eventually determined interaction between the Ottoman state and the Arab province, the provincial Ottoman authorities and local municipalities, municipal council members and its urban constituency, between bakers and the urban poor, and finally the interaction between family members (Chapter 2). Furthermore, the analytical frame of famine is useful in that it allows for a conversation with theoretical works that have taken Carl Clausewitz’s definition of war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” out of the context of *direct* combat and have broadened what could be understood as an ‘act of force’ to everyday social interactions. Turning Clausewitz’s assumption that war in certain contexts “is the continuation of politics by other means” on its head, it has been argued “politics is the continuation of war by other means.” Michel Foucault would argue that power relations—characterized on the one hand by the need to impose one’s will on others and the other hand characterized by resistance—are inherent in all human

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<sup>68</sup> Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 15.

relationships and hence ‘war’ becomes a perpetual state, in which no bullet need be shot. Hence, we are only to speak of degrees of intensity within *modes of competition*, which are increased with the decrease in food supply and especially with the onset of famine. The effects of famine, as it shifted patterns in consumption and communal relations, are therefore central to our understanding of the wartime power mechanisms that determined relations between the central government, local authorities, various local communities, and family members in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and would affect these societies well beyond the war itself.

I hope that my work will also contribute to famine scholarship more generally. Many social scientists have attempted to define “famine.” The array of definitions and variations in their emphasis are impregnated with disciplinary biases and there are as Alexander DeWaal, himself a social scientist and human rights activist, points out inconsistencies in defining famine that reflect the general slipperiness of the concept.<sup>70</sup> Modern ‘famine’ definitions, according to Devereux, may be divided into at least five categories; beginning with the most common *dictionary definitions*, wherein famine is broadly associated with severe shortages, hunger and starvation.<sup>71</sup> The second group draws on the first, but highlights food shortages as famine most important defining characteristics.<sup>72</sup> The physiological predicament of famine, i.e. inadequate food intake, makes up the third category focusing largely on its symptoms.<sup>73</sup> The fourth and arguably the most inclusive set of definitions seeks to comprehend famine’s complexities and as post-facto definition lists its disruptions in a society. Lastly, “insider definitions”, as mentioned above, seek to challenge western understanding of famine, by focusing on its meaning in the local context and as expressed by famine victims.<sup>74</sup> Most attempts at defining ‘famine’ in all of these categories largely resort to listing its most common causes and effects, blurring the boundaries between definition and description and at times even moving toward a theory, or explanation of famine.<sup>75</sup>

In spite of the apparent difficulty in defining famine, the fact that a vast literature attempting to define and theorize famine, exists and dates back centuries exists, suggests that the

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<sup>70</sup> De Waal, *Famine That Kills*, x.

<sup>71</sup> For example famine may be “an extreme scarcity of food” (Merriam Webster Dictionary) or “a severe shortage of food, as through crop failure or overpopulation” (Dictionary.com). The English dictionary definitions are similar to what is described in the Arabic as famine, namely “lack and scarcity especially of food” (Atlas Encyclopedic Dictionary). These definitions are often broad and arbitrarily select a few symptoms and causal factors for the sake of simplicity. See also Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> Geographer and expert of Developmental Studies Michael Watts, for example, describes famine to be: “A food shortage leading to widespread death from starvation; a societal crisis induced by the dissolution of the accustomed availability of, and access to, staple foods on a scale sufficient to cause starvation among a significant number of individuals.” *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>73</sup> The purpose of these definitions is to distinguish between ordinary hunger, which may be experienced at any time, and famine, which “implies hunger, starvation, malnutrition and something more—excess death.” *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>74</sup> For example the work of Alexander de Wall has paid particular attention of the victim’s narratives. De Waal, *Famine That Kills*.

<sup>75</sup> The apparent difficulty in defining famine have let some scholar to argue that the act of defining famine is no more than an academic exercise and that a definition of famine as a diagnostic tool is unnecessary in recognizing a famine. See Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 39; Stephen Devereux, *Theories of Famine* (New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 9.

act of defining famine is far more than simply an academic exercise.<sup>76</sup> The reoccurrence of deadly and devastating famines in the twentieth century and its continued threat, as in its most recent manifestation in Somalia, confirms the urgency of developing a theory that would translate into an applicable diagnostic tool. One may argue that at the heart of famine studies literature is an intense desire to render famine as a predictable, preventable, and punishable event. Therefore definitions proposed by academics, politicians, international humanitarians, as will be discussed below, often imply a theory of famine, namely an explanatory discussion of the social, economic, and political prerequisites for famine to occur. The general consensus is that recognizing the causal factors of ‘famine’ can lead to the creation of an early-warning system that would warrant prevention, and ultimately the rescue of innocent victims. Whereas an early-warning system has been developed based on research of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and has been employed by federal agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the predictability of food insecurities around the globe has done little to actually prevent famine. The reason for is simply that factors other than food insecurities play a significant role in the conditions leading up to famine (Chapter 1).

The development economist Stephen Devereux has argued that the inadequacy of famine theory is partly to blame for the reoccurrence of famine even in a world that is endowed with advanced technology and communication systems. Problems, he argues, have been “misdiagnosed or not foreseen, leading to inappropriate or late intervention.”<sup>77</sup> The failure to present a uniform famine theory, scholars and in particular economists, have argued leaves famines to stalk the globe in incognito.<sup>78</sup> The search for this theory of famine has led to many detailed historical studies of famine. Yet oddly, despite the fact that the Lebanese famine, as will become clear, had all the marks of what social scientists have brought together under the defining term of “famine,” it has been completely ignored by famine scholarship, which displays a general geographic bias toward the Indian subcontinent and west and east Africa.<sup>79</sup> Yet, the importance of the Lebanese case is undeniable, since it reveals that although there might be universal characteristics, famines are generally long in the making and partially the result of long-term socio-economic and political shifts in society, rendering particular regions more vulnerable (Chapter 1). More precisely, it reminds us that causes of any famine are historically contingent and in this case were dependent on the particular historical developments and immediate circumstances that described the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Chapter 1). Famines must be historicized.

Designating a particular food shortfall as “famine” in the post-Geneva world has clear political stakes. Modern international law classifies the intentional withholding of food and water to a population to be a crime against humanity and if it is with the verifiable intent of eliminating a particular group in whole or in part it could be considered genocide before the

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<sup>76</sup> The consensus among scholars is that the concept of ‘famine’ in its modern sense, i.e. a period of general shortage leading to mass starvation and death, was formulated in the end of the eighteenth century and most notably in the debates initiated by Thomas Malthus. Earlier usages of the term equated it more generally with hunger and dearth. De Waal, *Famine That Kills*, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *Famine*.

<sup>79</sup> The Lebanese case has not warranted so much as a mention in Cormac Ó Gráda, *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

international tribunal.<sup>80</sup> The modern definition of famine as mass starvation and an excess mortality of innocents appeals to the moral obligation of modern humanitarians and mandates state intervention on behalf of its citizens. Hence, for Devereux, as for many social scientists, the need for a universal causal pattern in the development of famines is based on the desire to recognize the earliest symptoms of famine before it occurs and more importantly by being able to name it as such set the wheels of prevention and relief in motion to save the lives its innocent victims. Early recognition, naming and appeals for help could potentially eliminate famine as a global problem, however, as we will see, in the Lebanese case this is not enough! Indeed the Lebanese case is very bad news. For one, the Lebanese case properly historicized will show that although there are generally recognizable symptoms and predictable patterns, famines are at one 'events' and 'processes' far from universal. Second, and this is far worse news, the Lebanese case reveals an even greater problem. It will become clear that even when local, regional and international actors are aware of imminent famine prevention and intervention are not a given. Instead, often-unsolvable political problems stand in the way of preventing and alleviating it. The questions of who is "mandated" to furnish food (relief), who is going to enforce that mandate, and finally who is going to receive the food are, as the Lebanese case will so pungently illustrate, is subject to unequal distribution of power and enframed in intricate Inequalities that were in this case exponentially magnified by the war and are unique to the particulars of the *war of famine* in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. This predicament of political specificity exposed here is the key reason why famines remain to be reoccurring crisis.

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<sup>80</sup> See Article 7, Paragraph 2 of Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998, <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/585> (accessed August 30, 2011).

## Chapter I

### The Locust Simply Eats?

#### Toward an Explanation of the Lebanese Famine

*We saw them coming as a great cloud flying across the sky and then swarmed by millions all about Ras Beirut. They look like giant flakes of snow being driven along by the wind over your head with their bright yellow wings flashing in the sun. On the ground you see their shadow, moving rapidly giving a very peculiar effect.<sup>1</sup>*

In April 1915, an invasion of desert locusts gobbled up every green twig and gnawed away at fruit and olive trees.<sup>2</sup> When the locust flew overhead the sky darkened and the air became unbearably heavy. The birds fluttered frightened to the ground. It was like a “snowstorm of mammoth flakes of yellow and black,” that settled on the fields and trees and devoured “every leaf and flower and fruit. [...] The ground where they had rested was bare of every living plant.” These greedy and gluttonous critters not only guzzled up that year’s crops, but in many places permanently damaged trees by their repeated onslaughts.<sup>3</sup> The locust plague not only added another dimension to the civilian’s hardships of war at the homefront, but it convinced the inhabitants of the region that they had attracted the wrath of God; they prayed that the winds would sweep the pest west into the Mediterranean Sea. “Man had done his worst for his country, and now nature had turned cruel.”<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately for the people of Lebanon, there were other invasions taken place as well. On August 4, 1914, the Ottoman Empire had signed a secret agreement with the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Whereas the Ottoman cabinet had been divided over what would be the best steps as the guns of August sounded on the European continent, a small inner group of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) led by the Minister of War Enver Pasha, a dedicated Germanophile, were eager to join the war against its greatest rival Russia.<sup>5</sup> The alliance struck by Enver with the Germans was activated when the Ottoman fleet launched attacks on a number of Russian ports on the Black Sea. The Ottomans’ military engagements during the Great War would include five major campaigns: the Caucasus campaign (1915-1918) against the Russians along the north eastern borders of the empire;<sup>6</sup> the Gallipoli campaign

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<sup>1</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Doc. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The locust arrived from the south across the Sinai and arrived in the *Vilayet* of Syria on April 1, 1915. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1920), 179.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>5</sup> William Cleveland *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 149.

<sup>6</sup> The initial involvement of the Ottoman was in the Caucasus, after the Russian forces, led by General Nikolai Yudenich, had crossed the borders. The Ottoman 3<sup>rd</sup> Army confronted the Russians as well as a number of Armenian volunteer units in November of 1914 and would be engaged in the area until October 30, 1918. The

(1914-1916) against French and British (the first major battle there was fought against Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC)) troops; the Mesopotamian campaign (1914-1918) against the British;<sup>7</sup> the campaign against British and Russian troops in northern and western Persia (1914-1918); and lastly the Palestine campaign against mostly British troops in the Sinai. There were a number of minor campaigns, most notably against Arab forces in the Hejaz region of the Arabian Peninsula (1916-1918).

Beirut and Mount Lebanon did not experience direct battle, except for targeted bombing generally on the port or German U-boats or warships lingering on the Syrian coast. What the civilians in the region, however, experienced was imposition of martial law, an increased presence of military personnel in their cities, towns and villages, the exile and execution of anti-Ottoman notables and intellectuals, a mobilization effort that conscripted the men of the region in unprecedented numbers, and disproportional mortalities. Most importantly, as the historian Roger Chickering has pointed out, “mobilization” was not restricted to making mobile troops and supplies, but became a “cynosure of the homefront.” Here the realities of mobilization included the collection of human (conscripted) and material resources (requisitioning) required to feed the armies.<sup>8</sup> This, as we will see below, added to civilians’ suffering and the overall desperate situation that described life on the Beirut and Mount Lebanon homefront and characterized much of the *war of famine*.

But amid all of these trials, nature added its own fierce competitor for the food supply in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The desert locust, or *Schistocerca gregaria*, has a long history. The desert locust, or *Schistocerca gregaria*, has a long history as a contributing factor to famine,<sup>9</sup> and this voracious insect continues to be a recurrent problem in particular on the African continent. And still, its appearance on any scene puts early-famine-warning systems on high alert. Despite modern technologies and advanced pesticides the locust still has the power to tilt the balance in famine-prone regions toward mass starvation.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Lebanese famine during World War I, the locust is often named as one of the primary causes of food shortages and civilians’ agony, despite the fact that social scientists generally agree that famine is man-made, and not a cruel joke of nature. The persistence of the locust as the culprit of famine, I believe is only in part due to the reality of its destructive appetite; it is also due to its powerful image in Lebanese oral history and folkloric accounts. During my research it became clear in conversations about World War I that all generations of Lebanese drew on this one iconic perpetrator to construct their most vivid narratives of the famine. After all, the pest is politically, socially and confessionally neutral. It provides an explanation for the famine and conveniently frees the narrator from any social, political and or sectarian indictments, allowing for a sense of

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Ottoman experience in the Caucasus included a number of devastating operations, the loss of the battle of Sarikamish (December 22, 1914 to January 17, 1915) being one of the most dramatic examples.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Townshend, *Desert Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Chickering, *The Great War*, 159.

<sup>9</sup> It appeared in the Bible as well as in the Qur’an as one of the plagues that were sent by God to punish the Egyptians. See the *Holy Bible* (Exodus: 10) and the *Qur’an* (Surāt al-’A’rāf (7:133)).

<sup>10</sup> One of the most recent examples is a locust plague in Niger that was accompanied by severe drought caused starvation. Meera Selva, "Drought and locust plague leave Niger on the brink of famine," *The Independent*, July 20, 2005. URL: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/drought-and-locust-plague-leave-niger-on-the-brink-of-famine-499462.html> (accessed June 13, 2011).

communal suffering.<sup>11</sup> The locust did not differentiate among classes or religious confessions. It simply ate whatever came in its way! But did it cause the Lebanese Famine?

This chapter analyzes the causes of the Lebanese famine, as proposed in Lebanese historiography as well as in autobiographical narratives, and situates them in the context of famine theories. Famine theories have followed the same trajectory that has characterized other epistemological shifts in our understanding of the world and the modern world in particular. The binary explanatory frame of human versus natural causes has been questioned in particular by a new generation of environmental historians, who has argued that the natural environment can serve a useful unit of analysis alongside the more commonly applied of categories of causation of famines such as: war, revolution, forced migrations, economic policies, massacres, etc. And although, historians like Alan Mikhail have pointed out that the inclusion of the environment allows for a transterritorial analysis, opens new interpretive avenues, and most important here allows us to widen “the lens of what is considered an acceptable historical actor.”<sup>12</sup> Still considering major historical traumas that *seem* caused by nature, like famines, are generally caused by human actions as well as natural ones; or at a minimum achieve their catastrophic impact because of human input (or lack thereof). For example, the historian Mark Healey showed this to be the case during the 1944 San Juan earthquake in Argentina.<sup>13</sup> This chapter intends to move beyond the binary explanatory frame of Man versus Nature and argues that the Lebanese famine was the outcome of complex social, economic and political processes, in which we may neither underestimate the power of Nature nor that of Man. Instead it was the dynamic and dialogical interaction between the two that led to the famine.

Furthermore, this study illustrates how transformations in nineteenth-century Beirut and Mount Lebanon contributed to their economic vulnerability and as well as to political suspicions that made the region particularly susceptible to famine. The historian of Africa Jan-Bart Gewald has pointed out that a general problem of famine studies is the tendency to focus on the “event” of the famine itself rather than on the social, economic and political processes preceding it.<sup>14</sup> This certainly holds true for the few historical accounts of the famine in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. All of these have focused on the war itself and failed to account for the long-term historical changes that made the society more vulnerable to food shortages, prices hikes, hunger and ultimately famine. It is clear that in the case of Africa and the Middle East the changes that accompanied the integration of these regions into the world market as raw material producers and potential colonies cannot be underestimated. This uneven integration acted as a catalyst for socioeconomic and political changes in Beirut and Mount Lebanon that would expose it to fluctuations in the world market and increased its susceptibility to famine.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Its importance in contemporary memory is reflected in the recent publication of Salīm Tamāri’s book titled *Year of the Locust* or *‘Ām al-Jarād*.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Healey, *The Ruins of the New Argentina: Peronism and the Remaking of San Juan after the 1944 Earthquake* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Jan-Bart Gewald argues that this is a common flaw in famine studies in general. See Jan-Bart Gewald, "Near Death in the Streets of Karibib: Famine, Migrant Labour and the Coming of Ovambo to Central Namibia," *The Journal of African History* 44 (2003), 216. The historiography of the Lebanese famine, which is rather limited in scope, also focuses for the most part on the event itself rather than the structural transformations preceding it. See for example, Mouawad, "Grande Guerre"; Schilcher, "Famine in Syria."

<sup>15</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 2.

The Lebanese catastrophe had all the characteristics of what social scientists have brought together under the defining term of “famine.” However, its causes, as will become clear, were circumstantial. It was the particular combination of the economic and political transformations of the previous century, immediate necessities of war, its political economy and strain on civilians, bad harvests due to unusually hot weather and recurrent devastating locust plagues that led to mass starvation and death. I argue, therefore, that ‘famine’ cannot be explained by a universal pattern or social theorem, but rather has to be understood in the context of both geographically and historically specific long-term developments as well as the immediate conditions of the event itself. I suggest that although there might be universal *characteristics* of famine, that the *causes* of any famine are historically contingent and in this particular case linked to the conditions that prevailed in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire as well as the overall climate of “total war.” Making this claim, of course, carries with it a rather devastating message, namely that famines may not be easily predicted, and early famine-warning systems that have been designed by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations in the mid-twentieth century can only be marginally helpful, especially without knowledge of the region concerned’s past and present.

#### Nature’s Curse: Fertility, Heat, and Vermin

The most frequently cited causal factor of famine is food shortages. Geographer and expert of Developmental Studies Michael Watts, for example, describes famine to be:

A food shortage leading to widespread death from starvation; a societal crisis induced by the dissolution of the accustomed availability of, and access to, staple foods on a scale sufficient to cause starvation among a significant number of individuals.<sup>16</sup>

The causes of food shortages of course differ widely, and various explanations have been proposed in general. Most studies concerned with theories of famine begin with Thomas R. Malthus (1766-1834), either affirming or opposing his explanation of famine as an instrument of nature that maintains the equilibrium between population and resources. Despite far reaching disagreements and debates over Malthus’s work, his *Essay on the Principle of Population* continues to be influential. First and foremost, it defined the modern understanding of famine as mass starvation leading to mortality greater than normal. This, of course, is not to say that the term ‘famine’ was not used to describe events prior to Malthus.<sup>17</sup> But it has to be noted that the

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<sup>16</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, the earliest mentions of famine can be found in ancient texts, such as the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’an. In these early accounts, famine is explained as either a threat of or actual divine punishment in light of disobedience or disbelief. In the Islamic tradition, God inflicted a devastating drought on the inhabitants of Mecca to punish them for their disbelief (*Sūra al-Dūkhan* (44:10-16)). *Dūkhan* here has been translated to mean ‘The Drought’ although in contemporary Arabic translated as smoke, in reference to the dust rising up from the dry earth that looks like smoke. According to the prophetic tradition, or *hadīth*, this drought was accompanied by a great famine, which “overtook them all and their resources were exhausted, until they ate dead animals and skins.” This *hadīth* was recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, which is a collection of prophetic traditions collected and written down by Muhammed Ibn Ismael al- Bukhārī in the ninth century. It is considered to be one of the most influential *hadīth* in Islamic jurisprudence. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (6:333). The Hebrew Bible points to overpopulation that led to hunger: “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to stay alive, we must eat grain. [...] We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our



term “famine” in these earlier writings was understood to be “hunger and dearth,” and did not necessarily include as its imminent outcome mass starvation. Second, Malthus argued that famine served a particular purpose in nature, namely to, maintain a balance between population and food supply. He argued that famine *must* occur when a population had grown so large that it outstripped earth’s capacity to produce subsistence.<sup>18</sup>

This Malthusian explanation of famine remained influential well into the twentieth century, despite the epistemological shift away from nature as the only force driving historical change. In particular, since the world population continues to grow and mortality rates decline, it could be easily argued that humankind has “fallen into an ambush of its own making,” i.e. the Malthusian trap.<sup>19</sup> For example, one scholar described famines on the Indian subcontinent “as a demonstration of the normal effects of the fertility of nature on the fertility of man.”<sup>20</sup> American biologist Paul Ehrlich in his book, *The Population Bomb* published in 1968, predicted that future mass starvations and famines were inevitable due to the constant growth of populations.<sup>21</sup> The validity of this theory, however, has been repeatedly challenged. A number of demographic studies have shown that generally the total number of famine victims as compared to total population numbers is rather small and that population numbers usually return to pre-famine levels in a rather short period of time. Amartya Sen’s case study of the Bengali famine of 1942-43 is such an example.<sup>22</sup> In addition, it has been shown that food supply has been increasing at a higher rate than population.<sup>23</sup>

Population growth, therefore, cannot account for famine in general and nor can it be used to explain the Lebanese case. Although, the Ottoman Empire as a whole experienced population growth—doubling its population density—in the nineteenth century, famines overall decreased.<sup>24</sup> For example, Egypt had suffered six famines between 1687 and 1731, and grain-producing Syria was not immune to famine either; in 1784, Syrian “[towns-] people paid only a penny farthing for their bread, while the peasants in the villages were absolutely dying with hunger.”<sup>25</sup> But because severe weather conditions—hailstorms, drought—or insect plagues never hit all parts of the country at once, famines declined in frequency with the improvement of

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homes to get grain during the famine” (Book of Nehemiah (5: 2-3); Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 8). The idea of famine as God’s punishment has never been completely abandoned and continues to be evoked in the writings and speeches of modern religious figures. For example, the Irish Roman Catholic Archbishop John Mac Hale attributed the Great Irish Famine of (1845-47) to divine punishment. Also see Genesis 41. In the context of the Lebanese famine, Maronite church leaders continuously remind their followers that the famine was a punishment of god for their negligence of religious and moral duties (Chapter Six).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population: Text, Sources and Background, Criticism* (Toronto: George J. McLeod Limited, 1976), 56.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics on the size of world population show a continued steady growth since the eighteenth century at a rate of about 1.5 percent each year, and reaching its height in the 1970s with an yearly population increase of two percent, and since has been declining. See Charles F. Gritzner, *Feeding a Hungry World* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 22.

<sup>20</sup> Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Ehrlich announces in his book that essentially the battle to feed all of humanity is over and that the growth of population would result in starvation and famine in the years to come. Gritzner, *Feeding a Hungry World*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Jenny Edkins, "Legality with a Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian Relief in 'Complex Emergencies'," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 25 (1996), 549.

<sup>23</sup> Gritzner, *Feeding a Hungry World*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112.

<sup>25</sup> De Waal, *Famine That Kills*, 17.

transportation. The last famines in the Balkan and Anatolian provinces occurred in the 1830s and 1870s respectively.<sup>26</sup> After that crop failures in any of the Ottoman provinces could be offset by regional or international food import. The Malthusian model does not account for such infrastructural improvements that would eventually allow interregional transfer of goods, balancing supply and demand. As a result of improved, although still limited, rail and road networks and expanded international trade no famines are reported for Syria in the nineteenth century. This does not mean that there were no periods of dearth, bad harvest and food shortages, but none of them escalated into famine, as people were able to adjust accordingly. It was only during wars, the historian Donald Quataert has pointed out, that that famine reemerged. It was when the transport systems collapsed or were employed for the sole purpose of the military, as was the case in Beirut and Mount Lebanon during World War I, that full-fledged famines took place.<sup>27</sup>

Scholars of the Malthusian school have also argued that population density and crowded conditions caused food shortages that can escalate into famine. If this were true then the rapid population growth and push toward urbanization that caused Beirut's population to increase from 10,000 in 1800 to 150,000 in 1914 would surely have resulted in food shortages.<sup>28</sup> But they did not. In the course of nineteenth century, Beirut had greatly benefited from the growth in sea trade, the building of a modern seaport in 1892, and infrastructural developments that connected the city to the hinterland, such as the building of the Beirut-Damascus road in 1861 and a railroad between the two cities in 1895.<sup>29</sup> Hence population growth was accompanied by an increase in economic opportunities. It is only natural for people to migrate to and live in places where they can make a living and support their families. Nineteenth-century Beirut was such a place. Hence, despite the demographic explosion born of economic migration and natural population growth, the city did not experience famine or economic hardship.<sup>30</sup> In the end there was no "Malthusian trap" to fall into.

A close second behind the "population monster," as Stephen Devereux has called this most popular explanation for famine, comes "unfavorable climate." A large literature attributes famine to crop failure due to changes in climate, be it drought or extreme cold. Geographers and climatologists of the 1980s have designated climate-produced famine regions. The Middle East, according to these studies, is located in a "famine belt" associated with "drought-induced famine." Indeed, in many cases climate-induced crop failures did contribute to famine as was

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<sup>26</sup> For an account of railway construction in the Arab provinces of Ottoman Empire prior to World War I see Shereen Khairallah, "Railway Networks of the Middle East to 1948," in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation: Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th century*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schäbler, (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998), 77-93.

<sup>27</sup> Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 114 f.

<sup>28</sup> Economic historian Charles Issawi gives the following population growth numbers for Beirut: 6,000 in 1800, 10,000 in 1840, 60,000 in 1860, 100,000 in 1890 and 150,000 in 1914. Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent, 1800-1914: A Documentary Economic History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 28.

<sup>29</sup> The Beirut port handled about 11 percent of the total trade in the Ottoman Empire by 1907, behind only the ports of Izmir and Istanbul. See Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9; Mahmoud Haddad, "The City, the Coast, the Mountain, and the Hinterland: Beirut's Commercial and Political Rivalries in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation: Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th century*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schäbler, (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998), 129.

<sup>30</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 2.

the case in Anatolian famine of 1873-74 and more recently in Sudan in 1984-85, Niger in 2005, and Somalia in 2011. But climate has never been the sole cause. According to eyewitnesses of the Lebanese famine, climate, in particular extreme heat waves and lack of rain, played a significant role in crop-failure. The winter of 1915 was harsh and “rains had ceased around February and were followed by hot winds lasting twenty days.”<sup>31</sup> Gerhard von Mutius, the German Consul at Beirut, reported that a heat wave hit Beirut and Mount Lebanon in June of 1916.<sup>32</sup> It accounted for an entire week of temperatures of 108 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>33</sup> Fritz Grobba, an officer in the imperial German forces and diplomat, wrote that the early arrival of hot and dry winds reduced the harvest of 1916 by twenty percent compared to an average harvest.<sup>34</sup> The hot winds were detrimental to the fruit trees, the cultivation of legumes, and in particular to the silkworm harvest in Mount Lebanon.<sup>35</sup> Lack of rain and hot winds, however, were nothing new to the inhabitants of the region. The community—aware of possible droughts and subsequent bad harvest—naturally adjusted its consumption and commerce in agricultural goods, especially imports and exports, according to the size of the harvests and the availability of food. In good years the surplus of agricultural products would be exported and with bad harvest years some grain would be imported, meaning that a balance was maintained.<sup>36</sup> Thus, shifts in rainfall and exaggerated temperatures would under normal circumstances not lead to famine. Therefore, although climate contributed to food shortages by destroying valuable crops, it could not have been the exclusive cause of the famine.

The extraordinary short winter and the hot desert winds that suffocated Beirut were discussed in the local Arabic press, but it was the recurring locust plagues that stole the headlines, beginning in the late spring of 1915. The gregarious locust even made international news when the American National Geographic published an article on the locust in the Middle East in December of the same year.<sup>37</sup> During the summer of 1915, five or six new locust swarms invaded the region, causing great damage to food supplies.<sup>38</sup> Locusts, each being about eight to ten centimeters long, could consume vegetation equal to their body weight—two grams per day. Invading from the south, crossing the mountainous areas of the Shūf and Matn districts of Mount

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<sup>31</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut, 1914-1918: The War Years" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1973), 335.

<sup>32</sup> AA: Beirut 10: Report of the German Consul on the state of sericulture in Lebanon, dated June 5, 1916.

<sup>33</sup> 42 degree Celsius equals about 108 degrees Fahrenheit.

<sup>34</sup> Linda Schilcher's article on the famine in Greater Syria describes Grobba as a German relief worker, which obscures the fact that he was an agent of the German government, whose special expertise was the Middle East. He fought in the German military on the Ottoman front during World War I and was wounded. Immediately following the war he was sent to Afghanistan as the representative of the German government and in the interwar period was assigned the post of ambassador to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Fritz Grobba's study of the Greater Syria's agriculture is one of the most thorough studies and gives important insights into its social, political and of course economic situation during World War I. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*.

<sup>35</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, September 19, 1916.

<sup>36</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> John D. Whiting, "Jerusalem's Locust Plague" *National Geographic* 28 (1915).

<sup>38</sup> The desert locust breeds in a far-reaching geographic area. It may be founding areas from Pakistan to Arabian Peninsula and across Africa's Sahel belt. The insect generally lives isolated in its breeding grounds and only after a long period of no precipitation will it fight for its survival by becoming gregarious. At this point the behavior of the insect changes completely; it begins breeding rapidly and large swarms of adult and juvenile insects form and turn into a "voracious feeding machine." It is then that they leave their breeding grounds due to "overpopulation," and temporarily invade other regions, as in Mount Lebanon in the Spring of 1915. See S. Krall, "Desert Locusts in Africa: a disaster?," *Disasters* 19 (March, 1995), 1.

Lebanon, the insects devoured all seedlings as well as grape and olive blossoms. Lingered a few days at the outskirts of Beirut, they continued their flight resembling a large cloud into the city from the direction of Furn al-Shebek, easily and without quarrel crossing the border between Mount Lebanon and the *Vilayet* of Beirut. Beirutis hoped and prayed that the wind would sweep the plague into the sea before it could land in their gardens and orchard, but to no avail.

Historically this “voracious feeding machine” has often been the ingredient that turned hunger and dearth into famine, and in wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon it most certainly added to the agony of the people. Even after the harsh spring, German and Ottoman authorities had predicted that the 1915 harvest would be, if not a good harvest, an average harvest. The invasion of locusts, however, destroyed a significant portion of the summer crops, in particular maize, fruit trees and vegetables, reducing them to about a fourth of an average harvest. The coastal region of Greater Syria were hit hardest since it relied heavily on the income of summer crops, whereas the winter crops of the interior, such as wheat, had been harvested prior to the arrival of the locust.<sup>39</sup> To the American Bayard Dodge, a longtime resident of Beirut and active in organizing relief, it seemed that “The food situation did not deteriorate until after the appearance of the locust in the spring of 1915.”<sup>40</sup> And although food shortages had raised great concern in the local press and among the members of the Beirut municipality as early as November of 1914, it certainly is true that in the spring of 1915 the food crisis grew extremely desperate.<sup>41</sup>

The arrival of the locust, like drought, was a happening over which humans had little control. But also, like dry winds from the Arabian Peninsula and the recurrent shortfall of rain, the harvest-gobbling locust was not new to the region, and the press referred to it as a “traditional” visitor to the region.<sup>42</sup> The pest usually arrived from the Sudan, by way of Palestine, in Syria and Lebanon in the months of April and May. But like hot winds and drought, the locust’s arrival, although certainly devastating for the harvest, generally did not result in famine. The locust had destroyed a significant part of the harvest in 1865 and reappeared in intervals in Syria numerous times, including the post-World War I period, but at no time did any of these invasions result in mass starvation and unusual mortality.<sup>43</sup> Since locust plagues were a recurrent phenomenon, the local inhabitants and the municipal authorities were quite familiar with it, and had established practices designed to minimize the destruction.<sup>44</sup>

The Beirut municipality took immediate measures and ordered every male over the age of fifteen to deliver of one *roṭl* of *living* locusts in sacks. Failure to deliver the crawling creatures or simply sweeping up already dead insects from the street would result in the large fine of twenty franks. Employees and children of a German orphanage immediately started collecting

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<sup>39</sup> USJ: *Al-Salām*, August 6, 1915.

<sup>40</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 335.

<sup>41</sup> See *Chapter Five* of this dissertation.

<sup>42</sup> The Argentine paper *Al-Salām* reported that the locusts were a traditional visitor in the region. USJ: *Al-Salām*, August 6, 1915

<sup>43</sup> The locusts were seen in the 1892 in the Jordan valley, 1899 in the Galilee, and in 1904 in the southern desert and Egypt. But the 1915 plague was extreme and it was reported that “onslaught covered all of Palestine and Syria, from the borders of Egypt to the Taurus Mountains.” See Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 336. The locust continued to be a problem and seven invasions of desert locust from the African continent were reported between 1930-1963, mainly in the month of April to May. See I. Tunç and A. Inci, "Decline of a Swarm of *Schistocerca Gregaria* in a Marginal Invasion Area," Bulletin OEPP/EPPO (1995).

<sup>44</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 37.

locusts and by end of the first day had gathered forty three pounds of living insects, and killed about as much. The deaconesses in charge of the orphanage wrote that at the end of the same day Beirutis had collected over five hundred thousand pounds of locusts and delivered to police station. The insects were thrown into a large pit that was then covered with lime and burned.<sup>45</sup> The poor of the city even saw the locust epidemic as an opportunity. Many began collecting the living creatures and sold them to the rich, each *roʿl* for a few coins. In addition, the municipality itself organized early morning expeditions to collect the insects. It was well known that morning dew would settle on the locust's wings and paralyzing them long enough to be easily gathered up.

Thus nature-focused theories, which base famine on climate (especially drought) or plagues of plant eating insects, as we have seen, are difficult to maintain in the Lebanese case. Heat and lack of rainfall as well as the locust plagues were facts of life in Syria and Mount Lebanon. But unlike the Malthusian trap, climate and ecology cannot be entirely dismissed as explanatory factors. Nature certainly was an accomplice to more fundamental triggers, adding its own ingredients to the devastation, and may have pushed the food shortages to a point where mass starvation became inevitable.

#### Man-Made Disaster: War, Waters and World Markets

In an attempt to challenge nature-focused theories, social scientist, economists in particular, have suggested that famine is man-made. Famine in the twentieth century has been most often linked to wars and ideology. For example, economist Cormac Ó Gráda suggests, and rightfully so, that war greatly contributed to the occurrence of famine throughout history and that in more peaceful or stable situations some of the great historical famines might not have occurred. Within the Ottoman Empire, as mentioned above, famines had significantly decreased with the improvement of infrastructure and the expansion of commercial trade network, but resurfaced during the war. World War I, which disrupted international and regional trade and mandated general mobilization of the Ottoman military, certainly played a major role in bringing about mass starvation and disease leading to excess mortality. First and foremost the Entente and Ottoman blockades of import, exports and remittances, and its interruptions of the flow of people in and out of the empire, stifled the wartime economy of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Second, although the region did not experience direct combat, the Ottoman army confiscated materials and commandeered foodstuffs, transportation and other necessities, reducing supplies to civilians. In addition, the policies of the increasingly totalitarian regime of the Young Turks in Istanbul meant the growing state interference and in agricultural production which, combined with the state's overall failed food supply policies, added to the civilian disaster. None of these wartime measures, however, would have led to famine, had it not been for the nineteenth-century social, economic and political transformation of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. In arguing this I follow the interpretational paradigm of Michael Watts's historical examination of famines in the Nigerian Hausaland, which highlights a growing susceptibility to famine in the beginning of the twentieth century as the result of the region's incorporation into the capitalist world market.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> FKS: *Dank-und Denkblätter aus der morgenländischen Arbeit der Kaiserswerther Diakonissen* XVI (1916-1917), 15.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Watts, *Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Watts finds that the nineteenth-century Sokoto Caliphate was quite capable in dealing with climatic stress and had successfully avoided famine.<sup>47</sup> However, during and after British colonial rule in the early twentieth-century a sequence of famines struck the region. Watts blames this on a shift in agricultural production. Peasants increasingly produced for the international market. This intensification of commodity production ruptured “the balance between peasant subsistence and consumption.”<sup>48</sup> A similar rupture occurred in the coastal regions of Greater Syria and Mount Lebanon in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as peasant farmers shifted their agricultural production toward cash crops for export to European markets.

### Famine as a War Strategy: The Maritime Blockades of Goods and People

Prior to the war, Greater Syria as a whole was in a good position with regard to food, and in particular, to its grain supply. Wheat, the most important basic necessity, was readily available throughout the provinces.<sup>49</sup> In 1913, its harvest had been above average; grain prices were low, and export (due to low prices) was minimal, so that a sizable surplus of grain was taken into 1914. Fritz Grobba informed the German authorities that the flour warehouses of Beirut’s and Jaffa’s merchants were stocked with a good amount of wheat at the outset of the war.<sup>50</sup> Linda Schilcher has argued that there was nothing to indicate that the supplies requisitioned for the war effort “could not be augmented from sources east of the Suez,” a region people thought would remain unaffected by the war.<sup>51</sup> We now know, of course, that it was in this region where the fiercest battles involving Ottoman troops would take place. In addition, the Entente powers imposed a two-pronged naval blockade on the Ottoman Empire beginning in December of 1914. The blockade was part of Entente war strategy, and it is puzzling that its impact on the food supply to Ottoman civilians had not been taken seriously until Linda Schilcher’s seminal study in the mid 1990s of the Lebanese famine.<sup>52</sup>

Using “famine” as a strategy of war was not unusual and numerous examples of artificially engineered famines could be listed.<sup>53</sup> In the context of World War I, an Entente blockade of Germany (1914-1919) led to severe food shortages on the entire continent, continued more than six months after the cease-fire (to coerce Germany into signing the Versailles Treaty), and may have resulted in the starvation of hundreds of thousands of Germans.<sup>54</sup> In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the Allies did not always agree on the usefulness and application of this

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<sup>47</sup> The Sokoto Caliphate was one of the most powerful Islamic empires in sub-Saharan Africa until British colonial forces occupied it in 1903. British colonial rule over Northern Nigeria, the home of the Hausa-speaking people, began in 1900 as the result of the Treaty of Berlin in 1885.

<sup>48</sup> De Waal, *Famine That Kills*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Wheat was particularly important since bread was the main staple of every family’s diet.

<sup>50</sup> Linda Schilcher relies heavily on Grobba’s published account for her work. His published work here is supplemented by unpublished studies of Grobba that can be found in the archives of the German Foreign Office in Berlin (Deutsches Auswärtiges Amt). Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Schilcher, “Famine in Syria.”

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>53</sup> Ó Gráda lists as examples Julius Caesar’s conquest of Gaul in 52 BC, Louis XIII’s siege of Huguenot La Rochelle in 1628, etc. See Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 229.

<sup>54</sup> There is still no scholarly agreement on the number of immediate and long-term casualties of Britain’s blockade. Following World War I, Nazi Germany repeatedly employed “famine as a weapon of war” for example during the siege of Leningrad (1943-1944) and the intentional starving of the Warsaw Ghetto (1942). *Ibid.*, 229.

strategy. Still both France and Britain employed “famine as a weapon of war,” convinced that an escalating food crisis in the Ottoman Empire would open opportunities to manipulate enemy populations. Eager to inspire rebellion among the Arabs against the Ottomans, the British thought that an empty stomach would do the trick.<sup>55</sup> The British offered grain to food-deprived tribes in south of Lebanon in exchange for their participation and support of an Arab revolt.<sup>56</sup> The French prevented Ottoman ships loaded with grain from entering Syrian ports, while at the same time secretly providing aid to Mount Lebanon through the Maronite patriarch, breaching their own blockade to inspire alternate loyalties and maintain their patronage of Catholic Christians in the empire.<sup>57</sup>

The Entente blockade on import and export trade with the Ottoman Empire began at the end of 1914. A ‘blockade fleet’ made up of French, British and Russian ships and two aerial squadrons were dispatched in December, initiating an ‘unofficial blockade’ that was mainly concerned with patrolling the coast and the Beirut port. This meant sudden and drastic disruption in the arrival of foreign ships and the cutting off of supplies shipped from Egypt.<sup>58</sup> Following the official proclamations of this maritime blockade, by the British on June 2, 1915 and the French on August 27, 1915, the “blockade fleets” conducted military operations, including attacks on suspicious vessels, dispatching reconnaissance planes and sending out agents on spy maneuvers, engaging in submarine warfare, and at times bombarding suspected supply and petroleum depots of the coastal cities. All of the maneuvers increasingly resembled a full-fledged siege.<sup>59</sup>

As German steamers and submarines were sunk to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, the Entente blockade could be describe as nothing else but a military success. Second, it almost immediately resulted in shortages of basic foodstuffs, such as wheat and flour, but even luxury items such as sugar coffee and tea were hard to find as foreign trade ended.<sup>60</sup> Essentially, it successfully shut down all supply lines to the coastal regions of Greater Syria and the Arabian

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<sup>55</sup> The British mostly negotiated with Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, in particular the Hashemite Sharif of Mecca. British intentions were documented and since published in the Hussein MacMahon Correspondence. The Hashimites eventually took up arms against their Ottoman overlords in April of 1916. In return the British lifted their blockade of the Red Sea, supplying the Arabs with weapons, food, advisers and money. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 235.

<sup>56</sup> French foreign ministry documents confirm that food deprivation was part of British war strategy. French officials repeatedly mentioned that the British considered “the famine as an agent that will lead the Arabs to revolt.” Not everyone agreed about the effectiveness of this starvation policy. An employee of the French foreign ministry, for example, wrote in an internal memo that “distributing food would win greater Arab sympathies for the Entente,” especially given the shortages created by drought and the locusts. Had the harvest have been normal distributing food would have probably been less useful for the Entente. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*.

<sup>57</sup> A report in an Istanbul paper mentioned a French patrol boat interjecting three Ottoman ships loaded with grain headed for Beirut. At the same time the Secretary General of Foreign Affairs suggested to send significant monetary funds to the Maronite patriarch and offered his help in smuggling money to Mount Lebanon collected by the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora in Alexandria and Cairo via the island of Arwad. The island of Arwad, a small island just off the Syrian coast had been occupied by the French and became the center of French activities in the Mediterranean. A detailed account of French aid to the Maronite community will be discussed in chapter six. Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut "; Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 22.

<sup>58</sup> James L. Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation by James L. Barton* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 71.

<sup>59</sup> For a detailed account of the military operations see Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 196 ff.

<sup>60</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al-Gharb.’”

Peninsula, resulting in skyrocketing prices.<sup>61</sup> By 1916, Ottoman external trade was almost completely limited its wartime allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary, and had decreased overall to one-fifth of its pre-war levels.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, the Entente's material and financial bribes encouraged Arabs to rebel against the Ottoman in 1916, inspired the Maronite community to look toward France as its savior, and thanks to the army's overall lousy provisioning, encouraged many Ottoman soldiers to desert. The food shortages and the maritime blockade remained in place through the entire war and only lifted when Entente powers occupied Beirut and Mount Lebanon in October of 1918.

In May of 1916, the Maronite archbishop in Cairo complained to the French Ambassador in Egypt, DeFrance, that the Ottoman government was set on decimating the Lebanese, and blamed French authorities for maintaining the blockade that made shipping of supplies to Mount Lebanon impossible. DeFrance responded that the archbishop did not take into account the Ottomans' interference with shipments to Syria, and cautioned that any supply shipped by sea would surely be confiscated by Ottoman troops.<sup>63</sup> DeFrance argued that the famine, political oppression, executions and deportations were Turkish impositions and that it was false to believe that the naval blockade caused any of the suffering in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Contrary to DeFrance's claim, the naval blockade cannot be dismissed as a contributing factor to the Lebanese famine, but his obviously polemical intent cannot disguise: the fact that the Ottomans themselves contributed to the disruption of international trade and communication.

Following its entrance into the war on October 31, 1914, the Ottoman government employed its own 'blockade' in order to inflict an economic blow against Entente powers. As part of this strategy, it stopped payments on foreign debts and unilaterally abrogated the capitulations. The capitulations had set low tariffs on imports into the empire and encouraged the purchase and consumption of imported goods, as well as the export of raw materials.<sup>64</sup> The outbreak of the war was an opportune moment for the regime to end these uneven trade agreements with the European powers. Military authorities in Beirut raised the "duty on foreign imports a hundred percent" and closed the city's customs house, which was filled with goods worth over one million dollars. When the owners of the goods were unable to clear customs, the military authorities commandeered the inventory of the customs house, without giving a receipt or issuing payments to the owners. Margaret MacGilvary equated the whole proceeding as "a mob-plunder carried out by soldiers and by government representatives."<sup>65</sup>

The Ottomans increased the control of their coastlines fearing an Entente attack, and prohibited foreign enemy ships from landing in its ports. Entente warships surveying the coast along with the mere possibility of foreign troops landing on the coasts of Lebanon stirred up bitter memories of the previous century in the Ottoman leadership. The nineteenth century, as it

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<sup>61</sup> According to Jamāl Pasha and other Ottoman officials, who denied any intent to starve out the Lebanese, the naval blockade was the reason for the famine. Because of the maritime blockade, the Ottomans had to divert supplies from Syria to Mecca and Medina to maintain its legitimacy as imperial rulers over the two holy cities. Prior to the war supplies were shipped along the Red Sea from suppliers in Egypt, India and Australia. See Djemal [or Jamāl] Pasha, *Erinnerungen eines türkischen Staatsmannes* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922); Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 235.

<sup>62</sup> Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I" in *The Economics of World War I*, eds. S. N. Broadberry and Mark Harrison (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 118.

<sup>63</sup> MAE: *Guerre 1914-1918, Turquie* Doc. 178

<sup>64</sup> James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 48.

<sup>65</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 59.



is well known, witnessed increased European economic intervention, facilitated in part by capitulatory agreements, as well as intervention through politics of minority patronage, in particular Christian minorities. So that when violent civil strife broke out in Mount Lebanon in 1840 and again in 1860, the European powers did not hesitate to intervene on behalf of their Christian clients. From then on European visions of society had great influence over the administrative structures of Mount Lebanon and further fed into sectarian divisions.<sup>66</sup> The French, in particular, fostered a friendly and protectorate relationship with the Maronite community of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. At the beginning of the war, the *mutaşarrif* of Mount Lebanon, Ohannes Kouyumdjian Pasha reported on the increasing controls of the coastline, by Ottoman soldiers. He saw this as a challenge to his power as the governor of this semi-autonomous district. Ohannes Pasha argued that he had enough troops to control the coast and blamed the fact that he had not been asked to do so on a deep-seated Ottoman suspicion as to the loyalty of the Lebanese.<sup>67</sup> Despite Ohannes Pasha's constant reassurance that his subjects were committed to the Ottoman sultan, the military authorities continued to question Lebanese loyalty. According to a Lazarist priest from the Aintoura monastery in Mount Lebanon "the Turks said that the people of Mount Lebanon were the allies of France and thus established the blockade."<sup>68</sup> Lebanese writer Ḥalīm Mūsa Ashqar recounted Turks saying: "If we open your heart, we see France there."<sup>69</sup> The suspicions were not unwarranted, since not only did a number of Lebanese men volunteer for the French army, but it was also no secret that the Maronite patriarch Elias Hoyek remained in close contact with representatives of the French government throughout the entire length of the war.<sup>70</sup> In fact, many Maronites were involved in spy activities and information exchange with the French blockade forces stationed off the coast of Mount Lebanon.<sup>71</sup>

According to the historian Mahmoud Haddad, the defeat of the Ottomans in their wars in North Africa (1911-12) and the Balkans (1912) had "produced a political situation where some of the Christian notables of the city spoke of the necessity of aiding France to take control" over Beirut.<sup>72</sup> But it was not only Christians who were considering the intervention of foreign advisors to be advantageous; leaders of the Muslim community like Salīm 'Alī Salām thought that the role of foreign advisers could be beneficial in Beirut's affairs. However, the Muslim community did not seriously advocate the detachment of Beirut from the *Vilayet* of Beirut in turn for an attachment to Mount Lebanon.<sup>73</sup> In addition, with the beginning of party politics after the Young Turk revolution in 1908 voices calling for reform and a measure of autonomy for the Arab provinces—most did not consider complete independence—inspired Ottoman suspicions of Arab disloyalty. These suspicions escalated during the war into accusations of treason that

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<sup>66</sup> Ussama Samir Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism; Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> Ohannes Kouyumdjian Pasha, *Le Liban à la veille et au début de la grande guerre: mémoires d'un gouverneur, 1913-1915* (Paris: Centre d'Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine, 2003), 80.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Yūsūf Taniūs Kraydī conducted by Nicholas Ajay in 1964. See Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," Appendix, 14 ff.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Mr. Ḥalīm Mūsa Ashqar conducted by Nicholas Ajay in 1964. *Ibid.*, 18 ff.

<sup>70</sup> The relationship between the Maronites and the French government will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Six. Yūsuf Hakīm, *Bayrūt wa-Lubnān*, 154.

<sup>71</sup> Ajay, "Political Intrigue and Suppression in Lebanon."

<sup>72</sup> Mahmoud Haddad, "The City, the Coast, the Mountain," 146.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

ultimately resulted in the public execution of Beirut reformers.<sup>74</sup> Thus the Ottoman goal in controlling the coastline and increasing surveillance of the borders around Mount Lebanon was three-fold. First, it was to eliminate any food supplies coming into the region from the European patrons, which was feared would further shift the loyalties of the local away from the Ottomans. Second, it was to prevent locals from communicating with the enemy, and lastly, to avoid valuable supplies from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Together the Entente and the Ottoman blockades interrupted international sea trade with devastating and ultimately deadly consequences. But this catastrophe would not have been possible without the overall economic transformation of the region in the century before World War I. As Greater Syria was increasingly incorporated into the world market, peasant farmers in Mount Lebanon and in the coastal region of the province began cultivating cash instead of subsistence crops to satisfy the growing hunger of European industry for raw materials. The primary cash crops produced for export in *Vilayet Beirut* and Mount Lebanon were silk and tobacco. By 1880, revenues from silk export made up about fifty percent of the total revenue of Mount Lebanon and by 1911, silk made up about sixty-two percent of all exports from the mountain.<sup>75</sup> Silk became a primary source of income, providing households with the necessary resources to purchase food on the market. In 1915 however, the maritime blockades, however, cut off the import of silkworm eggs from France and Italy and producers in Lebanon had to rely on eggs from Bursa. Bursa eggs, however, did not do well in the Lebanese climate, and the wartime silk harvest was about half that of peacetime. In the summer of 1916 the harvest was further reduced by the heat wave.<sup>76</sup> To make matter worse, the other agricultural goods produced for export by farmers of the mountains, mostly lentils, vegetables, figs and other fruits, and olive oil, could no longer be shipped, according to a report commissioned by Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bey after his appointment as *mutaşarrif* (or provincial governor) of Mount Lebanon.<sup>77</sup> The loss of income of course was dramatic and purchase of food became yet more difficult.

Beirut had benefited from the growing import and export business of the nineteenth century, and the increasing economic opportunities in the city in particular attracted waves of people. The growth of Beirut, however, was based on opportunities in commerce and trade rather than growth in industry.<sup>78</sup> And it comes to no surprise that an urban population removed from food production—no matter how wealthy—was especially vulnerable to shifts in the food market.<sup>79</sup> Urban growth combined with the overall shift of Mount Lebanon’s economy to cash crops meant an increasing distance between the individual and subsistence and increasing vulnerability of the population to “food supply shock.”<sup>80</sup> The shock came as soon as Beirut and Mount Lebanon were cut off from the international market. It not only decreased imports and export of food stuffs and raw materials stifling commerce and trade in the city, but also meant the loss of income from agricultural products grown for export, such as silk. The result was an

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<sup>74</sup> For a detailed account of this see Tauber, *The Arab Movement*.

<sup>75</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home; Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>76</sup> The silk harvest of 1916 was reduced from an average of four thousand bales of raw silk to only six hundred. AA: *Beirut 10*, Report of the German Consul to Beirut on the state of sericulture in Lebanon, June 5, 1916.

<sup>77</sup> Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bey and Fu‘ad Afrām Bustani, ed., *Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bey: Lubnān, Mabāhith ‘ilmīyah wa-ijtimā‘īyah* (Bayrūt, 1970), 389-390.

<sup>78</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 159.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

overall decrease of the purchasing power of the inhabitants of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Not only goods were cut off by the maritime blockades, but also the flow of people and money was disrupted, eliminating alternate sources of income, primarily that from a growing tourist industry in Lebanon, as well as remittances sent from abroad.<sup>81</sup> According to Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bey’s report, in the pre-war years the income from tourism for Mount Lebanon alone was about twenty million *ghurūsh*.<sup>82</sup> Although still in its infancy, the tourist industry had been growing and hotels were equipped with modern sanitary arrangements. Prior to World War I, there were four tourist agencies in Beirut that organized tours to historical places on the coast and in Mount Lebanon, such as the ruins at Byblos. The moderate climate of the mountains made it a welcomed escape from hot summer days, while summer resort towns like Beit Marie, Aley, Brumana and Bhamdoun attracted tourists from Egypt and Iraq, affluent Beirutis, as well as returning emigrants, who “spend their newly-earned wealth in the mountains or even retired there and build villas.”<sup>83</sup> Most foreigners residing in Beirut, such as consular staff, merchants, missionaries etc. also had summer residences in the mountains. Consequently, tourism grew to be an alternate source of income source based on goods and services provided by locals and from renting out homes and rooms.<sup>84</sup> With the external naval blockades the income from international tourists and returning emigrants immediately ceased. The internal flow of domestic vacationers decreased during the war as well due to the increased financial strain, increased restrictions on internal travel and stricter military supervision of the borders between the *Vilayet* Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Another example would be the foreign students of the SPC, who now were unable to have money sent to them.<sup>85</sup> Although the halt in import, export, and tourism came to a complete halt did not alone cause the famine, it left Lebanese even less able to cope with it.

The Ottomans interfered with the remittances sent from abroad that contributed to the livelihood of many and for some Lebanese were the sole income.<sup>86</sup> In Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bey’s report placed remittances from abroad were listed as the primary source of income in Mount Lebanon, followed by income from the silk industry, tourism, agriculture and industry.<sup>87</sup> The increasing importance of remittances had been the result of large waves of emigration of men and women from Mount Lebanon, during the economic downturn and, in particular, the decline of silk production in the late 1890s.<sup>88</sup> The report estimated that about one hundred fifty thousand Lebanese now lived in the diaspora, sending home money.<sup>89</sup> When the war began, the Ottoman authorities closed down foreign banks and the consular mail services of the British, French and Austrians in Beirut. Consequently remittances became sporadic, and at times ceased

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<sup>81</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 116.

<sup>82</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 302.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>85</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge December 2, 1914.

<sup>86</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 13.

<sup>87</sup> Bustani, *Ismā‘īl Haqqī Bey*, 452.

<sup>88</sup> Only shortly after Lebanese silk production had peaked between 1860s and 1890s the competition from Japanese manufacturers, whose factories were better equipped and produced a superior thread, caused many smaller Lebanese factories to close their doors. Khater, *Inventing Home*, 202 n. 50.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

completely.<sup>90</sup> Money sent from abroad did not make often it to the person in need or lost much of its value in the exchange to local currencies. Many families were left high and dry. For example in the summer of 1915, a man who had relied on the money sent by his two sons from Australia was in desperate need of funds and came to Beirut in search of a possible loan. He found a lender, who loaned him money at the outrageous rate of fifty-five percent compounded interest, to be paid back after the war in gold.<sup>91</sup> This does not mean the funds from abroad completely stopped; there are many reports of money coming into the region through the American Mission Press, the tactics and strategies of which will be discussed in chapter six, but a reliable supply of remittances was a thing of the past.

### Government Failure: Conscription, Commandeering, Confiscations

Social scientists have also pointed to inflation, the collapse of the ‘entitlement system,’ and especially bad government, i.e. the inability to deal with the challenges posed by nature, pest, greed, corruption and war, as a key causes of famine. The fifteen-century Arab philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldūn was among the first to attribute famine or *majā‘ah* to be the outcome of bad government.<sup>92</sup> Ibn Khaldūn drew a clear link between inadequate governing and high grain prices. He characterized the public administration during later stages of dynasties as corrupt and inefficient. Offices in the administration were sold and could be obtained and maintained through bribes. As the ruling authorities, resorted to imposing oppressive taxes, farmers would resist by refraining from cultivating the land and move into the urban centers in search for subsistence. Ibn Khaldūn argued that population numbers and the density of the urban areas would increase and grain production decrease, causing an increase in prices so that eventually “indigent people” would be to buy any grain, and perish.<sup>93</sup> Ibn Khaldūn blamed famine, the culmination of hunger, on the government’s “coercion of the subject” and its failure to intervene successfully to remedy the decrease in agricultural production, and the resulting food shortages. Thus, in his perception, there was no doubt that Man himself caused famine.<sup>94</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn’s interpretational frame was taken up by fifteen-century Mamluk chroniclers, such as Ibn Taghrī Birdī and the Arab historian Taqī ad- Dīn al-Maqrīzī, who drew on his theory to explain the economic catastrophe and the famine that hit Egypt in 1403.<sup>95</sup> Ibn Taghrī Birdī, a close associate of the Mamluk administration, focused on governmental failures.

During this year [A.H. 806/ 1403-4] there was a vast extent of uninundated land in Egypt, and extreme scarcity resulted, followed by the plague. And this year was the beginning of

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Mr. Yūsuf Nakhle and Archibald Crawford conducted by Nicholas Ajay, 1964. Published in Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," Appendix, 95ff.

<sup>91</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 64.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Khaldūn has been credited as being the first to actually use the Arabic term *majā‘ah*. See Maqrīzī and Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn-Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah; An Introduction to History*, Franz Rosenthal trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 249.

<sup>94</sup> M. Chapra "Islamic Economics: What It Is and How It Developed," EH.Net Encyclopedia, ed. Robert Whaples. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/chapra.islamic> (accessed May 18, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> Taqī ad- Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) had served multiple times as the market supervisor or *muhtasib* under the Circassian Mamluk regime in Egypt. Well aware of the dire economic situation leading up to the crisis of 1403-05 and he was an outspoken critic of the Circassian regime. Maqrīzī and Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 3.

a series of events and trials in which most of Egypt and its provinces were ruined, not only because of the failure of the inundation [of the Nile], but also because of the lack of harmony in the government and the frequent change in officials in the provinces, as well as other causes.<sup>96</sup>

Taqī ad-Dīn al-Maqrīzī, in his polemical account against the Circassian dynasty, took the accusations of failed governance even further and argued that the famine, which he referred to as *ghalāh* (or increase in prices) that “causes *jū* ‘ (hunger) and *mawt* or *mawtān* (death),” was the outcome of three factors.<sup>97</sup> Like Ibn Khaldūn, he argued that famine occurs when people are unable to purchase food due to high prices (not the absolute absence of food) as the result of a weakening regime that appointed “public officials on the basis of bribes” rather than merit. Subsequently, it was not unusual for these officials to impose oppressive taxes to recover the bribes they had paid for their office. In turn, al-Maqrīzī argued, the productivity of the peasants declined, resulting in food shortages, which were amplified by the third cause of *ghalāh*, the debasement of currency. Al-Maqrīzī’s interpretational frame, although couched in religious rhetoric, may be seen as an early precursor to Amartya Sen’s entitlement theory of the 1980s, which clearly indicts governmental mismanagements to be responsible for people’s distress during famine.<sup>98</sup> In the European context, the British economist Adam Smith, following the lead of a number of eighteenth-century French thinkers, argued against nature-focused theories and suggested that famines occurred due to the “violence of government attempting, by improper means, to remedy the inconveniences of dearth.”<sup>99</sup> As the champion of free market policies, however, Smith thought that periods of dearth could be remedied by free market policies and a government’s non-interventionist economic policies. The economic historian of the Ottoman Empire Şevket Pamuk has shown, the Ottoman food policies went through several stages including, a policy of free market from November of 1914 to July of 1916. Whereas the market, as I argue in chapter four, was not entirely free even then, as local municipalities sought to impose price controls and regulations, the inaction of the central government and its decision to leave food unregulated did not have the happy result of increasing supply that Smith would have predicted. Instead the increasing food shortages from 1914-1916 seem to prove the opposite: under conditions of war free market does not even out shortages.

On the contrary, the economist Amartya Sen, who radically redefined famine along with its causes, blamed famine on failed government intervention.<sup>100</sup> He argued, in short, that

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> The Circassian Mamluk rule over Egypt began in 1384 and ended in 1517, with the Ottoman occupation of Egypt. Historians seem to agree that the later period of Circassian rule experienced a sharp economic decline, due to political upheavals, decline in agricultural production, industry, commerce and trade, an unstable monetary system, as well as rising expenditure of the military. Ibid., 11.

<sup>98</sup> M. Chapra, "Islamic Economics."

<sup>99</sup> For example Claude-Jacques Herbert in the 1750s and A.R.J Turgot in the 1760s not only articulate the idea that famines are man-made but that a free market economy should alleviate famine. Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 13.

<sup>100</sup> The reading of earlier Arab economists has shown that Sen’s understanding is not as novel as it has been presented. In addition, Amrita Rangasani’s study of famine records, codes and manuals from the nineteenth century has shown that even contemporary governments thought that famines were caused by the “collapse of the network of exchange of social transactions and services, wages and assets including the varied services and skills of the family unit or the village.” See Amrita Rangasani, "Failure of Exchange Entitlements' Theory of Famine: A Response," *Economic & Political Weekly* 20 (Oct., 1985), 1457. Still, Sen’s theory has been a useful tool in delineating the causes of past and present famines, as will be clear from the Lebanese case.

famines were not the outcome of food shortages or the unavailability of food, solely due to poor harvest as Smith had claimed; rather people starved because they are unable to command food, either because they lacked money or the socially and politically sanctioned right to receive food for free.<sup>101</sup> Famine therefore was the result of a breakdown in “entitlements” that resulted in the loss of access to food “enjoyed by a household by virtue of its socially recognized right to control certain resources.”<sup>102</sup> The type of resources that are at a household’s disposal could be actual cash, labor, or an arrangement with a private or public charitable organization, all of which would guarantee access to food. The inability to command food may be the result of high and unstable prices driven up by shortages due to limited means of transportation or disruptions to inter-district transfer, but also panic purchases and speculation that were encouraged by administrative chaos.

According to Sen, famines were caused artificially and generally played out in a field that was controlled by humans. This is certainly true in the Lebanese case. Here as we will see it was not a general unavailability of food, despite decreases in production, but rather the disruptions of inter-district transfer, local protective policies, administrative chaos, overblown bureaucracy, corruption and the high costs of transportation that were most detrimental. These conditions, along with state interventionist policies that sought to regulate food supplies for soldiers and civilians, including in-kind taxes, forced cultivation, requisitioning of supplies and all thinkable means of transportation, removed food from the market. The most obvious and immediate consequence was high and unstable prices that made it impossible for some to purchase the bare minimum for survival.

Fritz Grobba argued that shortages and starvation in Greater Syria were not inevitable. He estimated the daily consumption of wheat to be about 600-650 grams per person, meaning that the entire region of Greater Syria with a population of about four million needed about 900,000 tons of cereal to provision its population.<sup>103</sup> In the pre-war years this need was easily met by the wheat production in the interior regions, which should still have been able to feed everyone, even when imports from abroad were interrupted in the end of 1914.<sup>104</sup> His assertion is confirmed by eyewitness accounts that mentioned that the wheat and grain production in the interior remained ample during the war. For example in of November 1915, a Syrian refugee reported that there was plenty of stocks of wheat, barley, lentils, cooking butter, sheep and vegetables in Aleppo. Wheat, he recounted, was stacked pile upon pile; there were thousands of bags of grain heaped on the platform of the Aleppo train station and in the caravanserais and on the rooftops, although many of them were rotten.<sup>105</sup> It was not lack of food that would cause famine in the coastal regions and Mount Lebanon.

However, the disruption of imports and exports via sea routes were not so easily offset through overland shipment. Efforts at doing so were severely handicapped by the inadequacy of the overland infrastructure, paved roads and railways alike, despite Ottoman efforts and

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<sup>101</sup> Louise A. Tilly, "Food Entitlement, Famine, and Conflict," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14 (1983); Sen, *Poverty and Famines*.

<sup>102</sup> Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 80.

<sup>103</sup> This equals about 500-510 grams of flour. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> In 1913 the excess was about 76,000 tons. *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, November 4, 1915.

European capital investment into infrastructure in the later half of the nineteenth century.<sup>106</sup> For example, throughout the nineteenth century, roads were built in Mount Lebanon mainly to support the tourist trade, so that by 1917 there were more than eleven hundred kilometers of paved road.<sup>107</sup> But at the same time as late as 1912, there still was no railroad that connected the Ottoman capital to the Arab provinces. The rail system that linked Beirut via Damascus to the interior grain producing areas such as the Ḥaurān, in particular, had only opened in 1894 and since then had suffered from overall mismanagement, producing unreliable, slow, and uncomfortable trains.<sup>108</sup> Following the opening of the Beirut-Damascus-Ḥaurān line the majority of goods shipped between the coast and the interior was conducted by rail. Still the capacity of the system was simply not great enough to offset the shortages resulting from the wartime naval blockade; by 1914 the Ottoman Empire as a whole still only operated one hundred small trains on barely more than 3,500 miles of tracks for an area of approximately 680,000 square miles.<sup>109</sup>

The *mutaşarrif* of Mount Lebanon, Ohannes Kouyoumdjian Pasha, wrote in his memoir that his province was subjected to a double blockade: the naval blockade of the Entente powers and the blockade of the overland transport by the Ottoman military. Yusūf Rufāil seconds Ohannes Pasha's complaint: "We were deprived of supplies from the sea and from Syria." And as far as he was concerned "two blockades in a lifetime are enough for anyone."<sup>110</sup> The overland blockade was the result of military needs. When on August 2, 1914 the Ottoman government issued an order that called up all men between twenty and forty-five, all railroads "in Turkish and German hands were available only for military use."<sup>111</sup> According to the Turkish feminist and close friend of Jamāl Pasha Halide Edib, "there was one single railway (that was not complete at the time) over which the entire military transport and the entire provisioning of the country had to pass."<sup>112</sup> Ohannes Pasha complained that, despite of Jamāl Pasha's orders to ship a set number of trainloads of wheat to Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the shipments were sporadic and unreliable, as trains and fuel were needed first of all to move troops and their supplies.<sup>113</sup> The difficulties were not only the limited number of rail lines, but also fuel shortages that contributed to unreliable train schedules. By the summer of 1917, "thousands of beautiful pine trees had been cut down, but fuel was growing more and more scarce, so that the railroad was

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<sup>106</sup> Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) made great efforts to improve the internal network of trains in the Ottoman Empire, as part of his mission to advance the empire into "modernity." See Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 1998). European capital investment in Greater Syria also went into the construction of railways to link the coast to the hinterland, ultimately contributing to the commercialization of agriculture and the increasing integration of the empire into the world market as an exporter of raw materials. The estimated European investment into the development of infrastructure was approximately 205 million francs between 1860-1914. The construction of the Beirut-Damascus Road alone cost the French investors 4.2 million francs. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 10.

<sup>107</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home*, 116.

<sup>108</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 71ff; Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (London: Longman, 1997), 352.

<sup>109</sup> Hikmet Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, 28; Townshend, *Desert Hell*, 15.

<sup>110</sup> Yusūf Rufā'il was born in 1887 in a small village in the Kisrawan district of Mount Lebanon. At the outbreak of the war he worked for the newspaper *al-Naṣīr* and was supportive of French intervention. See interview with Mr. Yusūf Rufā'il conducted by Nicholas Ajay in 1964 and published in Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilayah of Beirut," Appendix, 56 f.

<sup>111</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 35.

<sup>112</sup> Halide Edib Adivar, *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edib* (Charlottesville: Leopolis Press, 2003), 322.

<sup>113</sup> Kouyoumdjian, *Le Liban*, 137.

unable to transport very much wheat.”<sup>114</sup> Civilians were increasingly deprived of access to transportation, which now depended upon the military, which had taken control of it in order to prosecute the war. Military needs took precedent over the needs of civilians.

It was not only the needs of the army that at times made civilian transportation impossible, but the policies of locally stationed military, provincial and municipal authorities also interfered with shipments. When Jamāl Pasha arrived in Greater Syria, he banned grain exports from the interior to the coast. He argued that the grain would surely be exported “to supply enemy fleets active in the eastern Mediterranean and offering a good price for grain,” rather than being sold locally.<sup>115</sup> His fear was not unwarranted considering corruption and the difficulties in overseeing procurement and shipment. It is not difficult to imagine that corrupt procurement officers would find ways of selling grain at their disposal to the highest bidder, which would likely be the Entente. Moreover, provincial officials, such as the Ottoman governor of Damascus, banned exports from the interior to prevent price hikes locally. According to Jamāl Pasha, the purchase of wheat in the grain producing regions of the *Vilayet* of Syria to supply Mount Lebanon had caused the price of bread to increase significantly in the interior cities. Consequently after they had temporarily allowed shipments in January of 1915, the administrative council of the *Vilayet* decided to prohibit the export of their grain to the *Vilayet* of Beirut and the *Mutaşarrافیyya* of Mount Lebanon. Even after intense negotiations between the central authorities, local Turkish officials, and municipal officers from Beirut and Damascus put no trains back in motion, shipments were obstructed by redtape. It was difficult to ship anything without special permission in form of papers that had to be notarized numerous times and “stamped with a great many official seals.”<sup>116</sup> And even if the necessary stamps could be procured they did not guarantee that the loads would be shipped or arrive at its destination. It often happened that the military authorities confiscated even shipments that had official approval and their transport had been paid for.<sup>117</sup> A bloated bureaucracy and the arbitrariness of the military authorities contributed to the famine in the coastal regions. The grain trade during the war became a high risk investment and increasingly only those merchants would engage in the trade who had direct links to the military authorities, so that they could avoid confiscations of their goods. The situation was aggravated by the corruption of those who operated the railroads, and it was not unusual that the men in charge “would assign freight cars to shippers, merchants and growers only upon the payment of bribes from one to two hundred pounds” and sometimes even change their minds if a larger sum was offered from someone else.<sup>118</sup>

In the context of World War I the term *seferberlik*, initially referring to general mobilization, stands out and continues to dominate the memory of the war.<sup>119</sup> ‘*Serferberlik*’ was

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<sup>114</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al-Gharb.’”

<sup>115</sup> Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 236.

<sup>116</sup> This is according to the eyewitness account of a Greek-Orthodox refugee from Aleppo. AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, November 4, 1915.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> For example, a shipment of grain that had been arranged and paid for by the Beirut Grain Syndicate in 1915 never arrived in Beirut, although the wheat had been brought to the train station in Aleppo, simply because the station master in Aleppo had been offered a greater sum. Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 352; Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 237.

<sup>119</sup> When it was first used is unclear, but the term might have already been part of Ottoman state discourse during the second Balkan War. Universal conscription as a form of recruitment began to be discussed toward the end of Sultan



initially ‘decreed’ on August 14, 1914. Preparations such as registration and the physical examination of the men’s bodies, however, had begun earlier at the end of July 1914.<sup>120</sup> Sheikh Aḥmed Ridā, resident the southern town of Nabatia, wrote in his memoirs that on the afternoon of July 31, 1914 the names of the men—between the ages of twenty-two and forty four—who were liable for military service were read out publicly, which people understood was the beginning of universal conscription in the preparation for war.<sup>121</sup>

On August 3, 1914 the Ottoman authorities distributed large sealed envelopes of unknown and mysterious content to the mayors of the villages and cities in the region. The envelopes were not to be opened until a general order was given; premature opening would result in severe punishments.<sup>122</sup> When the Ottoman War Ministry ordered the breaking of the seals two weeks later, people’s suspicions were confirmed. The envelopes contained large red posters adorned with two green crescent moons, one crossed by sword and the other by a gun indicating the military nature of the proclamation. Below the symbolically armed crescents, large letters read ‘SAFIR BARLIK.’<sup>123</sup> Local officials were instructed to post the proclamations on the doors of government buildings and houses of worship. As the news of a general call to arms spread, men gathered in the town’s square. The responses were mixed. According to Sheikh Ridā, some of the men in Nabatia wanted to flee but did not know where to.<sup>124</sup> Others were eager to join the army in light of possible war booty. The account does not record a national enthusiasm comparable to the responses in the European urban centers. Rather, the atmosphere in the southern town was agitated and confused, and for the most part men opposed the conscription measures.<sup>125</sup> The protest prompted the Ottoman military authorities to send a telegram to the provincial administration the day after the public announcement, declaring that military service in the regular army was to be limited to one year. The content of the telegram was disseminated and apparently had a calming effect, but still many questioned whether the one-year limit was genuine.<sup>126</sup>

The mobilization in the *Vilayet* of Beirut took place in a feverish manner, and all who are able to carry arms were “driven” to the barracks, although some went eagerly. The French consul described the proceedings as utter chaos: “orders and counter orders are following each

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Mahmud II’s reign. In September of 1843, reformer Reza Pasha established an army staffed by conscripts. Conscripts initially were to serve five years. The service period was reduced in stages down to one year by the end of 1914. Conscription was via lottery carried out among healthy men of the appropriate age. Women, non-Muslims officially until 1856 and in practice until 1909, residents of Mecca and Medina, religious functionaries and religious students, and a number of professional groups were exempted. During the war the age-bracket was continuously expanded and the purchase of exemption made increasingly more difficult. For an account of the history of Ottoman conscription policies see Erik Jan Zürcher “The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice,” in Erik Jan Zürcher, ed. *Arming the State: Military conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 79-94.

<sup>120</sup> The French Consul General to Beirut Georges-Picot wrote to the French foreign Ministry on August 15, 1914 that the Ottomans had announced an empire-wide general mobilization.

<sup>121</sup> Ridā, *Mudhakkirāt lil-tārīkh*, 34.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>125</sup> In Beirut the atmosphere seemed equally confused. But here the initial call to arms did meet with enthusiasm similar to the euphoria in European cities. Many of the young men eagerly joined the Ottoman army, while others sought to flee to Mount Lebanon, which was exempted from conscription drives.

<sup>126</sup> Ridā, *Mudhakkirāt lil-tārīkh*, 35.

other hour after hour and no one knows which order to obey and orders are constantly sent only to be rescinded a few moments later.”<sup>127</sup> Only one order never changed, he wrote, and that was the order that a train was always ready to transport troops to Damascus. At some point the military authorities had immobilized a hundred cars for this purpose. Otherwise, no two offices responded in the same manner to the same question, and the consul saw soldiers being brought to Beirut just to be sent off the next day again.<sup>128</sup> The result was that mobilization proceeded at a snails pace.

As the war progressed the recruitment of men became increasingly desperate. The government continuously increased the exemption taxes (or *bedel-i nakdî*), widened the age bracket of men to be enlisted and hunted down deserters, who met with harsh punishments to deter others.<sup>129</sup> As the result of an extensive system of exemption, however, the Ottomans had a difficult time filling their ranks. As late as January 1915, a time of full mobilization, only four percent of the male population was under arms, compared to France, which had already mobilized ten percent.<sup>130</sup> Then the Ottoman government sought to limit exemptions. In 1916 a very detailed list of who might be exempted was drawn up, so as to eliminate any ambiguity. Only top civil servants, judges, and *muftis* (Islamic scholars) were exempt under all circumstances. Lower ranking civil servants, policemen, railway clerks, etc. were exempt only if there was no mobilization order in their locale.<sup>131</sup>

Due to the special status of the mountain district, the men of Mount Lebanon were exempted from military service. However, many Lebanese lived or had their businesses in the cities of the *Vilayet* of Beirut and their status as registered Lebanese would increasingly be questioned. Not surprisingly, following the announcement of general mobilization, Beirutis of military-age fled to Mount Lebanon. In addition many Lebanese who lived in the adjacent Ottoman provinces returned to their villages in the mountain out of fear of conscription. It was a “desperate flight of men in prime age.”<sup>132</sup> The secretary of the Beirut chapter of the American Red Cross confirmed that the men in the region “fled before the conscription officers as from the plague.”<sup>133</sup> The fear was by no means unwarranted. Military authorities stopped everyone of military age and requested proof of their exemption status; if the papers could not be produced in due time the man would be taken and enrolled in the army.

