UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Spatial Relations: Post-War Reconstruction and the Afterlives of Jewish Terrains in Lebanon

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6b5283gq

Author

Oringer, Molly Theodora

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org

Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Spatial Relations:

Post-War Reconstruction and the Afterlives of Jewish Terrains in Lebanon

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Molly Theodora Billings Oringer

2023

© Copyright by

Molly Theodora Billings Oringer

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Spatial Relations:

Post-War Reconstruction and the Afterlives of Jewish Terrains in Lebanon

by

Molly Theodora Billings Oringer

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Suzanne E Slyomovics, Co-Chair

Professor Laurie Kain Hart, Co-Chair

In this dissertation, I contend that, though Lebanon has long been imagined as a haven of diversity in the Middle East, only recently has the country's once-flourishing Jewish community been considered by state powers and the public as a representation of local cosmopolitanism. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90), Jewish synagogues, neighborhoods, schools, and cemeteries faced the same threats of destruction and abandonment as the greater built environment. Lebanese Jews, who stood at roughly 14,000 in the decade prior to the war, now almost exclusively live in the diaspora. Today, Jewish spaces have been refurbished by developers, repaired by diasporic groups, and adapted to house refugees of Palestinian and Syrian origin. To understand how diverse relationships to the spaces of an absent minority group influence concepts of belonging among the Lebanese body politic, I consider how those interfacing with Jewish sites reflect on their prior histories and articulate their own aspirations through processes of multidirectional memory.

The Introduction to the dissertation introduces Lebanon, its Jewish past, and the main questions and research modalities of the dissertation. Chapter One narrativizes Lebanon's Jewish history within the broader scope of imperial projects and the development of a Lebanese state and national identity. Within this framework, I pay particular attention to the growth of a communal Jewish identity, especially within the scope of the hardening of ethno-religious affiliations into the sole legitimate category of political representation. Chapter Two accounts for the transformation of Wadi Abu Jamil—Beirut's historic Jewish neighborhood and the location of the country's only rehabilitated synagogue—vis-a-vis the violent spatial metamorphosis of the surrounding central district since the official cessation of the civil war. I chronicle the process of co-designing a Wadi Abu Jamil walking tour with a Lebanese architect that examined both its Jewish history and its current inaccessibility. In Chapter Three, I focus my analysis on photographs pertaining to Beirut's historic Jewish neighborhood and its central synagogue. I address the ways in which the mobilization of collective nostalgia through the circulation of these snapshots on three Lebanese Jewish Facebook groups provides a realm for debating, challenging, and reconstructing concepts of belonging as they relate to remembering while remembering a shared homeland from the diaspora. Chapter Four addresses the quotidian transformations of Lebanon's formerly Jewish neighborhoods, and the ways in which these sites are entangled with varying nationalisms, crises, dislocations, and local political contestations. This chapter draws on ethnographic material from Sidon in order to consider how non-Jewish "cultural brokers"—those who, through voluntary involvement or the happenstance of interacting with/living in formerly Jewish spaces—are charged with the role of interpreting and preserving the histories of these sites.

In the dissertation, I assert that these individuals serve as "cultural brokers"; through voluntary involvement or the happenstance of living in and around formerly Jewish spaces, they interpret and preserve the histories of these sites. I also analyze how political parties and elite state actors mobilize a Lebanese-Jewish past within a narrative that posits a uniquely Lebanese cosmopolitanism as essential to moving beyond ethno-sectarian violence. By examining notions of 'Jewishness' within the post-war state, I show how everyday interactions with the built environment construct discursive and social spaces within which people grapple with notions of social difference.

The research for this dissertation was carried out over 21 months of ethnographic fieldwork. My fieldwork combined multiple methodologies in order to contend with the afterlives of Jewish spaces in Lebanon, including life history interviews conducted with interlocutors; numerous semi-structured and informal interviews; research conducted in institutional, private, and nontraditional archives; participant observation and "webservation;" visits to formerly Jewish sites across Lebanon; and photographic and experimental visual documentation.

The dissertation of Molly Theodora Billings Oringer is approved.

Aomar Boum

Joanne R Nucho

Laurie K Hart, Committee Co-Chair

Suzanne E Slyomovics, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

For my partner, Kareem, and our son, Rawi Saadia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES…………………………………………………………………………..viii

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS…………………………………xii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ……………………………………………………………...………xiii

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH…………………………………………………………..………xx

INTRODUCTION: Spatial Relations…………………………………………………...…1

CHAPTER ONE: Jewish Lebanon Past and Present…………………………………………….45

CHAPTER TWO: Walking the Wadi: Navigating and Narrating Beirut's Former Jewish Neighborhood……………………………………………………………………………...124

CHAPTER THREE: "It Was our Home and Sadly We Will Never Return": Nostalgia and the Circulation of Images in Lebanese Jewish Virtual Communities………………………………171

CHAPTER FOUR: Whose Jewish Sidon: Cultural Stewardship and the Material Legacy of Jews in a Southern Lebanese City…………………………………………………………………199

CONCLUSION……………...………………………………………………………………….251

BIBLIOGRAPHY…...………………………………………………………………………….261

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The renovated exterior of Magen Avraham Synagogue in Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut. Photo © Molly Theodora Oringer (all images are by the author unless otherwise stated), March 24, 2023……………………………………………………………………………………….6

Figure 2. The ruined interior of Bhamdoun Synagogue as seen from the upstairs women's section. September 10, 2019……………………………………………………………………...7

Figure 3. Traces of Jewishness in the Synagogue of Sidon. The synagogue has been adaptively repurposed as housing for refugees and the working poor since the 1980s. March 7, 2020…….38

Figure 4. The interior halls of Bhamdoun Synagogue. September 10, 2019……………………40

Figure 5. A map of historic centers of Jewish life in Lebanon with approximate dates of each locale's temporal period. August 2023 (map by author)..……………………………………………………………………………….…………45

Figure 6. A map of synagogues still standing in Lebanon today. Map by the author. 2023…….53

Figure 7. A map of Lebanon's remaining, locatable Jewish cemeteries. Map by the author. 2023…………………………………………………………………………………………54

Figure 8. The former entrance to the synagogue (in the center of the image) in the Tripoli neighborhood of Zahrieh. The site has functioned as a tannery and dye factory for over half a decade. To the left of the entrance is the wall of the adjacent Greek Orthodox church. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. February 20, 2022……………………………………………….....58

Figure 9. The interior of Deir al-Qamar's synagogue, now overseen by the IFPO, today hosts dance and theater performances. Image courtesy of Maqamat Dance Theatre. November 28, 2017……………………………………………………………………………………...…63

Figure 10. The exterior of Deir al-Qamar's synagogue. The original six-point star was replaced with an 8-point figure during recent renovations. August 14, 2020…………………………….64

Figure 11. A French Mandate Forces map of Beirut, with built-up areas coded in red. Map by Commandant P. Pollacchi. 1938…………………………………………………………...…75

Figure 12. Faint Hebrew letters visible on the exterior of Tripoli's former synagogue. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. June 12, 2022……………………………………………………...77

Figure 13. A CIA map of Shi'i-majority neighborhoods in Beirut, which clearly demarcates the "Green Line" dividing the city between (Christian) East and (Muslim) West. 1986. Courtesy of

Wikicommons. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Line_(Lebanon)#/media/File:Key_Shia-Controlled_Neighborhoods_in_Southern_Beirut_(cropped).png……………………………...104

Figure 14. The remnants of Ohel Jacob, ‘Aley’s synagogue. The roof was destroyed during fighting between the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and the Lebanese Forces, a right-wing Christian militia. August 17, 2020…………………………………………………………..…109

Figure 15. The entrance to the Bhamdoun Synagogue, replete with its grand exterior staircase leading to a reception foyer. A banner warns would-be trespassers that the synagogue is private property. September 10, 2019……………………………………………………………….111

Figure 16. Map of South Lebanon featuring Israel’s occupation zone (known as the “Blue Line”) and the Litani River. Image courtesy of Wikicommons.…………………………………..…114

Figure 17. Comic depicting Nour’s story of learning and practicing Hebrew while growing up in Israeli-occupied South Lebanon. Illustration by the author. Acrylic and pen on canvas paper, 2020……………………………………………………………………………………….117

Figure 18. The aftermath of the collapse of an external wall of the Beirut Jewish Cemetery. December 27, 2019……………………………………………………………………..…122

Figure 19. Walking the Wadi. Painted map by the author. Acrylic and ink on canvas. 2022…………………………………………………………………………………….….124

Figure 20. Map of Beirut’s Heritage Trail. Wadi Abu Jamil is roughly demarcated in red, with Rue Wadi Abu Jamil underlined (edits made by author). Solidere Annual Report. 2008……...128

Figure 21. Solidere’s domain as located on a satellite map of Beirut. The significant infill of the “Beirut Central District” visible on the satellite image—known as the Normandy landfill and notoriously full of wartime rubble and trash—is absent from the zoomed-in map………….....129

Figure 22. Solidere’s domain holdings in relation to available land banks. Solidere Annual Report. 2017………………………………………………………………………………130

Figure 23. Villa Abdelkader, a recently renovated mansion in Wadi Abu Jamil owned by a wealthy expatriate art collector. Our tour participants noted its superficial similarity with Magen Avraham Synagogue. September 17, 2019…………………………………………………….144

Figure 24. A pre-war building with neighbors’ new constructions in Wadi Abu Jamil. Substantial modifications made to the original structure, including its top floor, are visible. September 17, 2019……………………………………………………………………………………….146

Figure 25. The billboard demanding justice for Hariri’s assassination. In 2007, the sign’s counter clocked 1,000 days since the politician-businessman’s murder. Photo by Matthew Cassel…...148

Figure 26. The reconstructed Magen Avraham Synagogue borders the excavation sites of presumed Roman-era Beirut Hippodrome. In the forefront of the photo is a landscaped garden for use by residents of the gated community (April 1, 2023)……………………………........157

Figure 27. All that is visible of Magen Avraham from behind Wadi Abu Jamil's recent parameters is a small portion of the synagogue's peak, including its two tablets bearing the Ten Commandments. March 24, 2023…………………………………………………………...158

Figure 28. PLO fighters in front of Magen Avraham Synagogue. December 1975…………...163

Figure 29. Bride and groom wedding portrait in front of Magen Avraham, undated, posted to LJCC by the moderator, August 24, 2016 (4:35 a.m.).…………………………………………184

Figure 30. Group photo of wedding attendees in front of Magen Avraham, undated, posted to LJCC by the moderator, August 24, 2016 (4:35 a.m.) …………………………………………186

Figure 31. New construction of Magen Avraham, posted to LJCC by R.L., April 26, 2017 (11:20 a.m.)……………………………………………………………………………………………190

Figure 32. Magen Avraham sanctuary, 1930s, posted to the LJCC by the moderator, November 2, 2014 (4:10 am).…………………………….…………………………...………195

Figure 33. Sidon (Saida) shown on a map of coastal southern Lebanon, with the medieval Old City outlined in red. The location of Sidon's Ḥarat al-Yahūd (the Jewish Quarter) is marked by a red circle. Map by author. August 2023……………………………………………………….199

Figure 34. The locked Tomb of Zebulun sits in an unkempt field adjacent to a mosque in the city of Sidon. Photo courtesy of Diarna.org……………………………………………………...201

Figure 35. The placard reading Ḥarat al-Yahūd announces one's arrival to Sidon's Jewish Quarter. Photo by Hussain Abdul-Hussain. 2023……………………………………………...214

Figure 36. On the left, Sunni Sheikh Khader al-Kabsh replaces the neighborhood's placard with one reading Harat Ghaza (Gaza Quarter) in solidarity with Palestinians facing Israeli bombardment. In 2017, the original sign was again replaced with one "renaming" the neighborhood Harat al-Quds, this time by neighborhood youth protesting then-US president Trump's plan to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. Photos courtesy of saidadays.com (2009) and al-akhbar.com (2019), respectively.………………………………………………….….215

Figure 37. Small wrought-iron Stars of David around the synagogue-cum-home's ceiling are one of the few symbolic vestiges of the structure's former function. March 2020………………...223

Figure 38. Blue paint, which once adorned the synagogue and its exterior, peels from the stone at the structure's entrance. June 2018……………………………………………………………224

Figure 39. A poster affixed above a metal door in Harat al-Yahud, Sidon. The poster shows a photograph of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and is flanked by images of two political leaders: on the left, Osama Saad, leader of the Popular Nasserite Movement; on the right, Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah. The words Harat al-Quds (Jerusalem Quarter), nestled between two graphics of Palestinian flags, are obscured by dangling electrical wires and Ramadan decorations. March 2020……………………………………………………………….228

Figure 40. Israeli paratroopers escort a Torah unearthed from the Sidon synagogue through the streets of the Old City. Photo by Avi Aviel (segulamag.com).1982……………………………..236

Figure 41. Nagi Zeidan, local historian of Lebanese Jewish communities, and Jihad al-Muhammad, resident of the Sidon synagogue, with the Sefer Torah unearthed by al-Muhammed. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. April 2022……………………………………………………242

Figure 42. The interior of Magen Avraham Synagogue as seen from the *bimah.* Photo courtesy of Lebanon Untravelled. 2016…………………………………..……………………………255

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

My interlocutors spoke mainly in the Lebanese dialect of Arabic, but also used Modern Standard Arabic, French, and English. The transliteration of Arabic words in this dissertation—both Modern Standard and Lebanese dialect—are transliterated according to the standards outlined by the International Journal for Middle East Studies (IJMES). Proper nouns and place-names are written in their official or most common spellings in Lebanon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe the completion of this dissertation to the support and contributions of countless mentors, family, interlocutors, and friends. I cannot begin to articulate my immense gratitude for all who have guided me on and accompanied me through this journey; I hope that this short thanks can serve as a testament to my continued appreciation for their immense support, camaraderie, friendship, and guidance.

I am foremost appreciative to my doctoral committee for their willingness to think alongside my theories, musings, and multiple drafts. My dissertation co-advisors, Susan Slyomovics and Laurie Kain Hart, have served as guiding lights since my first days at UCLA. Thank you, Susan, for always encouraging my intellectual and creative endeavors, and for your steadfast cheerleading even when my dissertating process faced unexpected delays and embarked on new trajectories. Your prolific writing and steadfast commitment to ethically-guided scholarship has provided a true model for the sort of academic I hope to become. Thank you, Laurie, for your close reading, insightful edits (the mark of a true Virgo), and the humor with which you've met all of my dangling modifiers. Thanks is also due to my doctoral committee members, Aomar Boum and Joanne Nucho, for their critical feedback and intellectual sustenance. Aomar's unconditional enthusiasm for even the most harebrained elements of my research have propelled me to experiment, play, and reach beyond the expected of mainstream

academic scholarship. In particular, his graphic novel, illustrated by the late Nadjib Berber, encouraged me to think about historical storytelling in new and unexpected ways. On that note, Joanne's ethnographic sensitivity to the experiences of Lebanon's so-called minorities and the relationship between the state, infrastructure, and community identity provided an ideal model of own research.

I extend my thanks beyond my dissertation committee to the faculty, staff, and students at UCLA. Michael Rothberg, who served on my prospectus committee, has provided a necessary framework for thinking about how multidirectional memory need not be a competitive endeavor. Jessica Cattelino, Nancy Levine, Hannah Appel, Akhil Gupta, Li Min, Jason Throop, James Gelvin, Yunxiang Yan, Sarah Stein, Davide Panagia, and Kevan Harris who have, variously, contributed to my training as a scholar and teacher. In the Department of Anthropology, I thank Ann Walters, Tracy Humbert, and Jennifer Banawa; I would not have successfully navigated UCLA's bureaucracy without their help. Countless peers in the department—whether of my cohort of having graduated before my matriculation—have deeply shaped my experiences in and out of the classroom by sharing both post-class drinks and their successful grant proposals. Among them are Tyanna Slobe, Andrew Marcus Smith, Agatha Palma, Anoush Suni, and Amy Malek, and countless others.

I must also extend my gratitude to those who supported my academic development prior to my arrival at UCLA. At Smith College, my undergraduate advisors, Suleiman Mourad and Nadya Sbaiti, played a critical role in helping me develop my academic interests. I had the pleasure of reuniting with Nadya as a PhD candidate in the Summer

2018 iteration of the Lebanese Studies Dissertation Workshop in Beirut where, alongside Ziad Abu-Rish and the numerous fabulous student and faculty participants, I learned to contextualize my research in the history and present of the Eastern Mediterranean. At New York University, where I completed my MA in Near Eastern Studies, I thank Maya Mikdashi for her guidance as I further developed as a graduate student and with her support in applying to PhD programs.

I am indebted to the many folks who read drafts of my various chapters throughout the dissertation writing process. At Cambridge University, the Middle East History Reading Group—in particular Diala Lteif, Camille Cole, S.A. Alkhulaifi, and Jan Altaner provided generous feedback on Chapter 2, despite the fact that I am neither a historian nor an "official" member of the University. I am profoundly thankful to Lior Sternfeld, Michelle Campos, Orit Bashkin, Amanda David Bledsoe, and the editors at Jewish Social Studies who guided me, with immense patience, through my first experience of peer review. An earlier version of Chapter 3 appeared in the Summer 2023 issue of Jewish Social Studies. I am also grateful for the co-panelists with whom I shared space at the 2021 and 2023 MESA meetings and the 2021 Association for Jewish Studies meeting. I must also acknowledge the roundtable participants who, at the 2021 American Anthropological Association Meeting, offered their time and energy to the panel I organized, "Ethnography, Compounding Crises, and the World to Come: What Can Anthropology Learn from the case of Lebanon?" Their contributions have deeply shaped how I relate my fieldwork findings to the world at large, which has become an essential element of both my political orientation and my scholarly aims.

This research has been supported generously by multiple institutions and departments. My pre-dissertation research was supported by UCLA's Department of Anthropology, Center for Near Eastern Studies, Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, Y & S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies, Graduate Division, and Inter for International Studies. I am also grateful to the American Academy for Jewish Research who helped to support my preliminary fieldwork. My dissertation fieldwork was funded by the Orient Institut-Beirut, where I held a resident doctoral fellowship 2018-2019; the Wenner-Gren Foundation through a Dissertation Fieldwork Grant. The final year of my dissertation writing was made possible by the Association for Jewish Studies through a Dissertation Completion Fellowship; a Summer Dissertation Writing Fellowship from the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies, and the UCLA Graduate Division's Dissertation Year Fellowship.

No generative writing, in my case, can be done in isolation; indeed, it is my friendships both in an outside of the academy that have most nourished my intellectual development and driven me to explore the far-reaching implications of the questions I seek to answer. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Mashinka Firunts Hakopian and Daniel Scott Snelson, who shepherded our move from one Armenian diaspora (Bedawi, Beirut) to another (Glendale, California) at a moment of profound personal and social turmoil. Danny and Masha's commitment to community building—to say nothing of the many times they've come to our rescue—have allowed me to witness the adage of family-beyond-blood in action. Cady Chaplin and Lauren Argentina Zelaya—close friends since my first day at Smith College—have provided unconditional emotional support, endless

laughs and (mis)adventures, and a warmth I have yet to find anywhere else. I am forever thankful that, with a drink (or three) under my belt, I worked up the nerve to approach Agata Cieslak at a party in Beirut in 2019; our friendship has since flourished across many continents and has provided me with immense sustenance. I continue to draw inspiration from Ben Ratskoff and Michael Zalta, whose insistence on complicating the two-dimensional frameworks that so often accompany our collective struggles for liberation have made me a better scholar and a kinder individual. And, lastly, my thanks go to Suleiman Hodali: though we meet relatively late in my graduate school career, the immediate kindredness I felt between us has only been increased by his continued generosity and similarly wry sense of humor, even at a distance.

I built a community in Beirut like none other I have experienced, and cannot imagine having carried out fieldwork—nor survived the compounded local and global crises of the early '20s—without the support of numerous individuals. Those who are lucky enough to know Beirut and the social intimacies she fosters know that the friendships forged inevitably stretch beyond the boundaries of the city, and indeed the region. I am lucky to have shared intellectual and physical spaces with Jana Haidar, Jean-Pierre and Yasmina Zahar, Nagi Zeidan, China Sajadian, Anna Rhumert, Samee Sulaiman, Jackson Allers, Panos Aprahamian, Nizar Haraké, Farid Mattar, Mohamed Safa, Livia Caruso, Louise Malherbe, Aia Atoui, Rayyan Abdelkhalik, Safa Hamzeh, Maxime Hourani, Edwin Nasr, Tatiana Toutikian, Bassem Saad, Kristine Khouri, Rayya Badran, Ghalya Saadawi, Ramzi Hibri, Stefan Tarnowski and Victoria Lupton, Zack Cuyler, P.L., and Marie-Nour Hechaime. I extend my sincere thanks to Dinah Diwan,

whose paintings and collages (and her untraditional road to artistic practice) have served as a model not only of how to make art, but how to conduct visual ethnography in unexpected and creative ways. Dinah, her partner Marco, and their incredible daughter Lola have so kindly welcomed me into their homes in Los Angeles and Paris, and their generosity has helped me to feel tethered in my most wayward moments. This research would have been wholly impossible without the interlocutors I made in my fieldsite, many of whom I now call close friends. In order to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors, I employ pseudonyms throughout my dissertation; though I cannot thank them by name, their generosity and trust are the basis of this dissertation. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

The labor of those who have supported my daily life during this protracted writing process also deserve an acknowledgment, particularly because the majority of this dissertation was written while parenting a young child at a distance from family. To the many who helped care for Rawi, keeping him safe, entertained, and learning while I stole moments away to write: I owe much of my son's ever-expanding vocabulary and silly sense of humor to you. The many cafes and their workers where I wrote this dissertation in pre- and post-COVID lockdown also deserve a thank you: in Beirut, I am indebted to the staff of Riwaq Cafe, whose commitment to fostering a safe space truly goes beyond empty words; Kalei (both the Mar Mikhael and Ras Beirut locations); and Tota, which truly became my second homes. In Cambridge, I thank the folks at The Locker and Hot Numbers (both the Trumpington and Gwydir locations).

I extend my greatest thanks to my family. I am forever and most earnestly thankful for the continued support of my family. I owe my love of writing, appreciation for all things aesthetic kitsch, and sharp wit (if I may) to my mother Kathy, who knew better than to ever ask me “when I was finishing my dissertation,” instead cooking my favorite meals when I visited and helping me to move across the country when I first began my studies at UCLA. My father, Hal—also an anthropologist by training!—encouraged me, from an early age, to see beyond the confines of national or ethnic belonging and to support the liberation struggles of all people. My brother, Harry, added the final cherry on top of gifts of intellectual curiosity and personal freedom my parents gave me: my earliest memories of outdoor adventures, imaginative play, and cooperation stem from growing up side by side. Lest I fail to acknowledge the non-human companions in my life who have offered their unconditional love, I wish to thank Marwaha and Shulamith, my beloved cats. Thank you, family, for your unwavering support.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful for my partner, Kareem Estefan, who, over the course of more than a decade, has provided me with endless love, camaraderie, friendship, and patience. Kareem’s everyday modeling of employing generosity as the foundation of his critical thinking, activism, and teaching has served—and continues to serve—as my guiding compass. I am so thrilled, each day, to build our family and raise our son together despite the evils of the world. It is to him, and to our son, Rawi, that I dedicate this dissertation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Before attending the University of California, Los Angeles, Molly Theodora Oringer earned an undergraduate degree in 2012 from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she majored in Religion with a minor in Middle East Studies. Her undergraduate education included a semester abroad at Alexandria University in Alexandria, Egypt, where she studied Arabic. Following graduation, Molly completed her M.A. in Near Eastern Studies at New York University, where she was the recipient of a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship for the duration of her study. Molly carried out research in Palestine/Israel toward her M.A. project regarding touristic consumption and the political Zionist adage of 'working the ground with one's hands.'

While at the University of California, Los Angeles, Molly received a GAANN Fellowship from the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies. Molly also received funding from the American Academy for Jewish Research; the UCLA Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies; the UCLA Y & S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies; the UCLA International Institute, the UCLA Graduate Division, and the UCLA Department of Anthropology, all of which supported preliminary fieldwork. During her first year of fieldwork, Molly received a resident fellowship at the Orient Institut-Beirut; her second year was supported by a Doctoral Fieldwork Grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Her final year of writing was made possible by a Dissertation Fellowship from the Association for Jewish Research and a Dissertation Year Fellowship from the UCLA Graduate Division.

Molly has presented her research widely at conferences in the U.S., Europe, the UK, and the Middle East. Beginning in January 2024, Molly will be a postdoctoral research associate in the department of Anthropology and Archaeology at Durham University, where she will serve on a team of researchers interrogating participatory research, material heritage, and the Palestinian nakba.

INTRODUCTION

Spatial Relations

"Did you hear? The Last Jew of Beirut died."

It wasn't true, of course, and Elias knew it. After all, as he had told me, he himself was a Beiruti who was proud of, although highly secretive about, his "Jewish blood." Twenty-eight years old, a fluent English speaker, and covered in tattoos, Elias was born the son of Lebanese Jewish parents who had converted to Catholicism during the country's fifteen-year Civil War (1975-1990) for "convenience and safety." Growing up, his parents had rarely discussed their wartime experiences outright; Elias had only discovered that his family was Jewish in his teenage years through stories relayed by his late grandfather. On their walks together through the family orchards in southern Lebanon, Elias' grandfather had told him the story of King David, giving context to the *chanukiahs* (menorahs) scattered throughout the family home and providing a reason for why the family gathered for long Saturday lunches rather than the typical Sunday affairs of most Lebanese. Now, as we sipped our coffees in a cafe in Beirut's Hamra district, Elias referenced the death of Liza. Liza was an almost-legendary figure who, up until her passing, was said to be the only remaining Jew in Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut's historically Jewish neighborhood that, given its location in the heart of Beirut's downtown, had succumbed to a fate of total razing under a privatized redevelopment project that had controversially changed the ethos of the area. As one of the few Jews in the country willing to talk to journalists or pop into a walking tour that passed through her neighborhood, Liza had become a minor celebrity and a source of fascination for those wanting to learn more about a community that had, due to migration, all but disappeared during the Lebanese Civil War.