The general mobilization was badly planned and resulted in a large number of able men being removed from agriculture and industry. The actual cultivated acreage in Greater Syria in the years 1914-1915 decreased not the least because the conscripted men came mostly from farmers and sharecroppers, whereas the wealthier segments of society continued to be able to pay

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<sup>127</sup> M.A.E, *Guerre 1914-1918, Turquie* [M. George-Picot Consul General of France at Beirut to M. Doumergue, Chairman of the Board, At the French foreign Ministry], as quoted in Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, 27.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> By December of 1915, the Ottomans apparently ordered that the upper age was to be increased to sixty in response to rumors of a revolt and the need for the enforcement of Ottoman troops stationed in Baghdad. AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, December 17, 1915.

<sup>130</sup> Zürcher “The Ottoman Conscription System,” 90.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>132</sup> M.A.E, *Guerre 1914-1918, Turquie* letter from M. George-Picot Consul General of France at Beirut to M. Doumergue, Chairman of the Board at the French Foreign Ministry, as quoted by Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, 27.

<sup>133</sup> Mc Gilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 56.

an exemption tax.<sup>134</sup> In December of 1914, Bayard Dodge wrote to his family in the United States that the greatest fear in Beirut was that reckless commandeering and conscriptions would make the upcoming harvests impossible because there would neither be enough horses nor farmers to do the work.<sup>135</sup> He was right in his prediction. There was also a decrease in acreage under cultivation and crop yields in the empire as a whole already in the first year of the war.

Similar to the strategic battle plans, the Ottoman government, by way of the Fourth Army Corps, orchestrated the civilian sacrifices in the Arab provinces. In addition to far-reaching conscription, the commander of the Fourth Army in Damascus, Zekki Pasha, ordered the empire-wide requisition of provisions for soldiers and transport animals for the army on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1914. The Ministry of War issued the order and transmitted it to the military authorities stationed in Damascus. From there it was forwarded to the governor of Beirut province and the *mutaşarrif* of Mount Lebanon, who then passed the orders down a chain of command to “notables and officials in the quarters” and to village chiefs, who did the actual collecting.”<sup>136</sup> For example, the central military authority in Damascus ordered local authorities in the southern districts of the *Vilayet* of Beirut via telegram to grant the locally stationed military officers access to grain. Aḥmed Riḍā reported in his diary that the *mudīr* of his district acted upon the order from the military authorities when he collected all the keys to the storehouses of the grain merchants in the region. The order did not go unchallenged, but the threat of being sent to the military court was warning enough for the inhabitants of the district to swallow their anger.<sup>137</sup> In September 1914, military authorities ordered the outright confiscation of grain from Nabatīya. In response the *mudīr* made a list of merchants, who would have to supply five thousand *uqqāt* (6,410 kg) of grain to the military authorities.<sup>138</sup> In time the formal requisitioning orders turned into commandeering and plunder and eventually it “wasn’t safe to bring food to or from Beirut, because food and mules were confiscated.”<sup>139</sup>

As the food crisis grew to unprecedented proportions in 1916, the Ottoman state found it necessary to intervene. The state composed and published a number of laws that were in part inspired by Germany’s food supply policies and were characterized by intense state intervention. The Ottoman historian Şevket Pamuk, as mentioned above, divides Ottoman food supply policies into three phases. In the first phase, prior to 1916, the central authorities relied on market forces to regulate prices and supplies. The policy failed, as prices rose with shrinking supplies, hoarding, and the increasingly limited and extremely costly transportation. In contrast, intervention of the central government, Pamuk argued, marked the second phase of Ottoman food policies<sup>140</sup> In July 1916, Istanbul authorities founded the Imperial Ottoman Office for

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<sup>134</sup> For a description of the actual process of conscription and various exemptions see chapter five of this dissertation. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 13.

<sup>135</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Doc. No. 63.

<sup>136</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 161.

<sup>137</sup> This was immediately seen for what it was, namely an attempt of the military government to confiscate the grain of the region. Everyone was aware that confiscations would be devastating and the gathered community to raise their concerns and express their fears with the town’s elders. The town leaders, however, urged everyone to observe the military government’s orders and warned that anyone who would stirred up trouble would be sent to the military court for judgment. Riḍā, *Mudhakkirāt lil-tāriḫ*, 33; AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.17.4.

<sup>138</sup> An *uqqa* equals to about 1.282 kg.

<sup>139</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 161-165.

<sup>140</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 125.

Provisioning, which was initially to be in charge of recording, transporting, and controlling the empire's entire grain supply in excess of the tenth to be paid to the state. This soon, however, proved to be an impossible task without a more extensive administrative apparatus. Therefore, the state continued to rely on local established networks and practices (discussed in chapter four) and instead of attempting to impose complete state control, focused on organizing the large-scale purchase and distribution of grain to the military and the most needy civilians.<sup>141</sup> For this purpose, the Provisional Grain Act was passed on July 23, 1916 and implemented in September.<sup>142</sup> The Ottoman authorities took complete control of purchasing grain from producers, with "cereal producers to retain only enough for seed and the maintenance of their household."<sup>143</sup> The rest of the harvest was committed to government agents at a fixed price, which generally was well below the open (or black market) rate. To facilitate the practical implementation of this law, the empire—by way of an executive order—was divided into three provisioning zones: Asia Minor, Greater Syria (including Adana), and Mesopotamia (including Aintab and Marash).<sup>144</sup> The export of grain from any of these zones into another had to be approved by a commission that the central Office for Provisioning had specially set up for this purpose.

The executive order assigned complete authority over purchasing and distributing grain to Jamāl Pasha, who eagerly applied the law. He ordered delegates from the various Syrian provinces to Damascus to inform them of his plan for the upcoming harvest of 1916. Jamāl Pasha designated three grain purchasing zones—Palestine, the Ḥaurān, and the province of Ḥamā—and assigned three prominent merchants to carry out purchases in these zones. The Beirut merchant Michel Bey Sursuq was responsible for the Ḥaurān region and was ordered to buy and deliver to the headquarters in Damascus eighty thousand tons of wheat.<sup>145</sup> This was an unrealistic amount. Jamāl failed to consider the needs of the population of the Ḥaurān itself, and the fact that trade was complicated because often peasant farmers, mostly Druze, refused to trade in paper money and demanded gold.<sup>146</sup> Still purchases were carried out, even if it meant that peasants had to be threatened with violence. Consequently, grain producers were more often than not forced to sell not only their livelihood, but also the reserve grain that should have been used for the next cycle of cultivation.

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<sup>141</sup> Taxes at this moment were rendered to the state in kind and in peacetime consisted of a tenth of the harvest.

<sup>142</sup> The original draft of the law was published on Juli 25, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2598). The law was amended at least four times on September 7, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2643), September 11, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2643), November 7, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2598) and December 13, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2701) and amended on October 24, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekayi* Nr. 2690), as published in Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 22-23 and 165-166.

<sup>143</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 123.

<sup>144</sup> The central legislative measures dictated the organization of smaller sub-commissions in the provincial capitals. The sub-commissions were to carry out a census counting inhabitants *and* domestic animals to determine amount of the grain needed for cultivation and subsistence. The central Office for Provisioning was then to compare the grain on hand for cultivation, the number of inhabitants, the amount of livestock, and the supply of foodstuff in all provinces and determine the need and surplus. It was hoped that by tracking the supply and need empire-wide a balance could be struck.

<sup>145</sup> Mustafa 'Izzadin, a native of Tripoli, was assigned the region around Ḥamā, and a merchant named Antebi from Jerusalem was assigned the grain-producing areas of Palestine. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 24.

<sup>146</sup> The Ottoman government had introduced paper currency at the outset of the war, but due to inflation it quickly devalued. During the height of the famine the paper currency lost seventy-five percent of its value.

Ottoman policy for provisioning civilians focused on the producer and did not deal with problems of transport, etc. It did little to alleviate the situation in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and even aggravated shortages through compulsory sales of all grain beyond the actual need of the peasant farmer's family at low, government-regulated prices. Farmers were not allowed to harvest their grain until a government agent had estimated its size and worth, which could ruin the entire crop if for any reason there were long delays or rainfall. The response of cereal producers was resistance.<sup>147</sup> Families hid their grain from government agents and attempted to smuggle it out to sell at higher prices on the black market. Sometimes, they tried to bribe local officials so they would underestimate the harvests or delivered grains of lower quality. And as Pamuk points out, resistance to the wartime measures of the state resembled what James Scott has termed "weapons of the weak." The state was undermined through foot dragging, concealment, and evasion.<sup>148</sup>

Amendments to the Provisional Grain Act in September of 1916 responded to the problems the authorities encountered. The state's was to outline punitive measure in cases of hoarding and smuggling. Most important, paragraph one of the amendment—a revision of paragraph seven of the original legislation—ordered that anyone who disobeyed state orders would be arrested and brought before the military courts, where they could receive a prison sentence lasting from one week to one year.<sup>149</sup> Any grains hoarded, hidden from the commission, or sold illegally at higher prices would be confiscated by the government and become its property, without any financial compensation to the owner. At the same time, the law was expanded to include all foodstuffs; local government commissions had the authority to confiscate any hidden foodstuffs without any monetary payment. The result was devastating. An American eyewitness reported that by October, military authorities had taken control of the entire wheat supply and even figs, grapes, and olives. The confiscated items were then "redistributed" to all districts, but the amount each received was only a third of what was necessary for survival.<sup>150</sup> The price of wheat in Beirut rose from 625 *ghurūsh* per *qın̄tar* in October 1916 to almost double that, 1,200 *ghurūsh*, in December. The peasant's response to government interference was in many ways no different from that described by the fifteenth century Arab chroniclers.

That response was to produce less, focusing on feeding themselves and their family, and circumventing government collections. At times peasant families stopped cultivating their lands altogether, because they could no longer make profit. Faced with this crisis, the Ottoman government sought to intervene directly in agricultural production with the Compulsory Cultivation Law and an ordinance for its implementation on April 3, 1917.<sup>151</sup> The Compulsory Cultivation Law was the most intrusive legislation enacted against peasants and bore the hallmarks of what commentators from Ibn Khaldūn, to al-Maqrīzī and Amartya Sen have seen as government failures to deal with food shortages and decreases in production. The 1917 law, signed by Sultan Mehmed Reşad, applied to all peasants not serving in the army, as well as all

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<sup>147</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 124.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 124; James C. Scott, *Weapon of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>149</sup> See *takvim-i vekayi* Nr. 2628, September 11, 1916 published in Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 166.

<sup>150</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, October 24, 1916.

<sup>151</sup> The Compulsory Cultivation Law was first announced on September 18, 1916 (*takvim-i vekayi* Nr. 2656), but it was not put into effect until April 3, 1917. See Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 174.

women and men above the age of fourteen; those capable of agricultural labor were required to cultivate a set amount of land, working at least eight hours a day.<sup>152</sup> The law gave the government the right to force individuals as well as various organizations to work in the fields.<sup>153</sup> If necessary, the agricultural ministry could demand that—once they had finished working their own lands farmers communally cultivate the fields of the families of soldiers or land that would otherwise remain fallow. The punishment for not following the orders of the state’s local representatives was a cash fines from twenty-five to a hundred *ghurūsh*; repeat offenders could receive a jail sentence of one day to week. The law designated the size of the land a farmer was required to cultivate; depending on the type and sex of his draught animals, and it regulated the producers’ work hours and possible profit. The law was amended in the Ordinance on the Implementation of the Compulsory Cultivation Law, adopted April 3, 1917. The Ordinance further shifted the focus toward provisioning civilians and addressed a number of the causes for food shortages in the provinces. It regulated the use of draught animals and prohibited their requisitioning as well as their sale for slaughter.<sup>154</sup> The regulation also dictated what and when the peasant farmers were to grow. The emphasis was the cultivation of winter crops. To make sure that agricultural work ran smoothly, men who were building and repairing equipment as well as any civil officers that were needed to implement the law were to be exempt from military service. In addition, any work project initiated by the authorities was deemed less important than agriculture, and twenty thousand men were put at the disposal of the agricultural ministry.

The Compulsory Cultivation Law represents the extreme of the Ottoman state’s interventionist policy in that it regulated space and time of the grain producers in an attempt to increase food supplies. With this law, the government hoped to mobilize its entire population for the war effort, including women and children. The plan was meticulously drafted, and the Ordinance on the Implementation of the Compulsory Cultivation Law specified how it was to be administered from the level of the central government to the provincial authorities down to the level of the village. However, the law had little immediate impact, and the harvest of 1916 to 1917 turned out to be only 75 percent of that of the previous year.

This and other measures aimed at increasing the grain available for both the army and the civilian population were ridden with miscalculations. Thus, although Jamāl Pasha ordered that the annual tithe be paid in kind, lack of personnel and transport facilities meant that many people had no choice but to pay in cash. A ban on threshing grain until taxes had been paid and permission to thresh had been issued—aimed at preventing smuggling and illegal sales of grains—also misfired. As permissions were frequently delayed, the result all too often the loss of the entire crop “as vermin and autumn rains destroyed it.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> The ministries of the interior, finance, justice, commerce, and agriculture were charged with the implementation of this law. The amount of land to be cultivated by farmers who owned a set of male oxen or horses was to be forty-five dūnums and for a female pair of such animals, thirty-five dūnums, according to the Ordinance on the Implementation of the Compulsory Cultivation Law, published on April 3, 1917. Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> The organizations listed included trading companies, civil society associations, subsidiary chapters of the Red Crescent. See Article 2 of *takvim-i vekayi* Nr. 2656 (September 18, 1916) in Ibid., 174.

<sup>154</sup> Article 10, ‘Ordinance on the Implementation of the Compulsory Cultivation Law’ published on April 3, 1917. Ibid., 176.

<sup>155</sup> Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 242.

Jamāl increased taxes on producers, ordering them to render a second tenth of their harvest to the government to feed the troops, and employed the army to deal with any resistance. To supply civilians, small-landowners were forced to sell additional tenth, and large landowners, an additional 25 percent, at fixed (low) prices.<sup>156</sup> Such taxes, along with increasingly hard requisitioning policies and grain seizures, by removing positive incentives to increase production,<sup>157</sup> only led peasants to stop cultivating their land, or to evade collection by hiding their harvests and systematically hoarding supplies.<sup>158</sup> Thus the state's coercive measures, coupled with its inability to overcome the predictable peasant resistance, only exacerbated an increasingly devastating situation. As Adam Smith had argued, 'dearth' or supply shortfalls was due to poor harvests, and that 'famine' –as distinct from dearth—are the outcome of a failure of government.

The requisitioning of draught animals posed another grave problem that not only complicated transportation of food, but also made farming more difficult, as "the government consistently seized pack animals for the army."<sup>159</sup> The orders affected the entire district of Greater Syria and were extended into semi-autonomous Mount Lebanon following a telegram of the minister of war Enver Pasha to the Ohannes Pasha dated September 12, 1914. The telegram was a clear sign that the region was not to be exempted from the empire-wide decree.<sup>160</sup> The governor responded to the telegram by alerting Enver to the illegality of such order and the negative response that could be expected from Lebanese subjects. It was not worth alienating the Lebanese in light of the small number of mules and camels that could be collected from the mountain, Ohannes Pasha wrote. In the end, he was able to at least temporarily delay the requisitioning of animals and the order was only carried out after Ohannes had left his post in 1915.

In February of 1917, the military authorities now desperate for animals to transport troops and supplies published another requisitioning order. According to the decree "the owners of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, mules and camels are ordered to present themselves within a certain time for sale to the government." Failure to follow the order would be interpreted as an attempt to defraud the government and punished with the confiscation of the animals.<sup>161</sup> Edward Nickoley described the orders as an attempt by the government to go "over the country with a fine comb for both men and animals."<sup>162</sup> Still others have described such attempts as having no system at all. Bayard Dodge wrote that "men, horses and supplies have been taken for the army cruelly and, what is more striking, very stupidly with no system."<sup>163</sup> The military authorities demanded all strong animals for its troops, but even weaker animals were taken as pack animals. As a result, agricultural production declined, despite the forced cultivation law, because of the

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<sup>156</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 66.

<sup>157</sup> Theodor Wiegand, *Halbmond im Letzten Viertel; Briefe und Reiseberichte aus der alten Türkei von Theodor und Marie Wiegand 1895 bis 1918* (München: Bruckmann, 1970).

<sup>158</sup> For a more detailed account of the Ottoman food supply policies see chapter five of this dissertation and Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 234

<sup>159</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3.

<sup>160</sup> Kouyoumdjian, *Le Liban*, 74.

<sup>161</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, Feb 12, 1917

<sup>162</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, Feb 12, 1917

<sup>163</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, December 2, 1914.

lack of draught animals to cultivate the land and transport the harvest to the market, particularly since railways were used almost exclusively for the transport of troops and military supplies.<sup>164</sup> According to Pamuk, the numbers of draught animals in the empire as a whole fell by more than one half and the number of sheep and goats were reduced by 40 percent.<sup>165</sup> The number of animals in Beirut was reduced so drastically that one “could count them on the fingers of one hand,” which made any taxi or transportation services extremely expensive. If one could find a cart the fare would be at least three times as much as before the war.<sup>166</sup> The animals left in the hands of their owners often were the weakest exemplars and the high cost of feed meant many of them died of starvation.<sup>167</sup>

Every war has its profiteers. Hoarding and profiteering posed another problem in Beirut and Mount Lebanon that was not easily dealt with. While Adam Smith has suggested that famine is not the outcome of “collusion between grain merchants” and/or hoarding, but of government intrusions, among the Lebanese, both—hoarding and ineffectual or negative state intervention—contributed to the famine. Smith believed that a free market would naturally minimize the effects of any harvest failure, for merchants, in their desire for profit, would make up for failures of the government by ensuring the “intertemporal and interregional arbitrage.” It would not be in their interest to hoard their goods for a long time, since if supplies suddenly became plentiful they “would be forced to sell at a loss.” Moreover, merchants would be inclined to move supplies from areas with a relative surplus to one with a deficit. This would even out the market and reduce “the damage done by any harvest failure.”<sup>168</sup> Smith went so far as to suggest that any government intervention, such as price controls, would be foolish, since high prices in times of dearth were desirable to discourage people from consuming more grain than absolutely necessary and would stimulate private trade.<sup>169</sup> In contrast, according to Amartya Sen “a well functioning market may exacerbate famines, by removing food from where there is insufficient purchasing power to richer, less affected areas.”<sup>170</sup> In contrast to the Smith’s vision of merchants saving the day, by balancing prices and supplies regionally, Amartya Sen accuses farmers and grain merchants of transform a moderate production deficit into an exceptional shortfall in products being released in the market.<sup>171</sup> Following Sen’s work from the 1980s, ‘famine’ has most often been associated with speculative hoarding, which is said to

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<sup>164</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 35.

<sup>165</sup> Pamuk, “The Ottoman Economy,” 120. Still the Ottoman authorities issued exemptions. A permit *or vessika* to keep one’s animal could be obtained. For example the American-Vice Consul of Beirut, had a special permit to keep his horse as of October 1914. Howard Bliss requested a permission for a number of donkeys and other animals to transport supplies for the college’s students up to Mount Lebanon where they would spend the hot summer month. He even was able to purchase a second *vessika* “to protect the sheep and cow,” which were needed for their provision. AUB: AA 2.3.2.1.1 Letter from Howard Bliss to Kiazim Bey, May 29, 1914.

<sup>166</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, March 31, 1916.

<sup>167</sup> Schilcher, “Famine in Syria,” 235.

<sup>168</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, “Adam Smith and Amartya Sen: Markets and Famines in Pre-Industrial Europe” (unpublished research findings at University College Dublin, Ireland and Davis Center, Princeton University, 2003-2004), 3.

<sup>169</sup> The ideas of Adam Smith can be found in some governmental policies in the early and mid-nineteenth century. For example Arnold points out that the British Viceroy to India in the 1860s “most earnestly impressed upon all persons in authority the necessity for not permitting the smallest interference with the ordinary operations of trade during the continuance of scarcity.” See David Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* (New York, 1988), 113.

<sup>170</sup> Ó Gráda, “Adam Smith and Amartya Sen,” 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



exacerbate the situation. In the Lebanese case it seems that, despite government efforts, much of the grain that arrived in Beirut and Mount Lebanon after 1915 was smuggled and sold on the black market at exorbitant prices. The wartime underground trade in grains was controlled by a number of Beirut merchants who had no qualms about withholding grain from the market in order to drive up prices, a story that will be explored further in the chapter five.

One example of merchants' power to control the market is the overall failure of the Beirut and Aleppo grain syndicates. After he arrived in Beirut in 1915, the Ottoman governor 'Azmi Bey took up the challenge of providing for the civilians of his province. He set up a grain syndicate of Beirut merchants under the leadership of Mustafa 'Izzadin, a grain exporter. The syndicate was given a monopoly over purchasing wheat in Aleppo and transporting it to Beirut, and was offered a ten percent profit in return. The idea was to buy wheat and grain directly from the producers in the Syrian interior and transport it to designated distribution centers in Beirut. The municipality was to closely supervise the syndicate, although the latter was a private organization. The syndicate failed miserably since market forces, despite efforts by the municipality to control them, remained largely unchecked. The possibility of making extremely large profits on the black market was too tempting for most merchants. For example, in the summer of 1915, the price of wheat in Aleppo was about three hundred gold *ghurūsh* for one *qīntar* (about 256.4 kg) of wheat. Even when transportation costs of sixty to a hundred *ghurūsh* and the additional ten percent of profit were added, the legal price of wheat was still well below its black market price of seven to eight hundred gold *ghurūsh* per *qīntar*. The overall devaluation of paper money and the ever-decreasing supply of food in Mount Lebanon further inflated prices, so that they reached one thousand gold *ghurūsh* per *qīntar* by the fall of 1915. Aleppo merchants saw these high prices as a great opportunity and formed their own syndicate to bring the profitable trade into their own hands. When the Aleppo syndicate succeeded in taking control of the grain market in Aleppo, Beirut merchants were marginalized and increasingly unable to make any profit within the context of their syndicate. Since they were, after all, operating at their own risk, the Beirut merchants were also eager to circumvent government restrictions. It was not long before they decided to leave the useless and unprofitable confines of the syndicate. Faced with the abandonment of his project, 'Azmi Bey promised 'Izzadin, the only remaining merchant in the Beirut syndicate that the government would cover any losses he incurred. However, a one-man syndicate was inadequate to import the amount of wheat necessary to feed Beirut. People continued to starve, and the black market was thriving as ever. Mustafa 'Izzadin, however, continuing to insist that private merchants should control grain import and export, even if profit were small, suggested setting up a syndicate that would include merchants from all three markets: Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Aleppo. The officials agreed and formed a public company with eighty shares each to be sold at one thousand Turkish liras. The shares were evenly split between Beirut and Aleppo merchants. The merchants negotiated with the railroad commissioner in Aleppo to set aside ten freight cars per day for shipments to Beirut and Mount Lebanon; then they bought a total of nine hundred tons of wheat. This amount could have fed the city and the mountain community for some time, but none of it was ever shipped; the railroad commissioner had received a better price for his cars. The Aleppo-Beirut syndicate disintegrated, and Beirut remained without a stable and regular supply of wheat.

What is important here is that speculative hoarding and the inability of the government to rein it in was detrimental to civilian consumers. Thus, neither Smith's nor Sen's assumptions

about market forces are quite correct. Although, Smith was correct in assuming that merchants would be eager to bring food, if necessary by smuggling it to the coastal region and Mount Lebanon, this eagerness did not alleviate the situation since first they strategically withheld grain from the market, driving up prices even further. Sen's assumption that merchants would remove their supplies from areas of insufficient purchasing power to richer and less affected areas, however, is equally questionable, since merchants were obviously eager to bring supplies into the affected areas, as it was there where higher prices could be demanded at least from the wealthy—for some time.

### Conclusion: A Perfect Storm?

In this chapter I have argued in light of famine theories that the Lebanese famine has to be understood as a sudden crisis resulting simultaneously from the privations of war that forced a breakdown of societal and economic networks; environmental factors such as locusts, heat and lack of rain; and prepared for by economic and political shifts of the nineteenth century in the region. It is the combination of all these factors that defined this human and environmental catastrophe.<sup>172</sup> War in general contributes to or in some cases even causes famine, in that it disrupts agricultural production, undermines local economies, interrupts the flow of foods, creates new patterns of demand for food, undermines people's ability to cope with crisis and often increases the strain by adding refugees to the picture.<sup>173</sup> World War I's role in causing the Lebanese famine and in foiling any attempts at its prevention or alleviation cannot be underestimated; its politics "suffocated and diverted the supply of food" that might otherwise have fed the most vulnerable.<sup>174</sup> And there is no doubt that other key causal factors were in one way or another related to the war in general and the Ottoman war effort in particular. The Entente and Ottoman strategies, their political economy of war and famine, are therefore essential to understanding the mass starvation in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. It is clear, however, that war does not always result in famine. It is clear that long-term historical developments joined the immediate necessities of war to cause mass starvation and death. Famines do not occur according to a universal pattern, but rather are the outcome of complex social, economic and political processes that are historically specific. Making this claim carries with it a rather devastating message, namely that famines may not easily be predicted. But what it also alerts us to is that we may neither underestimate the power of nature nor the weaknesses of man. It is the interaction between them that marks famine in its modern understanding. The combined factors of an Entente and Ottoman blockade, wartime profiteering, bad harvests and recurrent devastating locust plagues<sup>175</sup> led to an increasing shortage of food and/or purchasing power that led directly to excess mortality from starvation or hunger induced disease. As we will see in the following chapter, it transformed the dynamics within the family, changed patterns of consumption, and required strategies of survival that would upset the moral economy of society.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Eric Vanhaute, "From famine to food crisis: what history can teach us about local and global subsistence crises," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (47-65, 2011), 51.

<sup>173</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 163.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>175</sup> Schilcher, "Famine in Syria."

<sup>176</sup> Ó Gráda, *Famine*, 4.

## CHAPTER II

### Famine and Family:

#### Hunger, Death and Survival

It was the winter of 1916 that would be remembered as the one that wrecked and ruined the family in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. By the end of 1916, the war had been going on for two devastating years and winters had been particularly harsh as people struggled against hunger and disease. This winter promised to be nothing more than another wretched and devastating experience. It was during this winter that the lack of food and intense hunger drove the widow of Ibrāhīm Wāzan Sha`īb to madness. In the days of mid-November 1916, her husband Ibrāhīm had lain tossing in his bed, suffering from nausea and diarrhea, symptoms indicating that he had eaten something poisonous. He died a day later, the untimely death of an otherwise healthy man who left behind his wife and a number of children. The widow and all of her neighbors were almost certainly convinced that Ibrāhīm had died from eating the “stretched” flour distributed by the local government. The Sha`īb family had been struggling without food, and the rations that could be purchased from the Beirut municipality for a low price had been welcome; but now they seemed to be more deadly than hunger itself. The widow was delirious from hunger, fearing her own death more than anything, but also not willing to waste precious flour. In desperation and panic, she fed her seven-year old daughter bread made from the “flour” suspected of having killed her husband. The girl died almost immediately.<sup>1</sup> How could a mother do this? How could she, let’s say knowingly, poison her own child? There is no answer to this question. We will never know what was going on in the head of this desperate mother. But her brief tale may be instructive as to what happened to ‘family’ during the war.

Stories like that of Ibrāhīm Wāzan Sha`īb’s widow and the many reports of women and men having to make decisions driven by hunger present us with a window into the provincial Ottoman home during the time of famine. What did the famine mean for people on the ground? What effects did it have on society? How did people and the community survive, as competition over food grew desperate in 1916? Mohiuddin Alamgir in his attempt at defining famine lists a number of symptoms—he calls them “sub-states”—of famine. Some of these symptoms—the increase in interregional migration, the ‘wandering’ of uprooted families, the separation of family members, and breakdown of traditional social bonds—will be discussed in this chapter.<sup>2</sup> But we shall also see how changes in nutritional status, eating alternative ‘famine foods,’ and food fraud and the resulting loss of body weight, not only combined with each other and with the increase in crimes to produce excess deaths, but also significantly altered the attitudes and composition of society.

This chapter pays particular attention to the changing physical composition and moral attitudes of the family during World War I, which, as I will argue, exhibited a radical shift in the priorities internal to it. Historians of Europe have recently argued that although the war effected an overall decrease in the size of the European household, its impact on family and household

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<sup>1</sup>It is unclear how many children the couple had. AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, November 22, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Mohiuddin Alamgir, *Famine in South Asia: Political Economy of Mass Starvation* (Cambridge, 1980); Devreux, *Theories of Famine*, 14 f.

patterns was limited. Contrary, to what earlier historians have assumed, the principle of male authority within the family was maintained even in the absence of the father, by replacing him with the oldest male child or another male relative. In Mount Lebanon and Beirut, the war had more radical consequences. While there might be instances of male substitutions, gaps were mostly filled by women—to the detriment of the family’s traditional patriarchal structure.<sup>3</sup> My findings are thus closer to earlier scholarship on the European family, which had assumed that the patriarchal family was severely damaged during the war.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the famine transformed the family from a unit that provided safety and security to its members to a locus of competition for survival. It will become clear that during this period of extreme crisis for Beirut and Mount Lebanon, it would be female heads of household who increasingly made household decisions, and that gradually these decisions would favor the survival of individual members of the family over the survival of the unit as a whole.

The disintegration of the family as a functioning unit and the dispersion households was a not a new tendency brought about solely by the war. Leanings into that direction can be discerned in ‘Lebanese’ society already in the previous century. Far-reaching economic changes of the nineteenth century not only made the region more vulnerable and susceptible to famine, as we have seen in chapter one, but also meant that the ideal type of family, namely a productive unit that simultaneously constituted a single household, had already come under attack in Mount Lebanon and to a lesser extent in Beirut.<sup>1</sup> This was, first of all, the result of dramatic shifts in terms of gender and age in the workforce of the silk industry of Mount Lebanon. Until about 1850, peasant men made up the majority of silk factory workers. By the 1860s, however, women, and in particular young women, constituted by far the majority. The reason, according to the historian Akram Khater, was not only that women worked harder and for less money, but also that they readily subordinated themselves to the male authority in the workplace. So it can be said that in the case of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the war, forcing women to fend for themselves outside of the home, was less an inaugural moment of female “emancipation” than an event that exaggerated and accelerate tendencies already present in society.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the increasing focus on silk as a cash crop, and the resulting economic crisis as Lebanese silk was replaced in the late nineteenth century by artificial silk from Asia in European markets caused many men to leave their families in search for new sources of income abroad. According to the economic historian Charles Issawi, emigration from Lebanon began in the 1850s, first to Egypt; by the 1880s most immigrated to the Americas. As reasons Issawi lists population pressure due to an economic downturn and religious and social unrests.<sup>6</sup> Both developments, the increasing emigration of male members of the home and the fact that women had begun to work outside the household in the silk industry, had already jeopardized the *family*

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Wall, “English and German families and the First World War, 1914-1918.” in *The Upheaval of War ; Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66.

<sup>4</sup> For example Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ingrid Sharp, “‘Frauen and Fraß’: German Women in Wartime” in *The Great World War 1914-45; The People’s Experience*, vol. 2, eds. John Bourne, Peter Liddle, and Ian Whitefield (London, 2001), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Between 1860 and 1900 approximately 120,000 persons emigrated. For example in 1900 the American Consul asserted that emigration to the United States started in 1878, and five thousand persons left every year from Tripoli and Beirut.

and *household* as ideal type in the period leading up to the war.<sup>7</sup> The shift was one of necessity and in response to economic pressure. The remittances of the male émigré and the wages of the “factory girls” increasingly contributed to family’s budgets and with time became indispensable to survival of its members.<sup>8</sup>

The rifts in social structures effected by the war of famine and all its devastating symptoms extended well beyond the limits of the family. The profound dislocation and the micro-level shifts in household economies and gender roles within the family contributed to the destabilization not only of male authority as heads of household, but also of male authority that dominated communal leadership.<sup>9</sup> Communal leaders/patrons abandoned their clients in order to guarantee their own survival. We see this clearly, for example, in religious communities. It seems to have been a common occurrence for clergy to abandon their communities in order to increase their own chance of survival. In some cases, however, patron-client ties were strengthened. I will return to this paradox in chapter six. Here my focus is on the destructive force of the war of famine.

In contrast to the rich sources and population statistics historians have at their disposal for Europe, which allow a detailed analysis of changes in family size, age, gender composition, etc., the available data for Beirut and Mount Lebanon are more limited. Comprehensive statistics that can speak to the effects of famine on family are practically non-existent. Some preliminary observations can be made, however, in terms of changes in family structure and size of households based on parochial records of local religious communities that took inventory of their fellowships in the aftermath of the war. Memoirs and institutional diaries offer further information on internal decision-making of families and the state of the community at large. The local press sometimes reported on the various survival strategies employed by communities, families, and individuals, pointing to changes in social behavior, including consumption patterns, crime, food fraud, eating of alternative ‘famine foods,’ down to the denial of traditional social bonds and shifts in moral attitudes. These symptoms, or horrors, of famine were the defining characteristics of the war of famine. They were the shabby reality of everyday life in contrast to the glorious or not so glorious battles fought by soldiers on the front. Thus in this chapter we shall learn about *Ersatzkaffee* and wheat, starvation and coping mechanisms, all of which at some points might challenge the ethical and moral values of society.

### The Horrors of Famine: Hunger and Death

“*Did You Ever See a Starving Person? I Hope You Never May!*”<sup>10</sup>

Decisions that affected the family before the war, such as the immigration of fathers and sons and the working of daughters in the silk industry, were made in the context of economic strain. These strains, as we have seen in chapter one, drastically increased during the war, resulting in a

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<sup>7</sup> The Lebanese historian Akram Khater has shown how women’s work in the factories had social repercussions and placed much pressure on the families involved. Although, the income of the working women was vital to the survival of the family, these ‘factory girls’ met great social disapproval. Khater, *Inventing Home*.

<sup>8</sup> The yearly remittances are estimated to have been about 143,000 Turkish liras. Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizen*, Intro.

<sup>10</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

severe subsistence crisis beginning in the spring of 1915. The result for many individuals was “widespread, prolonged and persistent, extraordinary and insufferable hunger lasting for several months.”<sup>11</sup> A number of famine studies, in contrast to describing famine in terms of inadequate food availability, have focused on this aspect and have described famine in terms of “inadequate food intake.”<sup>12</sup> Some social scientists conceive the symptomatic biological effects of famine on the human body—including malnutrition, starvation and at its worse excess mortality—the most reliable signal of famine and the best lens through which to study it.<sup>13</sup> Excess mortality, namely more “deaths per unit of population than would normally be expected,” makes up the unit of measurement in these studies and (never mind its arbitrariness) is used to separate famine from dearth and ordinary hunger. Hunger’s immediate and most visible effect was the slow destruction of the human body. The culprit “hunger” generally encompasses two different, although often co-existent, physical states; it may involve “acute starvation” or a sudden gross deficiency in food (calorie) intake to a level that is insufficient to maintain life, and/or a chronic under- or malnutrition, which is a less drastic and more long-term underfeeding.<sup>14</sup> Inadequate food intake resulted in undernourishment; in Lebanon the more fortunate could see “the poor hungry [people] sitting and watching their bodies become thinner and thinner, until not even the strength is left for them to lift their hand to beg.”<sup>15</sup> The final outcome was excess mortality, as “the numbers of those swept up by death reached tens of thousands, so that entire villages were emptied of its people and no one was left alive.”<sup>16</sup> Its effects in the Lebanese case were so horrid that Edward Nickoley, Principal of the School of Commerce of the SPC, lamented that “no matter how emaciated a person may be from disease, he never looks exactly like the person suffering from the pangs of hunger. It is indefinable but when you have once seen it you can never mistake it, nor ever forget it.”<sup>17</sup> It was the “fearful signs of death from hunger, swollen feet, thin and wiry hair and a terrible tense expression of the face”<sup>18</sup> that Nickoley alluded to. Foreign observers in Beirut, such as Halide Edib,<sup>19</sup> recalled the streets of the city:

Men in rags with famished faces, solitary waifs and strays of both sexes, wandered; lonely children, with wavering stick like legs, faces wrinkled like centenarians, eyes sunken with bitter and unconscious irony, hair thinned or entirely gone.<sup>20</sup>

According to ‘Anbara Salām “the human figure became distorted.” On her daily walks with her mother the two of them “would see children with extended bellies,” the protruding stomach being a classical symptom of undernourishment.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the lack of protein in the diet of the poor and children caused pedal edema (or swollen feet), swollen abdomen and thinning of

<sup>11</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda “Making Famine History” *Journal of Economic Literature* (2007), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Sheila Zurbrigg, “Hunger and Epidemic Malaria in Punjab, 1868-1940,” *Economica & Political Weekly* 27 (Jan. 25, 1992), 16.

<sup>15</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, September 30, 1916.

<sup>16</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, June 9, 1916.

<sup>17</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>18</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al -Gharb.”

<sup>19</sup> Halide Edib had been raised and educated in Istanbul. She lived and worked in Beirut during the war. Jamāl Pasha had asked her to take over a number of schools and orphanages. Adivar, *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edib*, 371.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Anbara Salām was the daughter of prominent Beirut political leader of the time Salām ‘Ali Salām. ‘Anbara Salām al-Khālīdī, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān wa-Filastīn* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Nahār, 1978), 69.

the hair and ultimately death.<sup>22</sup>

The marks hunger left on the human body were cruel, but it was the “moans of the starving and the groans of the dying”<sup>23</sup> echoing through the streets of Beirut that most prominently inscribed themselves on the memory of foreign as well as local “ear-witnesses.”<sup>24</sup> The ‘soundscape’ of hunger filled the ears of Beirut residents, when the eye could easily be closed. Local and foreign elites—probably due to their relative isolation from the lower classes—more often commented on the auditory than the visual experience of hunger in their memoirs and diaries. The constant begging sounds repeatedly calling out “*jau ’ān*” (or I am hungry) were so agonizing and so “bitter to bear” that some people closed their “windows tight in the hope of shutting out the sound.”<sup>25</sup> Unremitting, the cries became so much part of everyday life that some people became desensitized to the sound. Edward Nickoley described his own reactions:

The other night, when I went up to my room, I heard a moaning down in the street. By the light of the street lamp I could see from my window that the boy was lying in the Nelson’s lane right by our garden wall. I knew what was the matter, we have all seen altogether too many of these cases. There was nothing that I could do for the boy. I went to bed, and being very tired, I went to sleep. All night long it seemed that I heard the moaning, in a dreamy sort of way. But I slept through the night. At daylight I awoke the moaning had ceased. My first thought was that it all had been a dream. I looked out the window and saw a couple of *hammals* [or porters] carrying the boy away. That is a typical occurrence these days and it is this sort of thing that keeps us reminded that the war is going on and that it is spreading destruction far and wide.<sup>26</sup>

Another eyewitness noted shifts in people’s attitude to the distress around them. The more desperate the situation became, the less others would respond to their neighbor’s plight.

In 1915, if we saw a hungry man falling down, a crowd of people would gather around, giving him water, some food and some money. In 1916, we would walk the streets seeing men, women and children on both sides lying in the mud, whimpering, and begging people just a crust of bread. And people would pass by that, a condition not known in the history of Syria, and very rarely tried to help because the catastrophe had become bigger and had broken them thereby. The needy people increased and it became impossible to save them. The utmost that people did was, on passing people, to turn their face and block their ears so they could not hear this.<sup>27</sup>

Church bells added to the sounds of famine. The “often repeated tolling of the church bells and

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<sup>22</sup> The symptoms described here in children are classic symptoms of starvation. In 1935, Dr. Cicely D. Williams introduced the name Kwashiokor to describe childhood malnutrition in newly weaned children. She argued that the malnutrition was caused by a protein deficiency. Ann Dally, *Cicely: The Story of a Doctor* (London: Gollancz, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.12. Letter from Howard Bliss in Beirut to Stuart Dodge in the US, December 18, 1918.

<sup>24</sup> Adivar, *House with Wisteria*, 371.

<sup>25</sup> See AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>26</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.2. Report, July 14, 1917.

<sup>27</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 423.

the constant crying of the hungry children” was for Bayard Dodge an indication that he and his colleagues was no longer dealing with chronic semi-starvation but rather with acute hunger, i.e. famine.<sup>28</sup>

Hunger’s final strike was death.<sup>29</sup> And for most “famine scholars”, it is the *number* of people that succumb to it that defines famine. It is not famine when twenty men die of it, but “when whole families and communities keel over” as a result of extreme, widespread and disastrous hunger epidemic then it can be called a famine.<sup>30</sup> It is not only scholars, however, who insist on mortality as the marker of famine. The descriptive definitions of *majā‘ah* in the Arabic diaspora press also described it as excess mortality due to deficient food intake. Salīm Effendi Sarkis reported in an article published in the Argentinian *Al-Salām* that about 80,000 people had succumbed to *majā‘ah* in Lebanon by January of 1916.<sup>31</sup>

It has to be noted, however, that defining famine as excess death from starvation is limiting. Besides it being a rather arbitrary unit of measurement, mortality, as Amrita Rangasami has argued, is not necessarily a condition of famine. For her, famine is a process that includes several stages—“dearth, famishment, and morbidity—and the ‘culmination of the process comes well before the slide into disease and death.”<sup>32</sup> The sudden excess mortality is only the final stage, i.e. the outcome of famine, and therefore as causal explanation or as definition, useless.<sup>33</sup> However, as a symptom it is essential and has to be discussed in the context of any famine. Furthermore, if we are able to go beyond simple numbers of mortality and detect patterns in who died, and when and where, a discussion of mortalities will not only be illustrative of the tremendous horrors of the famine, but also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of shifts in social structure, social composition and politics.

It is clear that in the case of the Lebanese famine death struck the region, one- to two-thirds of the population, well above any normal rate.<sup>34</sup> Still, the estimates of total numbers of mortality, as argued above, although shocking, speak neither to the causes of death, nor to the gender, class or community affiliation of the victims. In general, there are two categories of causes that increase mortalities. The first is pure starvation, directly related to nutrition. The second is indirectly related to nutrition, as the body—undernourished and underfed—becomes more and more susceptible to disease. It is no secret that nutritional deficiency decreases the body’s immunity and makes it more susceptible to diseases and to poisoning from consuming inferior food/famine foods. As Alexander de Waal has pointed out, disease always treads on the heels of hunger and often many more people die of disease during famine than of starvation. I will return to this in the following chapter. Here we are concerned with the disproportional death of people from hunger.

There are a number of reports that indict hunger as the primary perpetrator. Edward Nickoley, for example, mentioned that “many have died *just* from hunger, no other causes.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al-Gharb.”

<sup>29</sup> Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> William Paddock and Paul Paddock, *Famine, 1975! America's Decision: Who will survive?* (Boston, 1967), 50.

<sup>31</sup> Salim Effendi Sarkis was a native Syrian in exile and editor of the paper *al-Mushīr* in Egypt, SJU: *Al-Salām*, May 27, 1916.

<sup>32</sup> Edkins, "Legality with a Vengeance," 551.

<sup>33</sup> Rangasami, "Failure of Exchange Entitlements," 1747.

<sup>34</sup> See introduction of this dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> My emphasis. AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.



The wreckage caused by hunger is apparent in the accounts of other American canvassers, who traveled into Mount Lebanon compiling lists of people in need. Upon their return to Beirut the men testified to the appalling state of affairs in the mountains caused by starvation. One surveyor, after making a list of poor people in the villages assigned to him, returned after he had completed his lists to the same villages to ensure their accuracy. It turned out that he had to compile new lists, since so many people had died in the meantime. In one village forty-seven people had died during the twelve-day interval between his first and second visit. In another village nineteen were dead upon his return, after only three days, most of them from “out and out starvation.”<sup>36</sup> The account of an American eyewitness published in a Cairo newspaper confirms the large number of starvation victims. In the village where he had spent the summer months, more than thirty people had died of hunger.<sup>37</sup> In other cases entire villages were said to have been abandoned. Bayard Dodge recalled one of his acquaintances who had visited a small village near the Damūr River reporting that it was “empty except for one old man, who was burying his dead friend.”<sup>38</sup>

The institutional diary or daily journal (*sijl youmīyyāt*) of the Charitable Society of Saint Paul in Harissa further confirms the increasing number of starvation victims.<sup>39</sup> The secretary of the society kept a detailed record of starvation deaths in the surrounding villages. In November of 1915, he wrote that “those who died of hunger were not few.”<sup>40</sup> By January of 1916, “not one day passed without us seeing many people succumbing to the pangs of hunger.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, a great number of people died in the coastal town of Jounieh, which had become a destination for people from the mountains in search of food. As the food crisis worsened, reports of deaths from hunger and starvation became ever more frequent. The entry from May 6, 1916 reads: “Today thirteen people died of hunger in Jounieh, five in Sarba and five in most villages of the Kisrawan. Up until today, 196 people died in Aachqout of hunger.”<sup>42</sup>

The village of Aachqout is an interesting example. The Society of St. Paul’s journal includes numerous incidents of starvation in this particular village. For example, a father from the village traveled to Jounieh to mortgage his fields. The trip down the steep mountain slopes was long and arduous, and the man died of hunger upon his arrival in the coastal town. His son followed him a few days later, but did not even reach the town. He died on the way.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the year of 1916, two-thirds of Aachqout’s inhabitants were dead.<sup>44</sup> And so, the priests reported, “people continued to die from hunger”<sup>45</sup> across the entire region of Mount Lebanon.

The *qāimaqām* (or sub-governor) of Mount Lebanon also informed the clerics at St. Paul

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, October 24, 1916.

<sup>38</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Relief Work I Syria During the Period of the War: (A Brief and Unofficial Account)” composed by Bayard Dodge.

<sup>39</sup> Harissa is located north-east of Beirut perched on the peak of the Mount Lebanon range overlooking the coastal town of Jounieh, which at that time was a sizeable town north of Beirut. See StPH. *Sijl al Youmīyyāt 1*, July 29, 1903 to December 30, 1930.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Entry dated November 25, 1915.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Entry dated January, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Entry dated March, 6, 1916. Aashqūt was a small village tucked away in the Lebanese mountains east of Harissa and is hard to reach even today.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Entry dated December, 1916.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Entry dated July 15, 1916.

that a “great number of inhabitants of the mountains died and that the death by hunger took everyday close to five hundred people and most among them were men.”<sup>46</sup> By September of 1916, three to five people died in every larger village from hunger and fevers resulting from it.<sup>47</sup> The year ended with fifteen people dead in Harissa itself, although at that time it was a small hamlet of “only a few houses.” The adjacent village, Daraoun, reported about 160 people dead by the end of 1916; even though this particular village was counted as one of the richer villages about a third of its residents died.<sup>48</sup> In closing the report of 1916, the society’s secretary confirmed Nickoley’s observation that some villages had completely disappeared. It is clear that hunger ravaged the mountain and that by 1916 it was pushing its inhabitants down into the city, where the sights and sounds of hunger imposed themselves on the urban scene.

The records of parochial archives give accounts not only of the number of wartime casualties, but also of the exact place of residence, class, gender, and, by default, confession of the deceased.<sup>49</sup> For example, a 1919 survey of the Greek-Catholic archdiocese in Beirut noted the size of the community, its gender and age distribution, in addition to an evaluation of the economic and familial state of its members. The entries follow a strict formula that lists the name and age of the male head of household, followed by the names and ages—as far as they are known—of his wife, his male children and last his female children. The list of family members then is followed by a descriptive sentence that notes first those dead, second those who have left the country and their whereabouts, and finally the economic and familial status of the surviving family members.

An analysis of these surveys allow for several conclusions. One, it may be said that mortalities in the villages inspected by the church, although generally high, fluctuated significantly. For example, the parish of the monastery at Mār Sima’an, located approximately twenty miles northeast of Beirut and including seven small villages, had extremely high mortalities. At the outset of the war, church membership was 902 individuals, which was drastically reduced to 646 by 1919. The survey lists 256 people as “dead during the war,” which accounts for civilian mortalities of 28 percent or nearly one third of the Greek Catholic community. The villages closer to Beirut or south of it had much lower mortalities. The village of Btater, for example, counted 45 Greek-Catholics among its residents. From this only four—all of whom were heads of households—died during the war, accounting for 8.89 percent of the village’s Greek Catholics. The remaining members of the community consisted of two men, five women and seventeen children, all of whom were listed in the very poor category. The survey lists even smaller death tolls for the village of Rūmia east of Beirut (5.26 %), the southeastern villages of Mazra’a al-Nahr (7.55 %) and Bsrīn (4.69 %).<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately the reports only specify “dead during the war” (*mawt fī al-harb*) and do not speak of the exact causes, so that it difficult to determine exactly why some villages had far greater mortalities than others. And while the reasons for the lower mortalities in the latter villages are unclear, it is not unlikely that the northern villages incurred higher deaths simply because they were further removed from

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Entry dated August 8, 1916.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Entry dated September, 16, 1916.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Entry dated December, 1916.

<sup>49</sup> GCA: Box: Al-Mutrān Ithnāsīūs Šūāyā, (1919). Similar reports are available for the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon in the archives of the Maronite patriarchate in Bkerke and potentially in the archives of churches and mosques in Beirut. However, access to these archives is often difficult to obtain.

<sup>50</sup> GCA: Box: Al-Mutrān Ithnāsīūs Šūāyā, (1919).

roads and transportation lines and access to foods more difficult. While there are no records that account for the region as a whole, a report commissioned by Ismā‘īl Haqqī Bey, the governor of Mount Lebanon, presents us with some idea. The report, published in 1918, estimated the total number of dead in Mount Lebanon from March to December of 1917 at 2,973, a number that seems rather small considering the above-mentioned surveys. However, the report has to be read with caution. The historian Fuad Bustani has pointed out that the administration in the mountains established by the governor was new and its staff inexperienced and numbers generally under-reported. Many people continued to register birth and death with their local village authorities, rather than with the Ottoman governor’s newly established health administration, suggesting that the statistics published here are not entirely accurate.<sup>51</sup>

The second conclusion that these sources hint at is a higher number of dead among men than women. For example, Haqqī Bey’s report gives higher mortalities among males than females.<sup>52</sup> The survey lists 1,265 women dead during the war compared to 1,708 men. Some famine scholars have argued for a direct link between gender and famine mortality, with women having a lower chance of dying from hunger due to larger amounts of body fat. But to argue this to be true in Lebanon’s case would need more research and it is unlikely that the data necessary to make this case could ever be found. What parish records do tell us with certainty, however, is that an overwhelming number of families lost their male heads of household. The post-war survey of the parish of Mār Sima’an, for example, accounts for a total of 155 households in the parish, *one hundred* of which lost their male heads through either death (56) or migration (44) during the war. This community, as we have seen above, had an extremely high number of deaths. Moreover of the total 256 deceased, heads of households made up approximately 21 percent. Male/female distribution of the remaining 79 percent is unclear and needs further investigation. Other villages with smaller Greek Catholic communities and fewer mortalities, however, hint at a pattern of higher male deaths. The church in the village Mazrāa al-Nahr had forty-nine members, four of which died during the war. The four all were men, husbands and fathers, i.e. heads of households. In the village of Bisrīn, the Greek Catholic community had a membership of 179 persons prior to the war, out of these eight died—all of which again were men and heads of households. In the small village of Btater, that had only five Greek Catholic households, three men died during the war; Khalīl Yūsuf Khalīl, Dāoud Sa’ad Khalīl, and Salīm ‘Asad Khalīl, all the heads of families. Still here too it remains questionable whether famine deaths were gender specific and more work, and possible comparisons with other communities, would be helpful. What we can conclude with certainty from these fragmented records is that an extraordinary number of families lost their male heads of household in the war.

The third preliminary conclusion we may draw from the records is that out-migration grew exponentially during the war and also contributed to the increase in female heads of households, in particular among the poor. Migration patterns clearly reveal difference in terms of gender and class. Immigration from Mount Lebanon, as mentioned above, began already in the nineteenth century. British Consular reports of the early twentieth century, for example, inform us that emigration was “always on the increase” and extended from Mount Lebanon to all districts of Syria. By 1909 emigrants are said to have been about ten thousand a year. By 1914, three hundred to three hundred fifty thousand persons had left, a quarter of whom were from Mount

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<sup>51</sup> For details on this see chapter three.

<sup>52</sup> Bustani, *Ismā‘īl Haqqī Bey*, 666.

Lebanon.<sup>53</sup> When the war reduced remittances to a trickle, and the silk industry was almost completely shut down due to the Allied and Ottoman blockades, emigration intensified. Egypt's Alexandria was the main destination for refugees from Greater Syria.<sup>54</sup>

Parochial records shows that class and gender largely defined options of interregional migration and migration abroad. For example, from the village Mazrâa al-Nahr, of the sixteen individuals who left during the war, only four were female. Of the males who had left, eight went abroad either to Brazil or Cuba and four had traveled to the grain-producing area of the Ḥaurān, in what is today's southwestern Syria. A survey of these records indicates that in general it was either male heads of households or the young single sons of Arab families who left for Egypt, and South and North America. From the village of Bisrīn forty-five (or 31 percent) left. Of these, thirty-three were unmarried men between the ages of twenty and thirty. Female migration it seems was limited to those who afford to move the entire family. The four women who had left Mazrâa al-Nahr, for example, were all members of a middle class family of eight that had moved to Brazil during the war. It seems that middle class families often left the region as a unit. For instance, in the village of Rūmia, the Greek Catholic community was mostly middle class. A total of 63 percent of the community left the village to move out of the region; among these a significant number of families had relocated in their entirety. Poor families generally sent either their head of household or their young men abroad. Poor women, on the other hand, were left behind and had to fill the gap left by the male member of the households. Most importantly, families expected additional income from men who were forcefully removed or voluntarily traveled overseas to seek new fortune. However, as everyone soon realized, the reality was very different and due to the blockade most were unable to send any of their income home to their families. With men absent and no remittances coming in, women were increasingly forced to work outside the home or in many cases left their homestead to migrate to Beirut in search for subsistence.

While it is impossible to draw far-reaching conclusions at this time, our survey illustrates the great potential of parish sources, in terms of gaining a much more detailed account of the geographic and gender distribution of mortalities, as well as of wartime migration patterns. However, much more research needs to be done in the local and smaller archives to draw comprehensive conclusions. Most importantly, what needs to be added are studies of comparable sources from the Muslim community. The institutional diaries of small mosques and the Islamic court records of Beirut would be ideal in expanding the scope of this micro-level analysis.<sup>55</sup> In general, however, it may be said here that the disruption of the households and the family unit found its conclusion, so to speak, during World War I.

### Dangerous Consumption: Stretching Flour and Wheat

Although, as we shall see in the following chapters, the local as well as the central authorities increasingly attempted to deal with the problems of provisioning the civilians by

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>54</sup> Among the hundreds of Lebanese who settled in Egypt during the war were a number of personalities “who would play a crucial role in the formation of modern Lebanon,” as for example, Emile Eddeé and Michel Chiha. Asher Kaufmann, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 60.

<sup>55</sup> The neglect of these sources here is due to the difficulty in accessing them. I hope to add them in the future.

employing legislation that rationed food, set prices and assured supply, none of their actions seemed to alleviate the actual suffering of the middle and lower classes.<sup>56</sup> The shortages affected most families who depended on bread as the main staple. Before the war it was common for families, in particular among the poor, to bake wheat flour bread in their homes. As noted in the previous chapter, there was rapid decrease in available wheat and its ever-increasing prices especially after shipments from the interior ceased or became more and more sporadic. Consequently, wheat prices skyrocketed from about fifteen *ghurūsh* per *roṭl* in July of 1916<sup>57</sup> to about forty *ghurūsh* in November of 1916. In response families began using alternative grains to grind into flour. The immediate substitute was barley, as it sold for about half the price of wheat in November of 1916.<sup>58</sup> Barley was also more readily available and cheaper than wheat but offered similar qualities and similar nutritional.<sup>59</sup> The greater availability of barley in the markets, however, meant that not only families of average means, but also some of the rich families began eating bread made from barley.<sup>60</sup> As barley climbed up the social ladder into the homes of wealthy Lebanese families and was no longer frowned upon as an inferior grain, its price increased just as its availability diminished. The outcome was that many of the poorer families resorted to stretching the flour used for baking bread with ground up and more affordable legumes, such as chickpeas, lentils and even lupine seeds, previously used only to feed livestock.<sup>61</sup> The price of a *roṭl* of lentils was between four and five *ghurūsh* compared to the *roṭl* of flour made from wheat, which was, as mentioned above, between sixteen to seventeen *ghurūsh* in April of 1916. Considering that an unskilled laborer in Beirut and its surrounding regions earned about eight to ten *ghurūsh* per day, legumes were much more affordable<sup>62</sup> Potato was another possible stretching agent for bread, but was not as popular, as for example in Germany,<sup>63</sup> since it turned the bread into “white talc that was like a white glue.”<sup>64</sup>

The increasing shortages of wheat coincided with a decline in its quality, as merchants tried to sell old stock that had been hoarded from previous years to drive up prices. In addition, they often attempted to bolster their pockets by adding dirt or sand into the bags of grain. One such example is a shipment of grain received by the Syrian Protestant College. The SPC generally dealt with grain merchants who worked under the protection and supervision of the government, and the college continued to receive grains in regular intervals. The wheat usually was acceptable and met the college administration’s standards. But when the college received a shipment of wheat from the Beirut merchant George Bey Thabet, employees discovered that the grain appeared to be last year’s crop and that it contained more than five percent dirt. Whereas many Beirutis and Lebanese, such as the Sha’īb family, had no choice but to consume the “dirty” wheat or flour, the president of the SPC complained to the merchant and requested a refund or exchange for a better quality wheat, under threat of reporting him to the authorities.<sup>65</sup> It was an offer Thabet could not refuse. He was aware of the college’s friendly relations to the Ottoman

<sup>56</sup> Municipal attempts at legislating food are discussed in chapter five.

<sup>57</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, July 18, 1916.

<sup>58</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, November 22, 1916.

<sup>59</sup> Grobba. *Getreidewirtschaft*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> StPH: *Sijl al Youmīyyāt I*, July 29, 1903 to December 30, 1930; Entry dated November 25, 1916.

<sup>61</sup> StPH: *Sijl al Youmīyyāt I*, July 29, 1903 to December 30, 1930; Entry dated April 13, 1916.

<sup>62</sup> I thank Prof. Sevet Pamuk for pointing out to me the purchasing power of unskilled labor.

<sup>63</sup> The German government introduced legislations for *Kriegsbrot*, or war bread, which prescribed the exact measures of potato to be mixed into the flour for bread.

<sup>64</sup> Yūsuf Emil Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān wa istishādahā* (Beirut, 1920), 106.

<sup>65</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.16.7. Doc. 3.

authorities; Thabet also realized that transporting the wheat back into his warehouse would be expensive and surely would result in an even greater loss. The college was able to negotiate a significant discount on the price of the wheat.

Food fraud was a daily occurrence. It was common knowledge that merchants and small businessmen tried to stretch their wares; they mixed ground coffee with finely ground barley and chickpeas and wheat with darnel.<sup>66</sup> The purchase of ready-made flour became ever more hazardous, as we have seen in the case of the Sha'ṭb family, which received municipal flour stretched with a poisonous substance. This is not to say that the municipality itself stretched the flour; it was more likely done by individuals within the long chain of suppliers and distributors. In general, the population complained that the flour of any grain declined in quality throughout the war years and that the mixing of flour with sand and sawdust was not unusual.

Bakeries in general gained a special status in the food distribution scheme of the local authorities. Municipal authorities charged bakeries with the distribution of bread to households in exchange for tickets that could be bought from the government. The bread produced by the bakeries was not what people were used to and many complaints were made as to quality. According to eyewitnesses, the government bread was “an unwholesome mixture of barley, corn, millet, and even earth and tares.” And in some cases the bread contained no wheat at all,<sup>67</sup> and was “dirty and black; the view of it simply spoiled one’s appetite.”<sup>68</sup> The bread was a mixture of ‘strange materials’ that caused the bread to get moldy within a day. One eyewitness recounts that it was white the first day, turned black the second day and then the same evening turned grey or purple.<sup>69</sup>

Imported goods such as coffee, sugar and rice disappeared almost completely from the market. Although considered luxury goods, the pre-war consumption of sugar had not been limited to the rich and wealthy. Sugar and coffee, in fact, were widely used in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.<sup>70</sup> The consumption of baked sweets, containing sugar, was associated among all classes with religious holidays and festivities such as marriages among all classes. Now trade in sugar and coffee came to a halt and the limited amounts that could be found in the markets were traded at excessive prices.<sup>71</sup> As sugar prices rose, so did the prices of baked sweets. For example by the beginning of 1916, the price of 2.5 kg Kanāfah as well as Baklava reached about sixty *ghurūsh*, an amount that “exceeded the earnings of even the rich in those days.”<sup>72</sup> This meant of course that the days when people were consuming all kinds of sweets and had embellished their celebrations with the taste of sugar were over, at least until the end of the war.

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<sup>66</sup> Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 201.

<sup>67</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 205.

<sup>68</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, March 30, 1916.

<sup>69</sup> Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*, 83.

<sup>70</sup> The import of sugar had increased significantly in the nineteenth century, changing consumption patterns. In 1836 the total value of imported sugar to Syrian was 14,000 pounds sterling; by 1913 it had increased to 607,000. Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> The shortage of sugar was not unique to Beirut and Mount Lebanon, but rather the interruption of sugar imports also affected the consumption patterns in Europe. Whereas Britain did not experience any severe supply shortages, prices of food items rose significantly. Sugar, however, was the only commodity that warranted government intervention. The British government set up a Sugar Commission in 1914 to deal with the disappearance of sugar imports from the European market. Peter Dewey “Nutrition and Living Standards in Wartime Britain,” in Wall and Winter eds., *Upheavals of War*, 201.

<sup>72</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, March 31, 1916.

Many families refrained from celebrating weddings and births, partially because they were unable to afford the necessary sugared goods associated with them; the same was true for funerals. Still, the very rich had plenty of festivities, although even those must have decreased.<sup>73</sup> Most of the coffeehouses in Beirut were closed during the war; no surprise since coffee had become rare and expensive. By 1916, “only the rich” could drink it and only without sugar.<sup>74</sup> Those who frequented the few remaining coffeehouses were served an unpleasant brew made from roasted chickpeas and lupine seeds. Foreign and Syrian liquors were sold at high prices and chocolate had completely disappeared from the market. Imported canned goods such as tuna, sardines or biscuits were hard to find and often too old for consumption. Another increasingly rare essential was salt. To make up for the lack of imported salt, people dried seawater in the sun.

Whereas chickpeas, lentils, and potato might have had negative effects in nutritional value –not to speak of the sand and sawdust, other additives had more serious consequences. During June and July of 1915, a large number of people in Beirut suffered from nausea and dizziness. The cause of this wave of sickness was blamed again on government bread, which eyewitnesses thought had been made from a “mixture of strange grains.” One of the substances mixed in with the wheat that caused people to complain from dizziness was darnel, or also known as cockle.<sup>75</sup> Darnel is a grass plant that grows plentifully in the Greater Syrian region and is found alongside and within wheat fields. It is often referred to as false wheat because of its similar appearance.<sup>76</sup> The consumption of darnel causes feeling of drunkenness and in some cases may even result in death. In Beirut, it had affected large enough numbers of people to be mentioned in the press. Another common additive was bitter vetch or *julubban*, grown as animal feed and not for human consumption. Similarly *Turmus* or salted lupine was traditionally used only as ground fertilizer or animal feed, but was introduced into the human diet during the war.<sup>77</sup> It had very low nutritional value and while flour made from *turmus* might have filled the stomach and partially relieved the initial hunger, it “weakened the digestive organs” and resulted in sickness and extreme weight loss.<sup>78</sup>

The practice of stretching wheat and flour with non-nutritious or even hazardous materials are the more digestible stories of survival strategies employed by Lebanese families and the local government. When it came to extreme hunger, contemporary witnesses report that those close to starvation ate about anything they could lay their hands on. One of the most commonly related stories is that people followed the horses of soldiers to pick out the remaining grains from horse droppings. Women and children would “knock each other down for the possession of an orange peel” or the rinds of watermelons.<sup>79</sup> Children were seen scavenging garbage and “heaps of rubbish [...] competing with dogs for whatever scraps there were.”<sup>80</sup> When six boys were found

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<sup>73</sup> For example, in the first years of the war the governor of Beirut ‘Azmi Bey organized parties in front of the Hotel Bolis, including singing, dancing and musical performances more than once a week. Unfortunately, we do not have any record of what was consumed during these celebrations. USJ: *Al-Salām*, July 26, 1915.

<sup>74</sup> USJ: *Al-Salām*, May 18, 1916

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>76</sup> The Latin name of darnel, *lolium temulentum*, hints at its intoxicating qualities. *Temulentus* meaning drunk.

<sup>77</sup> Historically, bitter vetch was only consumed as the last resort in times of great starvation. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 36.

<sup>78</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, June 9, 1916.

<sup>79</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>80</sup> al-Khālīdī, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān*, 69.

dead in the street in September of 1916, the medical examination concluded that they died of hunger. The exam revealed that the boys' bowels were completely empty except for the remnants of some lemon peel that they must have found at the side of the street and ate in desperation.<sup>81</sup> An American physician confirms: "I saw with my eyes lemon peel and soil in the bellies of a lot of people who underwent surgical operations in the American hospital."<sup>82</sup> In the village of Mansūriah, people had reportedly eaten "all the dogs of the town and all the animals that they could catch in the field and on the road."<sup>83</sup> And when in the Dūbbiyah, a village on the outskirts of Beirut, a man's donkey died, the villagers cut up the animal and distributed it in the village. The animal must have been dead for a while, since twenty people died of food poisoning after eating it.<sup>84</sup>

Desperation did not stop here and rumors of cannibalism make the rounds among the American missionaries. While mostly such accounts have been dismissed as rumors, the priests of St. Paul at Harissa actually witnessed such an incident. The journal of the convent notes that in a neighboring village a seven-year-old child died of hunger. The parents buried the body close to the house. During the night the dead child's nine-year-old brother sneaked out from the house and started digging up the body. The child ate the flesh of his brother, and consequently became very sick. Because the body had already started to decompose, the second child died only a day later. Incidents of cannibalism are also mentioned in post-war memoirs. One such example is that of a certain Tanniūs Shāhīn from the town of Damour, south of Beirut, who reportedly had slaughtered one of his sons and was eating the flesh of the child when he was caught by a passer-by, who took hold of him and delivered him to the local gendarmerie. The man was then interrogated in the office of the *qāimaqām* in 'Aley, where he admitted to his crime. He blamed hunger.<sup>85</sup> Mr. Yusuf Rufayil, in an interview, recounted how "body disease was accompanied by moral disease." He lamented that the situation was so bad that people would "employ just about any means to get food to survive, means which ordinarily their upbringing and pride would have ruled out." They would even resort to cannibalism. Still he believed that despite the many rumors such cases were actually rare, although he knew of two such incidents himself, one in the Kisrawan and one in the Shuf district of Mount Lebanon. In both cases it apparently were adults eating children.<sup>86</sup>

The strategies families employed to survive starvation, hunger and death were numerous. They varied, as we have seen above, from adjusting habits of consumption by stretching flour and switching to less expensive grain, to pure measures of desperation that included eating dogs, garbage and in some (although rare) cases, each other. To buy flour not only became increasingly difficult in terms of access, but the competition in the city became so desperate that carrying home a sack of flour became dangerous and often porters were attacked by hungry people in the streets.<sup>87</sup> Reports of bread riots as such are rare in the sources. This of course could have been an issue of censorship, since the Ottoman authorities would not want these to make the news and stir up more trouble. Or it may simply be that there were none and the issues

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<sup>81</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, dated September 8, 1916.

<sup>82</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, dated October, 26, 1916.

<sup>83</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 157.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Yusūf Rufāyil conducted by Nicholas Ajay, in 1965. Published Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut."

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*



brought up were only small-scale skirmishes. One reason, for a potential lack of riots may have been the strict military rule in the region. A demonstration in the southern district of Nabatiya against the confiscation of grain for the army may serve as an example. The local police almost immediately dispersed the demonstration and threatened the inhabitants with imprisonment. The mere threat of being sent to the military court, which had been set up by the Ottoman military authorities in the town of ‘Aley in the Matn district of Mount Lebanon, was, according to Shaykh Aḥmed Riḍa, enough for the citizens of the town to swallow their anger.<sup>88</sup> Another possibility is that such public display of discontent did take place but, just as the devastation of locusts, typhus, and enemy victories, was censored. The mere fact, however, that a number of food-related skirmishes in the city although referred to as “complaints” or “demonstrations” or described as “disturbances” not against the government but individuals, were mentioned in the press hints at the fact that people took to the streets. Bread riots, particularly in the city, during which bands of women and children “frantic with hunger overwhelmed the keepers of bread shops and vegetables and meat stands.”<sup>89</sup> The police stood by, according to Nickoley, as women and children carried away what they could and returned the next day for more. In a report from May of 1916, women and girls were gathering in front of the store of a flour merchant in Beirut. Faced with the threat of his supplies being plundered, he gave in and gave everyone present an *uqqa* of flour.<sup>90</sup> At other times shop owners simply closed their stores. In general, it is difficult to discern from the available sources whether or not serious uprisings or riots simply did not take place, or whether the authorities censored the press and ordered it to omit any public challenges of the government, or if the demonstrations were simply insignificant, since they are neither mentioned in memoirs of contemporaries, nor in the regional press.

It is interesting to note here that Nickoley defined the rioters as women and children. This on the one hand may hint at a general absence of men, but also has to be seen in the context the larger aim of his “historic diary.” By invoking the image of desperate starving women and children, i.e. those who not only were innocent in the conflict, but also represented a group that should be taken care of within a patriarchal society, Nickoley did more than simply point to the horrors of famine. He was inherently rendering a stark criticism of the native male authorities that in this case had failed in its provisionary function. Nickoley language was emotive and would stir up a moral obligation in the reader to aid those in need, implying an opportunity to rescue innocent women and children. In this context, his diary may be seen as part of larger humanitarian discourse. That women were at the forefront of fighting for food does not come as a surprise. Throughout European history bread riots have traditionally been women’s riots. In German cities women were the ones rioting for food in the long breadlines during the war.

#### Family: Do Father and Mother Devour Their Own Children?

Strong family ties, which we are known for, ceased to exist. Everyone was forced by sheer self-preservation to look out for himself. A mother would sell her child for food. A brother would not give food to his brother. Once a man was taking a loaf of bread to his ailing father. Upon arriving home, he found a group of people gathered in front of the house. He kept saying to himself that he hoped his father was dead. When the people

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<sup>88</sup> Riḍa, *Mudhakkirāt lil-tārikh*, 36.

<sup>89</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>90</sup> USJ: *Al-Salām*, May 6, 1916.

gathered around confirmed the death of his father, he was elated because now he could keep the bread for himself.<sup>91</sup>

The war's unprecedented hardship and the realities of hunger, starvation, death, and migration impinged on many families by launching a cutthroat competition among their members for mere survival. The famine sundered bonds of kinship and friendship and turned life upside down. The story Ibrāhīm al-Sha'ib's widow, who killed her own daughter by feeding her poisoned wheat, is by no means an exception. The collapse of the family as an economic unit that provides for the safety and security of its members was the direct outcome of competition over food and for survival brought by the famine. The priests at St. Paul were distraught by the fact that "the heart of the people was hardened against each other. [...] A brother does not help his brother anymore, nor the father his son, nor the sister her sister."<sup>92</sup>

The priests were first-hand witnesses of the breakdown of the family and commented in their daily journal on its depravity. One story recorded in great detail, in particular stands out, and exemplifies the clerics' concern over the moral state of their flock. It happened so that one of the convent's neighbors, wealthy by village standards, since he had a good income from his fields and owned a cow, refused to aid his close kin. The man was known for his stinginess, but his behavior during the famine enraged not only his monastic neighbors, but also the community at large. The man had two brothers, who were rather poor, and by 1916, the two men and their families were on the verge of starvation. Their brother turned his back on them and neither extended a loan to his brothers nor helped them with food. This in itself was an outrage, but the priests were even more astonished when they heard that the wife of one of the man's brothers—who was at the same time the sister of the wealthier man's wife—was sick and in need of milk. The sick woman asked her sister to sell her some milk at a fair price. But her request was denied since she did not have the cash to pay for it, and would need a loan from her wealthy sister. The fact that he "had many fields" mattered little to this man who "did not want to help his brother with even an *uqqa* [about 1.25 liters] of milk from his cow."<sup>93</sup> This particular account illustrates no more than a natural reaction to extreme suffering. The survival of the immediate household, i.e. wife and children, took precedence over the survival or care of blood kin outside of the household. What seems to trigger the judgements of the priests was the wealth of the man and their own perception that helping his brothers would not have jeopardized the survival of his own family. In light of people dying in throngs and the uncertainty as to when the war would end, the turning inward of families to their immediate relatives perhaps was not so shocking and a rather instinctive decision. In another incident the priests took in a sick woman who was at the verge of starvation. They nursed her for two days, and then rented a donkey that would take her back to her village Aachqout. The priests informed her brother that they were sending her, but he "did not come to help her, but he sent a bottle of water."<sup>94</sup> The strain that accompanied the struggle for survival was accompanied by an increasing carelessness or ambivalence about the health and survival of family members. The brother seemed to have no intention of securing the arrival of his sister, although there was a good chance that she would not survive the trip.

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with Mr. Yusuf Rufa'il conducted by Nicholas Ajay in 1964, Beirut. See Nicholas Z. Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," Appendix, 56 f.

<sup>92</sup> StPH: *Sijl al Youmīyyāt 1*, July 29, 1903 to December 30, 1930. Entry dated September 14, 1916.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. An *uqqa* translates into about 1.24 liters of milk.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Entry dated September 16, 1916

The constant presence of death in their midst desensitized the population, as Nickoley noted, with the result that the care for the bodies of the deceased became less and less of a priority. A woman who had died in Daraoun was dead in her house for twenty-four hours and no one of her family took care of her corpse. Instead the family informed the *qāimaqām* who was supposed to assure her burial.<sup>95</sup> When a thirteen year-old boy's body was left on the roadside for five days and neither his father nor his mother nor any other relative was willing to bury him, the priests wrote a letter to the municipality "asking for mercy and respect in religion and humanity" and permission for them to bury the body.<sup>96</sup> After some back and forth, the municipal staff gave the go-ahead to the priests to bury the body, and so they did.

As the number of deaths increased, in particular in the winter of 1916-1917, funerals became more frequent. Margaret Mc Gilvary describes her daily walk from her residence to the American Press office, which was about a mile.

I would pass as many as ten or twelve people either dead or dying by the roadside; or with death only a few hours distant. [...] One passed four or five funerals each day on any route, and the same coffin did service for every corpse in a district until it literally fell to pieces.<sup>97</sup>

In some cases funerals were eliminated completely, and the "dead were gathered off the streets in the morning and were thrown out on the hillside back of the town" to be eaten at night by wild animals.<sup>98</sup> Edward Nickoley wrote that "people have long since passed the point of common decency where they feel the need of burying their dead in cemeteries and with a certain amount of form and ceremony."<sup>99</sup> The high number of civilian deaths so overcrowded the graveyards "that the corpses were left only covered with earth, so that the wild beasts would feast on them."<sup>100</sup> The disposing of the bodies of the dead became a major problem. Bayard Dodge reports that in the mountain village of Alley, he and his staff bought a coffin that villagers then could use free of charge. Lumber had become so expensive that it was impossible for most people to purchase the wood to build coffins and bury their dead, so that communal coffins became quite common.<sup>101</sup> The various religious communities in the city each had several in stock that would be sent out to families that reported a death. In the villages, people often used the doors of their houses to carry the corpses. In the city, burial was an even greater problem because of the limited space. The governor of Beirut, since people were dying so fast, "ordered that bodies be placed in a common grave without any kind of ceremony."<sup>102</sup> The municipality organized four carts twice daily to tour the city picking up bodies that were then "unceremoniously dumped into mass graves, often forty of fifty at the time."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 204.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>100</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 304.

<sup>101</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. "Report of the Soup Kitchens in 'Abeih and Souk al-Gharb."

<sup>102</sup> Anṭūn Yamīn, *Lubnān fī al-harb: awDhikra' al-ḥawādith wa al-maḏālim fī Lubnān fī al-Ḥarb al-'Umūmīyah: 1914-1919* (Bayrūt, 1919), 69.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 69.