Yet, as Elias' smirk implied, Liza had not been Beirut's last Jew. Nor had she just died, as the article Elias had pulled up on his phone's browser had suggested. Liza had died ten years prior, insisting all the while that—despite the media's intent on painting her as the last of an exotic and all-but-disappeared community—there were others like her, though they were intent, for many reasons, on maintaining their silence. What did indeed make Liza unique was that—as far as anyone knew-- she was the last Jew to reside within Wadi Abu Jamil, and one of the neighborhood's final pre-war residents still residing in a property that had been claimed by eminent domain by Solidere, the private-public real estate company that was granted oversight of the reconstruction of Beirut's post-war downtown. Refusing the meager buyout offered in exchange for her relocation, Liza had spent her last years in her apartment in a crumbling multi-family building, surrounded by the constant din of construction as luxury high-rises went up around her. Having become a friend of the founder of Beirut's first and most popular walking tour, Liza would, in the mid-2000s, often make an appearance when tour groups stopped at the perimeter of Wadi Abu Jamil to discuss its ruined synagogue which, at the time, was rumored soon to be renovated. When Elias and I first met in 2018, the synagogue's restoration had been completed, but its location next to the house of Prime Minister Saad Hariri—son of the real estate tycoon-turned-prime minister Rafic Hariri, who had founded Solidere—meant that the neighborhood *in toto* was cordoned off and guarded twenty-four hours a day by armed members of the Internal Security Forces. Even if one were lucky enough to gain access through a friend or family member who owned property inside, visiting the synagogue required permission from the heads of the Beirut Jewish Community, a notoriously difficult feat for anyone without the proper *wasta*, or social connections. Liza had been one of the only public-facing Jews remaining in Lebanon, and her death seemed to risk further distancing the country's often-overlooked Jewish

history from society more broadly. Yet the social media posts and journalistic profile telling the story of her life continued to proliferate, often misaligning this curiosity, bubbling up again and again through layers of collective memory, with her assumed, always recent, death.[1]

It is no surprise, then, that these representations of Jewish Lebanon—whether in the form of individual testimonies or the spaces formerly inhabited by Jews—continue to be "unearthed." There is a palpable sense among those interested in the country's Jewish past of a disappearing social world that was echoed in the voices (both written and spoken) of those who shared such articles: there was, it seemed, an element of Lebanese society that was perpetually tragically at risk, and it was all that an interested Lebanese person could do to encourage others to "discover" this community before it ceased to exist in the country. Others curious to learn more about Lebanon's Jews had stumbled upon the remnants of Jewish sites when exploring one of the many landscapes of post-war abandonment and decay, such as the synagogues of ʻAley, Bhamdoun, or Sidon, where they were, at first glance, seemingly indistinguishable from the ruined non-Jewish spaces they neighbored. Still others, particularly those who came of age after the official cessation of the Civil War in 1990, first learned of Lebanon's Jewish history through the highly publicized announcement of Magen Avraham's renovation, or through publicity about trips to Lebanon made by European Jews expressing their solidarity, variously, with displaced Palestinians or with the ongoing Lebanese project for "coexistence."[2]

---

[1] Among these articles and blog posts are "Liza Srour, the Last Remaining Jew in Beirut" (Blog Baladi, July 10, 2019; https://blogbaladi.com/liza-srour-the-last-remaining-jew-in-beirut/); "Meet the Last Lebanese Jew in Lebanon" (The961, August 23, 2019; https://www.the961.com/meet-the-last-lebanese-jew-in-lebanon/); "Qiṣat Liza "ākhir yehūdia" fi libnān" (Vice, July 3, 2019; http://bit.ly/3oR9cMP); "Lebanese Jewry: Once a part of the country's confessional map, now vanished" (Al Jadid, 2019; https://www.aljadid.com/node/2185); "The Last Jew in Beirut," (Canadian Jewish News, January 13, 2010; https://thecjn.ca/news/international/last-jew-beirut/)

[2] These visits include a trip made by London-based Rabbi Alex Goldberg, who met with the Grand Mufti of Tripoli in 2019. His trip was reported as the first made by a rabbi in over 40 years. See Rosa Doherty, "London rabbi is first to travel to Tripoli, Lebanon for more than 40 years," The Jewish Chronicle, January 30, 2019.

Yet, unlike cases across the broader Middle East, where Jewish flight in the mid-20th century was the result of competing nationalisms that spurred specifically anti-Jewish violence, Lebanese Jews did not face state-sponsored antisemitic rhetoric or organized pogroms. Despite the fact that Magen Avraham had been heavily damaged during the Civil War, for instance, it was not due to its Jewish character, but rather its location along Beirut's former Green Line, which once demarcated the separation of a (largely) Christian East Beirut and (mostly) Muslim West. "Jewish spaces weren't looted or damaged intentionally because they were Jewish," asserted one of the few active Jews remaining in Lebanon as we spoke. Jews, like all Lebanese, had found themselves in the midst of totalizing violence that, kindled by meddling regional powers, left little room for maintaining the fluid identities and regional connections that had once animated their communal lives. "People and militias were eager to get ahead during the war, to make money or improve their situation in any way possible. They looted [this] synagogue because it had valuable things, not because it was Jewish." In this way, the formerly Jewish spaces that dot Lebanon in the decades since the war mirror the state of the built environment more broadly: they were the physical victims of many years of everyday violence; damaged by the mortars and bombs of foreign occupying armies; and left in states of perpetual limbo as developers, absentee landlords, and squatters vied for access.

This dissertation is an investigation of the afterlives of spaces once occupied by Jews in Lebanon in the absence of an active Jewish community. In the context of the postwar state, where the supposed end to the Civil War has not led to either truth-seeking reconciliation nor a

---

https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/london-rabbi-is-first-to-travel-to-tripoli-lebanon-for-more-than-40-years-1.479320. Another high-profile trip was made by a group of rabbis from Neuturei Karta, an ultra-Orthodox group who are well-known for their religious opposition to the State of Israel and political Zionism. The group was invited by Palestinian activists and their visit involved prayers held at Sidon's ancient synagogue. See DPA, "Neturei Karta Rabbis Make Surprise Visit to Lebanon," Haaretz, April 2, 2012. https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/2012-04-02/ty-article/neturei-karta-rabbis-make-surprise-visit-to-lebanon/0000017f-e0d9-d7b2-a77f-e3dfe0c20000.

true end to protracted violence, the spotlight on Lebanon's Jewish history may appear overblown, given the fact that the number of Jews in Lebanon is thought to have peaked around 14,000.[3] Yet, in the wake of conflict that left the 18 officially recognized ethno-religious communities even more sequestered both socially and spatially than they were before the war, interactions within the spaces of a now-absent community allow for memory work that emerges from Jewish/non-Jewish collaborations, "one that opens a door into the painful process of post-traumatic (re)encounter among members of groups who were former neighbors" (Lehrer 2013, 10). I posit that, in the wake of violence that displaced non-Jewish and Jewish Lebanese alike, the chasm left by the only community that virtually ceased to exist in the lead-up to, and in midst of, the Civil War provides a space for Lebanese to consider that there was once room for this community to flourish. These emergent discourses range from those employed by hegemonic powers like Solidere and other elite political actors, but also more diffuse efforts spearheaded by individuals who, respectively, help to clean up cemeteries, collect and publish the histories of Jewish communities in Lebanon, and weave the still-visible fragments of urban Jewish life into tours of the country's capital. Given that the intentions of such actors differ, I argue, the endgame of *what to do about* Jewish absence is less critical to those engaging with the afterlives of Lebanon's Jewish spaces, whether they be Jews or non-Jews, than the ways in which

[3] The exact number of Jews remaining in Lebanon remains unknown, as the last census was conducted in 1932 during the French Mandate (1923-46). Its statistical results formed the foundations of the confessional political system known as the National Pact that claims to proportionally represent Lebanon's 18 ethno-religious groups, of which Maronite Christians were the slim majority at the time. A new census would undoubtedly produce different results, which would challenge the entrenched political status quo and the elite whom it benefits. It was relayed to me that many Lebanese Jews have married into Christian families, thus evading count during interactions with elements of the state bureaucracy that would note their confessional belonging, such as voting. Estimates of the number of Jews residing in Lebanon are debated, ranging from a handful to 200. For more, see Paul Tabar, "The Lebanese Jewish Community: Emigration and Diasporic Relations," Washington D.C.: Middle East Institute, April 19, 2010, https://www.mei.edu/publications/lebanese-jewish-community-emigration-and-diasporic-relations.

individuals and collectives *contend with* Lebanon’s Jewish history as it relates to its present and future.

Figure 1. The renovated exterior of Magen Avraham Synagogue in Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut. Photo © Molly Theodora Oringer (all images are by the author unless otherwise stated), March 24, 2023.

Figure 2. The ruined interior of Bhamdoun Synagogue as seen from the upstairs women's section. Image by author. September 10, 2019.

While the presence of Jews in Lebanon has never faced widespread social denial or disdain, it was a fact buried by the compounded tragedies of communal conflict. When the Ta'if Accord that ended the Lebanese Civil War was signed in 1990 by political elites yet brought none of militia leaders, perpetrators of mass violence, or occupying forces to justice in the name of the estimated 120,000 killed and a further 17,000 disappeared, many Lebanese felt that the fifteen years of fighting had been for naught. A lack of state-sponsored reconciliation after the war, or even an agreement on the history of the war itself, has led to a proliferation of "as many collective memories as there are social groups to conceive them" (Hannsen and Genberg 2001, 234). Despite the rise of these memory cultures, those who experienced the horrors of the war are

often guarded when speaking of their own experiences, both due to personal trauma and a larger social wariness of recounting the war due to desire to encourage intercommunal trust (Neumann and Zeirold 2012). Conceptualizations of sectarianism as fanned by—or even the creation of—outside actors worked to distance fault and "compelled the Lebanese to focus on a cultural history at the expense of political history" (Haugbolle 2010, 26). Yet, at the same time, Lebanon's nature as a distinctly multisectarian society was taken up as a sign of tolerance that was to be lauded. Jews, then, collectively became one of the "sites" of memory shared by the Lebanese nation, representative of the shared cultural elements that had been lost to the violence of the Civil War.

For many of those in Lebanon—citizens and noncitizens of all ethnoreligious orientations alike—the history of the Jews of Lebanon has become an element of a bygone era.[4] For others, the case of Lebanon's "missing Jews" represents an aspect of their self-conceptualization of what it means to be part of an historically religiously diverse nation. In each case, such diversity is not simply imagined as an element of the past but is also analyzed, through a recognition of its absence, in the present. Thus, how the history of Jews in Lebanon is recalled today represents differing approaches to the Lebanese nation as a rare "nation of minorities" in the Eastern Mediterranean. Though nearly all of my interlocutors were quick to demonstrate their knowledge

[4] Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the Jewish communities that existed in Lebanon, interchangeably, as the Jews of Lebanon and Lebanese Jews. Despite this umbrella term, a number of Jews—particularly those who migrated to Lebanon from Syria and Iraq after the establishment of Israel in 1948—did not receive Lebanese citizenship, nor were they necessarily granted official travel papers. Despite this, many Jews invested work, finances, and personal attachments in the Lebanese state. I also make reference throughout the dissertation to the Lebanese body politic, striving when possible to use alternative terminology for "Lebanese citizens." This is because of the fraught nature through which citizenship is acquired in Lebanon: through patrilineal birth, marriage to a Lebanese male citizen, or, historically, through uneven granting of citizenship to Christian groups, including Armenians, Assyrians, and some Palestinian Arab Christians, which intentionally helped to bolster Christian demographic numbers and provide legitimacy for Christian political supremacy. "Lebanese citizen" as a label also fails to account for the myriad non-citizens residing in Lebanon today, which includes some 400,000 Palestinian refugees and 1.2 million registered Syrian refugees.

of Judaism and Jewishness as distinct from political Zionism, the historical presence of Jews in what would become the Lebanese state has been complicated by Israel's ongoing violent presence, which includes its siege of Beirut in 1982; the 15-year military occupation of South Lebanon from 1985-2000; massacres committed by right-wing Christian militias with oversight from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), as occurred at Sabra and Shatila (1982) and Qana (1996), and Israel's 2006 war against Hezbollah, which killed some 1,300 civilians in Lebanon and targeted the country's infrastructure. In the decades since the end of the Civil War, young people in Lebanon have learned of the country's once-strong Jewish community much in the way they have uncovered myriad facts and stories obscured by the collective trauma of war: through fragmented storytelling, personal research, or happenstance. Those who personally remember Jewish compatriots from before the war recall members of a social fabric whose precarious cohesion was, like so many things, a victim of the protracted conflict. Yet these elements of a shared national history, like all sites of memory, cannot be read outside of the sociopolitical present.

In reflections on the afterlives of spaces that were once the backbone of Jewish society in Lebanon, common themes emerge. Many of my interlocutors, particularly those born in the midst of, or after, the Civil War, had come to learn of Lebanon's Jewish past as if by accident. Stumbling upon Jewish spaces and discovering their histories, whether literally or figuratively, sparked contemplation and further research amongst those I worked with. My non-Jewish interlocutors in Lebanon—among them students, activists, NGO workers, businesspeople, intellectuals and professors, architects and developers, local historians, laborers, artifact collectors, and artisans—tied their interest in Jewish Lebanon to their own life experiences, political aspirations, and hopes for their futures, both personal and at a societal level. Some, who

came of age prior to or during the Civil War, have kept their long-standing friendships with Lebanese Jews who now live in the diaspora alive by attending to the state of their properties or by helping to facilitate their discussion forums online. Others, particularly younger Lebanese who have never knowingly met a Jew, focused on Lebanon's Jewish history as they began to question the rhetoric popularized by militias-turned-political parties that Israel, or other foreign powers, were at the root of Lebanon's most pressing ills. As their interest in the subject grew, many of my non-Jewish interlocutors took to the internet, where they discovered the many Facebook groups dedicated to, and articles authored by, Lebanese Jews and their collaborators. These media were full of the voices of Jewish individuals who remembered their time in Lebanon with a deeply nostalgic fondness but simultaneously admitted that their presence in Lebanon was not possible today. Overarching questions united these seemingly disparate groups of people: what were the social factors that had not only sustained, but once encouraged the growth of Lebanon's Jewish communities? And what experiences had made a Jewish future in Lebanon so unimaginable as to lead to mass migration and the abandonment of their once-thriving spaces? Through our conversations, it became clear to me that these were not inquiries concerned solely with the past.