The porters who carried the bodies would take the bodies out of the casket, and at times strip them of their clothing, divide the loot amongst themselves, bury the dead body naked, and return the casket to the church so that it could be used again. “As a rule porters and gravediggers were behind in their jobs.”<sup>104</sup> For example, Nickoley commented that when the mother-in-law of an acquaintances died, the family sent notice to the “proper authorities” but nothing was done about the body for a week because the porters and gravediggers attended to the calls in the order they came in.<sup>105</sup> Health officials in the city tried to deal with the overwhelming number of dead as best as they could, but, notoriously understaffed, their best was not enough. When a prominent member of the community, Anis Effendi Dāuq, died city officials including the Ottoman governor attended the funeral. After the burial the governor discharged the head health official of Beirut, because he had seen seven unburied bodies. People wondered what the governor would do if he would see other cemeteries, some of them much worse than that one.

The collapse of traditional respect accorded to the body of a deceased person was especially obvious in the case of grave robbers. For example, thieves came to the Maronite cemetery at night and dug up corpses that had been buried during the day. Thus put Ḥabīb Al-Mashqūqī’s corpse unto a cart and were taking it in the direction of Ras Beirut. Surprised by a police guard, they left the cart in the middle of the street, and fled into the night. The guard moved the corpse to the police station and Al-Mashqūqī was simply reburied the next morning. It is interesting to note that the thieves took the entire body, while others would have simply taken any valuables. The reason for this is unclear and one can only speculate.<sup>106</sup>

The number of dead was so high that the old rites and rituals surrounding burials in the city and in the mountains could no longer be maintained. Instead several priests were dispatched to the cemetery and sat there waiting to perform the last rites on the bodies as they came in. The secretary of the priest of St. Paul in Harissa rendered a harsh critique of clerics who increasingly abandoned their parishioners. He was most critical of the Maronite clergy at the patriarchate of Bkerke, located only a few kilometers down the mountain from Harissa. He wrote that the Maronite clergy in the face of war and famine were neglecting their duty toward the people. The processions, prayers and sermons that accompanied burials prior to the war were stopped. Worse, the Maronite archives confirm that their priests simply abandoned many of their parishes.<sup>107</sup> They stopped visiting the homes of those near death to give them their last sacraments and let them die without prayer. The priests of St. Paul further accused the Maronite clergy of privileging the rich over the poor, as they hurried to pay their respects to the rich. When the person was poor the “liturgy was rushed and their speech slurred.”<sup>108</sup> But the priests may have avoided or sped up the rituals because the numbers of sick and dead were beyond their capacity to succor. (They may also have feared infectious diseases that roamed the homes of the poor.) Some priests admitted that they abandoned their posts, because there was simply no food in the villages.<sup>109</sup>

Increasingly families, and in particular mothers, were pressured to make decisions that determined the death or the survival of individual members. So high were adult deaths in the

<sup>104</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*: AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, March 17, 1915.

<sup>107</sup> Bkerke: Hoyek 72, Document 94.

<sup>108</sup> StPH: *Sijīl al Youmīyyāt 1*, July 29, 1903 to December 30, 1930. Entry dated September 16, 1916.

<sup>109</sup> Bkerke: Hoyek 77, Doc. 71.

villages that there were an increasing number of orphaned children (an orphan defined as a child with at least one dead parent and that one unable to provide for them). Poverty rampaged through the mountain villages. A survey conducted by the Greek Catholic Church of seven villages that were part of the parish of Mār Simāan showed that 459 people persons who had survived the war, 347 individuals (or 75 percent) were poor and in need of support from the church. This included 58 orphans (36 boys /22 girls). The village of Rūmia was another case. Out of 191 persons registered with the village church, 122 had left the village to live abroad and of the 69 Greek-Catholics remaining in the villages, 57 were listed as poor.<sup>110</sup>

The poor families and in particular the “very poor” orphans were dependent on relief either from local churches and mosques that distributed food, and government soup kitchens and hostels, or from the relief centers set up by American missionaries. Overwhelmed by the numbers of people in need, including “hundreds and thousands” of children, the care in the numerous government hostels set up to indiscriminately pick up the orphans “just enough to keep them alive.”<sup>111</sup> In the American relief centers, which restricted the number of children who could be taken in, mothers were required to select from their children the one most likely to survive. American relief centers “due to the desperate circumstances” had adopted “the principle of the survival of the fittest in many of the villages and actually required mothers to select from their children those who are to be granted an opportunity to live while the rest of the family were inevitably condemned to die.”<sup>112</sup> Margaret McGilvary, secretary of the American Mission Press in Beirut, further described the priorities set by the mission which demanded that families make the decisions as to which member would receive aid. They were to choose the “young over the old; the well-educated over the illiterate; and the breadwinner of a family over the individual.”<sup>113</sup> The many women who came to the Brumana soup kitchen, set up by SPC’s Dr. Dray, were often told that they could only place one or two children in the orphanage. The Brumana soup kitchen included three shelters: for girls, boys, and babies; the boy’s and the girl’s shelter each housed about 40-60 children.<sup>114</sup> Mothers and aid workers knew that this most difficult, heart wrenching selection decision as to which child would be turned over to the soup kitchen and “to life” would inevitably mean the death of those that were left in the mother’s care.<sup>115</sup> However hard these decisions must have been, mother made these decisions and they were made to save at least one of their children.

Considering these reports in which brother abandoned brother, sisters did not care for sisters and mothers faced decisions that meant the sure death of one or more of their children is evidence that hunger, starvation and the everyday presence of death and the corpse was to the detriment of the Lebanese family and of the moral economy of Lebanese society. In some cases entire families died, in other cases some members abandoned others to secure the survival of either self or a smaller unit within the family. The household-family unit, although at first the one to focus survival strategies on, soon was only a measurement of how many mouths there were and how many could be fed. Once a family member was dead, his or her body was often abandoned and denied the traditional rites and rituals and, as we have seen, at times said to have

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<sup>110</sup> GCA: Box: Al-Mutrān Ithnāsīūs Šūāyā (1919).

<sup>111</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>112</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 75.

<sup>113</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 222.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>115</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA. 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al-Gharb.’”

been consumed by those near to starvation.

### Conclusion

This last example is certainly the pinnacle of competition for survival at the expense of family or the moral economy of the family, in particular the lower class family. What is clear from looking at the extreme stress situations brought about by acute starvation and intense hunger is that World War I inadvertently altered the family and the decision-making processes within the family as competition over food entered the home. Men usually either left the homes or were conscripted into the army; but if they did not, they were the victims of starvation at a higher rate than women. Women took over the role of heads of households and made decisions over their children that often meant life or death and aimed at the survival of individual family members, to the detriment of others. The vast devastation and the extreme number of deaths among the adults left many children orphaned, without families or households. Families tried to avert their complete destruction by employing various strategies, including changes in consumption. But in the end hunger prevailed and the great suffering during the war, and in particular the winter of 1916, was destructive of the family as a functioning unit.

## CHAPTER III

### Rats, Lice and Microbes:

#### The Spread and Prevention of Wartime Infectious Diseases

When Ahmed Dandan, a worker at the mill in Antelias, a suburb of Beirut, woke up on the morning of September 26, 1915, he felt terribly sick.<sup>1</sup> He was sweating and shivering at the same time and his head felt like it was about to burst into pieces. Instead of going to work and ignore the aches and pains as he normally would, he hurried to see a doctor in nearby Beirut. The physician examined Ahmed and concluded that the miller had contracted a “simple fever” (*al-ḥummā al-basīṭā*) the cure to which would be lots of rest and fluids. Six days later Ahmed’s daughter woke up with symptoms similar to her father’s. In addition to the fever, the young woman exhibited a painfully throbbing swollen gland on her thigh. The family did not hesitate for a minute and took her to the same doctor, who immediately connected the two incidents. Fearing it to be worse than a “simple fever,” he reported the family to the health and sanitation authorities in Beirut. The director of health (*mudīr al-ṣiḥḥa*) and the supervising physician (*tabīb al-markaz*) of the *Vilayet* Beirut drove out to the suburb to inspect the Dandan’s home. After a close examination of the daughter and a bacteriological screening of her blood and tissue from the swollen gland, the two medical officers decided that her condition could be nothing else but a type of plague.<sup>2</sup>

This was an extremely serious situation. If the home of the family was infected by the plague immediate actions needed to be taken to prevent the spread of this deadly disease to the entire city. The director of health called a meeting, which was attended by the governor ‘Azmi Bey, Beirut’s municipal health officials and a number of physicians from Beirut and its suburbs. What could be done? The men discussed and debated for a while and then thought the best solution was to quarantine the house of those infected. Most importantly, the assembled physicians wanted to ensure that the sick would be treated according to their instruction and remain under their close supervision. During some further investigation, the medical officers learned that scads of dead mice and rats had been found in and around the mill of Antelias shortly before Ahmed Dandan had fallen victim to the fever. The timely discovery left no doubt to the type of malady; it clearly was the plague, which had been transferred from these rodents to Ahmed and his daughter. Faced with potential disaster, the authorities of Mount Lebanon, immediately, extended the quarantine on the entire area of Antelias. This was a controversial move. And after much deliberation, the authorities decided to lift the general quarantine only a few days later. Not only was it simply impractical to shut down the entire town, but also the bickering and complaints of the suburban business community stirred much resentment among the town’s residents. In the end only the mill was quarantined. Some officials even suggested demolishing the entire building to guarantee the elimination of deadly microbes.<sup>3</sup> The black

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<sup>1</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, October 6, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> The plague had disappeared from most parts of Europe after 1718, but it continued to be a threat in the Middle East until the mid-nineteenth century and a few cases were reported in Beirut during World War I.

<sup>3</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, October 6, 1915; *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, March 1, 1916; Hūsni Bey, “Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān.”

death's visit to the suburb did not go unnoticed. Rumors that a *cordon sanitaire* would be imposed on Beirut almost immediately spread among the public. The threat of a quarantine line around the city and the potential restrictions of movement of people and vital goods, like wheat that already had been reduced to a trickle, caused fear among Beirutis. Any further obstruction of access to the city, would clearly throw even more families into starvation. To avoid unrest and dissent, the health officials ordered the local press to publish an article headlined in large letters "NO CORDON on Beirut" (*Lā Kūrdūn 'alā Bayrūt*). The article in the local press was to dispel rumors around the incident, assuring the public that health and sanitation officials had successfully dealt with the outbreak. The authorities attested to taking the matter very serious and reported that the two infected persons were on the road to recovery. In fact, they would be released from isolation within two to three days.<sup>4</sup>

The story of Aḥmed Dandan and his family is instructive on multiple levels. One, it is exemplary of another battle fought against an invisible enemy, capable of an attack that would be impossible to keep at bay with guns and bullets. The struggle against microbes and bacteria defined, as we will see, many of the daily administrative concerns and would be front-page news throughout the war. Two, Dandan's story reveals that by September 1915, the health and sanitary administration functioned like a well-oiled machine and responses to the appearance of potential epidemics followed a clear step-by-step process. Three, appropriate medical knowledges and technologies in terms of disease transmission, symptoms, incubation times, prevention, cure etc. were in place. Four, ordinary citizens, like Aḥmed Dandan and his family, were on high alert—the result of a public health campaign that begun in December 1914, with the goal of educating everyone in the city of the dangers of infectious diseases. This chapter analyzes the workings and formations of a public health and sanitation administration that had its roots in the urban transformations and transnational circulation of medical knowledge during the nineteenth century, was consolidated, strengthened, and militarized during the war.<sup>5</sup> The war, representing a long-term state of emergency, accelerated the consolidating a health and sanitation regime that would not only survive the, but eventually set the foundation upon which French colonial officers would build and expand their colonial welfare state. Mandatory vaccinations and medical services paid for by the Beirut municipality, systematic studies of health conditions, regular inspections of water sources, schools, markets and workplaces, recording of incidents of diseases and causes of mortality, down to the sweeping of markets and streets, all long credited to later initiatives by the French colonial state, were initiated on the local level in the nineteenth century. Still prior to World War I these measures were limited to medical and health emergencies and to major municipalities. The crises of 'total war' accompanied by epidemics of diseases forced Beirutis to institutionalize the intermittent and, in the case of the broader Mount Lebanon region, facilitated the creation, for the first time, of an interventionist government that focused on making the bodies of the sick a public concern: to be reported, isolated, and disinfected.

Wartime regulations and education campaigns, contributed to the formation of what Charles Briggs has referred to as "sanitary citizen," namely individuals who saw their body, health and disease in terms of medical epistemologies, who adopted hygienic practices ("disciplining their own bodies") and recognized the monopoly of the expert in defining disease

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<sup>4</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-ʿUṭhmānī*, October 6, 1915

<sup>5</sup> This was the result of two interrelated processes, namely the Empire's post-*Tanzimat* modernization efforts and civilizing mission and Europe's increasing cultural and economic intervention in *Greater Syria*.



prevention and treatment, and would increasingly demand health service from the state.<sup>6</sup> Overall, we see an accelerated medical modernization characterized by increased surveillance and regulation of personal and communal hygienic behaviors.<sup>7</sup> As a cautionary note, it must be said that the medicalization of Beirut and Mount Lebanon did not follow a linear development marked by modern medicine and public health and sanitation policies replacing traditional forms of healings. Instead, both modern and traditional healing methods coexisted and continue to exist, at times complementing and at times competing with each other. The focus here, however, is the story of health and public sanitation, as part and partial to Beirut's and Mount Lebanon's journey through the war; a tale that zeros in on one of the many social processes that are thought to define modernity.

Following the meandering trail of modernity, along the path of infectious diseases makes it possible to delineate social and administrative changes that were in direct response to non-human actors, namely rats, lice and microbes.<sup>8</sup> In Beirut and Mount Lebanon, diseases—as historical agents—enabled if not demanded social and administrative changes that most prominently resulted in the consolidation and strengthening of a bureaucratic hierarchy of health and public sanitation.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the agenda of Ottoman officials as well as foreign and native medical experts increasingly became “urban rehabilitation, prophylactic sanitary measures, and medical treatment: fresh water supply, rain drainage, street alignment, construction of pavements, and child vaccination,” partially spurred by epidemics, wars, as well as Beirut's demographic and economic growth.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the adjustments made to health and public sanitation, driven by extreme wartime exigencies, were in continuity with pre-war developments, which were characterized by efforts to institutionalize medical care, prevent outbreaks of diseases, and move beyond practices of isolation and quarantine.<sup>11</sup> But progress toward a permanent regulatory health and public sanitation regime was slow, complicated by financial problems and was largely limited to urban areas. Instead, it was the acute emergency of the war, that pushed imperial and local agents to boost their efforts in fighting infectious diseases, some of which thought to have been eliminated, but now reappeared. Most importantly, diseases here were occasions for the “potential legitimization of public policy.”<sup>12</sup> In the case of wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the conspicuous presence of communicable diseases in the urban space and the constant threat of violent epidemic outbreaks of the mostly deadly plagues, allowed for unprecedented intervention of civilian and military authorities into the everyday life of civilians. The organization of medical care and social provisions in turn

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<sup>6</sup> Charles L. Briggs, "Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Tell People to be Healthy: Power and Pragmatic Miscalculations in Public Discourses of Health," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 17 (2003), 288.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Cooter, "Of War and Epidemics: Unnatural Couplings, Problematic Conceptions," *The Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine* 16 (2003), 287.

<sup>8</sup> Some historians, most notably William McNeill, have examined disease as an agent in history. One that at times has even effected the fall of empires and facilitated colonial conquest. William McNeill *Plagues and People* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Rollet, "The 'Other War' I: Protecting Public Health," in *Capital Cities at War*, Winter and Robert, 421.

<sup>10</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 123-124.

<sup>11</sup> Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 252-276.

<sup>12</sup> In Europe cholera played a central role in “crystallizing sentiments in favor of public health and environmental reform.” The same may be said about changes in the Ottoman Empire. See Charles E. Rosenberg “Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History,” in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*, eds. Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1988), x; Charles E. Rosenberg, *Explaining Epidemics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 113.

altered the citizen's interaction and experience with local agents of the state. Municipal authorities increasingly intervened in the daily sanitary behaviors of Beirut's inhabitants, prescribing preventative measures that not only demanded new behaviors, but also were impositions of the civilians' bodies. The enclosure of civilians into an institutional frame of health and sanitation, public education campaigns, and discussions of health and disease in the press—outside of medical journals—the presence of cleaning battalions and surveying health officials all defined significant parts of everyday life on the home front.

The study of disease in wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon is complicated by the fact that no reliable statistics exist, that would make it possible to present even the most basic, not to speak of accurate, numbers of infections or disease mortalities. However, the sources at hand, namely eyewitness accounts, admissions records of the hospital associated to the SPC, a unique study commissioned by the governor of Mount Lebanon, Ismā'īl Haqqī Bey, including a report by the provincial director of health Hūsni Bey Muḥyī ad-Dīn titled “Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān” (Matters of Health in Mount Lebanon),<sup>13</sup> in combination with public health announcements of the Beirut and Mount Lebanon health directorates, allow me to draw some preliminary conclusions as to the character of the administration. Throughout the war, I argue, the administration does not only become permanent, but also increasingly compartmentalized as well as militarized—the later facilitating forceful top-down intervention. The sources disclose the various disease-specific prophylactic measures taken and are apt in exposing the problems that were encountered in the process.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the sources seldom address the civilians' responses to state measures and stories like those of Ahmed Dandan are few and far between. Whereas, the story of wartime health and public sanitation, at least for the time being, is for the most part the story of various attempts to deal with the disease rather than the civilians' experiences or reactions to the initiatives of local state agents, medical experts and educators, a close reading reveals that not all civilians were as trusting of the health authorities as Ahmed Dandan. The constant warnings against disobedience and threats of harsh punishments of those ignoring the orders of the sanitary administration indicate that the process of creating “sanitary citizens” did not go unchallenged.<sup>15</sup>

## Disease in the Middle East

Studies of the history of disease in the Middle East in general and in the Ottoman period in particular remain to be scarce and most of our knowledge continues to be based on a handful of studies.<sup>16</sup> The historiographical focus has been the effect of experiences with disease on changes

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<sup>13</sup> Hūsni Bey, “Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān,” passim.

<sup>14</sup> Ismā'īl Haqqī Bey was appointed governor to Mount Lebanon in May of 1916 and after a year he was assigned to be governor of Beirut. The report is a social, economic, historical and geo-political study that was and is considered one of the most important scholarly projects concerning Lebanon at the time. An approximate one thousand copies of the report were printed in Beirut in 1918, and subsequently distributed to administrators of Mount Lebanon. The printed book includes articles written by Jesuit fathers Antun Salhani and Louis Cheikho, both of whom led the project, Bulus Nujaym, Albert Naccache, and 'Isa Iskandar al-Ma'luf. It is interesting to note the diverse character of the authors. Jesuit scholars, Lebanese administrators and teachers from the SPC all worked together to produce this study. See Asher Kaufmann *Reviving Phoenicia*, 34 ff; Bustani, *Ismā'īl Haqqī Bey*, preface.

<sup>15</sup> Briggs, “Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Tell People to be Healthy,” 288.

<sup>16</sup> The most influential studies have been Jean-Noel Biraben's monograph on the plague, Michael Dols' history of the Black Death in the Middle East, and most prominently Daniel Panzac's discussion on disease and public health in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Middle East. See historiographical note in Sam White, “Rethinking

in medical theories, as a mirror of societal attitudes, and—like this study—on social and institutional practices.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, most recent works on diseases in the Middle East have been preoccupied with debunking Orientalist stereotypes, such as the assumption of a universal Muslim fatalistic attitude toward disease; a passive attitude, that has long been posited in diametrical opposition to western attitudes of active prevention and intervention.<sup>18</sup> Focusing on the plague and more recently cholera, these studies traced a recognizable shift in the inhabitant's attitude toward epidemics and defined it as a marker of modernity.<sup>19</sup> Based on Islamic theological text and European travelogues, historians have maintained that Ottoman society, like all Islamic societies, adhered to a well-entrenched notion of Muslim fatalism in the face of infectious diseases in the early modern period.<sup>20</sup> This 'otherworldly' approach, prohibiting human interference with the transcendent divine's plan, it is argued, lost currency in the late-eighteenth century as modern scientific explanations began replacing fate.<sup>21</sup> The social historian of Aleppo Abraham Marcus has argued, for example, that upper class non-Muslims—who witnessed the benefit of isolation practiced by their European acquaintances—initiated this attitudinal shift as they began to segregate themselves to 'actively' avoid infection.<sup>22</sup>

The search for this change in attitude, unfortunately, continues to reinforce the binary worldview that has long circumscribed the history of the region. It is only recently, that historians have begun to challenge the efficacy of a framework that is based on religious essentialism and insists that disease instead has to be seen within a dynamic social context.<sup>23</sup> For

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Disease in Ottoman History,” *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2010), 550; Michael Dols *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Jean-Noel Biraben *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens* (Paris: Mouton, 1976); Daniel Panzac *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman: 1700-1850* (Leuven: Éditions Peeters, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> See for example Nancy E. Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars: Epidemics and the Politics of Public Health* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 2; and Charles Rosenberg's study of three cholera outbreaks in the US spanning the nineteenth century, which illustrates a decline in piety and the development of “positivistic temper of thought and expression.” Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years; The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962), passim.

<sup>18</sup> Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars*; Nancy E. Gallagher *Medicine and Power in Tunis 1780-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); LaVerne Kuhnke *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>19</sup> Historians, based on theological texts, have argued that Muslim scholars propagated infectious diseases as a blessing from god, in particular after the Black Death in the fifteenth century. For example Sheldon Watts in his comparative study of the plague in Egypt and Europe has argued that human responses to plague epidemics in the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period was fatalistic, ascribing infection to divine fate. Reactions to diseases prior to the nineteenth century, according to Watts, were based on cultural assumptions or “construct of diseases”, namely, “the disillusion and misconceptions that society creates surrounding particular diseases.” Sheldon Watts, *Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 26; Suzanne Austin Alchon, “Review of Epidemics and History: Disease, Power and Imperialism by Sheldon Watts,” *The American Historical Review* 103 (1998), 1554.

<sup>20</sup> White, “Rethinking Disease,” 553.

<sup>21</sup> This shift in social attitudes based on needs and realities is not unique to the Middle East. Charles Rosenberg, for example, has shown the difference between public reactions to cholera outbreaks in 1832 and 1866 in Northern America. In 1832 the public perceived cholera as the ‘scourge of the sinful’ to be cured by improvements of moral health. Thirty years later in 1866, the public blamed the outbreak of disease on “the remediable faults in sanitation” and could be prevented by improvements in communal and personal hygiene. Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> The practice of self-isolation and later institutionalized quarantine, according to Marcus, resulted from Aleppines' observation of European practices of seclusion and its verifiable record of survival. Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity*, 252-276.

<sup>23</sup> Birsan Bulmuş “The Plague in the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1838” (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2008), 12.

one, Alan Mikhail has argued that diseases, in particular the plague, prior to the nineteenth century were regarded as “natural.” People, he argues, expected it to occur and adjusted their lives to it.<sup>24</sup> Sam White uncovered early modern travelogues and Islamic theological texts that report Muslims fleeing from the plague prior to the nineteenth century, forcing us to rethink the idea of religiously dictated fatalism in light of epidemic diseases.<sup>25</sup> This being said however, the fact remains that Ottoman authorities took only few preventative measures and certainly did not assert centralized efforts to deal with epidemics prior to the late eighteenth century. This slowly changed in the late nineteenth century and at a growing speed during the war, when the government took definite steps to prevent and contain diseases.

### War, Famine, Disease: Inevitable Boon Companions?

Scholars have become increasingly interested in the study of infectious diseases during the Great War in general. And we now have a few studies that pertain to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> These original studies are remarkable and have greatly contributed to our understanding. Their focus has been Ottoman military and experiences with diseases on the various battlefronts, and little research has been done until now into what George Cahen has referred to as ‘*l’autre guerre*’ (the ‘other’ war).<sup>27</sup> A war that was fought on the public health front aimed at protecting civilians from the menace of cholera, the plague, malaria and most important typhus. Rudolf Virchow, often referred to as the father of modern pathology, has famously argued any extreme change in environmental and social conditions have a great influence over the outbreak of diseases and mortality.<sup>28</sup> War, in general, amplifies the adverse effects of climatic as well as sanitary condition, and significantly alters living conditions, so that the relationship between humans and microorganisms is thrown of balance.<sup>29</sup> The Ottomans’ entry into the war on November 1, 1914, and the subsequent famine, was such a moment. In the years following, the Ottomans witnessed war and famine linking arms to become loyal partners in crime, producing an environment congenial to opportunistic diseases. Infectious diseases combined with “total war” and famine formed a deadly trio that was relentless in its demands on the battlefield and the homefront alike. It was those diseases that would take advantage of under-nourished bodies and deteriorating sanitation that appeared on the scene.<sup>30</sup> On June 3, 1916, one of Beirut’s leading intellectuals the Jesuit priest Louis Cheikho put it into words: “Voilà, donc le trio complet “a peste, fame et bello.””<sup>31</sup> Of course, it must be cautioned that there is no direct causal link

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<sup>24</sup> Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire*, 201.

<sup>25</sup> For example, an English traveler witnessed the flight from the plague in Edirne in 1676. White, “Rethinking Disease,” 553.

<sup>26</sup> Dagla, *War, Epidemics and Medicine*; Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*; David R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2006).

<sup>27</sup> George Cahen, *‘L’autre guerre’ Essais d’assistance et d’hygiène sociale (1905-1920)* (Paris, 1920), as cited in Rollet, “The ‘Other War I,” 421.

<sup>28</sup> White, “Rethinking Disease,” 549.

<sup>29</sup> Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Joel Mokyr and Cormac Ó Gráda, “Famine Disease and Famine Mortality: Lessons from Ireland, 1845-1850,” in *Conference on Famine Demography* (Les Treilles, France, 1999), 1-3.

<sup>31</sup> Louis Cheikho, an ethnic Assyrian, was born in Mardin in 1859. He settled in Beirut in 1894, after studying at the Jesuit Seminary in Ghazir, Lebanon and in France. At the outset of the war he taught at the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth and spent the war years in the city, trying to protect the library and archives on the Jesuit order from Ottoman confiscation. He recorded his experience of the war in a diary that is held by the Jesuit archive, the Archive Proche-Orient, in Beirut. PO: Diary of Father Loius Cheikho, 149.

between this triad. Their connection is tenuous and scholars of various disciplines have scrutinized this relationship based on the simple facts that there may be wars without epidemics and epidemics without war, famines without wars and wars without famine, etc.<sup>32</sup> Still World War I and the famine in more than one way contributed to the creation of environment that would be vulnerable to outbreaks of epidemics; it might even be said that Beirut and Mount Lebanon faced a four-year long epidemic emergency.

It is no secret that infectious diseases wreaked havoc on the battlefronts. It has been estimated that, for an Ottoman man in uniform it was seven times more likely to die of disease than of battle wounds.<sup>33</sup> War in general has been among the primary reasons for human displacement, either by forcing civilians to flee or opening space for states to engage in deportations to solidify its political community.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, wartime movement of conscripts over large stretches of territory meant that diseases were carried from one end of the empire to the other; especially, since the Ottoman battlefronts were located on the peripheries of the empire. At times it was necessary to move troops across the entire span of Greater Syria.<sup>35</sup> An inadequate infrastructure—no single railroad directly linking the capital Istanbul to the Syrian province—amplified the problem.<sup>36</sup> Packed into whatever trains were available, Ottoman troops traversed the land carrying disease infected lice, mosquitoes and microbes with them. Dirty bodies and uniforms and even the upholstery of overcrowded passenger cars became their ideal breeding grounds, especially in the winter.<sup>37</sup> In freight cars, common soldiers—sixty at one time—were crammed together in unsanitary conditions and over long stretches of time; many never reached their destination.<sup>38</sup>

It was not only soldiers who were affected by this type of movement; civilians also felt the crawling effects. First, crowded trains, now fueled with wood instead of coal, which no longer was available due to the Entente naval blockade, made more frequent stops, giving ample opportunity for soldiers to mix with civilians and to share the not-so-welcomed gift of lice, germs and bacteria. Father Louis Cheikho noted in his diary that soldiers were spreading typhus

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<sup>32</sup> For example, Jean Noel Biraben in the 1970s dismissed the until then common assumption “first famine-then plague” by showing that at times famine preceded and at times followed plague epidemics, as the epidemics disrupted harvests and normal food distribution. Also see Cooter, “Of War and Epidemics.”

<sup>33</sup> Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System.”

<sup>34</sup> Joshua A. Sanborn “Unsettling the Empire: Violent Migrations and Social Disaster in Russia during World War I,” *Journal of Modern History* 77, No. 4 (2005).

<sup>35</sup> See Hourani, *A History of the Arab People*, 314; Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*.

<sup>36</sup> The overland infrastructure, paved roads and railways alike, despite Ottoman efforts and European capital investment into infrastructure developments in the later half of the nineteenth century were still inadequate at the outbreak of the war. By 1914, the Ottoman Empire as a whole only operated one hundred small trains and there still was no railroad that directly connected the Ottoman capital to the Arab provinces. The rail system that linked Beirut via Damascus to the interior grain producing areas such as the Haurān, in particular, had only opened in 1894 and since then had suffered from an overall mismanagement, unreliable, slow, and uncomfortable trains. See Eric Jan Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion; The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in the World War I,” *Turcica*, 28, 1996, 245. Following the opening of the Beirut-Damascus- Haurān line the majority shipment of goods between the coast and the interior was conducted by rail. Still the capacity of the system simply was not enough to offset the lack resulting from the wartime naval blockade.

<sup>37</sup> Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut,” 413.

<sup>38</sup> According to some estimates out of the ten thousand troops mobilized in Istanbul to fight in the Sinai campaign in 1915 only 4,635 arrived in Palestine. And while statistics like this have be viewed with caution, they indict the large numbers Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion,” 245; Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, 33.

as they came and went causing great damage in Beirut.<sup>39</sup> The overall bad conditions in the army, as soldiers were underpaid, undernourished, and without medical care, adequate equipment and clothing, caused soldiers to desert in large numbers.<sup>40</sup> The men then roamed the countryside, hiding out in villages at times turning into brigands. The secretary at the St. Paul monastery in Harissa wrote: “the military was in trouble and all of the soldiers are running away [...] sometimes the escaping soldiers were grabbing from the people the only food they had.”<sup>41</sup> In the meantime these renegade soldiers introduced their annoying escorts, such as typhus infected body lice, into the most remote corners of Mount Lebanon.<sup>42</sup>

Another kind of movement was that of refugees.<sup>43</sup> It was not only Russia that that saw “A Whole Empire Walking.”<sup>44</sup> Large numbers of refugees, in particular Armenians, both those escaping the Young Turks genocidal campaign in the Anatolian provinces and those deportees who had survived as far as Syria living in unsanitary conditions, facilitated the spread of diseases. Moreover, local economic refugees—trying to escape the famine raving in the districts of Mount Lebanon—posed a problem as well. The many impoverished inhabitants of Mount Lebanon simply had no choice but to move from place to place in search of subsistence, all the while giving disease vectors a free lift. The wheat-producing plateau of the Hauran was the destination for many starving poor from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, who were in desperate search of food and work. These throngs of economic refugees turned what was known as the ‘great wheat land’ into a typhus-infected nightmare. Typhus was the disease most directly related to war, and there is no doubt that it was the most devastating wartime disease in the Ottoman Empire in general and in Greater Syria in particular.<sup>45</sup>

The second culprit that added to the creation of a favorable environment for the spread of diseases was the massive famine in the region.<sup>46</sup> Whereas recent scholarship has questioned the assumption that decrease in nutritional status inevitably leads to a greater susceptibility to infections, it is certain that the biological effects of famine, i.e. malnutrition caused by persistent hunger and its slow destruction of the body, assisted in the microbes’ assault.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, a starving body reaches a point of “acute deprivation” leaving the immune system impaired and

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<sup>39</sup> PO: Diary of Father Louis Cheikho, 139.

<sup>40</sup> Apparently by 1917, over three hundred thousand men had fled en route to the Palestine front. By the end of the war the number of deserters was four times that of soldiers on the front. Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion,” 245; Zürcher “The Ottoman Conscription System,” 79-94.

<sup>41</sup> STPH: Sijl Yaumiyyat 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930, Entry from May 19, 1918.

<sup>42</sup> Eric Zürcher notes that the dwindling number of soldiers in the army had two causes disease and desertion. Zürcher, “Between Death and Desertion,” 245.

<sup>43</sup> The spread of typhus among refugees in particular in Serbia, put the disease on the international medical agenda. In Serbia over two hundred thousand refugee civilians died in the first six months of the war. See Paul Weindling, “The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice: Comparing British and German Sanitary Measures,” In *Die Medizin und der Erste Weltkrieg*, eds. Wolfgang Uwe Eckart and Christoph Gradmann. Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996, 228.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> For example, Halide Edib wrote in her memoirs that “typhus was one of the worst epidemics in Syria.” Adivar, *House with Wisteria*, 364.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter one for an explanatory discussion of the famine.

<sup>47</sup> The culprit “hunger” generally encompasses two different, although often co-existent physical states; it may involve “acute starvation” or a sudden gross deficiency in food (calorie) intake to a level that is insufficient to maintain life, and/or a chronic under- or malnutrition, which is a less drastic and long-term underfeeding. Sheila Zurbrigg, “Hunger and Epidemic Malaria,” 16.

the body vulnerable to diseases. One eyewitness recounted that malaria in the Lebanese village of ‘Abeih seemed “especially terrible, as the people were too weak to withstand the constantly returning fever.”<sup>48</sup> The overall deterioration of food quality, changes in the ingredients, and eating of unfamiliar food that came to the famine region through relief efforts, aided digestive diseases, such as typhoid and cholera, in their attack on those starving.<sup>49</sup> The almost inseparable link between famine and disease has been confirmed by a number of social scientists of famine in the early nineteen-nineties, most prominently Alexander de Waal, who has been able to demonstrate that infectious diseases not only tread on the heels of starvation, but that generally many more famine deaths are caused by diseases rather than purely by malnutrition or starvation. In summary it can be said that famine, war and diseases were a deadly ternion that all to willingly performed the somber trio of bereavement and demise.

### The Social Function of Disease: Beirut 19<sup>th</sup> Century

There is, however, a danger in conceiving war, famine and epidemics as inseparable boon companions suggests, namely the assumption that non-war and non- famine social regimes are static and are under no pressure to change. Nevertheless, we know that the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries witnessed significant transformations in regards to public health and sanitation administration, as foreign, imperial and local officials introduced new hygienic practices and scientific cures in Beirut, at times in direct response to warfare and/or famine, but not always. Their overall aim, regardless of their motivation, as we will see, was to provide the necessary tools, technologies and infrastructure to control and observe diseases and create a stable health environment.<sup>50</sup> Late-nineteenth century changes in sanitary techniques in the Ottoman Empire resembled those in Europe, and similar to nineteenth century France, was part of a centralizing reform program and internal to an Ottoman imperial civilization mission.

Scholars have ascribed the introduction of modern cure, health and sanitation in the Middle East to the modernizing project of the Ottoman governor of Egypt Mehmet Ali Pasha (1769-1849). In response to various “epidemic” emergencies, the governor imposed naval quarantines, at times drew quarantine lines (or *cordon sanitaire*) around Egyptian cities, and built pest houses to isolate infected goods and people.<sup>51</sup> In addition, to systematizing the age-old practice of quarantine, he brought in European medical advisers and established the first “western-style teaching hospital”, the Egyptian Academy of Medicine.<sup>52</sup> Mehmet Ali, in light of a severe outbreak of the plague in the 1840s, intensified control mechanisms and instigated a

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<sup>48</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souk al-Gharb.”

<sup>49</sup> See chapter two for changes in consumption patterns. It is important to note that although some diseases are highly sensitive to food intake, others seem to operate entirely independent of nutritional status, and still others are somewhere in-between. In the case of Beirut it clear that deficiency diseases became much more common during the war. An increased occurrence of Pellagra, for example, was caused from a deficiency in vitamin B that may be found in meat and eggs, which now were in short supply. De Waal, *Famine That Kills*; Devereux, *Theories of Famine*, 16;

Ó Gráda and Eiriksson, *Ireland's Great Famine*, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Briggs, "Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Tell People to be Healthy," 288.

<sup>51</sup> For example reports of the plague in Istanbul in 1812 and in Alexandria in 1835 triggered such responses.

<sup>52</sup> By 1834, the historian Sheldon Watts argues, Mehmet Ali had created an “Ideology of Order,” namely a system of disease specific responses and policies. Watts, *Epidemics and History*, 37.

health campaign, marked by unprecedented state-intervention into practices of personal and communal hygiene, including a forced washing campaign of peasants' bodies and homes.

Furthermore, many historians agree that the Egyptians introduced modern health and sanitation practices to the Syrian lands during its occupation from 1831-1840. The argument is based on three developments that occurred at the same time as the Egyptian occupation, leaving little room for local agency. These are the dispatch of medical students to Cairo to study at the medical academy, the introduction of smallpox vaccination, and the building of a quarantine station in Beirut.<sup>53</sup> A closer look at each of these three factors certainly complicates the story of an externally applied modernity, defined by medicalization and preventative sanitary regime.<sup>54</sup> What is important here, however, is that despite the desire of foreign, imperial and local officials to introduce prophylactic practices, absolutely no institutional structure specifically charged with maintaining public health and sanitation existed until the middle of the nineteenth century. Instead most sanitation and cleaning measures under the Egyptian occupation and until the 1860s came directly from the Ottoman governor, and remained largely limited to actual outbreaks of diseases and were by no means permanent.

It was in the aftermath of the civil war in the Lebanese mountains and inter-communal massacres in Damascus in 1860, that definite changes were made. The Ottoman foreign minister Fuad Pasha was appointed to travel to the region to lead an investigation into the violence. What he found was that Beirut's quarantine center became the asylum of "thousands of refugees." This was to the detriment of sanitary condition in the city and "during epidemics people were jammed in."<sup>55</sup> The quarantine center, the historian Leila Fawaz writes, was a "pest hole" and contributed more to the spread of infectious diseases rather than their prevention.<sup>56</sup> Faced with a desperate situation, Fuad Pasha set up a council (*majlis al-i'āna*) to deal with the waves of refugees flooding Beirut and to provide refugees with shelter, food and medication.<sup>57</sup> The council was the beginning of a government-sponsored administrative body designated specifically to deal with public health.

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<sup>53</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 117.

<sup>54</sup> For example, a group of student group of students traveled to Istanbul to study at the Imperial Medical School and hospital established already in 1827. The Imperial Medical School in Istanbul under Ottoman sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839), like its counterpart in Egypt employed a number of foreign physicians, such as French Sade de Galliere, Viennese Karl Ambroso Bernard, and Italian Antoine Lagos. Another development that is often cited to back the claim that Egyptian occupation forces first introduced health and sanitation measure in Syria, is Beirut's first quarantine center established in 1834 under Egyptian rule and guidance. This, however, has to be seen in the context of quarantine as a common disease-control mechanism in the Mediterranean since the Middle Ages. In 1836, the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839) imposed systematized empire-wide application of quarantine measures under the guidance of the newly formed Ottoman High Council of Quarantine (later to be renamed Council of Health Issues). In the 1830s, the health and sanitation officers of the Egyptian occupational forces introduced smallpox vaccination to inhabitants in Greater Syria and French, British and American missionaries continued the practice. Forms of inoculation had been practiced in the Ottoman Empire for generations at least among the upper classes. See the letters of Lady Worth Montague; Tuba Demirci and Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health: Abortion Policy and Perspectives in the Ottoman Empire of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, No. 3 (2008), 380; Bulmuş "The Plague in the Ottoman Empire," 12; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 117.

<sup>55</sup> In one such instance, two thousand people had been confined in a space that would have been "barely sufficient to accommodate in any degree of comfort so many hundreds." Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 34.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 123.



The 1860s, taught everyone that isolation and quarantine measures were insufficient in dealing with outbreaks of epidemics. Cholera was the single most devastating disease in the nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> It was not only destructive when it returned in 1865, 1876, and 1883, but it also was formative.<sup>59</sup> For example when the 1865 cholera epidemic spread from Mecca to Beirut and killed close to three thousand people, the Ottoman authorities in coordination with native and foreign medical experts sought more effective ways to prevent diseases from entering the city. The newly established Beirut municipality was charged with maintaining public health and sanitation in order to eliminate any fertile breeding ground for disease in the city.<sup>60</sup> Still, most Beirutis continued to distrust municipal improvements, thinking it unable to protect them, so that even ten years later a bout of cholera compelled all but fifteen thousand of the poorest residents to flee the city.<sup>61</sup> Historically, flight into the rural high grounds surrounding the city, to seek shelter in either monasteries or with family, was a common practice among Beirutis.<sup>62</sup>

While some saw this as beneficial, most local and foreign merchants and businessmen protested that isolation, quarantine, and flight were economically damaging.<sup>63</sup> Stores and

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<sup>58</sup> Cholera was a relative new disease in the region and nineteenth-century improvements in health and public sanitation were often in response to it. By 1914, cholera had been significantly reduced in its appearance. The First cases of the disease were described in South Asia in the beginning of the nineteenth century and spread from there into the Middle East. Cholera, an infection of the small intestine, is caused by bacteria (*Vibrio Cholerae*) that may be present in water or on foods that has been exposed to the feces of an infected person. Its symptoms are profuse diarrhea and vomiting that lead to severe dehydration that could cause the death of the infected person within a few hours. In 1849, John Snow published the theory that cholera was not transmitted by foul air as had been believed until then. Instead, his 1854 investigation into the Broad Street cholera outbreak in London showed that all victims had consumed water from the same water well. In two subsequent field studies Snow was able to demonstrate that the most common disease vector of cholera was human sewage. Snow concluded that changes needed to be made in municipal government. The discovery of this connection stimulated public health reform in cities in Europe as well as in the Middle East in particular an investment into clean water supplies was emphasized. In 1883, German scientist Robert Koch during a research mission in Egypt isolated the organism that caused cholera. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 3; *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>59</sup> While occurrences of cholera in 1835, 1838, 1848, and 1851 did not result in epidemic outbreak mainly due to quarantine measures. For example, when cholera outbreak were reported in the interior and northern cities, killing thousands in Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Tripoli, the Beirut authorities immediately interrupted all communication with those cities; thereby preventing outbreaks in their own city. John Wortabet, M.D. "Cessation of Cholera in Northern Syria," *The Lancet* May 9 (1891), 1036; Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> For a history of the Beirut municipality see Chapter 4.

<sup>61</sup> Apparently the flight of 1875 triggered the city authorities to launch an inquiry into the state of the quarantine. It was announced a year later that the quarantine center near the port should be destroyed, and a new larger quarantine center should be build outside of the city. This marked the beginning of a long debate over the relocation of the quarantine center between local municipal health officials and experts and the imperial government that would continue into the twentieth century. The lazaretto's position was seen by many as a "standing menace to the health of the town." However the imperial government continued to deny the necessary funds, and instead focused on controlling the flow of people in and out from the lazaretto. See Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 119 ff.

<sup>62</sup> The 1848 cholera outbreak caused a "terror stricken" population to flee to the countryside and when in 1865 news of the disease in Egypt reached Beirut, "no less than 20,000 people left the city in a week." Cholera outbreak of 1875 and 1883 equally caused people to flee to the mountains. Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> According to SPC's Dr. John Wortabet, "at every visitation of cholera the rich inhabitants of infected towns seek refuge in the villages of Mount Lebanon, " while the poor were unable to escape the perils of the disease. Wortabet interpreted the flight of the upper classes to be beneficial. Not only, he argues, were they protecting themselves from contracting the malady, but also left behind the poor population "freed from the dangers of overcrowding." See Wortabet, "Cessation of Cholera in Northern Syria."

businesses were closed and international trade interrupted. Consequently, merchants often objected quarantine measures and at times challenged the political order in the city, urging urban improvements at times investing in them themselves.<sup>64</sup> Europeans eager to expand economic and cultural investments into Beirut and Mount Lebanon continuously argued for the creating of stable health conditions. Furthermore, nineteenth century scientific discoveries—germ theory in particular—inspired medical experts to urge municipal governments with clearing the empire’s cities of infectious disease and to demand an increasing focus on developing sanitary infrastructure.<sup>65</sup> Often foreign investors took on costly sanitation project, which ultimately promised profit, to improve health and public sanitation. For example in 1875, a British company completed a waterworks system that would deliver spring water from Nahr al-Kalb (Dog River) to the city via a piping system.<sup>66</sup>

The tremendous growth of the city in the nineteenth century meant that infectious diseases were no longer external but internal to its disease environment and any outbreak increasingly disruptive to its growing economy. Prevention, therefore, needed to go beyond simply controlling access to the city. Hence, local authorities in coordination with imperial agents and foreign medical experts increased regulatory mechanisms; at times inspecting homes, prohibited cattle from entering the city and banned traveling merchants from conducting their trade in public spaces.<sup>67</sup> When the cholera epidemic of 1882 caused many Beirutis to pack their belongings and close up shop, it threatened to result in considerable damage to trade and property.<sup>68</sup> The Beirut authorities, with the backing of the imperial government, not only stepped up isolation measures, but also began systematically surveying the city.<sup>69</sup> The 1882 crisis motivated the Ottoman governor and the Beirut municipality to solicit the advise of medical experts and charge a commission made up of local and foreign physician to deal with the health crisis and to recommend procedures to avoid future epidemics.<sup>70</sup> The commission drew up a twelve point plan that included daily street cleaning, inspection of markets, stores and

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<sup>64</sup> Palmira Brummett, “Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-11.” *International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 4 (1995), 448.

<sup>65</sup> Often the infection diseases were symbolic of larger social ills and a distinct sign of social denigration and Ottoman decline. Brummett “Dogs, Women, Cholera,” 448.

<sup>66</sup> While the customer base showed a consistent increase, filtered spring water only reached a small number of Beirut’s households. By 1875, the company provided water to two thousand households in the city, increasing the number to three thousand by 1896. Still, considering that at this time the city was home to about a hundred and sixty thousand people the number of people receiving cleaner spring water was remained quite small. French hygienist Benoît Boyer found that the number of microbes increased significantly as the water flowed down the mountain passing by fields that were fertilized with human or animal refuse. Most people still drank from well and Boyer by way of a bacteriological exam determined that the majority of Beirut’s wells were foul and filled with thousand of microbes. Boyer suggested filling the wells closing the main source of typhoid infection, but nothing was done Robert M. Khouri *La médecine au Liban: de la Phénicie jusqu’à nos jours* (Beyrouth: Éditions ABCD, 1986), 228.

<sup>67</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 121-123.

<sup>68</sup> According to Hanssen “abandoned shops and houses were looted and bread prices jumped as Beirut’s wheat market was running out of supplies.” Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> The Egyptian refugees who had brought cholera with them were ordered into quarantine and entrance into the city was granted only upon medical inspection. Wortabet, “The Cessation of Cholera,” 1037.

<sup>70</sup> The commission was made up of municipal doctor Nakhla Mudawwar, a local physician Dr Milhim Fāris, SPC’s Dr John Wortabet, and the French director of the Beirut’s quarantine Dr Sucquet.

places for food storages, the improvement of quarantine's architecture, etc.<sup>71</sup> That the efforts were successful can be concluded from the fact that—despite Beirut being officially designated at “infected” and still a significant number of people fleeing the city—only three people “a sentry at the lazaret and two washerwomen, who washed [the refugees] clothes” died.<sup>72</sup> The Ottoman officials in Beirut applauded the success of isolation combined with surveillance, cleaning and inspection. Population statistics, initially for taxation and conscription purposes, served to provide medical and demographic data that would service public health.<sup>73</sup> For the first time now diseases were recorded according to occurrence and location. Most importantly, routine health surveys of the city continued and the *ad hoc* 1882 health commission continued its work.<sup>74</sup>

Overall, foreign capitalists and medical expert pushed for the “creation of an open, healthy city.”<sup>75</sup> Scrutinizing urban infrastructure, peoples' eating and social habits, men like Benoit Boyer demanded large-scale reforms and municipal regulation and finance of sanitation measures.<sup>76</sup> In Beirut it was the old bazaars and the residences of the poor that increasingly were targeted. Boyer suggested gutting the old city of its bazaars to bring light and air into the center. The municipality agreed. However, no such radical measures were implemented due the resistance of local residents, merchants and shopkeepers.<sup>77</sup> While demolishing the markets was not a realistic option at this time, the municipality moved slaughterhouses, tanneries and Muslim and Christian cemeteries to the peripheries of the city. The real “opening” of the old city had to wait until the outbreak of World War I when the Ottoman governors eagerly took up the widening of roads under the guise of combating wartime diseases.

As part of Beirut's ‘medicalization’, the Ottoman state, foreign missionaries and local Arab notables set up hospitals and clinics to cater to the metropolitan population.<sup>78</sup> The large number of sick, wounded, and poor refugees resulting from the 1860s civil strife provoked private local religious charitable societies and foreign missionaries to open a number of clinics and hospitals that combined the care for the sick with material charity for the poor.<sup>79</sup> Local

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<sup>71</sup> The medical commission made the request for the *cordon sanitaire* to the imperial government via telegram and it was granted permission almost immediately. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 125.

<sup>72</sup> Wortabet “Cessation of Cholera,” 1037.

<sup>73</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 118.

<sup>74</sup> By the 1890s, the commission—made up of imperial, foreign and local medical experts—through the office of the municipality conducted regular inspection of schools, and public buildings.

<sup>75</sup> The number of foreigners in the city of Beirut had increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1895 the French consul accounted for 1200-1300 French citizens in Beirut, 600 Italians, 200 Austrians, 150 Germans, 100 Brits, 50 Swiss, and a handful of Russians. The number of British increased to 210 by 1901. See Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 22; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 128.

<sup>76</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>78</sup> Traditionally the Ottomans had left cure of the sick to clinics, hospitals, and madhouse attached to religious endowments (*waqf*) or religious schools. Until the early nineteenth century hospitals were independent from the state, when the state increasingly takes interest in the health and cure of its subjects and introduced state hospitals based on European models and adapted to local needs and knowledge. Demirci and Somel, “Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health,” 380.

<sup>79</sup> For example, the French Lazarist Soeurs de la Charité offered medical aid as well as food and shelter for the sick and wounded of the war.<sup>79</sup> The German Knights of St. John (Johanniter Order), who with monetary help from the German Kaiser, built a hospital—known locally as the Prussian hospital—staffed by Kaiserswerth Deaconesses and medical staff from the SPC in 1867 provided similar assistance. The American educators of the SPC worked closely

notables followed suit; Sunni notables founded *jam 'iyyat al-maqāsid al-khayriyya al-islāmiyyah* (the Muslim Association for Benevolent Intention, al-Maqāsid for short) in 1878, and Greek Orthodox Arab notables sponsored the *jam 'iyyat al-khayriyyat al-ourthodoxiyyah* (The Orthodox Charitable Society) in the same year.<sup>80</sup> As 'purely local' initiatives, these societies expanded to include schools and large hospitals that still operate today.<sup>81</sup> The hospital of the French Medical Faculty associated to the Jesuit University was founded in 1883.<sup>82</sup> Resident American educators worked closely with German Knights of St. John (Johanniter Order) who, with monetary help from the German Kaiser, built a hospital known locally as the Prussian hospital in 1867. The Americans established their own two hundred-bed hospital in the beginning of the twentieth century. By the 1890s, Beirut could account for six hospitals, fifty medical practices, and thirty pharmacies according to French geographer Vital Cuinet.<sup>83</sup>

Contributing to improvements in healing, health and public sanitation was the circulation of medical and scientific knowledge among Ottoman, foreign and local medical experts in the city.<sup>84</sup> Scientific journal and societies, such as the Syrian Scientific Society (or *jam 'iyyat al-'ilmiyya al-sūriyya*), facilitated the dissemination and discussion of scientific findings.<sup>85</sup> Missionaries of the SPC published and patronized Arabic medical and scientific journals that were widely read in the city.<sup>86</sup> Most scientific publications emphasized "the moral and material benefits of modern methods of hygiene and medical practices." Arguably the most influential journal was *al-muqtataf* (The Digest), started by two SPC college tutors, Ya'qūb Sarruf and Farīs Nimr, in 1876. It was a monthly publication that included articles on agriculture, industry, chemistry, medicine, hygiene, nutrition etc. Featuring articles translated from Anglo-American publications, the journals played an important role in the circulation of western medical knowledge to an Arabic readership, catering mainly to a Syrian audience.<sup>87</sup> That the knowledge

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with the German missionaries. Physicians employed by the SPC treated the patients in the hospital and the medical students of the college received their medical training there.

<sup>80</sup> In 1878, Panayot Fakhoury donated two rooms in his Gemmayze home. Since then the society could boast its own stable clinic that was to take care of in-patients. The demand from the community grew and with an ever-increasing flow of patients, the society decided to build a six-room hospital in 1883 in the Beirut quarter of Rumayl. Six physicians, including Dr. Cornelius van Dyke who also worked at the Prussian hospital, staffed the small hospital. In 1913, the Greek-Orthodox society inaugurated a ninety-bed hospital, funded in part by the society and in part by the *waqf* (or religious endowment) of the Saint George Church. See May Davie, *Atlas historique des orthodoxies de Beyrouth et du Mont Liban, 1800-1940* (Tripoli, 1999), 79.

<sup>81</sup> Samir Kassir, *Histoire de Beyrouth* (Paris, 2003), 168.

<sup>82</sup> By the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both the American SPC and the French Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth had medical schools.

<sup>83</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 195.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>85</sup> The Syrian Scientific Society was founded in 1852 the most prominent members were Butrus al-Bustani and Ibrahim al-Yaziji. It had a wide multi-sectarian audience and its membership reached 180. See Traboulsi *A Modern History of Lebanon*, 62-67.

<sup>86</sup> For example, George Post inaugurated a Medical Journal in 1882 and worked with Cornelius Van Dyck to publish *Al-Ṭabīb* (The Physician). The publications, Elsharky argues were shaped by the local context and local demands. Marwa Elshakry, "The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut" *Past and Present* 196 (2007), 173-214.

<sup>87</sup> The goal of the two men was to fill what they perceived to be a gap in the otherwise flourishing publications of the nineteenth century and to lay open the "virtues of modern science to an Arabic-reading public." The editors were linked to the SPC and worked closely with Cornelius Van Dyck. Van Dyke helped the two procure the necessary permits from the Ottoman Syrian director of publication and arranged for the American Mission Press to print the journal. While the college community viewed the journal with great pride and instructors referred their students to it,

of local medical professionals did not always go unnoticed in the international community—although for the most part dismissed as based simply on personal experience without much scientific basis—is clear from John Wortabet’s article “Fevers in Syria” in which he determines local healing methods to be successful and worthy of imitation.<sup>88</sup>

Public health and sanitation regulatory mechanisms in the Arab provinces were further augmented in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). The Ottomans’ devastating experiences and significant loss of life and territory during the Balkan Wars was instrumental in reforming health and sanitation services in the military. The reforms would eventually spill over into public health regulations for civilians. The war ministry announced its most important directive, in regards to infectious diseases in April of 1914. The “Regulation on Contagious and Epidemic Disease” officially placed the responsibility of epidemic disease prevention into the hands of the state.<sup>89</sup> This imperial law dictated that local municipalities, police centers, gendarmerie stations and local-administrative authorities from then on were in charge of examining, evaluating and preventing potential epidemic outbreaks.<sup>90</sup> As we have seen above, the Beirut municipality had already taken on much of these responsibilities, but now the imperial regulations would officially sanction state intervention, as far as into the homes of those suspected of infection. The directive of April 1914 encompassed detailed guidelines from who was responsible to inform the authorities of a disease, to the treatment of infected persons, to describing preventative measure, to the formation of a health commission at the first sight of an outbreak.<sup>91</sup> This systematic approach based on prior practices of the ground—now neatly outlined on paper—came into full fruition during World War I when it was put into praxis.<sup>92</sup>

In summary, in response to the challenges of increasing population, urbanization, war and to secure economic growth and investments, Ottoman, local and foreign officials, merchants, capitalists and medical experts throughout the nineteenth century proposed, discussed, debated and at times implemented health and public sanitation measures that would increasingly be transformed into permanent interventionist state-policies. The developments in the nineteenth century included the modern training of medical personnel, expansion of medical networks, increased circulation of medical knowledge, the establishment of hospitals and clinics, and

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not all opinions and scientific exploits published in the journal went unchallenged. The journal’s publication of the annual graduating speech of Harvard graduate and professor of geology and chemistry at the college Edwin Lewis, praising the work of Charles Darwin, causing great controversy among members of the SPC campus community. The controversy and the fact that the SPC would not allow native teachers to be promoted to the ‘rank’ of faculty cause the editors to move their journal to Egypt, but the journal continued to be circulated in Beirut and catered mainly to a Syrian audience. For a more elaborate discussion on the circulation of scientific and medical knowledge in Beirut see Marwa Elshakry’s article. Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Wortabet dismissed his Arab colleagues as ignorant to modern science, and instead of relying on textbooks and proven theories “trust for success to their own sagacity and experience.” See John Wortabet “Fevers in Syria” *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 20 (54), 1854, 370.

<sup>89</sup> Dagla translates the title to mean contagious. The term ‘contagious’ is problematic in that defines diseases that are transmitted on contact, with an infected person or bodily secretion of an infected person without a vector. So typhus would be excluded, a more accurate translation would be communicable or infectious.

<sup>90</sup> Dagla, *War, Epidemics and Medicine*, 126

<sup>91</sup> The main responsibility of informing local authorities of diseases was placed into the hands of individuals, primarily the heads of households. Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Regulations on the Infectious Disease and Epidemics” consisting of sixty-five articles giving detailed instructions as how to deal with infectious disease. Ibid.

increasingly regulated prophylaxis. The Beirut municipality was at the heart of debates over hygienic measures, advocated by its consultants, and introduced a stream of interventions in the everyday life of the urban population. In time locally formulated plans, like the twelve-point plan of 1882, would be taken up and incorporated into central legislation, as for example the directive of April 1914. Still prior to World War I, municipal interventionist projects were limited by financial difficulties and the limited number of enforcement agents. Moreover, Beirutis as well as the central government at times successfully challenged and prevented urban development plans and visions of city leaders and Ottoman officials from coming to fruition.<sup>93</sup>

The developments in Mount Lebanon stood in stark contrast to those in Beirut, no serious efforts were made toward dealing with issues of health and sanitation in the rural areas. Despite the Ottoman *mutaşarrif*'s (or governor) appointments of local physicians to supervise health affairs in the aftermath of the 1860 civil strife and the existence of two military hospitals and a few small American and British clinics in the mountain district, no organized health program existed.<sup>94</sup>

#### “The ‘Other’ War”

The Ottomans had been at war for only a month when infectious diseases demanded further administrative changes. The immediate first step was to establish a hierarchical administrative order that divided and delegated responsibilities among various health officials and medical experts. The ‘division of labor’ was to facilitate supervision of public health and sanitation, and to engage locally stationed military divisions into keeping epidemics at bay. As Greater Syria was now under the direct control of the Ottoman military, the sanitary efforts no longer were simply a civilian affair—instead we may speak of a militarization of public health. The imposition of martial law onto Greater Syria, and the involvement of military officers in issues of public hygiene and disease prevention often made it easier to push through controversial policies and projects. Tammy Proctor in her recent book *Civilians in a World at War (1914-1918)* has argued that the line between battlefield and home front, between soldiers and civilians, was often blurred during World War I. This is particularly true when it came to dealing with infectious diseases in Beirut. At the highest level the public health administration combined military and civilian officials, who were to work together in ordering the cleaning of the city and prescribe particular sanitary behaviors. In the fight against disease, Beirut was effectively turned into a

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<sup>93</sup> For example, the quarantine quarter remained a point of contention; in particular as residential quarter slowly encroached on it. Local officials, realizing the potential danger, appealed for money from Istanbul to move the quarantine quarter, but no financial help was forthcoming. When in 1910 a number of cholera cases were reported inside the quarantine quarter itself, the Ottoman governor called a meeting with the health officials of the Beirut municipality. The municipality, close to being bankrupt however, was unable to deal with even the most urgent sanitary problems. A second meeting forty days later, attended by the medical staff of the French Medical Faculty and the SPC, the director of the Ottoman Bank and the director of the Beirut Water Company, was supposed to discuss preventative measures against the spread of cholera. Still, no concrete decisions were made, because the men presents disagreed over the responsibility of foreigners to contribute to a fund designated to improve sanitation in the city.

<sup>94</sup> By 1848, military hospitals were either built or were in the process of being built in “every quarter of the Turkish empire”, and students “from all departments of the empire” are brought in, and are “lodged, fed, clothed, and educated, at the expense of the government.” In Mount Lebanon one of the hospitals was in Ba’abda the other in Beit ad-Dīn. An account of an American physician residing in Constantinople. “State of Medical Education in Turkey” *The American Journal of Medical Science* 17 No. 33 (1849), 233.

new battlefield that would be staffed by soldiers and civilians alike; a battlefield at which the enemy was not human, but consisted of rats, lice, microbes and dirt. By fall of 1915, the combined efforts resulted in a public health administration that functioned like a well-oiled machine, illustrated by the story of Ahmed Dandan.

Beginning on December 8, 1914, the Ottoman provincial health director in Beirut announced that all physicians, pharmacists, dentists and midwives practicing in Beirut were to report to the municipal health office with their diplomas and identity cards to be registered.<sup>95</sup> The goal was to provide the military authorities with a list of available medical personnel that could be conscripted into the army.<sup>96</sup> The Ottoman War Ministry, as part of post-Balkan military reforms, had drafted a law mandating that all civilian doctors, pharmacists and dentists between the ages of twenty and forty-five could be conscripted in case of war.<sup>97</sup> During the war, initially only physicians, pharmacists and dentists under the age of forty-five were conscripted into the military. But the age-range was expanded after October of 1915, when men above forty-five, given that they were of good health, could be commissioned for health services to the military if needed, within the province.<sup>98</sup> The *Law on the Liabilities of Physicians* published on July 20, 1914, outlined the logistics of emergency (wartime) recruitment of physicians in detail.<sup>99</sup> The health director used this as an opportune moment to take inventory and regulate medical services in the city. He immediately instructed the Beirut municipality to reorganize its public health administration and urged the drafting of directives aimed at controlling the cleanliness of public places and regulating social behavior. The directives were to regulate civilian's daily routines and were to be enforced by the agents of the municipality, i.e. the local police, throughout the entire war.

Only a week later, the Beirut municipal council announced its appointments to the administration. First in coordination with provincial health director, it appointed Drs. Abdl Rahman al-Unsī and Malkūnian to be permanently (*dā'imān*) in charge of forensic medicine and the overall evaluation of the medical condition in the city. Dr. Najīb al-‘Aradāti became the permanent municipal health inspector. Charged with surveying all aspects of public health (*al-ṣiḥḥa al-‘umūmiya*), he had to report any problems to the president of the municipality and the

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<sup>95</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, December 8, 1915.

<sup>96</sup> Almost immediately when the Ottomans entered into the war, civilian doctors, pharmacists and dentists of Istanbul between the ages of twenty and forty-five were drafted into the army under Law No. 1097 that had been announced on August 1, 1914. See Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, 26.

<sup>97</sup> At the first rumors of war, training in the proper care for battle wounds were organized and all doctors had to report to the head physician of their locally stationed military hospital to be instructed. AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 20, 1914.

<sup>98</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, October 7, 1915.

<sup>99</sup> A second law—the Law on Commissioning non-liaible Physicians—stipulated that army surgeons and pharmacists without diplomas, whether or not they had completed their fifteen years of service, could be drafted into the military in case of war. The Ottoman authorities demanded a list of civilian physicians from all Provincial Health Directorates. With this list in hand the Ottoman authorities thought it would no longer have to rely on medical staff permanently serving in the military. Instead it would be possible to recruit civilian doctors in times of conflict based on need. About two hundred military physicians were sent into retirement and another one thousand pharmacists and surgeons were ordered to leave the army. In addition, students of the Medical Schools were legally bound to serve in the army. According to this legislation all students of the Military School of Medicine, the Faculty of Medicine, and Schools of Medicine, as well as military and civilian veterinarians and health personnel who had studied abroad and subsequently passed all the Ottoman state medical exams could be employed in the military service should it come to war. Dagla, *War, Epidemics and Medicine*, 122.

Ottoman health directorate in Beirut.<sup>100</sup> The municipal authorities, fearing that the presence of soldiers would lead to a rise in venereal diseases, made sure to appoint a doctor to be the principal surveyor of syphilis, gonorrhea, etc. and the women, they sought responsible for spreading them. Venereal diseases had been a considerable problem in the bustling port city prior to the outbreak of the war. In a report conducted by the French Medical Faculty in 1895, syphilis was second only to malaria as the most commonly treated disease in the hospitals and clinics in Beirut.<sup>101</sup> According to Hūsni Bey's report, sexually transmitted diseases (*al-āmarād al-zuhariyah*) increased at the outbreak of the war among the lower class, since the rising cost of living forced many of them to engage in "reprehensible actions and fornications" (*al-munkarāt wa al-fawāḥish*).<sup>102</sup> However, the diseases were also relatively common among middle class Beirutis and Lebanese. Beirut's prostitutes (*al-nisā' al-'umūmīyāt* or *al-mūmisāt*) mostly worked in brothels that had been moved to the Sayfī quarter in 1913.<sup>103</sup> From the outset of the war, the health directorate reiterated the potential danger of venereal disease and the necessity to control prostitutes' bodies in the name of public health.<sup>104</sup> Consequently, Dr. Kāmal Effendī Ghaghūr was appointed to inspect Beirut's "public women" twice a week and to assure the treatment of those infected.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, all physicians in the city were liable, under severe penalty, to procure the names of possible sources of transmission from their infected male patients and issue monthly reports to the municipality and the health directorate.<sup>106</sup>

Three months later, when the military campaign in the Sinai Peninsula was in full swing, Jamāl Pasha added to the already existing health administration a sanitation or health commission (*qūmisūn ḥifẓ aṣ-ṣiḥḥa*). The commission was made up of senior military officer stationed in the district of Beirut, the president of the municipality, the chief physician of the military unit, and the chief municipal doctor.<sup>107</sup> Jamāl Pasha delegated complete control to the commission in matters of health, merging civilian and military powers into one body and expanding his own control by proxy into the city. Moreover, the blending of military personnel and civilians trickled down to lower levels; the municipality, health commission, and the provincial health director employed common soldiers—stationed in Beirut—in the sanitation projects inaugurated in the city in response to the numerous wartime emergencies. It was here that common soldiers worked alongside civilians to clean the city.

<sup>100</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uṭhmānī*, December 15, 1915.

<sup>101</sup> Khouri, *La médecine au Liban*, 230.

<sup>102</sup> Hūsni Bey "Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān," 654.

<sup>103</sup> According to Samir Khalaf, historical records are vague as to the exact location of the initial red light district. Some refer to it being on the 'passage down to the port,' others like Khouri refer to it as it having been behind the Ottoman Bank. But it seems that the brothels were only moved there in 1920 with the arrival of the French army in the city. Hanssen points out that the Beirut brothels were constantly moved from one place to another. See Khouri *La médecine au Liban*, 233; Samir Khalaf *The Heart of Beirut*, 211; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle*, 210.

<sup>104</sup> Compulsory medical inspection of prostitutes had already been introduced in the Ottoman Empire in the early 1880s. Demirci and Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health," 381.

<sup>105</sup> Beirut was also mentioned in British diplomatic records among the cities with the highest rate of venereal diseases mainly syphilis and gonorrhea and as a place from which these diseases spread into other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion," 245.

<sup>106</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uṭhmānī*, December 15, 1914.

<sup>107</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uṭhmānī*, March 30, 1915.



In the rural areas of Mount Lebanon, the appointment of ‘Ali Mūnif Bey as the *mutaşarrif* in the end of 1915 marked the beginning of a public health administration.<sup>108</sup> The governor began by ordering the renovation of the fifty-bed military hospital in Ba’abda, building three twenty-bed hospitals in other parts of his district, and setting up a laboratory, staffed with a bacteriologist. Most importantly, however, ‘Ali Mūnif Bey put together a team of health officials, consisting of a head physician and a number traveling doctors. The physicians were to be supervised by the director of health. The most important man appointed to that particular position was Hūsni Bey Muḥyī ad-Dīn.<sup>109</sup> When he took over the post in February of 1916, Hūsni Bey expanded and systematized the public health administration in the mountains; he rented a building to house the assets and records of the health department, hired physicians for each district of the mountain, and paid them the viable salary of one thousand *ghurūsh* a month.<sup>110</sup> To assist the work of the health department, the governor divided Mount Lebanon into twenty-three “health” districts—each with a head physician, health official and a midwife, and supplied them with the necessary medical equipment. The monthly expenses and the number deaths and births were to be recorded now into special registries, to facilitate childhood vaccinations of smallpox and cholera. Accordingly, both Beirut and Mount Lebanon could account for an administrative body that combined military and civilian officials drew on local medical experts to staff the ranks of the provincial health directorate and a bureaucracy that kept track of diseases by the end of 1915.

### Making Sanitary Citizens

The outbreak of the war naturally was a great shock to the public-health systems in all belligerent countries. However, whereas the European capitals the hospitals were almost immediately flooded with wounded and mutilated men, Beirut’s hospitals initially remained empty. The city was too far removed from the battlefronts to be of any immediate help to wounded soldiers. SPC’s president Howard Bliss, for example, reported that, despite the offer to the Ottoman government that any wounded soldiers sent to the college hospital would be cared for free of charge, the hospital’s admission record showed that patients were mainly victims of disease.<sup>111</sup> It was civilians infected with malaria, cholera, typhoid fever, plague, and most importantly typhus, who were admitted into the hospital.<sup>112</sup> Consequently, the increased threat of infectious diseases immediately steered the civilian and military health officials’ focus toward prevention of disease, rather than rehabilitative or curative work.<sup>113</sup> The goal was to create an environment free of diseases, based on a negative definition of individual and communal health. The criteria or test of health was first efficiency in action and second the ease and comfort “in

<sup>108</sup> The last Christian *mutaşarrif* (or governor) of Mount Lebanon Ohannes Kouyumdjian Pasha resigned in May 1915. ‘Ali Mūnif Bey was the governor of Mount Lebanon from September 25, 1915 to May 15, 1916, and was then replaced by Ismā‘īl Haqqī Bey. Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Hūsni Bey “Al-Ūmūr al-Şihḥīah fī Jabal Lubnān,” 661.

<sup>110</sup> Four times the amount an unskilled worker would earn. Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut,” 458.

<sup>111</sup> AUB: 49<sup>th</sup> Annual President’s Report

<sup>112</sup> Hūsni Bey distinguished “local diseases” (*al-amrād al-maḥaliyyāh*) known and common before November 1914 that increased during the war, such as malaria, typhoid fever, from known diseases such as the plague and cholera that had been reduced if not eliminated prior to the war, but now reappeared. Hūsni Bey “Al-Ūmūr al-Şihḥīah fī Jabal Lubnān,” 649.

<sup>113</sup> The opposite was true for the European capitals, where civilian care was subordinated the care for soldiers and the main focus of the health system was the cure and rehabilitation of battlefront casualties. See Catherine Rollet “The ‘Other War’ I,” 421.

feeling—absence of pain—well-being,” meaning that perfect health was the absence of diseases.<sup>114</sup>

In both Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the measures to prevent pathogenic organisms from spreading and turning into epidemics were to follow three steps: official notification, isolation, and disinfection. The Regulation for Communicable Diseases (*Niḏām al-Āmrāḏ al-Sāriya*), republished in the Beirut press in March of 1915, mandated that all cases of specified diseases were to be reported within twenty-four hours to town or district sanitary authorities.<sup>115</sup> People responsible to make these reports were medical attendants, head of families or oldest relative in the house, nurses, midwives, owners of rental property and shops, janitor or porters of apartment house, managers of hotels and lodging house, religious leaders, and the washers of the dead. Failure to report was punishable by fine or imprisonment. Through the designation of responsibilities to individual community members power was distributed into the smallest capillaries of the empire, strengthening the disciplinary abilities of the state. Moreover, health increasingly demanded that individuals would protect themselves through adjustments in his or her sanitary behaviors and routines and exhibit certain self-discipline.

Most importantly, what was clear to the authorities and medical experts was that this response system relied first and foremost on informed and knowledgeable citizens. Medical experts in the region, like SPC's William Thomson Van Dyck, proposed that health was not a static condition. It was not merely the adaptation of a living organism to external conditions, but the *conditioned* adaptability of that organism, as a whole, to an ever-varying environment. Meaning that education and behavioral adjustments were essential in bringing about perfect health. Hence, education of civilians and soldiers in regards to diseases quickly became the top priority, as it did among governments of all belligerent countries.<sup>116</sup> The public needed to be infused with an intimate knowledge of diseases that posed a threat to the wellbeing of the community. Officials argued in the press that the public needed to be familiar with each disease's own natural history and possess a comprehensive understanding of sources of infection, symptoms, channels of infection, modes of virus transfer, periods of incubation, and periods of infectivity. Hence, health officials initiated an education campaign, targeting individual's behavior. A distinct urgency is immediately visible in the public discourse (press) to produce, what Anthropologist Charles Briggs has called a *sanitary citizen*, i.e. an urgency to forge individuals who saw their body, health and disease in terms of medical epistemologies, who adopted hygienic practices (“disciplining their own bodies”) and recognized the monopoly of the expert in defining disease prevention and treatment.<sup>117</sup> The goal was to produce citizens who could recognize the symptoms, saw the obvious dangers of epidemics if not treated, knew the medical landscape of the city, and who placed the well being of the community ahead of personal attachment to the infected person, since isolation and quarantine often removed family from their homes.

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<sup>114</sup> AUB: W.T. Van Dyck, *Syllabus of Lectures on Hygiene for the Use of Students of the Syrian Protestant College* (Beirut, 1916), 3.

<sup>115</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, March 30, 1915

<sup>116</sup> For example biologist George Nutall joined the British Army Pathology Advisory Committee of the War Office and published a number of articles in which he stressed education as to the nature and dangers of lice in transmitting typhus. See Paul Weindling, “The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice,” 234.

<sup>117</sup> Briggs, “Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Tell People to be Healthy.”

To produce this kind of citizen the military and civilian health and sanitation agencies commenced to inform the public, about typhus, cholera, typhoid, and malaria. Science journals, like *al-muqtataf* (The Digest), designated significant space to the discussion of infectious diseases. The emphasis, generally, was to present appropriate prophylaxis, which after all—it was mentioned—was much easier than treating diseases.<sup>118</sup> But the journal’s primary audience was medical experts. The articles scientific descriptions and medical jargon made it inaccessible for the general public. To reach a broader audience, the health commission and its officers used local newspapers to disseminate medical and sanitary knowledge. Both the provincial and the municipal health directorates continuously published “advice” pieces in an effort to create a public awareness of all aspects of infectious diseases. Since the articles were meant for the consumption of the average reader and listener, the authors—all trained medical experts—systematically avoid any medical jargon and limited themselves to the basics. Exemplary of “advise” journalism is an article from March 15, 1915 published in *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, titled “military fever.” Following a bout of typhus, its author the Ottoman health director of the *Vilayet* Beirut Ḥasan Bey al-Āsīr urged “that the people must understand how the sickness is transmitted.” Everyone needed to be “woken up to the seriousness of this disease.” It was imperative, he wrote, to teach everyone to protect themselves from body lice, the source of infection.<sup>119</sup>

Typhus was by far the biggest challenge for the health commission all through the war. Although, typhus was not completely unknown to the region—an outbreak was reported in 1898—it never had been widespread before the war.<sup>120</sup> The first serious outbreak was reported in the spring of 1915, and it was to spread like a wildfire in the winter of 1916.<sup>121</sup> Mount Lebanon’s health director Ḥūsni Bey lamented that typhus counted among the deadliest disease in his district; there was not one village or sub-district without it.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, it was the most notorious disease in all districts of Mount Lebanon from March to December 1917, followed by typhoid, smallpox, dysentery, relapsing fever, measles, croup and cholera.<sup>123</sup> He estimated that 2.5 per thousand contracted typhus during the war meaning that—with pre-war population estimates raging from 400,000 to 630,000—the number of typhus-infected persons would have been between ten and sixteen thousand. This number, although only a rough estimate since neither the report nor population numbers can claim accuracy, would in any case be devastating in an area that had only a limited medical infrastructure.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> In August of 1915, the journal published an article to educate the public about typhoid fever, its symptoms, and treatment. The article clarifies the difference between typhus and typhoid the latter being a water-born disease. AUB: *Al-Muqtataf*, August 1915, 181.

<sup>119</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī* March 15, 1915.

<sup>120</sup> Typhus occurred twenty years before the war. Migrants from North Africa had brought it into Beirut at that time.

<sup>121</sup> Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 168; McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 186.

<sup>122</sup> Ḥūsni Bey “*Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān*,” 659.

<sup>123</sup> The *Matn* and *Shūf* districts as well as the town of Zahle had the greatest number of affected people. The survival rate once contracted typhus, according to the numbers collected by Ḥūsni Bey were somewhere between twelve and twenty three percent. *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Ḥūsni Bey’s report is an attempt at evaluating the number of infected as well as the mortalities among civilians in his province. While it gives a good idea of the situation in the mountains during the war, it cannot be taken at face value, because his system of registering diseases, death and births was only in its infancy and the government appointed physicians had little practical experience. So that village elders and *muktārs* (or village chiefs or chiefs of

The biggest problem in the mountains, Husni Bey wrote, was the unstoppable movement of typhus-infected poor, who at the verge of starvation, stumbled from place to place, in search for food. The poor, in his words, were the prey (*farīsa*) of this deadly disease.<sup>125</sup> In the city, the authorities warned that the disease was most commonly found in crowded places; as for example the now congested tramway, prisons, hospitals, etc. While typhus found easy prey among the poor, it did not leave the middle and upper classes unaffected. Edward Nickoley wrote:

Our own community as had several cases, fortunately none fatal. Dorman, Chesbrough, Mrs. March and half a dozen students were all ill. Miss Shepherd has just come out of the hospital and Miss La Grange at Tripoli is down with it now. We were exposed to the disease everywhere. The body lice, which carry the disease, may be picked up at any time and in any place. We find them in our recitation rooms after a class has gone. Some of the students have brought them in their clothes. The latest discovery is that the beasts cling to flies and are carried about by them, another reason for swatting the fly. But you see there is no way of avoiding infection. The only thing to do is keep clean and well, this reducing the danger to the minimum, both of being exposed and of contracting the disease when bitten.”<sup>126</sup>

The fact that typhus was not, what Hūsni Bey would refer to as, a local sickness (*al-marad al-maḥalliah*), meant that civilians were mostly unfamiliar with the disease, if not completely ignorant of its causes.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately, medical experts and physicians in the region as well had very little experience with it. According to the historian Phillip Hitti, who himself contracted typhus while walking the streets of Beirut in 1916, physicians were largely unfamiliar with modes of transmission and potential cure and possible methods of prevention.<sup>128</sup> In fact typhus at the time was largely unknown everywhere and to everyone, except to a few specialists.<sup>129</sup> In Beirut and Mount Lebanon, typhus was referred to by a number of different names, adding to the confusion. The public announcements in the press most often referred to it as military fever (*al-hummā al-askerī*), whereas Hūsni Bey referred to it as *al-hummā al-namshīa* (referring to rashes that might accompany the disease).<sup>130</sup> At times it was referred to as exanthematic typhus fever (*al-hummā al-tīfūsiya al-ṭafḥīa*), lice fever (*al-hummā al-qaml*) or army fever (*al-hummā al-jaish*). There was much confusion surrounding the disease, especially in regards to the

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a city's district or quarter) continued to exercise their traditional functions and not everyone registered with the health directorate. Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 658.

<sup>126</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>127</sup> Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*, 113.

<sup>128</sup> Typhus certainly was a problem among Ottoman soldiers, and as Hitti recounts during his service in the military in 1917 his group witnessed about four thousand cases. There are some discrepancies, however, about where Hitti was living during the war. According to an interview with Hitti himself published by Nicola Ajay, he was in Beirut at least some of the war, while Asher Kaufmann writes that Hitti was living in New York and in 1917 founded the Syrian Educational Society. See Kaufmann, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 76.

<sup>129</sup> See Paul Weindling, “The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice,” 228

<sup>130</sup> *Namshīa* from the Arabic word *namash* meaning freckles. Hūsni Bey “Al-Ūmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān,” 658.

difference between typhus (*tīfūs*) and typhoid fever (*al-tīfū 'īd*).<sup>131</sup> Often even doctors were unable to distinguish between the two.<sup>132</sup> The supervising physician Fuad Ḥamdī did his best to instruct the public. On May 6, 1915, he clarified that typhus was much worse typhoid and that it was, in his words, a fever of the brain (as it was accompanied by severe headaches) rather than an intestinal fever. He relied on the publications of the health director Ḥasan Bey Al-Āsīr and the head physician of the municipality Abdl al-Rahman Effendi al-Ūnsī, both of whom had seen the disease in Egypt and had written detailed treaties on the disease in the years leading up to the war.<sup>133</sup>

Second to typhus, cholera was the most widely discussed disease in the press, in particular in the papers of the mountain districts. In general, cholera was certainly more prominent in the interior cities such as Damascus and Aleppo, but it did also made its appearance in the coastal cities.<sup>134</sup> Historically at the first rumors of cholera, Beirutis immediately fled to the rural regions. Escape into the mountains became less and less desirable, not only because of its even greater wartime food shortages, but also since diseases did not make halt at the administrative boundaries.<sup>135</sup> At times water-born diseases like typhoid and cholera appeared first in the mountains and spread from there into the city.<sup>136</sup> The reason was that in the villages most drinking water came from wells and rivers that could be easily contaminated and were more difficult to control and regulate. The use of potentially contaminated animal manure or human excrements as fertilizers in fields, gardens, and orchards meant that disease-carrying bacilli

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<sup>131</sup> Another disease that was completely unknown to the physicians in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, according to Husnī Bey was ‘relapsing fever.’ The fever by itself not deadly at times accompanied typhus turning into a deadly combination and chances of survival significantly decreased. The sickness did not spread everywhere but according to the report spread along the major routes of troop movement.

<sup>132</sup> French Clinician Louis differentiated between typhus and typhoid in 1829.

<sup>133</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-Ūthmānī*, May 6, 1915.

<sup>134</sup> During the war years cholera was most widespread among soldiers and occurred most prominently along lines of troop and refugee movements. For example, the Cairo paper *Al-Muqaṭṭam* reported of a severe outbreak of cholera in districts of Anatolia, in particular the city of Izmir, and in Aleppo. Aleppo, refuge for large numbers of Armenian survivors living in unsanitary conditions, was especially hard hit by cholera. On May 15, 1916 Father Louis Cheikho reported: “Cholera broke in Aleppo ten days ago, and created great havoc in the city and this year will be especially bad due to the miserable state of the population” (See PO: Diary of Father Loius Cheikho, 148). Also it is noted that many soldiers were infected with the disease at the garrisons near Beersheba. Consequently, fear among people arose that soldiers would carry the sickness into the Syrian towns after leaving the front (AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, July 1, 1916). Lebanese Emil Yusuf Habash reported that cholera was severe in Jerusalem mainly because it was closer to the Palestine front and soldiers frequently moved through the city (See Yūsuf Emil Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*). The letters of a German Archaeologist confirm the cholera outbreaks in Jerusalem. He wrote 174 cholera cases were counted in July of 1916. The military authorities in one case in particular resorted to extreme measures to deal with the disease. A whole village (Afule, Palestine) was burned down and the inhabitants put up in tents. According to Wiegand, this was done because the authorities were unable to eliminate the disease. Theodor Wiegand, *Halbmond im letzten Viertel*, 180, 195; F.G. Clemow “Cholera in Turkey, etc., since 1914” *Lancet* (December 11, 1920).

<sup>135</sup> However, due to wartime food shortages that were worse in the mountains, flight—and self-isolation—in the rural highlands increasingly became an option only for the upper classes. Only the very wealthy could move the necessary food supplies, which required an expensive and difficult to obtain travel and transportation permit (or *vessika*). Transportation, itself, was almost impossible to find and extremely expensive, since most carts, carriages, etc. had been confiscated by the military.

<sup>136</sup> For example, On May 21, 1916, cholera cases were reported in Mount Lebanon, and only roughly three weeks later in Beirut on June 10, 1916.

would easily seep into the groundwater.<sup>137</sup> On June 7, 1917, the editors of Mount Lebanon's official paper, *Lubnān*, made cholera front-page news. The focus here, like it was for typhus, was to inform the public of modes of transmission, symptoms and familiarize everyone with the best precautionary measures. The health director explained to the public the ways by which the cholera bacillus could be transmitted. Most importantly, it was desirable personal hygiene habits that were described in detail—so as to inspire changes in individual's sanitary behavior. He advocated cleanliness of body and community as the most important elements in avoiding infection. "Perfect cleanliness" he wrote "is the best protection from cholera" (*al-Nazāfa al-tāmma hīa khair wāqin min al-kōlīrā*).<sup>138</sup>

The propagation of cleanliness was one thing, but the actual practical execution proved to be a challenge on the most basic level. It was the shortage of soap, which would preclude adequate and proper bodily hygiene. Soap shortages in part were due to the blockade of imports including sodium hydroxide an essential component in the fabrication of soap. But even more devastating, swarms of locusts destroyed the olive harvests of 1915 and 1916. The resulting shortage doubled the cost of olive oil, essential in local soap production.<sup>139</sup> By 1916, the price of soap had increased eight-fold, making soap a luxury item to be afforded only by the wealthier segments of society. Cleanliness was not only key in avoiding cholera and typhoid, but also—if not as Nickoley wrote the "only preventive against typhus"—important in keeping lice from multiplying. When there is "no soap and there is no fuel," Nickoley wrote, people were simply unable "to keep their clothes and their bodies clean."<sup>140</sup> SPC's Bayard Dodge recorded the situation as desperate; the "poor sold their lands and their furniture, until their houses were empty," but most importantly, he grieved its rising cost made soap unaffordable to them, "with the natural result that dirt and disease came upon them."<sup>141</sup>

The various members of the health commission and the health department of the municipality were prolific authors and diligent educators, but for the education project to be successful it needed to be extended beyond the print media since the majority of the city's and the mountain's inhabitants were illiterate. The provincial health directorate ordered all available scientists and town officials to inform the public about infectious diseases in religious gathering places, markets and other public places by way of lectures, publicly posted announcements, and organized meetings. The goal was to put everyone onto highest alert. Foreign medical experts contributed not only to the health and sanitation debates in the city, but also contributed their share to the educational campaign. As we have seen prior to the war a network of medical experts shared their discoveries in journals and researchers crossed paths internationally. According to the historian Paul Weidling, the international communication networks in the medical sciences were sustained during the war and embassies of neutral powers generally facilitated the exchange of information and new medical findings in particular in terms of

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<sup>137</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 37.

<sup>138</sup> LNA: *Lubnān* (Ba'abdā: 1914-1918) June 7, 1917. The announcement was repeated on June 12, 1917.

<sup>139</sup> For a discussion of the production of soap see. Beshara Doumani *Rediscovering Palestine; Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>140</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>141</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. "Relief Work I Syria During the Period of the War: (A Brief and Unofficial Account)" composed by Bayard Dodge.

cures.<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, it is unclear whether or not the American embassy in Beirut distributed pamphlets, like that in St. Petersburg to educate on the origins and prevention of typhus for example.<sup>143</sup> And while more research is needed to establish the actual scope of international circulation of medical knowledge, the experiences of German medical experts and those of neutral powers are likely to have been disseminated in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>144</sup>

The employees of the medical school of the American college were eager not only to inform a new generation of physicians, but also its general student population of the importance of hygiene of the body, home, the city and the community. The predominance of diseases provided, according to the SPC's Annual President's Report, unusually good opportunities for their study and "especially typhus in the hospitals and clinics" that would then be shared amongst colleagues and passed on to the public.<sup>145</sup> In 1916, Dr. William Thompson Van Dyck published a bound volume of his syllabi of lectures on hygiene for the use of SPC students. His lectures prescribed the appropriate measures to be taken against the spread of disease. His intentions were to instruct far beyond the classroom, and he thought facilitated by the fact that many of the SPC students volunteered in soup kitchens and orphanages in and around the city.

The education of common folks became ever more important with the steadily decreasing number of experts who could differentiate healthy from the sick and identify diseases, mainly due to conscription of civilian doctors into the army.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately there are no reliable statistics as to how many doctors per civilian were left in the country. However, sources hint that the ratio increased significantly as it did in all belligerent countries.<sup>147</sup> Bayard Dodge reported that malaria raged in the mountain districts, because "all of the doctors of the district had gone off to serve in the military hospitals."<sup>148</sup> Moreover, medical and pharmaceutical students were recruited into the army. It is interesting to note that while first-year medical students in Ottoman institutions were exempt from service in the army, medical students of the American Medical School in Beirut in their first and second year, however, were called to serve in the army.<sup>149</sup> The college, although unhappy with the policy, used it as a bargaining chip. The fact that it already had sent many doctors, pharmacists and dentists to serve in the army during previous conflicts and "was preparing young men for their duty as citizens of the country" was used repeatedly as an argument against deportation of faculty and closure of the school. SPC's

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<sup>142</sup> In Beirut doctors advertised that they were employing the latest methods used in the hospitals in Paris in their cure of venereal diseases. Dr Sāmaḥ Fākhūrī prior to his appointment as member of the health directorate in Lebanon, advertised his clinic in the local paper. He announced that he would conduct blood tests for venereal diseases and promised that his praxis employed the latest scientific methods. AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, June 7, 1915.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Weindling, "The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice, 228.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> AUB: 51<sup>st</sup> Annual President's Report

<sup>146</sup> Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*.

<sup>147</sup> A press report from March 15, 1915 mentioned that the number of doctors decreased significantly and posed a great difficulty in controlling typhus. The solution, it is mentioned, would be caution on behalf of civilians. AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, March 15, 1915. In Germany the ratio was one doctor for fifty-eight hundred people, compared to one per fifteen hundred before the war. In France it was one doctor for fourteen thousand people. See Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 160.

<sup>148</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. "Report of the Soup Kitchens in 'Abeih and Souk al-Gharb."

<sup>149</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.16.5. Letter from Howard Bliss to Minister of Education Shukri Bey dated June 29, 1916.

president Howard Bliss pointed out that the physicians of the college contributed “not a little” to caring for the sick in Beirut and were at the forefront of promoting public health in the city.<sup>150</sup> Jamāl Pasha in a speech held at the SPC in March of 1916, acknowledges the service of graduates from the college.

As an instance of the many benefits this college, I can mention the service of the graduates especially the medical graduates, many of whom are now in the army rendering invaluable service to the army and country. To many of these such service has meant the sacrifice of their lives; for in caring for the typhus patients, some of them contracted the disease of these I am proud as the college too may justly be proud.<sup>151</sup>

Physicians were constantly asked to report to the authorities.<sup>152</sup> In June of 1915, the supervising physician Fuad Hamdī ordered all “Ottoman” doctors regardless of age to report to the health administration, bringing with them their medical license, identity card and in case they were exempt from “*safar barlik*” the paperwork to prove it. While conscription of civilian physicians, pharmacists and dentists did not go unchallenged, it significantly reduced the number of doctors in the city. Hamdī wrote that despite the repeated mandate for all physicians, pharmacists and dentist having to report to the military hospital for a physical examination and to obtain the proper documents many had not done so. Some of them had vanished in the mountains or were hiding other places. He made it clear once again that all physicians registered in Beirut whether or not they were in the city or in the mountains were to report within five days to undergo physical examination, or they would be brought in by force and would procure penalties.<sup>153</sup> Either the men had to enter the military as a common soldier, rather than the customary rank of officer, or would be convicted by the military court as deserters, meaning a possible death sentence. However, the ruling would most often be a prison sentence and loss of property.<sup>154</sup> For example, court published a list of eight physicians who had failed to reports to the recruitment office, in January of 1915. The court gave the men a customary ten days to appear, after which they would be tried as deserters and their properties and money confiscated.<sup>155</sup> Still despite significant penalties and to the frustration of the public health officials, doctors continued to dodge the orders of the recruitment office.

To remedy the desperate situation, the remaining physicians extended their hours and often held office hours outside of their regular office. Whether the intent was to fill the actual need or to expand their businesses is unclear. It most probably was a combination of both. The physician Ahmed al-Tunisi, who was the doctor assigned to the Qarantina quarter, held additional daily office hours in the pharmacy of Mohamed Masbah Effendi al-Jamal, which was located in an adjacent quarter.<sup>156</sup> Some of the physicians conscripted would pass on the names of their patients to a particular colleague, who would then announce himself as the substitute in the local press. Doctor Salim Jalakh, for example, advertised that he would take on new patients and would hold an open clinic at his house every afternoon from one to four, and would be ready

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<sup>150</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.16.6.

<sup>151</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.3.18.1 transcript of Jamāl Pasha’s speech from March 13, 1916.

<sup>152</sup> See for example AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, September 15, 1915.

<sup>153</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, October 28, 1915.

<sup>154</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, June 7, 1915

<sup>155</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, January 17, 1915.

<sup>156</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, February 27, 1915.



to respond at any other time if it was necessary.<sup>157</sup> The municipality sought to deal with the shortage of physicians by ordering all remaining doctors to volunteer fifteen hours every week to municipal health. But still what was more important was to raise awareness and extent medical competence to ‘ordinary’ civilians.

The educational campaign and the unremitting dissemination of knowledge of individual diseases and appropriate prophylactic hygienic practices contributed to the formation of sanitary citizens, who now would be increasingly aware of disease specific medical knowledge and would adjust their hygienic behavior accordingly. When there was a notable decrease in typhus after its worst outbreak in the years 1916 and 1917, Hūsni Bey attributed it partially to the fumigation and disinfection efforts (discussed below). But more importantly, he argued, people began to pay more attention and took precautionary measures, as the result of increased awareness. Still, the process of creating sanitary citizens was rather thorny, complicated by the lack of the most basic, namely soap, and the resistance of people to “advice” of the health commission.

### Creating a Healthy Space

The public education campaign was focused on personal hygiene—individual sanitary behaviors—which at times were disguised as ‘advice’ and at times came as orders from the sanitary commission. To improve the health of the community as a whole the sanitation commission (*qūmisūn ḥifẓ aṣ-ṣiḥḥa*) devised strategy that would include surveillance, inspections, mandatory vaccinations, and infrastructural improvements. The sanitation commission met twice a week to discuss conditions in the city. Its evaluations and suggestions were based on daily inspections of all “public shops, streets, water places, depots, jails, public baths and grocery shops” carried out by the municipal health director Dr. Najīb al-‘Aradāti and his staff.<sup>158</sup> At the heart of all the preventative as well as curative instructions was a clear separation of the sick from the healthy that was had been advocated prior to the war. For example, Boyer’s nineteenth century study had “proposed planning measures aimed to separate the ‘healthy’ from the ‘foul’ in the name of ‘public welfare’.”<sup>159</sup> Now with increased urgency, this separation was to be accomplished on a number of levels. Citywide infected poor were to be isolated in the quarantine center designated as a space for the sick. Moreover the infected were to be removed from the private home and placed into public facilities so that hospitals and clinics became ever more important as designated spaces for the ill. The decreed separation reached down into the home where the sick and dying persons were to be isolated from the rest of the family, both physically into a separated room and socially as food and drink were not to be shared. Interactions between the sick and the healthy—crossing the divide—were to be avoided and if necessary needed to be strictly controlled. To facilitate the division, the municipality offered free care in the Ottoman hospital and medical examination; so that family members would not hesitate to report their sick out of financial reasons, and proper isolation of diseased would be guaranteed. The health director aimed this policy especially at the poor who were

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<sup>157</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, February 27, 1915.

<sup>158</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, March 30, 1915; Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 459.

<sup>159</sup> The tropes of Orientalist understanding of the “Arab” or ‘Islamic’ city find expression in Boyer’s study. He clearly drew a line between the old and the modern city, the former crowded, dirty and prone to disease and the latter the exemplar of modernity. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 128f.

unable to properly nurse their sick in their homes. While hospitalization apparently was meant to be voluntary, the language of his directive was demanding and suggested that there was little choice. It was only after the protest of some upper class community members, who saw hospitals as dangerous breeding grounds for diseases, that the municipal health director made a clarifying statement in the press.<sup>160</sup> He wrote that admittance into the city's hospital was voluntary, while at the same time insisting that it was the best option for those who were not equipped to properly take care of their sick, namely the poor.

Unfortunately the limited number of hospitals, shortage of medical personal, the closure and confiscation of existing hospitals, missionary hospices and clinics, and restrictions to building new ones made hospitalization an inadequate solution.<sup>161</sup> To begin with, Beirut could account for only six hospitals in 1914. The hospitals and clinics were small in size, especially when compared to hospitals in the European capital cities. For example, the Public Health department in Paris (of course a much larger city) was in charge of a hospital system of over thirty thousand beds, Berlin had five major hospitals and the Rudolf Virchow hospital alone had two thousand beds.<sup>162</sup> While in France the state for the most part orchestrated medical care, Beirut's hospitals and clinics, like in Germany, were a mixture of public and private enterprises that combined could only account for a few hundred beds.<sup>163</sup>

The Ottoman authorities, however, were eager to assert power over health in the city making it a state affair. They did so by confiscating existing foreign clinics and hospitals and prohibiting the creating of new ones, without its consent. A law published in October of 1914, outlined that it would be prohibited to "foreign, private, philanthropic, religious and educational societies and associations to found wholly new sanitary establishments independently of the authorities."<sup>164</sup> The existing foreign 'sanitary institutions' were subjected to regulations from the state, and in particular were to be subject to rules and regulation issued by the General Sanitary Department. This included the submission of a list of the physicians, their specialty and qualifications. The foreign sanitary establishment would be subject to inspection, "just as Ottoman schools and foundations of the same nature." In addition, the sanitary establishments are "required to comply with and obey all warnings and directions made to them by the inspector."<sup>165</sup> American hospitals and clinics, besides the German hospital, were the only foreign institutions not confiscated by the Ottoman government, but now were closely monitored. Confiscations and close supervision of the remaining foreign medical institutions resulted in a reduced number of hospitals and complicated the daily operations of those remaining.

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<sup>160</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī* May 23, 1915.

<sup>161</sup> The French Medical Academy was confiscated and renamed the Ottoman hospital, and Hasan Efendi al-Asīr was appointed to be in charge of the property. AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, December 2, 1915.

<sup>162</sup> Four of the hospitals were managed by the city council, one by the Prussian administration, and seven additional hospitals were run by religious organizations. Catherine Rollet, "The 'Other War' I," 423.

<sup>163</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.1.14; "Syrian Protestant College Nurses' Training School: Beirut, Syria June 1914.

<sup>164</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.16.3. Translation of Ministry of Education Law distributed to foreign educational institutions in the empire.

<sup>165</sup> AUB: *Ibid*.

The health commission dealt with the limited space in the hospitals and their shortcomings by encouraging wealthy families to keep sick family members in their homes, given that there was enough room for isolation, and the financial means to nurse their sick properly. If the infected person remained in the home the families were to follow specific instructions that were based on the physical and social isolation of the contaminated individual to avoid spreading the disease to the entire household. One should not eat in the same room as flies could transmit the bacillus from the infected person onto the food, or share any food, drink or cigarette with an infected person. The infected person should be placed under the supervision of a doctor, isolated, eat and drink from designated dishes that should be washed in boiled water, the feces of the sick should be mixed with water and Lysol—which could be purchased at the pharmacy—and left standing for an hour before dumping it in a hole far away from any well and then cover it with dirt.

The division and isolation of the sick, despite its obvious problems, was essential to the creation of healthy spaces, and health officials accused everyone who crossed the divide of immoral behavior. The medical experts singled out women, in particular, as polluting the community and the home. Fuad Hamdī scolded women for ‘flocking’ to the clinics for unnecessary social visits. The women, in his eyes, disrespected the boundaries between the sick and the healthy, and were the transmitter of diseases, since they go out their visits and take with them the bacteria in their gowns and then transmit them to their poor children and husbands.<sup>166</sup> It was not only the physical sick that were designated to particular places, but also those who were ‘morally’ deviant. The police chief ordered in June of 1915 that all brothels should hang from their doors red gas lamps, to clearly mark places of immorality.<sup>167</sup> The divide between healthy and sick, moral and immoral, became ever more distinct throughout the war.

### Surveillance, Regulations and Resistance

The higher frequency of water-borne diseases mainly cholera, typhoid fever, and dysentery, resulted in a close surveillance and inspection of water sources and monitoring water consumption. It was common that wells were infected with microbes and bacteria and at times only the swift actions of the local authorities were able to prevent disaster. Already, following a typhoid outbreak, which killed one hundred and five and infected a much greater number of Beirutis in 1895, Benoît Boyer had suggested sealing all the city’s water wells. Little or nothing, however, was done along these lines however.<sup>168</sup> In 1918, Husni Bey’s report illustrates that clean water was considered an essential aspect of public health and water contamination was a problem far from being solved. He began his assessment of Mount Lebanon’s state of public health with a description and evaluation of water distribution in the region. He complained that many villages, in particular in the Shūf district, in Burj al-Barājneh (then part of the Matn), Jūnīeh, Jbeīl and parts of the coastal Kisrawān, relied on wells for their drinking water, which

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<sup>166</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī* May 21, 1915.

<sup>167</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī* June 7, 1915.

<sup>168</sup> Before the war, Benoît Boyer, as mentioned-above, had warned of the danger of contaminated water and forcefully argued that drinking water from wells was unhealthy based on his scientific discoveries. The typhoid outbreak in 1895, Boyer asserted showed that the water supply was unsafe. Imperfect filtration system and continued consumption of well water—mostly by middle and lower class families, prevented water-borne diseases to be a thing of the past. For Boyer this meant that the spring water piping system needed to be expanded through the Beirut Water Company, eliminating wells all together. Khouri, *La médecine au Liban*, 228.

was easily contaminated. In the many of the coastal villages, people used cistern for water supply. In seventy-five percent of these villages malaria was a recurrent problem in the later months of the fall, when the water level would run low and the containers turned into ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

When the war broke out and typhoid fever, in particular, caused havoc in both the city and the mountains— health officials began to inspect the city’s water wells regularly and conducted bacteriological exams of the water supply.<sup>169</sup> The control of the water supply was one of the most important steps in disease prevention. The director of health urged people to drink little and use only boiled water for consumption and cleaning of their bodies or food items. Beer, wine, coffee and tea were deemed safe beverages.<sup>170</sup> In 1916, the health inspectors found that a military encampment set up too close to a spring had contaminated with typhoid. A bacteriological exam confirmed the fears of the authorities.<sup>171</sup> Public toilets, in particular, were a thorn in the eyes of the health officials. Beirut’s health officials prohibited drinking from wells too close to toilet pits or otherwise deemed unsafe and outlawed urinating in public in the first six month of 1915.<sup>172</sup> In May of 1915, it was decided that all landlords within a period of ten days had to build toilets in their houses and make sure that filtered water would arrive at the premises.<sup>173</sup> Given the financial burden and the extremely short time given for the improvements, many property owners ignored the orders. Realizing the difficulties, senior military officers lieutenant colonel (*bikbāshī*) Sāmī gave a short extension, but warned that anyone who did not follow the orders would be brought in front of the sanitary commission and would be hit with a penalty, as well as having to built the toilet.<sup>174</sup> The health commission sought to use the increased presence of water-born diseases to propel the relocation of the toilet into the private realm and eliminating it from the public. The project was not without difficulty. The mere fact that penalties had to be prescribed and accounts in the press suggest that even months later the public toilet issue had not been solved to the satisfaction of public health officials. Whereas the authorities saw it ideal to eliminate them completely, they were unable to do so. An overflowing of sewage from one of the public toilets caused the health commission to figure that if they could not be made away with they should at least be fixed. The solution was that they should be dug into the ground, as it was the case in “superior or developed countries” (*buldān rāqīyah*), not only for the sake of public health, but also public morality (*al-ādāb al-‘umūmiyāh*).<sup>175</sup>

Often the health and sanitation prescriptions were disguised as “advise” articles. The language used in the articles titled “advise” (*naṣā’ih*) however, indicates that the health directorate’s publications were much more than just friendly advice. The government’s resolve to regulate communal and personal sanitation was evident in the warnings that accompanied its health bulletins. Threats that neglecting health advice and not following the sanitary ‘suggestions’ could result in penalties were common appendixes. Regulations, such as the prohibition of urinating in public, throwing garbage or dirty water in the alley of the city, were

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 644.

<sup>170</sup> LNA: *Lubnān*, June 7, 1917. The announcement was repeated on June 12, 1917.

<sup>171</sup> Hūsni Bey, “Al-‘Umūr al-Ṣiḥḥiāh fī Jabal Lubnān,” 652.

<sup>172</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, March 30, 1915.

<sup>173</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, May 28, 1915.

<sup>174</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, June 12, 1915.

<sup>175</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, September 18, 1915.

backed by punitive measures ranging from monetary fines to exile that were clearly and forcefully articulated in the press. A notification from the municipality ordered that owners of homes and stores were to place a closed can at the threshold of their homes and stores to collect garbage. In essence the regulations were to order domestic as well as public spaces, designating particular areas to be for refuse materials.<sup>176</sup> A municipal cleaning crew would then collect the garbage regularly.<sup>177</sup> Violating the orders of the “health protection commission” could result in fines equivalent to 23 to 230 piastres (of one to ten riyal majidi)—a very high amount by any standards (an unskilled worker being paid only eight *ghurūsh* a day)—or in imprisonment from one week to a month and in severe cases even exile.<sup>178</sup> The health commission would target the residences of the poor in its public hygiene scheme, and on occasion singled out the poor as having to clean their dwellings. The municipal officers would give the lower classes of their quarters ten days to improve the appearance and the cleanliness. If they failed to meet the standards, the executive agents of the city’s health government would seal off their homes.<sup>179</sup> The constant warnings of potential punishment, most importantly suggests that Beirutis and Lebanese were not as eager to become ‘sanitary citizens’ as the health officials were hoping.

The above-mentioned strategies were specific to water-borne diseases, which as we have seen demanded an increased surveillance of water supplies, and stricter control of communal hygienic practices typhus demanded an entirely different strategy. Widespread ignorance due to the fact that infected body lice transmitted typhus was discovered just before the onset of the war, and its causative bacteria only during the war in 1916, and the fact that an effective vaccine was not produced until after the war, complicated the commission’s efforts.<sup>180</sup> The only effective way of dealing with the disease had proven to be the eradication of its vector the body lice. Internationally various systems of “de-lousing,” “*Entlausung*” were introduced to curb the disease. In Mount Lebanon, Hūsni Bey introduced fumigation and disinfection. He himself had invented movable steam ovens, thirty of which were distributed in the mountain’s health district. The steam ovens, powered by wood, produced a water steam that would be pushed over infected clothes and linens to suffocate the lice. Any bedding and clothes should be sent to the health directorates cleaning station, where they would be fumigated. If no steam ovens were available, people were advised to iron their clothes, especially the seams to eliminate lice.<sup>181</sup> Sulfur

<sup>176</sup> Briggs, "Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Tell People to be Healthy," 288.

<sup>177</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, May 11, 1915.

<sup>178</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, January 21, 1915.

<sup>179</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 3, 1915.

<sup>180</sup> Charles Nicolle has director of the Pasteur Institute in Tunis had discovered body lice (*Pediculus Humanus Corporis*) to be the transmitters of epidemic typhus in 1909. His discovery was confirmed by Ricketts and Wilder in 1910 and Anderson and Goldberger in 1912. Paul Weindling notes the Serbian typhus epidemic in the winter of 1914 as having placed the disease on the international medical agenda. The death toll in Serbia, where refugee civilians spread the disease, was extreme. Over two hundred thousand people died in six months. It was soon noted that prisoners of war were especially vulnerable. A number of scientists began research in the prison camps. In the course of the war, European entomologists eagerly studied and constructed detailed behavioral profiles of lice. Based on the research of men like Austrian Stanilaus Prowazek, who died of typhus himself while conducting experiments in the camps, the causative agent of the disease, namely the bacteria *Rickettsia prowazekii*, was discovered in 1916 by Brazilian bacteriologist Rocha Lima working in Germany. See Paul Weindling, “The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice,” 228; A vaccine against typhus was first discovered by zoologist Rudolf Weigl in the interwar period. Stefan Kryński, “Rudolf Weigl: 50 Years of Rickettsia Prowazeki Culture in Lice” *Wiadomości Parazytologiczne* 13 (4) 1967, 361-62; Paul Weindling, “The First World War and the Campaigns against Lice,” 227.

<sup>181</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, May 20, 1915.

fumigation of homes had already been practiced during the second Balkan war, but reports were unanimously saying that they were unsuccessful in eliminating all the lice. For Hūsni Bey—knowing that his movable fumigation ovens were not enough to service all districts of Mount Lebanon—sulfur fumigation of homes still was a good option, if it was done correctly.<sup>182</sup> According to the directorate of health lice were only found on people who did not care for their personal hygiene, entered dirty baths, or who were forced to work in crowded places.<sup>183</sup> In Beirut, the municipal health directorate focused on publicizing preventive measures in the papers. In March of 1915, it Beirutis advised to keep their hair short, avoid crowded places, not to mix with soldiers who visited their shops and homes, not to enter or work in places that are infected with lice, and to frequently check and wash clothing and bodies. If one became infected and washing did not help a head wrap dipped in kerosene or oil for an hour was recommended. Everyone was encouraged to keep a tin of naphthalene in his/her pockets and dust their skin around the neck, ankles and wrists with it to keep lice at bay.

Malaria, according to a report conducted by the French Medical Faculty the most commonly treated disease in the hospitals and clinics of Beirut and Mount Lebanon before the war, was endemic to the region and occurred seasonally in the end of fall and in the first two months of winter.<sup>184</sup> The disease is caused by a protozoan parasite (*Plasmodium falciparum*) and transmitted by female *Aopheles* mosquitoes, which breed near water and in particular areas of stagnant waters and mud. Local physicians were well informed when it came to malaria and knew how to avoid it. Hūsni Bey, for example, mentioned that sleeping under nets could easily avert infection. Unfortunately, few people did so. Prior to the war, mass malaria epidemics were generally prevented through quinine treatment. The wartime naval blockade quickly depleted supplies of quinine and malaria deaths rose into the thousands.<sup>185</sup> Dr. Nabīh Sha'b, a well-known physician from the southern town of Sayda, confirmed the increase of malaria cases in his district. When a particular harsh outbreak of malaria was reported in the end of summer 1916, little could be done in terms of distribution of medicine. Beirut's "pharmacies were swamped with orders for Epsom salt and quinine" that could hardly be filled.<sup>186</sup> The municipality and the military authorities did their best to scrape up whatever quinine tablets could be found and moved the infected persons to the hospital in the quarantine quarter of the city with some success.<sup>187</sup> An eyewitness recounted that the German government provided some medical supply in 1917, including quinine tables somewhat reducing the number of mortalities.<sup>188</sup> But not only were medicines short in supply, their reduced availability meant that prices increased. The decrease in number of pharmacists in the city, as the majority had been recruited into the army, posed another obvious problem. The few remaining pharmacies did not operate according to regulated hours, so that at times prescriptions could not be filled even if urgent. But that was

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<sup>182</sup> The proper sulfur fumigation of homes was described in great detail, including the necessary amount of sulfur to be burned per cubic meter. AUB: *Ittihād al-'Uthmānī*, May 20, 1915.

<sup>183</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-'Uthmānī*, May 21, 1915.

<sup>184</sup> Boyer and his colleagues collected observations from local clinics and hospitals and closely examined the medical record of 21,000 patients to look for the most common ailments. Khouri points out that typhoid was not mentioned in the study, since it was mostly treated at home and that the number for syphilis and gonorrhoea would be under reported as they were "treated with discretion by private physicians. Khouri, *La médecine au Liban*, 230.

<sup>185</sup> Kana'an, *Beirut fi al-tarikh*, 169.

<sup>186</sup> Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," 420.

<sup>187</sup> Kana'an, *Beirut fi al-tarikh*, 168.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

not all. At times greedy pharmacists in the city took advantage of the situation began overcharging their customers. The health commission stepped in to mitigate the circumstances and mandated a rotating schedule for the pharmacies and fixed the price of prescription; so that any time day or night at least one would be open in the city and any one prescription could no longer exceed eleven *ghūrush*.

However because of the constant shortages and unreliability of supplies, the municipal authorities focused their efforts to root out the causes of malaria as they tried to do with typhus. The greatest problem when it comes to malaria, epidemiologists continue to argue today, is that its vector, i.e. mosquitoes, remains to be ignored in the fight against the disease. This was not the case in wartime Beirut. Government ordinances, published in the press, illustrate a concerted effort of the local authorities to eliminate the disease at its source—dirt, mud, stagnant water, etc. The locally stationed military divisions were warned that they were responsible to maintain a level of cleanliness around their encampments, and private individuals were ordered to keep their homes and businesses clean. The military authorities dispatched a cleaning battalions, made up of thirty soldiers equipped with shovels, cards, buckets, lime etc., to clean the streets and markets from animal dung, stagnant water and mud, and disinfect public toilets.<sup>189</sup> Repeated warnings were issued of its potential dangers, and everyone was instructed to drain standing waters.<sup>190</sup> The Beirut municipality paid for part of the efforts, and money transferred to the American Red Cross paid to employ eighty men to clean the streets.<sup>191</sup>

In addition to keeping the city clean and surveying public hygiene, mandatory vaccinations were among the key preventative measures employed by the health commission. Through the ministry of health, the military issued circulars mandating all soldiers to be immunized against cholera, typhoid fever and smallpox. The vaccination of civilians was dealt with locally. Smallpox (or *judarī*), in particular, triggered systematized vaccination campaigns in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The disease was endemic to the region, causing much devastation in the past, but it had virtually disappeared; no smallpox outbreak was recorded after the turn of the century.<sup>192</sup> When smallpox reentered the region in 1915, the Beirut municipality devised an elaborate vaccination campaign in response to it. After outbreaks were been reported in Sidon, Damascus, and Beirut in January, the municipal health department set up vaccination stations throughout the city. Like in the European capitals, propaganda posters and public press announcements accompanied the vaccination campaign. The health commission warned people that vaccination was mandatory, and everyone had to carry a certificate attesting to his or her immunity. Employees of schools, shops, manufacturing businesses, and other public places or

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<sup>189</sup> As the responsibilities were assigned by the military command of the Fourth Army corps in coordination with the health directorate and the Beirut municipality, some staff members of the SPC suggested to employ the poor and starving men through the Red Cross in exchange for food or money. The municipality welcomed the idea and set up street sweeping battalions made up of the city's poor.

<sup>190</sup> Hūsni Bey, "Al-Ūmūr al-Şihḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān," 652.

<sup>191</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland Dodge, Dated May 2, 1915. Also see Chapter 5.

<sup>192</sup> Smallpox by the eighteen century was endemic in all countries, except for Australia. The variola major or variola minor virus causes the disease. Earliest forms of smallpox prevention were inoculation practiced in India, China and later in the Ottoman Empire. See for example Lady Wortley Montague's description of smallpox inoculation in Istanbul. English physician Edward Jenner first discovered a vaccine against smallpox, based on injecting people with the cowpox virus, in the late eighteenth century. For a detailed history of smallpox see Jonathan B. Tucker *Scourge; The Once and Future Threat of Smallpox* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002).

offices who already had been exposed to smallpox and were immune were to obtain a certificate from their doctors. Everyone else had to undergo immunization within a month. The vaccination stations, serviced by a single physician Dr. Bashīr Effendi, were set up in various settings with designated vaccination times, which then were published by the municipal health director in the press and posted in public places.<sup>193</sup> In the city quarter Ras Beirut, for example, the vaccination station was in the police station and open in the afternoon hours. In addition, the municipality distributed the necessary bovine serum to every hospital, school, company and doctor to use for free, mandating a list to be submitted to the health department with the names of those who had been vaccinated.<sup>194</sup> Vaccines for smallpox, cholera and typhoid fever were either imported or prepared in Istanbul, where a number of laboratories had been expanded to meet the rising demands. Throughout the war, the Beirut municipality organized free vaccinations against smallpox and cholera. While vaccinations against smallpox had been administered before the war, wartime public announcements and constant reminders in the press of hours and location of vaccination stations reveal a sudden urgency.

When smallpox again made its appearance in April of 1915, a headline in the local papers read in large letters: “Smallpox (*Al-Judārī*); To the People and Inhabitants of Beirut!” The article confirmed rumors that Dr. Salīm Bey Ḥakīm had spotted four smallpox cases in Beirut’s Qurantina district, during a routine inspection of the district. The doctor found four brothers near the church of Mār Mikhaīl, whose faces were marked with pox. In compliance with the Regulation of Communicable Diseases (*Nizām al-Āmrāḍ al-Sāriya*), he immediately informed the municipality and then began vaccinating the quarter’s inhabitants, who had neither been exposed to the sickness nor had been vaccinated.<sup>195</sup> Faced with the threat of a smallpox epidemic the municipal health directorate reminded the cities inhabitants of the directives included in the Regulation for Communicable Diseases, in particular paragraph one, which made the reporting of any infectious disease mandatory. Heads of households, medical doctors, nurses, midwives, the owners of tenant housing, washers of the dead, etc. were legally were bound to report any suspicious sickness in their environs to the office of the municipality or the nearest police station within twenty-four hours.<sup>196</sup> Failure to do so would be met with harsh punishment, namely a monetary fine of one to fifteen Ottoman Lira or imprisonment from twenty-four hours to one month.<sup>197</sup>

In general, the population was not eager to be vaccinated. Smallpox continued to resurface to the frustration of the supervising physician Fuad Hamdī, who was an adamant advocate of vaccinations. For him it was the failure to regulate and implement childhood vaccinations in the empire that allowed for the wartime disease crisis. In countries where everyone was vaccinated, he argued, smallpox was no longer a problem. He did not blame the people for being suspicious of vaccinations; after all they were not accustomed to the practice. Rather the answer to his rhetorical question: “Why is that the smallpox is not eliminated?” (*Limāzā lā yatalāshā maraḍ al-judārī?*), was that the Ottoman state did not “know the value of life.” Whereas in what he

<sup>193</sup> For an account of vaccination campaign against smallpox in Paris see Catherine Rollet, “The ‘Other War’ I,” 435.

<sup>194</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, January 21, 1915

<sup>195</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, April 2, 1915.

<sup>196</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, March 17, 1915.

<sup>197</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, April 2, 1915.



refers to civilized countries the life of the individual was honored, he wrote “We don’t know how valuable every person is in our country.”<sup>198</sup> This failure, according to Hamdī Bey was at the heart of the Ottomans’ disintegration and the already then significant wartime losses. It was the wartime need of men that made his argument a strong case to be supported by key health officials. And when he compared the damage the sickness had done to the Ottoman army to the German military, which he argues has not lost one man under the age of forty to this disease, while the Ottomans, he exaggerated, could count about forty thousand, vaccination seemed to be the magic bullet. It is impossible to verify this arguably highly inflated number, but it certainly served to bring the point across.<sup>199</sup> Hūsni Bey eventually described a vigorous vaccination campaign in the mountains that included returning to villages multiple times to make sure everyone was vaccinated.<sup>200</sup> According to Hūsni Bey, vaccinations increased in number throughout the war, and by December of 1917, 88,973 persons had been vaccinated in the mountain districts.<sup>201</sup> In the case of Beirut, the municipality, as mentioned above, had already imposed mandatory vaccination since January of 1915. And as the war progressed health officials wrote articles in the press describing the purpose, and content of vaccines as well as the actual procedure to ease the public’s suspicion. In Mount Lebanon, under Hūsni Bey childhood vaccinations, in particular, became more organized.

Finally, large-scale infrastructural improvements were undertaken during the war—justified as improving sanitation and eliminating places that were associated with breeding diseases and stood in the way of a healthy city, i.e. crowded markets and the residences of the poor. The governor ‘Azmi Bey was particularly interested in improving the image of the city. Among his many schemes was the repairing of the cities streets, which would eliminate mud and stagnant waters, known as the source for malaria. The money for this project was to be raised through taxes. He sold the project to the public as a two-fold blessing; not only would the result be better streets in the city, but also the project would employ hundreds of workers and provide them with what they needed to survive.<sup>202</sup> A much more controversial project was the construction of two new fifteen meter wide streets or boulevards that would cross the entire city. The Ottoman governor Šāmī Bakr Bey launched the project that was taken up with great zeal by his successor ‘Azmi Bey’s. French hygienists and Beirut notables had discussed a similar project before the war. But as mentioned above, their eagerness to open the old city of Beirut, ridding it of the old crowded markets and widening the streets was met with resistance and struck down at its inception. And the sad finances of the Beirut municipality did nothing in terms of reviving the project.

The war presented itself as an opportune moment. The governors now took advantage of the low price of labor and “the present conditions which simplified the putting through of public enterprises.”<sup>203</sup> The far greater power assigned to the office of the Ottoman governor—under the guise of martial law—meant that projects could easily be pushed ahead, even if the public did not agree. Moreover, the governor found a great supporter in Jamāl Pasha, who throughout the

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<sup>198</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, July 29, 1915.

<sup>199</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, July 29, 1915.

<sup>200</sup> Hūsni Bey, “Al-Ūmūr al-Šiḥḥīah fī Jabal Lubnān,” 657.

<sup>201</sup> This would make up about 21 percent of the inhabitants based on Husni Bey’s estimated population number of 414,800. Ibid. 665.

<sup>202</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, July 20, 1915.

<sup>203</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.10.1. Letter from Howard Bliss to Cleveland Dodge dated October 30, 1915.

war engaged in a comprehensive program aimed at improving the infrastructure of Greater Syria.<sup>204</sup> In light of the circumstances the governor easily secured his permission to build the road beginning at Sūq al-Ḥaddādīn (the market of the iron or blacksmith) near the city's port. The project necessitated the destruction of hundreds of homes and shops that stood in its path, beginning with those stores and workshops located in Sūq al-Ḥaddādīn. The groundbreaking took place on April 7, 1915 accompanied by a large ceremonial celebration attended by religious leaders, senior government officials and dignitaries of the city.<sup>205</sup> Shops, homes and warehouses that stood in the way of this Ottoman vision of urban modernity were confiscated. The owners of the buildings and stores under demolition order were given three days to evacuate their properties and in the coming years one hundred forty stores and ninety buildings were destroyed.<sup>206</sup> The protest of locals was paid little attention. Bonds issued by the municipality were given to property owners as compensation. No one trusted these bonds, especially since the municipality had a rather sketchy financial record (having declared bankruptcy in 1913). Many Beirutis tried to avoid the bonds and the usurpation of their property, by simply not showing up at the municipal office to register much to the frustration of the governor. The justification, for the project all along was public health and the modernization of the city.<sup>207</sup>

The strategies employed by the health commission and the various public health officials could account for some success, even if at times only marginal success, in improving the health of the community. The health commission's efforts and sanitary improvements advocated, sponsored and financed by the municipal government were formulated and applied in direct response to specific diseases' vectors of transmission. The surveillance and inspection of water sources and the often-immediate government action, in case of contamination, eventually meant that there were relatively few cholera cases, in particular when compared to the interior cities. A report issued by Dr. F.G. Clemow published in *The Lancet* based on Ottoman records, although fragmentary and actual cholera cases probably underreported, shows that from May 19, 1916 to February 14, 1917 there were only 64 cases of cholera resulting in 31 mortalities in Beirut, compared to cholera in the interior cities such as Aleppo (2020 infected/1203 mortalities) or in the environs of Damascus (1594 infected/713 mortalities). Mount Lebanon counted 287 infected and 129 mortalities.<sup>208</sup> The larger numbers of cholera in the interior cities were the result of larger refugee populations living in unsanitary condition and more frequent troop movement through these towns and most probably less municipal surveillance. Hūsni Bey ascribed the relatively small numbers of cholera cases to swift efforts of the administration that were set in motion at the first sight of the sickness.<sup>209</sup> The health commission tried to tackle malaria by employing cleaning battalions, fixing roads, controlling and regulating the sanitary behavior of the community. Typhus, although according to Husni Bey reduced toward the end of the war, was a far greater problem than journalistic accounts suggest. Whereas 'entlausung' by steam and fumigation and personal precautions could account for some improvements, they certainly did not eliminate the disease. While cholera, malaria, and smallpox were mentioned in private papers and correspondence as well as in post-war memoirs in passing, the effects of typhus were

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<sup>204</sup> Kayali, "Wartime Regional and Imperial integration," 296.

<sup>205</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-ʿUṭhmānī*, April 7, 1915.

<sup>206</sup> Ibrahim Kanaʿān, *Hulākū Lubnān* (Beirut, 1980), 144.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Clemow "Cholera in Turkey," 1213.

<sup>209</sup> Hūsni Bey, "Al-ʿUmūr al-Ṣiḥḥīyah fī Jabal Lubnān," 657.

continuously lamented. According to father Cheikho, it ravaged the city.<sup>210</sup> In 1917, Nickoley pointed out the situation continued to be devastating as “Typhus has been exceedingly bad. People have died in large numbers.”<sup>211</sup> The omission suggests that the real effects of this extremely devastating disease, as those of famine, were censored. But the success stories have to be seen in the context of still large numbers of mortalities throughout the war. The authors, such as Husni Bey, were obviously interested in reporting the success and only a few critical voices were heard. What we know however is that the authorities faced a number of problems in implementing the often so neatly outlined preventative measures, including not only the resistance and suspicion among the population, as mentioned above, but also the general shortages of physicians and pharmacist, soap (so essential to personal hygiene) and medical supplies as well as the opportunist behavior of pharmacists.

## Conclusion

Historians of the Ottoman Empire have shown that in the late-nineteenth century the empire came into its own as an “educator state” with a systematic program of education and indoctrination intended to mold into citizens. The same is true for the expansion of a public health that, in the same period, showed beginnings of a hierarchical administration that no longer simply relied on quarantine measures, but included daily street cleaning; inspection of markets, stores, and places for food storages; the improvement of quarantine’s architecture. The implementation of sanitary measures, however, was for the most part still limited to periods of epidemics and not part of everyday life. In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the Ottoman state absorbed many of these practices into the legal framework of the state, but it was during the World War that public health and sanitation became an increasingly organized effort to prevent disease and prolong life through the education of sanitary citizens.

Local agencies in cooperation with the Ottoman military authorities established a permanent health administration staffed by local physicians and health officials and instigated a systematic study of health conditions, regular public inspection of schools, markets and workplaces, free mandatory vaccination campaigns, and free access to hospitals. With the outcome that growing state intervention into the daily life of civilians on the home front, forged a new social reality. Those who failed to obey the health commission’s orders were unsanitary subjects and their bodies and residences “were subject to deprivatization,” meaning that the authorities could inspect their homes, stores and bodies at will and impose punishments.<sup>212</sup> What we saw was municipal officials surveying their neighborhoods and homes, soldiers and civilian cleaning battalions sweeping the streets, construction of a new urban space, loss of property for some, forced vaccination campaigns, monetary fines and at times imprisonments. Whereas for the Beirutis this was not completely new—although now more rigid and demanding— for the rural inhabitants of Mount Lebanon who now were faced with similar measures—this was completely unprecedented.

What this chapter has illustrated is the formative quality of the war in consolidating and at times creating of modern forms of government in response to infectious diseases. The move

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<sup>210</sup> PO: Diary of Father Louis Cheikho, 149.

<sup>211</sup> AUB: *Edward Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.3.1.2. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

toward a medicalization of Beirut and Mount Lebanon that had its roots in the nineteenth century was neither stunted nor abandoned during the war. Consequently, the assumption that Lebanon's public health regime was owed to French colonialism in 1921 has to be revised. In the postwar period, French advisors did not interfere much with the workings of the Beirut municipality, which as we have seen was at the heart of the practical implementation of sanitary and health measures. And as the Lebanese historian Carla Edde has shown in her work even when the French colonial powers imposed new legislation, such as the "Rules for the Temporary Organization of the Municipality," they did not modify the practices of the municipality and efforts at public health and sanitation in the city continued uninterrupted. It is more accurate to say that the French elaborated a system already in place. The colonial officials faced a citizenry that would not only adhere to hygienic practices, but increasingly demand health services from the colonial state, and protect the population. The demand for state intervention was already present in the war period, in particular when it came to provisioning and food supplies, but less obvious here in terms of health services. Furthermore, epidemics continued to be a problem during the Mandate period, and disease prevention complicated by the fact that the French invested only three percent of the budget in public health. Moreover, by placing "the health of both women and men" secondary to the needs of the French Army, French authorities stood in continuity with the Ottoman period. The real transformation came during the war.

## CHAPTER IV

### Feeding the City:

#### The Beirut Municipality and Civilian Provisioning

The Ottoman Empire had been at war only thirteen days, when in the afternoon hours of November 13, 1914, a group of destitute men frantically knocked on the doors of the Beirut municipality building. The men, described in the local newspaper as “the heads of households and from among the poor of the city,”<sup>1</sup> desperate and with hungry women and children waiting at home, protested that neither flour nor wheat could to be found in the city. The shelves of the stores and bakeries had been emptied and the usual four loads of grain from Aleppo had not arrived in Beirut that day. There was not an ounce of affordable flour or wheat left in the markets, the worried men warned municipal council members, who were taken aback by this sudden assembly on their doorstep. At the same time, other mobs of urban poor ransacked neighborhood bakeries, seizing whatever hidden reserves they could get their hands on. Beirut seemed to be falling apart under the weight of hunger. The urban order was in danger, and the lack of food suddenly had generated a precarious condition that clearly needed to be dealt with immediately, to preserve the peace in the city. Without hesitation, the municipality rushed to solve what would become the “flour issue.”<sup>2</sup> The municipal council members sent a courier with a message to the Ottoman governor general of the *Vilayet* Beirut, Sāmī Bakr Bey, who immediately cabled his counterpart in Aleppo soliciting provisions and urging top priority for a grain shipment to the coastal capital. There was plenty of grain in Aleppo, but its transport to the coast would prove to be the greatest obstacle. The Ottoman government, immediately after its entrance into the war on side of the Central Powers, had appropriated all railway services for military purposes, making the transport of wheat from the interior a costly nightmare.<sup>3</sup> Railway freight cars were almost impossible to obtain, and military commandos and the railroad commission wanted large bribes to get anything moving.

Given these difficulties, the president of the Beirut municipality, Aḥmad Mukhtār Bayhūm decided to handle the situation in person. His primary concern was to take care of the bottleneck in the transportation system that had reduced the grain supply in the city and driven prices through the roof. Bayhūm and his colleagues on the municipal council knew very well that there was plenty of wheat and flour to be found in the interior regions of Greater Syria.<sup>4</sup> So in the early morning hours of November 14, Bayhūm set out via Damascus to Aleppo with only one goal: arranging the shipment of enough wheat and flour to feed his city. After intense

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<sup>1</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, November 14, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> To what extent these attacks on the bakeries were riots and how widespread they were cannot be established from the local press.

<sup>3</sup> By the end of 1914, Ottoman planning for the first Suez campaign against British forces stationed in Egypt was well under way, accompanied by a call for general mobilization. The first attack took place in January 1915, in a campaign aimed at interrupting the flow of supplies shipped through the Suez Canal. To move troops to the front, Ottoman authorities used all available trains, and since the rail connections in Greater Syria were already limited, transport of commodities as well as civilian passengers became very difficult. For example, before the war, a railway car could be hired for about twenty Ottoman liras; in 1914, it cost sixty. Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 18. See also Chapter One of this dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the availability of wheat and flour in the grain producing regions of the interior of Greater Syria, see chapter one of this dissertation.

negotiations, he finally secured the necessary freight cars from the military command of the Ottoman Fourth Army Corps. With the cars lined up, Bayhūm sent an urgent telegram to the prominent Beirut merchant Ḥassan Effendi, asking for the immediate transfer of five hundred Ottoman liras from the account of the Beirut municipality to purchase a “great amount” of wheat. Ḥassan Effendi lost no time: Grabbing his coat, he hurried to the Beirut branch of the Ottoman bank to transmit the desired amount to Aleppo.<sup>5</sup> A week later, trainloads of grain slowly made their way down the mountainous slopes of Mount Lebanon into Beirut, and the residents of the coastal city breathed a sigh of relief. The urban poor were jubilant, and hopes were high that the municipal president’s efforts had solved the first wartime food supply crisis.<sup>6</sup>

Aḥmad Mūkhtar Bayhum’s intercession on behalf of Beirut’s civilians, only two weeks into the war, and his effort to guarantee the interdistrict transfer of wheat, marks the beginning of municipal intervention in the wartime provisioning of Beirut, and it set the standard for civilian expectations from their municipal council. The food crisis, however, was far from over; shortages, spiraling prices, rationing, and speculation continued to circumscribe everyday life in Beirut throughout World War I. By the early spring of 1915, grain and flour shortages at the Beirut homefront had become a matter of life and death, and the crisis was to culminate into a full-fledged famine or *māja’ah* that would claim the lives of approximately one third of Greater Syria’s population as the war drew to a close in October of 1918. The famine, as I have shown in chapter one, did not result from an absolute lack of food, since throughout the war, food—in particular, wheat and flour—was readily available in the interior regions of Greater Syria. The shortages in Beirut and Mount Lebanon were due to a combination of Entente and Ottoman naval blockades on import and export goods, military commandeering, requisitioning and outright confiscation of food as well as all possible means of transportation, the conscription of farm labor, the confiscation of draught animals, and not the least environmental factors, such as recurrent locust plagues and lack of rainfall.<sup>7</sup> In addition, an overall administrative chaos, marked by corruption and cronyism, and the inability of the local and central governments to successfully implement their food supply policies, because of personnel shortages, lacking administrative structures, wartime strains on their budgets, and resistance from agricultural producers, encouraged speculative hoarding, panic purchases, and black marketeering.<sup>8</sup> The result was high and unstable prices, which meant that lower- and middle-class civilians were exposed to famine because they lacked either the money to buy food or the socially and politically sanctioned right to receive it at a reasonable price or even for free.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter analyzes the efforts of the Beirut municipality to stabilize the supply, distribution, and price of provisions in order to make food widely available to households and individuals. The goal was to guarantee that civilian’s resources—whether cash, labor, or even an arrangement with a public or private charitable organization—could put food on the table. I argue that the Beirut municipality, staffed by community leaders, developed policies and regulatory mechanisms in the first few month of the war that may have served as a model for the

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<sup>5</sup>AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uṭhmānī*, November 17, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> Although the shipment was the result of a combined effort of the Ottoman governor, the Beirut municipality, and merchants, who arranged for transport and payment, the press credited Aḥmad Mukhtār Bayhum, the president of the municipality, for the success.

<sup>7</sup> The causes of the Lebanese famine are discussed in detail in chapter one of this dissertation.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Ravallion, *Markets and Famines*, 14; Ó Gráda and Eiriksson, *Ireland's Great Famines*, 213.

<sup>9</sup> Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 70; Tilly, "Food Entitlement, Famine, and Conflict," 334.

Ottomans' state food supply policies beginning to be announced in March of 1916. At the outset of the war, the priority of the Ottoman government was to supply, clothe, feed, and provide proper health services to its soldiers. The Ottoman losses on the Balkan battlefields (1912-1913) had been a bitter lesson. The failure of the state to effectively plan and control the flow of goods and materials to the frontlines had hampered the military campaign and caused disease and hunger to be the deadly companions of Ottoman soldiers. It was a mistake not to be repeated.<sup>10</sup> The Ottomans' strong emphasis on logistics was a reflection of what was at stake on the battlefield, since another military loss could mean the death of the empire.<sup>11</sup> The authorities in Istanbul initially figured that Greater Syria's overall food production was sufficient in feeding its population. However, in the spring of 1916 the devastating situation approaching famine could no longer be ignored, and the Ottoman central authorities began drafting food supply policies that included the provisioning of civilians. The policies, it seems, adopted practices already established in Beirut into the legal framework of the state. It is difficult, of course, to draw a direct link between practices and policies employed in Beirut and those of the Ottoman state. In particular since there are no scholarly works on municipal measures employed in Ottoman cities during World War I, such as price control and rationing, that could confirm this assertion. Until we have studies of the municipalities of Damascus, Istanbul, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Nablus, etc., it is impossible to say for certain whether wartime practices in the peripheral cities, Beirut in particular, directly inspired central Ottoman legislation.<sup>12</sup> Yet, it is by no means unlikely that the central Ottoman wartime food supply policies emulated what was happening in the empire's own provinces, where a "plethora of blueprints" for dealing with civilian provisioning could be found.<sup>13</sup> This after all was a common practice if we consider the imperial reforms of the nineteenth century, which on many occasions "streamlined" practices on the ground by making them empire-wide laws.<sup>14</sup>

Second, I argue that the municipal efforts to obtain, distribute, and control food supplies through legislation—although often marked by failure—signify the growing importance of municipal politics. An analysis of the Beirut municipality during World War I confirms that provincial urbanites were by no means passive actors in the struggle for access to food, nor did they submit silently to the military dictatorship of the Commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army, Jamāl Pasha, although political oppression, suspicion, and executions marked the later period of his reign in Greater Syria.<sup>15</sup> Instead as state power increasingly infiltrated everyday life in the city, the power of local urban notables, in this case powerful merchants, and provincial civil

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<sup>10</sup>The requisitioning efforts and policies of the military authorities in Greater Syria on the eve of World War I—as discussed in chapter one—clearly illustrate that supplying soldiers took priority over assisting civilians. See Dagla, *War, Epidemics and Medicine*, 119.

<sup>11</sup> By 1915, the Ottoman Empire had lost almost all its European and North African territories.

<sup>12</sup> The historiography of the Ottoman city during World War I is scant in general and almost non-existent in terms of municipal policies and practices in supplying food to urban residents. In recent years historians have, however, taken an interest in the everyday life of civilians at the Ottoman homefront. Based on wartime diaries of civilians and Ottoman soldiers and photographs, pioneering work has been produced in particular on everyday life in Jerusalem, with an emphasis on cultural and social history. Leading the way is Salīm Tamāri with his important work on the city of Jerusalem. See Salīm Tamāri, "Jerusalem's Ottoman Modernity"; Salīm Tamāri, "The Short Life of Private Ihsan;" Abigail Jacobson, "Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War;" Salīm Tamāri, *ʿAm al-Jarad*; Salīm Tamāri, "Years of Delicious Anarchy;" Robert Mazza, "Dining Out in Times of War."

<sup>13</sup> Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*.

<sup>15</sup> For an account of Jamāl Pasha's political persecutions of Arab notables see Tauber, *The Arab Movement*.

servants expanded as well.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Beirutis continued to be participants in a complex negotiation that revolved around the most basic necessity, namely food.<sup>17</sup> At the center of these negotiations, as we will see, was the Beirut municipality. The importance of the municipality as urban institution in charge of the wellbeing and order of the city had grown significantly prior to the war and is discernable in its pre-war role in urban management as it presided over cleanliness, social behavior, and public hygiene. Its importance, as I will demonstrate, continued to increase during the war, despite great challenges to its authority and its failures to avert famine. The municipality secured and strengthened its power to determine and control behavior of Beirut residents most prominently through its active intervention in and control of the food supply market in the city. It is in the realm of civilian provisioning that Beirut's municipal policies epitomize the interference of a governing body in the fabric of daily life that is characteristic of wartime society in general; the municipality asserted its right and responsibility to determine when, what, and how much an individual needed and was allowed to eat.<sup>18</sup> It must, however, be noted that the municipal market intervention does not simply represent practices of control, regulation and surveillance, but rather was the outcome of and response to intense negotiation and confrontation among different urban actors, including the urban poor. The negotiations, debates, discussions, and demands of municipal politics inspired a political self-confidence in the provinces of the empire, and the Beirut municipality consolidated its position in the urban sphere, surviving not only the war, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and colonial occupation, but also continues to be the central agency in Beirut's urban political economy up until today.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the story of regulating food supplies to spare civilians from famine overall was one of failure on the local as well as on the imperial level. Shortages, high prices, and malnutrition continued to be part of the Ottoman civilians' everyday life. For the most part, regulations were poorly administered both in the periphery and in the center, mainly due to lack of manpower and corruption that hampered their enforcement. The Beirut municipality, for example, had declared bankruptcy prior to the war and during the war reduced the number of its employees because of lack of funds.<sup>20</sup> Without adequate personnel, the municipality was unable to curb corruption and black marketeering from the side of local baker, police, and grain merchants. The same was true for the imperial government. It lacked policing agents and relied heavily on local agents, whose loyalty to their community or their own pocketbook potentially trumped loyalty to the government. The particular social demographic of the municipal council and its enclosure into the social urban network of merchant notables, as we will see, meant that its policies and practices first and foremost benefited the upper classes that constituted its electorate. The municipal council mollified the poor of the city through public decrees, but instead of imposing harsh punishments to enforce them, it employed strategies such moral suasion to convince the upper and upper-middle classes to think about the wellbeing of the

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<sup>16</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> As to the importance of local actors as agents not simply spectators in the Ottoman world see Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> See Winter and Robert, *Capital Cities at War*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Carla Eddé, *Beyrouth: naissance d'une capitale 1918-1924* (Beirut: Sindbad, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Jens Hanssen, "The Origins of the Municipal Council in Beirut, 1860-1908," in *Municipalités méditerranéennes les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d'une histoire comparée (Moyen-Orient, Maghreb, Europe méridionale)*, ed. Nora Lafi (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2005), 149; AUB: *Ittihād al-'Uthmānī*, November, 25, 1914.



community. Unfortunately to no avail, since in the end the poor died of starvation. The central Ottoman legislative measures, in particular those that focused on increasing agricultural production, also failed due to labor and draught animal shortages and resistance from the side of the peasants. The imposition of a forced economy or *Zwangswirtschaft* and wartime controls were deeply resented by the peasants, who now could no longer take full advantage of the market. The Ottoman policies in the end were more effective in creating resentment and resistance than they were in increasing the food supply.<sup>21</sup>

Most historians of the early twentieth-century Middle East in general and Lebanon in particular have shied away from including World War I as a socio-economic event into their historical analysis. The main reason for this is the dearth of sources as a direct result of Ottoman censorship. The Ottoman military authorities imposed harsh censorship on all correspondence in and out from the empire as well as the press. The authorities opened all letters and confiscated those containing information about the devastating situation in Beirut or Mount Lebanon; the author could face arrest and would have to appear in front of the military tribunal. This explains why, for example, in the entire wartime correspondence of American employees of the SPC, which contains hundreds of letters, the word ‘famine’ is not mentioned once. Still sifting through Arabic papers and journals published in Cairo, North and South America, I have found that letters were sometimes written into books or carried out by refugees, and subsequently printed in the diaspora press.

Prior to the war, Beirut had been known for the publication of numerous newspapers and journals in multiple languages. The rapid urbanization of the nineteenth century, which increased the population of Beirut from approximately 10,000 in 1800 to about 150,000 in 1914, had given birth to a public sphere in which the upper middle class—intellectuals, literary societies, and journalists—found its voice.<sup>22</sup> In this novel space, participants’ opinions were formed and indeed published in the numerous local newspapers and journals.<sup>23</sup> However, the censorship policies of the Ottomans meant that many of the papers, as for example popular papers like *Lisan al-Hal*, *al-Mufīd* and the French publication *Reveil*, were shut down and those papers that continued to publish had to do so under close scrutiny of the authorities. Yet, I discovered that debates about food supply policies and problems were plentiful in the remaining publications. In particular, I found that the local sections of newspapers, *al-akhbār al-baladiyyāt* (or city news) or *al-maḥaliyyāt* (or domestic news), read carefully and against the grain, have the potential to provide detailed accounts of the social, economic, and political processes that defined daily life in Beirut during this period. These local news sections in particular—however insignificant they may seem in the broader scheme of the war—were the space in which daily life on the homefront was played out. Here urban government met the public sphere, and the two of them read—at times comfortably, at times uncomfortably—side by side. Here municipal politics were publicly announced and articulated as well as discussed, debated, and revised—that is, politics was practiced. Here “daily city talk” could be shared. The editors of the local

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Robert Moeller writes that German peasants deeply resented the wartime controls that hindered them to take full advantage of a market that would almost certainly mean great revenues. The same was true for peasants in the Ottoman Empire. See Robert Moeller, *German Peasants and Agrarian Politics, 1914-1924: The Rhineland and Westphalia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 3ff.

<sup>22</sup> Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 63.

newspapers selected the topics of debate, determined the political consumption of the urban population, and circumscribed their participation in political and socioeconomic deliberations, all the while making sure that the Ottoman authorities would receive praise so that they might overlook the real issues at hand. Often enough the matters discussed in the local news sections one day became the subject of opinion pieces on the title page the next. These opinion pieces, authored by Beirut's news editors and prominent intellectuals, addressed the city's pressing concerns, often rendered a harsh critique of the urban government, and suggested how to deal with the issues at hand. Through the news pages the literary elite, on behalf of all Beirutis, charged the municipality—as the local agency of the Ottoman state—to take up its role as an “apparatus of security” that would guarantee both the overall well-being and the behavior of society. The public urged the municipality to exercise a form of surveillance and control, resembling the attention heads of households paid to their families and possessions.<sup>24</sup> Increasing literacy rates assured that the writings and opinions on news pages were read and heard by an ever-widening audience, and as we will see, they had the ability to influence the course of municipal policies.<sup>25</sup>

### Origins, Social Demographics, and Transformations

The Beirut municipality was a relatively new institution at the outbreak of World War I. Prior to the nineteenth century, Beirut like all other Ottoman towns was governed by a complex system of privileges. It was generally dominated by traditional notables, leaders of confessional communities and guilds, which came together in civic assemblies to instigate, regulate, and supervise public order, the markets, building projects, taxation, and so on.<sup>26</sup> The Beirut municipality was established—as the first municipality in the Arab provinces—in response to a local emergency.<sup>27</sup> The gruesome 1860 civil war in Mount Lebanon and the communal massacres in Damascus the same year motivated the Ottoman government to appoint a group of

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<sup>24</sup>Michel Foucault makes this comparison while outlining the art of government. Michel Foucault et al., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 102.

<sup>25</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> The nature of Ottoman city prior to the Tanzimat reforms beginning in 1839 has been widely discussed. The most recent literature has generally served to discredit Orientalist tropes of the Muslim, the Islamic, or the Arab city as lacking structure and administrative institutions. The idea that the cities of the Middle East and the Mediterranean World were simply chaotic mazes had dominated urban histories well into the mid-twentieth century. But the works of prominent scholars such as Janet Abu-Lughud and Andre Raymond have presented strong arguments against this perception through case studies as well as inquiries into the overall historiographical trajectory. For examples of this literature see Janet L- Abu-Lughud, "The Islamic City--History Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (May, 1987); Andre Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1994). For case studies, see also Bruce Masters, Edhem Eldem, and Daniel Goffman, eds. *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (New York, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> The first municipality in the empire was that of Istanbul (Pera and Galata) established in 1858. (See Gabriel Baer, "The Beginning of Municipal Government," *Middle Eastern Studies* 4, No.1 (1969).) The Beirut municipality was preceded by the *majlis* of Beirut (or Beirut council) that had been established under Egyptian occupation of Greater Syria (1831-1841). Ibrāhīm Pasha, son of Muḥammed Ali Pasha of Egypt, appointed councilors from among the merchant classes. The *majlis* created new departments of public health and commerce as well as a police force. In fact, the *majlis* was often called upon to settle commercial disputes, which was beyond its scope of authority, but foreshadowed the merchants' role in municipal affairs throughout the nineteenth century. For more detailed discussion, see Samir Kassir, *Beirut* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 102f.

urban notables to deal with the streams of refugees from these sites of civil unrest. In 1864, the Ottoman government announced the Provincial Law, which demanded that all cities and villages have a municipality or *belediye*; at that time, the Beirut municipality became a permanent institution for urban management.<sup>28</sup> The Provincial Law was part of the more general centralizing imperial reforms of the Ottoman Empire, referred to as the *Tanzimat* or reorganization (1839-1879).<sup>29</sup> The *Tanzimat* reforms have been central to Ottoman provincial historiography, in particular in works on the implementation of new land codes and the restructuring of property laws.<sup>30</sup> Only a handful of studies, however, have looked at urban reforms, and in particular the institution of representative and electoral politics in the form of municipal governance. I argue that this area has great potential for shedding new light on urban governing structures, forcing us to further rethink the position of the provincial city in the landscape of the empire.<sup>31</sup>

The Provincial Law of 1864 continued to be refined and amended for some years to firmly establish the structure and responsibilities of the provincial municipalities. The Ottoman governor of Damascus, Mehmed Rashīd Pasha, ushered in local urban electoral politics in 1868, when he determined that an assembly of local notables should elect the members of the provincial municipalities rather than having officials appointed. Coinciding with the inauguration of the first Ottoman parliament and the proclamation of the empire's first constitution in 1876, the central Ottoman government announced the newly amended Municipal Law, which articulated in detail the structure and function of future municipal governance. The

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<sup>28</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 123.

<sup>29</sup> The reform of urban government as part of the *Tanzimat* reform has been widely ignored, and only a handful of scholars have addressed it as an important moment of restructuring in the Ottoman Empire. According to Nora Lafi, Ilber Ortali was one of the key scholars addressing municipal reforms. In his opinion municipal reforms were wholesale European imports. (Lafi refers to Ilber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahalli İdareleri (1840-1880)*, Ankara, 2000.) In contrast, Lafi argues that there is no homogenous European municipal structure and no European model to begin with; she asserts that municipal reforms in the Ottoman Empire were the outcome of circulated knowledge that brought different European experiences into a negotiation process between the central Ottoman administration and local powers, in particular urban notables. (See Nora Lafi "Mediterranean Connections: The Circulation of Municipal Knowledge and Practices during the Ottoman Reforms, c. 1830-1910," in *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into Transnational Municipal Moment, 1850-2000*, eds. Pierre-Yves Saunier and Shane Ewen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 40). Furthermore, she points out that Ortali focused on Istanbul's Galata district, which was hardly representative of the entire empire. For example, Steven Rosenthal has demonstrated how the municipality of Istanbul's Galata district was unique. First and foremost, because not only was the district separated from the rest of the city by the Bosphorus, but already since the seventeenth century was the seat of permanent foreign embassies and by the nineteenth century certainly was the home of a large community of foreigners, who had significant influence over the government of their district. (See Steven Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, No. 2 (1980); Steven Rosenthal, "Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and Istanbul," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, No. 2, (1980).

<sup>30</sup> For property and land reforms, see Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Huri Islamoglu, *Constituting Modernity Private Property in the East and West* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Martha Mundy, *Governing Property, Making the Modern State: Law Administration and Production in Ottoman Syria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> For Beirut see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*; for Izmir see Vangelis Kechriotis, "Protecting the city's interest: the Greek Orthodox and the conflict between municipal and *vilayet* authorities in Izmir (Smyrna) in the Second Constitutional Period," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, No. 2 (2009); for Alexandria see Baer, "The Beginning of Municipal Government"; for Istanbul see Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul"; Rosenthal, "Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and Istanbul"; for a general survey of the Mediterranean municipalities see Nora Lafi, ed., *Municipalités méditerranéennes*.

short-lived Ottoman parliament fine-tuned the legislation with further amendments in 1877.<sup>32</sup> The resulting Municipality Law of Istanbul and the Provinces<sup>33</sup> regulated the electoral process and expanded the franchise to all male Beirutis above the age of twenty-five who paid a minimum of fifty *ghurūsh* (equivalent to half a British pound sterling) of (unspecified) taxes and had no criminal record.<sup>34</sup> The law also excluded foreign citizens from being elected to the council, restricting its membership to Ottoman subjects.