The maintenance of Jewish spaces and the dissemination of a community history overshadowed by wider ethno-sectarian conflict has been both the work of non-Jewish actors in Lebanon and Lebanese Jews abroad. This interest in the Jewish history of Lebanon as an innate element of Lebanon does not stop at a mere lamentation over what has been lost: it also represents "political and moral concerns" over the future of Lebanese society, often with very different approaches and aims (Lehrer 2013, 2). A new generation of Lebanese, who grew up in the aftermath of the Civil War, are discovering the social memory of Jews alongside innumerable

other quasi-silences often attributed to the proliferation of the approach of “no victor, no vanquished” (Hermez 2017, 182). Many of the Lebanese interested in their country’s Jewish past may never meet a Jew face-to-face during their lifetime. Others, who have discovered members of their own extended families to be Jewish, might be left piecing together their family histories in the company of those who would rather keep this controversial, and often painful, trove of memories sealed. For those who can personally recall their former Jewish neighbors, schoolmates, business partners, and friends, attending to a Jewish past can feel like witnessing an apparition: dealing with the loss of the Jewish community requires acknowledging that what once bound Jews to the idea of a shared Lebanese future was, in many ways, made impossible by the factors that led to, and then followed, the Civil War. Despite the historical murkiness, Lebanon’s Jewish past has become a topic of increased interest across different strata of Lebanese society. As I would discover during fieldwork, the social aspirations and political orientations my interlocutors expressed through the prism of an interest in Lebanon’s Jewish past were highly diverse. For some, identifying a moment in history where Jewish communities from elsewhere sought refuge from persecution in Lebanon pointed to a larger, though short-lived, moment where many ethnic and religious minorities were offered refuge, if not always welcomed with open arms. Others viewed discovering Lebanon’s Jewish community as a process of unlearning the social norms they saw as plaguing society or as an attempt to distance Lebanon’s future from the ongoing displacement of Palestinians by “Jews" in Israel. Still others followed the high-profile renovations of Magen Avraham with continued hope that tending to Jewish spaces might aid Lebanon’s self-conceptualization and international profile as a place of tolerance.

In popular imagination, Lebanon has long been conceived as uniquely ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse (Weiss 2009). In order to consider how Jewishness and Jewish spaces become a stand-in for larger issues of social plurality and difference, I build expand on the work of anthropologists, historians, and other scholars engaged in studying the Levant, or the Eastern Mediterranean, as a site of "diverging narratives that commonly build upon its history of dynamic cultural transformations" (Issa and Wigen 2020, 1). Rather than approaching Lebanon through an assumed harmonious cosmopolitanism that was overshadowed by either age-old or imported sectarian conflict, these scholars treat social difference as the object of analysis instead of its framework. This is most fruitfully achieved, suggest Rana Issa and Einar Wigen, by situating discourses of belonging and community-making within their specific historical time-space. Applying Bakhtin's literary theory of the chronotope—which insists that time and space become "charged and responsive" through mutual constitution—to an anthropological study enriches not only historical understandings of ways of belonging that were sidelined in the wake of nation-state-dominated ontology, but how such orientations may appear in the present (ibid, 7).

Lebanon and Jews of the Arab World

This dissertation builds on the work of scholars who have examined the afterlives of Jewish spaces in the Arabic-speaking world, particularly those who have emphasized how local conceptions of and interactions with Jewishness emerge from the complexities of sociopolitical relations as opposed to primordial antagonisms between the Jewish community and the larger "host" community (Hourani 1947; Shenhav 2006). Such research has insisted that the European model of Jewish space as separate and ghettoized—whether due to government or self-imposed

segregation—fails to account for the ways in which Middle Eastern Jews participated in everyday relationships and exchanges with their broader communities, debunking claims that Jewish-oriented spaces hosted solely “Jewish” activities and residents (Boum 2013; Gottreich 2006; Levy 2008). Previous scholarship concerning Jewish space in the Middle East has largely addressed the legacy of formerly Jewish spaces through two channels: the targeted destruction of spaces due to their “Jewish” character or, conversely, the gradual degeneration of sites that have fallen into ruin in the wake of Jewish persecution and subsequent flight (Bashkin 2012; Beinin 1998; Slyomovics 2000; Slyomovics and Stein 2012). Lebanon, however, presents a novel case study, as Jews both abandoned and lost their homes and neighborhoods as a result of the overarching violence of the Civil War, rather than as the result of an organized, antisemitic campaign. Further, in Lebanon, unlike the cases of Morocco or Poland, Jewish history and heritage are not routinely mobilized in order to encourage Jewish return tourism from the diaspora (Ashworth 2002; Boum 2013). Unlike in some locations, where a renewed interest in a once-present Jewish community dovetails with an overtly antisemitic rhetoric utilized by those in political power, the “boogeyman” figure of the Jew is not routinely defined through quintessentially antisemitic tropes. Rather, the memory of violence enacted on Lebanon by Israel—some of it quite recent in scope—looms large. Even if, as Lital Levy insists, the “long arm of the Arab-Israeli conflict reached far beyond the geographical borders of Palestine,” the question of political Zionism was but one of a handful of issues of modernity facing Jews in the Arab world (2008, 452). The differing ways in which Jews interacted with imperial powers (both Ottoman and European); the nature of encounters with non-Jewish members of society; local forms of, and access to, education; and, later, participation in nationalist movements shaped how, and in what ways, Jews were considered to be part of, or antithetical to, collective Arab or

national identities (Bashkin 2012; Beinin 1998). Thus, the emergence of political Zionism as ostensibly antithetical to the post-colonial Arab world is but one of multiple political circumstances that have shaped the modern history of Jews of the Arab world.

The recent history of Lebanese Jews is marked by both a flourishing of its diaspora and a physical absence from Lebanon. Though the Lebanese Jewish community was not among the largest in the Middle East, its heterogeneous composition (class?) and integration into the fabric of both the pre- and post-independent Lebanese state reflects a self-perception by a power-wielding sector of the Lebanese body politic as diverse, tolerant, and entrepreneurial (Levi 2012; Salameh 2016; Schulze 2001). Rising to importance in the 19th century as a crucial entrance to the hinterlands of Damascus and Aleppo, Beirut in particular attracted both European and Ottoman Jewish merchants and traders, who joined a long-standing Jewish population dating to the time of the Second Temple. Beirut's fast development as the gateway to Greater Syria drew together various Jewish communities, including those who dwelled in rural Mount Lebanon for centuries; Sephardic Jews who had fled Andalusia in 1492 and established themselves in the Ottoman Empire; and European Jewish businessmen, rabbis, and educators. As global trends of anti-Jewish sentiment heightened in the early and mid-20th century, Beirut's Palestine-adjacent location made it a point for Jewish refugees fleeing various forms of antisemitism in Iraq, Syria, and Europe. Thus, a focused study of Lebanon's Jewish character grants the researcher access to a microcosm of Levantine nation building, where difference and community were encountered and debated through business interactions, in educational settings, and through joint participation in social activities.

Prior to the declaration of Israel's independence and the Palestinian *nakba* (catastrophe; disaster) in 1948, roughly 850,000 Jews composed various communities throughout the Middle

East and North Africa. These communities—particularly those in urban settings—were heterogeneous in nature, and counted indigenous Ottoman, and Sephardic Jews, as well as European Jewish traders, rabbis, and educators. The settings, to varying degrees and with differing social results, played host to Jewish encounters with, and integration into, societies of the Arab world. The degree to, and means by which, such distancing or intimacy was developed depended on factors such as ethnoreligious and class-based social seclusion; histories of imperial and colonial rule; the prevalence of Western-oriented Jewish education networks, like the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle; and the development of nationalist pursuits, all of which affected the extent and specificities of Jewish identification with greater society (Levy 1993; Rodrigue 1990). These aspects influenced the shaping of each Jewish community, which Tomer Levi claims helped to "form a familiar component of social organization in a highly fluid, heterogeneous, and constantly changing environment" (Levi 2012, 29).

Unlike the cases of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, where Jews lived amidst a Muslim majority, Lebanese society consisted of fluctuating but, until recently, relatively evenly represented numbers of Muslims and Christians. In tandem with the development of Pan-Arabism and Syrian nationalism, Lebanon's Maronite Catholic community—with whom Lebanese Jews formed alliances to be discussed in the following chapter—debated the merits of a Christian-majority nation-state strongly affiliated with Europe to replace French mandate rule (Salameh 2012, 302). This wider ethnoreligious-cum-political orientation Lebanon's Jews encountered in their Christian compatriots supplied an alternative form of nationalism that relied neither on Islam as a dominant cultural vein or on a proverbial back turned to Europe in order to stake claims to belonging (Schulze 2001). This status of Lebanon as ambivalently Arab in identity provides

another layer through which to understand how Jews contextualized themselves in a changing Mediterranean society.

Space and Place

During the Civil War, quotidian spaces that once hosted a multitude of interactions between different sorts of people were altered by the physical destruction of material space, but also by the segregation of different ethno-religious and political factions who retreated to the safety of particular geographies guarded by respective militias. The spatial violence enacted upon the built environment was often the result of guerilla warfare or the byproduct of foreign occupation; ruination of space was, at other times, the end goal in and of itself. Jewish spaces like synagogues, homes, cemeteries, and schools were variously sites of refuge, battles, and, like the larger built environment and the people it housed, the victims of violence. These spaces, however, are not simply ruins whose prior histories mark bygone, better times. Rather, the different ways these sites have been used, reimagined, reinhabited, and appropriated since the flight of their original inhabitants raises questions around how Lebanon's Jewish history is conceptualized, remembered, and forgotten. Reflections on the absence of the Jewish community also sparks reflection on the plight of non-Jewish groups who interact with formerly Jewish spaces in the present. As Anoush Suni contends in the context of Ottoman Armenian spaces whose inhabitants were victims of genocide and forced depopulation in the last years of the Ottoman empire, the spaces of a no-longer present minority may best be approached as material palimpsests: they are remnants in the built environment "of violence on the landscape, which both sediment one upon the other and become part and parcel of intertwined histories" (2019, 2). Unlike in the case of Armenia, where many of these sites are directly linked to the genocidal

violence enacted on the religious, linguistic, and ethnic minority, Lebanese Jewish spaces reflect the totalizing violence of the Civil War and the loss of a minority group to life made unlivable amidst competing geopolitical interests and protracted warfare.

The terms "space" and "place" have no agreed upon definition across intellectual history, and have been topics of both hotly contested semantic debates; even a single scholar is likely to acknowledge the need for multiple definitions for the myriad dimensions of these terms. Henri Lefebvre, for example, describes space as a social production, with meanings that change depending on historical moment. Lefebvre concerns himself with three forms of space: the first is the notion of an ever-present abstract space, which is dictated by capitalist modes of being and influenced by such things as the workday schedule and the infrastructure that regulates vast networks and movement of goods and people (1992). The second of Lefebvre's trajectories consists of a triad of spatial relations that work dialectically: spatial practice, representations of space, representational space. The first term applies to daily interaction with the built environment, whether it is in public, through labor, or at home. The second concept, representations of space, reflects the realm of map-making, city planning, and the practice of understanding space through measurement. Lefebvre's third form—representational space—are those arenas that may be appropriated or reconstituted by alternatives to the dominant political powers at hand (ibid, 345). Understanding how these different forms of space function in tandem, insists Lefebvre, involves recognition of space as produced by social life to reveal a radical possibility of appropriation for the needs of the social group (ibid, 345). Finally, Lefebvre's third trajectory of exploration is the concept of differential space that could, in theory, challenge the tripartite of spatial domination by insisting on a "right to space." Suppressed by the state powers that be, differential space is that which must be radically reformulated, as the

reproduction of power is formulated through, and manifested in, Lefebvre's understandings of space (ibid, 248).

The so-called academic "spatial turn" has produced crucial research that, pairing analyses with historically-situated accounts of communities, conceives of space and place as both constitutive of, and by, the social and political relations which enliven them (Lässig and Rürup 2017, 1). In what follows, I absorb "place" and "site" into the concept of "space" to signal both the material world's imaginative and physical dimensions. As Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup insist, such a recognition is necessary if we are to dissolve a binary that positions space as "either materiality or alternatively as discourse," when, in reality, material space "shapes an imaginary superstratum, which in turn" reproduces how spaces are built, maintained, and experienced (ibid, 5). Though spaces both host and define social power relations, they are not static or unchanging either in their physicality or concerning how they are imagined. Spaces are neither islands nor insulated from the socio- and geopolitical realities with which they are surrounded. Particularly in the modern and contemporary eras, which witnessed the ever-increasing mobility of goods and people to travel over great distances, spaces are susceptible to appropriation by groups and individuals from a wide range of positionalities. A single space (and the symbols and rituals with which it is associated) can serve as the site in which a vast array of perceptions, histories, and experiences are projected and experienced. In this dissertation, I employ the term "site" in order to ground the abstract category of space and its discourses to specific, historically-situated material realms, I employ the term "site" for its ability to reflect both physical place and the imaginative realms that coalesce around the material.