The membership in the Beirut municipality until World War I was dominated by a particular socio-demographic profile. The elected council was generally made up of twelve men who had alternative sources of income and did not have to rely on the councilmen's meager salary. Hence, most municipal council members were involved in local, regional, or international trade and business or were members of a new class of literary elite who owned substantial property in the city. The reason for the dominance of these propertied elite is twofold. First, the Municipality Law of 1877 linked the right to run for a seat on the municipal council to the payment of large amounts of property taxes, namely one hundred *ghurūsh* (the equivalent of one British pound sterling) per month.<sup>35</sup> According to Jens Hanssen, this meant that only notables who possessed properties worth at least fifty thousand *ghurūsh* could run for office. This, of course, significantly limited the number of qualified candidates. Therefore, this was not "a system of universal suffrage but of conservative *elite* power."<sup>36</sup> Second, the predominance of the landowning merchant class, in particular, may also be explained through the goal of the municipal reform process itself and the unique nature of Beirut's merchant community. Unlike other North African or Ottoman Mediterranean cities, where foreigners dominated trade and commerce, nineteenth-century Beirut had a homegrown cadre of local merchants from various confessional backgrounds who controlled the trade exchange and constituted a powerful fiscal class by itself.<sup>37</sup> The nineteenth-century reforms, by preserving and reinforcing the prerogatives of urban notables, served as a tool to institutionalize local power thereby attaching them to the center.<sup>38</sup> What this means, however, is that council members were both participants in the domain of exchange activity and participants in the legal and administrative apparatus controlling the market. In addition, it was not unusual for the municipality to rely on the merchants' expertise and, as in the above-mentioned case, employed them in its wartime provisioning scheme as agents to arrange the various aspects of

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<sup>32</sup> Whereas the Ottoman parliament and with it provincial representation ended with the abrogation of the first constitution in 1878, only to be reinstated after 1908 Young Turk revolution, the municipal council staffed by locally elected representatives had proven its utility and continued to exist. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> The law was published under the title *Dersaadet ve Vilayet Belediye Kamunu*. Kechriotis, "Protecting the City's Interest," 210.

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed account on the election process see Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 150 ff; Hanssen, "Origins of the Municipal Council," 148-151.

<sup>35</sup> Henri Jessup estimates that by 1880 only 724 individual out of about 100,000 were eligible to run for positions in the municipality. Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 64.

<sup>36</sup> Hanssen, "Origins of the Municipal Council," 149.

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of the role of foreign elites and merchants in the municipalities of Alexandria and Istanbul, see Baer, "The Beginning of Municipal Government"; Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul"; Rosenthal, "Urban Elites and the Foundation of Municipalities in Alexandria and Istanbul." For Beirut see, Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Nora Lafi "Mediterranean Connections," 45; Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants*; Sahara Tetsuya, "Municipal Reforms in Japan and Turkey: The *Belediye* System of the Tanzimat and Municipal laws of Meiji Japan," in *The Rising Sun and the Turkish Crescent: New Perspectives on the History of Japanese Turkish Relations*, eds. Selçuk Esenbel and Chiharu Inaba (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2003).

transportation and monetary exchange. This often makes it difficult to tease out the motivations of the institution. The lines between government agency and private business were sometimes blurred, in particular when it came to disciplining the wartime market.

As a result of the initial municipal reform, the local upper and upper-middle class population became more involved in public affairs, and their participation further expanded after the 1908 Young Turk revolution.<sup>39</sup> The assigned responsibilities of the Ottoman municipalities certainly resonated with a more general discourse of representative politics, which defined at least the early years of the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918).<sup>40</sup> The burgeoning of party politics, ideological formations, and electoral activities increasingly governed Beirut's public sphere and gave rise to a new group of urban notables, the *zu'amā'* (sing. *za'īm*). The new political leaders, like most of the municipality's council members in the forty years before the war, were made up of propertied "merchants, entrepreneurs, bankers or real estate owners."<sup>41</sup> In contrast, however, the power of the *za'īm* depended less on physical coercion and access to state power and more on the leader's ability to "build a loyal electorate through a party, a movement, a welfare organization, or a community based clientele," all of which required capital.<sup>42</sup> These new political bosses, regardless of their ethnic or confessional origins, were powerful players, whose authority relied on the politics of clientelism and on their unique control of the street.<sup>43</sup> The ability of the *zu'amā'* to offer their constituency social services or community-based patronage would create a loyal electorate.<sup>44</sup> Typical of these leaders was Salīm 'Alī Salām, whose marriage into the most prominent Sunni family of clerics, combined with his father's business fortune, had catapulted him and his family to the top ranks of the Beirut upper class. Men like him were attracted to the political system and in time emerged as its prime representatives.<sup>45</sup> Salām's power grew from his revival of the Sunni charitable organization, *jam'iyyat al-maqāṣid al-khayriyya al-islāmiyya*, which provided medical aid for the sick, education for the poor, and other social welfare benefits. Salām became president of the municipality in 1908 and was elected to the Ottoman parliament in 1914. The increasing presence of the *zu'amā'* in municipal politics linked the council to an electorate that increasingly had expectations about services provided to them. The unique connection of the *zu'amā'* to the street and their own membership in a social network of urban notables, complicated the municipality's ability to act. It had to respond to demands of ordinary folk on the one hand and its upper class friends, neighbors and family on the other. The wartime food supply policies employed by the municipality in 1915, as we will see, was a reflection of this precarious position in that it often relied on jawboning rather than on real actions. The fact that the municipal council's members came from all religious confessions meant that there was a certain confessional equality in terms of access to municipal power.

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Kechriotis, "Protecting the City's Interest," 207.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion on the politics of 'clientelism', see Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut; The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840-1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Jens Hanssen, "From Social Status to Intellectual Activity: Some Prosopographical Observations on the Municipal Council in Beirut, 1868-1908," in *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 60.

The municipality's state-sanctioned legitimacy and its expanding links to an urban clientele permitted it to intervene in the daily lives of urban inhabitants and made it the key institution for urban politics, revolutionizing the city in the years leading up to the war. As Jens Hanssen has usefully summarized, the responsibilities of the modern municipal administration may be summarized in five categories: urban planning, market control, health, public morality, and public welfare.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the municipality played a significant role in important economic and political decisions, which reflected a certain provincial autonomy. It negotiated between the provincial governor and the provincial council as the representatives of the state and the needs and demands of its constituency. Among other endeavors, the members of the municipal council established directives to facilitate the security and sale of properties outside of the city center, bargained with European capitalists over the construction of the Beirut port in the 1870s, and negotiated with Ottoman authorities to make Beirut a provincial capital in the 1880s. Instigated by the council, the projects were to be financed by the incredible increase in tax revenue that had accompanied the political growth of the municipality.<sup>47</sup> The majority of members of the Beirut municipality at the outbreak of the war, such as Aḥmed Mūkhtar Bayhūm, Michel and Alfred Sursūq, Salīm 'Alī Salām, were members of the Beirut Reform Society, or *jami' iyyat Bayrūt al-iṣlāḥīyah*, founded in 1912. The Beirut Reform Society proposed a program in the provinces that included greater autonomy of the municipality. The Ottoman government denied the request to further expand municipal power, trying to curb its increasing influence.<sup>48</sup> In conclusion, it may be said that by 1914 Beirutis habitually turned to the municipality as the administrative agency responsible for solving the city's problems. Acting not only with the permission of the state but also with local affirmation of its role in urban politics empowered the municipality; but it also exposed it to harsh criticism and blame, should it fail to realize its assigned responsibilities.

Their growing participation role in urban politics inspired a political self-confidence among the city's elite and a feeling of autonomy and responsibility for the wellbeing of the community. Evidence of this is the municipality's prompt response to food shortages at the beginning of the war. It is often argued that martial law and the military dictatorship in Greater Syria severely restricted local decision-making.<sup>49</sup> It is true that some municipal functions were limited. For example, urban planning projects were eagerly taken over by Jamāl Pasha, who as commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army Corps had complete power over military and civilian affairs in Greater Syria, and the Ottoman governors Sāmī Bakr Bey and 'Azmi Bey.<sup>50</sup> In other areas, such as health and sanitation, the municipality took the initiative. It devised, for instance,

<sup>46</sup> Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 84-110.

<sup>47</sup> The annual tax revenue of the municipality grew from being 150,000 to 160,000 *ghurūsh* in 1858 to 750,000 *ghurūsh* after 1861 as the result of the vigorous application of the 1858 land code that raised taxes on state land as well as subjected urban rented and owned properties to taxation. See *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>48</sup> Ilīās Jurjus Jarayj, *Vilāyet Bayrūt 1887-1914: al-tārīkh al-siyāsī wa-al-iqtisādī* (2004), 305 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Most works dealing with the period emphasize political suppression and resistance. See for example, Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; Tauber, *The Arab Movement*.

<sup>50</sup> Sāmī Bakr Bey, armed with the authorization of Jamāl Pasha, put into effect two plans in the old city of Beirut, which had been resisted prior to the war by local shopkeepers. The plan was to build two roads that would each be twenty meters wide and necessitated the destruction of many homes and shops along the way. 'Azmi Bey arrived on the scene in July of 1915 and continued the work. (See Kassir, *Beirut*, 158.) For other works on the urban planning schemes of Jamāl Pasha see Hasan Kayali, "Wartime Regional and Imperial Integration"; Carl Watzinger, *Theodor Wiegand, ein deutscher Archäologe, 1864-1936* (München: C. H. Beck, 1944); Djemal (Jamāl) Pasha, *Erinnerungen*.

an elaborate vaccination campaign against smallpox in January 1915. After an outbreak of the disease had been reported in Sidon, Damascus, and Beirut, the municipal health department registered all available medical personnel and set up vaccination stations throughout the city, drawing on its own experience and that of its medical personnel and advisers to carry out this successful campaign.<sup>51</sup> While in the realm of urban planning we see a reduction of municipal power, the Beirut municipality remained a powerful local player and fortified its position as regulatory agency, thanks to its role in and health and sanitation, as will be discussed in chapter four, and as we will see here in market control and its interventionist food supply policy during the food crisis of 1914-1915.

### Food Crisis (1914-1915): Initial Stages of Municipal Intervention

The lack of provisions and in particular the shortages of flour and wheat became the main predicament of Beirutis, as we have seen above, almost immediately after the declaration of war in the empire.<sup>52</sup> Despite the efforts of the municipality to guarantee interdistrict transfer as early as November of 1914, the shortage of flour continued to be the city's most pressing issue. People talked about nothing else but the "flour problem," and headlines in the local press read "flour, flour, flour!" Only a few days after the press had jubilantly announced the end of the food crisis, large crowds of hungry men, women, and children again gathered in front of bakeries and stores that sold the precious flour. Driven by hungry stomachs and bare dinner tables, ravenous Beirutis complained that this time the food crisis had its roots in the insatiable greed of a small number of merchants. Some Beirutis merchants had apparently diverted a few carloads of flour into Mount Lebanon, where they would be able to sell it for a much higher price.<sup>53</sup> Commentaries in the press backed the claims of the crowds and attributed the shortage to the "sad fact" that merchants were taking advantage of their position in the supply chain and stopping trainloads—that were not directly supervised by the municipality—in the mountains, depleting the market and driving up prices.<sup>54</sup> Bertold Brecht asserted, "famines don't just happen; they are organized by the grain trade," and the people of Beirut would have agreed attributing their hunger to wartime profiteering.<sup>55</sup> Heeding the anxieties of the Beirutis and fearing widespread riots, the municipality again intervened to guarantee unhindered interdistrict trade and to curb any destabilizing speculation among Beirut grain merchants.

At this moment, the municipality decisively took control of feeding city residents, positioning itself as the mediator between the central authorities in Istanbul, the military authorities led by Jamāl Pasha, and its local electorate and effectively setting the stage for

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<sup>51</sup> Vaccination stations were set up throughout the city to avoid the spread of the disease, after a couple of outbreaks had been reported in the *vilayets* of Beirut and Damascus. Employees of schools, shops, manufacturing businesses, and other public places or offices who already had been exposed to smallpox and hence were immune were to ask their doctors for a certificate to that effect. All others had to undergo immunization within a month of the public announcement. To this effect the health department of the municipality had acquired bovine serum and set up stations throughout the city with designated vaccination times. The vaccination was free and administered by a medical doctor. AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, January 21, 1915. For more on disease and disease prevention see chapter four of this dissertation.

<sup>52</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, November 21, 1914.

<sup>53</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, November 21, 1914.

<sup>54</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, November 21, 1914.

<sup>55</sup> As quoted in Ó Gráda and Eiriksson, *Ireland's Great Famine*, 20.

interventionist food supply policies. On November 21, 1914, the provincial administrative council, the Beirut municipality, and some members of the Beirut Chamber of Commerce met, under the supervision of the Ottoman governor, Sāmī Bakr Bey, to discuss the issue of speculative hoarding and how to put an end to it.<sup>56</sup> The meeting resulted in a number of decisions. First of all, the assembly thought it necessary to involve the central authorities and sent a telegram to the interior ministry in Istanbul, soliciting assistance in the matter. The Beirut leadership urged the central authorities to guarantee the daily shipment of at least eight trainloads of wheat, the minimum quantity necessary to avoid widespread and devastating famine.<sup>57</sup> The response from the interior ministry was a swift transfer of ten thousand Ottoman liras to the Beirut branch of the Ottoman Bank to be used for the purchase of flour and wheat. The intent of the interior ministry was to engage the municipality directly in the wholesale grain business and thus prevent merchants from manipulating prices. The municipality was to regulate and supervise the market forces; however, the council subcontracted the purchase and distribution of wheat to “trusted” Beirut merchants and instead focused on guaranteeing the transfer and shipment.<sup>58</sup> The municipality, thereby, not only circumvented the center’s orders, but also opened a space for large-scale corruption and speculation from the side of the merchants. Yet, at this point the municipality’s efforts were a success, and the “flour crisis” once again ended when a telegram from the interior ministry announced the authorization of supply shipments to Beirut on November 24, 1914. The telegram declared that whatever amount of wheat and flour was needed to guarantee the provisioning of the city could be shipped legally from the interior, despite the ban that had been placed on exports by the local governments in Damascus and Aleppo.<sup>59</sup> The promise of unobstructed interdistrict transfer by rail calmed the fears of the Beirutis, who thought that these steps by the central authorities would effectively end food shortages in the city. The press euphorically attributed “the end of the crisis” to the great accomplishments and negotiation skills of the provincial governor and the president of the municipality. Until the end of the year, wheat was purchased in Aleppo and shipped to Beirut without many problems.<sup>60</sup>

On February 17, 1915, the local press reported that shipments from the interior had again stopped, and three days later, only a five-day supply of wheat and flour was left in the city.<sup>61</sup> By March, prices of flour and wheat were so high that it was “impossible for the poor to buy these vital materials.”<sup>62</sup> The public blamed the high prices, and rightfully so, on the interruption in shipment. In particular since by now, the Ottoman campaign against the British at the Suez Canal was in full swing, which meant that all rails extending across the Arab provinces had to serve only one purpose, victory. Since the troops were in dire need of food and supplies, all cargo and passenger trains were requisitioned to ship materials and new troops to the front. In addition, the ministry of war ordered all agricultural products from the interior commandeered for military purposes. In Beirut, the urban poor—faced now with starvation—again approached the municipality to deal with this crisis. In addition, a number of merchants were equally eager

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<sup>56</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 21, 1914.

<sup>57</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 22, 1914.

<sup>58</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 23, 1914.

<sup>59</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 18.

<sup>60</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, November 24, 1914.

<sup>61</sup> Ajay, “Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut, 354.

<sup>62</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, March 26, 1915.



for municipal intervention because some of them had purchased grain in Aleppo but were unable to procure transport. They felt sure to lose their important investments.

Faced with this great challenge, the Beirut municipal officials feverishly tried to salvage the situation and were in constant negotiations with their counterparts in Aleppo and Damascus to assure transport of already purchased wheat. When Jamāl Pasha arrived in Beirut for a visit in the beginning of April, members of the municipal council immediately approached him about their transportation problems. Sympathetic to their pleas, Jamāl Pasha promised weekly shipments of thirty trainloads of wheat to Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Until regular shipment from Aleppo could be arranged, he commanded ten loads of flour should be sent from Damascus to fill the gap in civilian provision. Since Jamāl Pasha was the highest authority in Greater Syria, one might assume that his orders would be obeyed without question. However, his instructions did not translate into regular shipments of wheat to Beirut. Despite repeated telegrams from the Beirut municipality, Damascus hesitated to ship flour. The president of the Damascus municipality openly defied Jamāl Pasha's orders, convinced that any export of flour would unnecessarily raise the price of flour in his own city. His insolent behavior became the subject of complaint. Salīm 'Ali Salām and Michel Bey Sursuq, Beirut municipal representatives and close acquaintances of Jamāl Pasha, telegraphed the commander, arguing that the defiance of his orders and further delays of grain shipments "threatened to result in famine" in their city.<sup>63</sup>

Problems also arose in Aleppo. The Beirut municipality had purchased 180 loads of wheat from Aleppine merchants to be shipped to Beirut. According to a telegram sent to the Beirut municipal president, however, the Beirut merchants could not find trains for the transport. The president of the municipality and the governor of Beirut were outraged and demanded an explanation from the governor of Aleppo, urging him to follow the orders of Jamāl Pasha and act for the sake of the "150,000 Beirutis who are on the verge of starvation."<sup>64</sup> Eventually, shipments were procured, but despite the great effort of the municipality, interdistrict transfer of wheat and flour continued to be sporadic and unpredictable.

The intervention in interdistrict transfer in the early months of 1915 signifies the beginning of a more organized and orchestrated effort by members of the municipality, who negotiated with those who could facilitate shipment, such as the interior ministry in Istanbul, Jamāl Pasha, and the various provincial authorities. The municipality for the most part relied on "honest" merchants, some of them members of the council itself, to carry out the actual transfer and distribution of goods. Increasingly interested in the transport of wheat, the municipality also began purchasing some of the provisions itself with the money provided by the Interior ministry, and was eager to arrange for daily or at least weekly shipments from Aleppo; leaders were well aware that a regular and steady supply was necessary to avoid price hikes and daily price fluctuation. The instabilities in the market were particularly dangerous for those families who were unable to buy grain in large quantities and purchased their supplies daily. The goal increasingly became to guarantee ample amounts of affordable grain. Public disturbances and large gatherings in front of stores, bakeries, and the municipality building itself certainly motivated the action, and the clear threat of famine necessitated further intervention. Beirut officials knew that their city faced great danger, and for the first time in their correspondence and

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<sup>63</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, April 11, 1915.

<sup>64</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, April 15, 1915.

in the press, they used the emotive term *famine* to legitimize intervention into the market. But, despite the efforts of the municipality, its charged rhetoric, and the involvement of Jamāl Pasha, shortages of wheat and flour continued to make press headlines, and shipment remained unstable. The solution to the continuous problem had to be stricter interventionist municipal policies, involving controlling the wholesale market of grain and flour, fixing its price, and implementing a rationing system.

### Disciplining the Market: Regulation, Surveillance and Punishment

All wars have their profiteers, individuals who, “with their boundless appetites and cynical attitudes to the suffering around them,” suck every possible profit from those who have nothing to start.<sup>65</sup> As we have seen, merchants at one point eagerly diverted trains from Beirut to Mount Lebanon, and Beirut certainly had its share of gluttonous individuals who were attracting public reproach: the well-fed baker’s son, members of high society who held elaborate galas while at their gates the hungry were begging for a piece of bread, and merchants who were emptying those pockets that already had gaping holes in them. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍa wrote in 1918 that the calamities of the war were created by the upper classes and in particular the large merchant families in Beirut.<sup>66</sup> Opportunities to take advantage of those in need, however, trickled down the socioeconomic ladder to bakers and policemen.<sup>67</sup> How did the municipality deal with those who saw food shortages as a golden opportunity to advance their wealth?

From the first month of the war, even as it was trying to guarantee interdistrict transfer, the Beirut municipality sought to prevent speculation and profiteering. It began by discussing prices of luxury goods in December 1914. Unstable prices for coffee and sugar—imported goods—became an issue among the city’s consumers, mainly due to the Entente naval blockade. Focusing on delineating the prices of coffee and sugar, the municipality first responded to the demands and tastes of the city’s upper and upper-middle class consumers. Who could return from the “era of sugar” to the “era of dibs?” In contrast, controlling the prices of basic necessities, wheat and flour in particular, seemed to have been an after thought.<sup>68</sup> Despite the fact that both the prices of daily necessities and luxury goods had increased significantly immediately following the announcement of general mobilization and reached unprecedented heights only a month into the war in December 1914. The local press articulated the public’s anxiety over the instability of prices, which went up and down several times in the course of one day, and it was not uncommon for them to double from one day to the next. For example, a *roḡl* (or 2.5 kg) of sugar could be bought for twelve *ghurūsh* on December 2 and sold the very next day for twenty.<sup>69</sup> An *uqqa* (or 1.3 kg) of coffee went up from thirty-five to fifty *ghurūsh*, and a standard size can of kerosene rose from sixty to seventy *ghurūsh*.<sup>70</sup> All of these being commodities that were unaffordable to the lower classes, as an unskilled laborer in Beirut earned about eight to ten *ghurūsh* per day.

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<sup>65</sup> Khalidi, “The Arab World,” 289.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>67</sup> Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*, 82.

<sup>68</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, December 4, 1914.

<sup>69</sup> A *roḡl* equals about 2.5 kg and an *uqqa* is about half of that equaling 1.282 kg.

<sup>70</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, December 3, 1914.

Faced with price increases of sometimes more than a 100 percent, the voice of upper class Beirutis grew louder, demanding that the municipality intervene directly into the market by legislating and enforcing fair prices. In response to the complaints of the well-to-do of the city, the municipality ordered the most prominent sugar, coffee, and kerosene merchants into its office to discuss the trade practices of their commodities. To appease consumers, the municipal council set up a commission made up of members of the municipality and the Beirut Chamber of Commerce and assigned it the task of suggesting prices for the most important commodities that eventually would also include wheat and flour. The commission decided to reduce prices of luxury items—in particular sugar and coffee, which had triggered the initial complaint—to the level prior to the steep increase of December 2.<sup>71</sup> When the price list was published in the local news on December 6, 1914, it seemed that the municipality was on its way to successfully manage the instabilities in the market. The pricelist included luxury goods such as coffee and sugar but also wheat, flour, bulgur (cracked wheat) butter, milk, soap etc.<sup>72</sup>

The focus on the tastes and demands of the upper classes comes to no surprise, considering that the council members' positions were dependent on the franchise of upper and middle class men, who more often than not voted along the lines dictated by their community leaders. The nomination for candidacy to the council, in general, relied on the goodwill of powerful and rich community leaders and the endorsement of *imāms*, priests and *mukhtārs*<sup>73</sup> of the quarter and neighborhoods.<sup>74</sup> What might be puzzling, however, is that no penalties or effective control mechanisms accompanied these early regulatory measures. Instead the municipal council applied what economists would refer to as moral suasion, i.e. trying to pressure, but not force, the coffee, sugar and grain merchants to adhere to the prices suggested and published. Employing this strategy, the municipal council sought to simultaneously appease merchants and upper and upper-middle class consumers, making price suggestions, while at the same time leaving the market wide open for speculation and profiteering. The fact that these early measures focused on luxury goods and that the public announcement of prices, including wheat and flour, did not come with strict price enforcements illustrates the municipality's precarious position between consumers of all classes and Beirut merchants. The complex social network of urban notables that heavily relied on cronyism, as well as the municipality's moral obligation to the entire community dictated its response to high and unstable prices, which resulted in a weak policy of public decrees without strict enforcements.

The municipal efforts to control prices immediately sparked a debate in the Beirut press, and most of all the lack of punitive measures and/or enforcement of the suggested prices became

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<sup>71</sup> Since sugar and coffee were imported items, their availability in the market was immediately affected by the Entente two-pronged naval blockade and the Ottoman commitment to halt any import and export trade with its enemies.

<sup>72</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-'Uthmānī*, December 6, 1914.

<sup>73</sup> The title of *mukhtār* refers to the head of a village or a city neighborhood.

<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to exactly estimate how many people would be eligible to vote and it depends on the number of tax-paying members of the community, which cannot be determined at this point. While fifty *ghurūsh* is not a very large amount considering that an unskilled laborer could earn eight to ten *ghurūsh* a day, it is quite possible that only a small number of men paid taxes. The numbers of votes cast in the previous century tell us that the approximately 20-25 percent of the population might have been eligible to vote. What in general may be said is that this certainly was not a system of universal suffrage and that community leaders were often able to influence the results through block voting. See Hanssen, "The Origins of the Municipal Council," 149.

the subject of harsh critiques.<sup>75</sup> The press presented civilian sacrifice as a communal moral necessity, appealing to the Beirut upper classes to share the sacrifices of the urban poor, who could not find any affordable flour.<sup>76</sup> The municipality was essentially to become the agency to assure that this moral obligation was met. Commentaries in the local press appealed to the social consciousness of those who clearly put their personal interests over those of the community, at the same time suggesting that if this small group of men was unwilling to voluntarily serve the community, the “elected deputies” of the municipality would be obliged to force them to do so.

On December 7, 1914, in an open letter to the governor, Beirut intellectual Yūsuf ‘Abd Allah Ṣūṣah expressed his concern and frustration over the practical implementation of price controls of “daily necessities”, or “*al-ḥājīyāt al-ḍarūrīyāh*,” which as he puts it had failed despite the great efforts of the municipality.<sup>77</sup> Ṣūṣah insisted that Beirut’s commerce was in the hands of a small number of individuals, who took advantage of the population’s dire need and thereby affected its moral and physical strength. The wartime profits from grain sales had reached up to 200 percent, which was to the detriment of the urban poor. Ṣūṣah praised the municipality for its attempts to serve the town by ending the rising costs of living, but he pointed out that the last time the municipality legislated prices, merchants continued to sell their goods at exorbitant rates. The setting of maximum prices without the implementation of strict government control, or *Zwangswirtschaft*, generally meant only that commodities disappeared from retail stores and instead were sold on the black market for the highest price possible. That was exactly what was happening in Beirut.<sup>78</sup>

Ṣūṣah blamed merchants for hoarding their goods, waiting for an opportune moment to make a maximum profit. Sometimes, he wrote, merchants stored their goods for two to three weeks until the market was completely devoid of the product, so that consumers would pay whatever their greed demanded.<sup>79</sup> In his attack on the profiteers, Ṣūṣah employed a complex moral language that juxtaposed the merchants’ greedy personal interest against the good and “humanitarian” intentions of the municipality, which was working for the collective destiny of the city. He appealed to the Beirut leadership’s sense of duty, based on its moral obligations toward the large bloc of consumers who had a common interest, in reasonable prices, in contrast to the particular claims of avaricious individuals. Ṣūṣah’s comments hint at a moral code centered on communal sacrifice on behalf of the city’s poor; his idea of wellbeing was living well not simply in a material sense but also in a moral sense, calling for human decency.<sup>80</sup> For Ṣūṣah, the municipality had to regulate the market of all basic commodities and the morality in the city, and the only solution was government intervention that would go far beyond simply suggesting prices. He suggested, therefore, that the municipality should take a complete

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<sup>75</sup> Although the Ottoman governor had suspended some important publications, the papers still in print as the year ended did not hesitate to engage in a discussion of prices and municipal food supply policies. The suspension of papers is mentioned in AA: R 14032: Türkiye 177, Letter from the German Consul in Beirut Mutius to the German Chancellor Bethman von Hollweg, dated Beirut, October 15, 1914,

<sup>76</sup> The French press during World War I issued similar appeals as to the moral obligation for communal sacrifice. See Jean-Louis Robert, “The Image of the Profiteer,” in *Capital Cities at War*, eds. Winter and Robert, 104.

<sup>77</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, December 7, 1914.

<sup>78</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Speculative withdrawal and hoarding, of course, have been a popular explanation for famine in general and especially when no apparent shortage of grain could be observed. Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 76.

<sup>80</sup> For a discussion of morality and war profiteering in France see Robert, “The Image of the Profiteer,” 131.

inventory of essential commodities and then set a fair price according to their availability. More important, he recommended limiting wholesale transactions to the municipal agency and leaving general commerce to retail transactions only. This, he proposed, would bring prices back to a reasonable level and prevent powerful merchants from hoarding goods and monopolizing the market.<sup>81</sup> Ṣūṣah renders his critique of the inaction of the municipality in the flattering rhetoric and he does not fail to remind the municipality that Beirutis after all did not forget its role in the transport crisis at the heart of which was to feed the hungry and the poor.

Ṣūṣah's complaint was reiterated the next day on the front page of the Beirut paper, *Al-Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*. The press insisted that merchants would respect the by now widely publicized price list because the "honorable" municipality took into consideration the cost of living of the poor when drafting it, and therefore backed the municipal attempts at moral suasion of the merchant community. The recommendations, the paper argued, were motivated by moral obligation and compassion for the poor and were an honorable attempt to save the lower classes from starvation. The municipal intervention gained a moral ground so to speak, but no surveillance and ordering of the market—in line with Ṣūṣah's proposal—were put into practice for some time. Instead, prices continued to rise far beyond the limits set by the municipality.<sup>82</sup> The municipality did not take an inventory of wheat or flour, nor did it take over the wholesale grain business to eliminate hoarding and resorted to jawboning, urging the merchants to adhere to prices suggested by the municipal commission.

The reason for this hesitation is unclear. The municipality was certainly capable of undertaking such measures, and in fact, it engaged in a successful campaign to control the wholesale market for kerosene and eliminate hoarding the following month. In light of a severe shortage, the municipal council ordered that no household or store was allowed to have more than six cans of kerosene on hand at any given time. The municipality successfully enforced this order by dispatching its agents to search homes and stores in all quarters of the city. The agents, police and gendarmes, confiscated all kerosene that exceeded the legal limits per household and transported it to the storage facilities of the municipality. Furthermore, to avoid any price speculation and manipulation, it began selling the kerosene itself from its warehouses at designated times of the day.

The municipality did not apply this strategy to the basic commodities of wheat and flour until the spring of 1915, when as we have seen above, the prices rose to unprecedented levels, as a result of decrease in availability, aggravated by merchant's greed and a thriving black market. The flour shortages were extreme and when bakeries closed their doors the price of bread rose from one day to the next.<sup>83</sup> As more and more people were unable to obtain food, further inaction of the authorities, especially the municipality, would have brought about widespread famine. Realizing the danger and its responsibility to the community's survival, the municipality finally intervened boldly in the city's food market. In May of 1915, under pressure from the public and from the military authorities under Jamāl Pasha, the municipality imposed punitive measures, such as monetary fines and imprisonment, to dissuade the Beirut business community from selling commodities, in particular grain and its derivatives, above assigned prices. The

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<sup>81</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, December 7, 1914.

<sup>82</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, December 20, 1914.

<sup>83</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*, April 10, 1915.

council, as mentioned above, had hesitated to enforce price limits because it was afraid to alienate its electoral base and community leaders. Now with decreasing grain supply, the municipality faced the constant possibility of urban riots that could provoke intervention from Istanbul or from Jamāl Pasha, who constantly heard complaints about merchants' greed. The municipal council had no choice but to decidedly established itself as an "apparatus of security" that would serve the well-being of the community, even if it meant alienating its loyal merchant base, cutting them out of the profitable grain trade. Hence, to alleviate the desperate situation in Beirut, the municipality bought wheat or flour, either through members of the municipality or via the Ottoman governor. When trainloads of grain or flour arrived in Beirut, the municipality had policemen waiting at the various stations throughout the city to receive the precious cargo. The wheat or flour was then distributed to vendors at a wholesale price set by the municipality, and storeowners were ordered to sell the provisions at fixed prices.<sup>84</sup> To be eligible to retail wheat or flour, vendors had to procure permission from the police. Beirutis cheered at the prospect of being able to obtain wheat at a decent price, especially when the municipality assured them that the retail price would not exceed the limit it had set in December 1914: five *ghurūsh* per *roṭl*.

In the winter of 1914, the municipality had suggested price limits, but it had failed to enforce them. Now—as famine was knocking on the door—the municipality showed that it was serious about making sure that vendors obeyed the price limit. The increasingly regular arrival of wheat represented an opportunity, and a number of Beirut bakers engaged in a profiteering scheme. They sold a single loaf of bread for a *matlik* (about eight *ghurūsh*, i.e. about the daily income of an unskilled worker) whereas prior to the war a whole *roṭl* of bread could be bought for ten *ghurūsh* or less. However, such schemes it was clear had to end, and anyone who sold above set prices could and would be arrested. For example, the Beirut police arrested two men, Ibrahīm Ibn Ḥusayn and Tawfiq Ibn al-Ḥāj, because they sold the *roṭl* wheat for five *ghurūsh* and twenty-five *bāra*. Exceeding the municipal price by only a fraction of a *ghurūsh*, the men were imprisoned. The arrest was to serve as a clear deterrent and a show of the executive power of the municipality.

The response of the press to the punitive measures was positive and reassuring. It reported the arrest and made sure that the reading public would understand that they were a warning to others that disobeying the municipality's orders would no longer be tolerated. Under the headline, "In Punishment There is Life," the press reported further arrests as examples to anyone who even thought of circumventing the law.<sup>85</sup> By referring to the Qur'an and to the sacred nature of law and its enforcement as life giving, the press legitimized the actions of the municipality and imbues them with the highest authority. The press urged the municipality to continue publicizing the prices at least twice a week so that sellers and buyers would not forget them. The Beirut public continued to place its trust in the municipality, hoping that "it would bear down on the merchants after the arrival of the shipment and set just limits to the prices of flour," thereby publicly confirming its position by linking its legal actions to divinely sanctioned and life-giving punishment.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, April 9, 1915.

<sup>85</sup> See The Holy Qur'an: Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:179) Translation of the verse according to Dr. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān: "And there is a [saving of] life for you in Al-Qisas (the Law of Equality in punishment), O men of understanding, that you may become pious."

<sup>86</sup>AUB: *Al-Ittiḥād al-‘Uthmānī*, March 31, 1915.

Through these actions, the municipality intervened in the daily life of civilians to a new and greater degree by March of 1915. Besides dealing with transportation issues, the municipality now began to discipline the market of the city. The municipal council took up the wholesale business of wheat, registered vendors and issued permits, delineated fixed and fair prices, and enforced its provisioning scheme through arrests and punishment. The mechanics of municipal intervention grew out of actual need and responded to an increasingly desperate public. Since the central Ottoman authorities interfered in neither distributive nor punitive measures in the provincial capital, the moral duty to feed the poor was placed into the hands of the municipality. By the spring of 1915, it was employing its legislative as well as executive powers to feed its city. However, the municipal interventions did not go unchallenged, and Beirut merchants continued to find ways to circumvent its orders and engaged in black market speculation. The Beirut merchants' unwillingness and open defiance to adhere to orders from the municipality or even the Ottoman authorities is evident most prominently in their abandonment of the Beirut grain syndicate that had been set up by the local Ottoman governor 'Azmi Bey in August of 1915, as discussed in chapter one.<sup>87</sup>

### Rationing and Riots

The Beirut municipality, in addition to controlling the market through regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms, began to take charge of the civilian's body with an intricate rationing scheme that was to govern the food grain intake of Beirut residents. The municipality began rationing grain and bread by the spring of 1915, which is quite early when compared, for example, to Paris, where rationing of bread became public policy only after January 29, 1918, and London, where the Ministry of Food established a voluntary rationing scheme in February 1917.<sup>88</sup> Only Germany's capital, Berlin, had put together a system for rationing earlier, in January-February 1915.<sup>89</sup> Still, throughout the entire year of 1915, there were times when there was no bread in the city at all. A letter, smuggled out of Beirut and subsequently published in an Arabic paper in Argentina, mentioned that for one or two days neither the rich nor the middle classes nor the poor had the taste of bread.<sup>90</sup> The rationing system was designed to ensure a minimum food intake for Beirut's residents and to organize the distribution of bread and flour, which previously had been chaotic. One eyewitness said it was very dangerous to join the large crowd in front of the doors of the mill near the municipal building, waiting to get a share of flour. The desperate souls waiting for a morsel of bread or a cup of flour shoved and pushed to get to the front. When a woman dropped her child, it was immediately trampled to death.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The governor had set up this grain syndicate under the leadership of grain exporter Mustafa 'Izzadin. The idea was to involve the Beirut merchants directly into the provisioning scheme and to control their actions. 'Azmi Bey gave the syndicate the monopoly over purchasing wheat in Aleppo and transporting it to Beirut and promised them a ten percent profit. Although the syndicate was a private organization, the municipality was to closely monitor its every step.

<sup>88</sup> Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, "Feeding the Cities" in *Capital Cities at War* eds. Winter and Robert, 328.

<sup>89</sup> George Yaney, *The World of the Manager; Food Administration in Berlin during World War I* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994), 81.

<sup>90</sup> The letter that appeared in the Argentine newspaper described the situation in the spring of 1915, but it took until the fall of that year that it reached the publisher. USJ: *Al-Salām*, September 9, 1915.

<sup>91</sup> Whether or not this particular story is true cannot be corroborated by other sources, but we may in any case see the image as a narrative tool of the author to convey the chaotic and desperate situation in the city. See Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 156.

However, by spring of 1915, a more organized rationing system seemed to be in place. Dr. Ra'if Abī al-Lam', who was a medical student at the SPC during the war, reports that:

Food was controlled and issued at appointed government places throughout Beirut. It was a ration system with fixed prices. The *mukhtār* of each district in the city issued a certified document stating how many people were in each family. Then one person from each family would go to the distribution centers and present the documents, which entitled him and his family to a certain amount of wheat according to the family's size.<sup>92</sup>

The Beirut bakeries were supposed to allot bread to individuals who possessed the proper documents.<sup>93</sup> The documents could be purchased from the municipality at the local police stations, but often enough they were handed to the council members' clients.<sup>94</sup> The rations assigned by the municipal council were the following: Every person over the age of fifteen would receive 480.13 grams of bread per day; those below that age would receive 320.09 grams, and children under the age of three were not assigned any ration.<sup>95</sup> The rationing scheme of the municipality was far from perfect, in not accounting for the most vulnerable member of society, the young child. The reason for this is unclear; it may have been that it was assumed that the child would still be breastfed or that it could survive by parents giving up small portions of their own rations. Second, its distribution of permission and rationing papers relied on patronage. Political bosses in the municipal council made sure their own constituency was supplied with rationing cards for free, bolstering their own political power and legitimacy. Access to municipal power became crucial to survival, so that refugees and recent immigrants to the city, having no links to the community, would be excluded. Rationing papers, of course, could be purchased from the municipality, which required a level of purchasing power that had been declining in general. This in turn shows the contradictory standards of the municipality. Whereas rationing, in general, should supersede or correct discrepancies between high demand and limited supplies, the purchase of rationing papers was subject to just these laws of supply and demand. So that ultimately, the survival of the city's inhabitants relied on access to municipal power.

Although not at starvation level, the rations amounted to about half the normative caloric intake of the average working person.<sup>96</sup> Families of five and above were assigned a ration of 1.3 kg per family per day meaning that the daily flour ration for a family of five—given it could afford to buy from the municipality—was an average of 260 grams (951 cal) per person. The caloric value of the ration may be estimated at about 1,800 calories for the individual older than 15 and 1,200 for a person under 15. This amounts to about 49 percent of the average pre-war consumption.<sup>97</sup> The ration in besieged Leningrad in 1941-1944 amounted to about 707 calories for a worker and 423 calories for the dependent, which caused starvation over time and was the death sentence for masses of people. In comparison, the Beirut rations seem to be high. But even if flour was combined with other food items, the fact that bread was the main staple of the

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Dr. Rāif Abī al-Lam' conducted by Nicholas Ajay in 1964. Published in Ajay, "Mount Lebanon and the Wilyah of Beirut," Appendix, 25.

<sup>93</sup> AUB: *Al-Īttihād al-'Uthmāni*, May 30, 1915.

<sup>94</sup> Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 154.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>96</sup> Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1914-1995: Myth, Memories and Monuments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 61.

<sup>97</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 18.



average family was proof enough that such rationing amounts would result in prolonged malnutrition, since the normal caloric value of a worker is about 3,000 and that of a dependent about 2,800 calories. As an alternative, the municipality allowed households with more than five members to buy a sack of flour per month. The average sack of flour weighted about fifty kilograms, which meant that a household of more than five would have a daily ration of 1.6 kilograms, slightly more than if they bought their ration on a daily basis, which most families did in any case. Overall, the result was a chronic underfeeding of the civilian population, which eventually resulted in more cases of malnutrition and hunger-induced diseases.

Thus the municipality by no means solved the food crisis. Many families still were unable to purchase food, despite the relatively low prices of municipal flour. The larger economic chaos in the province meant that the resources of the lower- and middle-class households continued to decrease, so that even when prices stayed the same, purchasing power continued to decline. In addition, despite the municipality's efforts, the amounts of grain and flour available for sale were limited. Prior to the war, based on the production of its mills, the city of Beirut consumed about seven to eight hundred bags of flour each day. To maintain that level that at least five freight cars needed to arrive in Beirut on a daily basis. As we know, this became more and more difficult. Moreover corruption was common, since municipal employees and council members were able to buy at will and were purchasing the sack of flour for 23 *ghurūsh*, which was only about a quarter of the price the municipality had set for the general public.<sup>98</sup>

The rationing system was flawed in another way. The municipality was unable to employ enough enforcement agents, and had to rely on local police and bakers as their representatives on the ground. The municipality had declared bankruptcy in 1913 and the war was certainly not helping in recovering its financial independence.<sup>99</sup> The situation of the municipality was so dire that instead of hiring new enforcement agents, it had to let go off, for example, fifteen of its sergeants in November of 1914.<sup>100</sup> It was public knowledge that bakers and policemen worked together to fill their pockets with cash by stretching ingredients and accepting large bribes. At first, people complained about the quality of the bread. Yusūf Ḥabash, for example, described the bread purchased from the bakeries as white the first day, black the second day, and turning grey or purple that same evening. He suspected that the color of bread was the result of "strange materials" mixed with the flour.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, bakers and policemen alike accepted large bribes from people desperate for flour. Corruption was so rampant and obvious that 'Azmī Bey soon realized that distributing bread instead of flour had failed miserably. Returning from a trip to Damascus in May 1916, he was greeted by a group of outraged Beirutis, who complained about the distribution of bread and insisted that he eliminate the bread rationing system and instead provide flour by means of tickets sold by the municipality. 'Azmī Bey apparently conceded to the public's demands but faced resistance from the director of the police, who was making a nice bundle off the existing system. However, 'Azmī Bey, the more powerful of the two men, insisted and the chief of the police was left with no choice but to support the measure.<sup>102</sup> Even after the bakeries were no longer in charge of distributing government bread,

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<sup>98</sup> The sack of flour contained about 20 *roṭl*. A *roṭl*, according to the municipal price list from December 1914 was to be sold for five *ghurūsh*, so that a sack of flour should be sold for one hundred *ghurūsh*.

<sup>99</sup> Hanssen, "The Origins of the Municipal Council," 149.

<sup>100</sup> AUB: *Al-Ītīhād al-ʿUṯmāni*, November 25, 1914.

<sup>101</sup> Habash, *Al-Jihād Lubnān*, 97.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

the bakers still were in a position of power within the chain of provisioning and demanded bribes from anyone who knocked on their door asking for a piece of bread.<sup>103</sup> After all, the municipality had limited staff and local police closed both eyes as bakers continued to sell bread at black market prices under the nose of the city council.

The rationing system nevertheless was an attempt to maintain the urban order walking the tightrope between satisfying interests of its upper class urban electorate and avoiding riots of the urban poor. It also denotes an attempt to govern not only the city's markets, but also at maintaining a certain nutritional level in the city, thereby controlling its residents' bodies and essentially intervening at the most intimate level of daily life in the city. Small children, however, were entirely ignored, as were those who did not have direct access to municipal power through roots in the community. It was, at this point, in the interest of the council members to distribute permissions first and foremost to their own upper and upper-middle class political constituencies. This, in turn, strengthened council members' position in the city, as well as the position of those families represented on the municipal council during the war, like the Bayhums, the Sursūqs, and the Salāms. By the end of the war, the municipality was securely established at the center of urban politics.

The period from November 1914 to the summer and fall of 1915 certainly marks an increasing municipal intervention into the fabric of daily life on the Beirut homefront. The municipality began by negotiating interdistrict transfer and then shifted to disciplining the market and its speculators and finally sought to assure the food intake of the less privileged residents of the city while at the same time trying not to alienate the upper classes. The intervention responded not only to the city's actual needs but also to the continuous public debates and demands upon the municipality as an agency of modern governance that was to be responsible to its electorate and imbued with a moral obligation to preserve the wellbeing of the community. However, the municipality's precarious position in the city as an institution run and elected by the urban notables as well as its financial difficulties hampered its ability to successfully enforce the decrees it announced in the press. What further worked against the efforts of the municipality were the continued corruption and cronyism as well as the overall disintegration and ever more desperate situation caused by the war. The municipal intercession on behalf of its civilians was the local attempt to deal with the food crisis, but as the situation grew worse the Ottoman state eventually could no longer turn away. The provincial municipal council had set up a disciplinary and distributive mechanism that in 1916 would be expanded upon and it seems mimicked in imperial legislation.

#### Legislating Food: The Ottoman State's Efforts to Feed its Civilians

At the outset of the war, the priority of the Ottoman government, as mentioned above, was to supply, clothe, feed, and provide proper health services to its soldiers. Military priorities, however, did not mean that the Ottoman authorities made no attempt to regulate and control food distribution to the civilians; neither did it mean that the soldiers were being well fed and supplied. But centralized measures that included an organized effort to supply civilians were adopted only in the spring of 1916. Until then, the Ottoman central government neither regulated agriculture nor implemented price controls, and it knowingly sacrificed civilian well-

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 97.

being in service of the war effort. Men at the local level, therefore picked up the slack and sought to alleviate civilian sufferings through the local municipal council, and as we have seen, and through civil society organizations, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The central authorities were well aware of the food supply problems in the coastal regions of Greater Syria. Both the Ottoman interior ministry and the war ministry had received numerous telegrams and reports from provincial representatives and Arab members of parliament about the desperate need for grain and flour in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. More than once, the Ottoman governor of Beirut, Sāmi Bakr Bey, and the *mutaşarrif* of Mount Lebanon, Ohannes Pasha, sent telegrams informing the central authorities about the dire situation in their provinces. The Beirut representative in the Ottoman parliament, Salīm 'Ali Salām, traveled to Istanbul to urge government intervention on behalf of the civilians early in 1915.<sup>104</sup> Shortages were publicly debated and discussed in the Beirut press. These reports, however, were either ignored or dealt with only marginally by the central authorities.<sup>105</sup> Unlike the German government, which sought to legislate prices to prevent speculation, to regulate the level of grinding grain, and to dictate the amounts of potato flour to be added to the bread as early as the fall of 1914, the Ottomans did not undertake any such centralized efforts until food shortages were so acute that they no longer could be justified as a legitimate civilian sacrifice in the war effort.<sup>106</sup> Of course the Ottoman Empire did not enter the war until November 1, 1914, and therefore could not have been expected to follow the suit of the Germans prior to that, but it would take another two years until a central food supply policy that included civilians would be announced and implemented.

By the end of 1916, the war had been going on for two devastating years. The winters had been particularly harsh as people struggled against hunger and disease, and the winter ahead promised to be another wretched and devastating experience. The harvest of winter crops in 1916 had been meager, due not least to the fact that so many peasant farmers had been conscripted into the military and the winter crop had been guzzled up by swarms of locusts. As the food crisis grew to unprecedented proportions in the winter of 1915-1916, the state itself found it necessary to intervene on behalf of its civilians. It composed and published a number of laws inspired in part by Germany's food supply policies and characterized by intense state intervention. The historian Şevket Pamuk divides the food supply policies of the Ottoman state into three phases. In the first, prior to 1916, the central authorities used a free market policy. Considering the actions of the Beirut municipality, however, it is clear that local markets were not entirely free, at least from March 1915 onward. Pamuk argues that central state interventionism marked the second phase of food supply policies, beginning with the Provisional Grain Act, which was passed in July 1916 and implemented in September 1916 and culmination

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<sup>104</sup> See al-Khālidī, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān*; Kouyoumdjian, *Le Liban*.

<sup>105</sup> For example, Beirut's *Al-İttihād al-'Uthmāni*, as shown above, reported as early as November 1914 that the poor came to the Beirut municipality to complain about the lack of wheat and flour.

<sup>106</sup> An imperial law from August 4, 1914, set the maximum prices of commodities to prevent speculation, and a federal regulation from October 28, 1914, not only demanded that grain would be ground finer to increase supply, but also prescribed the amount of potato to be added to what would be called *Kriegsbrot* or war bread. This of course did not mean that German civilians did not experience shortages; on the contrary. But what is important here is that the German authorities immediately after their entry into the war at least attempted to regulate the provisioning of civilians. This cannot be said about the Ottoman government, which waited twenty month to include civilians into wartime food provisioning. See Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 22.

in the Compulsory Cultivation Law of 1917.<sup>107</sup> However, the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul passed a number of laws prior to this date that paved the way for the more comprehensive July 1916 law. The earlier legislation, from March and May 1916, first and foremost took into account the important role of the imperial municipalities. Most important, a law passed on March 5, 1916, stipulated that the empire's municipalities were to be officially in charge of procuring bread for civilians.<sup>108</sup> Of course, as I have shown in the case of the Beirut municipality, the provincial urban agencies had already taken up this responsibility a year earlier, mostly to avoid riots and possible intervention from the military government. Therefore, the passing of this particular legislation simply integrated existing practices into the legal frame of the state. A second law, passed in May of 1916, gave the municipalities the official permission, to confiscate not only grains but also bakeries, as well as to regulate prices and sales of food and other basic commodities. Again, this law is an affirmation and state-sanctioning of practices that the Beirut municipality, in coordination with the Ottoman governor, had employed since March of 1915.<sup>109</sup>

In July 1916, the Istanbul authorities founded the Imperial Ottoman Office for Provisioning, but the execution of food supply policy in the provinces remained in the hands of local agencies. The Beirut municipality and its distributive mechanisms and rationing scheme continued to function, but they became officially part of the state's food supply policy scheme. The Ottoman food supply program was ambitious, and the Office for Provisioning initially was to be in charge of recording, transporting, and controlling the empire's entire grain supply in excess of the tenth to be paid to the state. This soon, however, proved to be an impossible task without an extensive administrative apparatus. Therefore, the state continued to rely on local established networks and practices. Instead of attempting to impose complete state control, the central authorities focused on organizing the large-scale purchase and distribution of the necessary grain to the military and the neediest civilians.<sup>110</sup> For this purpose, the Provisional Grain Act was passed on July 23, 1916. The original draft of the law was published in the official gazette of the Ottoman state *takvim-i-vekeyi* on July 25, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2598). The law was appended at least four times on September 7, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2643), September 11, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2643), November 7, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2598) and December 13, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2701) and amended on October 24, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2690).<sup>111</sup> According to the legislation, the Ottoman authorities took complete control of purchasing grain from producers, with "cereal producers to retain only enough for seed and the maintenance of their household."<sup>112</sup> The rest of the harvest was committed to government agents at a fixed price, which generally was well below the open or black market rate. To facilitate the practical implementation of this law, the empire—by way of an executive order—was divided into three provisioning zones: Asia Minor, Greater Syria (including Adana), and

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<sup>107</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 125.

<sup>108</sup> The various legislations I am discussing here were originally published in the official gazette of the Ottoman state *takvim-i-vekeyi*. The texts used here are translations of the originals into German, which were published in Fritz Grobba's study of Syria's wartime economy. See Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 22.

<sup>109</sup> Original published in *takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2545 from May 1, 1916. As quoted in *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>110</sup> Taxes at this moment were rendered to the state in kind and in peacetime consisted of a tenth of the harvest see chapter one of this dissertation.

<sup>111</sup> See Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 22-23 and 165-166.

<sup>112</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 123.

Mesopotamia (including Aintab and Marash).<sup>113</sup> The export of grain from any of these zones into another had to be approved by a commission that the central Office for Provisioning had specially set up for this purpose.

The focus of the Ottoman food supply policies was to deal with civilian provisioning at the level of the producer and leave the distribution and market control to local agencies.<sup>114</sup> For example, according to the Provisional Grain Act, every provincial capital and district was ordered to form provisioning and distribution committees under the guidance of the highest administrative officers, that is, the Ottoman governor, the mayor or the president of the municipality, the commander of the gendarmerie, and other elected members. The local provisioning and distribution committees then were to buy the foodstuff from either the central commission or the highest authority in their zone and distribute it among the needy at a low price. Under this centralized effort, the agents in the provincial capital remained crucial in carrying out the task at hand. The only significant difference from local practices was that now the municipalities themselves would purchase grain from the military authorities, rather than having to secure purchases directly from the producer or through their own hired merchants.<sup>115</sup>

Overall, the Ottoman Provisional Grain Act marks a move from an initial focus on the military to a centralized attempt at provisioning civilians as well as soldiers.<sup>116</sup> It did little to alleviate the situation in Beirut, however, and essentially aggravated shortages through compulsory sales of all grain, beyond the actual subsistence requirements of the peasant farmer's family, at low government-regulated prices. Moreover, farmers were not allowed to harvest their grain until a government agent had estimated its size and worth, which, because of potentially long delays and rainfall, could ruin the entire crop. Not surprisingly, the overall response of the cereal producers was resistance.<sup>117</sup> Families hid their grain from the government agents and attempted to smuggle it and to sell at high prices on the black market. Sometimes, they tried "to bribe the local officials to underestimate their obligations and to deliver grains of lower quality." And as Pamuk points out, resistance to the wartime measures of the state resembled what James Scott has termed "weapons of the weak." It was local scale undermining of the state through foot dragging, concealment, and evasion.<sup>118</sup> This of course was not unique to peasants in the Ottoman Empire, but for example German peasants employed similar strategies.<sup>119</sup>

Amendments to the Provisional Grain Act in September of 1916 responded to the problems the authorities encountered. The answer of the state was to outline punitive measures in cases of hoarding and smuggling. Most important, paragraph one of the amendment from

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<sup>113</sup> The central legislative measures dictated that the military authorities in the assigned zones were to put together smaller subcommissions in the provincial capitals. A census was to be carried out to count the inhabitants and domestic animals to determine amount of the grain needed for cultivation. The central Office for Provisioning was to compare the grain on hand for cultivation, the number of inhabitants, the amount of livestock, and the supply of foodstuff in all provinces and determine the need and surplus.

<sup>114</sup> For more details and a discussion of the Compulsory Cultivation Law see Chapter 1.

<sup>115</sup> See the 'Amendment to the Grain Act' from July 25, 1916 (*takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2649) published in Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 167-172.

<sup>116</sup> Paragraph one of the 'Provisional Grain Act' clearly states that the legislation was to serve the provisioning of the army as well as civilians. See *takvim-i-vekeyi* Nr. 2598, July 26, 1916 published in *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>117</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 124.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 124 Scott, *Weapon of the Weak*.

<sup>119</sup> Moeller, *German Peasants and Agrarian Politics*.

September 11, 1916—a revision of paragraph seven of the original legislation—decreed that anyone who disobeyed state orders would be arrested and brought before the military courts, where they could receive a prison sentence lasting from one week to one year.<sup>120</sup> In addition, any grains hoarded, hidden from the commission, or sold illegally at higher prices would be confiscated by the government and become its property, without any financial compensation to the owner. If the punitive measures described here sound familiar, it is because in the summer of 1915, the Beirut municipality had announced that it would arrest anyone who disobeyed municipal orders and tried to sell grain or its derivatives above municipal prices. At the same time, the Ottoman law expanded to include all foodstuffs; local government commissions had the authority to confiscate any hidden foodstuffs without any monetary payment. The result was devastating. An American eyewitness reported that by October 1916, the Ottoman military authorities had taken control of the entire wheat supply and even over figs, grapes, and olives. The items confiscated were then “redistributed” to all districts, but the amount each received was only a third of what was necessary for survival, assumingly because much of the food was still assigned to the military. In addition, the price of wheat in Beirut rose from 625 *ghurūsh* per *qinṭar* in October 1916 to almost double that, 1,200 *ghurūsh*, in December 1916.

Food supply policies underwent a third transformation in the summer of 1917, after the interventionist policies had failed to produce the desired results. The main goal of this new legislation was to provide better incentives to the producers and greater administrative regularities. The Legal Ordinance for National Provisioning included the formation of a centralized Ministry for Provisioning, which was under the supervision of the war ministry and was responsible for the purchase and distribution of grain and its derivatives meant for human and livestock consumption.<sup>121</sup> The new ministry was charged with feeding first of all the army, all institutions, and the civilian population in regions that were experiencing shortages. Its overall functions differed little from those of the Office for Provisioning. In general, the Legal Ordinance for National Provisioning addressed issues that had hampered the effective implementation of prior measures and was meant to improve the actual process of purchasing and distribution. For example, it clearly lists what the provincial commissions were allowed to purchase: grains and their derivatives, such as bulgur and flour, as well as rice, sugar, olives, and olive oil. To prevent any delays and dysfunctions in the purchasing of these items, their collection was linked to the collection of taxes that were set to be a tenth of the harvest in kind. The commission was to obtain a second tenth from the cereal producers at low government price.<sup>122</sup> The law stipulated that the authorities could demand to buy a third tenth if needed at the same low price, but they had to go through a process of evaluation to ensure no shortages would result from such a purchase. The purchase was now limited to particular goods and to a particular amount. The government agents could no longer purchase everything and anything. Whatever was left, the producers could sell as they wished. The policy articulated in 1917 was a mixture, as Pamuk points out, of interventionist policy and free market economy. For the municipal agencies, this simply meant that they had the option of purchasing foodstuffs from the producer or from the state. In general, it may be said that neither the Provisional Grain Act (1916) nor the Legal Ordinance for National Provisioning (1917) meant great change in the administration of food supplies in Beirut. For the most part, the changes employed by the state

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<sup>120</sup> See *takvim-i vekayi* Nr. 2628, September 11, 1916 published in Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 166.

<sup>121</sup> See *takvim-i vekayi* Nr. 2984 from August 26, 1917. See Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 180-87.

<sup>122</sup> Pamuk, “The Ottoman Economy,” 125.

affected rural peasant producers, who now clearly felt the interventionist policies of the state. In Beirut, the Ottoman governor and the municipal council continued to organize the distribution and rationing. The municipality, in particular, remained the local regulatory and distributive agency.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how the municipality took steps to address extreme shortages of food that threatened to induce famine, especially among the poor of the city. The Ottoman Empire was slow to recognize and address food shortages, and when it did, it followed the pattern already drafted and tested in the cities. Comprehensive Ottoman state laws regulating civilian provisioning were drafted and first implemented—as shown above—almost two years after the local authorities in Beirut had already experimented with rationing, price control, and organized distribution. The reason for such late intervention was, as Fritz Grobba has pointed out, that the Ottomans “‘naturally’ did not worry about Syria, simply because under normal circumstances the region could supply its population based on local production.”<sup>123</sup> Only when it became clear that the local production was not able to meet demands were centralized food supply policies articulated. In contrast, the Beirut municipal council had responded to the demands in their city, almost immediately after the Ottomans entered the war. To deal with food shortages and wartime profiteering, the municipality first successfully directed interdistrict transfer, and then—although less effectively—expanded its control over the market and eventually the rationing of its citizens. It is most important to note that the central Ottoman authorities did not define the role of the municipality in provisioning the provincial homefront; instead, that role was defined and negotiated locally, and, as we have seen, Ottoman food supply policies, in particular those of March and May 1916, drew on and maintained the regulatory mechanisms that had been established in the provincial city, subcontracting rationing and local distribution to the municipality.

The precarious position of the municipality as a newly emerging institution that was to take care of all residents including the poor, its upper-class merchant members, and its upper and upper-middle class electorate that included many businessmen, who would profit from an uncontrolled market, complicated its ability to act as regulatory agency.<sup>124</sup> So that when the food crisis in the winter of 1914 to 1915 sparked a debate in the local press, which alternately blamed the greed of the merchants and the inefficiency of the municipality for the destitute situation in Beirut, both sides of the debate urging more direct municipal intervention in the market, the municipality attempted to strike a balance between the individual and family interests of its members and its role as an agency of modern governance, which was to work for the collective well-being of the city. The balance unfortunately was tipped in favor of the urban elite to the detriment of the urban poor, who continued to starve. In turn, a new political leadership, the *zu'amā*—who since 1908 increasingly dominated the municipal council and who now responded to the demands of its urban electorate for food and order—was established as the most important urban actors in the post-war period.

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<sup>123</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 11.

<sup>124</sup> Hanssen, “From Social Status to Intellectual Activity,” *passim*.

This fresh look at the history of food supply policies in the provincial Ottoman Empire during World War I, based in large part on contemporary journalistic reports, undermines some existing accounts about what happened during the war, in particular the perception that local authorities stood helplessly by as the Ottoman military command under the guise of martial law confiscated food. In contrast, we have seen that municipal officers as well as the Ottoman governor took decisive steps to address the suffering in the city. However, Beirutis had very different experiences of the life at the homefront and this difference, as we have seen, was class based. For example, upper class citizens with access to municipal power could buy inexpensive wheat and powerful merchants circumvented municipal orders and profited from the black market in the city, whereas the poor struggled in light of corrupt bakers and policemen, who undermined the municipal rationing scheme, etc. The privations of the war clearly aggravated class differences and carried them into postwar period. Second, it may force us to rethink the common perception, articulated by Şevket Pamuk, that the food supply policies of the Ottoman Empire prior to July of 1916 were entirely dictated by free market forces.<sup>125</sup> In fact, it seems that local municipalities at least in part dictated the markets, although a black market continues to exist. Third, I have shown how the municipality evolved under wartime stresses, engaging in unprecedented interventions in the life of the city. In the process, it became the champion of its citizenry and grew in power and prestige, and may have inspired the food supply policies of the Ottoman state, forcing us to further adjust the political position of the peripheral city in the overall scheme of the empire. This certainly is not new and the works of social historians of the Ottoman provinces have long argued for the importance of the periphery versus the center. The wartime actions of the Beirut municipality are simply another powerful example of this reality.

The examples in this chapter are only a small selection of municipal interventions into the daily life of the city. At the very least, they illustrate a new social reality in which municipal agents could search homes and stores for hidden kerosene and residents had to visit the municipal building in the city center to purchase or beg for the proper documents to receive rations. As a result of its intervention into the fabric of daily life on the homefront, the municipality, despite its many failures, continued to consolidate its power as an urban agency of governance and strengthened its control over the affairs of the city, and evolved into the most important urban agency of the immediate postwar period. After the war had ended and the Ottomans were expelled, it was the wartime municipal council that gathered to take complete control over its city. The council appointed its own men to positions vacated by the Turks, and its members raised the banner of the short-lived independent Arab state on the Grand Serail in the heart of the city.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy," 122-123.

<sup>126</sup> Eddé, *Beyrouth: naissance d'une capitale 1918-1924*.



## CHAPTER V

### Soup Kitchens, Workshops and Orphans:

#### The American Relief Efforts

In the midst of devastation, hunger and starvation, an unnamed woman climbed the steep mountain paths; hope for life pushing her onward to her destination, the American soup kitchen in Brumana. Alongside her a small group of children dragged their feet, all the while complaining of hunger and exhaustion. After hours of staggering, pulling and pushing, the ragged band reached a little brook. There the children collapsed at the side of the water, some almost fainting. None of them had eaten a square meal for days and they cried bitterly, refusing to go on. Squatting and contemplating her course of action, the woman noticed that her eldest daughter carried her old doll, which had been brought from Australia. It was the little girl's prized possession and almost all that they had left in the world, a reminder of a different time. A small tear in the doll's body left some bran trickling from its stuffing, a possibility that would not surpass the eyes of a starving person. The woman—with a mother's wit—emptied the doll of its stuffing and made little bran cakes in her hands. She softened the cakes in water and made her children eat. "It was not much for them to eat, but it was something. Cheered by the taste of wet bran, they went on their journey, until they finally arrived at the soup kitchen tired, but courageous."<sup>1</sup> Arriving in Brumana was moment of redemption for this family. The woman managed that all of the children were accepted into the shelter of the soup kitchen and she herself was given some work as a seamstress.

There is no need to say that not all families were this fortunate. However, what is clear is that human tragedy, war and economic devastation, in this case also was accompanied by efforts to help those in need. Relief efforts in Beirut and Mount Lebanon came from multiple sides. For one, the Ottoman governors and military leaders organized soup kitchens and food distributions. Local agents and agencies, such as the Beirut municipality, implemented rationing programs and price controls.<sup>2</sup> Local charitable societies and religious communities, as we will see, distributed food and money to their community members.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the success of state, municipal and local private relief efforts was limited. Municipal efforts, as we have seen, failed due to persistent black marketeering and hoarding and charitable societies quickly saw donations dry up as prices for everyday commodities skyrocketed. James Barton's observation that people who had given generously were beggars at least in part rings true.<sup>4</sup> A third form of relief came from foreign philanthropists, most prominently the resident German and American communities made up of diplomats, missionaries and educators.<sup>5</sup> The German community in the city for the most part aided the relief efforts by providing nurses, keeping its school and orphanage running, and

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<sup>1</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. "Relief Work in Syria during the Period of the War."

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>4</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 211.

<sup>5</sup> At the outbreak of the war there were about five hundred American citizens in the Ottoman empire, most of them engaged in missionary, educational or diplomatic work.

setting up soup kitchens.<sup>6</sup> The Americans funded by private donations to the American Red Cross and the American Committee for Syrian and Armenian Relief (ACSAR) (later to become the Near East Relief (NER)) in New York, set up distribution centers, soup kitchens, workshops and orphanages beginning during the war and expanded their efforts to an unprecedented scale in the interwar period. The primary focus here will be American relief efforts, which is the best documented and arguably the most extensive and systematized aid effort.

The humanitarian practices employed by foreign philanthropists on the ground shaped Ottoman civilians' experience on the home front, forging a new social reality including the re-imagining of urban space, challenging the position of traditional forms and institutions of charity, disrupting normative gender relations, and shaping the childhood experience of the orphan survivors. At the same time, wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon were key experimental grounds and illustrative of important shifts in international humanitarian practices. What will become clear is that American relief work, which was rooted in religious obligations and inspired by nineteenth century domestic philanthropic enterprises, gradually developed into a strand of increasingly secular and professional international humanitarianism at the heart of which was economic development, and in particular agricultural development. Until World War I international humanitarian enterprises, in general, could not claim a continuing, central organization that could coordinate fundraising at home and relief abroad and were mostly limited to providing food, cloth and shelter through missionaries stationed in areas of emergencies.<sup>7</sup> And while many of the earlier missionary efforts foreshadowed practices of later international humanitarian organizations, World War I and more specifically the human catastrophe in the Ottoman Empire marked an important moment in the secularization and professionalization of international relief that had begun in the previous century. This development is most evident in the creation of the professional relief committee (ACSAR) that grew into a permanent and lasting organization (NER), incorporated by the American Congress in 1919.

Most important characteristic of American relief effort in Beirut and Mount Lebanon was that it was not only geared not toward relieving misery, but to end it permanently, as it almost immediately was directed toward making lasting change in society.<sup>8</sup> In this the goals of the relief efforts as they were articulated during the war, were reflective of earlier developments in American philanthropy in the United States in the early twentieth century. Philanthropy in the Anglo-American context had undergone significant change as it moved toward a systematized form of charity that surveyed society, defined causes and implemented cures of social ills. World War I set the stage for this kind of "scientific" giving to be implemented on an international scale. The focus on affecting lasting change in "Near Eastern" society, stood in contrast to relief efforts rendered by organizations like the International Red Cross (IRC) on the European continent, which was focused on providing medical care to soldiers and to a lesser extent civilians, food distribution, the creation of an information network for locating missing persons and prisoners of war, and inspecting prison camps. In Italy, the American Red Cross

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<sup>6</sup> The key German institutions in the city were the Zoar orphanage founded by the Kaiserswerth Diocese, its attached German school that was both boarding and day school and the hospital of the Knights of St. John, named locally the Prussian hospital. All three were established shortly after the civil war of 1860.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Daniel *American Philanthropy in the Near East; 1860-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970), 148 ff.

<sup>8</sup> The administration of the ACSAR was based on the corporate model, with a board of trustees, public charters, annual report and managerial staff. The ACSAR turned into an incorporated philanthropic institution in 1919 the NER.

active in coordination with local authorities opened daycare centers, hospitals and canteens or refugees. Herbert Hoover's Commission for Relief in Belgium concentrated on food distribution.<sup>9</sup> And although relief organization at times tried to create employment opportunities, such as the employment of Belgian lace workers or opening of sewing workshops to aid women devastated by the war in France, relief was for the most part distributive, aimed at alleviating the immediate symptoms of war.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, relief workers in the Middle East eagerly and early on connected aid to long-term projects addressing the causes of poverty and suffering, therein marking it, as the historian Keith Watenpaugh has pointed out, a "critical moment in the definition of modern international humanitarianism."<sup>11</sup>

American relief volunteers, many of whom had lived in Beirut and Mount Lebanon for years, some families like the Dodges and the Blisses even for generations, almost immediately sought to address what they perceived to be the structural deficits of their host society—anticipating a transformative social agenda. Relief workers identified the societal deficits that led to the extraordinary wartime suffering to be an economic dependency and the lack of lower middle class of literate peasants and artisan. Not mentioning the immediate and indicting causes of the famine, i.e. Ottoman conscription, wartime requisitioning and the Entente blockade, the Americans in their private and public correspondence blamed pre-war societal preferences of education and intellectual work over physical labor for much of the economic devastation. James Barton argued that the region had incurred such extraordinary suffering because education in the region had been "interpreted as book knowledge" which implied the inferiority and contemned for manual labor.<sup>12</sup> This vision—based partially on reality and partially on the philanthropists' imagination—led relief workers to employ practical strategies that moved far beyond addressing the immediate symptom of war, i.e. starvation. Instead it increasingly became the philanthropist's goal and for some an obsession to renovate a society that in the words of one of most influential Beirut philanthropists, Bayard Dogde was "like a jellyfish."<sup>13</sup> Dodge saw the spinelessness of this passively drifting sea creature as emblematic of Syrian society's lacking backbone for self-sustainability. It was, so he wrote, the moral obligation of the philanthropists to teach the jellyfish to stand up on its own—to become self-sufficient—by create a functioning middle class, made of economically productive citizens. Relief workers, not unlike European and American reformers of the preceding century, did not define a citizen to mean a person with full political rights. Rather "a citizen was an individual who accepted his or her role as a productive member of society."<sup>14</sup> Hence, the main wartime goal of the American relief workers on the ground became teaching self-sustainability. In practical terms this meant the incremental elimination of distributive "free charity" in form of money or goods and the subsequent systematization of philanthropy that demanded active involvement of the aid recipients and relied on methods of "scientific" giving.

Wartime experiences, in turn, would serve as a blueprint and inspiration for NER officials

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<sup>9</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 183.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 189.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920-27," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 228.

<sup>13</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1: Letter from Bayard Dodge in Beirut to his mother in New York, January 13, 1919.

<sup>14</sup> Lydia Murdoch *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 45.

as they expanded their work in the interwar period in size and geographical scope. Facilitated by the liberalizing and tutelary agendas of the mandate system and non-interference and at times support from French colonial authorities, the philanthropist in the post-war period added to their wartime agenda of teaching self-sustainability, instruction in self-discipline and self-government.<sup>15</sup> Within this scheme the orphaned child—a child that had either lost one or both parents or whose parents were unable to provide—increasingly became the most important object of relief work to the exclusion of adults. Local Syrian children orphaned by the famine and later thousands of orphaned Armenian refugee children, in the eyes of the humanitarians, were not only the most innocent, but also potentially the most dangerous symptom of war and violence. Bayard Dodge worried that if the “poor little children are not handled in a very large and efficient way; they will be a terrible curse on this land.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time the orphaned child presented an opportunity. It was a fabulous *tabula rasa*, whose bodies could easily be fed back to normal and their mind trained in ways of usefulness and their characters built for the purpose of life. The orphan, as Watenpaugh has argued, in the eyes of the relief workers, became an abstraction an “empty vessel into which [...] beliefs about change, national honor, and civilization could be poured.”<sup>17</sup> It simply was the perfect moldable clay to recreate society. And in the words of James Barton, founding member of the Near East Relief, the orphan was the “yet unpoisoned, unprejudiced open mind, the future citizen and arbiter of world destinies” and therefore should to be the “chief beneficiary of American philanthropy.”<sup>18</sup> In order to teach self-sustainability, self-discipline and self-government, the volunteers set up orphanages that were microcosms of society, complete with an economy, the illusion of a nuclear family, and supposedly just forms of government. The orphans, according to Dodge were “just that middle class and to fill the need for trained workmen and artisans,”<sup>19</sup> “which is to be the crying need of this country in the future.”<sup>20</sup> As relief work expanded, NER officials in their correspondence placed an increasing emphasis on the term citizenship and expanded its meaning. Whereas during the war citizenship was understood primarily in terms of an individual’s economic contribution to society, in the interwar period citizenship was to include knowledge of just practices of government, self-discipline, and an internalizing of the nuclear family as normative.

What is to note here is that the American relief workers intentions in raising orphans to be productive members of society and the vision of the child both as a danger and an opportunity were not unlike earlier Ottoman attempts at “rejuvenating economic activity by turning idle and wandering children into productive laborers.”<sup>21</sup> Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman state opened educational and disciplinary institutions, *Islahanes*, for orphans and poor children, in the main cities of the empire, like Istanbul, Damascus, Aleppo etc. While there is no record of such *Islahane* in Beirut or Mount Lebanon, we have to keep in mind that American

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<sup>15</sup> In general it seems that in the interwar period the French authorities were sympathetic to the American efforts, however the Americans were also careful not to alienate the French officials. See AUB: Bayard Dodge Collection: AA 2.3.4.7.4, passim.

<sup>16</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1: Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, March 10, 1919.

<sup>17</sup> Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations", 1337.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Vernon Vickrey, *Near East Relief: A Review for 1922 (Annual Report to Congress)* (New York, 1923). 28.

<sup>19</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland Dodge, March 16, 1919.

<sup>20</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland Dodge, April 5, 1919.

<sup>21</sup> Nazan Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities and the State: Vocational Orphanages (Islahanes) and Reform in the Late Ottoman Urban Space," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, No. 3 (2011), 493.

practice of enclosure, vocational training, and children as clay to be molded into useful citizens was not a new concept in the context of the Ottoman Empire. On the contrary according to the historian Nazan Maksudyan, the Ottoman *Islahanes* “represented a means of reintegration and of reshaping of civic responsibility in children,” and were part of Ottoman reforms and centralization efforts.<sup>22</sup> The Ottoman orphanages were opened in response to waves of refugees from the conflict zones in the European provinces in the late nineteenth century. Not unlike the American relief workers, Ottoman reformers saw these refugee children as potential danger to the urban and social order in the cities of the empire. The notion of the dangerous child certainly was neither unique to American sentiments nor Ottoman sentiments, but had occupied a significant place in European popular opinion and reform discourse beginning in the late eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> At the same time the orphan presented an opportunity; Ottoman reformers, like American relief workers, saw the formative potential of the child and perceived it to be as a “strong candidates for the new Ottoman citizenship” based ethnic and religious equality.<sup>24</sup> In addition to being the teaching ground for a new kind of citizenship, the Ottoman orphanages, like the wartime American institutions, were geared at the “rejuvenating domestic economy and augmenting skilled artisans.”<sup>25</sup> Vocational training took clear precedence over formal schooling in the *Islahanes*.<sup>26</sup> The trades taught included shoemaking, tailoring, rug weaving, cabinet making and printing and often the actual training was geared toward nearby local industry. The Ottoman reformers, in contrast to the Americans’ emphasis on agriculture, saw the orphanage education as instrumental in developing urban economy and reinvigorating local industries to combat the empire’s debt. Reformers lamented the closure of urban artisan workshops and thought training children to become talented and skilled workers would combat the empire’s dependence on European imports.<sup>27</sup> It comes to no surprise that the Ottoman state took up the plight of the orphan (or poor children) in its own realm. However, due to the failure of the Ottoman state to sufficiently take care of abandoned and orphaned children during and after the war, the children, for the most part were to be in the hands of non-state international organizations, such as the ARC and later the NER, that took it up on themselves to remedy their host society.<sup>28</sup>

### Humanitarianism, Politics and Power

The historian Emily Rosenberg has argued that the mere diversity of philanthropic impulses should lead us to question the familiar and over generalized interpretations of philanthropy that either celebrate American expansionism as progress or dismiss it wholesale as

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<sup>22</sup> Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities and the State," 493.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 497.

<sup>24</sup> The orphanages were to be religiously mixed in theory, and probably were to a certain extent in practice as well. See examples Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Mihdat Pasha as quoted by Ibid. 499.

<sup>26</sup> The children’s days were divided accordingly: two hours of basic reading, writing and arithmetic and six hours of training in arts and crafts. Ibid., 499.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 499.

<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that the Ottoman authorities did not render relief. On the contrary, Jamāl Pasha established a number of soup kitchens and orphanages in the Beirut and Mount Lebanon, but still many children were left uncared for.

imperialism.<sup>29</sup> The picture is much more complex and often enough philanthropic relief work has to be located as floating in between the two. The case study of philanthropy employed in Beirut and Mount Lebanon during and immediately after World War I, will illustrate the difficulty separating interventionist politics from humanitarian work. The former United Nations Commissioners for Refugees, Sadako Ogata has described humanitarian and political actors as “uncomfortable bedfellows” and a separation between the two would be entirely artificial.<sup>30</sup> In recent years scholars and humanitarian practitioners have discussed and debated the real limitations of humanitarianism free of politics, triggered by the moral dilemma that troubles humanitarians as bystanders to violence and at times through their humanitarian aid have abetted perpetrators.<sup>31</sup> The contemporary debates in essence are reflective of the difficulties in defining the boundaries of humanitarianism and its interventionist nature.

In the historical context of the post-World War I period, the conscious and at times unconscious connection between imperialism, colonialism and humanitarianism has evoked harsh criticism. David Rieff has argued that humanitarian organizations’ failure to insist on the core principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence has again and again led humanitarianism to resemble imperialism and colonialism.<sup>32</sup> However, we must bear in mind that humanitarianism as envisioned by Henri Dunant, founder of the ICRC, and evoked here by Rieff, has seldom existed and to perceive it and politics as polar opposites is impossible. While American relief workers in Beirut and Mount Lebanon sought to stay clear of political involvement the project inevitably was entangled in politics of social transformation. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the meaning, intent and impact of international interactions must be seen in their historical and localized context, rather than be described “according to generalized and globalized claims” in regards to its goals and effects.<sup>33</sup> What can be said is that the relief efforts, like other philanthropic impulses, were built on contradictory imagery. Although cast in apolitical terms, emergency aid as part of the American project in the Levant, as we will see, was not apolitical and invariably became enmeshed in politics.<sup>34</sup> It immediately becomes visible in the rhetoric employed by American relief workers that closely resembled that of nineteenth century imperial civilizing mission, was based on a western vision of a singular process of development, championed social engineering and was after all a top down approach. And as Barton put it the work left the “door open for America to participate in the social, economic and moral reconstruction of the Near East.”<sup>35</sup>

Despite this semblance to a colonial project in rhetoric and in its tutelary and transformative goals, however, most relief workers on the ground were neither interested in politics nor advocated an American interventionist move, at least when it came to the Arab

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<sup>29</sup> Emily Rosenberg, “Missions to the World: Philanthropy Abroad,” in Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 256.

<sup>30</sup> Sadako Ogata was the United Nations Commissioners for Refugees from 1990 to 2001. See Volker Schimmel, “Humanitarianism and Politics: The Dangers of Contrived Separation,” *Development in Practice* 16, No. 3/4 (2006).

<sup>31</sup> For example aid to the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Dunant first articulated the core principles of international humanitarianism in the context of the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863. David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), passim.

<sup>33</sup> Rosenberg, “Missions to the World,” 242.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>35</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, xiii.

provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>36</sup> The key relief officials on the ground were aware of contemporary dismissals and critiques of Red Cross and Near East Relief work as “simply for purposes of propaganda” and more importantly of the potential difficulties they could face if their work could only be accused of being for political purposes, and men like Dodge urged for a continued separation of the two.<sup>37</sup> It was hoped that if the United States became involved in any sort of business in the region that was not purely philanthropic, that relief work would be kept separate, unless “one may help the other.”<sup>38</sup> The message was a mixed one to say the least. So it would be false to indiscriminately dismiss American philanthropists as imperialists. Not only is the story more complicated, but also because such wholesale dismissal would potentially diminish the tremendous good accomplished by aid workers on the ground. After all for many thousands, the American efforts meant survival. What we may take away from this is the overall difficulty to locate the political in this international project. In the case of famine relief and orphan care in Beirut and Mount Lebanon we see the formulation of a humanitarian project—perceived by its practitioners as neutral and beneficial—that insisted on addressing underlying causes of suffering and thereby is implicated in a politics of transformation. The consequences of which may be measured by its immediate effects on shaping the social reality on the home front, the lasting effects on the life of survivors and on post-independence Lebanese development programs. I suggest, therefore that we take this early moment of international transformative humanitarianism to illustrate the difficulties and challenges in defining the boundaries of humanitarianism.

The strategies employed in wartime Beirut and Mount Lebanon have been translated into policies and practices of post-World War II humanitarian organizations. For example, the employment of mostly local educators and administrators foreshadowed a humanitarian aid practice that in the 1970s became known as “participatory development.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the ‘aid discourse’ employed in the Syrian project in the early twentieth century, I believe, was formative in framing the discourses of humanitarianism through economic development toward self-sustainability that persists until today as the mission of the Near East Foundation (NEF). While the involvement of the American government in relief work during and after the war is muddled, these private philanthropists experimented with techniques that would characterize governmental programs of foreign assistance, such as Truman’s Four Points program or the more recent federal agency USAID.

### Urban Relief: Educator, Missionaries and Diplomats

The Ottomans had only been at war for three weeks, when in November of 1914, food shortages in Beirut became desperate, riots broke out and stores and markets were looted. Witnessing the upheavals in the city, resident American diplomats, educators and missionaries inaugurated a concerted relief effort through the existing administrative apparatus of the five-

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<sup>36</sup> The story is different in the case of the Caucasus and the lobbying for an American mandate over Armenia in the region.

<sup>37</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, March 16, 1919.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Participatory development* seeks one to encourage local populations in development project and solicits its ideas and advice in setting up particular projects.

year-old chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC) in Beirut. According to Margaret McGilvary, this was the first national chapter ever established outside of the United States or its dependencies.<sup>40</sup> During a meeting of the local chapter of the ARC in December of 1914, the members elected American Consul Stanley Hollis, president; Professor James Patch from the SPC, vice-president; and Mr. Dana Manager of the American Mission Press, treasurer. Three additional members from the SPC were elected to the executive committee: Mr. Bayard Dodge, Mrs. H.G. Dorman and Mrs. H.H. Nelson.<sup>41</sup> The executive committee's make up exemplified a corporative spirit, bringing together missionaries, diplomats and educators for the purpose of alleviating the suffering in the city.<sup>42</sup> At a later meeting, the executive committee was charged with the investigation of local needs; to appoint sub-committees (that could include native volunteers) and to administer all funds.

Funding for the effort came mainly from abroad, most prominently the United States. The Beirut committee initially requested funds from the ARC in New York to begin its work. To secure the collection of funds, the Palestine-Syrian Relief Committee formed in New York organized a fundraising and advertisement campaign of unprecedented and scope. The aim was to help famine victims and relief the "distress conditions among civilian population in Syria."<sup>43</sup> The committee brought together politicians, journalist and prominent philanthropists from various religious backgrounds, all of who had personal interests in the Near East. Through the winter and spring of 1915, the committee worked to collect significant funds and transmit them to the region.<sup>44</sup> The Palestine-Syrian Relief Committee united with the Armenian Relief Committee that had formed in September of 1915, to become the ACSAR in November of 1915. All the while the president of the SPC, Howard Bliss, solicited funds from private donors. He was aware that the Rockefeller family had offered help to those in need, and he was hoping to arouse sympathy for the victims of famine in Beirut.<sup>45</sup> In addition the committee had full support from the American government; key members were close friends with President Wilson, who opened State Department files for the committee to gather information of the actual situation in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>46</sup>

The fundraising efforts of the ACSAR were impressive and are well known. Other efforts

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<sup>40</sup> The ARC chapter was established in response to the Armenian massacres in the *Vilayet* of Adana in 1909. McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 83.

<sup>41</sup> At a later point the Washington State Department ordered that no consular employees may be part of the relief effort and Stanley Hollis was forced to resign. So that Mr. Patch was elected president and Professor J. Steward Crawford vice-president. *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>42</sup> The ARC at a certain point ceases to act in the region. It was decided that its limited funds should all be invested in relief efforts in the European theatre of war. But even after that the members of the executive committee continued to serve on "what is now known as the Permanent Committee for American Relief in Syria." *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>43</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> The men associated with this earliest fundraising effort were American journalist Talcott Williams born in the Lebanese mountain village of 'Abeih (the locale of one of the first soup kitchens in Mount Lebanon), Jewish-American politician Oscar Strauss, who had been Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Rabbi Stephen Wise, Chairman of the Jewish Emergency Relief Commission, and Stanley White, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Mission.

<sup>45</sup> The Rockefeller foundation, upon request of Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau, Sr. initially donated \$ 20,000 to the Committee on Armenian Atrocities in September 1915, with the condition that the relief committees in the Near East would consolidate their efforts. AUB: *AUB Missionaries*: AA 7.2.1: Letter from Howard Bliss to Mr. Starr J. Murphy, December 30, 1914; Daniel, *American Philanthropy*, 150.

<sup>46</sup> Barton, *The Story of the Near East Relief*, xii.



like the émigré effort in Egypt to aid Syrian famine victims have been not been documented in the same detail. Here member being closer to the theatre of war, experiencing the British occupation forces preparing for battle in the Sinai, less removed from the homeland geographically, and culturally, as they still lived in a Arabic-speaking country and most importantly its ranks filled with people who had escaped the famine by a hair, the Syrian Diaspora in Cairo were eager to help their compatriots. In addition to funds from abroad, “numerous friends in Turkey are coming generously forward with their offers of assistance.”<sup>47</sup> And in late December the Bayard Dodge and his colleagues organized a large fundraiser for “the poor people near the college.”<sup>48</sup> Throughout the early month of the war different college clubs raised money for the relief work would put on various festivities that often would be attended by high Ottoman officials.<sup>49</sup>

The actual transfer of money was through diplomatic channels and the ARC, which furnished its Beirut chapter with ten thousand dollars to initiate humanitarian work in January of 1915.<sup>50</sup> Beirut’s ARC volunteers rented a large office near the SPC that would serve as its headquarters.<sup>51</sup> The relief work was first initiated in Beirut, because the city was in much greater need than any of the interior cities. As mentioned before, Beirut relied on commerce and trade and with the blockades faced much greater problems than interior cities, such as Aleppo and Damascus. Moreover, the American community was much better established in Beirut. According to Margaret McGilvary, “Beirut was a gathering point for the destitute of the country for miles around.” She reported an estimated forty thousand homeless and destitute people in Beirut.<sup>52</sup>

The funds from overseas were used for two purposes: the organization of a medical expedition to accompany the Ottoman army to the battlefield in the Sinai and to establish local relief committees that would be in charge of dealing with the “distress among the civilian population.” The president of the SPC Howard Bliss and Dr. Ward offered the medical mission to the Ottoman governor Jamāl Pasha in exchange for the permission of three British Doctors Graham, Webster and Gray to stay and continue their work at the college in Beirut. Jamāl Pasha accepted the offer and a committee, under the direction of Dr. Ward, was set up for fitting out and conducting the mission. In addition, Reverend George Doolittle of the American Mission was appointed Associate Director on January 17, 1915. The actual mission was made up of Ward himself, Doolittle, four German deaconesses who were trained nurses and worked in the German Johanniter Hospital in the city, as well as fifteen students of the senior classes in medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry.<sup>53</sup>

The civilian relief work of the Red Cross was organized into three departments: (1)

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<sup>47</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*: AA 7.2.1: Letter from Margaret McGilvary to Headquarters of American Red Cross in NY, January 1, 1915.

<sup>48</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Mother, December 28, 1914.

<sup>49</sup> For example the governor general of the *Vilayet* of Beirut as well as the mayor of Beirut were to attend a festivity put on by the student of the Flower of Culture Society of AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Aunt, January 28, 1915.

<sup>50</sup> The ARC supplemented these funds from time to time and apparently by November of 1916, the Beirut Chapter had received \$ 33,641.22 from Washington. *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>51</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Relief Work in Syria During the Period of the War (A Brief and Unofficial Account)” by Bayard Dodge.

<sup>52</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*.

<sup>53</sup> AUB: 49<sup>th</sup> Annual President’s Report, 1914-1915, pg. 18.

employment,<sup>54</sup> (2) distribution of flour and (3) assisting families of Ottoman soldiers in “obtaining from the government the promised allowance for support.”<sup>55</sup> Word that the Americans were distributing money, food and work spread in the city and between the months of January 1915 to August of 1915 the main office had to handle about fifteen hundred application a month. In February, Dodge reports that in one week about four hundred cases had been dealt with by the relief station near the college and approximately the same number in the relief station in the city proper.<sup>56</sup> Student volunteers from the SPC took charge of keeping track of these applications. To facilitate the work, the committee divided the city into ten “relief districts” and staffed them with native volunteers, supervised by an American woman, either a member of the college or the mission community in the city.<sup>57</sup> Dodge wrote that the relief districts were “controlled by different ladies of the college community and by different people of the Mission.”<sup>58</sup> Five or six of the districts as well as the employment office for women for the inhabitants of the Northern districts of the city were controlled from a large dormitory building that belonged to the College, located across the tramline from the College gate. Frederick Bliss and Bayard Dodge, who stood at the top of the stairs, screened the women for their place of residence, so that the women could be pointed toward the correct waiting room for the American female volunteers in charge of their district. Here they would undergo “investigation” as to their neediness and real poverty. Generally a student volunteer would stand at the bottom of the stairs to hold back the crowd. Other student volunteers would assist in prescreening the women and would act as ushers. The American women were assigned a male secretary who would record “statistics about the women and give them work or flour, if they deserved.”<sup>59</sup> In general, a week’s portion of flour was then given to those destitute families, without a wage earner.<sup>60</sup> Each day, Dodge writes “we see as many women as time allows for, which must average about sixty, for our half of the city alone.”<sup>61</sup> The male employment office was located in the Eye Clinic of the college and was open every afternoon.<sup>62</sup>

The committee encouraged its members in the districts to visit the homes of aid applicants to make sure that their need was real and that the money and flour used in the appropriate way. No one was helped until visited or thoroughly looked into.<sup>63</sup> The central committee formed a proactive “Investigation Committee” headed by the SPC’s professor of social science and staffed exclusively by American women. As in the domestic context, surveys were among the most popular tools “to probe beneath society’s layers for knowledge that would buttress reforms.”<sup>64</sup> American women surveyed the city, assessed the conditions of the poor, registered those in desperate need, and distributed flour and medicine.<sup>65</sup> Generally male college students escorted

<sup>54</sup> The Employment Department was split into two; one for the men headed by Professor Robert B. Reed and another of women supervised by Miss Anna Jessup, both of whom were associated to the SPC. McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>56</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collections*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Aunt, February 5, 1915.

<sup>57</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*, AA 7.2.1. Letter from Margaret Mc Gilvary, January, 1915.

<sup>58</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge, January 21, 1915.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 89.

<sup>61</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge, January 21, 1915.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*, AA 7.2.1. Letter from Margaret Mc Gilvary, January, 1915.

<sup>64</sup> Judith Sealander, “Curing Evil at Their Source: The Arrival of Scientific Giving,” in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility*, eds. Friedman and McGarvie, 237.

<sup>65</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*, AA 7.2.1. Letter from Margaret Mc Gilvary, January, 1915.

female volunteers, serving as translators and chaperones, as they maneuvered an urban public space that was almost exclusively male. The methods of the Beirut committee—namely first registering all applicants, investigating their worthiness and unannounced follow up visits of the poor, closely resembled practices of late nineteenth century American “scientific philanthropy.”<sup>66</sup> The premise of which was to avoid indiscriminate soup-kitchen charity, because in the words of American Philanthropist Thomas E. Paine it was powerless in coping with “the forces of experienced and crafty pauperism.”

Moreover, the methods first experimented with in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Anglo-American context and faithfully employed in wartime Beirut were based on a vision of philanthropy deeply indebted to a Calvinist understanding of the right kind of ‘doing good.’<sup>67</sup> Charity was an integral part of Calvinist ideology. But, as sociologist Max Weber has argued, it was a specific form of charity. He wrote that Calvinism destroyed “traditional forms of charity” first by eliminating miscellaneous almsgiving and then by systematizing it based on the principle that “a man proved himself exclusively in his vocational work.”<sup>68</sup> It was the obligation of a Christian to be “useful” and participate “actively in the renovation of one’s life, church and human society.” Giving alms was thought of as encouraging laziness and supporting beggary.<sup>69</sup> To solve the dilemma between Christian obligatory charity and potential slothfulness, Beirut’s female Red Cross volunteers visited the homes of aid applicants to determine their actual needs. If deemed worthy they handed applicants a paper with their family’s name and number of dependent. This paper could then be presented to their district’s distribution center in exchange for money. The committee soon realized that “even the very poor people were apt to spend some of their money on tobacco and other luxuries” and began to only distribute flour to avoid useless squandering of funds.

As staunch believers and loyal adherents to Puritan belief that “a man proved himself exclusively in his vocational work,”<sup>70</sup> the American committee from the get go was interested in putting aid recipients to work. Volunteers made sure note the applicant’s former occupation. The local press reported that American volunteers were determined “in case the poor person is

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<sup>66</sup> This was advocated by Protestant clergy and philanthropists, like Boston Lawyer Robert Treat Paine.

<sup>67</sup> Calvinist doctrine made salvation contingent on using all one’s divinely deposited endowments “for the very purpose of being distributed to the good of [y]our neighbors.” Charity here is understood as a practice of benevolent giving to those in need motivated by a religious or moral obligation. Charity is either a single or repeated act of giving that generates a dependent relationship between the giver and the receiver. The term philanthropy, conversely, is defined as “donations [either time or money] that are dedicated to a narrowly defined cause and the donations are targeted to affect a recognizable change in social condition.” Philanthropy, therefore, necessitates a systematized approach that could successfully bring about social change over time. Calvinist doctrine, as articulated by John Calvin himself in sixteenth-century Europe, made salvation contingent on using all one’s divinely deposited endowments “for the very purpose of being distributed to the good of [y]our neighbors.” Jean Calvin, *On the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library).

<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Philanthropy>, (accessed January 3, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen, 1965), 220 ff.

<sup>69</sup> In the history of the Calvinist church we see an institutionalization of care of the poor and the creation of charitable institutions that distributed daily necessities in turn for services. In the case of orphans teaching industrious work became part of institutionalized care. In Europe this coincides with the rise of the welfare state, which begins to compete in provisioning the poor with the church; an example of this are England’s social welfare programs and poor laws as well as see the systematization of orphan care that included vocational training of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries.

<sup>70</sup> Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 220 ff.

able-bodied” to give him or her some work paying one or two coins depending on age.<sup>71</sup> McGilvary articulated this sentiment in a letter to Red Cross donors in America, stating that the investigation committee worked closely with the employment committee in the city “for we consider it advisable, whenever possible, to supply work, rather than food and money.”<sup>72</sup> The Red Cross committee thought that aid recipients could be put to good use in particular in maintaining public sanitation. Consequently, it approached the Beirut municipality, asking it to utilize male aid recipients to clean the city’s streets. The Red Cross itself employed a number of women to sew clothes for the poor, lace making, and needlework and making bandages for the hospital expedition.<sup>73</sup> The SPC hired “Red Cross workers” to lay some terraces on the college grounds.<sup>74</sup> By February 1915, about three hundred men and an equal number of women had been employed in various ways by the American employment office.<sup>75</sup> The committee hoped that both men and women would be employed to clean the prisons, barracks, and police stations, a ambition that might have gone unfulfilled since there is no other reference to this kind of work among aid recipients.<sup>76</sup>

Money kept coming in from abroad and in May of 1915 a transfer of gold worth about eleven thousand dollars meant that the committee had enough money to last until June 1st. About half of the money was to be used to buy corn for the poor widows and destitute families in Beirut and other half was to be distributed in the surrounding districts such as Tripoli, Sidon, Damascus and Mount Lebanon. A portion of the money was used to employ eighty men a day to clean the street of Beirut. Bayard Dodge gave five thousand dollars to build roads, plant trees and draining, finishing walls, and leveling the preparatory grounds. The employment committee expected to use that money to employ about two hundred men at the time “to work week on and week off from June to December” and have another two hundred work the alternate weeks. The salary was to be 1.50 \$ a week, which would mean that at about four hundred families were kept going. Important work was done “for the college at a minimum cost and instead of making paupers out of the poor they will be taught to work. All men to whom work is given will be thoroughly investigated as to their needs.”<sup>77</sup> By mid-May, about 560 men were working off and on for the American relief, and money was already being sent into various districts in the mountains.<sup>78</sup>

Beirutis of all social classes responded positively to the American’s efforts. The overall high number of aid applicants from among the poor of all religions, the approving response of Beirut intellectuals in the press and cooperative reaction of local notables and politicians, who as municipal officials without hesitation organized sweeping and cleaning battalions, confirm the positive response. The press praised the committee’s work as “nothing but another proof offered by the Americans of the pains they are taking in the affairs of the country in which they are living and the effort [...] to render sincere service, free from ulterior motive.”<sup>79</sup> The college campus became what in today’s terms might be described as a “humanitarian space,” providing

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<sup>71</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī*, January 14, 1915.

<sup>72</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*, AA 7.2.1. Letter from Margaret Mc Gilvary, January 1915.

<sup>73</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge, January 21, 1915.

<sup>74</sup> AUB: 49<sup>th</sup> Annual President’s Report of the SPC, 19-20.

<sup>75</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Aunt, February 5, 1915.

<sup>76</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge, January 21, 1915.

<sup>77</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, May 2, 1915.

<sup>78</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge May 15, 1915.

<sup>79</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī*, January 8, 1915.

sanctuary for those enclosed in it.

The relief work on the ground had real effects the everyday life in the city. As well-financed and well-organized, it challenged the position of religious institutions and native charitable societies, which faced downturns in donations and difficulties in obtaining supplies, as the main distributor of charity to the poor. Beirutis now were registered and surveyed by a non-state, foreign agency. American volunteers labeled Ottoman civilians as needy, poor, and able-bodied and divided the city into relief districts according their vision of the city, at the heart of which was the headquarters of the relief committee near the American college. As a result, the poor and needy would traverse the city along the paths of the resident American's understanding of the city. The fact that foreign female volunteers would visit the homes of the poor challenged social norms, as they impeached on the male authority by evaluating the head of household's ability or inability to provide. Economic shifts in the decades leading up to war, had pushed women to seek employment outside the home, relief employment accelerated the disruption in gender roles.

Ottoman authorities, in particular the Ottoman governor 'Azmī Bey, increasingly described the actions of the Americans as undermining the credibility of the Ottoman state, and as creating alternative loyalties. These fears were not unwarranted, in particular since the efficient work of the Americans stood in stark contrast to the fledgling efforts of the municipality at rationing and market controls, and the fact that Ottoman state did not have any formal food supply policies to feed its civilians until 1917. In August of 1915, the governor ordered the suspension of all foreign relief work in the city, and informed the college administration and the Red Cross committee that "any one desiring to distribute charity could do so openly through the municipality [...] otherwise no distribution could be made."<sup>80</sup> What followed were arrests of relief workers, intimidation campaigns, and in some cases exile to Anatolia, marking the end of the first stage of relief work.<sup>81</sup> The same day as the governor issued the order, Mrs. Gerald F. Jr. Dale (Mary Bliss), Superintendent of the American College Hospitals in Beirut, was arrested. Mrs. Dale accompanied by two local volunteers, was making her monthly distribution on behalf of the ARC to the poor women in the neighborhood of Mar Nicolas when she was taken into custody. The police took her and her two companions to the local police station and confiscated the money they carried (ninety-five *ghurūsh* and thirty *paras*). The chief of the police informed the party that the American, Austrian and German Consulates had been notified of the prohibition of aid giving. After a fierce lecture, the chief of police released Mrs. Dale, who after all was a high profile persona of the foreign community. Her arrest had the potential for a

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<sup>80</sup> AUB: *AUB Missionaries*, AA 7.2.1. Letter from Howard Bliss to American Consul of Beirut Stanley Hollis, August 17, 1915.

<sup>81</sup> 'Azmī Bey's order caused a split among its members of the Red Cross Committee; the missionaries insisted that relief work should continue in secret and against Ottoman orders, and continued to distribute remittances channeled into Beirut through Standard Oil Corporation and later a German banker. The secretive dealings did not go unnoticed, and the missionaries increasingly became subject of intimidation campaigns, ending with their exile to Anatolia. The fact that the Red Cross Committee was made up of members that had long-standing ties to the community and in particular those attached to the American College this presented a moral dilemma. The college administration, to the dismay of many of its employees, pledged political neutrality to preserve its large investments, which meant that relief work had to stop. Throughout the war we see the college administration in close contact with the military commander Jamal Pasha, hosting, courting and flattering him, avoiding any mention in their correspondence of famine and the overall devastating situation in the region. The Ottoman authorities clearly perceived any aid to civilians as political. For a detailed account of the American Mission Press during the war see, McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*.

political scandal. The young men who had helped her, however, were kept in custody. Upon hearing the story, two SPC senior faculty, James Crawford and Frederick Bliss, visited the governor himself. The governor, agreed to release the students, but reiterated to the educators that “any one desiring to distribute charity could do so openly through the municipality [...] otherwise no distribution could be made.”<sup>82</sup> The Americans associated with the SPC stopped their relief work; in particular since the college administration was eager to maintain good relations with the Ottoman and was not willing to risk the closure of their school. The closure of the French institution of higher education and the confiscation of French properties served as deterrent.<sup>83</sup> Howard Bliss wrote to Cleveland H. Dodge in New York:

We can still hardly believe the facts, that the French schools have been confiscated; [...] that the proud new and beautiful buildings of the French school of Medicine are being stripped of their equipment and are themselves in the keeping of the Ottoman authorities; that the French Hospital here has likewise been taken over by the Turkish Government!<sup>84</sup>

Realizing the dangers to the investments of the Independent Schools in the Ottoman Empire, the American educators were careful not to offend the Ottoman authorities. All foreign schools except for the American and the German institutions had been closed and “new nationalistic laws were passed, forbidding new foreign institutions to be started, [...] and making the study of Turkish necessary and compulsory chapel illegal.”<sup>85</sup> In the case of the American institutions in Beirut the new law was not enforced for a while, mainly because the administrators were able to convince Jamāl Pasha of its valuable contribution to the war effort. Moreover, the SPC enjoyed special favor because the nephews of an important government official were studying at Robert College in Istanbul, and the Ottoman postmaster of Beirut had registered his son with the school in November of 1914.<sup>86</sup> Whereas neutrality is generally thought of as key ingredient for international humanitarian aid to be successful, here it took on an entirely different meaning. The Ottoman authorities in the city defined humanitarian aid as interventionist and for the Americans to remain neutral was to forfeit humanitarian aid. Neutrality would be the best guarantee to preserve the community’s investments and status in the empire. Although the statement of Dodge “fortunately as Americans under the protection of a neutral man of war, we are trusted by all and the College is the center of confidence and hope” is exaggerated since not everyone trusted the intentions of the Americans, it shows that neutrality was at the heart of maintaining the American position in the empire.<sup>87</sup> The key goal of the SPC’s administration was to keep its school running, and their staff, faculty and students fed throughout the war, even if that meant not helping those suffering outside the gates. “We feel especially glad that the students are of such good spirits, because the people in the city are in

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<sup>82</sup> AUB: AUB Missionaries: AA 7.2.1. Letter from Howard Bliss to American Consul of Beirut Stanley Hollis, August 17, 1915.

<sup>83</sup> The Ottoman authorities confiscated properties of the French Medical Faculty in December of 1914. See PO: Diary of Father Loius Cheikho, 10.

<sup>84</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3, Letter from Howard Bliss to Cleveland H. Dodge, November 28, 1914.

<sup>85</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, December 2, 1914.

<sup>86</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, December 2, 1914.

<sup>87</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Family, December 2, 1914.

constant state of fear and groundless panic.”<sup>88</sup> This was to stay that way. The inside of the college gates was to be a safe and well fed haven, even if the world around it would fall apart.

‘Azmī Bey’s order and instructions from the Washington State Department that consular officials should not hold positions in the Red Cross chapter, in an effort not to mix politics with humanitarian aid, changed the composition of the committee itself and caused a split among its members. The Presbyterian missionaries, under the leadership of Mr. Dana the manager of the American Mission Press, insisted that relief work in the city should continue even if it had to be done secretly and was against Ottoman orders. Dana was willing to take the risk. Since his organization was still able to receive funds from abroad, although with great difficulties, he sought it imperative to continue.<sup>89</sup> It was advertised in the Arabic diaspora press that money could be sent through the Mission Press. Mr. Dana and his staff continued to distribute cash quietly, under the nose of the governor and the chief of police. Their work, however, did not go unnoticed. The Beirut governor sought to intervene by first cutting the Press off from all its mail. Second, the governor staged a number of intimidation campaigns, and publicly accused the Press of giving money to the locals on behalf of the French and British governments. Third, ‘Azmī Bey charged the Press with interfering in the business of local banks. He, even, accused Mr. Dana personally of tempering with the Turkish paper currency, blaming him for its depreciation to one-fourth of the gold value.

The Press’s greatest difficulty, however, was securing money and finding a way for it into the empire. The direct transfer of funds was no longer possible. Dana instead sold Mission Press checks in return Turkish paper money. Moreover, the currency exchange transaction meant tremendous loss in value of the money sent from abroad. This at times earned the Press criticism from the donors as well as the recipients. But still, for many people in Lebanon and Beirut the money given even at an extreme price was the only means of survival. The public pressure on the Press and the hostility against it from the side of the authorities continued to grow, but Dana continued the work to the best of his ability, even when during the last three years of the war, his “life was one of constant annoyance and danger.”<sup>90</sup> Dana was eventually exiled and sent to Constantinople for trial.

While ‘Azmi Bey forbade the American to help in the city, he organized some of the wealthy women in the city to start public charities.<sup>91</sup> According to Dodge, the governor organized nearly thirteen hundred poor women and children to “live in a hospice or to work in industrial centers.” During the war a committee of Beirut women—supplied with foodstuffs by the Ottoman governor—ran these centers. The industrial centers employed thirteen hundred girls, who would come every morning to the building and were instructed in weaving, rug making and needlework. Their products were then sold to the wealthy families in the city and the money used to support the effort. Dodge hints that the indirect result of these efforts was that many women for the first time had left their homes to work outside. Another Ottoman institution, run by the mayor of the city, was an orphanage of very young children and infants.

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<sup>88</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.6.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Aunt in New York, November 30, 1914.

<sup>89</sup> Already in December of 1914, the Beirut Mission Press informed the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in New York City that it should continue to accept money from the Syrian Diaspora to be transmitted to relatives back home.

<sup>90</sup> For a detailed account of the American Mission Press during the war see, McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*.

<sup>91</sup> These will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

Unfortunately there is very little information on these institutions and more research is needed, but apparently the six hundred children housed in the Beirut orphanage received simple lessons, and the mayor had taken a special interest in this orphanage realizing that the children were poorly fed and under nourished. The best-equipped orphanage that was kept up by the Ottomans during the war was that of the catholic nuns Filles de la Charité. The government allowed the local Syrian nuns and manager to keep the institution running and provide care for six or seven hundred children under close supervision of the Ottomans. The governor also “employed a large number men making a new city park,” in the construction and repair of roads, as well as in turning the military barracks of Beirut into a “splendidly equipped government house.”<sup>92</sup>

### Moving into the Mountains

With their abilities to distribute aid in Beirut strictly limited, Americans focused their relief effort toward Mount Lebanon. The move was marked by important developments. The work on the ground at this particular moment exhibited a clear break with *distributive charity* toward *practical philanthropy* that now was intended to effect lasting structural change in the beneficiary society. It is here that the promotion and the instruction of, what Bayard Dodge called, active citizenship—defined as an individual’s economic contribution to the community—was first articulated and developed in practice. The American’s move was supported by the Mount Lebanon’s Ottoman governor Ali Munif Bey who intimated that he would be grateful if the ARC would transfer, what he called, “the relief machinery that had operated so effectively in Beirut” to his province. The only demand he made was that the Americans would work with the locally appointed representatives of the Red Crescent. The Red Cross Executive Committee in Beirut elected a joint relief committee that included both employees from the American College and from the American Mission Press, as well as the representative for the Red Crescent was a local judge named Muhammed Effendi Izzedine.<sup>93</sup>

The joint committee worked hard in the mountains from December of 1915 to April of 1917, when America entered the war. To coordinate the effort of the committee, Dr. Doolittle had moved to Ba’abda the seat of the Lebanese government. When ACSAR announced that in December of 1916, a shipload of food and clothing was to arrive in Syria, the committee held meetings in order to coordinate the reception and distribution of aid. The committee immediately decided that there was no way to aid Beirutis, due to the hostile attitude of ‘Azmi Bey. Instead the committee undertook a survey of the mountain, and “more than a thousand villages in Lebanon were personally visited by Red Cross agents and list of needy individuals were made up in three categories of need.”<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the committee secured warehouses, conducted an elaborate census, and prepared to act fast once the cargo landed. Unfortunately,

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<sup>92</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Relief Work I Syria during the Period of the War: (A Brief and Unofficial Account)” composed by Bayard Dodge.

<sup>93</sup> Izzedine was a committed man and his death from typhus in the winter of 1917 was a tremendous blow for the work in the mountain. He apparently continued to work even while in his sick bed. It was at this time that the Armenian and Syrian Relief Committee (ACSAR) took over the financial support of relief work. ACSAR was the result of the merger of smaller relief committees in November of 1915. James Barton was its president. A great fundraising effort was asserted in the United States. In October of 1916, for example, president Wilson designated two days as gift-days for those in need in both Armenia and Syria. Mc Gilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 92; 87

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



the ship never made it to the Syrian coast.<sup>95</sup>

In the summer of 1916, Bayard Dodge set up a soup kitchen—locally referred to as *mat'am* or restaurant—in the mountain village of 'Abeih.<sup>96</sup> Before that, in cooperation with some colleagues and a number of local officials, Dodge began by distributing small sums of money to the most 'trusted' inhabitants of the village, who were to pass it on to the most needy people in their community., 'Honest' shopkeepers received money from the Americans in exchange for giving "food to a few families in abject poverty."<sup>97</sup> The second step was food distribution, which was funded by the American, but administered by a committee of village leaders. The village committee made a list of needy families and assured that every person was given a *rotl* (or 2.56 kg) of wheat every two weeks. Soon thereafter, the Americans opened a soup kitchen in 'Abeih and a second one in the neighboring village of Sūq al-Gharb, under the supervision of George Scherer. The two kitchens combined took care of eight hundred people.<sup>98</sup>

The Americans insisted from the very beginning everyone who "could do something in return for his or her food was called upon to work." Adult men, for example, were employed to build and repair roads. Those who refused to work were immediately dropped from the list. Even little children were told to collect wood or spin raw wool on hand spindles. Older girls and women were expected to spin wool and then knit garments for the winter.<sup>99</sup> Dodge argued that:

It seemed best to encourage self-respecting labor, paying for the same in grain, bread or cooked food. This seemed better than giving help to people like beggars, even though a minimum return of labor was required. Instead of developing the begging instinct by offering free charity, self-respect was maintained by offering labor. As we gradually introduced the change, it was pathetic to see how far the pauperizing tendency had developed. Some even preferred to beg rather than to bring two pounds of wool weekly or to knit half a pound of wool per week. However the new plan was developed and in the end won its way.<sup>100</sup>

Employment in turn for food was further developed over time. The first large-scale labor organized in 'Abeih was the planting of grain. A local Druze sheikh who had the skills, abilities and the desire to help was put in charge. Thirty to forty men were employed to plant wheat, barley, beans, tomatoes, millet and corn. The cost of the undertaking was about three thousand Ottoman liras for the season, the yield of which would be able to feed no less than a hundred people. Purchasing the necessary amount on the market, according to Dodge would have been much more expensive, hence the work was a great success. The second industry developed on a large scale was weaving. Since imported manufactured cloth was increasingly hard to be obtain and prices had increased significantly, this promised to be a profitable industry. The first attempt was to set up a small scale weaving room under the personal direction of the director of the soup kitchen. However he lacked the technical knowledge and information about the local conditions

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<sup>95</sup> The government of Mount Lebanon and the Red Cross committee worked together to produce this census that divided People into classes and degrees of poverty. AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. "Relief Work I Syria During the Period of the War: (A Brief and Unofficial Account)" composed by Bayard Dodge.

<sup>96</sup> 'Abeih is located in the *Shuf* district about fifteen kilometers from Beirut adjacent to the Beirut-Damascus road.

<sup>97</sup> AUB: *Bliss collection*, AA. 2.3.2.18.3. "Report of the Soup Kitchens in 'Abeih and Souk al-Gharb."

<sup>98</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge in Beirut to Cleveland H. Dodge in New York, October 5, 1918.

<sup>99</sup> AUB: *Bliss collection*, AA. 2.3.2.18.3. "Report of the Soup Kitchens in 'Abeih and Souk al-Gharb."

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

which “no American possessed or could easily acquire.” Secondly, the demand for woven cotton cloth was so high that a much larger industry was necessary. The first two orders alone made up a total of four hundred and eighty yards.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, the aid volunteers employed a master of the trade and paid him a decent living wage, “so that he would give his best energy and interest in the management of the industry.” The master was carefully selected based on his skills, honesty as well as his need. He was given full responsibility and a free hand.<sup>102</sup> The employment of local experts would be an important strategy of American relief efforts.

American relief workers also invested in the local silk industry. Initially the Americans designated six thousand liras to purchase the precious little cocoons, and employed six men as commissioned buyers. Since the unwinding the delicate silk thread from the cocoon required special equipment, the American rented three separate silk factories. Staffed by over sixty people—girls and women for the most part—the factories worked in full speed to unwind the raw silk. The second step was to “spin” the silk—unwinding it onto separate reels according the thickness of the thread, converting it into threads of four to six plies, bleaching and dying, and rolled onto small skeins. Thirty young women from over half a dozen villages in the mountains were employed to this work. The silk was then to be woven into clothe, which proved to be the more difficult project, as silk weaving required precision and patience. “Many of the weavers came and remained a few days and were dismissed for careless work.”<sup>103</sup> According to Dodge, the reason was that in the first two years of the war all the weaving industries were halted and many of the master weavers had died as casualties of famine and conscription. In Sūq al-Gharb there were several young men who attempted to learn the difficult trade, but there were only a couple that succeeded.

The American philanthropists developed many different projects that needed workers. For example wool was purchased in large quantities that needed careful washing and drying. Every day six porters and nine women left the soup kitchen in the early morning hours to wash the wool in a stream four miles from the village. Another group of women sat and stuffed sheep to be killed in the autumn. Part of the boiled down meat and fat was used in the soup kitchen and some was sold to private families. In addition some skilled workmen, stonemason, were put permanently on the payroll of the soup kitchen to improve the facilities. The efforts, in general, were based on local pre-war industries and skills. The philanthropists early on realized that the best way to re-build industry and create employment opportunities was to hire local experts who were given full responsibility for the task at hand, marking the beginning of what has been coined “participatory development” in the 1970s. Participatory development is meant “to give the poor a part in initiatives designed for their benefit” with the goal of creating long term and sustainable industry.<sup>104</sup> It is unclear, however, whether or not the work projects were entirely taken over by local workers or if the projects became self-sustainable industries without the monetary aid of the American relief efforts.

The Brumana soup kitchen underwent a similar development as the ones in ‘Abeih and Sūq al-Gharb. It was the British doctor Arthur Dray, a professor of dentistry, who made sure that

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<sup>101</sup> Dr. Dray at the Brumana soup kitchen had ordered 160 yards for the orphanage and the American hospital 320 yards for nurses’ uniforms. AUB: *Bliss collection*, AA. 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souq al-Gharb.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Andrea Cornwall, *Beneficiary, Consumer, Citizen: Perspectives on Participation for Poverty Reduction* (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2000), 11.

the Brumana soup kitchen grew from feeding a dozen people in 1916, to an establishment that employed two or three hundred people who took care of 1200 refugees and people in need, nine-tenth of which were children.<sup>105</sup> Hundreds of people came from neighboring villages to be fed. Each needy person received a number of tickets that could be exchanged for a “number of loaves of bread and a dipper of soup.” The poor were obliged to appear in person or sent a friend with the ticket. Part of a large hotel and many small houses were used for the work. Here too sheep were fattened and woolen garments knitted by the hundreds. In addition to a soup kitchen that distributed food in exchange for services as it was the case in ‘Abeih, the Brumana soup kitchen grew into a large orphanage, which throughout the summer and winter of 1917 gave shelter to over six-hundred children. The children were clothed and fed and taken care of by “a large staff of nearly a hundred teachers and workers.”<sup>106</sup> The children “attended classes, they exercised in out of door play and gymnastic drill and employed their leisure time in industrial occupation.”<sup>107</sup> The girls spun wool or knitted dresses for themselves and their younger siblings. The boys learned carpentry and masonry to such an extent that they were able to build a small stone house that was used as a kitchen.<sup>108</sup> The Brumana case took the vision of the American Philanthropists a step further in that here skills were taught to those who had none, providing the child with a vocation and a calling that would not only guarantee divine favor, but also would be a great contributions to society at large.<sup>109</sup>

The work of the American philanthropists aided altogether about five thousand five hundred people in the northern Shūf and Matn districts of Mount Lebanon. This region was generally better known by the American philanthropists, many of who had summer homes in villages like ‘Abeih, Shweir and Ras al-Matn, and many of the villages were easier accessible, since the Beirut-Damascus road as well as railway cut right through the area. Two more soup kitchens were set up in Tripoli, and Americans aided refugees in Zahle, and Baalbek. In the spring of 1918, the attention of the American’s was drawn toward Damascus where a great number of destitute Armenian refugees had found shelter. However, relief work in Damascus was a delicate undertaking and complicated by the fact that no or few Americans lived in the city and communication with Beirut was difficult during the war. According to reports on the relief work in the mountains, relief was rendered to needy people of all classes and sects, and disregard of religious beliefs. It is reported that both Druze and Christian denominations were fairly equally represented.<sup>110</sup>

Overall the American Philanthropists despite their restrictions in the city were able to expand relief work, which would be the basis for the post-war efforts discussed below. By September of 1918, the directors of the soup kitchen decided that in the coming year “little or no free charity, except in very exceptional cases” would be given. Instead all relief funds were to be

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<sup>105</sup> Dray had been able to stay in the Ottoman Empire despite being the citizen of an enemy country, due to the diplomatic maneuvering of the SPC’s administration and emergency dental care he rendered to Jamāl Pasha. McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 222.

<sup>106</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Relief Work I Syria During the Period of the War: (A Brief and Unofficial Account)” composed by Bayard Dodge.

<sup>107</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 226.

<sup>108</sup> Whereas the ethnicity of the children is not outright mentioned they must have been local Arabic-speaking children. The aid work here was not completely removed from religious education as the children were made to recite the Lord’s Prayer in Arabic before every meal, regardless I presume of their own religion. Ibid., 227.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>110</sup> AUB: *Bliss Collection*, AA 2.3.2.18.3. “Report of the Soup Kitchens in ‘Abeih and Souq al-Gharb.”

used in the industries. Dodge argued that “pauperizing a land is worse than starving it” and that it was the duty of the men in charge to do everything in their power to make “the people feel some self-respect and teach them the love of work.”<sup>111</sup> In the beginning of January 1919, the relief work continue to run in the mountain districts and Dodge reported that now “twelve looms are running, making silk, cotton and woolen clothes and many are spinning thread.”<sup>112</sup> Dodge saw the benefit from industry development not only to be teaching young men responsibility, develop their skills and building up their self-respect and confidence, but also he saw in these young men “the hope for a future generation of honest, efficient businessmen.”<sup>113</sup> The workings of the ‘Abeih soup kitchen illustrate the shift from individually distributed monetary aid, to food distribution to systematized philanthropy that was—if not to change society at large—to either provide or reinstate self-respect.

By the end of the war practices on the ground increasingly translated into a discourse that focused on the desire to install a ‘love for work’ and ‘self respect,’ implying that neither was an attribute of Near East society. The animators of soup kitchens in Mount Lebanon were unremitting volunteers, their experience irreplaceable, and their suggestions influential in postwar reconstruction. The men remained in key positions even as their organizational affiliations continuously changed. When in the end of the war, an ARC committee arrived in Beirut as part of the British occupation forces relief work was immediately picked back up in the city. Mary Bliss organized a soup kitchen near the college ground and the Red Cross started a “huge central cooking plant” from which they sent supplies to five or six substations in the city.”<sup>114</sup> Both Bayard Dodge and his wife Mary were in charge of caring for one of these substations near the college. Here they gave out bread and cooked food to about five hundred and fifty persons everyday. Bayard expressed his discomfort with the distribution of food and expressed his wish to add industrial work. He wrote: “Personally, I feel strongly that everyone ought to work, if they receive food at the soup kitchen unless of course ill health prevents.”<sup>115</sup> According to Dodge, what “the people need now is not easy charity and sentimental sympathy, but hard work and strict justice. Years of despotism and war have demoralized the people, so that what the need most of all is to learn self-respect and to shift for themselves.”<sup>116</sup> Dodge was positive that there would be plenty of opportunity to put aid recipients to work.

By January 1919, about two thousand five hundred people were receiving food from the various soup kitchens set up in the city by the Americans. A great effort was made to arrange for most of them to do some work in exchange. As in previous years, the small boys were to clean and repair the streets and the woman and girls to spin and knit wool. The Americans arranged for several hundred of the women to do the wool work in an empty college building, but complained that it was difficult to teach them to be “punctual and business like.”<sup>117</sup> The system set up by the Americans required each needy person must work a certain number of hours to earn a meal ticket and to be entitled to receive their share of the noon distribution of bread and

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<sup>111</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 8.

<sup>112</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, February 9, 1919.

<sup>113</sup> McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 40.

<sup>114</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, December 21, 1918.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Mother, January 13, 1919.

<sup>117</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Mother, January 13, 1919.

soup.<sup>118</sup> A small day nursery was started, so that women could leave their youngest children and go to work for an allowance of bread and soup at noon. In the post-war efforts the American philanthropists continued their effort to employ the poor and needy in the city, to guarantee a measure of self-respect.

### Enclosure, Hygiene, and the Nuclear Family

As the Ottomans withdrew, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was first on the scene. The ICRC was faced with the question as to what to do with the Ottoman orphanages and industrial shops that already existed, and in the interim period it was unclear of who was going to be in charge of these institutions. It took over the work in the 'Abeih and the Brumana soup kitchens in the winter of 1918. However, one of the large industrial centers had already been abandoned and another one, according to Dodge, was hanging on by a thread. After interviewing Dodge, the Deputy Commissioner of the American Red Cross, James Nicol, understood the urgency and drafted a "Memorandum concerning care of orphans." Estimating that there were at least twenty thousand orphans in Mount Lebanon and the Syrian coast, the Commissioner suggested gathering the orphans into institutions to keep them alive. And in his words "use the opportunity to make of them a real contribution to the effective citizenship of the Near East." He argued that it would be necessary to break with customs of the past when orphans in the West and in Syria were placed into institutions but were treated based on a wholesale plan. This he asserted prevented orphans from having the opportunity to develop individuality or initiative. In the end he wrote they are turned out at the age of seventeen with no knowledge of the world. Nicol instead suggested creating villages of orphans that would be microcosms of society at large: complete with an economy, family and a government.

The practice of raising children without parental care in family like settings to prepare them for the future had been experimented with in Britain beginning in the 1870s with the building of "orphan villages."<sup>119</sup> The British model had served as inspiration in America where men like Charles Loring Brace took up the charge and developed farm foster care, which would allow children to be integrated into family life and develop work habits. Nicol's plan was reflective of these historical developments. He argued that "all motives, natural rewards and punishments, that occur in normal life should be present in these orphan villages."<sup>120</sup> Bayard Dodge confirmed the desire:

We hope that we can arrange for some sort of orphan city, which will as far as possible reduce the institutional atmosphere of the orphanage to the minimum, as there is nothing sadder than to see a lot of little kids being brought up without any chance for self expression or individual development, like so many machines in a factory.<sup>121</sup>

In the summer of 1919, the Red Cross passed on responsibility for relief work in Syria to the Near East Relief (NER), which was eager to expand its work. "It was the mass appeal of the children that spurred the committee to prolong its activities."<sup>122</sup> Dodge was elected to carry out

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<sup>118</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, January 28, 1919.

<sup>119</sup> Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, passim.

<sup>120</sup> *The New Near East* (February, 1920), 13.

<sup>121</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, April 5, 1919.

<sup>122</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, xii.

Nicol's plan. The NER orphanages in Greater Syria, as we will see, embodied a systematized form of philanthropy that relied on regulatory and disciplinary mechanism, as well as teaching self-sustainability, self-governance, and self-discipline. It was argued that the children "for three, four and even five years had led a life outside the normal environs of childhood," in an existence that "was little more than animal, so wholly was it concerned with self-preservation."<sup>123</sup>

Discipline, the NER officials thought, was the cure for years of homeless existence and was essential to organizational efficiency, in light of what would become an overwhelming number of orphans.<sup>124</sup> James Barton and his colleagues saw the antidote to the traumatized stupor in which they saw children sitting passive, hidden in corners, to be "character building" through a system of corrective mechanisms that involved hygiene, work, physical exercise, surveillance and punishment. Consequently, the orphanages would be uniquely structured around "technologies of behavior, which were aimed at integrating the orphans into society,"<sup>125</sup> based on an excessively idealized version of adult autonomy, independence and maturity.<sup>126</sup> The child had to be elevated from being a passive victim to an active adult, an autonomous individual, and by extension a historical agent. The NER made it its prerogative to bring up its orphans "to maturity and fit them for useful citizenship."<sup>127</sup>

In March 1919, Bayard Dodge wrote to his father Cleveland Dodge, founding member and president of the NER, that the NER had so many orphans that they did not know how to take care of them. The NER at this point was in charge of about 2,500 orphans in Beirut and Mount Lebanon most of these were Arabic-speaking.<sup>128</sup> In light of this large number—a number that still would increase significantly—Bayard Dodge worried that if the "poor little kids are not handled in a very large and efficient way, they will be a terrible curse on this land" and the only way to solve the problem was to:

Pick out a number of the neediest and worthiest children and to bring them up in such a way that they may become great asset to the country. There are plenty of very rich and plenty of very poor, but the war has to a certain extent demoralized the middle class of artisans, who ought to be the backbone of the population, so that I hope that we may be able to train these orphans to be just that middle class and to fill the need for trained workmen and artisans.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The New Near East (October 1920), 10.

<sup>124</sup> Barton, *Story of Near East Relief*, 223. In addition, Rebecca Saunders and Shushan Avagyan have discussed the detrimental effects of the discipline on the children's ability or possibility to deal with the trauma that they had encountered during deportation, massacres, and in the Syrian case famine as they have been represented in literature. See Rebecca Saunders and Shushan Avagyan, "(Un)Disciplined Traumatic Memory: Mission Orphanages and the Afterlife of Genocide in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's *The Daydreaming Boy*," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 4 (July, 2010).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Myra Bluebond-Langner and Jill E. Korbin, "Challenges and Opportunities in the Anthropology of Childhoods: An Introduction to "Children, Childhoods and Childhood Studies"," *In Focus: Children, Childhoods, and Childhood Studies* 109, no. 2 (2007), 243.

<sup>127</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.2. Doc. No. 17

<sup>128</sup> The actual number of orphans was naturally much higher. The French mandate government for example was in charge of three thousand orphans.

<sup>129</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1 Doc. No. 44.

Whereas the wartime soup kitchens initiated the focus on teaching practical skills and on provisioning the poor and urging a move away from ‘free’ charity, the tone of the aid discourse in the post-war period changed significantly. The objective, articulated by Dodge, was to affect a recognizable change in the social conditions, an element that is not found in the previous writing and moved beyond just simply teaching self-respect. Dodge now asserted that if the orphans were taken care of in the right way they “will form the backbone of a splendid new spirit and citizenship.”<sup>130</sup> Here is important to note the addition of citizenship to the vocabulary of the relief worker. Dodge argued that “what the people need now is not easy charity and sentimental sympathy, but hard work and justice.”<sup>131</sup> He suggested that although a great deal of charity would still need to be “indulged” in during the winter of 1919, after the winter the NER could fully concentrate on “the most constructive forms of work.”<sup>132</sup> Syrians, he argued, may do most of the work, under the supervision of a few dedicated Americans. The goal was that local staff would train the orphans to be Syrians and citizens in their own land.<sup>133</sup>

In the correspondence of the relief workers the religion of the children was hardly mentioned, and if it was addressed it was in the context orphan education, which was raise children “free from religious prejudice.”<sup>134</sup> In the eyes of the relief workers one “of the greatest needs of this part of the world [was] to break down religious prejudice.”<sup>135</sup> The relief volunteers were confident that they could bring up orphans of different sects in their institutions and install in them “the same liberal attitude toward religion that the boys of the mission schools and College have.”<sup>136</sup> The fact that the overwhelming number of children was Christian seemed to be unimportant. The strategies employed by the NER reflected Dodge’s vision, and by 1921 all funds that came from the US were diverted into orphan care<sup>137</sup> and what followed was a systematization and centralization of orphan care that would allow for proper education. By December of 1921, the NER orphans had been gathered, divided up and concentrated into three large orphanages at Sidon, Jbeil and Ghazir. In September of 1921, the total number of NER orphans was 2,125 of which 916 were Armenian and 1,209 Syrian. The sectarian distribution shows that most of the orphans were Christian and that there were only few Muslims and Druze. The Sidon orphanage for example housed Arabic-speaking children of the following sects and denominations: 14 Sunni Muslims, and 25 Druze children, while there were 102 Greek-Orthodox, 217 Maronite, 147 Greek Catholic, and 67 Protestant.

The NER faced new challenges in 1922, when the French troops withdrew from the southern Anatolian province of Cilicia, which caused a large wave of mostly Armenian refugees

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., Doc. No. 42.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Doc. No. 34.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., Doc. No. 48.

<sup>134</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, March 10, 1919.

<sup>135</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1. Letter from Bayard Dodge to Cleveland H. Dodge, April 5, 1919.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> The NER worked alongside the French government, which facilitated the work of the NER and often supplied it with shipments of grain etc. and “it was hoped that American Relief Workers can deserve the confidence placed in them by training their children to be really worthy citizen of the land in which they lived.” Nellie Mann Papers: “Report: NER in Syria from September, 1921.” I thank Missak Keleshian for allowing me to view copies of these documents in Beirut and for sharing the great many photographs he has collected of the NER work.

into Greater Syria.<sup>138</sup> Orphan centers located in eastern and southern Anatolia, namely Kharput, Marash, Aintab, and Adana were transferred to Syria.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, the NER negotiated with the new nationalist Turkish regime to gain permission to evacuate all the orphans in NER facilities in Anatolia and to transport them to now French occupied Syria and Lebanon. The process of retrieving Armenian orphans from Anatolia was not easy and relocations were made sometimes of twenty orphans and sometimes an entire orphanage was ordered to move out over night. The children were mostly transported to Aleppo and from there, after being inspected by the local NER representative, to Beirut. Most of them were sent up to Ghazir where they waited to be distributed into the surrounding orphanages.

By 1923, the number of orphans in the care of NER increased to by another six thousand Armenian orphans.<sup>140</sup> The NER's Beirut Committee was in charge of a total of about eleven thousand orphans distributed over seventeen large orphanages in Greater Syria. Twelve of the orphanages were in a radius of thirty miles of Beirut housing a total of 7,815 orphans, with additional orphanages in Aleppo, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.<sup>141</sup> As the number of Armenian orphans increased steadily throughout 1922, the NER officials sought to thin out their Arabic speaking orphans from the Sidon institution, by finding homes for them.<sup>142</sup> Nellie Mann writes that at the time of the Cilicia Crisis the NER was no longer organized for adult-relief and had narrowed its mission in on "fatherless and motherless children" so that they might "receive such a training that when they are turned out in the world at the age of 17 they might not become a burden upon the community, but they may be self-supporting, altruistic Christian citizens."<sup>143</sup>

In order to facilitate the transformation of the child from a passive object into an autonomous and productive adult subject, the child required discipline. The NER employed several techniques that included registration and the enclosure within what Foucault has described as a "protected place of disciplinary monotony."<sup>144</sup> The first step to generate identifiable and classifiable individuals out of a confused mob of wandering vagabonds and ragged waifs and to integrate the children into the ordered regime of the orphanage was registration.<sup>145</sup> Local NER staff registered the thousands of collected orphans before allowing them to enter into the confines of the orphanage, which could be rented or purchased buildings, hurriedly built barracks or even tent cities. During this initial exam the orphans were documented, classified according to gender age and ethnicity and distributed into the appropriate facilities, and to guarantee administrative and instructional efficiency.<sup>146</sup> For example, the NER

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<sup>138</sup> Nellie Mann Papers: Letter from Nellie Mann from Beirut to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Women's Sewing Society, April 15, 1922.

<sup>139</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 214.

<sup>140</sup> Exact numbers of exactly how many orphans were cared for by the NER around Beirut are difficult to obtain. The numbers kept changing and throughout 1922 orphans kept pouring into the region. Bayard Dodge gave the following numbers and locals: 650 from Aintab, 800 from Jerusalem, 1,000 from Aleppo, 90 (unexpected from Urfa) 600 from Urfa, 1,000 from Marash, 500 from Diabekir and Mardin, and 1,500 from Kharput. See AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.3. (throughout).

<sup>141</sup> Nellie Mann Papers: "Annual Report of NER" written by Hilda J. King, December 1923.

<sup>142</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.4. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Family, May 14, 1922.

<sup>143</sup> Nellie Mann, "The Children's Sacrifice," written upon her return to America.

<sup>144</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 141.

<sup>145</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*.

<sup>146</sup> The examinations, according to Saunders and Avagyan, served to "differentiate, individualize, classify, document and regulate the incoming orphans." See Saunders and Avagyan, "(Un)Disciplining Traumatic Memory."



orphanages in Lebanon were divided as follows: The Jbeil orphanage was almost exclusively for Armenian boys, the Armenian girls were in Ghazir and the Syrian orphans were concentrated in Sidon. The Sidon orphanage was established on American Mission properties that included a large building and a farm.<sup>147</sup> The concentration of the children according to ethnicity in this case made it easier to staff the institutions with local relief workers, who not only spoke the appropriate languages, but also could assist in translation and instructions. Furthermore, the practice of registration played into the daily disciplinary practices in that children in many of the orphanages were assigned uniforms with numbers, facilitating early morning and evening roll calls.<sup>148</sup>

The orphanage of Aintoura, near Beirut, represents a particularly interesting case in that the registration by the American relief workers reversed a process of *turkification* that the Armenian orphans had undergone during the war. The Aintoura orphanage had been the pet project of Jamāl Pasha, who assigned Turkish feminist Halide Edip to run it. Edip wrote in her memoirs that Christian Armenian children upon their entry into the institution had been circumcised and were given Turkish names. This was done as a measure to erase their Armenian identity and to transform them into Turks.<sup>149</sup> Bayard Dodge wrote that almost immediately after the Ottomans had abandoned the orphanage, he was involved in figuring out how to care for them, and the college arranged for Mr. Crawford to be in charge of the orphanage. Dodge described it as a “cosmopolitan affair with Armenian and Turkish Kurds among the children, a Russian as teacher, a Moslem steward, Syrian girls to help conduct the classes and several Spanish Jewesses to aid them. Then an American superintendent, who draws his supplies from the British and French commissary stores.”<sup>150</sup> When the American relief workers, here still under the auspices of the ARC, took over the institution immediately following the war, the children were eager to have the Americans record their Armenian names, and thereby reclaim their national identity.

Since many of the children arrived sick at the orphanages, the NER workers were careful to identify and isolate cases of tuberculosis, trachoma, malaria, scabies etc. The orphanages were structured around ‘functional sites,’ which Foucault describes as “coding a space that architecture generally left at the disposal of several different uses” to create—in this case—a useful space.<sup>151</sup> Since, it was often necessary to isolate those children who had contagious diseases, the NER workers designated either special ‘hospital’ rooms or tents. The incoming children were scrubbed, examined, and introduced to personal hygiene to avoid the spread of parasites and diseases. Vahan Hamamdjian’s, an Armenian orphan from southwestern Anatolia, description of the gathering of thousands of orphans from villages, towns and the desert and their subsequent registration is exemplary of the process. Upon arrival, a woman registered him along with all other children, before inviting them into the orphanage. Then two older women took

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<sup>147</sup> The Mission leased its property to the NER for ten years, in exchange that they would be improved. AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.3. Letter from Bayard Dodge to his family, September 7, 1921.

<sup>148</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 223.

<sup>149</sup> Jamāl Pasha saw this not as a violent act of ethnic cleansing, but rather as an act of charity in that the Turk was in his eyes was superior human being, and therefore this transformation would be beneficial for the children. Keith Watenpaugh, “The Social Death of Children in the Armenian Genocide 1915-1922,” paper given at UC Davis Spring Human Rights Symposium “Lost Children: The Transfer of Children during Genocide and Civil Conflict, UC Davis, May 17, 2011.

<sup>150</sup> AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.1: Letter from Bayard Dodge to his Mother, October 20, 1918.

<sup>151</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 144.

him into a bathroom where they removed his lice –infested clothes and threw them into a burning stove and bathed him “with soap and warm water.”<sup>152</sup> The initial cleaning of the body was followed with regular bathing rituals, during which the children were scrubbed and combed. In the Sidon orphanage the bathing day was Saturdays. Here the boys lined up after breakfast, undressed, and one by one were scrubbed with “a rough bath mat” and soap, rinsed, dried and inspected. The staff stressed neat and clean physical appearance at all times and shaving of the heads of those who went unkempt as punishment.<sup>153</sup>

The institutions, however improvised, had designated places to eat, sleep, exercise, learn and play. The organization of space and the practice of assigning the child a particular position in that space facilitated supervision, in that an empty, chair, bed or mat would mean a missing child. In general, the orphan’s day was organized around strict timetables that established rhythms, imposed particular occupations, regulated the cycles of repetition.<sup>154</sup> The timetable regulated meal and bed times, learning and play activities, as well as chores and work. As Nellie Mann employee of the NER recounts:

The children rise at five and dress in their work clothes. Some of them lay the mats and tin bowls and spoons in rows out in the yard for breakfast. Others sweep the huge courtyard with palm branches, others distribute the food into the dishes; some make the beds, and some scrub the floors, some wash and dress the babies; and various other jobs so that everyone is busy. If they hurry through with their work they have a playtime before it is time to comb and dress for school.<sup>155</sup>

The children moved in lines, participated in exercise drills that were methodic and structured and were instructed in organized sports such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball.<sup>156</sup> Organized sports were thought as essential to encourage in the children a team spirit that was thought to be lacking in the Near East, where “games among children were individualistic.”<sup>157</sup> The disciplinary elements that defined the structure and organization of the orphanage were to produce valuable members of society by keeping the children busy and productive and distracted from the traumas they had experienced.<sup>158</sup>

The methods of orphan education used in the Anglo-American context varied and underwent a number of changes in the nineteenth century. The earlier generation of British reformers, such as James Kay, Edwin Chadwick and Edward Tufnell saw the enclosure of children into large barracks to be preferable over family cottages. In the minds of these men a military style training and strict discipline was enough to transform pauper children into productive members of society. Military drills were thought to “imprint itself deeply into the

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<sup>152</sup> Vahan Hamamdjian, *Vahan's Triumph: Autobiography of an Adolescent Survivor of the Armenian Genocide* (Lincoln : Universe, Inc., 2004). 94.

<sup>153</sup> Nellie Mann Papers.

<sup>154</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 149.

<sup>155</sup> Nellie Mann “Diary of a Few Days Vacationing at Sidon Birdsnest,” May 21, 1923.

<sup>156</sup> Hamamdjian, *Vahan's Triumph*, 101.

<sup>157</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 255

<sup>158</sup> Saunders and Avagyan argue that the “internalization of the orphanages’ discipline functioned rather than as a way to leave the past behind and adjust to society, as a mechanism of psychic repression that inevitably developed into traumatic symptoms.” Saunders and Avagyan, “(Un)Disciplining Traumatic Memory.”

character of the boys whose life has hitherto too often been wild and aimless.”<sup>159</sup> However, by the late nineteenth century a significant shift toward raising children in family cottages had taken place. By the 1870s and 1880s, mass barrack schools had been condemned as turning out “automatons” which would “lack domestic affection necessary to promote the sense of local responsibility and individuality that served as the basis of national citizenship.”<sup>160</sup> Hence, we see an emphasis on the family as an integral part of orphan education, exemplified in the shift to family cottages. Nineteenth-century British reformer William Chambers wrote: “family system is the foundation of everything that is valued in our institution. Our whole structure of society rests on it.”<sup>161</sup> Whereas in the British case the mass education was to find new favor in the beginning of the twentieth century, as children were to be raised in the service of empire and during World War I in the service of the nation, the emphasis on the family as the essential building block of a functioning society remained central to the American project in the Levant.

The NER structured its orphanages around an understanding of family that hailed the structure of the modern American nuclear family. The orphanage was to give the illusion of ‘family’ as an important and primary organization of society in the microcosm of the institution. The wardens or caretakers of the orphans were either widows or older orphan girls, who in the Armenian orphanages were called *mayrigs* or mothers and the operations director often not on site full-time was the father or *hayrig*.<sup>162</sup> The institutional structure reflected a distinct family hierarchy in which the mother was the designated caregiver and in home provider, while the father was—the often absent—breadwinner.<sup>163</sup> The everyday decision-making was in the hands of the female relief workers, but ultimate authority laid with the “head of the household” the male NER official who often traveled from one orphanage to another for inspection. The NER relief workers often referred to the orphans as ‘families’ marked by a natural solidarity and harmony, an experience that orphaned children were to take into the world as responsible adult mothers and fathers, and by extension as responsible citizens of a larger family, the nation. How harmonious this orphan family life really was, is of course up for debate.

### The Children’s Court: Lessons in Self-Government

The ideal autonomous adult, however, should not only possess self-discipline but also would have internalized social responsibility, social justice, and an all American democratic spirit. In an attempt to apply “the principle of child self-discipline to boys and girls in the orphanages,” the relief workers set up children’s courts with “native teachers as presiding officers and the children themselves as judges and marshals.”<sup>164</sup> The courts were to solve the ever-present problem of everyday misdemeanors by subcontracting disciplinary power to responsible children. It was not unique in that often the regulatory system within the orphanages employed older children to take care and discipline the younger ones. For example, an Armenian orphanage in Aleppo run by Pastor Shirigian was mentioned to be an institution with very few rules, as the children were “allowed the utmost liberty so long as they play good

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<sup>159</sup> Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*, 122.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* 135

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>162</sup> Andranik Zaroukian, *Men Without Childhood* (New York: Ashod Press, 1985).

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*; Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).122.

<sup>164</sup> *The New Near East* (October, 1920), 10.

naturedly.” The pastor relied on appointed lieutenants to remind “quarreling boys” that this was not the way of good Armenians and he explained that this appeal was usually enough to keep everyone in line, a rather idealized vision of discipline that may not have been the norm.

Addranik Zaroukian recounted:

We weren't just orphans. We never wore the orphan's mask of sorrow and desolation because we never felt the absence of goodness or affection. Ours was one collective face, rude, bitter, mischievous. We hated everyone, we hated each other. Every manner of lie was our defense. It was natural law to beat up the weak, to be beaten by the strong. For a piece of bread the size of a fist we battled, bit, bled. Love was an incomprehensible word, friendship an unknown feeling. Bread was comrade, friend, and love.<sup>165</sup>

The NER advocated a systematized approach in terms of the children's self government, in that every orphanage was to have a ‘boy police.’ The young officers were empowered to conduct arrests of anyone who was caught committing an offense against the institutional regulations. The ‘boy police’—exemplary of an executive branch of governance—was to bring the offender before the court and assure the execution of the sentence. “Save for the supervision of the native teacher the entire machinery of justice [was] operated by the children themselves.”<sup>166</sup> A typical court was made up of the presiding officer and three judges, selected from older children. For example, in one of the orphanages that is said to be typical, the judges were an apprentice in the orphanage carpentry shop, a blind girl who was a teacher to the visually impaired orphans and a boy of fourteen. The court imitated adult courts in that strict records were kept and judges often drew on precedents in their judgments. A typical case, recorded and published in the *New Near East*, was one of an older boy mistreating younger boys. As Andranik Zaroukian mentioned, “It was natural law to beat up the weak, to be beaten by the strong,” however, the court was to eliminate this ‘natural law’ and replace it with a bar of justice. The accused pledged guilty arguing that the younger children had mocked him as being dumb and behind his age in his studies. The presiding officer then read the record of the boy, who was not without a history. He had appeared in front of the court accused of similar offenses numerous times and a teacher had been recorded as calling him a ‘troublemaker.’ Based on the record of the boy and the present circumstances the judges deliberated and announced the verdict, which was a night locked up in solitary confinement in the jail. The jail was a room in the orphanage that had been designated for the particular purpose of punishment. In another case a group of boys, who had been caught in a nearby orchard that was forbidden ground for the orphans, were “sentenced to clear stones from an area in the garden.”<sup>167</sup>

The children's court had a twofold function. For one, it was to solve the “difficult problem of discipline” by setting up a just system of punishment. Discipline continued to be a problem in the orphanages even when the children “found their way back to physical and mental health” and began to rediscover their childhood “the result of their wild life became evident in increasing infractions of discipline.”<sup>168</sup> The court was a tool for “inculcating in the new generation of

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<sup>165</sup> Zaroukian, *Men Without Childhood*.

<sup>166</sup> *The New Near East* (October, 1920), 11.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

Armenians an understanding of the elements of self-government.”<sup>169</sup> More importantly, it was hoped that this system of justice would be able to bring “the influence of this democratic spirit to bear upon all children.”<sup>170</sup> The children were taught that their illegal actions had consequences and that asocial behavior would be met with punishment, and that social justice was equally a right as well as a responsibility.

### Teaching Self-Sustainability

Beyond self-discipline and self-governance, a third ‘self’ increasingly became the focus of the NER. It was a “self” that would be economically independent and would contribute to the economy of the “New Near East.” During the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees in 1920, the NER announced that its work fell into now two distinct divisions. The first was to provide “physical relief of the homeless dependent people, and second provisions for the orphans and their reestablishment on a self-supporting basis.”<sup>171</sup> Bayard Dodge blamed earlier missionary education of having failed in the Middle East. He argued that missionaries had trained an entire generation of people “above industrial work and agriculture” and had thereby undermined the country’s economic basis.<sup>172</sup> He saw the postwar orphan crisis as an opportunity. The NER now had control over thousands of empty bodies, blank slates that could be inscribed with values and norms that would guarantee a functioning self-sustainable society and contribute to the economic development of the region.<sup>173</sup> In addition, the local circumstances most prominently the lack of private homes that would be willing to take up orphans made industrial and educational centers the only practical solution, in that “one or two years’ training [would] prepare older boys for self-support.”<sup>174</sup>

The board of the NER agreed with Dodge’s assessment of the situation and by 1921 all funds been diverted into orphan care to facilitate a systematization as well as centralization of the orphanages that would allow for proper education.<sup>175</sup> The children were instructed in regular subjects, such as elementary math and reading. Language instruction in case of the Armenian orphans often meant a relearning of their own native language, which many of the younger children had forgotten during captivity and deportation.<sup>176</sup> In addition, the children learned French and local Arabic, since it became increasingly clear that the orphans would have to be

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<sup>169</sup> The New Near East (October, 1920), 10.

<sup>170</sup> The New Near East (October, 1920), 11.

<sup>171</sup> The New Near East (February, 1920), 12.

<sup>172</sup> In Europe public and private children’s institutions had undergone a transformation from a focus on professional training for the poor youth into schools with the primary focus on education in the end of the nineteenth century. What can be witnessed in the European context is a redefinition of childhood as “a life stage characterized by school rather than work.”<sup>172</sup> And by early 1900, the majority of children studied academics rather than being trained in the various professional skills, and by 1905, British institutions had drastically reduced the amount of manual labor expected from the children. Instruction in trades was to be only part time and based on the choice of the youth.

<sup>173</sup> AUB: *Edward F. Nickoley Collection*: AA 2.3.2.2.1. Doc. No. 4 Letter by Bayard Dodge to Nickoley in Beirut

<sup>174</sup> The New Near East (February, 1920), 13.

<sup>175</sup> The NER worked alongside the French government, which facilitated the work of the NER and often supplied it with shipments of grain etc. and “it was hoped that American Relief Workers can deserve the confidence placed in them by training their children to be really worthy citizen of the land in which they lived.” Nellie Mann Papers: “Report: NER in Syria from September, 1921.”

<sup>176</sup> Hamamdjian, *Vahan's Triumph*, 96.

integrated into Syrian society instead of being sent back to their homeland.<sup>177</sup> “The great need for education here [was] not for academic work but practical work, which will teach the people to develop the resources for their own country.”<sup>178</sup> The focus was on vocational training.

By December of 1921, the NER orphans had been gathered and divided up into scores of orphanages in Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo and the Lebanese towns of Sidon, Jbeil, Ghazir.<sup>179</sup> The idea was to place the children into well prepared orphanages where they could be taught trades and most importantly farming with the proper equipment, so they would be “of the greatest service to their communities later on.”<sup>180</sup> The orphanages at Sidon and Jbeil both had many acres of land around them and were ideal for teaching agriculture.<sup>181</sup> And as Ohannes Tilkian, an orphan from Jbeil recounts: “we started a new life growing mentally and physically. We worked hard in class and outside doing manual work to improve our surroundings.”<sup>182</sup> By 1921, the NER Committee had instituted “industrial and trade work in all orphanages” with aim to teach every child a vocation that at the age of seventeen they would be “self-supporting” as well as proud to be working with their hands.<sup>183</sup> The NER hoped that the orphans would be “content and anxious to settle down in their home villages and to serve their own fatherland as best they can.”<sup>184</sup> Next to farming the children were taught carpentry, tailoring, weaving, shoemaking, ironwork, cooking, washing, sowing, dressmaking, etc.

In light of the new wave of refugees after 1921, the NER began building new orphanages and enlarged existing ones, which clearly reflected the priority of teaching self-sustainability. For example, in the newly set up orphan center in Beirut the older boys were placed under “trained leaders and quickly taught trades of all description, so that they might soon become self-supporting.”<sup>185</sup> In addition, an industrial center for girls was set up in an old café and dance resort on the Beirut waterfront. Here four hundred Armenian girls were busy doing needlework and embroidery, between the hours of eight in the morning and five in the afternoon.<sup>186</sup> The girls of the Ghazir orphanage were known to be excellent rug knitters and many of them had

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<sup>177</sup> A 1921 report on the NER in Syria also point out that the NER made an effort not to “Americanize” the children, because the goal was to “fit the children for life in this country rather than for emigration. Native languages and French are to be taught in preference over English, and the whole emphasis of the training is to prepare the children for service in the Near East.” Miller and Miller, *Survivors*, 112.

<sup>178</sup> The NER at this point was “just going to let the children obtain as much book learning as they would get in a grammar school at home.” AUB: *Bayard Dodge Collection*, AA 2.3.4.7.3.3 Doc. No. 5 and No. 8

<sup>179</sup> In September of 1921, the total number of NER orphans was 2,125 of which 916 were Armenian and 1,209 Syrian. The sectarian distribution shows that most of the orphans were Christian and that there were only few Muslims and Druze. The Sidon orphanage for example housed 14 Sunni Muslims, and 25 Druze children, while there were 102 Greek-Orthodox, 217 Maronite, 147 Greek Catholic, and 67 Protestant children.

<sup>180</sup> The NER was so determined in its goal to make useful citizens that it denied offers of the various religious communities to take on the children of their own sect. The argument was that this would lead the NER to have to equip multiple smaller orphanages with the proper equipment for teaching industry and farming which was financially was impossible. *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> The NER Committee appointed Mr. Howard McAfee to run the local operations in Greater Syria. McAfee was an expert in agricultural and industrial education. Nellie Mann Papers: “Report: The NER in Syria.”