Although an active Jewish community has all but ceased to exist in Lebanon today, traces of the locales formerly enlivened by the country's Jews remain scattered across its present-day

territory, albeit in both intact and less obvious forms. These locales include the neighborhoods they formerly occupied; Jewish cemeteries and houses of worship; schools; and shared shrines. Despite the fact that these spaces are not necessarily utilized today as they were intended at the time of construction, their history is often known to those who interact with them, whether they do so by deliberate choice or through the happenstance of conducting daily routines in their midst. Thinking through the histories and uses of these places, then, has the potential to illuminate the processes of collective memory that undergird the narratives embedded in the present-day built environment. A focus that accepts the "mutual constitution of person and place, where the social person emerges through the milieu of the neighborhood, while the charter of the neighborhood appears through the constitution of its community," as Doreen Massey explains, grants "a potential for the happenstance juxtaposition of previously unrelated trajectories" (2005, 94) By placing an analysis of such "social negotiations" within a spatial framework, we may better understand how space dictates, and is dictated by, everyday "run-ins with alterity" (Bryant 2016, 120).

Lieu de mémoire

In settings like Lebanon, where wholescale violence has left its mark on both the built environment and the personal memories of those who inhabit it, materiality becomes a lens through which divergent understandings of the past function as "sites of memory" (Nora 1996). I turn here to Pierre Nora, whose work is useful for understanding the shifting meanings imbued in sites as they reflect a national patrimony. In a three-volume English work of compiled essays edited by Nora, writers deconstruct the making of French national culture in order to explain the production of a shared social history in the context of the modern nation-state. As Nora states in

his introduction to the first volume, the project's intention is to "demonstrate empirically the hidden connection between all true memorials…and objects as seemingly different as museums, commemorations, archives, heraldic devices or emblems" inasmuch as they share a similar function as sites of memory (1996, xix). In seeking to account for the construction of French collective memory, Nora turns to various sites, defined not only as physical "sites" but also as elements like literature, urban attitudes, and museums (Compagnon 1996; Corbin 1996; Nora 1996). Convinced of the declining importance of memory and the rise of a more rigid history, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* attempts to answer the popular questions that, in the wake of World War II and the Algerian War of Independence, circulated around the meaning of national memory, nationhood and its present history (Nora 1996:x). Nora explains that the violence of the current post-World War II moment has stripped public memory of implicit meaning, representing, instead, a collection of empty signs. Thus, those tasked with maintaining a cohesive body politic—state actors and cultural producers, one assumes—again infuse such signs with revised meaning that resonates in the era at hand in order for them to remain salient. Likewise, the totalizing violence of the Lebanese Civil War created a rupture in meaning concerning many of the sites and symbols that had, before, served the public as emblems of shared Lebanese culture. Although the once-overtly Jewish symbols that adorned the community's sites have in many cases faded or disappeared, locals continue to remember and narrate these spaces as Jewish. Whether telling of their own childhood experiences or referring to memories inherited from family and friends, spaces are reinscribed as Jewish through references to their names, former uses, and historical inhabitants.

As Diana Pinto explains, while Jewish spaces cannot exist wholly divorced from Jews, they are not simply the remains of, or monuments to, a Jewish past (1996). Unlike a Jewish

community, which can be self-sustaining in organization and practice, Erica Lehrer tells us that Jewish spaces cannot flourish with Jews alone (2013, 2). In the absence of a public Jewish life in Lebanon, much of this work of public presence has been at the initiative of, or through collaboration with, "heritage brokers": local non-Jewish activists, historians, and others curious not only about Lebanon's Jews, but what the silence around their present absence says more broadly about Lebanese society. While many of these spaces are directly linked to physical spaces of a community lost, others undertake explorations of a Lebanese Jewish past indirectly, such as through the study of Modern or Biblical Hebrew or classes on Kabbalah. Other forms of Jewish spaces include cemeteries and synagogues which, through diasporic cooperation, are sites of investment of both time and money. In both cases, interactions with, and reflections about, such sites spur engagements with not only a Jewish past, but a history of civil conflict and geopolitical realities that led Jews to feel that their place in society was untenable.

The means by which places emerge as sites of memory has changed significantly since the time of Nora's writing, particularly with the advent of widespread internet access. The proliferation of internet users across the globe, as Annie Gérin explains, has greatly altered how collective experiences are perceived in relation to both the spaces with which they contend and the spaces in which these contestations take place (2006, 43). From different locations in the diaspora, including the Americas, France, and Israel, Lebanese Jews have taken to a number of blogs, chat rooms, and, most recently, Facebook groups and pages to share memories, post digitized ephemera, and reconnect with friends and family. As is the case with physical spaces, the maintenance of these online communities are the initiatives of both Jews and non-Jews who help them to function as spaces where individuals learn about, debate, and reformulate the intersection of Lebaneseness and Jewishness. Sites such as Facebook and personal blogs have led

to the participation of non-Jewish Lebanese, who were previously not privy to the diasporic social institutions of Lebanese Jews, a phenomenon which will be explored in Chapter 3.

As is the case with physical sites of memory, these virtual *lieu de mémoire* are sites of investment made by communities—however defined—"with a living desire to remember," despite the fact that those investing may have widely different aims in how they "ma[p] out future directions or informing collective consciousness" (Gérin 2006, 42). In many ways, internet-based *lieu* build on earlier memorial projects, like the proliferation of "memory books" that commemorate destroyed Palestinian villages. These projects call into question how ideas of indigeneity and belonging to a particular place rely on a distant-reaching collective temporality, and how such temporalities are sustained from afar when access to these places of memory is no longer feasible (Davis 2012; Slyomovics 1998). Considering production and circulation of the memory book as form, Rochelle Davis seeks to shed light on the ways in which Palestinian geographies erased by the Israeli settler-colonial project are recalled by displaced community members and, in turn, what methods are utilized for recording such histories. Rather than focusing on historical production at the hands of Palestinian elites, Davis turns her analysis to the practices of everyday community members—often those of younger generations born in exile—who see it as their duty to record information slowly being lost to generational amnesia.

Forums like the ones hosted on Facebook are not simply spaces where users grieve what is lost (though these displays of nostalgia and loss are common). Such spaces are remarkable, explains Louis Fishman in the context of Turkey, where a once robust Jewish community has dwindled to numbers in the thousands, because they allow for the fact of the historic presence of Jews to once again take up space in the public sphere. What's more, they allow Jewish participants to weigh in on discussions where their voices were stifled by the geographic rupture

between communities and locale (2020, 171). Thus, online forums serve not only as memorials, but allow for the intersection of "Jews' individual and communal memories…with the construction of local and national historical narratives" (ibid).

Collective and National Memory

All imagined collectives rely on shared perceptions of a mutual past in order to buttress claims to a present-day constituency (Connorton 1989, 2). The vast array of scholarship on the idea of nation has rightfully approached the concept and its relationship to the state as constituted through practices rather than as a "practical category" of analysis (Brubaker 1996). As Amy Mills contends, the development of nationalist sentiment is not a unitary process; one must seek to understand the "experiential moments and spaces through which individuals and social groups produce and challenge notions of national identity" (2010, 12). National memory is not wholly encompassing, particularly in places like Lebanon, where multiple strains of communal memory diverge from one another, sometimes quite drastically. Lebanon provides a stark example of how the past is remembered in fragmented ways (Seigneurie 2011; Volk 2010).

As is the case in many post-colonial settings, political violence in Lebanon was both the result of, and resulted in, the proliferation of numerous contested, and often emotionally visceral, frames of understanding the past. In the Arab world, such nationalisms were constructed both in conversation with—and actively against—a pre-colonial Islamic milieu, which sought to unite the Arabic-speaking world under one banner (Firro 2004). In Lebanon, the vast array of ethno-religious communities aligned themselves with, and were sometimes divided among, national projects. While these models of nationalism came about through European frameworks of

belonging and statecraft, they were actively undertaken by different elements of society, including by Lebanese Jews.

In Chapter One of this dissertation, I narrativize Lebanon's Jewish history within the broader scope of imperial projects and the development of a Lebanese state and national identity. Within this framework, I pay particular attention to the growth of a communal Jewish identity, especially within the scope of the hardening of ethno-religious affiliations into the sole legitimate category of political representation. This chapter describes the establishment of various Jewish spaces—including houses of worship, neighborhoods, educational systems, and other social arenas—alongside the waxing and waning of their communities across what would become the Lebanese state. It contends with how Lebanese Jews variously saw themselves as embroiled in imperial projects and quests for national autonomy, from a religious minority in the Ottoman Empire, subjects of the French Mandate, and participants in the nascent independent Lebanese state to how they grappled and engaged with the project of political Zionism and that State of Israel. My aim in this chapter is not to delineate a unique Jewish history separate from Lebanese history, but to show how the former was deeply shaped by, and entrenched within, the latter.

Violent historic ruptures like wars and revolutions, claims Richard Terdiman, create periods in which citizens struggle to relate their hitherto national patrimony to the present moment, resulting in "a sense that their past had somehow evaded memory, that recollection had ceased to integrate with consciousness" (1993, 3). Such "memory crises" necessitate imbuing national myths with new, salient meanings, lessening the importance of some aspects of these myths while requiring the incorporation of new meanings and events. Overcoming such a crisis, insists Terdiman, involves a reconciliation of the disparities between the past and the present, resulting in a collective haunting by traumas past (1993, 14). In the case of Lebanon, the

discontinuity brought on by all-permeating violence was further complicated by the "discomfit" engendered by a lack of post-war fact-finding tribunals and national reconciliation efforts, as well as an inability to come to an agreement regarding how to address the war in public spheres like national education curriculum (Shuayb 2016). Despite this state-sponsored amnesiac approach, Lebanese themselves have not simply "forgotten:" cultural critics, scholars, and members of society attest that Lebanon's post-war period ushered in a massive proliferation of competing narratives about "what happened" during the war and why, rather than a dearth of explanations (Volk 2010, 6). Indeed, it has been argued by thinkers Lebanese and otherwise that Lebanon is home to "as many collective memories as there are social groups to conceive them," with sites of memory that bring to mind a range of associations for the various "religious communities, political parties, generations, notables and delinquents" among whom they strike a chord (Hannsen and Genberg 2001, 234).

In attempting to unravel the complexities of memories of a no-longer present community in the following chapter and, more broadly, throughout the dissertation, I wish to highlight two possible ways of thinking about the social functions of memory and the political potentialities that memory holds. Firstly, I find Marianne Hirsch's notion of "postmemory" particularly generative in relation to memory's enmeshment in social identity and its role in binding so-called "imagined communities," or nations, through both spatial and temporal distance (Hirsch 2012; Anderson 1983). Hirsch suggests the word "postmemory" as representative of the process of mediation that characterizes the way in which the children of Holocaust survivors mediate the inherited symbols and embodiments of trauma through their own temporally-specific realities. The ways in which familial stories are filtered through an individual's own life-world, interests, and experiences was demonstrated to me aptly by Elias, who discovered his Jewishness in his

teenage years through the stories relayed to him from both the Bible and of Jewish life moments, like weddings and holidays, but his grandfather. As the family's Jewishness was transmitted to him through individual stories and snippets of information, Elias took to the internet, where he could explore what it meant to be "Jewish" beyond the scope of his social world in Beirut, where he felt he needed to conceal his family's religion. During the many conversations we shared as we developed a friendship, Elias would juxtapose memories of the "Jewish" things his family did—like the image of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life hanging in his grandparents' home or the his family's long, weekly Saturday lunches —with references to Seinfeld and self-deprecating "Ashkenazi" humor, neither of which were elements of his family's experience. As he struggled to explore what it meant to have Jewish roots in a country that was, in the early 2000s, heavily embroiled in ongoing geopolitical strife with Israel, Elias came to understand his family's Jewishness by way of references to Jewish culture and humor through global media and the internet.

Scholars of Lebanon have utilized Hirsch's model to explain how memory is transmitted between generations, whether through oral tradition and narrative accounts, in public debate, and in art, literature, and film (Hayek 2017; Larkin 2012; Sawalha 2011). As Anthony Smith explains, the process of again and again infusing representations of the national collective with innovative meanings "is a recurrent activity…that involves ceaseless reinterpretations, rediscoveries and reconstructions; each generation must re-fashion [national and social] systems in light of the myths, memories, values and symbols of the 'past'" (1999). This, Hirsch suggests, addresses how postmemorial work serves to "reactivate and reembody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by investing them with resonant…forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (2012, 33). Both in the context of the nation and the family, the concept of

postmemory acknowledges the process undertaken by generations following historic rupture of reaffirming the temporal and experiential bonds made weak by collective trauma.

On the other hand, “multidirectional memory,” as defined by Michael Rothberg, works against the concept of historical uniqueness. Rothberg proposes that narratives of traumatic memory always provide new language through which to describe and understand multiple meanings of remembered violence. According to Rothberg, traumatic collective recollections are unnecessarily positioned in competition with one another; it is, seemingly, as if there is finite space for what can and cannot be remembered. Rothberg suggests that we disavow the notion of competitive memory, which often emerges from the gaps of imperfect metaphorical fit (2009, 8). Rather, Rothburg points to the gaps in comparison as the very sites that might offer seemingly disparate historic junctures the space to illuminate counternarratives in one another. In the case of the city of Sidon’s formerly Jewish neighborhood, the Palestinian refugees who now occupy once-Jewish spaces contend with their own displacement and lack of citizenship through the material remnants of a no-longer-present community whose displacements were brought about through the same set of intersecting imperial projects (a topic I will address in full in Chapter Four). It is Rothberg’s location of the possibilities made manifest by a shared language across disparate historic junctures—along with Hirsch’s notion of an always-already, and is a constantly, remediated, inherited type of memory—which I wish to keep in mind when considering how my interlocutors, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, frame their ongoing relationship to Lebanon’s Jewish history.