<sup>182</sup> STK: “Those Turbulent and Sad Years” by Ohannes Tilkian, Doc. No. 40

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Nellie Mann Papers: “Annual Report of NER” by Hilda J. King, dated December, 1923.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

been employed in the Beirut rug-making factory when they turned sixteen.<sup>187</sup> The Ottoman governor had encouraged some important people to establish the Beirut Carpet Company in the buildings of the Sisters of Azarieh located in Ras Beirut in December of 1915 to manufacture “national” carpets.<sup>188</sup> The boys at Jbeil, who had learned carpentry, eagerly set out to build the shelters for the newly arriving orphans in 1923.<sup>189</sup> The industrial work in the Aleppo orphanage was “not only self-paying but the profit covers a good part of the expenses for the maintenance of the industrial boys.” The 1923 Annual Report of the NER closed in pointing out the success of the NER policy, in that the trades they taught the boys resulted in their finding jobs in Syria and the girls were either working in homes or were “able to earn something toward their support by their needlework.”<sup>190</sup> The success story of the NER program was to shape future humanitarian programs that would increasingly focus on economic development and occupational instructions.

### Childhood Agency

The history of the NER orphan is not the history of the child, but rather the history “of the ways in which adults tried to shape or characterize the young.” The child was to be disciplined and processed into a ‘useful’ citizen, into an autonomous adult, and it comes to no surprise that the child’s voice is neglected or silenced in the humanitarian discourse. NER workers essentially dismissed the child as an agent. Some survivor narratives confirm the passivity of the child that was seemingly at the mercy of the adult supervisors, who decided its fate, while others inscribe themselves with possibly unrealistic agency. In addition, the meaning assigned to the orphan experience may vary according to gender, political affiliation, age and the status in society of the subject-author. Asdghig Avakian, an “inmate” at the Antelias orphanage in Beirut described a moment that was to change her life over which she had very little control.

Two missionaries from the AUH [American University Hospital] arrived to select some girls to be taken to Beirut and trained as nurses. Several of us were called to the superintendent’s office and lined up for inspection. I was wearing a long, dark, shabby dress, my hair was done in pigtails tied with a red ribbon. The kind, smiling eyes of Mrs. Graham and Miss Ella Osborn, the two missionaries, studied us carefully. The sister who had assisted me at the time of my malarial attack spoke in my favor, and was over generous in her praise of my conscientiousness, willingness and helpfulness. She spoke highly of my intelligence and a few other virtues, which she had seen in me. With her help, I was chosen as one of the four who were to be taken for training.<sup>191</sup>

In contrast to Avakian’s account of her childhood marked by foreign adult intervention, Vahan Hamadjian recounts that he had a clear vision of his future. When asked by one of his

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<sup>187</sup> In Aleppo the NER ran a rug-weaving factory. In addition the industrial department in Aleppo employed about four hundred women to make clothing, mattresses etc. for the two hospitals under its care and the refugees coming into Aleppo. See STK: Doc. 127. The Ghazir girls under the supervision of Jacob Kunzler knitted a large and elaborately patterned carpet that was sent as a gift to American President Coolidge.

<sup>188</sup> Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 205.

<sup>189</sup> See Miller and Miller, *Survivors*, 121.

<sup>190</sup> STK: Doc. 127.

<sup>191</sup> Asdghig Avakian, *Stranger Among Friends: An Armenian Nurse from Lebanon Tells her Story* (Beirut, 1960), 81.

teachers what he would want to be in the future, he outlined: “first, I will finish this school, [...]. Then, I will go to college. After I finish college, I will attend a British military school.”<sup>192</sup> Although for both the childhood experience was a significant phase in their development toward adulthood, Avakian and Hamdjian differ in what they saw to be their childhood agency in deciding their future occupation. This differential understanding may be due to various circumstances, and the gender of the survivor might play a role in the differences. In the case of the male survivor the need to represent himself not as a victim, but rather as a maker of his own destiny, would determine his status as a leader in the community, a father and male authority, which would be undermined by any narrative of victimization.

According to an oral history project, the children generally had positive memories of their time in the orphanages, despite the strict discipline. Instead the discipline was interpreted to emerge from a “deep concern for the children’s welfare.”<sup>193</sup> The entry into the orphanage often is portrayed as a moment of redemption, which, I believe is the outcome of politics that on the one hand circumscribe the child’s past experiences, of violence perpetrated against them and their family by the Ottoman Turk, and on the other hand, the Turkish government’s continued denial of the Genocide, characterized the orphans’ adulthood so that their narratives would serve as documentation of the atrocities and had significant political meaning. Furthermore, the emphasis on the American humanitarian rescue mission, that meant survival and a potential future, solicited continued support from the American public and government for the Armenian cause.

Despite the absence of the orphan’s voice in the humanitarian discourse and its temporality and fluidity in the survivor narratives, it is clear that the orphaned child had an agency. First, the plight of the orphans had direct influence on the changing ways of modern humanitarianism, in that their care demanded a systematized philanthropy that initiated ideas of self-sustainability. It is the participatory role of the child in the scheme of the NER’s successful humanitarian intervention, which shaped the strategies of today’s governmental agencies, such as USAID, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies such as Save the Children etc. the focus of which is economic development to foster self-sustainability.<sup>194</sup> President John Calvin Coolidge affirmed the success of the NER in that, according to him, “not only has life been saved, but economic, social, intellectual and moral forces have been released.

In addition, the orphan child as a cultural emblem of suffering took on great symbolic meaning in the post-World War I political arena. The orphan child represented examples of “Muslim depravity, the inherent guilt and backwardness of Turks, and the general moral disorder and chaos of war.”<sup>195</sup> On the one hand the need to rescue the children from the ‘terrible Turk’

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<sup>192</sup> Hamamdjian, *Vahan's Triumph*, 101.

<sup>193</sup> Miller and Miller, *Survivors*.

<sup>194</sup> President John F. Kennedy justified the creation of USAID in 1961 by arguing that “the economic collapse of developing countries “would be disastrous to our national security” and “widespread poverty and chaos lead to a collapse of existing political and social structures.”<sup>194</sup> USAID like NER in the 1920s has as its goals today (1) economic growth, agriculture and trade, (2) global health and adds as a third goal (3) democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance, all of which are to “advance US foreign policy.” See official website of USAID url: [http://www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/usaidhist.html](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html) (accessed August, 23, 2011).

<sup>195</sup> Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations'."



became the key motif within the fundraising campaigns of the NER that was to raise monetary and material contributions from the public on an unprecedented scale. Second, the atrocities committed by the Ottoman Turks during the war symbolized in the thousands of orphans in the care of the NER, was a powerful tool in arguing for Armenian national sovereignty, the division of the Ottoman Empire, and of course for the orphans' formative potential in what the NER officials saw as a "New Near East" based on American liberal democratic society.

The third instance where we might detect the agency of the child are the children's courts within which the children certainly were not "merely passive objects of policy, but an active participants in the interactions of governing."<sup>196</sup> Here the children were able to affect change in their daily lives. Even though the structure within which arrests, prosecution, sentencing and punishments were to take place were designed by adults and modeled on 'adult' institutions, meant that the child's action was enclosed within social confines outside of its control, the actions of the children were able to affect change. Societal structures and confines clearly do not only effect children, but also pose limits, restrictions and laws on adults as well, agency is never fully autonomous.

## Conclusion

Addressing the organized efforts of the American community in Beirut and Mount Lebanon to deal with the privations of war and famine, this chapter has illustrated, first that American relief work in Beirut and Mount Lebanon affected the wartime realities on the homefront and altered urban space. Volunteers of the American Red Cross determined access to food, shelter, work and money to some civilians, the most needy and poor, denied it to others, and defined the physical fitness of aid recipients, dividing the needy further into able- and unable-bodies, the criteria of which remain unclear. In addition, American relief work as it was allowed to function from January 1915 to August of the same year, clearly altered the perception of urban space. The division of the city into districts according to the American's vision of the city, placing the main office at the heart of their own reality, namely next to the campus of the American college determined an alternate urban reality. It provided an alternate way of traversing the city and later the mountain as the poor and the needy could avoid municipal offices and instead walk toward the offices and soup kitchens of the American Red Cross committee in their district. The placement of relief volunteers into district offices and endowing them with the authority to survey neighborhoods, register families, and distribute money and aid, challenged the normative municipal rule of the city and the authority of the Ottoman administration.

Second, this chapter illustrates the far reaching consequences and pivotal role of the war not only in shaping the realities of everyday life on the home front, but also on the formation of a particular aid discourse. The American philanthropists' perceptions of what were the failures of their host society—magnified by the historical realities of a complete breakdown of the social order during the war due to famine, disease, and military dictatorship—determined the actions and practical strategies of their aid campaigns. It was here, in the laboratory of war, where new methods of child welfare, public health and practical education that would become integral parts

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<sup>196</sup> Mary Jo Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, Narratives of Childhood," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, No. 1 (2008), 116.

of humanitarian interventions of the twentieth century introduced and systematized. I have argued that character of relief work itself changed already in the context of the war from a distributive charity toward an increasing emphasis on philanthropy that would effect change in society by creating useful citizens and thereby remedying the perceived societal deficits. The shift is evident in the increasing focus toward work in exchange for money or food as illustrated in the work of wartime soup kitchens and the increasing focus on orphaned children, which presented the perfect moldable clay to create a middle class from scratch. “Starved, diseases, and unschooled children formed the raw material that had to be remodeled and remade.”<sup>197</sup> The fact that, as social and cultural historians have shown, Greater Syrian society was not devoid of a middle class, did matter little to the American volunteers, who were convinced that no such class existed and that it would be their prerogative to create. First and foremost this included the possibility of the passive object of humanitarian intervention to become an active subject by fulfilling his or her responsibility through economic participation. This on the one hand, was in the interest of the American Philanthropists themselves to guarantee his or her own salvation through doing good and abstaining from charity that would encourage laziness, and in turn opening the door of salvation for the men, women and most of all children in their care. On the other hand, a person’s usefulness, according to the American Philanthropist, was measured by his or her contribution to the economy of the country.

What is missing in the aid discourse of the American philanthropist is a discussion of rights that accompany modern humanitarianism. Instead the American Philanthropists adopted a discourse that in its patronizing and victimizing tone was reminiscent of the late-nineteenth century colonial discourse of a civilizing mission. Furthermore, the liberalizing and tutelary role of the mandate system as defined by the League of Nations verified the validity of the American Philanthropists’ goals and strategies that were to work on a passive object. Consequently, the discourse of the American Philanthropist lingers between Calvinist ethics of usefulness and pragmatic philanthropy that speak of citizenship in terms of responsibility, rather than rights and vocabulary employed is that of productivity and expertise. In addition the practical employment of local administrators, teachers, and personnel may indicate participatory development in its early stages.<sup>198</sup> When looking at the three main goals of the NEF today that includes “providing education and training necessary to participate fully in civic and economic life, encourage participation in local government through community organizing and institutional strengthening initiatives, and creating economic opportunity by means of enterprise development, micro credits and improved agricultural and natural resource management,” we see a continuity in the goals as well as strategies employed by its predecessor the NER.<sup>199</sup> And there is no doubt that the NEF laid the foundation or at least inspired the mission of US foreign aid campaigns, such as USAID, which were politically motivated. President Kennedy justified the creation of USAID in 1961 by arguing that “the economic collapse of developing countries “would be disastrous to our national security” and “widespread poverty and chaos lead to a collapse of existing political and social structures.”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*, 220.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.neareast.org/whowere/history> (accessed August 23, 2011).

<sup>200</sup> [http://www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/usaidhist.html](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html) (accessed August 23, 2011).

## CHAPTER VI

Fiat Panis! Let there be Bread!

### The Aid Campaigns of Civil Society

Relief efforts to aid victims of the war of famine—as discussed in previous chapters—for came from multiple sides. Studies of wartime relief in the Ottoman Empire are few and far between and until now their focus has generally been the international effort to aid Armenian survivors.<sup>1</sup> In Beirut and Mount Lebanon, the resident American community initiated international relief by organizing soup kitchens and workshops in Beirut, until the restrictions of the Ottoman authorities on foreign relief work in the city would limit their work to the central districts of Mount Lebanon. An overall scholarly focus on international relief has distracted from state-sponsored municipal and provincial relief efforts, a neglect that I have tried to remedy. I have shown that the municipality and the Ottoman authorities intervened in the market by attempting to control prices and set up a rationing and distribution system in the city.

Moreover, the disproportionate attention on international relief has also obscured the work of local volunteer organizations. Beirut could account for a network of local volunteer organizations associated with churches and mosques that would attempt to contribute to communal wartime relief. These non-governmental volunteer associations had been founded in the late-nineteenth century, to provide medical care, education, burials and subsistence to the urban poor. Indeed, the wellbeing of Beirut's poor prior to the war was almost exclusively in the hands of these charitable organizations. With that the overall distribution of charity—in form of food, money, education or medical attention—was entirely based on need. It was neither a right nor a clearly defined entitlement. Faced with debilitating wartime shortages, volunteer organizations struggled to maintain their level of communal engagement. But an analysis of the financial and administrative records of a number of these organization reveal that systematic deprivation of civilians, the out-migration of wealthy lay supporters of charities, increasing financial stress, resulting from an overall decrease in donations and the intervention of the state to avert potential alternate loyalties led to an overall marginalization of urban volunteer associations. A simultaneous expansion of state-sponsored relief and services headed by the Beirut municipality—as discussed in chapter four—detracted from their importance. While wartime relief in the city was marked by competition over voluntary and state-sponsored agencies, with the former increasingly giving way to the latter, relief efforts in Mount Lebanon continued to be firmly in the hands of non-governmental entities. Local representatives of the state would continue to rely on the institutional network of religious communities. The example explored in this chapter is the relief effort organized by the Maronite church in the northern districts; a region that was rather isolated and lay outside the reach of the American efforts. In this the chapter is by no means an exhaustive study of relief efforts, but will form the basis for future research and analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Watenpaugh, “The League of Nations”; Peter Balakian *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003); Jay Winter ed. *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Only a few studies have been concerned with non-governmental local relief efforts in general.<sup>2</sup> Thus far there is no systematic study of local non-governmental philanthropic activities in Beirut that move beyond the frame of organizational or institutional histories of singular organizations.<sup>3</sup> In these histories the war years are generally glossed over and dismissed as a period of reduced communal work or its complete discontinuation. In addition, we lack a methodical inquiry into the continued distributive charity rendered by churches, mosques as well as by individual wealthy urban notables, who acted out of neighborliness or with the intent of maintaining their patron-client relationship and thereby their position of power within the community.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that a detailed analysis of local non-governmental relief efforts will shed further light on the social realities on the home front. The ability or the inability of communal leaders, lay and religious, to either maintain or expand the provisioning of their clients under the strains of war, would solidify or potentially damage their political position. What will become clear is that in addition to the general difficulties presented by the material impediments, access to the high-ranking Ottoman officials largely determined the institution as well as individual's capacity to provide relief in form of distributive charity.

This chapter by no means is an exhausting study of famine relief efforts in the city and the mountain, but rather it is a preliminary survey that will set the basis for future discussions and research. The preliminary findings of a comparative investigation of urban non-governmental volunteer organization, however, suggest that the outbreak of the war in Beirut, as in the European capitals, precipitated the adoption of responsibility for social benefits by public authorities, most importantly the Beirut municipality as well as local Ottoman officials, and the marginalization of local non-governmental philanthropic activity. This was the direct result of state intervention, aimed at curbing any alternate forms of loyalty that could result from distribution of food and money other than representatives of the state. Still, what has to be noted is that the Ottomans' limitation of non-governmental charity/relief was not universal. Instead it differed significantly depending on its regional context (i.e. urban versus rural)—exemplified in by the different attitudes taken in Beirut compared to Mount Lebanon—actual need, the relationship to and goodwill of individual local and Ottoman officials, and the political affiliations of the organization's leadership. Consequently, for some organizations the war meant that their efforts were outlawed and their institutions, including schools and hospitals, shut down or absorbed by the Ottoman government; for others it meant that their philanthropic work was continued with the blessing of the authorities, but was either significantly reduced or ceased because of financial strains that will be discussed in detail below. This development, namely the decrease of local non-governmental charity, as the historian Thierry Bonzon mentioned in the context of the European capitals, had an effect on social welfare and the scale to which the state—most importantly the municipality—would be held responsible for supplying services to

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<sup>2</sup> One such study that pays some attention to local philanthropic activities during the war is Roger Chickering's study of wartime German city of Freiburg. Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life*.

<sup>3</sup> See: Wisām Bishārah Kabkab, *Jam'īyyat al-khayrīyyat lil-jā'ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlīk fī Bayrūt (1883-1983)* (Bayrūt, 1983); Wisām Bishārah Kabkab, *Jam'īyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn: ta'asīsuha, tanzīmuḥā, dawruḥā al-rasūlī*. (Bayrūt: al-maktabah al-Būlusīyah, 1987); Su'ād Slim, *The Greek Orthodox Waqf in Lebanon during the Ottoman Period* (Beirut: Orient Institute, 2007); Davie, *Atlas historique*; 'Iṣām Muḥammad Shībārū *Jam'īyat al-Maqāsid al-Khayrīyah al-Islāmīyah fī Bayrūt (1878-2000)* (Bayrūt: Dār Miṣbāḥ al-Fikr lil-Ṭbā'ah wa al-Nashr, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut*.

the citizens in the aftermath of the war.<sup>5</sup> Of course the end of the Ottoman state and subsequent colonial occupation complicates the story of World War I as a solidifying moment of the welfare state, especially since all too often a clear break between Ottoman and French governing is drawn. The administrative change, however, did not mean the complete erasure of practices of government. Furthermore, wartime changes in the realm of philanthropic activities—increased state intervention in non-governmental organization—would result in changes of social attitudes, in particular the urban populations’ increasing demands for state services that would outlast the immediate wartime stress. As argues in the preceding chapters, the consolidation of public health and municipal administrations laid the foundation for the demands directed at the colonial welfare state. At the same time the colonial state not only continued to marginalize certain aspects of urban philanthropy, but also made it increasingly reliable on government funding. The fact that non-governmental organizations grew ever more dependent on municipal and military authorities for access to medical and food supplies foreshadowed the growing reliance of private charity on state support. It was in the aftermath of the war that “institutions operated by religious sects, such as schools, hospitals, charity organizations, youth and cultural clubs, would be entitled to government funding.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it may be argued that the war was instrumental in increasingly blurring the line between non-governmental agencies and the state.

Whereas in Beirut it is the marginalization of non-governmental philanthropy and distributive charity, Mount Lebanon provides a differed picture. While, the records of Beirut’s volunteer organization indicate that communal charity in the urban areas decreased in scope, in Mount Lebanon the Ottoman authorities, despite significant political tensions, at times employed the communal networks, in particular of Christian churches and convents, to distribute aid. Ottoman officials stationed in the rural regions hence not only worked closely with international relief agencies—as we have seen in the previous chapter—but also with religious leadership, most prominently the Maronite patriarch, to organize the practical distribution of food in the mountains. If the authorities did not directly interact or facilitated the acquisition of supplies—mostly wheat—at least would not intervene directly. This runs contrary to the belief that the Ottomans were set on starving out the mountain districts. It is clear from the records that Ottoman authorities at times supplied free wheat for distribution and by 1916 demanded the formation of committees, made up of the superiors of Christian convents, demanded lists of the poor, and a close cooperation between local and state representatives and the Maronite church in particular. Still while the Ottomans intervened at times by ordering the process of aid distribution in the mountains, the church authorities for the most part asserted control over monetary and material distributions and determined when, where and who would receive the available help. The discussion of this chapter is, however, not to negate the suffering in the mountains. And it must be noted that the efforts described below were still only marginal due to larger problems, such as lack of proper means of transportation, corrupt local officials and greedy merchants, etc. Instead the story serves to challenge narratives of universal tyranny and should add to Linda Schilcher’s conclusion that there remains to be “no proof of malicious intent” from the side of the Ottoman officials to starve out the Lebanese in particular; especially,

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter four for a discussion on the expansion and consolidation of municipal relief efforts in Beirut. For a discussion of a similar development in the European capitals see Thierry Bonzon, “Transfer Payment and Social Policy” in *Capital Cities at War*, Winter and Robert, eds., 302.

<sup>6</sup> Suad Joseph “The Public/Private: The Imagined Boundary in the Imagined Nation/ State/Community: The Lebanese Case.” *Feminist Review*, No. 57, Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries (Autumn, 1997), pp. 73-92

since there were numerous instances of cooperation between Ottomans and local church officials in aiding starving Christians of the mountains. Schilcher has argued, instead, that it was the failure of the Ottomans to “deal fairly with *all sectors* of the population and not just those closely attached to the state apparatus.”<sup>7</sup> It will become clear that access to aid neither an equal opportunity, nor was it defined exclusively by sect, instead it was dependent on amicable relations to the representatives of the state apparatus. This in essence means that ‘need’ was no longer the primary category that determined an individual’s access to charity, but also his or her relationship to the state via the proxy of their communal leaders or directly to municipal authorities. Moreover, the significant role of the Maronite church in rendering distributive charity and its pragmatic dealings with the Ottoman authorities strengthened the church as a political actor, and. The Church—its position as representative of the community solidified during the war—received grassroots support from famine survivors and at the same time maintained its secret connection to France, it was naturally given a seat at the political bargaining table in the aftermath of the war.

Lastly, it has to be noted that the examination of institutions and organizations, whether international, state or local, eclipsed individual acts of charity or neighborliness that lay outside the frame of institutional analysis. Whereas, it has been argued that patrons abandoned their clients in times of need and surely there are many examples of windows, doors and homes being closed, examples to the opposite might shed light on the continuities and discontinuities of social relations. The story that must be told is a story of both strengthening of patron-client relationships and the disintegration thereof. Some urban notables strove to maintain their status and enhance their political position by providing for those dependent on them for their employment. Many of them took advantage of their relations to the Ottoman authorities, as it was the case of Beirut’s Sursuq family, to not only gain valuable access to food, but also to maintain or obtain positions in the market and gain concessions for urban improvement schemes that would be sold to the public as charity. Moreover, as in any war as in any famine, hidden amongst the stories of suffering, competition and cutthroat survival strategies, are stories of giving based on an individual’s sense of moral obligation to their neighbors. These moments of kindness deserve an examination. They are all too often overlooked, since their position outside the frame or organized efforts and their personal nature leave them to be fragmented and difficult to verify. It is generally the wealthier benefactors who, for whatever reason, recount these acts and seldom can accounts of recipients—the poor and most often illiterate—verify these stories. But still these stories may provide some evidence that even during extreme circumstances when, as I have argued, traditional social bonds crumble under the burden of survival exceptions are made. It never is a simple story. More importantly, however, these accounts of small individual acts of charity, as they become part of family history, memory and myth, were and still are significant as narratives of redemption and social positioning.

The reasons why people give is the broader question that underlies this discussion. As Amy Singer has pointed out in her important work on Ottoman soup kitchens at the very basic level “charity is a reflection of a donor’s wishes, inspired by spiritual, social, economic or political motives” as well as self-interest and ambition; but it was aimed at salvation and in preparation for the afterlife, or increasing one’s social standing and economic wealth through “tax reduction or the protection of property, and consolidating the support of constituencies” it

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<sup>7</sup>My emphasis. Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 255.

still would be considered charity.<sup>8</sup> Singer further asserts that charity often requires, but is not necessarily inspired by, the presents of poor and needy. Charitable giving, in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, was not immediately triggered by the famine, instead Beirut's non-governmental voluntary organization pre-dated the war, and so did charitable giving among the convents and monasteries in Mount Lebanon. But the war certainly created a new urgency, as more and more needy appealed to the potential givers. Charitable giving is an integral part of religious piety, in both Muslim and Christian traditions. Generally, there are two kinds of charity one demanded in exchange for being a community member and the second voluntary. In the context of the Christian church the giving of tithes to the church belongs to the former category, whereas the dropping a coin into the collection basket, but also—as we will see below—gifts of gratitude upon safe return from travel, the birth or marriage of one's child belonged to the latter category of giving. In Islamic tradition, it is alms (or *zakat*) that are rendered annually by those Muslims, who can account for a minimum level of income and wealth that fall under the category of obligatory giving. In addition, voluntary donations (generally referred to as *sadaqa*) in form of large endowments, the incomes of which would be designated to aid the poor or the sick or small individual acts of charity would be expected from the pious Muslim.<sup>9</sup> The focus of this chapter is voluntary charity and the limits and possibilities it encountered as part of the Great War. The motivations for supplying those in need, as we will see in the following, varied from one agent or agency to the next, ranging from a perceived duty to help the “sons of your country” most prominently expressed by the Syrian Diaspora, a communal obligation to aid the poor regardless of sectarian affiliation, to an obligation to one's clients and to individual feeling or better religious and cultural obligation of *Nächstenliebe*.

#### A “Purely Local Initiative”: Civil Society and Wartime Relief

Charity in Beirut, had taken on a different form in the late nineteenth century, when urban notables and intellectuals organized volunteer organizations associated to the various religious communities in the city to aid the poor, by offering medical services, help with burial costs, education and at times subsistence. Among the most prominent organizations were the Sunni *jam'iyat al-maqāṣid al-khayriyya al-islāmiyya* (Muslim Association for Benevolent Intentions, *Maqāṣid* for short from hereon), the Greek-Orthodox *jam'iyat al-khayriyyat al-ourthodoxiyyah* (the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society), the Greek-Orthodox *jam'iyat musā'da al-marḍā fī mustashfā al-qadīs jūrjūs* (Society for Aiding the Sick of the hospital Saint George, Society of St. George from hereon), and the *jam'iyat al-khayriyyat lil-ṭā'ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlīk* (or Greek-Catholic Charity Association). The latter three will be examined here in detail, as their financial and administrative records were at my full disposal, and because, in contrast to the *Maqāṣid* they continued to operate throughout the war. The Ottomans suspended the work of the *Maqāṣid* as early as 1914 and absorbed its institutions—schools and the hospital—into the Ottoman government. While the leading male member of the Sunni notability were largely excluded from non-governmental charity work, a number of Muslim women from key Beirut families, as will be discussed below, took on some of the efforts previously carried out by the *Maqāṣid*, as part of

<sup>8</sup> Amy Singer, “Serving up Charity: The Ottoman Public Kitchen,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35, no. 3 (2005), 481.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 482.

the Syrian Woman's Association.<sup>10</sup>

The primary intent of these volunteer organizations was to cure the physical ill and deal with larger social problems, primarily by educating the children of the urban poor free of charge. In addition, all maintained an aspects of distributive material charity.<sup>11</sup> Both the Sunni and the Greek Orthodox societies were founded on the premise that help should be given to all in need it regardless of their sect (or *tā'ifa*). The Society of St. George, for example, mainly to provided services free of charge for the sick of the city regardless of sectarian affiliation (*li-ṭabīb maraḍ jamī' al-tawā'if dūn istishnā'*).<sup>12</sup> Still a close link to the religious institutions, most visible in the social demographics of the leadership, was maintained.<sup>13</sup> Despite the public statements proclaiming the organizations non-sectarian character, in practice aid was mainly distributed to members of their respective communities.<sup>14</sup> Other societies like the Greek-Catholic Charity Association aimed their work more specifically toward helping the poor of its own community (*li-maṣlaḥa mu'wazīn min ibnā' milla al-rūm al-kathūlīk*) in Beirut and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup>

Samir Qassir has correctly characterized Beirut's voluntary organizations or philanthropic societies as "purely local initiatives" that functioned independent from the Ottoman state or its intervention and their incomes almost exclusively came from donations and membership dues of private individuals and rental incomes.<sup>16</sup> The organizations' financial records indicate that their philanthropic work was well financed by members of the community. Donations and community participation to all of the organizations examined here was particularly good in 1914. The Society of St. George received donations amounting to a total of 43,349 *ghūrush* from private individuals. The money flowing into the organization's coffers was either recorded as charity (*īhsān*) collected on feast days, donations to the societies upon return from travel (*bi-qadūmihi min al-safar*), during regular Sunday sermons (*bi-khuṭba*), or on the occasion of wedding ceremonies (*bi-zifāf*) or birth of a child (*bi-maulūd*). An analysis of the lists of donations shows that the organization received its largest donations from prominent Greek-Orthodox families,

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<sup>10</sup> While I was unable to gain access to the archives of the organization itself, the secondary literature suggests that the society ceased all aid work by the end of 1914. Officially the organization was unable to function. But the fact that the society was able to reopen with little difficulty in the end of 1918, suggests that its leadership remained in close contact and its institutional structure less damaged than may be expected. However, although I believe that the organization was never fully abandoned no proof for this exists. The historian Shibārū notes that the organization continued to exist despite Ottoman interference, but as to what extent is unclear. See Shibārū, *Jam'iyat al-Maqāsid*, 66; Hallāq, *Mudhakkirāt Salīm 'Ali Salām*, 124.

<sup>11</sup> For example, although the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society focused education of the children of the poor, it provided material assistance to the poor of the community in form of cash payments.

<sup>12</sup> Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George

<sup>13</sup> The governing bodies of the organizations generally were a mix of secular urban notables, intellectuals and religious leaders. For example, the was headed by Sheikh Abdl Qadar Qabani, a religious figure, member of Beirut's Muslim elite, a man of the *nahda*, and founder of *thamarat al-funun* and by men like Salīm 'Ali Salām, Beirut notable, intellectual and politician. Michael Johnson notes that from 1918 to 1931, the mufti of Beirut served as the president of the *Maqāsid* and even after that the mufti kept a post reserved as the honorary president. The Greek-Orthodox association initially was headed Bishop Ghoufrā'il and its ranks were filled by secular community leaders.

<sup>14</sup> This is clearly visible in the records of the Society of St. George. See Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>15</sup> The church authorities at times demanded from the society to aid needy from Damascus and Alexandria. See Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-khayriyyat*, 50, 120.

<sup>16</sup> In the case of the Greek Orthodox society there were donations from the Russian consulate in Beirut, but for the most part donations came local benefactors.



such as the Sursūqs, the Ṭrāds and the Sama'āns. For example, one of the largest donations came from the president of the society Yūsuf Bey Sursuq, who donated 1,177.30 *ghūrush*.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, some of the largest contributions came from the estate of deceased community members.<sup>18</sup> For example, the society's hospital received the large amount of 11,038 *ghūrush* from the estate of the deceased wife of Jurjī Habīb Ṭrād.<sup>19</sup> Otherwise, donations averaged about twenty to thirty *ghūrush*. Hence, the large donations of particular families were quite exceptional, hinting not only at their significant disposable wealth, but also were an indication of the social position of these families, within their own community and by extension the city; a social position that came with communal obligations. Individual donations to the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society were comparable to those of the Society of St. George, as they reached 43,566.20 *ghūrush* making up about twenty-five percent of its entire income in 1914. The donations were, as in the above-mentioned case, given during holidays, special celebrations, etc.<sup>20</sup> The correlation of donations to religious holidays and ceremonies confirms a continuous close relation between, in this case, Christian obligatory charity and what essentially were lay voluntary organizations. This undermines the narrative of a linear secularization that often has been used to describe the transformation of modern philanthropy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the very least Beirut's voluntary organizations would have to be described as a period of transition, but a complete disconnect between philanthropic efforts and religious organizations, never took place. Until today the organizations discussed here continue to work closely with their respective churches. This relationship, however, does not mean that these organizations do not represent a modern form of philanthropy, on the contrary their administrative practices, hierarchical organization and social change messages are representative of what scholars have defined to be modern philanthropy. A third Christian society for which detailed financial records are available is the Greek-Catholic Charity Association. Its community was significantly smaller. But this society also could count 1914 as an extraordinary good year as it received plenty of donations.<sup>21</sup> Its income from donations and memberships combined added up to 22,607.55 *ghūrush*, accounting for approximately thirty five percent the societies income.<sup>22</sup>

With the outbreak of the war the donations to all three Christian volunteer organizations decreased significantly. Still all three were able to keep their doors open and in their work remain independent from the Ottoman state, unlike the Muslim *Maqāsid*, which was closed down for political reasons, and its properties and institutions taken over by the Ottoman authorities in Beirut.<sup>23</sup> One of the oldest charity organizations in the city was the Society of St.

<sup>17</sup> Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>18</sup> In general, the largest donations to the society came from estates even before the war. For example, in 1913/14 the largest individual donations came from the estates of Philip Thabet (2,177.20 *ghūrush*) and Jurji Yusuf Sursuq (2,718.20 *ghūrush*). Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The Ṭrād family was and still is one of the key Greek-Orthodox families in Beirut. One of its most prominent members was Petro Ṭrād, who briefly became president of Lebanon in 1943. Petro Ṭrād fled Beirut during World War I. He had signed a petition that was presented to the French Foreign Ministry, demanding the end of Ottoman rule over Lebanon. When Jamal Pasha ordered him to appear in front of the military court, Ṭrād fled to save his life. He returned after the war and would be an ally of the French. Traboulsi *History of Modern Lebanon*, 84, 89.

<sup>20</sup> Bey 223: Report of the Work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society.

<sup>21</sup> GCCA: Sijil no. 2: Meeting Minutes of the Greek-Catholic Charity Association (1915-1923).

<sup>22</sup> The income of the Greek-Catholic Charity Association in 1914 totaled 64,713.20 *ghūrush*. See Kabkab, *Jam 'iyyat al-khayriyyat*, 137.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account see: Ḥallāq, *Mudhakkirāt Salīm 'Ali Salām*.

George—founded in 1878—to provide medical help to the city’s poor. Its services in light of the ever-increasing presence of infectious diseases (chapter three), one would assume, be considered ever more important. But while the government pushed for poor civilians to be treated in hospitals, the municipal and the Ottoman authorities extended no financial help to the society, to guarantee the continuation of its work for the lengths of the war. Still, the society was able to keep its hospital running, albeit its operations were scaled down significantly, due to the significant decrease in the income of the society.<sup>24</sup> It was the large surplus (64,889.75 *ghūrush*)—double that of the previous year—carried over into 1915 that could be described as the saving grace of the society. In particular, since its records reveal individual donations as having declined by eighty three percent (to only 7,474.20 *ghūrush*) due to out migration, the overall decrease in wealth and rise of living costs. In addition, the income from payments of wealthy patients was cut in half the reason for this is unclear. Most probably it was the result of reduced medical services as doctors and pharmacists were conscripted into the military as well as a fear of infectious diseases. Since the increasingly crowded conditions in the hospitals rendered them unsafe “places of infection.” Despite orders from the provincial health directorate that families had to admit infected persons to the city’s hospitals, wealthy community members were unwilling to do so. Instead, pressure from Beirut’s rich, forced the health directorate to reword its request, allowing those who had the necessary financial means to treat their sick in their homes and rely on ambulant services.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the income of the Society of St. George’s clinic increased, but it in no way could make up for the income lost to the hospitals.<sup>26</sup> In 1915, the society’s net income (the income without budget surpluses carried over from the previous year) amounted to half that of the previous year.<sup>27</sup> This may have been due to the fact that the war was still in its beginning stages and the uncertainty of its duration, caused many donors to deal cautiously with their money, as well as of course shortages, price increases, out migration etc. The organization’s financial situation worsened the following year when individual donations further decreased. What stands out, however, is that the society continued to benefit from a number of large bequests from prominent community members.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the overall increase in mortalities in the city inadvertently benefited the charitable societies, but it is too early to draw this conclusion with absolute certainty. The fact that contributions to the society increasingly, and by mid-war exclusively were from estates, however, may be seen as an indicator.

For the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society donations also steadily decreased. In 1915 donations shrunk by sixty percent, an additional seventeen percent in 1916 and ceased completely in 1917/1918.<sup>29</sup> Even bequests from estates, which in the case of the Society of St. George had replaced individual donations as the main income source, were few and significantly

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<sup>24</sup> The number of sick admitted into the hospital in 1917 was significantly lower than in 1914, illustrating the overall trend of marginalizing non-governmental philanthropic work.

<sup>25</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, May 23, 1915.

<sup>26</sup> The clinic income in 1914 was 382 *ghūrush* and 6,350 *ghūrush* in 1917, with no income noted for 1918 and 1919. See Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>27</sup> The budget surplus from 1914 was 64, 889.75, added to the now lesser income. The total available funds were in 1915 were 119,523.15 *ghūrush* (about 20,000 less than the previous year). Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> For example the society received the large amount of 12,462.40 *ghūrush* from the estate of the deceased Ibrahim Asa’d and his children. Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Bey 223: Report of the Work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society.

smaller than in prewar years.<sup>30</sup> Other sources of income such as the tuition from the six schools and donations collected during church services, steadily decreased.<sup>31</sup> The Greek-Catholic Charity Association had a similar experience during the war. Its donations and membership dues decreased significantly from totaling 27,768.15 *ghūrush* in 1915 to 10,678 *ghūrush* in 1917.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, to decrease in donation active participation in the work and the payment of membership dues that added, although not significantly, to the organizations' income rapidly declined.<sup>33</sup> For both Greek-Orthodox societies subscriptions dropped off and were zero by the end of the war. The yearly membership in the Society of St. George was 109 *ghūrush*, an amount that was easily affordable for a wealthy family. However, being a member in the organization meant that active participation in its daily business was required and only a small number of men were either allowed or willing to make such a commitment. In 1914, the number of paying members was fifteen men, whereas in 1916 only five paying members were registered.<sup>34</sup> While membership dues were eventually eliminated some of the initial fifteen members continue to contribute to the society. Yūsuf Bey Sursūq is a good example. He was on the membership list in 1914, but after that is not mentioned. He, however, continued to contribute, and donates 5.625 *ghūrush* to the society in 1917. The drop in active participation can mostly be blamed on the voluntary emigration, flight and exile of wealthy community members. Their absence drastically effected the daily business of the volunteer organizations and complicated their abilities to carry out their philanthropic work during the war. The Greek-Catholic Charity Association, for example, was unable to elect a new governing body for the society in the years 1915-1918, because many of its members left the country, some had died and others simply refrained from attending the meetings, being occupied with their own survival.<sup>35</sup> The governing body elected in 1913-1915, with Nahla 'Aūdah as its president continued to carry out its responsibilities on a much reduced scale.<sup>36</sup> Fundraising became more and more difficult as well. In the years leading up to the war, voluntary associations frequently organized public fundraising events such as lotteries, concerts, movie nights and balls. For example, the Society of St. George's organized a movie night, a well-attended fundraising event, which brought in 18,859 *ghūrush* in 1915.<sup>37</sup> However it was the last of such events noted in the records. Overall, the war, although it did not eliminate such events, meant that fewer such entertaining evenings

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<sup>30</sup> The income from estates for the Greek Orthodox Benevolent Society: 1914/15: 23,037; 1915/16: 5,714.10 *ghūrush*; 1916/17: 16,207.20 *ghūrush*; 1917/18: 1,225.00 *ghūrush*. See Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> By 1917/1918 the income from tuition was about half of the income from it in 1913/1914. It is unclear whether or not the decrease in tuition is due to the decrease of students or if students no longer paid the tuition. The four churches associated with the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent were Saint George, Mār Nicolas, Mār Elias, Saīda Ras Beirut Society Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-khayriyyat*, 139.

<sup>33</sup> Other income sources in case of the Society of St. George were for example profits from the gardens owned by the society, as well as the sale of medicaments, and other goods and materials. Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>34</sup> Membership dues of Society of St. George paid in 1914: 1,499 *ghūrush*; 1916: 717 *ghūrush*. Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> GCCA: Sijil no. 2: Meeting Minutes of the Greek-Catholic Charity Association (1915-1923).

<sup>36</sup> Only the representative in charge of the poor, the treasurer and the registrar were replaced during the war. In the aftermath of the war the society still was fragile and the leadership concerned about its future, in particular since it was made up seven members only and when the appointment of a successor to Bishop Ithnadius Suwaya, who died in 1919 was delayed. But the society in the aftermath of the war was eager to restore its activities at least to the level before the war, and began repairing some of its remaining properties.

Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-khayriyyat*, 114 ff.

<sup>37</sup> Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

and afternoons were arranged, especially after 1915, and since such fundraising events significantly contributed to the organizations' income, it was tragic that they no longer took place.

As noted above, the Ottoman state did not contribute to the funds of these 'purely local' societies. Instead, it subtracted from their income through taxation on their properties. Beirut's philanthropic societies relied heavily on income from rental properties that were registered as *waqf*.<sup>38</sup> It comes to a surprise that the financial record of the Society of St. George accounts for an doubling in rents from 23,701 *ghūrush* in 1914 to 46,089 *ghūrush* in 1918. The additional income came from new properties that were purchased in 1916 and 1918.<sup>39</sup> These purchases were investments to bolster the organization's budget, when it saw the income from donations decrease. Since this particular organization had a significant surplus carried over from before the war, it was able to manage and act on good investment opportunities that immediately translated into an excellent alternative source of income. As more and more people were willing to sell their properties under value to survive, the community leaders did not hesitate to invest the funds of the St. George Society in properties. The other organizations did not seem to have the same savvy investors. Rental income for the Greek Orthodox Benevolent Society made up about forty-two percent of the societies income.<sup>40</sup> The 1913-1914 budget of the society accounted for 71,854 *ghūrush* in rental income, but unlike the Society of St. George there was a significant reduction in rental income to 41,210 *ghūrush* in 1914-15 and 27,435.35 *ghūrush* in 1915-16.<sup>41</sup> The reason for this difference is unclear, further research is needed to see whether or not there were significant sales or confiscations of the properties of the Greek-Orthodox Philanthropic Society, as it was the case for the Greek-Catholic Charity Association. Here the Ottoman governor's urban planning scheme was particularly damaging.

When Greek-Catholic Charity Association was founded in 1883, the church leadership registered all the *waqf* properties belonging to the Beirut diocese in its name, except for those properties directly attached to the diocese. Most of these endowments were lands and buildings leased on the basis of old rental agreements and their periodic increase in rent was subject to the approval of the state, and improvements made to the properties.<sup>42</sup> In income to the society from rental properties was 63,308.35 *ghūrush* in 1913, it decreased to 36,473.25 in 1914 and to its lowest of 21,201.05 in 1915.<sup>43</sup> The records of the society show that the initially decrease in 1915, was the result of municipal confiscations of the society's most important income

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<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of *waqf* properties in Lebanon see Suad Slim *The Greek Orthodox Waqf*, Richard van Leeuwen *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon: The Khāzin Sheikhs and the Maronite Church, 1736-1840* (New York, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> The financial records note purchases in the amount of 28,070 *ghūrush* in 1916 and 30,454 *ghūrush* in 1918. Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>40</sup> The total income of the society for September of 1913 the end of August 1914 was 170,357 *ghūrush*. Bey 223: Report of the Work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society.

<sup>41</sup> The income levels around forty thousand *ghūrush* in the remaining years of the war. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The maintenance and improvements of properties was a significant part of the daily dealings of the organization, and it seemed to have been in constant negotiation and maneuvering to maximize its profit, that would then be used to benefit the poor. It was a delicate and involved business venture to say the least. The large endowment was used to make significant improvements to properties, so that rents could be increased and the board sold non-profitable properties and bought new ones to increasing the revenues of the society.

<sup>43</sup> After 1915, the income leveled at about 35,000 to 40,000 *ghūrush*. See Kabkab. *Jam 'iyyat al-khayriyyat lil-tā'ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlīk*, 139.

properties. When the Beirut municipality broke ground in April of 1915, to build two twenty-five meter wide streets that spanned the entire city, it made no secret that whatever properties lay en route would be demolished.<sup>44</sup> The owners, according to the city's authorities, would be compensated with bonds that could be exchanged for cash after the war. The municipality appropriated fifteen properties belonging to the Greek-Catholic Charity Association, totaling 206 *qīrāt* (approximately 36,050 m<sup>2</sup>). Ten of the properties were religious endowments (*awqaf*) donated in the previous century and five had been purchased from donations to the poor, in an attempt to increase the predictable income of the society.<sup>45</sup> The properties were located in the numerous Beirut markets. Some of the most profitable could be found in the Sūq al-Bāzarakān., all of which would be confiscated.<sup>46</sup> The Sunni volunteer association *al-Maqāsid* also occupied some rooms in the upper level of the market that were used as offices and housed some of its employees. Moreover, Greek-Catholic Charity Association lost one of its largest stores in the Sūq al-Aṭṭārīn,<sup>47</sup> a store in the Sūq al-Ḥaddādīn, a storehouse in the wheat port, two storehouses that were attached to the Khan al-Babir, six store in the Khan-Abdl-Salām, and three stores in the tanning district.<sup>48</sup> As the properties came under control of the city government, the rental income of the organization clearly fell below pre-war incomes. Moreover, the Ottoman officials did not compensate the organization for any of its losses, and it was only after long negotiations with the French colonial government that it received damages in 1930. Trying to make up for the losses in rents, the leadership of the organization began to knock persistently on the doors of benefactors, soliciting extra donations especially, because the number of needy continued to multiply.<sup>49</sup> But this could not account for much success, and donations, as mentioned above, continued to slump.

Arguably the most difficult stress on the philanthropic societies in Beirut, besides confiscations was state's heightened demand for taxes. Throughout the entire war, the Ottoman government sought to increase taxes to finance its military campaigns, etc. This included raising taxes on local as well as foreign private institutions. In January of 1916, the Ottoman government reportedly elevated property taxes to fifteen percent.<sup>50</sup> Press reports mentioned that the state not only required heavy taxes for the use of schools buildings, hospitals and land, but also abrogated any previous agreements and exemptions. For the Society of St. George this meant that its dues to the state more than doubled from 1,565.35 *ghūrush* in 1914 to 4,035 *ghūrush* and further increased to 16, 565.15 *ghūrush* in 1916. Of course, here the increase can be partly blamed on the purchase of a large property in 1916, adding to the overall assessment of the taxes.<sup>51</sup> Despite the abrogation of special tax arrangements and prior exemptions, taxes –it

<sup>44</sup> See AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, April 7, 1915.

<sup>45</sup> The properties in the Sūq al-Barzakan were either storage rooms or stores, the rents of which were used to finance the societies work. Kabkab. *Jam ‘iyyat al-khayriyyat lil-ṭā’ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlīk*, 125.

<sup>46</sup> The market was located near the eastern wall of the Amīr Munzur mosque and near the Shams ad-Din mosque, and stores in the market for the most part specialized in fabrics and sewing tools. On the various markets in Beirut in the Ottoman period see: Ḥassān Ḥallāq, *Bayrūt al-maḥrūsah fi al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmānī*. Bayrūt (1987), 34ff.

<sup>47</sup> Sūq al-Aṭṭārīn was situated west of the Great Umari Mosque, in the center of Beirut and was specialized in herbs and home remedies as well as perfumes. Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> GCCA: Sijil no. 2: Meeting Minutes of the Greek-Catholic Charity Association (1915-1923).

<sup>49</sup> Kabkab. *Jam ‘iyyat al-khayriyyat lil-ṭā’ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlīk*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> USJ: *Al-Salām*, April 18, 1916.

<sup>51</sup> The Greek Orthodox Benevolent Society's taxes to the state rose from 9,042. 25 *ghūrush* in 1914, including some overdue payments from the previous year, to 16,728.25 *ghūrush* in 1916 and 18,429.25 *ghūrush* in 1917. See Bey 223: Report of the Work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society.

seems—could still be evaded with the appropriate connections to Ottoman state officials. For example, the SPC was able to avoid paying the increase in taxes, mentioned in the college's yearly report.<sup>52</sup> The American Ambassador in Istanbul, who was on good terms with the Young Turk leadership in the capital, was continuously able to postpone the college's tax payments. Local volunteer organizations, however, were unable to gain the same privileges and were hit with excessive taxes.<sup>53</sup>

As the result of increased taxes and an overall decrease in the income, a simultaneous increase in the expenses in the city, non-governmental organization's ability to distribute charity dropped notably.<sup>54</sup> Aid to the community, rendered by the Greek Catholic Charity Association fell steadily from 59,184.70 *ghūrush* in 1914, to 17,986 *ghūrush* in 1917.<sup>55</sup> The difficulties became most obvious, when actual cash distributions to the poor were temporarily halted in the autumn of 1916, because all income from subscriptions and rental income had to be used to pay the taxes.<sup>56</sup> The cash distributions made by the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society shrunk considerably from a total of 13,813.05 *ghūrush* in 1914-15 to 3,962.20 *ghūrush* in 1916-17.<sup>57</sup> The reduction in aid to poor community members in case of Society of St. George is reflected in the declining operating costs (by about half) of the society's hospital and a decrease in salaries. The diminishing hospital expenses suggest that the hospital had reduced its services and consequently relief in form of medical help to the community dwindled. Moreover, an abbreviated admittance record of the society's hospital supports the overall contraction of hospital services.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, however, in response to the most important emergency in the city, namely food shortages, Society of St. George shifted its focus from providing medical aid to providing provisions to the poor. The organization invested in building an oven (*furn*) in 1916 and in the following years expenses for subsistence (*ma'ashāt*) were added to its everyday expenditures.<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that Christian philanthropic organizations, although not outlawed or confiscated wholesale by the Ottomans, were progressively more limited in their abilities to help poor Beirutis. Whereas both the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society and the Greek-Catholic Charity Association lost tremendous income from its properties and donations, the Society of St. George was able to purchase new properties, increase its income to not only pay mounting state taxes, but also shifted its work according to need. Although, the Christian volunteer organizations for the most part continued to hand out money and food, the overall

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<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, it is unclear how high the tax demands were and whether the college ever made any payments. What is known is that the college administration continuously asked for exemptions from the Ministry of Finance and was repeatedly granted its requests.

<sup>53</sup> United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople, Abram Isaac Elkus, wrote to Howard Bliss in Beirut: "I have been able to cultivate quite friendly relations with the ministers in charge of affairs and at a personal visit which I made to His Excellency Talaat Bey to-day, he gave instructions in my presence so that you will not be troubled in tax matters until a new law has been passed with reference to your institutions." See: AUB: 2.3.2.13.5. Letter dated January 24, 1917.

<sup>54</sup> See Kabkab. *Jam'iyyat al-khayriyyat lil-tā'ifa al-rūm al-kāthūlik*, 137.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Bey 223: Report of the work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society.

<sup>58</sup> In 1914, 28,132 people were treated in the hospital, while in 1917 the number was reduced to 3,263. The numbers of admittances are only given for the year 1914 and 1917. See Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

scope of non-governmental distributive charity and philanthropic activities in the city diminished. At the same time the urban authorities—as discussed in previous chapters—created alternatives, through rationing and distribution of food and government-run medical service. As a result, more and more Beirutis turned to government-sponsored charity, as the war took its toll on private associations.

The shift from non-governmental philanthropy to government sponsored municipal aid does not mean however, that urban notables who had cemented their social status through philanthropic work in the pre-war period were entirely sidelined. On the contrary, because most families actively involved in non-governmental charity work leading up to the war, also were active in municipal and state politics, they were able to maintain social standing, despite the marginalization of their private efforts. The shift of distributive charity from non-governmental organizations to the municipality, in this case was only a shift of the actual distributive agency—the actors at the helm of giving stayed mostly the same. Still some families clearly were able to advance their position in society, throughout this shift from non-governmental charity to increasing state-sponsored provisioning. The families that benefited most were those that could show for an intimate relationship to the Ottoman governors and at time Jamāl Pasha himself, and were ready to play a game of accommodative politics. It is well known that some wealthy urban notables, such as Ahmed Bayhūm and Yūsuf Sursuq, both of whom came from a tradition of political accommodations, were courted by CUP in the years leading up to the war.<sup>60</sup> In June of 1914, the Young Turks granted the Hula Lake land concession to members of their families. In turn, the men offered their political loyalty, which proved to their great advantage during the war.

The wartime maneuvering of the Sursuq family is particularly interesting.<sup>61</sup> It illustrates the social dynamics in Beirut that was subject to an intricately spun web of political, personal and patron-client relations. It was one's position in this web that would determine access to food and supplies and ultimately survival. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Sursuq family had consolidated its social status as a leading Beirut family, and secured considerable power and wealth as large landowners and international traders.<sup>62</sup> Taking advantage of its financial wealth, the Sursuqs often bid on and won concessions from the Ottoman state.<sup>63</sup> The family, therefore, with the blessing of the state, invested in a number of local building projects such as roadwork

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<sup>60</sup> Eyüp Özveren, "Beirut: Port-Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean (1800-1914) *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center), 16 (1993),

<sup>61</sup> The Sursuq family migrated to Beirut from Adana in southern Anatolia. Some of the members of the family began settling in Beirut in the mid-nineteenth century and became leading silk merchants and exporters of staples. As the family's status in the city increased, some of its members took on foreign consular positions. For example Dimitri Sursuq was hired by the American consul as *dragoman* in 1832, other members were associated with French, German, Russian and Greek consulates. Although the Sursuqs made extensive connections with foreign powers, they also continued to nurture their relationship with the Ottoman authorities and were involved in local politics (See Quilty. "Bridging the Dichotomy," 108ff). By the war the family was firmly established in the city and would be counted to be among the city's merchant aristocracy. Traboulsi *History of Modern Lebanon*, 22, 59.

<sup>62</sup> The Sursuqs were the agents of the international trade company Lascaridi and Company in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>63</sup> Michel Ibrahim Sursuq was given together with 'Umar Bayhūm (Sunni notable) the Lake Hula land concession. M. James Quilty. "Bridging the Dichotomy: Socio-Economic Change and Class Consolidation in Ottoman Beirut and Damascus" (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University), 103.

and the expansion of the Beirut port, which in turn secured them the support of local clients, who reaped the benefits from urban improvements and increased employment opportunities.<sup>64</sup> The active participation in building projects and international trade, linked the Sursūqs to the commercial elites of all sects. As members of this elite, the family's involvement in municipal, provincial and state politics were a given. Alfred Bey Sursuq, for example, had been the secretary of the Ottoman Embassy in Paris in the beginning of the twentieth century and here was able to cultivate relationships with high-ranking Ottoman and French officials. The most significant friendship, which would guarantee the family's political and socio-economic position during the war, was that with the Ottoman provincial governor 'Azmi Bey.<sup>65</sup> The Sursūq's connection to the Ottoman authorities in the city, their overall accommodative politics, and not least the fact that Jamāl Pasha appointed Alfred's brother Michel Sursuq, who had been an elected deputy in the Ottoman parliament in 1914, to head the grain collection and distribution Beirut and Mount Lebanon in 1917, historically has secured the Sursūq's the title of war profiteers. The political opposition to the Ottoman state saw the family's involvement with the Ottoman authorities as treason and ultimately as contributing to the material deprivation in the city.

There is no doubt that the family as a whole benefited from its close connection to the authorities; after all its members survived the war undamaged, well fed, politically and economically empowered. The story, however, must be complicated here by the family's engagement and support of philanthropic work in the city that was largely upheld during the war. The Sursuq family was involved in both of the Greek-Orthodox volunteer organizations, but it seems that the involvement in the Society of St. George took precedence. Yusūf Bey Sursuq, president of the Society of St. George, did not see his volunteer organization closed or taken over by the state, and of the three organizations examined above, it arguable survived the war most intact. The family contributed its leadership talents, in addition to making significant financial contribution throughout the war, Yusūf Bey being one of the most prominent donors.<sup>66</sup> The society received large amounts of money from the estate of Kathrine Sursūq, as well as from a number of the immovable family properties that were registered as *waqf* for the benefit of the society.<sup>67</sup> The family's involvement in the Greek Orthodox Benevolent Society was limited to financial contributions.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, family members made sure to donate at public functions, in the presence of the Ottoman authorities. For example, Yusūf Bey Sursuq gave one hundred sacks of flour during a fundraising even in November of 1914, to be distributed amongst the poor, becoming an example of good citizenship in the speech of the Ottoman governor.<sup>69</sup> Other families that were very active in the Greek-Orthodox philanthropic societies were the Ṭrād and Tweini families.

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<sup>64</sup> The family had sizable investments in roadwork, the Suez Canal and purchased 25,000 Ottoman liras in port company shares according to the local paper *Lisān al Hāl*. See Quilty, "Bridging the Dichotomy," 108ff; Hanssen *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 88.

<sup>65</sup> Alfred Bey often hosted the Ottoman governor and at times even the military commander Jamāl Pasha in their lavish mansion in Beirut.

<sup>66</sup> Yusuf Bey Sursuq donated 2,177 *ghūrush* in 1914 and 5,625 *ghūrush* in 1917. Bey 170: Report of the Society of St. George.

<sup>67</sup> The *waqf* of the deceased Zarifa and the child of Jurji Ladaf Allah Sursuq, the *waqf* of the Elias Sursuq as well as the *waqf* of Emily Sursuq. See Bey 223: Report of the work of the Greek-Orthodox Benevolent Society

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al- 'Ūthmānī*, November 22, 1914.



At the same time the Sursuq family took advantage of its relationship to the authorities and the general circumstances of the war to expand its economic and social position in the city. Alfred Bey Sursuq, for example, sought permission from the Ottoman authorities to build a horseracing track in Beirut. He almost immediately was given the go ahead, not the least due to the fact that his close friend ‘Azmi Bey was very fond of horseracing. On the surface it is difficult to grasp that in the midst of famine, war and at times rampant spread of diseases, anyone would consider building a racetrack. Nevertheless, considering the other building projects, like the widening of roads and demolishing of the old markets in the center of the city, the approval of a state of the art track might be less surprising. And like the other building projects, the family and the authorities framed it as urban improvement measures, thereby fitting well into Jamāl Pasha’s overall plan for the cities of Greater Syria.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, Alfred Bey and the family as a whole argued, and still does, that the project, like street repairs and cleaning sponsored by the municipality and the American Red Cross, provided work for the poor and was first and foremost an effort to feed the city’s workers and their families. It no doubt fed some. Alfred Bey Sursuq, after all, employed four prominent engineers: Hussein al-Ahdab, Joseph Aftimos, Amine Abdelnour et Maroun Gammaché, as well as a supervisor named Hanna. A man named Ibrahim Hosni was in charge of the bread oven, baking the daily rations for an undefined number of workers. In addition Alfred Bey demanded from his friend ‘Azmi Bey that he would be allowed to not only supply his employees, but their entire families with food. Each worker was paid twenty-five *ghūrush* per day and was given a ration of about three hundred grams of bread. The foreman received double that. In addition, employment at the construction side would guarantee exemption from the military service. “And thanks to this,” the family archivist wrote, “hundreds of families were spared the vicissitudes of the war.”<sup>71</sup> Whether or not it was hundreds of families is unclear, since no detailed records of the building project is available, but it certainly guaranteed the survival of some.<sup>72</sup> What has to be kept in mind, in any case, is that the family’s good relations—economic and political—benefited only *its* clients and ultimately added to unequal distribution of aid. In general, it was the direct link to the family and by extension the government that guaranteed access to food. Survival depended on the continuity of politics of patronage, which the Sursuq family was able to uphold.

### The Alternative: The Syrian Women’s Association

While pre-existing philanthropic societies associated to religious groups saw their donations and therefore the abilities to aid those in need decline, Jamāl Pasha and the Ottoman governor encouraged the creation of alternative organizations, most prominently the Syrian Women’s Association (*jam’iyyat al-saīdāt al-sūrīyāt*). The key difference was that this particular volunteer organization was not linked to one specific religious organization and was financially supported by the government. The Syrian Women’s Association was formed in the

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<sup>70</sup> Kayali, “Wartime Regional and Imperial integration.”

<sup>71</sup> Sursuq Family Archive: Texte retrouvé dans les archives de Lady Yvonne Sursock Cochrane: Camp de Courses-Residence des Pins.

<sup>72</sup> A paper provided to me by Yvonne Sursock Cochrane herself reports that Alfred Bey bought wheat from Palestine and transported it to Beirut, where it would be stored in his home. Everyday some of it was distributed to the families of workers employed by the family. Whether or not he sold wheat as well is unclear from the text, certainly the picture painted within it is an attempt at repairing the family’s tainted image. *Ibid.*

spring of 1915, and would be engaged in charitable work in Beirut for the benefit of the poor (*li-tashghil al-fuqarā'*) throughout the entire war. The leadership of the association was made up of upper class women from all sects (*min kul al-tūwā'if*), who formed a number of committees that would be in charge of organizing relief efforts in different parts of the city.

The city's authorities saw the Syrian Women's Association as a substitute to the work of foreign philanthropists that they viewed with great suspicion. In supporting, the Syrian Women's Association the Ottoman governor eagerly encouraged local relief that would not challenge the political status quo. The first report of any organized efforts coordinated and arranged by the Syrian Women's Association dated March 22, 1915, roughly coinciding with the governor's prohibition of American Red Cross work in the city. At this point the Ottoman governor, himself, commissioned sewing work from the association that would partially be paid for by the state. The women's committee, put in charge by recommendation from the governor, began their work immediately and employed groups of young women in three schools: Zahra Al-Ihsān (Greek-Orthodox), Al-'Āzariya (Lazarist School) and Madrasa al-Banāt al-Islāmiyya (Islamic Girl's School). The Salary was a minimal wages based on skills and productivity; for every hundred bags sewn workers would receive seven *ghūrush*, an amount that would at this time buy about a *roṭl* of flour. Every shirt or men's undergarment would earn them two and a half coins. Initially and to guarantee the realization of the project, the governor assigned one hundred Ottoman Lira to the committee.<sup>73</sup> In April of 1915, the women's society raised an additional 23,615 *ghūrush* in private donations, from which it provided 17,315 to be distributed as salary to poor women, working in the school in exchange for twenty-two thousand pieces of clothing sewn for Ottoman soldiers.<sup>74</sup>

'Anbara Salām, the daughter of prominent Sunni Muslim notable Salīm 'Ali Salām, recounts the work of the Beirut women in her memoirs. She was recruited into the association, despite her father's shaky relationship with the Ottoman authorities, by Ahmed Mukhtar Bayhūm. Indeed the intimate connection between her father and Young Turk sympathizer Ahmed Mukhtar Bayhūm, whom 'Anbara and her siblings called uncle Abu Amīn, meant that her father was politically sidelined, but not exiled or even executed as some of Salām's closest friends.<sup>75</sup> 'Anbara dated the initiation of the women's relief operations in Beirut to the end of 1917, coinciding with empire-wide legislation to provision civilians. However, other available sources suggest that the women were at work much earlier, but it may be said that the 1917 initiatives were no more than an extension of the work already underway since March of 1915. It was now that permanent relief centers were set up, beyond the provisionally, makeshift and only partially government-funded workshops organized in the local schools. According to 'Anbara, the Ottoman authorities opened four refugee shelters "to take in starving children from the streets" and two workshops "for women and young girls where they would be taught various crafts, given food and paid a symbolic wage for their work."<sup>76</sup> Jamāl Pasha outlined this scheme during a gathering in the house of 'Umar Dauq.<sup>77</sup> At the meeting Jamāl Pasha spoke of a

<sup>73</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-ʿUthmānī*, March 22, 1915.

<sup>74</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-ʿUthmānī*, April 9, 1915.

<sup>75</sup> Like for example 'Abd al-Ghani al-'Uraysi, 'Anbara's would be fiancé.

<sup>76</sup> al-Khālidi, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān*, 69.

<sup>77</sup> The Da'ūq family was among the Sunni notable families in Beirut and involved in regional trade. A number of the family's men had been seated on the municipal council. 'Umar Dauq was politically active as a member of the municipal council throughout the war years. It is clear that he took great care not to offend the Ottoman authorities.

workshop and two refugee shelters that he wanted opened; one should be in the Muslim neighborhoods of West Beirut and the second in the predominantly Christian East. To push ahead with the work, he promised that the “government was prepared to extend all possible help to the scheme and all that was required by way of housing, food, clothing, and so forth.”<sup>78</sup> Heeding to the wishes of the military commander, the women from West Beirut reorganized themselves into three committees.

It is important to note that the women in leadership positions in the western neighborhoods were all from important Beirut families, sympathetic to the Young Turks, most prominently the Bayhūm family; a family was in very good standing with the Ottoman authorities and has like the Daūq, Ṭrād, and the Sursūq’s a long history of political leadership in the city. Najla Bayhūm, with the help of Miss ‘Abdl al-Hamīd Ghandūr as the treasurer and ‘Anbara was the secretary, was in charge of refugees. Miss Ahmad Mukhtar Bayhūm ran the second committee, the role of which is unclear. A third commission was in charge of the workshop and headed by Miss Muhammed Hamadeh, who was able to recruit a number of young women volunteers to aid her in the work. But even here a one of the Bayhūm women took over. It was ‘Adila Bayhūm, who relieved Miss Hamadeh. According to ‘Anbara, the Christian women of East Beirut ran two shelters and a workshop, but we neither have detailed accounts of who was active in these committees, nor about the extent of their work.<sup>79</sup> A great part of the work seemed to have been funded by donations from the community. ‘Anbara related that the women tirelessly collected donations of beddings, clothes, kitchenware and food. The government would provide whatever could not be covered by private donations.

The methods of the Syrian Women’s Association were similar to those of the American project. Its aim was not distributive charity, but rather the women assigned work to the poor and would teach women skills that would guarantee an income even after the war. The women, with aid of the governor, closed the Ottoman school in the Burj Abū Haydar quarter of the city and transformed it into a “workshop to teach girls and women in the western part of the city various handicrafts.” The work was well organized; the committees assigned skilled instructors to small groups of women, gathered in separate rooms, to teach sewing, embroidery, and knitting. An additional industry established in this particular workshop was carpet weaving. The women hired Armenian master craftsmen who taught the appropriate techniques and skills. The various products would then be sold to local wealthy families. About one thousand women were eventually employed and fed in the workshops.<sup>80</sup> Besides the workshops, the Beirut women arranged shelters that, not unlike the American soup kitchens in Brumana and ‘Abeih, brought “in children from the streets or from houses that had closed their doors, silently suffering from hunger, pain or disease.”<sup>81</sup> The children would be admitted into the shelter after being scrubbed clean, their hair shaven, and had undergone medical examinations. Like in the American orphanages in the mountains, the children were instructed in elementary math and reading. The

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. ; I also consulted the memoirs unpublished translation by Prof. Tarif Khalidi, who was kind enough to share his work with me.

<sup>79</sup> al-Khālīdī, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān*, 69.

<sup>80</sup> The women were fed a meal at noon and given a large loaf of bread that they could take home with them at the end of the day. Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

governor ‘Azmi Bey was intimately involved in the work of the Beirut women and often came to inspect the shelters.

Unfortunately, little else is known about the work of Beirut women. But the limited information illustrates an increasing state intervention in urban philanthropic work. Instead of being financed solely by private donors, it now received materials and funds from both wealthy patrons as well as the Ottoman government. The social demographics of the women leaders again illustrates that direct access, good relations and political sympathy, i.e. approval of the Young Turk regime determined access to funds and continued social status. By extension it would be clients of important families that would first and foremost benefit from aid. Hence access to relief was not based on one’s sect as it has so often been argued, but rather one’s position in relations to power. This, however, still meant that aid was not distributed equally among all members of society. In addition, the philanthropic work of the Syrian Women’s Association moved beyond helping the sick, academic education, and distributive charity, which characterized the pre-war work in Beirut, but now sought to teach practical skills that would provide income and self-sufficiency to the recipients.

In conclusion, here it may be said that all pre-existing volunteer organizations in Beirut experienced a decrease in their donations. The Sunni society was closed down and we do not have adequate information as of now, in terms of the community’s activities during the war. Both Greek-Orthodox societies saw their income decrease not only from donations, but also from their rental properties compared to the pre-war revenues. However, the amount rendered to the poor did not change much in the following two years. It is only in the year 1916/17 that distributions to the poor decreased by seventy percent from what had been given in 1914. The reduction in material distributions to the poor and lesser admittances into the hospital clearly has to do with the decrease in the societies budgets, rising prices, higher taxes, and ‘confiscations’ of properties. The continued participation of important families in the urban scene of philanthropic enterprises in addition to their own private charity illustrates that local notables did not suspend their moral obligation across the board, as some have argued. What was crucial to the families’ ability to maintain their position as benevolent patrons in Beirut, however, was their relationship to the Ottoman authorities. Friendly relations would guarantee access to supplies, political positions most importantly on the municipal council and ultimately an expansion and solidification of political power. For civilians on the ground this meant that access to aid was not an equal opportunity, but depended on one’s relation to the patrons of the city. Even if material distributions shifted from the volunteer organization to municipal distribution, the fact that the social demographics of volunteer organizations greatly overlapped with that of the municipality—it was the agency of distributive charity that changed but not the agents—would guarantee similar distribution patterns. Whereas clients of politically marginalized families would suffer, those of urban notables who had a track record of accommodative politics and nurtured their relationships with the Ottoman authorities would be fed.

#### Aid in Mount Lebanon: Between State and Church

The relief efforts in the mountains looked very different and were deeply intertwined in sectarian politics. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Americans relief efforts were limited to the Shūf and the Matn districts. The American Red Cross made few attempts to reach the

remote northern region of Mount Lebanon. It is here that the religious leaders, and most prominently the Maronite patriarch, in the absence of pre-existing volunteer organization, sought to organize relief for their communities. According to Engin Arkali, the outcome of World War I was a victory of the Church over the secular government of Mount Lebanon that had been established in the later half of the nineteenth century embodied by the Administrative Council. And while the war and military rule facilitated this victory, the church's active role in the provisioning its people in the mountain contributed greatly to its elevated position in the minds of the Lebanese.

The Maronite patriarch has always played a political role as leader of the community. Historically, his position had been challenged by a growing feudal system, so that by the fifteenth century he shared power with a Maronite lay elite. However, by the mid-nineteenth century "Mount Lebanon was communally reinvented in the sense that a public and sectarian identity replaced a non-sectarian politics or notability that had been the hallmark of pre reform society."<sup>82</sup> The new political order of the *mutasarrifiyya*—established in the aftermath of the 1860 civil war—allowed the Maronite patriarch, with the guarantee of foreign powers, to reestablish his temporal powers.<sup>83</sup> Simultaneously, a new social mobility in the church brought to the front ambitious and motivated clerics, who were eager to expand the power of the church. Moreover, the overall growth of the Maronite community and the relocation of the seat of the Patriarchate from the remote northern region of Bsherri to the easier accessible Bkerke, perched on the mountain side overlooking to the port of Jūnieh only a few miles north of Beirut, was the physical manifestation of a more powerful and an increasingly politically involved patriarchate.<sup>84</sup> So much so that at times, the church was considered to be "the only social force among the Maronites."<sup>85</sup> Still at the outset of the war, the *mutasarrifiyya*, according to Engin Arkali, could account for "basic institutions of a modern governmental apparatus," embodied by the Administrative Council that functioned alongside the Church and most importantly challenged the idea that the Church represented the desire of all the mountain's inhabitants.<sup>86</sup>

It was the war of famine in the mountains that sidelined the secular authorities and led to an augmentation of the Church's power. The Maronite patriarch's role in providing wartime

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<sup>82</sup> Richard van Leeuwen, "The Political Emancipation of the Maronite Church in Mount Lebanon (1736-1842)," *Middle East Research Associates Occasional Paper* no. 8 (1990), 7.

<sup>83</sup> The newly imposed governing systems privileged communal representation. So that cross-sectarian loyalty to rural amirs was replaced by loyalty to religious leadership. The late nineteenth century patriarch Boulus Massad (1854-1890) hinted at this development when he described himself as the "sole representative of the Maronite nation." See Fiona McCallum *The Christian Religious leadership in the Middle East: The Political Role of the Patriarch*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press (2010), 56. For a discussion on shifts in Mount Lebanon's political system see William Polk *The Opening of South Lebanon, 1788-1840: A Study of the Impact of the West on the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Arkali, *The Long Peace*; Richard van Leeuwen *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon: The Khāzin Sheikhs and the Maronite Church, 1736-1840* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 22-23; 48-49.

<sup>85</sup> The French consul to Lebanon describes the Church as such in 1881. The French were deaf to the plight for reforms from the Administrative Council leading up to the war, and any proposals without the signature of the patriarch were shown little interest. The Ottoman administration, on the other hand made concessions to the reformist bid in Mount Lebanon to counter French and British influence, and granting some to the requests. *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Governmental activities were defined locally and the entire system was financed by locally raised revenues and staffed by native people. Arkali, *The Long Peace*, 184.

relief to the community—despite significant political opposition and obstacles placed in his way by the Ottoman authorities—contributed to this victory in no insignificant way. The resulting consolidated political position of the patriarch would open the way his involvement in the formation of Lebanon in the postwar period.<sup>87</sup> Significant political changes took place in the mountains, its autonomy was abolished in 1915 and its administration placed under the Interior Ministry in Istanbul and the military authorities in Damascus. The imposition of martial law affected public order, and empowered the army to suspend prior governing bodies and take over areas that would normally be dealt with by the police and the court. In the mountain district, the military authorities dissolved the Administrative Council, exiled some its councilors and appointed of new councilors and officials who were sympathetic to the Young Turk regime. With secular authorities deprived of their power, foreign missionaries, who had numerous churches and seminaries that were involved in charity work, expelled and financial support to Christian from abroad dried up, the community's attention increasingly was focused on the actions of the Maronite patriarch, Elias Hoyek (1899-1931).<sup>88</sup> And while the historian Elizabeth Picard has argued that the power of the patriarch, “the ‘last bastion,’ was reduced to a minimum by the Muslim imperial powers during the war,” it is more likely that his continuous lobbying for supplies, his pragmatic dealings with the Ottoman authorities and his efforts to feed his parish solidified his position as the head of the community.<sup>89</sup>

The relationship between the patriarch and the Ottoman authorities, in particular Jamāl Pasha, was tense and complicated to say the least.<sup>90</sup> In the beginning of the war, the military authorities contemplated exiling the patriarch, based on news that the Church had pledged its loyalty to France. The patriarch denied these charges in a letter to the military commander, who grudgingly and after long back and forth dropped the charges.<sup>91</sup> Efforts to exile the patriarch, however, continued throughout the war and his loyalty, and that of the entire Maronite community, to the state was constantly questioned. Jamāl Pasha wrote in his memoirs about rumors of a Maronites uprising. In retrospect, he asserted that he did not fear any such rebellion, not because it could not happen, but because he was sure he could easily strike it down.<sup>92</sup> Still in reality, he made sure that the community, and its leadership in particular, was under close surveillance. Hoyek was able to avoid banishment not the least due his repeated public assurances of his and the Maronite community's commitment to the empire, as well as his position as a prominent public figure, with significant community support.<sup>93</sup> To assure Jamāl Pasha that the Maronites were supportive of the Ottoman state, the patriarch sent a delegation of three bishops to meet with the military commander and pledge their loyalty. The delegation conveyed to the commander that the Maronites were not questioning his intention and that his most recent statement in the press was well received and reaffirmed them of his good will.<sup>94</sup> To reinforce the delegation's guarantees, the patriarch sent a statement to the press proclaiming his loyalties to the Ottomans and promised that the Maronite church would contribute all it could to

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<sup>87</sup> McCallum *The Christian Religious leadership in the Middle East*, 57.

<sup>88</sup> Arkali, *The Long Peace*, 129.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Picard, “Dynamic of the Lebanese Christians” in Andrea Pacini ed. *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East; the Challenge of the Future* (Oxford, 1998), 214.

<sup>90</sup> McCallum, *The Christian Religious leadership in the Middle East*, 57.

<sup>91</sup> Arkali, *The Long Peace*, 174.

<sup>92</sup> Djemal [Jamāl] Pasha. *Erinnerungen*, 210.

<sup>93</sup> Other church officials such as Beirut's bishop were unable to avoid exile.

<sup>94</sup> Djemal [Jamāl] Pasha. *Erinnerungen*, 211.

the communal sacrifice necessitated by the war. Moreover, he advised his followers to maintain “harmony and tranquility” amongst themselves and in relation to other sects. It was vital that the Maronites remembered that after all they were a people that grew up in the bosom of the Ottoman nation. “Her love imprinted on our hearts for many generations.” He ordered priests to be an example of loyalty to the state and vehemently demanded that talking about political issues in public should be avoided.<sup>95</sup> As a sign of the Church’s allegiance, he called upon his followers not to forget those defending the country, instructing priests to collect donations for Ottoman soldiers from their parishes and say special prayers and litanies in their churches on behalf of the Ottoman war effort.<sup>96</sup> Whether or not this actually was done in the churches is not clear, but at least publicly the Maronite leadership worked tirelessly to erase doubts over its commitment to the Ottoman state, never mind that secretly it was dealing enemy powers. In line with this strategy, the patriarch applied for a sultanic *berât* to “protect himself from martial inquisitions and his Church’s property from expropriation by the military authorities.”<sup>97</sup> The *berât* was finally issued in January of 1916, coinciding with, as will be shown below, the beginnings of an organized relief effort.<sup>98</sup> All in all Church officials, most prominently patriarch Hoyek would advocate pragmatic actions, to safeguard their position as community leader as well as secure food supplies to their followers.