Cosmopolitanism and Conviviality

My choice to identify cosmopolitanism and space as the foundational nodes of inquiry is not arbitrary; with particular regards to Lebanon's position in the Eastern Mediterranean, historically interwoven patterns of trade, religious identification, language, and geography can, as Henk Dreissen considers, provide an initial basis for analyzing "the assumed congeniality of [those dwelling] around the Mediterranean" (2006, 130). It is not only Jews who once conceived as Lebanon as a refuge for minorities. Lebanon has long been viewed as an "anomaly" in the Arab world for its perceived social openness; indeed, no other country in the region boasts such cultural and religious diversity (Haugbolle 2010, 29). Ronnie Chattah, who founded the longest-running and one of the most popular walking tours of Beirut, Walk Beirut, identified the time in which the Jewish community thrived as representative of a short-lived moment in which Lebanon served as a safe haven for a number of persecuted minorities. "That rare window offered a lot," he explained to me, "which is: in the Middle East, [there was] a flourishing, small but important Jewish community…that is Lebanese through and through." Like other Lebanese, Ronnie described, Jews engaged in trade, social life, and "buried their dead" in Lebanon. "Greeks, Armenians, Jews…there [were] communities that flock[ed] to this country to seek refuge" despite the fact that they were disappearing in other parts of the region. To Ronnie, Lebanon's importance lay not with the fact that it was historically multicultural, but with the reality that, as Jews and other minorities were threatened elsewhere in recent postcolonial history, they flocked to and flourished in Lebanon. "That window, I think, is what a lot of people want to re-explore." In light of a state system that, today. continues to be defined by sectarianism—where political claims, appeals for support, and demands for social restitution can often only be fulfilled through one's legally-defined sectarian affiliation—locating historical

examples of a seemingly cosmopolitan Lebanon can provide appealing alternatives to the political status quo.

Involvement with Jewish memory sites can help to bolster social and political legitimacy, particularly when undertaken by political parties and elites. In the aftermath of the Civil War, such sites serve to display supporters' commitment to religious differences and social reconciliation, even if in idea more than in practice. This is most visible in the case of Magen Avraham's reconstruction, which received financial funding from Solidere and explicit support from a range of politicians and political parties. When restorations to the synagogue were completed in 2014, Lebanese politicians from a range of parties were present to share their words of support with the media, including Hezbollah's chief Hassan Nasrallah. "This is a religious place of worship," reported Arab News. "Its restoration is welcome." Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, a member of the Sunni-led Future Movement, made similar remarks: "We respect Judaism. Our only problem is with Israel" (Arab News, 2020).

As I will explore in the following chapter, the emergence of a system of national representation in Lebanon along ethno-religious lines has its roots in a particular, modern historical moment. Yet, like the *lieu de mémoire* that Nora claims are central to any nation's collective memory, the imaginations, "ideological fictions," and language that imbue sectarianism with its social currency are "products of specific historical, material, and geopolitical contexts" (Makdisi 2019, 5). This dissertation builds on Ussama Makdisi's concept of the "ecumenical frame" across history to provide an alternative to both the idea of Lebanon as a place of hopelessly entrenched sectarianism and the idea that harmonious coexistence between ethno-religious groups was the status quo in the pre-modern era. It is tempting to refute the common adage that the Middle East is but a "collection of war-torn countries and societies" by

viewing the public importance of religion as an imported social scaffolding. Yet, as Makdisi shows, the language of sect was often taken up to stress the importance of political solidarity across regional religious and ethnic differences at the time of the Levant's transition from a disintegrating Ottoman imperial order to European colonial rule (Makdisi 2021, 7). The "ecumenical frame" of the Eastern Mediterranean accounts for the agency of local regional actors to harness a "modern political community in which explicit religious differentiation was transformed from being a marker of imperial culture to being a crucial aspect of national culture" within the setting of a secular nation-state (2019, 7). Just as sectarianism must be historicized in order to challenge the ubiquity of age-old religious fragmentation, it is critical to de-romanticize the notion that the Levant was a site of uninterrupted harmony before the advent of imperialism. Doing so allows for a clearer and more historically-situated view of quotidian instances of "making due" and "getting along," even when they emerge from less-than-ideal circumstances or produce unexpected or unsettled outcomes.

In light of violent temporal ruptures like civil war, nostalgia for more "cosmopolitan" times attempts to fill the gap between contemporary lack in social cohesion and ideas about how things ostensibly once were. During our interview, Raed, a businessman close to the upper echelons of Solidere, relayed stories that his father had told him about the Jewish business partners and artisans he had once visited in Wadi Abu Jamil. Mid-conversation, Raed paused, and changed the subject: "I was born right before the [civil] war, and in my lifetime I've personally witnessed the shift from a tolerant country to one where people have no tolerance for difference, no interest in listening to the opinions of people who are different than them, no belief that all people should have the right to think freely."

The notion of social cosmopolitanism has, seemingly to the detriment of those seeking to understand the core concepts behind its semantic veil, been utilized in recent debates as an abstraction that connotes, as Bruce Robbins explains, “a fundamental devotion to the interests of humanity as a whole” (1998, 1). As Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Eleonor Kofman, and Catherine Kevin contend, beyond serving as a “floating signifier,” the thread connecting different evocations of cosmopolitanism involve a “process of the human imagination” and an “affective disposition that inflects social and political relationships" and the realms in which they inhabit (2008, 3). Though often an “invocation of a tag rather than pursuit” of a concrete or fixed allegiance, recognizing the weight in which the word is employed “is not to assert that there is some essential quality” to the concept of cosmopolitanism, but rather recognizes the weight, meanings, and reasons for wielding such a label (Hayden 2016, 61).

Rather than attempting to pinpoint an essential core of cosmopolitan theory, this dissertation performs a close ethnographic reading of the contexts in which the term is evoked, particularly as it relates to the historical presence of Jews in Lebanon. Following the lead of Dreissen, who concludes that we cannot assume that the influence of one’s place of residence—however diverse or homogeneous— is the primary influencing factor when it comes to personal, or even communal, identification, I aim to address iterations of cosmopolitan practices or theories as but one element in a locally specific—but global reaching—formation in which certain markers of identity wax and wane in importance depending on context (2006). This dissertation approaches cosmopolitanism as not an ideal to be reached, but as a productive launching pad for theorizing about the implications of collective identification and national narrative in Lebanon today.

The instability of cosmopolitanism-as-term, however, should not suggest hollowness to the concept of meaningful, fruitful interactions between dissimilar populations. Nor should it suggest that the actors at hand are always cognizant of, or deliberate about, cosmopolitan aspirations. To differentiate between cosmopolitanism as a moniker for a globally-minded, jetsetting class, scholars have turned to the concept of *convivencia* (conviviality), which, as Ulrike Freitag suggests, aims to capture the concrete actions, organization, and daily lived experiences of non-elites, not necessarily with a focus on "interactions between 'us' and 'them' but on 'how we work things out between ourselves'" (2014, 376). As Deniz Neriman Duru elaborates, distinguishing cosmopolitanism from conviviality places emphasis not only "on the need to share space with persons who we already presume to be different," but also firmly "on the production of place through shared attitudes and experiences" of solidarity and social interaction amongst the working class (2016, 159). Rather than offering a mere terminological alternative, convivencia acknowledges that people outside of the political and mercantile elite also found common ground. "Contrary to the term 'coexistence,' which appears to imply" a notion of "passively 'existing' together", explains Bryant, " the concept of conviviality emphasizes "the performative nature of boundary-crossing" (2016, 7). Conviviality, according to Bryant, signals an embodied and active process, whereas coexistence more accurately connotes a tacit but disinterested acceptance, or even a sense of closed-off, self-sustaining communities who tacitly acknowledge each other's existence without interacting. It is also critical to note that, despite the use of nostalgia-laden expressions longing for a sense of pre-war coexistence, the notion fails to capture the realities of lived history in Lebanon. As Hayden emphasizes, "'peaceful coexistence' is not so much a condition that can be disrupted, as a manifestation of relations at times when the dominance of one group is so firmly established that it need not be

imposed, and cannot be countered" (2016, 62). In such an analysis, violence and coexistence may exist relationally, allowing one to focus "on the physical forms used to mark dominance, [and thus allow us to] trace the trajectories of domination and its decline, and thus of periods of peaceful interaction with those of contestation."

I explore these themes of collective memory and cosmopolitanism in the built environment in Chapter Two of the dissertation. In this chapter, I account for the transformation of Wadi Abu Jamil—Beirut's historic Jewish neighborhood and the location of the country's only rehabilitated synagogue—vis-a-vis the violent spatial metamorphosis of the surrounding central district since the official cessation of the civil war. I detail the history of walking tours in Beirut's downtown, accounting for how the inclusion of its Jewish history works against the grain of the absence of material traces in what is now an elite gated neighborhood. I chronicle the process of co-designing a Wadi Abu Jamil walking tour with a Lebanese architect that examined both its Jewish history and its current inaccessibility. Drawing comparative insights from the "spatial turn" in Jewish studies, theories and (re)interpretations of cosmopolitanism and collective narrative making, and critical heritage studies, I concern myself with how various actors rely on differing conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism, conviviality, and belonging when interacting with, or narrating, the history of Wadi Abu Jamil. These varied discourses, I argue, offer insight into how a no-longer-present minority community can serve as a prism through which actors engage with the concept of "difference" as an integral part of belonging to the Lebanese nation.

Nostalgia

In Chapter Three of the dissertation, I focus my analysis on photographs pertaining to Beirut's historic Jewish neighborhood and its central synagogue on Facebook, where, on groups and pages dedicated to Lebanese Jews, Jews and non-Jewish Lebanese converge to explore and remember Lebanon's once-vibrant Jewish past. Originally developed to keep donors and fans up to date on the renovation of Magen Avraham Synagogue and connect long-lost friends and family, these Facebook groups have evolved to encompass discussions between Lebanese across myriad political and religious affiliations. The conversations that take place in these groups are tinged with nostalgia as participants recall life in Lebanon prior to the departure of the vast majority of its Jews. In this chapter, I address the ways in which the mobilization of collective nostalgia for a seemingly more cosmopolitan Lebanon takes place through the circulation of these snapshots. The photographs shared on these Facebook groups provide a realm for debating, challenging, and reconstructing concepts of belonging as they relate to remembering a shared homeland.

Nostalgia, as commonly defined, is characterized by a sentimentalized "longing for the past" and a "wistful affection" for that which cannot be reconstituted (Oxford English Dictionary Online). A nostalgic approach to a shared communal history, Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko posit, "emphasizes the irretrievability of the past as the very condition of desire" (2015, 68). The nostalgic reflections on Lebanese Jewish Facebook communities thus involves dwelling in the space created by simultaneously longing for what once was and acknowledging that, in Lebanon's present reality, no such rejuvenation is possible. Alongside co-members, Jewish participants utilize visual representations of life in prewar Wadi Abu Jamil to spark discussions about what it means to be a Lebanese Jew in the present moment. As collective

return from the diaspora has little to no mass appeal given Lebanon's protracted geopolitical and economic realities, I argue that the forum's participants depend on nostalgic reverie in order to reify concepts of a shared past while positing a future that, like all communal narratives, relies on a particular historical conception of collective experience. As Amy Malek explains in the context of cultural production in the Iranian diaspora, the nostalgia of those in exile—and, I would argue, of Lebanese whose knowledge of the country's Jewish history has been stifled by the trauma of civil war—mends collective identity severed from its place of origin through visual commonalities and iconic imagery (2019). I argue that diasporic Lebanese-Jewishness as represented on these forums signifies an understanding of communal relations that accounts for shared collective memory in relation to geographic distance and lapsed time (Boym 200, xvi). I suggest that, against the common notion of nostalgia as a stagnant and backward-gazing exercise, nostalgic reminiscing in these groups works to shape an imagined future that, although removed from Lebanon spatially and temporally, allows for a continued (and evolving) conceptualization of what it means to be a Lebanese Jew, reflecting what Victoria Bernal calls "emotional citizenship" in that affective attachment to Lebanon, while tethered to a geographic space, is not limited in terms of legal citizenship or state borders (Bernal 2006).

Ruination

This dissertation contends that the material world both shapes, and is shaped by, how societies remember the past. As was the case with the built environment more broadly, Jewish spaces were in various states of ruination after the Civil War. How to treat such spaces has been an ongoing point of contention not just among developers, architects, politicians, and planners, but also among the wider Lebanese public. The merits of spatial restoration, reuse, or demolition

continue to be a central theme of public debates over thirty years later. These differing opinions on how to deal with material cultural heritage—and what state or private powers have the ultimate say—demonstrate how the slow brutality of spatial erasure can enact damage on both the physical environment and on collective memory as severe as years of protracted inter-communal warfare (Sharp 2020). As scholars have previously argued, the separation between wartime and post-war spatial violence in Lebanon is not an entirely useful division: though perhaps most visible after the end of the war, such reconstruction efforts were deeply entangled with war-era strategies of altering the built environment.

Much of the controversy concerning post-war reconstruction in Lebanon has been centered on the role of Solidere, a French acronym for *Société Libanaise de Reconstruction* (Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction [of the Beirut Central District]). Solidere's effect on Beirut's downtown is particularly important to this dissertation: not only is Beirut's historically Jewish neighborhood of Wadi Abu Jamil located within its territory, but, a the most high-profile redevelopment scheme, it continues to shape discourses of ruination and redevelopment. Headed by the assassinated real estate tycoon-cum-Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, who made his billionaire fortune in Saudi Arabia, Solidere was, at the time of its inception, the largest inner-city renewal project in the world. The history of the company, and its relationship to the formerly Jewish spaces over which it now holds purview, will be addressed in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation.