While, the church issued a statement addressing material relief as early as November of 1914, an actual organized effort by the patriarch came about slowly and was formulated only in spring of 1916.<sup>99</sup> The motivations of the Maronite church to render relief to its community were political and spiritual. For one, feeding the poor and selling wheat to the wealthier people of the community would certainly generate allegiance to the church and safeguard if not further solidify its position. Especially since other community leaders, including members of the Administrative Council, continuously challenged the notion that the patriarch represented the political desires of the entire Maronite community.<sup>100</sup> Beyond political ambitions however, the motivations were also based on religious obligations, based on a moral obligation and on *maḥabba al-qarīb* or neighborly love (*Nächstenliebe*).<sup>101</sup> The initial communally circulating letters and statements to the press reminded the public that the war would necessitate collective sacrifice, and that in times of great stress the needy, hungry and poor should under no circumstances should be forgotten. It was the moral duty of every Maronite to offer assistance according to his or her ability.<sup>102</sup> In November of 1914, Patriarch Hoyek wrote that many people were starving; some of them were so desperate that “they would be happy with just the crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich.”<sup>103</sup> It is to note that Maronite clerics, in their public and communal correspondence, presented the obligation to help the poor exclusively in religion terms. The call for material

<sup>95</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥādāl-‘Ūthmānī*, November 23, 1914.

<sup>96</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥādāl-‘Ūthmānī*, December 5, 1914.

<sup>97</sup> Arkali, *The Long Peace*, 174.

<sup>98</sup> Up until World War I, the Maronite patriarchs had successfully avoided requesting a *berât* from the sultan that while on the hand would mean legal recognition of the community, but it also meant an act of submission to the Ottomans. McCallum *The Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East*, 63.

<sup>99</sup> The initial statements that addressed food shortages and the community’s obligation to the starving took place in the context of the first food crisis discussed in detail in chapter four.

<sup>100</sup> McCallum *The Christian Religious Leadership in the Middle East*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Ellie Azzī, *Buḥuth Muḥadāh Ilā al-Ābātī Būlus Na’amān* (Junieh; Lubnān: al-Maṭba’ah al-Būlīsiyya, 2008), 299.

<sup>102</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥādāl-‘Ūthmānī* November 23, 1914.

<sup>103</sup> AUB: *Ittiḥādāl-‘Ūthmānī* November 23, 1914.

relief was—if not subordinated—always accompanied by the appeal for ‘spiritual relief,’ namely the comfort of souls and in the very desperate cases preparations for the afterlife. Avoiding indicting the Ottoman state, the European powers, or local war profiteers, clerics declared that human sins had brought about war and famine. The ‘human sin’ directly spoken to was first and foremost the abandonment of religious duties, namely the neglect of worship and ritual among the Maronite community. Other possible sins, or reasons, were kept purposely vague. To appease God and to end suffering and starvation, church leaders argued it was necessary to return those who had strayed from their religion and its commandments to God. Increased prayers and providing communities, who were abandoned by their priests, with religious services were advocated as the community’s salvation. The primary focus on spiritual apathy and corruption, human sin and salvation through confession, ritual and prayer in the writings of the priests locates the causes as well as solutions to material devastation internal to the Maronite community, suggesting an acute awareness of the patriarch’s delicate position in relation to the state. The publicly circulated letters of church officials —letter that would be read during church services—in accordance with the instructions of the patriarch avoided public discussion of the real difficulties. Discussions of the overall lack of grain, rising costs of transportation, hoarding and confiscations all of which could be blamed to some extent on the failures of the state would be consciously avoided. Instead the letters were self-indicting and went above and beyond to paint a picture of a church loyal to the state.

However, what complicates the story of the Maronite community was its relation with the outside world. Its relationship with European Christian powers had long been a thorn in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, and increasingly so in the late nineteenth century. Despite the patriarch’s claims to the opposite, he upheld communications with the French government throughout the war. When the situation grew more and more desperate in the winter of 1916, the patriarch needed cash funds to purchase grain and to effectively aid his community. Since material shortages became ever more desperate and queues of ragged and starving bodies knocking on the doors to the churches, convents and bishoprics grew longer and longer, the patriarch could no longer ignore the need among his parish. When critical voices as to the church’s commitment to its poor grew louder, the patriarch was forced to put actions forward that were beyond rallying the community. He needed to step up and organize real material relief through his office. The initial unfriendly gestures of the Ottoman military leadership—threatening him with exile—left the patriarch with little trust that Ottoman state would be of any help. Consequently, his first instinct was to turn to the community’s foreign patron, France.<sup>104</sup> To get into contact with French officials, he sought the help of Egypt’s Maronite bishop Yusuf Darian. Hoyek instructed Darian to appeal to the French government to provide the Church with cash to feed famine victims.

On November 13, 1916, Bishop Darian sent a letter to the French General Trabaud, French governor of the island Arwad off the Syrian coast, in the name of the patriarch. In it he requested a loan from the French government in the amount of one million francs in exchange for a lien on church properties. The French authorities took the patriarch’s request serious and considered the appropriate steps. In fact, French authorities had asked Trabaud already in July of

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<sup>104</sup> The relations between France and the Maronite Church date back centuries.



1916 to work out a plan to aid the Lebanese by providing subsidies to the patriarch.<sup>105</sup> The French Foreign Minister Briand approved sending funds to the patriarch as long as the money would only be used to buy grain. Everyone involved was aware, that providing the patriarch with monetary funds would be risky, since there was no guarantee that the transaction could be kept secret, putting those involved into extreme danger. Especially, because the Ottomans had demonstrated their resolve to persecute, arrest, and even execute individual's suspected of being in contact with enemy powers, regardless of their confession and social standing. While some French officials approved of the transfer of funds, as long as it was done in secret, others, like the Secretary of the Foreign Ministry J. Cambon, suggested not filling the entire request of the patriarch.<sup>106</sup> Instead, he advocated sending smaller amount that while facilitating immediate relief was unlikely to raise suspicion. If the funds were used in an efficient and satisfying manner, he promised that more cash would be forthcoming. Cambon also hinted at the possibility of transferring the funds that had been collected by the Syrian Diaspora in Egypt, via the island since by now it was obvious that all canals were closed.

The émigré effort at collecting funds for famine victims in Beirut and Mount Lebanon was remarkable. The Syrian Diaspora in North and South America, Europe and Egypt organized an extraordinary fundraising campaign, and were eager to channel money to their families and compatriots. While the efforts of the North American Diaspora has been mentioned and given some attention by historians, the efforts of the Egyptian Diaspora thus far have been ignored.<sup>107</sup> The campaign of the Egyptian Diaspora is particularly interesting since it was situated close to the theatre of the war and its ranks were filled with numerous people who had escaped the famine by a hair.<sup>108</sup> Although Syrians living in Egypt were well aware of the material suffering from the beginning of the war due to the stream of refugees from the region, an organized effort came about only in the summer of 1916. It was in response to devastating anonymous report that had arrived from Syria in June of 1916, describing starvation and suffering in Syria as full-fledged famine (*maja'ah*) that a communal fundraising effort finally took shape.<sup>109</sup>

The Syrian community leaders in Cairo formed a relief committee that drew together religious leaders from all sects in Egypt.<sup>110</sup> It propagated its collections as a "purely charitable project" and assured the Egyptian authorities that it was a non-sectarian and apolitical

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<sup>105</sup> A. Hoyakem, D. BouMalhab Atallah, J. Charaf, eds. *Le démantèlement de l'Empire ottoman et les préludes du mandat: 1914-1919*, Beyrouth, Doc. 160, 184-185.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., Doc. 156, 180-181. Also see Ajay, "Political Intrigue and Suppression in Lebanon," passim.

<sup>107</sup> Barton, *The Story of Near East Relief*; Daniel, *American Philanthropy*.

<sup>108</sup> The Syrians residing in Egypt not only experienced the British occupation forces preparing for battle in the Sinai, but also were living less removed from the homeland geographically, culturally still living in an Arabic-speaking region.

<sup>109</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqattam*, June 9, 1916.

<sup>110</sup> It is two years after the beginning of the war that the committee was formed. Community leaders blamed the late start of their aid effort on the international focus on Belgium, which had dominated the Egyptian papers spurred by British propaganda efforts against Germany, accusing it of massacring innocent women and children. The events in Belgium had distracted from the need in the Ottoman Empire. For an account of the myth and realities of the German atrocities in Belgium see: John Horne and Alan Kramer *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, 2001).

undertaking.<sup>111</sup> The committee promised that it would function within the legal premises of the Egyptian state and guaranteed complete transparency of its actions.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the committee was able to secure legitimacy among all religious communities, by placing the entire effort under the combined care of the heads of the religious communities. Having procured the support of religious leaders, the committee rendered total control to them.<sup>113</sup> Through fundraising events, donations and membership dues the committee, was able to collect 7,424 Egyptian pounds in only two meetings.<sup>114</sup> Transferring the money to Syria, however, was a whole different problem. The committee thought that it could send its collections through the American Red Cross, but that avenue never seemed to manifest.<sup>115</sup> So that utilizing the connection of the Maronite bishop in Egypt, to the Church in Mount Lebanon was ultimately the only viable option. Throughout the war, Darian transferred small amounts intended for named individuals to Hoyek via the Anglo-Egyptian Bank or the Deutsche-Palästina Bank.<sup>116</sup> What happened to the large funds collected by the Egyptian committee remains to be unclear and warrants further research.

The French Foreign Ministry secretly transmitted the first subsidy to the Maronites in December of 1916. At the same time, French authorities informed the patriarch that the

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<sup>111</sup> The collection of aid for civilians living in enemy territory was of course not without controversy, and the committee knew that it needed to tread lightly not to offend Egyptian state officials or worse the British colonial officers.

<sup>112</sup> The committee informed that if any member of the Syrian Diaspora was involved in politics, he did so in his personal capacity and the committee was by no means responsible for his actions. But if one of committee's administrative members meddled in religious or political affair, it would be grounds for his resignation. Egyptian state officials would be informed of any money sent to Syria and Lebanon and in its public announcements the committee continued to emphasize its purely charitable intentions, in aiding human suffering. AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam* June 19, 1916.

<sup>113</sup> The religious leaders in charge were the Sheikh al-Islam, the patriarchs, or their local representatives, of the Coptic, Greek Orthodox, Maronite and Greek-Catholic churches, the head rabbi of the Jewish, American missionaries, and the leaders of the Protestant church in Jerusalem and Egypt. AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, July 10, 1916.

<sup>114</sup> The donations came from individuals and varied from four to two hundred Egyptian pounds. AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, July 10, 1916.

<sup>115</sup> A month after the initial collections, the committee still had not found a way to send their collections, but assured the public that it was working hard to obtain the permission to send food to Syria and Lebanon. In the meantime, the committee was in touch with Diaspora members in the United States, who were lobbying the American government to work its influence with the Ottomans to allow the transmission of material aid. It took months until some progress was made. It was possible to send small amounts of money, although at a great loss, into Syria through the American Mission Press in Beirut, but sending food and medicine, the preferred aid of the Egyptian committee, was an entirely different undertaking. On September 23, 1916, there seemed to be some hope. A telegram arrived from New York that there would be a way to send clothes, medicines and foodstuff to those in the region who did not have people on the outside. The Egyptian committee met with military representatives to confirm the news and make sure that there would be no last minute confiscation and material loss. In the meantime, the committee continued to solicit donation in particular from Syrians who "morally, socially and for the sake of humanity" were responsible to aid their compatriot. The committee also reached out to Egyptians to aid Syrians, who were after were brothers related in language, customs and religion (AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, September 23, 1916). A few days later the committee confirmed that the Red Cross had received permission to send relief into Syria, and preparations for the first shipments should be undertaken (AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*: September 26, 1916). The American ship loaded with goods donated by ACSAR landed safely in Alexandria, where it was to add the materials provided by the Egyptian committee. The ship, however, never made it to Beirut, where preparations had already been made for its arrival, because Jamāl Pasha insisted that the goods would be distributed through the Ottoman authorities. The Americans did not concede to his wishes and the shipment was diverted. See McGilvary, *The Dawn of a New Era*, 95.

<sup>116</sup> For example: Bkerke: Hoyek 32, Doc. 387 and 355.

requested loan was denied, because the transfer of such large amount would necessitate the use of financial institutions and keeping the transfer secret would undoubtedly be impossible. Moreover, it was reasoned that the French government was prohibited from extending loans to individuals, unless the borrowers was the head of a state. As only limited funds would be forthcoming from the government, it was suggested that the funds collected in Egypt would be smuggled in through the channels on Arwad.<sup>117</sup>

Simultaneously, the patriarch corresponded with the Ottoman authorities to see what the options were. With no guaranteed financial aid from France to Mount Lebanon and the closing of all its missionary institutions in the mountains, the patriarch had no choice but to look for alternatives to solve the crisis. He realized that the best way to guarantee help to the Lebanese people would be regulated cooperation between all Christian monasteries, supervised by himself from the Archdiocese in Bkerke.<sup>118</sup> Instead of relying on outside money, the patriarch granted permission to Maronite institutions to sell properties to finance relief work in their communities. In an order from January 9, 1916, the officials at the archdiocese instructed superiors of monasteries, schools and religious endowments to negotiate the necessary mortgages and sales contracts with the government to secure funds, even if it would mean large-scale debts.<sup>119</sup> The patriarch's instructions as to how to negotiate mortgages and land sales were rather vague. This raised concerns and at times harsh critiques, as some described the relief efforts as inadequate and haphazard. Moreover, the patriarch was accused of ordering land sales, but not leading by example, as the archdiocese did not sell any land. For example, the secretary of the neighboring convent of the order of St. Paul wrote: "Yes, the patriarch wrote an official letter to all the monasteries to help the poor. Even to mortgage their fields on their own and some monasteries did this," but the archdiocese not sell its golden chalices, nor did it sell any of their large fields or borrow enough money to give charity, as it should be.<sup>120</sup> As a result, it is said that the people were dying of hunger especially in the northern region of the Kisrawan. Whether or not this criticism is entirely true, still needs to be confirmed. Of course the overall immense numbers of civilian casualties suggest that relief efforts only scratched the surface, but whether or not the archdiocese could have done more, needs to be explored further and will be an integral part of additional research. More importantly, a preliminary survey of the records as well as the press suggests that the archdiocese did sell large tracks of land. According to an account in the Cairo press, Hoyek did not hesitate and sold part of the church's property to two Beirut merchants, Abdallah Effendī Bayhum and Abd-Hamīd Effendī Ghandūr, for twenty thousand Ottoman Lira, a significant, although probably exaggerated amount of money. The income, according to eyewitnesses was used to distribute money and food among the poor and needy of Mount Lebanon.<sup>121</sup> Besides selling properties, the Church borrowed money and at times decided to sell properties to pay off some of its creditors. For example, in April of 1917, Abbot Ighnāṭiūs Al-Tannūrī General Superior of the Maronite order informed the patriarch that under the current conditions it had been decided that an orchard belonging to the archdiocese, located along the coast of Beirut, near Burj Hammūd, and would be sold to satisfy some creditors who had given

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<sup>117</sup> Hoyakem, Atallah, Charaf, eds. *Le démantèlement de l'Empire ottoman*, Doc. 161, 185. Letters from De Margerie, Director of the Political and Commercial Affairs in the Foreign Ministry to Defrance, Minister of France in Egypt.

<sup>118</sup> Azzī, *Buḥuth Muḥadāh Ilā al-Ābātī Būlus Na'amān*, 293.

<sup>119</sup> Bkerke: Hoyek 31, Doc. 25.

<sup>120</sup> StPH: *Sijil al-Joumiyyat* 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930: Entry September 1916.

<sup>121</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, October 3, 1916.

their final request for payment.<sup>122</sup> According to Al-Tannūrī, relief work in the monasteries continued “even under the heavy burden of increasing debts.”<sup>123</sup> In summary, it is clear that funding for the relief efforts in the mountains came from multiple sources; either the money was smuggled in by French officials, or obtained through property sales, borrowing and of course donations given to the church during services and collections.

While the relief work incurred large debts for the Maronite church, its large landholdings made it possible for the church to continue relief work in its various institutions uninterrupted. Smaller Christian orders in the mountains had a much more difficult time in dealing with the disproportional debts, resulting from their relief efforts, affecting their ability to distribute regular aid. According to the financial records the Paulist convent, the order had acquired a debt of fifteen thousand Egyptian pounds (amounting to the large sum of one hundred fifty thousand *ghūrush*). This was a very large sum for a small order that had been founded only ten years prior. Moreover, the money had been borrowed at exorbitant interest rates ranging from twenty to thirty percent.<sup>124</sup> The financial strain as well as disruptions in supplies would undermine the convents efforts in the community.

In addition to cash funds, the ability to buy or receive grain for free was vital. It was soon clear to church leadership that to secure access to food supplies good relations to the government were essential. The patriarch was careful not to offend the authorities and, as shown above, publicly declared his commitment to the authorities. When Jamāl Pasha invited the patriarch for a meeting in the Lebanese mountain town of Soufar, the patriarch, having declined earlier invitation, complied. The meeting took place on July 21, 1915, and although the relationship between the two men remained tense throughout the war, their interaction was courteous and respectful. The two men would meet again on a number of occasions.<sup>125</sup> The July meeting resulted, in Jamāl Pasha promising three hundred thousand kilo wheat to Mount Lebanon for the coming year. It is unclear if he actually sent the entire amount and reports of unreliable shipments suggest that not all the promised wheat and flour arrived. In his memoirs, Jamāl Pasha asserted that he sent both money and grain in 1917 to assist the patriarch in his dealing with the poor in his district.<sup>126</sup> How much and how reliable the provisions were still needs to be worked out further, but an initial look at the available sources reveals that, Jamāl Pasha supplied foodstuffs be distributed on various occasions. It is reported, for example, that he sent about 200 tons grain to the Maronite church in 1917.<sup>127</sup> A list of distributions of wheat among the various Maronite bishoprics confirms the government’s *ihsān* of wheat to the church. A document titled, *First List*—indicating that more wheat would be expected—recorded the names of priests in the various districts, and the amount they received as charity from the government (*ihsān min daula al-qā'id al-‘ām*).<sup>128</sup> The priests of St. Paul wrote that Jamāl gave

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<sup>122</sup> Bkerke: Hoyek 77, Doc. 101, Letter Ighnātiūs Al-Tannūrī in a letter dated April 11, 1917.

<sup>123</sup> Bkerke: Hoyek 77, Letter Ighnātiūs Al-Tannūrī in a letter dated May 1, 1918.

<sup>124</sup> See Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn*, 213.

<sup>125</sup> The two men again met in Beirut on July 31, 1915, December of 1915, and May of 1916, where Jamal Pasha each time was greeted with great pomp and circumstance, and in the Lebanese town on Bhamdūn in July of 1917. AUB: *Ittiḥād al-‘Ūthmānī*, July 31, 1915; *Al-Muqattam* December 18, 1915.

<sup>126</sup> Djemal [Jamāl] Pasha. *Erinnerungen*, 288.

<sup>127</sup> Grobba, *Getreidewirtschaft*, 36.

<sup>128</sup> The total amount of wheat distributed at this times was 840 *roṭl* amounting to not two hundred tons but roughly two. Bkerke: Hoyek 31, Doc. #29, Dated November 22, 1917.

Lebanon free wheat not two but three times, an indication for them that if the patriarch wanted he could easily obtain help from the government, but was not taking advantage of his connection. Still it has to be noted here that while Jamāl Pasha was willing to send wheat to the Maronite community, he did not tolerate any sign of disloyalty to the Ottoman state and did not halt at convicting prominent members of the Maronite community of suspected of treason. Maronite priest Yusuf Hoyek, for example, was convicted of treason by the military court in Beirut and sentenced to death for his communication with the enemy. He was hung in Damascus.<sup>129</sup> Others were exiled. For example, Beirut's Maronite bishop Butrus Shibli was summoned by the Ottoman governor of Beirut and forced to resign from his post. The military court then sent him into exile to Adana, where he was held in a Jesuit monastery guarded by four Ottoman soldiers. The bishop died in exile. The Greek-Catholic bishop Doumani of Tripoli was held in Ankara a building belonging to the municipal council.<sup>130</sup>

The patriarch only began a concerted and organized relief effort in 1916—supported by the timing of his requests for funding and materials from abroad. The effort relied on his supervision and ordered administrative procedures that will be discussed below. The focus on the action of the patriarch, however, has clouded and obscured the work done on the local level already from the very beginning of the war. Abbot Al-Tannūrī wrote numerous official letters to the community. In a letter from September 1914, he drew attention to the food shortages and the growing pressure on the population in Mount Lebanon. Hinting that war would be long, Al-Tannūrī reported that the number of poor at the doors of his monastery increased daily demanding bread, and that poverty was growing worse in all districts already in the fall of 1914. Accordingly, he instructed the numerous Maronite institutions to mobilize all the supplies of the monasteries and not to waste a thing in anticipation of a great emergency. “It is not fitting for us and our Christian brothers,” he wrote, “to live off money for the poor and not to be withholding even food in a time of need.”<sup>131</sup> The powerful appeals Al-Tannūrī to his Maronite brother did, at least in some cases, translate into real action.

It is clear that monasteries and convents did not wait for specific orders and instructions from the patriarch. But rather they went ahead and aided the poor of their villages and parishes according to their own system. For example, the monastery of Saint Anthony at Houb began distribution in 1915, and its records reveal that no less than one hundred and fifty people came to receive bread on a daily basis.<sup>132</sup> A summary report of the work of this particular monastery titled *Deir Houb During the Years of the War from 1914 to 1919* and submitted to the archdiocese, reveals that during the year 1915 a total of 22,000 *ghurūsh* was spent on aid. Some of the funds were distributed in cash and part was doled out in form of wheat, potato and corn. Relief work was detrimental to the convent's finances; its treasury was depleted by 1915. Still the convent's superior was able to continue cash and food distributions until the end of the war. This was possible because after 1916, the archdiocese made funds available to those institutions that were unable to come up with them on their own.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> AUB: *Ittihād al-‘Uthmānī*, March 16, 1915.

<sup>130</sup> AUB: *Al-Muqaṭṭam*, October 3, 1916. For a more detailed account of the fate of Butrus Shibli see: Kan'an, *Bayrūt fī tārikh*, 170.

<sup>131</sup> Azzī, *Buḥūth Muḥadāh Ilā al-Ābātī Būlus Na'amān*, 295.

<sup>132</sup> Dar Houb is located approximately thirteen miles south of Dimane in Bsherri district of northern Lebanon.

<sup>133</sup> How he obtained these funds is unclear until now, but a look at the actual financial records of the monastery could reveal the source.

Beginning in January of 1916, the Maronite patriarch resolutely intervened by applying rules to the distribution of charity (*Ihsān*) and relief work (*Ā'māl al-Īghātha*). He demanded that all Maronite monasteries compiled lists of the kind and amount of crops they harvested, such as grain and silk cocoons, as well as products from vineyards and orchards, i.e. wine, *dibs* (or grape molasses), olive oil etc. The list was to be signed by the superior of the monastery and stamped with the official seal before sending it to the Archdiocese in Bkerke. He warned the Christian monasteries to be careful to only sell crops when appropriate reserves had been secured. To make sure that the monasteries pantries and storerooms were stocked, the Church prohibited the sale of crops and food products above a certain amount.<sup>134</sup> If the monastery wanted to sell more it needed to submit a written request, justifying the desired sale. According to the Church leadership, it wanted to assure that all Maronite monasteries and convents were in a position to provide subsistence to the poor of their community throughout the entire year. Leaders who disobeyed these guidelines were considered to have broken their vow and treated accordingly, i.e. excommunicated.

The actual distribution of relief was to follow seven principles outlined in a communiqué from the archdiocese. First, superiors of smaller parishes should record the names of the poor in their community, i.e. those men and women who were unable to earn their livelihood. Village authorities would then check, verify and certify the list. Subsequently, the list had to be submitted to the bishop of the local bishopric, who would in coordination with superiors of monasteries, as well as the managers of the schools and endowments discuss the organization of weekly wheat distributions, assign the appropriate number of poor that could be helped by individual monasteries, and approximate the amount and the price of the supplies needed. With a budget and plan in place, the leaders of the institutions could appeal for funds from the archdiocese's treasury at Bkerke, if their own institution lacked the necessary cash. Still, the patriarch insisted that money from the archdiocese would only be forthcoming, if the local leaders had tried everything in their power to procure their own funding. And they were told in article seven to negotiate mortgage and sales with the government. Third, once the lists were compiled and a separate statement outlining the practical way of distribution and the estimated costs, a copy had to be sent the Ottoman governor, or *mutassarif*, asking him for the necessary wheat. It was then up to the Ottoman governor to define the terms, prices and actual amounts of food supplies to be delivered. Fourth, when the wheat was delivered the archbishop would immediately send it out to monasteries, schools and endowments for distribution. At this point the lists of needy community members should be adjusted, especially since the numbers of poor constantly fluctuated. The superiors of the various institutions were ordered record the cost and most importantly the actual weight of the wheat they had received, so that exact payment could be made to the government. It was crucial to weigh the wheat upon arrival and after sifting it, since the weight noted on the delivery documents often was more than the actual amount received. Indeed oftentimes, large amounts were missing. For example in the case of the convent of St. Paul, the secretary recorded that "the last time we took two bags of wheat said to be seventy-five *roṭl* and after sifting it we noted that thirteen *roṭl* were missing."<sup>135</sup> Fifth, Maronite bishops were charged with overseeing the entire distribution process, making sure to adjust the lists and most importantly report any negligence and fraud from side of the superior in

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<sup>134</sup> It is unclear what this set amount was.

<sup>135</sup> StPH: *Sijil al-Joumiyyat* 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930: Entry from January, 1916.

the monasteries, or the managers of schools and endowments. Any offenders would be disciplined by the bishop onsite or would be referred to the archbishop in Bkerke. The church authorities found it crucial that distributions were recorded in detail and on a daily basis so that their work was documented and could be presented to the military authorities if necessary at a moments notice.<sup>136</sup> The registers, or *sijils* had to be transmitted to the bishop by the end of the week for inspection, guaranteeing an overall accountability and prevent any fraud or insubordination to the orders of the patriarch. The last two points of the order instruct the clerics to borrow the appropriate money, or as already mentioned above, sell or mortgages properties to the government to assure that food supplies could be paid for in cash.

With direct orders from the patriarch in place, the amount of aid spent by the monasteries increased somewhat. For example, the monks of the monastery of Saint Anthony of Qozhaya now provided monetary and material relief in the amount of 71,000 *ghurūsh*.<sup>137</sup> While this seems to be a large increase from the previous year's 22,000 *ghurūsh*, it has to be seen, nonetheless, in the context of dramatic price escalations in the region. The cost of a single *roṭl* of wheat—and this may be the greatest increase recorded in any of the sources—went up from twenty *ghurūsh* in 1915 to one hundred twenty-five in 1917. As a result the monastery spent a total of 123,000 *ghurūsh* on 1,465 *roṭl* of foodstuffs in 1917, whereas in 1915, the combined expenditure for 1,300 *roṭl* was only 17,300 *ghurūsh*. This means that although increasingly more money was spent, it did not mean that more people were fed. A similar conclusion can be drawn in terms of cash distributions. The financial records of the monastery show a large increase in cash being distributed. But as prices went through the roof, individual charity recipient would presumably be given higher amounts to make sure they could purchase the necessary food for survival.

To guarantee that foodstuff and relief expenditures were properly recorded and the work was reaching those in need, Hoyek sent out survey teams. The goal was to amass detailed descriptions of community's material and spiritual state, as well as to dole out some financial help to village churches and bishoprics in the most remote regions of Mount Lebanon. One such survey, in fact the third of such surveys, took place in the northern districts of Jbeil and Batroun from May 31 to November 17, 1917. The church leadership continued to insist on the simultaneous delivery of spiritual and material aid, and the surveyors had clear directives to survey the "spiritual state" of the Maronite community, and to afford the community with spiritual guidance; which included leading the followers in prayer, hear their confessions, pronounce absolution, and perform other religious services and rites. At the same time, the clerics had, although limited, monetary funds they could give to priests onsite, for the sole purpose of feeding the poor of their villages. The inspectors issued the financial aid, according to their assessment, partially in Ottoman paper lira and partially in solid *ghūrush*.<sup>138</sup> Overall, the records show that the money distributed was not very much, considering the high prices and the difficulties of obtaining wheat and flour. It has to be noted as well that the shortages in the northern districts not only affected the poor, wealthier families—defined by their larger homes

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<sup>136</sup> See for example USEK: *Sijil Beit Chabab*, (APCE-1215, Manuscript #1)

<sup>137</sup> The monastery of St. Anthony of Qozhaya is located in the Zgharta district in Northern Lebanon. Nestled in the Qadisha Valley, it is considered one of the oldest and wealthiest Maronite monasteries.

<sup>138</sup> The highest amount distributed was fifty paper lira in combination with ninety solid *ghūrush* to the poor of the village of Ihmaj in the northern district of the mountains. The village was in an extremely miserable state, many men had left and the community's priest had abandoned his post. See Bkerke: Hoyek 77, Doc. # 51. *Report of Father Lois and Father Butrus*, dated November 22, 1917.

and properties, also had to deal the difficulties in obtaining grain. Consequently, many would approach the monasteries. At times convents and monasteries decided that they sell wheat to the “owners of large houses,” charging them half an Ottoman Lira (or fifty *ghūrush*) per *roṭl*.

The team of surveyors, Father Luis and Father Butrus, set out on their journey from Dimane—the summer residence of the patriarch—on May 31, 1917. With the blessing of the patriarch, the men traversed the mountains by foot for the following five months. They first arrived at Dar Houb, which would serve as base for inspections of the surrounding villages. As it was expected, the two were met with dire conditions and extreme poverty (*nāzaran li-hājatihim al-shadīda wa li-faqrhim al-mudqī*).<sup>139</sup> The priests, however, were especially troubled by the widespread and utter ‘spiritual desertion’ in almost every village they visited. The village priests, they recorded, were either neglecting their religious duties (*tahaunān ‘azīmān fī wājabātihi al-rūhīyyah*) or in some cases—as in villages Rāshā and Maḥmarsh—had simply left, leaving their parishes ‘orphaned.’ It was the fact that these remote villages experienced extreme food shortages, which drove many of the priests to abandon their flock. For instance, a priest, temporarily serving the community at Maḥmarsh, apologized to the surveyor that he could not stay after expiration of his term; he have as the single reason the material shortages in the village, which he declared he would never survive. To calm his fears, the fathers gave him forty-five *ghurush* in gold and an additional forty hundred *ghurūsh* in paper.<sup>140</sup> Given the current prices, however, it was clear that the money was no more than a drop of water on a hot stone, and would run out before the blink of an eye. The report of Fathers Lois and Butrus, and many similar reports found in the archive of the Maronite archdiocese, contribute not only to our understanding of the material and spiritual state of the community, but also hint at migration patterns that might warrant further research. Whereas, the people of Mount Lebanon’s central districts tended to migrate to the Beqā’a and the Ḥaurān, the starving of the northern districts left their villages to find work and food in the ‘Akkar. The priests recorded upon their arrivals in numerous villages that many of the men had left their families and village for the north. In some cases they had returned, but in most cases families and villages were abandoned for good. The situation in some villages was so desperate, that the two priests found it most beneficial to prepare those poor souls left behind for the afterlife, by hearing confessions and bestowing absolution.<sup>141</sup>

The compiling of lists, registering and surveying of the poor, besides serving to draw up more or less concise budgets and providing immediate emergency funds, were necessary to secure adequate access to government wheat. Jamāl Pasha instructed the Ottoman governor that absolutely no wheat would be forthcoming without such lists. The military government used the secular administrative structure to organize wheat allotments, but the involvement was strictly limited to the procurement of wheat and its sale to local church leaders. The Ottoman governor and the administrative council—knowing their administrative limitation—relied heavily on the well-established religious networks of convents, schools, and monasteries in the mountains to deal with the increasingly desperate situation. The records of the Catholic Order of St. Paul at Harissa, only a few miles up into the steep mountains from Bkerke, elaborate on the role of the individual administrative offices in the mountain district. When the priests wanted to purchase

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



the needed wheat from the government to feed the 330 poor who showed up at their doors on distribution days, they had to follow a similar process that was prescribed by the Maronite order.

The government asked to give a list of poor to whom we give the bread and the quantity that is given to everyone. The list then had to be certified by the *mudir* of the sub-district. After that the list should be presented to the governor and certified. A petition for the wheat should follow and the governor would examine the facts very carefully. If he finds it to be agreeable, he writes again to the *mudir* to give the wheat. The *mudir* then requests from the person, who is in charge of the government wheat, to give the *mukhtar* of the village the quantity of one load to be distributed to the poor. Until now it was not allowed to distribute more than two bags of wheat. And every time we are obliged to follow this process.<sup>142</sup>

What this illustrates is that government officials were involved at a higher level of the distribution chain, while local religious institutions were focusing on the actual process of distribution on the ground, an arrangement that reinforced the community's vision of the Church as key benefactor. On March 12, 1916, the governor asked for a committee to be formed, to provide food to the poor in the district of Ghosta.<sup>143</sup> The committee would be made up of the superiors from seven bishoprics of various Catholic orders that surrounded the mountain village of Ghosta. This is significant in that the governor approaches religious leaders not the *mukhtars* or mayors of villages, sidelining them in the relief efforts. The church leaders met and decided to distribute bread, not wheat or money.<sup>144</sup> Assigning each of the seven convents a distribution day, the committee attempted to share its responsibilities.<sup>145</sup> In return for the committee's efforts the government promised to send a weekly *qīntār* of wheat to convents involved at government prices set at five hundred and fifty *ghūrush*.

The plan, community leaders agreed, was a good one and the convent's superiors were ready to implement it full force. There was only one problem; none of the convents received the allotted amount, instead much smaller amounts were delivered. The Paulist in the first and second weeks received only seventy-one *uqqa* (approximately 92 kg) instead of the promised *qīntār* (about 256.4 kg); during the third week no wheat arrived at all. During the fourth week only fifty *uqqa* (about 65 kg) were delivered and after that nothing until April 24, 1916.<sup>146</sup> Beginning in October 1916, the priest witnessed a short period during which deliveries of grains became more regular. This can be attributed to a government grain syndicate, organized to purchase and ship wheat from the interior. In the end of 1916, the syndicate was able to secure the regular delivery of twenty *qīntār* per month to Mount Lebanon. When it was obvious that grain would be forthcoming, the committee conducted a new survey of its community, counting

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<sup>142</sup> StPH: *Sijil al-Joumiyyat* 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930: Entry from January, 1916.

<sup>143</sup> Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn*, 213.

<sup>144</sup> Apparently this was modeled on a committee set up by Muslim officers to provide for the starving people in the port town of Junieh. The Paulists were initially not included in the committee, without any apparent reason. The convents were Deir el-Kerim (Maronite), Zumar (Armenian), Shirfe (Syriac), Nsbieh (Maronite), Ain Waraqa (Maronite), Mar Chalita (Maronite) and Deir Mar Boulus (Roman-Catholic). Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> This new arrangement meant that the poor who had relied on the charity from the Paulist found their distribution days cut from two days, to now only one, every Tuesday.

<sup>146</sup> StPH: *Sijil al-Joumiyyat* 1: July 29, 1903 to December 31, 1930: Entry March 12, 1916.

545 needy families in and around Ghosta.<sup>147</sup> Each convent was assigned a number of needy individuals, according to its capacity.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately only a few months later, the wheat supply again became unpredictable. Indeed it became so irregular that some of the convents had to stop their distributions in February 1917.

The secretary of the Paulist order regularly noted that wheat supply to their convent was desperately unreliable. This the bothers noted stood in stark contrast to supply deliveries to the Maronite convents—both Maronite institutions part of the committee of seven and outside of it. The Paulists suspected the Maronites patriarch of manipulating the government; an accusation that is not without merit. After all the patriarch was in direct communication with Jamāl Pasha and repeatedly able to secure his community's access to government grain. However, the government's 'seeming' focus on supplying the Maronites might have been simply the result of its demographic size. Not only would the patriarch as the leader of the majority population have disproportional pull with the military governor, but also could account for a much larger network of institutions well-situated to carry out distributions. Moreover, the Maronite community may have been favored over other smaller communities because the latter lacked high profile representative and had much small number of followers. The fact that Jamāl Pasha was worried of descent in his territories, in particular after the Arab Revolt in the Hejaz had become more than just a nuisance, contributed as well. An uprising at the opposing end of the territories in his care, sponsored by the French, would certainly be difficult to deal with by 1916, as Ottoman troops were stretched thin and desertion an ever-growing problem. Maintaining good relations with the patriarch increasingly was in Jamāl's best interest. The patriarch in turn dealt pragmatically with the Ottomans, as noted above he repeatedly proclaimed his loyalty to the Ottoman state. During meetings with Jamāl Pasha in May 1916, the patriarch was not shy to articulate his demands in terms of supplies. According to the patriarch's secretary Father Boulus 'Aql, it was at this meeting that Jamāl Pasha conceded assuring the patriarch large and regular shipments of grain. The wheat was supposed to arrive and be distributed on May 13 or 14.<sup>149</sup> In this case, the Paulists were not forgotten, as they so often were by their Christian neighbors. On the contrary, the representative of the patriarch Abdallah al-Khūry informed them of his Excellency's allocation two *qīntār* of the wheat to their convent, which Jamāl Pasha had bestowed onto the poor. The allowance was apparently an expression of the patriarch's appreciation of Paulist's efforts in feeding the poor.<sup>150</sup> They only had to retrieve it from the rail station.

In the grant scheme of the famine, the relief work of local actors has been overshadowed by the tremendous devastation and excessive deaths. And we certainly have to be reminded, that despite the efforts of the Maronite church and the various smaller Christian orders in the northern region of Mount Lebanon, the situation was desperate. So desperate that within In a letter from May 1, 1918, Abbot Ighnāṭiūs Al-Tannūrī General Superior of the Maronite Order confirmed "Our brothers in humanity and the sons of our religion drinking from the cup filled with starvation." Nevertheless the churches efforts had a significant impact when it comes to the

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<sup>147</sup> Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn*, 214.

<sup>148</sup> The Paulists, shocked by the great need in their village, took it upon themselves to help an additional ten people who had been propelled into adverse poverty by the war of famine.

<sup>149</sup> StPH: *Sijil al-Joumiyyat* 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930: Entry May 1916.

<sup>150</sup> Copy of the original letter published in Kabkab, *Jam'iyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn*, 214.

experience of civilians on the homefront. The seemingly minor efforts made a great difference and for some it was the only way to survival. As the *mudir* of the district Ghosta put it in a letter: “The work of the Paulists in Harissa was of immediate help to many poor of its surrounding villages, and if it had not been for their effort a great many more would have perished from hunger.”<sup>151</sup> The relief work also contributed to shifts in political power in the mountains with the Maronite church solidifying its positions as temporal leadership of the Christians of Mount Lebanon.

#### Acts of Small Charity: Politics of Patronage

When speaking of local relief and foreign wartime relief, it is tempting to survey these efforts within the frame of governmental institutions, such as municipalities or non-governmental voluntary organization may they be local or international or religious institutions. This tendency toward surveying and analyzing charity and philanthropy in institutional settings generally is the outcome of historians’ understanding what constitutes a feasible archive. The preservation of accounts, letters and detailed minutes of charitable and philanthropic organizations and their mention in the local press as important community organizations, after all, lends itself to the study of relief work with the frame of institutions. By extension the institutional frames provide an important insight into the actual need on the ground as well as to shifts and changes charity and philanthropy, humanitarian practices and in the broadest sense practice of giving in war conditions. Despite its obvious benefit, the institutional/ organizational frame obscures acts of charity that linger outside of the confines of hierarchical and bureaucratic non-governmental and governmental agencies. Individual acts of kindness and the efforts of individual patrons to supply their clients cannot be accounted for. On the one hand, ignoring these seemingly small acts of charity in a society that was based on an intricate network of patron-client relations constitutes a serious lacuna. On the other hand, however, including such acts is difficult, to say the least. The obvious problem is that individual acts of charitable giving more often than not went unnoted, and generally did not leave a documented trail of monetary or material distributions that could in any way attest to their size and frequency. Still, while the small piece of bread in the pocket and the *ghūrush* that travels from a giving to a receiving hand are difficult to trace, they make up an important part of communal living and had significant meaning during and after the war. Unearthing some of these stories will add to the local relief story, and provide alternative stories to the story of the greedy merchant, shopkeeper and corrupt patron, who saw the war as an opportunity to abandon his clients, that have dominated the account of the Lebanese famine. Considering small acts of charity as manifestations of neighborliness, embedded in both Islamic and Christian traditions, further confirms the multifaceted character of aid and relief. Oral history accounts proved an interesting source to discover some of these. The use of oral sources, of course, in the context of the war of famine certainly is problematic, but nonetheless valuable. It is clear that accounts related are no longer the memory of actual survivors, but rather constitute an oral history that has traversed at least a generation and as it has survived the test of times has to be considered part of family history, memory and myth. The tales of one’s ancestors as do-gooders in the community may justify, advocate, or even redeem the individual or his or her family’s position in present day Lebanese society.

The first example is that of Dr. Hisham Nashabe, former president of the *Maqāṣid* and

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<sup>151</sup> Copy of the original letter published in Kabkab, *Jam ’īyat al-Mursalīn al-Būlusīyīn*, 217.

scholar, who recounted one such story of small giving to me in his office at the *Maqāṣid* in spring of 2010.<sup>152</sup> It was the story of his maternal grandfather, related to him by his mother; a distant memory that had become family history. He began by vaguely describing his first encounter with the story. Not remembering the actual time or setting, his initiation into family history took place when he “was a young man” a time of individual growth and character building. Nashabe continued by speculating that his mother must have been about fifteen during the war. The mentioning of her age, comparable to the age when he first learned his family’s history, reinforces her credibility as a source. As a fifteen year old she would be able to remember as well as assign meaning to her experience. The actor in the account was Nashabe’s grandfather, who was a customs officer at the Beirut port. Due to his position in the Ottoman administration, the family was “lucky enough” to have been on the list of those who would be supplied with flour from the government. Nashabe’s grandfather would collect the flour for the family in rations of a fifty-pound sack monthly. As a state employee, he would be purchasing it for 23 *ghurūsh*, which was only about a quarter of the price the municipality had set for the general public.<sup>153</sup> The port official usually hired a *ḥamil*, a man making his living carrying heavy loads for wealthy clientele, to bring the flour home. On one occasion, when the head of the household was expected to come home with the family’s flour, he returned without being followed by the *ḥamil*. When the family inquired about the whereabouts of the flour, he concurred that he had purchased the flour. But on his way home he encountered so many desperate people begging for a bit of flour, that he could not bring himself to simply ignore their plights. He stopped, cut the sack in the street and distributed the flour right then and there.

The story certainly embellished with the artistry of storytelling and repetition, filtered through the messy contraption of memory and adjusted to the audience, recounts the selfless, and virtually heroic act of voluntary giving that would have meaning in the past and in the present. The fact that many government employees were accused of greed and heartlessness is countered in the family’s history of un-organized, random and voluntary kindness. For surviving members of the family examples like this of compassion and commitment to the community is a memory that would offer narratives of redemption, especially to those who had witnessed first hand the horrors of war and famine, but did not experience the hard ships on their own bodies, or to a much lesser extend. Or as in the case of the Sursuq family recounted above, memories of voluntary giving and community work are elevated above other wartime memories to counteract accusations of profiteering. In this narrations of charitable giving serve an important purpose in family memory, history or myth.

Another relevant source for the discovery of individual charitable giving are diaries or post-war memoir composed by the surviving literate elite of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. It may be argued that the mentioning of charitable giving here—whether true or not—served to counter or deal with a deeply seated shame and guilt triggered by the survival of a devastating crisis; a guilt and shame that is common to survivors of great travesty.<sup>154</sup> The memory of doing good here may be seen as a form of self-acquittal. The “historic diary” of Edward Nickoley includes

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with Dr. Hisham Nashabe, Beirut, April 2010.

<sup>153</sup> The sack of flour contained about 20 *roṭl*. A *roṭl*, according to the municipal price list from December 1914 was to be sold for five *ghurūsh*, so that a sack of flour should be sold for one hundred *ghurūsh*.

<sup>154</sup> See Paul Chodoff, “The Holocaust and Its Effects on Survivors: An Overview,” *International Society of Political Psychology* 18, no.1 (1997), 153 ff.

both an admission of guilt as well as an attempt at personal redemption. The diary, although unpublished, clearly was written with a future audience in mind, most prominently his wife whom he addressed directly in the text. Nickoley recounted wealthy urbanites, including himself, would simply close the windows to shut out cries for help. People were “desensitized” and the audience to the soundscape of suffering was deaf. Nickoley’s honesty is striking. He described, for example, a night when he simply went to sleep, despite knowing a young boy was dying just below his window. Simultaneously, Nickoley went to great lengths to acquit himself listing his various acts of charity and sought desperately to redeem himself as a survivor who—after all—did what he could. One of his “private charity” was “old” Hanūf, who had worked for him for many years and therefore “deserved” his attention. She had fallen ill and could no longer work. Nickoley moved her into his house, feeding her and securing medical care.

His second “private charity” case was a woman named Miriam who worked at the American Girls’ School. Nickoley made sure Miriam, as an employee, would receive adequate rations. He lamented his inability to take care of the children of both women. This seemed to weigh heavily on his conscience. Feeding Miriam but not her family evoked a deep guilt in Nickoley and he repeatedly insisted “we are giving her as much help as we can.”<sup>155</sup> Hanūf’s children were sent to the Brumana orphanage and saved. He eventually blamed his inability to feed the women’s children on the strict orders of Ottoman government prohibiting any foreigner to distribute charity in the city. His actions were under close scrutiny of the American community, which feared that any breach of government orders could result in the closure of the college and their expulsion from the empire. There are many more accounts of small acts of charity that may be recounted here, as for example ‘Anbara Salām who wrote in her memoirs: “I recall that my mother, when leaving the house, always carried some bread or food to distribute to the starving instead of small change which would have done them little good.”<sup>156</sup> The importance of these stories is three-fold. One, they make a public amends, especially those stories that are recounted in post-war memoirs, second, their memory, implanted into the family history or myth, entails a healing of guilt and shame of the survivor, and third, random voluntary giving during a time of great travesty serve to justify the social position of particular family’s in the present, such as the Sursuq family, and pose as the opposing story to the rather harsh accounts of competition between and within the various communities as well as the family.

## Conclusion

What this chapter has illustrated is that relief work took on many different forms during the war. It consisted of the fledgling effort of non-governmental volunteer organizations to uphold the work that they were already doing prior to the war. In addition to the expected financial strains, due to the decline of donation and membership fees, their work was impinged upon by municipal and government intervention, may they have been additional taxes, confiscation of properties, competition presented by municipal alternatives or direct closure. An analysis of the financial records of a number of Christian philanthropic societies in Beirut reveals a general trend marked by a decrease in their operations, signifying an overall reorganization of social benefits in the city. This did not mean the elimination of non-governmental networks, for

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<sup>155</sup> AUB: *Edward F. Nickoley Collection*, AA 2.3.2.2.1. Historic Diary, 1917.

<sup>156</sup> al-Khālīdī, *Jawla fī al-dhikrayāt Lubnān*.

the benefit of state funded charity and welfare. Instead, it may be best described as a marginalization and state intervention in their affairs, exemplified by state funding and supervision in the years after the war. Moreover, the wartime marginalization of non-governmental volunteer organizations significantly shifted the socio-political relations in the city, as the responsibility for the wellbeing of Beirut's inhabitants gradually shifted toward the state authorities. Still prominent urban merchant families, in particular those friendly with the Ottomans, continued to play a significant role in non-governmental charities and further asserted their socio-economic and political position by taking on leadership positions in those organizations sponsored by the state as well as in administrative bodies, like the municipality. It would be clients of these families—Christian and Muslim—that would be first in the distribution lines. Wealthy family, who stood in opposition to the Ottoman state, saw their access to food declining and their status as wealthy patrons weaning. Moreover, some wealthy patrons did not follow their communal obligations and in turn jeopardize their communal footing. Relief work contributed, not insignificantly, to shifts in social and political power structures in the city.

In the northern districts, the poor and starving relied mainly on the local Maronite church for food and/or money. The cautious actions of the Church, namely providing services, relief, and guidance to its followers would mean that secular leaders were effectively banned from the political arena and the social scene during the war. What is to note is that the work of Christian leadership in the mountain was distributive charity only. Unlike the attempt of the Americans and the Syrian Women's Association in Beirut, relief was not linked to long-term visions of self-sufficiency. Therein, it was by no means a systematized form of philanthropy that would address the causes of suffering beyond the immediate emergency. On the contrary it was just that emergency relief.

One of the main critiques rendered against the Maronite Church has been that relief efforts were slow to manifest, claiming the patriarch did not extend aid until 1916. The research here presented reveals local monasteries and convents distributing bread, grain and flour on their own already in the beginning of 1915 and appeals to clerics to pay attention to the poor in their community were circulated as early as November 1914. The imposed supervision of the patriarch, the consequent registrations and lists was essentially an incorporation of practices that were already well established on the micro-level into the government of the patriarchate. Overall, wartime relief work may be seen as a moment of centralization and consolidation of the church, in that it streamlined the efforts of convents and monasteries. While the sale of properties and the large debts affected the economic strength of the church in the aftermath of the war, the relief work funded by the income from these sales increased the Church's standing among the Maronites, many of whom came to rely on distributions of their local Maronite monasteries. It also contributed to an elevation of the Church's position at the political bargaining table in the post-war period. Patriarch Elias Hoyek leading the Lebanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

The patriarch's assertion of his leadership role was the result of pressure from below as hungry community members sought his help, facilitated by the Ottoman government that relied on the church's institutional network to distribute government *ihsan* or charity, and serve as a demonstration to the government that he was in charge of his followers. As illustrated above, the position of the Church as potential seat of resistance and treason, due to its long-standing

relationship with France forced the religious leadership to tread with caution. The ever-increasing need for government grain, forced the patriarch to publicly court the Ottoman government and avoid any open dealings with France.<sup>157</sup> To publicly demonstrate that he was in charge over the supplies and processes of relief in all the Maronite institutions, might have further served to assure the government that he was not only an important man, but also the most important liaison, which they would cautiously have to trust. Besides demonstrating his power over the community, the patriarch and the men at his side, would avoid indicting anyone but the community itself as having caused the famine. The correspondence of the clerics involved in organizing relief was focused on otherworldly explanations of the famine. The Ottoman government is never mentioned as a contributor to the disaster, instead the famine was explained as a punishment of God for human sins. It set up a system that combined material distributions, with prayer, services, hearing of confessions and absolutions. Repentance, prayer and an regular participation in the religious ritual, the priests reiterated again and again in their reports, would be the only way to survive. The differences between urban and rural relief are significant. Urban relief was linked politics of patronage, and as the war progressed increasingly were non-sectarian and enclosed state-sponsored organizations. In the rural areas the relief work was deeply link to sectarian politics and the Maronite patriarch crystallized as the most important patron of the community. The formative powers of the war of famine were undeniably at work.

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<sup>157</sup> As we have seen, he continued to be in correspondence with French officials through the Maronite bishop in Egypt, but this was done in secret. And when dealings came to light others would take the fall for it, leaving Hoyek untouchable.

## CONCLUSION

### The Ghosts of the 'War of Famine'

In 1952, the Lebanese government decided to hold an international competition for a monument that would commemorate World War I. The winner's statue would be erected in the heart of Beirut at the center of what today is most prominently called Martyr's Square (or *Sahāt al-Shūhada*)<sup>1</sup> and replace an already existing sculpture, which was the work of prominent Lebanese architect Yusūf Hoyek (1883-1962). Hoyek's monument was a somber and understated piece titled '*Deux Pleureuses*' depicting of two grieving women—a Muslim and a Christian—mourning the death of their children. Inaugurated on May 6, 1930, the statue almost immediately became the focus of heated debates and disapproval in the press due to its obvious sectarian motif.<sup>2</sup> The public's discontent was finally mollified with a new monument in the spring of 1960. The statue that ultimately gained approval from the political leadership and continues to be displayed in the square, although now riddle with bullet holes from the most recent civil war (1975-1990), was the work of Italian sculptor Renato Marino Mazacurati (1907-1969). It was installed on May 6, in a ceremony attended by Lebanese president Fuad Shihab (1902-1973). Mazacurati's statue depicts a very different theme, one of liberation and freedom. At the monument's center towers a woman raising a torch with her right hand and embracing a young man with the left, while two young martyrs lie at her feet. The state's removal of a memory of communal and distinctly sectarian suffering and its replacement with a memory of heroic martyrdom, liberation, and male sacrifice, is telling and illustrative of the Lebanese state's post-independence politics of memory. The suffering endured and depicted more pungently by Hoyek's statue, but obviously lacking a visualization of brave resistance, would clearly taint the moment of national 'birth' with an unacceptable passivity and remind of the unspeakable and better forgotten horrors of famine. Instead the state proposed a memory emphasizing martyrdom and struggle for liberation that most notably would be devoid of sectarian tones. The goal was to present a celebratory memory of the sacrifices of World War I and frame the, albeit artificial, creation of the nation in its most victorious light. The suffering of the majority—men, women and children who died of starvation, succumbed to diseases such as malaria and typhus, or who were conscripted into the Ottoman army never to return to their homes—would be actively silenced by the state.

Still the famine continued to be a recurrent theme in the contemporary international press, diplomatic records, post-war literature and film, and persists in popular memory today. Indeed, the present-day popular memory of World War I is dominated by the story of "the Great Famine," evoking in the audience the obvious comparison with the nineteenth-century Irish potato famine. For example, when I solicited memories of the war from an older generation of

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<sup>1</sup> The square has undergone numerous name changes. During the reign of Ottoman sultan Abdul Hamid it had acquired the label '*Sāhat al-Ittiḥad*' or simply '*al-Ḥamīdiyyah*'. After a visit of Amir Faisal in 1919 it was renamed '*Ḥadīqat al-Ḥurrīyah*' (Garden of Liberation or Freedom), under French mandate rule the square was referred to as *Place de Canons*. Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut*, 190ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hoyek's statue now sits in the basement of the Lebanese National Museum. Ibid., 191.



Lebanese, most, if not all, men and women interviewed would frame the conversation by stating that there was *no war* in Lebanon, but there was the “war of famine” (or *ḥarb al-majā’ah*), “starvation” (or *maut jū’an*), “hunger” (*jū’*), or simply “no food” (*la akl*).<sup>3</sup> The experience of the war at the homefront in the memory of the survivors, passed on to the next generation of Lebanese, therefore is first and foremost identified with either famine (*majā’ah*) or its associates hunger (*jū’*) and food shortages (*naqṣ al-ghidhā’*), rendering the war and famine as inseparable companions.

The causes of the famine were, and generally still are, attributed to Ottoman tyranny, that was supported by the despicable compliance of the local notables in starving out the “Arabs,” the “Syrians,” the “Lebanese” or the “Christians” depending on the political and communal affiliation of the narrator. The absence of a collectively recognized Lebanese national history has long perpetuated differential interpretations of the famine depending on social and political perspectives that function outside of the state sponsored memory paradigm—often with sectarian overtones. Such differences were grounded in the nineteenth century history of the region, in which successive colonial powers – Ottoman, Egyptian, and European – had often privileged particular groups for their own ends, and a civil war, arguably on sectarian lines, had already scarred the region. The majority of Christians maintained that Muslim Turks deliberately caused the famine by cutting off supplies to Mount Lebanon with the singular intent of starving out the Christian minorities of the empire. Many even argued that these policies were “the prelude to general massacre like that of Armenians.”<sup>4</sup> In addition, reports that Muslims had received rations of flour that were denied to Christians, and that Turkish officers, “Jamāl Pasha at their head, can’t have enough Christian girls to sacrifice to their perversion” all fed into a confessional memory. The sectarian narrative served to reaffirm and politically advocate the values of the pre-war social order and its norms in the postwar period.<sup>5</sup> Lebanese nationalists—mostly Maronite Christians—for example used the memory of Christian suffering and Muslim profiteering as one example of confessional division and the need for an independent ‘smaller’ Lebanon, within in the boundaries of Ottoman Mount Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> Some Muslim narratives were equally divisive, accusing Christians of treason, spying, and undermining Arab autonomy.

Linda Schilcher has most prominently challenged the reality of Turkish intent at eliminating Lebanese Christians. She has forcefully argued that while so far there is “no proof of malicious intent, the fact of the matter is that the Ottomans had grossly failed to ensure adequate supplies for the civilian population, to curb corruption among state officials, to break local

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<sup>3</sup> Based on interviews conducted in various regions and among members of different confessions as well as an ‘Oral History Project’ led by Dr. Marie Chahwan and myself with students at the Lebanese University in the spring of 2010. Of course the memories presented here are not first hand memories, but for the most part are second generation memories. These memories have to be interpreted keeping in mind the influence of time, as well the influence of public discourses and tropes that easily crept into the storytelling.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Whereas the majority of post-war Lebanese nationalists, such as Michel Chiha, argued for a Greater Lebanon that would include regions that were inhabited by Sunni and Shiite Muslims but economically indispensable, a small minority of Christian Lebanese nationalist, often called the autonomists, called for a small religiously homogenous Lebanon limited to the region of Mount Lebanon. See Kais M. Firro, “Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (September, 2004); Raghid Solh, “The Attitude of Arab Nationalists Toward Greater Lebanon in the 1930s,” in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, eds Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (London, 1988).

speculators and to deal fairly with all sectors of the population and not just those closely attached to the state apparatus."<sup>7</sup> Indeed disentangling the causes of the famine from nationalist and religious polemics, examining them in light of various famine theories and most importantly historicizing it, confirms Schilcher's interpretation. Placing the famine into its historical context and looking at it as not simply an 'event' but as a socio-economic process dependent on structural changes taking place in the nineteenth century has shown that the regions incorporation into the world market increased its vulnerability and susceptibility to famine, adding to Schilcher's multi-causal interpretation of the famine. Leading to the conclusion that the Lebanese famine was as much the outcome of long-term historical developments and external non-human factors unrelated to war, as it was the result of immediate necessities of war, its political economy and strain on civilians.

With the outbreak of World War I, civilians everywhere were asked to contribute to the war effort through sacrificing foodstuffs, clothes and cloth, tins, cans, animals, and other war-related products. However, since civilian sacrifice differed on all homefronts and since the Ottoman homefront hitherto has been widely ignored, the initial question was what constituted the civilian sacrifice on the Ottoman homefront and what effects would these sacrifices have on the communal relations and social ties? The sacrifice of civilians on the Ottoman homefront was for the most part ordered from above. The Ottoman military authorities collected beasts of burden, quotas of wheat, tents, tins, and trousers paying minimal amounts in return and at times simply confiscating what was needed for the war effort. Voluntary sacrifices, such as purchasing war bonds, prominent in other belligerent countries based on ideas of national sacrifices were minimal. Occasional drives for donations to the Mount Lebanon division of the Ottoman Red Crescent to benefit soldiers and their families yielded few responses and only from the wealthiest civilians.<sup>8</sup> The limited or better decreasing voluntary sacrifices are further exemplified by the slump in the donations to non-governmental charitable organizations. Instead as the war continued, it was forceful sacrifices—requisitioning, confiscation, and taxes—that most prominently characterized civilians' sacrifices in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The extraordinary demands on Ottoman civilians would, as outlined above, result in material shortages, loss of property and employment, lack of access to charity, and for many the ultimate sacrifice would be death. This contests the notion that civilians have no role in war and must remain 'ideological bystanders' to the conflict "both incapable of their own defense and divorced from the battle-lines."<sup>9</sup> The realities of civilian sacrifices on the Ottoman homefront, essentially dissolves the dichotomy of front and home and poses a challenge to the general definition of civilians as non-military person protected from war.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the sacrifices demanded were so dramatic that Ottoman civilians were as likely to become victims in this conflict as the empire's soldiers fighting in the brutal campaigns in the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, the Sinai or at Gallipoli. This successfully dissolves the separations of a parallel separate civilian effort that only supported the 'real' front, but the front was as real in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, as it was in Gallipoli, and confirms the utility of the concept of 'total war.' Given the scope of civilians' sacrifice warrants

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<sup>7</sup> Schilcher, "Famine in Syria," 255.

<sup>8</sup> The Lebanese division of the Red Crescent for example solicited donations from the Maronite patriarch and asked him to convey the great need to his followers. The documentation of the Red Crescent's activities in the provinces, however, is sparse and much more research is needed to outline it with great specificity. See Bkerke: Hoyek 32, Doc. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

their inclusion at the very least in the history of World War I in the Middle East.

Wartime legislation generally is the first sign of change during conflict, and indicative of increasing state intervention in the fabric of daily life on the homefront. Considering Beirut and Mount Lebanon, it is clear that the imposition of martial law altered the social realities on the homefront. Constant shifts in military conscription laws, censorship of the press and the mail, in particular of materials that could aid the enemy, regulation of currency, requisitioning of all means of transport, supplies and draught animals, travel restrictions and orders of exile all defined a new social reality that was the homefront and mandated civilians' contributions to the war effort. An examination of the provincial city revealed that interventionist policies would reach far deeper into society. The analysis of policies and actions of the Beirut municipality through the local sections of newspapers, in particular, *al-akhbār al-baladiyyāt* (or city news) or *al-maḥaliyyāt* (or domestic news), exemplifies the profound intrusions of local agencies into the everyday life of the population. Municipal confiscations of private property in the center of Beirut, the destruction of homes, and the dismantling of the old city wall marked urban planning was only one element that added to the distress of the city's residents.<sup>11</sup> At the same time state intervention and more precisely the state's ability to mobilize resources to provision the battle and the homefront, would mediate civilian sacrifices in all belligerent countries. The Ottoman state initially focused on mobilizing resources for its military and neglected the civilian aspect. It was commonly assumed that civilians, in particular in Greater Syria, would be able to feed themselves. The first food crisis in November of 1914 should have been a sign to the contrary and an indication to state authorities that the provisioning of civilians would be an essential ingredient in maintaining order and goodwill in the provinces. Faced with protests from the urban poor, who found the shelves of their bakeries and stores empty of bread and flour and ambivalence from Istanbul, the pressure was on local state agents and agencies to mobilize resources for its citizen/subjects. The state did not intervene in civilian provisioning until July 1916. In the grand scheme of things, we cannot deny that both local and state agencies failed to drum up the necessary assets that would keep civilian sacrifices at a reasonable level and guarantee everyone's survival. An analysis of municipal attempts has shown, here, that it was certainly not for the lack of trying. Municipal authorities at times sought to control the market, regulate prices, devised rationing schemes, organized soup kitchen, and facilitated the work of philanthropic committees in the city. The local attempts at mobilizing resources were exemplary of increased intervention by local state representatives and government agencies into the everyday life of civilians, which was universal to all homefronts. State intervention, however, would take different forms and would depend on the state's reach and its administrative structure. Moreover, wartime regulations controlling the purchase and sales of basic necessities, formulated and implemented first on the local level, were backed by punitive measure. Selling wheat above legislated prices could mean arrest. And municipal attempts at rationing in the city, in particular of kerosene, were enforced through home searches and seizures of goods and materials. Ordinances published by the provincial health directorate, mandating any suspected case of infectious diseases to be reported to the authorities was another local measure that reached into the Beirut and Mount Lebanon homes. Failures to report would result in monetary fines and in some cases imprisonment. In general, it was the goal of municipal and provincial health authorities, supported by the military court, to regulate sanitary behavior and

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<sup>11</sup> Henri Jalabert, "Beyrouth sous les Ottomans, 1516-1918," Kullīyat Bayrūt lil-Banāt, ed., *Beirut Crossroads of Cultures* (Beirut, 1970). 65-91.

communal interactions. Since the military court's verdicts were often harsh and arbitrary, civilian's fear of its reach grew and dictated their actions.

The examination of the Beirut's and Mount Lebanon's wartime experiences has shown the powerful position provincial players had in negotiating the extent and nature of the war effort and in legislating the civilian sacrifices. When the central authorities began dealing with wartime provisioning of civilians, they adopted much those practices already implemented on municipal levels into state legislation and continued to rely on locally established market control and distribution mechanisms. This forces us to further rethink the position of local urban leadership in the context of the Ottoman state and reaffirms what social historians have long argued for the Ottoman period, namely that Beirut's notables were a critical elite not only with major influence in the capital.<sup>12</sup> During the war they proved to be powerful negotiation partners, who initiated local relief, mediating civilians' wartime sacrifices and most importantly drew the blue print for statewide legislation and providing the necessary, although far from adequate, administrative apparatus in the provinces. Moreover, it has become clear that wartime legislation was flexible, as it was constantly adjusted to the circumstances and the feasibility of its implementation in the region.

It has to be noted, however, that efforts of municipal agencies were undermined by continuous black marketeering, lack of means of transportation, and most importantly by the municipal council members' own position in the intricate woven web of patron-client networks and their socio-economic position as key merchants and businessmen in the city. The state's attempt at provisioning civilians was equally flawed. In that it lacked the necessary administrative structure and its initiatives to exert greater control over the agricultural production in the provinces was undermined by everyday peasant resistance, and the simple fact that through requisitioning and conscription it had depleted its human and animal workforce, leaving fields to be uncultivated and at times unharvested.

#### The Paradoxes of War: Ruptures and Continuities

The greatest paradox of the 'war of famine' was its simultaneous totalizing and transformative force that here has been exposed through the study of everyday life on the homefront. The ruptures affected by the war would be the more obvious effects and have been hinted at by historians. One of the most detrimental symptoms of the 'war of famine' was its destruction of family. The war effectively turned the family from a locus of safety and security to a place of competition over food, as brothers denied bread to brothers and fathers and mothers were forced to abandon their children. Survivor memoirs, journalistic accounts as well as unpublished personal and institutional diaries leave no doubt as to how the deprivations severed the tendons of power and trust once joining family members and by extension communities.<sup>13</sup> In addition, to competition over food that would place strains on family relations, divergences in mortality and migration according to gender would contribute to the disruption of 'normalcy' within the family. Thus far unexamined parochial reports, despite their fragmentary nature and the far from comprehensive analysis here, allow for some preliminary conclusions based on the

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<sup>12</sup> For example see Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine*; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*; Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>13</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 19.

finding that in the mountains death from starvation was higher among males than females and outmigration of females was limited to upper and upper middle class families.<sup>14</sup> Adding to this urban conscription policies that grew ever more encompassing and increasingly more difficult to avoid, the result was a large number of female-heads of household, a signal of the family and ultimately the world turned upside down. Indeed it would be a great concern of the public that “many too many families are completely disorganized.”<sup>15</sup> With the disruption of the family as a unit, normative gender roles were upset, contributing to gender anxieties that would prompt the urgency for a return to pre-war normalcy that designated women to be in home caregivers subordinated to male authority. A return to the pre-war status quo and the salvation of family, indeed, would become the obsession in the post-war period. For example, the reconstitution of family would be enclosed in the Near East Relief’s strategies of orphan care. The internal structures of the orphanages in the post-war period clearly displayed a desire to reinvent the family in its normative form with the overall goal to reconstitute and strengthen the most basic building block of the new nation. The continuous struggle of male members of households, families and the nations to reassert their position in society would eventually enter political and legal debates. When women, inspired by their wartime survival and for some upper class women their role in relief work in the city, sought to not only maintain their position, but also to secure political and legal rights, they were met with fierce opposition from their male counterparts. Instead, women would be marginalized with increasing force in the post-war period, reversing the economic and social trends which had placed women into positions of economic power and decision-making within the household, beginning in the pre-war period and with increasing force during the war. Debates and women’s demands for equal political and legal rights were met with fierce opposition in the Lebanese parliament. Deputies in favor female suffrage were dismissed as “Followers of Women” and some equated suffrage proposals “as akin to the rape of Syria’s purity and integrity by imperialists.”<sup>16</sup> The result would be societal fissures and instabilities as the struggle over gender roles continued.

Equally disrupting were food fraud, black marketeering merchants, greedy bakers, corrupt gendarmes and callous priests abandoning their followers—denying them their last rites and fleeing devastated villages. The possibilities for profit, at times, would trigger the dissolution of patron-client relations and deepen class-consciousness. The deprivation in the communities and competition often meant that priests would forego their spiritual and moral duties and simply abandon their flock, effectively breaking the trust of the community in the religious leadership. Nevertheless, the detailed analysis of everyday life in Beirut and Mount Lebanon simultaneously revealed the famine’s legacy to have been a reaffirmation and at times congealing of patron-client ties. For example, the examination of local relief work has shown that urban notables in Beirut and the Maronite church in Mount Lebanon at times were a more reliable “source of security and nourishment than the state.”<sup>17</sup> In the city, we saw urban notables bolster their social standing through contributing to relief efforts, as for example the Bayhūm women, or combined investment possibilities with employment of the poor, as it was the case of

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<sup>14</sup> In the city conscription of males would add to the mortality from famine. In the mountains men were exempt from conscription throughout the war due to the previous semi-autonomous status of Mount Lebanon in the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Alfred Sursūq's horse racetrack. Even more importantly, the position of wealthy patrons in the urban administration, most notably the Beirut municipality, guaranteed their clients access to supplies. The scope of their charitable work was often exaggerated through effective self-promotion in an attempt to justify and gain community support for their social and political position as powerful urban patrons. However, it has to be noted, the reliance on politics of personal, organizational and municipal patronage, resulted in drastically uneven distribution of material aid. Access to provisions was guaranteed only to those members of Beirut's elite who were willing to compromise politically, publicly support the Unionist government, and avoid any confrontation with the authorities. In the rural areas of Mount Lebanon, the Maronite church, in particular, used the opportunities presented by the war to strengthen its position as patron, gain community support and consolidate its political power. Its continuous efforts to supply its community and pragmatic dealing with the Ottomans while maintaining links to the outside world would mean that for the church the war was a victory in terms of its political power. The Church within in this delicate balancing act was able to sideline secular leaders in the mountain districts, not the least because its networks of churches, convents and monasteries were easily organized to distribute aid in the mountains, and readily utilized as such. In turn it would gain the grassroots support from the community members many of whom relied on church charity for survival. This guaranteed the Church a prominent role in post-war political bargaining.

Clearly World War I was marked by devastation, dehumanization, interventionist policies, and disruption of normality, threw civilians into a whirlwind of change that was destructive and disparaging. At the same time the instruments of brutalization demanded administrative and communal responses that would leave lasting legacies. Food shortages and food fraud would result in municipal authorities to step up its and sought to control and regulate supplies to civilians, even before the Ottoman state would outline a legislative measures. Clearly municipal interference in the market, price controls and rationing were interventionist and disruptive of normalcy on the homefront. At the same time interventionist policies necessitated a consolidation and streamlining of the municipality as urban administrative agencies. Infectious diseases in Beirut forced the reconstitution of and in Mount Lebanon the creation of a health and sanitation administration, the goal of which would be the gradual formation of sanitary citizens. The increasing regulations of garbage, water and cleanliness would reshape social behaviors that would eventually lead to a healthier city. Moreover the increasing numbers of poor coinciding with the decreasing capabilities of non-governmental charity, due to decrease in income and increase in property taxes, i.e. marginalization of non-governmental charity, would open not only the possibility for state intervention in charity and led increase in state-sponsored giving, but also set the stage civilians' demands for state welfare. Whereas health and charity prior to the war were mainly in the hands of non-governmental agencies, the war affected their enclosure into government affairs and budget that would carry over into the post-war period. The health administration configured during the war set the foundation upon which French colonial officers would build and expand their colonial welfare state. In addition, local state agencies, most importantly the Beirut municipality did not only survive the war, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and colonial occupation, but also continues to be the central agency in Beirut's urban political economy up until today.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Carla Eddé, *Beyrouth: naissance d'une capitale 1918-1924* (Beirut, 2009).

In short this detailed analysis of the 'war of famine' its causes, horrors and, until now unexamined, powers in reshaping social and administrative structures has shed light on the experience of Ottoman civilians on the homefront, and most importantly undermined one-sided interpretations of Ottoman tyranny, and complete collapse of society. Instead, what has been revealed here were the paradoxes and uneven effects of 'total war': both its destructive and formative powers. One's gender, class and relation to the ottoman authorities, either directly or by proxy would determine one's experience of war and dictate life or death.

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AUB: American University Beirut, Beirut

*Collections:*

Bliss Collection 1902-1920 (AA: 2.3)

Edward F. Nickoley Collection (AA: 2.3.3)

Bayard Dodge Collection (AA: 2.3.4)

Syrian Protestant College; Annual President's Reports 1914-1918

Syrian Protestant College; Minutes of College Meetings 1914-1918

*Papers and Journals: (Place of Publication: Years Consulted)*

Al-Ahram (Cairo: 1914-1920)

Al-Bashīr (Beirut: 1914,1919)

Al-Barq (Beirut: 1918-1919)

Al-Ḥaḡīqah (Beirut: 1918-1920)

Ittihād al-‘Ūthmānī (Beirut: 1914-1918)

Al-‘Irfān (Beirut: 1914-1921)

Lisān al Hāl (Beirut: 1918-1920)

Al-Manār (Cairo: 1914-1918)

Al-Muḡaṭṭam (Cairo: 1914-1920)

Al-Mufīd (Beirut: 1918-1920)

Al-Ṣafā ' (Mount Lebanon: 1914-1915)

BEY: Archive of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy, Beirut:

*Reports:*

Bey 77,170,223,291,665, 1511

Bkerke: Archive of the Maronite Patriarch, Bkerke (AMP):

*Collections:*

Hoyek 31,32, 33; Report 1916

GCA: Archives of the Greek Catholic Archdiocese, Beirut

*Registers:*

Sijil al-madāris wa al-Kanāīs wa Auḡāfihā--Al-Mutrān Ithnāsīūs Ṣūāyā.

Sijil al-Murāsālāt raqm ithnayn –Al-Maṭārīna: Milānīūs--Ithnāsīūs - Qaṭṭān

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Al-Mutrān Ithnāsīūs Ṣūāyā

Tārākāt Al-Marḡūm Mīkhāil ‘Akkah: 1907-1920



GCCA: Greek-Catholic Charity Association, Beirut

*Registers:*

Sijil no. 2: Maḥāḍir jalasāt al-sharika al-khayriyyah (1915-1923)

Sijil no. 11: M'alūmāt 'āmah al-sharika al-khayriyyah (from its foundation until 1946)

Sijil no. 12: M'alūmāt 'āmah al-sharika al-khayriyyah (from its foundation until 1944)

Sijil no. 14: Waqf 'Akkah (1909-1924)

Sijil no. 16: Murāsālāt al-sharika al-khayriyyah (1883-1935)

LNA: Lebanese National Archive, Beirut

*Papers and Journals:*

*Al-Iqbāl* (Beirut: 1914)

*Lubnān* (Ba 'abdā: 1914-1918)

NEST: Near East School of Theology, Beirut

PO: Archive Proche-Orient, Beirut

*Collections:*

Diary of Father Loius Cheikho

World War I (8 A 12)

StPH: Archives of St. Paul, Harissa

*Registers:*

Sijil Yaumiyāt 1: July 29, 1903 to the 31 December, 1930

USEK: Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik

*Registers:*

*Sijil Beit Chabab*

USJ: St. Joseph University, Beirut

*Papers and Journals:*

*Al-Salām* (Buenos Aires: 1914-1919)

*Le Revue Phenicienne* (1918-1918)

*Germany*

AA: Politisches Archive des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin

*Collections:*

Türkei 175 a, 175c and 177

Beirut Konsulat

FKS: Fliedner Kultur Stiftung, Kaiserswerth

*Collections:*

Gr Fl IV Box 347, 239

*United States*

HL: Houghton Library, Harvard University

*Collections:*

ABCFM: American Board of Commissioners Foreign Missions, Syrian Mission

HI: Hoover Institute, Stanford University

*Collections:*

Red Cross Activities; 1918-1919, Boxes 97-100

*Canada*

SKA: Stanley Kerr Archive, Zoryan Institute, Toronto Canada

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