Some Jewish spaces in Lebanon have been rebuilt or cleaned up, as is the case most notably with Magen Avraham but also with Jewish cemeteries, where descendants of the people buried make repairs to the sites in remembrance of the communities who once buried their dead there. A far larger number of Jewish spaces, however, still bear the scars left by competing

militias and occupying armies. It is difficult to access data concerning the impact of wartime violence on the built environment; the work of the Lebanese Department of Statistics was halted during the Civil War and many of its records were lost (Sharp 2020, 9). In the context of contemporary Lebanon, a current fascination with ruins points to concerns about shared cultural heritage; access to "sectarianized" geographies that have further solidified rather than softened after the civil war; ongoing privatization and speculative real estate; and foreign engagement and Lebanon's tourist economy (Bou Akar 2018; Huyssen 2010). Particularly when spaces are overlooked by state actors, what is left of Jewish spaces can be viewed as what Yael Navaro deems "remnants:" traces in the built environment that have resisted attempts to bury, ignore, or erase historical elements that do not conform to the dominant national narratives at play (2017). In "disturb[ing the] flat ontologies" central to nationalizing processes, these "shards accidentally left behind in the aftermath of cataclysmic violence" hold within them the possibility to "evoke that which exceeds violence, that which remains against the grain, in spite of it."

Figure 3. Traces of Jewishness in the Synagogue of Sidon. The synagogue has been adaptively repurposed as housing for refugees and the working poor since the 1980s. Photo by author. March 7, 2020.

No Jewish space, to my knowledge, was untouched by the totalizing violence of the Civil War. Whether they are today structurally sound or barely recognizable as once-Jewish, each site bears, in its own way, scars from decades of prolonged intercommunal violence alongside the visual vestiges of its former religious or communal significance. Ruins, as Brian Dillon explains, are physical embodiments of the paradoxes of history: they are both portals into the past and physical reminders of how aspirations around their usage have fallen short since the time of their construction (2011). Particularly stark in its attraction of such *Ruinenlust* is the Bhamdoun Synagogue, which, despite a large banner warning would-be adventure-seekers that trespassing

on private property is prohibited, offers unencumbered glimpses of what life may have been like for well-to-do Jews before the war.[5] A simple search online for "Bhamdoum synagogue" reveals endless snapshots of the abandoned structure in a mountain village close to Beirut, where adventurers today scale the still-sound stairs to the upstairs women's section, which offers sweeping views of the carved-out ark where the torah was once safeguarded, and the central bimah from where the rabbi conducted services. Certainly, few former congregants are immune to the rush of emotions brought on by the grandness of this view: as I showed such images to a Lebanese Jewish artist in the United States that I had taken during my own visit, her voice filled with emotion. "I remember those summers [spent in Bhamdoun] well," she reminisced. "We children would run around in the aisles, play in the back near the windows that looked out over the mountains."

[5] The German term Ruinenlust defines an impassioned fascination with ruins and the great lengths that are taken to account for, and make repairs to, them.

Figure 4. The interior halls of Bhamdoun Synagogue. Photo by author. September 10, 2019.

Ruins like those in Bhamdoun, explains Ken Seigneurie, do not “concretize a *casus belli* according to a moralized syllogism, but unfurl time’s tight progress and suspend cause-effect reasoning to evoke the ambiguity and pathos of that which is forever lost” (2011, 12). Despite the melancholy with which they are often approached, ruins, and the material terrains with which they are embedded, are not simply static settings through which to glimpse the past. Scholarship has shown that processes of ruination can reveal how histories of violence, imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism produce real effects on the built environment and the people who inhabit it (Hell and Schönle 2010; Stoler 2013). Taking such a spatial approach to ruins and ruination can help us better understand how they are woven into the narratives of those who

interact with them. It can also reveal how the ruins may adopt new lives as time progresses, varyingly becoming sites of commodification, mourning, and appropriation (Appadurai 1988).

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I address the quotidian transformations of Lebanon's formerly Jewish neighborhoods, and the ways in which these sites are entangled with varying nationalisms, crises, dislocations, and local political contestations. Chapter Four draws on ethnographic material from Sidon in order to consider how non-Jewish "cultural brokers"—those who, through voluntary involvement or the happenstance of interacting with/living in formerly Jewish spaces—are charged with the role of interpreting and preserving the histories of these sites. I pay particular attention to the ways in which these brokers' engagement meets resistance from Jewish community officials and the local municipality. Given the overlapping displacements in many of these sites—particularly in Sidon, where many of the formerly Jewish spaces are now occupied by multiple generations of (sometimes twice-) displaced Palestinian and Syrian refugees—I turn to literature on ruination and space to consider how remnants of these spaces' former uses acts as a lens through which actors come to understand their own ongoing trials. Utilizing Michael Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory, I consider how these sites spur conversations regarding overlapping displacements.

Given the absence of Jews in Lebanon today, non-Jewish "heritage brokers" play a key role in maintaining Jewish spaces in Lebanon and disseminating their histories. In this regard, non-Jewish Lebanese are tasked with serving as cultural brokers of what journalist Ruth Ellen Gruber calls "virtually Jewish space," or space that, though marked by its Jewish past, is not necessarily inhabited by Jews today (2002). In addition to transforming, occupying, and maintaining physical formerly Jewish spaces in Lebanon, these individuals help attest to the histories of Jews in everyday, in-person conversations, written accounts, and more recently, on

virtual forums. Like in other locales where a historically present Jewish community no longer exists, this cultural brokering involves the preservation of Lebanon's Jewish history and helps maintain the ways in which its memory circulates in society. The Jewish Quarter of Sidon, situated in medieval Old City, is a particularly stark example of how a formerly Jewish neighborhood and its history are understood in the context of contemporary geopolitics and local power struggles. These themes, alongside processes of ruin and ruination, will be explored further within the context of Sidon in this dissertation's final chapter. I follow this chapter with the dissertation's Conclusion, by reflection on the dissertation's central themes of space and belonging vis-a-vis Lebanon's present-day, continued economic collapse and political stalemate, particularly in the aftermath of the October 2019 popular protests, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the August 4, 2020 port explosion.

Methodology

This dissertation is based on 21 months of ethnographic fieldwork. The bulk of this research was conducted during continuous residence in Lebanon between June-September 2018 and January 2019-September 2020, with preliminary fieldwork carried out in fall of 2015/winter of 2016 and follow-up fieldwork in March 2023.

My fieldwork combined multiple methodologies in order to contend with the afterlives of Jewish spaces in Lebanon. I amassed the life histories of my interlocutors; conducted numerous semi-structured and informal interviews; walked alongside collaborators as they narrated the histories of neighborhoods and spaces while mapping our journeys with a basic GIS software; joined interest groups and classes on the topic of "things Jewish," such as kabbalah; conducted research in institutional, private, and nontraditional archives; undertook participant observation

and "webservation" (Bernal 2014); and analyzed different forms of media and material culture. I recorded my findings in detailed fieldnotes, documentary photography, and audio recordings. I also took to documenting the built environment through drawing, painting, and narrating the stories shared by my interlocutors in the format of comics.

Before undertaking fieldwork, I studied Arabic intensively, including the Levantine dialect spoken in Lebanon. This allowed me to carry out interviews and textual analysis without a translator, for the most part; I employed the help of a skilled and generous research assistant when conducting research in places where the local dialect proved challenging.

In analyzing the data collected in the interviews I conducted, I focused on how my interlocutors narrated both Jewish and general Lebanese history, and how these were presented as intersecting or separate trajectories. I paid particular attention to the ways in which Jewishness and Jews were conflated with, or intentionally framed as distinct from, Zionism and the State of Israel. I also focused on how my interviewees tethered themes of Jews, Jewishness, and local Jewish history to ideas about the shortcomings of geopolitics, society, and the Lebanese state.

Utilizing Beirut as my base provided me easy access to intellectual, cultural, and academic communities that greatly enriched my research. That said, I was keen to explore how traces of Jewish life have remained in Lebanon's so-called secondary cities and towns, and how histories of Jewishness in these places highlight the interconnectedness of Lebanon to surrounding locales in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. In order to better understand the varied afterlives of Jewish terrains across the country, I made repeated research trips to Tripoli; Bhamdoun; 'Aley; Deir al-Qamar and its surrounding villages; and Sidon and its peripheries. I also traveled to South Lebanon and to the Beqa'a region. In each of these locations, I sought out

the physical spaces of the Jewish communities that once occupied them, including cemeteries, synagogues, schools, and neighborhoods.

All personal names and details of my interlocutors, save for those collected as oral histories, have been changed in this dissertation. Despite a general acceptance of Jews as an innate element of Lebanese history and society, the topic of Jewishness is, in practice, often conflated with Zionism. Moreover, a set of anti-normalization and boycott laws—though vague in their language— prohibit Lebanese citizens making any sort of contact with Israelis. Though the enforcement of these policies can be arbitrary and uneven, my overarching policy of assigning pseudonyms is intended to protect the identity of the individuals and organizations that graciously shared their time, opinions, and collaborative efforts with me.

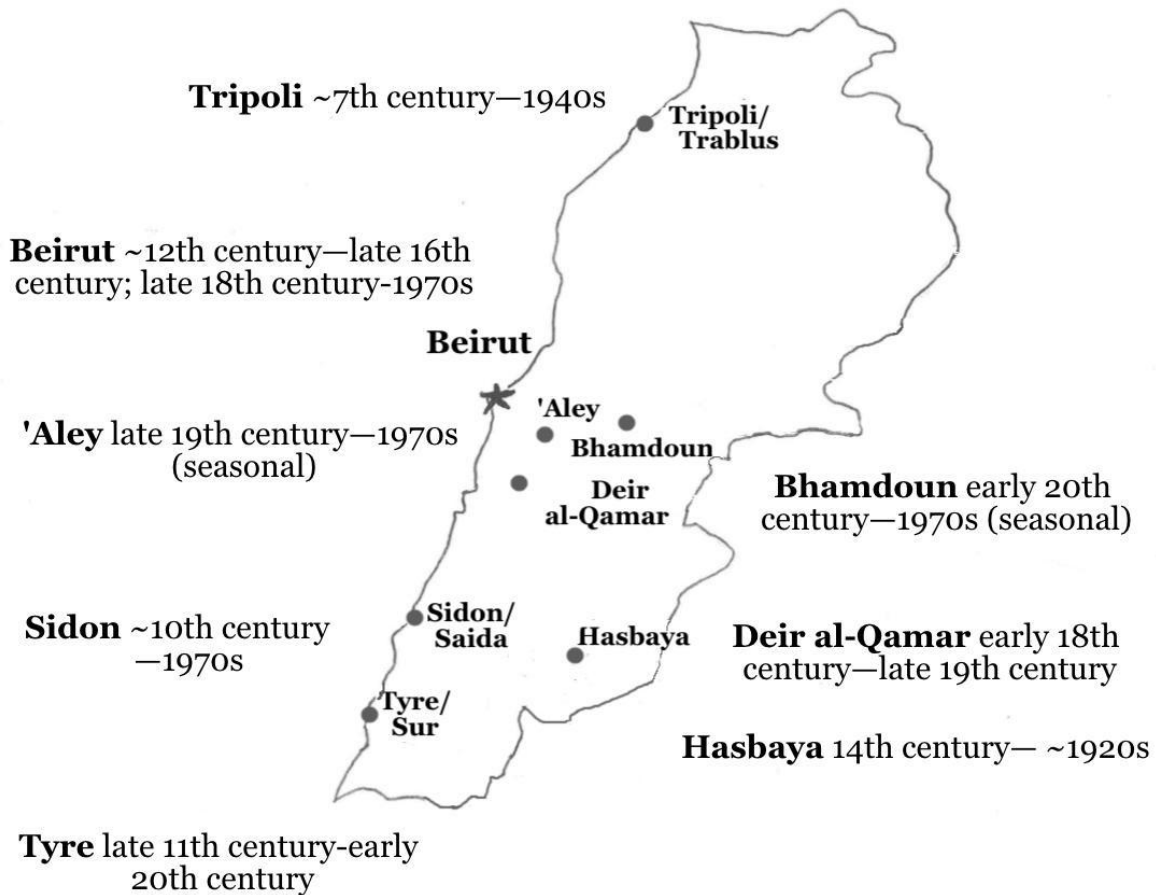

Figure 5. A map of historic centers of Jewish life in Lebanon with approximate dates of each locale's temporal period. Map by author. August 2023.

Introduction

This chapter introduces the Jewish history of Lebanon as intertwined with the development of the modern Lebanese state and its peoples, territory, built environment, and cultural heritage. I argue that the ways that Jewish communities, and the built environments they constructed, were altered by changing notions of territory in relation to the polity of Lebanon. In doing so, I aim to show how the growth of Jewish life-worlds, institutions, and cultures evolved within the trajectory of competing Lebanese nationalisms and visions for what an independent, modern Lebanese nation would look like. The historic geography of Jewish life in the Eastern Mediterranean relied on the movement of people, goods, and ideas that have, according to their place and time, stretched across imperial and national borders. These networks, I argue, challenged the impermeability of social boundaries, showing how quotidian actions of people and groups reveal the limits of the state in defining ideas about, and practices of, community belonging. By taking stock of regional Jewish history, I explore how individual and collective understandings of the fact that there was once a thriving Jewish community in Lebanon is received in the present day, when Jews are all but absent from Lebanese society. In particular, I illustrate the intractability of nationalist discourses—most notably Arab nationalism and Zionism—in the context of the experiences of those living in Lebanon. I do so in order to demonstrate that the social cleavage left by the departure of a minority in a self-identified confederation of ethno-religious minorities provides the scene in which my interlocutors reflect on Jewishness as it is shaped by their own lived experiences and the stories shared by families and other community members. I ask: what historical ruptures led to the dispersal of Jews in Lebanon, and what were the lived experiences of this fallout? How has the memory of a Jewish community lingered societally and topographically, often in unexpected and trace ways? How

did Israel's involvement in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90), and its extended and catastrophic occupation of South Lebanon, entrench conflations of Jewishness with the actions of the Israeli state? And how does the ghostly, absent nature of Jews in Lebanon today serve as a vacuum through which both Jews and non-Jews come to understand Lebanon's supposed shortcomings?

An anachronistic and unchanging understanding of shared history cannot support a collective indefinitely; to maintain its cohesive identity, a society must, whether subconsciously or otherwise, periodically imbue national sites and symbols with renewed and relevant meaning (Halbwachs 1950). In this vein, I suggest that things Jewish in Lebanon function as what Pierre Nora calls a "memory site" in that reflections on the once vibrant presence of Jews speaks to a moment in a national past that continues to resonate in the present (1996). These reflections also speak to how this moment in Lebanon's past is understood within the context of the country's present, including its relationship to its diaspora, its sense of social and religious identity, and its protracted and violent relationship with its former occupier, Israel. I illustrate these claims through ethnographic vignettes that situate my interlocutors as the inheritors of historical narratives that they have come to view through both collective memory and their own lived experiences. As Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy note, such a turn to studying social memory complicates the dominant historical narratives and the means through which they are formed by shifting the "focus from time to temporalities, and thus to understand what categories people, groups, and cultures employ to make sense of their lives" (2011, 37).

To the possible chagrin of historians, the following sections will shift in temporality and location; while following a generally linear path in time, the narrative occasionally diverges in an attempt to center the story of Lebanese Jewish communities in center stage. This chronicle is interspersed with ethnographic material drawn from interviews and participant observation

carried out with interlocutors engaged with, in different applications and settings, themes of space and Jewishness in Lebanon. Though perhaps jarring for those who expect a clear fidelity to progressive time, it is my hope that such a construction will show the contemporary, continued resonance of these important themes.

<u>The Jews of Lebanon: a literature review</u>

Despite a wide geographical range of popular and scholarly writing pertaining to the history of Jews of the Arab world, Lebanon has long been considered a secondary site of exploration. An array of scholarship written in the recent decades has worked to bridge this gap by positioning the historical development of Lebanon's Jewish community broadly within the sociopolitical context of the Levant and within the dynamic of Lebanon's modern history in particular. Lebanon's self-conceptualization as a nation of minorities presents a unique case study in the Middle East, as its trajectory of social inclusion and migration diverged from those of its neighbors. Lebanon's history, for Jewish and non-Jewish communities alike, is also one through which we can better understand the importance of connection with other regional and international hubs. As this chapter will demonstrate, the historical events that transpired across the Eastern Mediterranean—and, in many cases, across the world—would alter the lived realities of Jews in the territory that would come to be the state of Lebanon.

In *The Jews of Lebanon: Between Coexistence and Conflict*, Kirsten Schulze maps the historical development of Lebanon's Jewish milieux within the sociopolitical scope of the country and its regional surroundings. Positioning the Jewish community as but one in a nation that developed its sense of self through the framework of a "nation of minorities," Schulze asserts that Lebanese Jews, by and large, were privy to the same rights as their non-Jewish

compatriots. Schulze's work is groundbreaking for any scholar of Jewish communities in the Middle East and Mediterranean, and goes to lengths to de-exotify "Jewishness" as a social category in a context where the community never faced persecution of the likes seen elsewhere in the Middle East. Indeed, Schulze's work—by far the most comprehensive in historiographically parsing out the relationship between Jews and Lebanon more broadly—has provided an invaluable foundation on which to build my research (and particularly this chapter).

Yet, in her (rightful) insistence that Jews and non-Jews often shared similar visions for the nascent Lebanese nation, Schulze does not explore how other affiliations sometimes took precedence over national ideologies, nor how the particular spatial dynamics of communities may have manifested differently. As Tomer Levi argues in *The Jews of Beirut: The Rise of a Levantine Community 1860s-1930*s, most—if not all—of Lebanon's Jews maintained connections elsewhere through trade, family, or religious networks (2012). While Schulze posits that a lack of interest in making *Aliyah*, or moving "going up" to the Biblical Land of Israel, amounted to a disinterest in Zionism among Lebanese Jews, Levi claims that local support for Zionist activity coexisted alongside a Jewish commitment to Lebanese nationalism and, later, statebuilding. In contending with the diversity of Jewish philanthropic and educational networks that converged on Beirut, Levi shows how Beiruti Jewish life evolved alongside the influence of international Jewish organizations like the Alliance Israélite Universelle, B'nai Brith, and Talmud Torah, all with different political and religious aims. Levi demonstrates how the cosmopolitan nature of Beirut's Jewish community at the turn of the 20th century, with its multiplicity of languages, religious rites, and ties to elsewhere, mirrored the growth of Beirut's convivial atmosphere across sects as it developed into an important Ottoman port city.

Laura Zittrain Eisenberg's monograph *My Enemy's Enemy: Lebanon in the Early Zionist Imagination, 1900-1918* (1994) dissects the historic and theoretical ties between Zionism and Maronite nationalism. Eisenberg, who was conducting research in Israel during the country's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, utilizes Israeli archives to explore how actors in the pre-state Zionist movement saw the potential for an alliance of minorities between Lebanon's Maronite Christians and Jews in Palestine. Though this outlook cannot account for the whole strategy toward Lebanon, Eisenberg shows how viewing Jews and Maronites as inhabiting structurally similar positions in the Eastern Levant shaped the two parties' actions well beyond Israel's establishment in 1948.

In *Lebanon's Jewish Community: Fragments of Lives Arrested*, Franck Salameh addresses Lebanese today, warning them that the erasure of Lebanon's Jewish history from the nation's collective narrative "shall read like a travesty of history" (75). Salameh asserts that Lebanese Jews' singularity in the milieu of the larger Arab world—particularly after 1948— is intrinsically related to Lebanon's uniqueness as a multi-confessional polity. In the vein of Eisenberg, Salameh investigates the shared ideological relationship between Jews and Maronites, who both engaged in building the Lebanese nation through commerce and an overlapping bourgeois social life. Salameh does much to build on previously written secondary sources, but moves beyond a chronicle of Jewish history by paring historical narrative with numerous personal accounts from Lebanese Jews abroad as well as Lebanese Christians with whom Jews formed deep and lasting bonds. Yet, given Salameh's neglect of a range of voices from non-Christian sects (including that of Palestinians), a Jewish presence in Lebanon is presented as contingent on the "natural bond" shared between Jews and Maronites, who invested themselves in the prospects of an ostensibly secular and multi-ethnic state.

The gaps in Salameh's analysis reveal how an historic presence of Jews in Lebanon—and their contemporary absence from Lebanon today—can stand in for larger themes thought to be lost to Lebanon's modern strife. The narrative presented by Salameh, while painting the French Mandate as a period in which ethno-religious diversity flourished, does not account for the ways in which Mandate officials further politicized confessionalism to privilege Maronite rule (a topic to be discussed further in this chapter). Maronite political hegemony is thus presented as a neutral option foreclosed by encroaching Arabism and Islamism that even the supposed innateness of Jewish-Maronite friendship could not survive. Yet, Salameh is straightforward in his acknowledgement of the often-nostalgic tone the project undertakes, accepting his personal ties to, and stakes in, the recognition of Lebanon's Jewish past. By tethering the dispersal of Lebanon's Jews to a rising intolerance for difference that culminated in the Civil War, Salameh admits that he "cannot look at these stories with the detachment of an outsider…because I am myself *not* an outsider" (22).

Recent research on the Jews of Lebanon demonstrate how attention paid to spatial dynamics highlights how Jewish Lebanese identity formed in relation to, and through interactions with, other ethno-religious groups. These works also focus on the spatial dynamics at play in particular settings in which notions of Jewishness and social relations differently intersect. Exploring the tensions that arose between the Jewish communities of Beirut and Sidon, Aline Schlaepfer shows how "new forms of sectarianism," as experienced in light of Beirut's rise to the preeminent Lebanese city, were contended with and enacted by Jews under the tutelage of the French Mandate (2021, 1). Similarly, Caroline Kahlenberg's historical account of Jewish student organizing at the American University of Beirut in the first half of the 20th century demonstrates how Jews in Beirut—with their myriad social ties beyond the borders of the

emergent nation-state—performed different political aspirations and alignments in a space they shared with a diverse, international student body (2019).

Local Lebanese historian Nagi Gergi Zeidan has demonstrated the rich possibilities of present-day, cross-confessional collaboration. Zeidan, who began conducting research and writing for local outlets on the topic of Lebanese Jewish history in the 1990s, has been perhaps the most active non-Jewish Lebanese individual working with the Lebanese Jewish diaspora. Zeidan's text, *Juifs du Liban: d'Abraham a nos jours, histoire d'une communauté disparue* (2020), plots the historical development of Jewish life in myriad settings across Lebanese time and space. Through extensive family archive research and ethnographic work among his many Jewish friends, Zeidan provides details such as registries of the surnames of Jews who inhabited different Lebanese towns and cities, thus attesting to a continued Jewish presence since antiquity (though often without citing exact sources). Like Salameh, Zeidan's project is an explicitly personal one. Born the son of a member of the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), Zeidan's interest in the Jewish history of Lebanon was sparked when, in childhood, he identified antisemitic rhetoric—rather than anti-Zionist or anti-imperial commitments—as the heart of the supposedly leftist party's attitude toward Jews. How could the party espouse a pan-Syrian identity, Zeidan wondered, without being inclusive of the Jews who called this territory home (11)? Prior to the publication of his book, Zeidan utilized Facebook as an open-source archive of sorts, where he made available the data he'd discovered and, with the help of Lebanese Jews outside the country, connected familial histories to the Jewish spaces he'd frequent. His many Facebook posts remain available even after his untimely death in 2022.

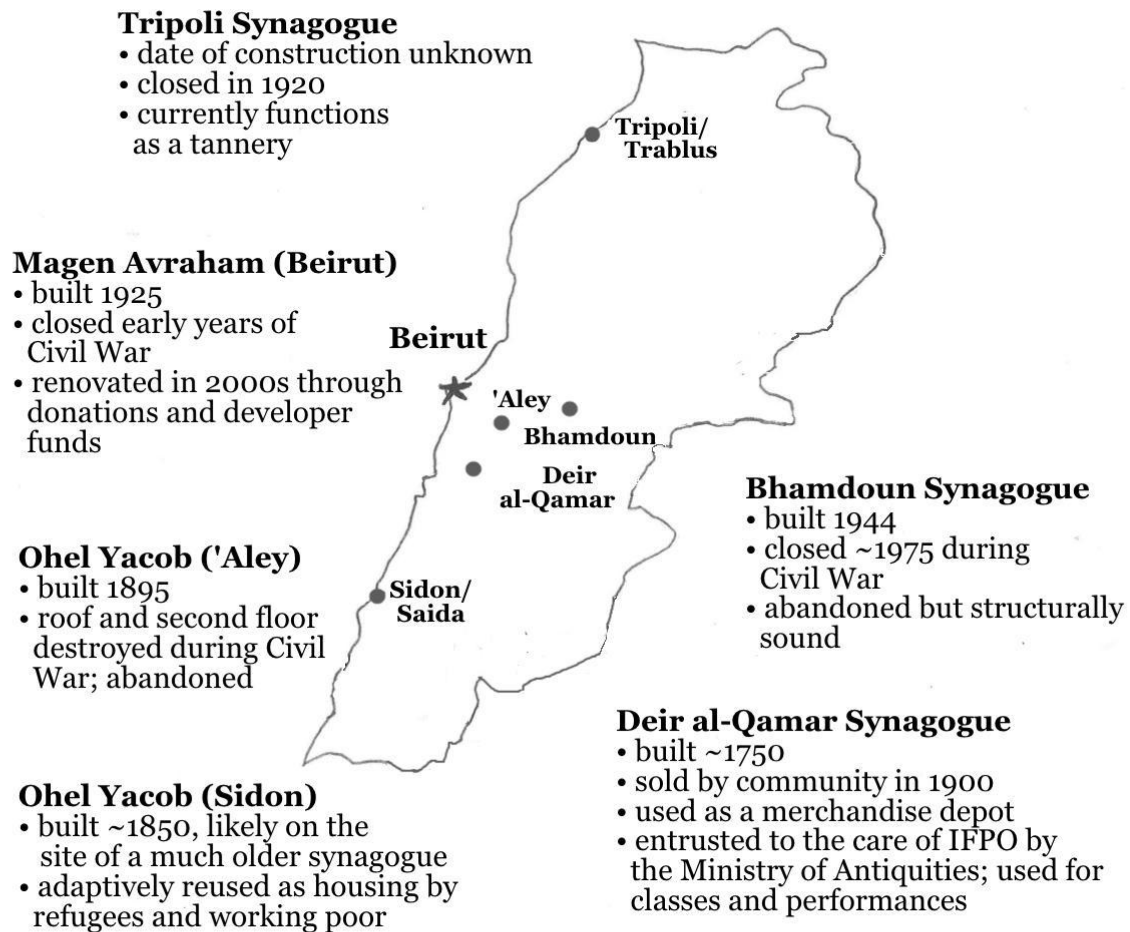

Figure 6. A map of synagogues still standing in Lebanon. Map by author. 2023.

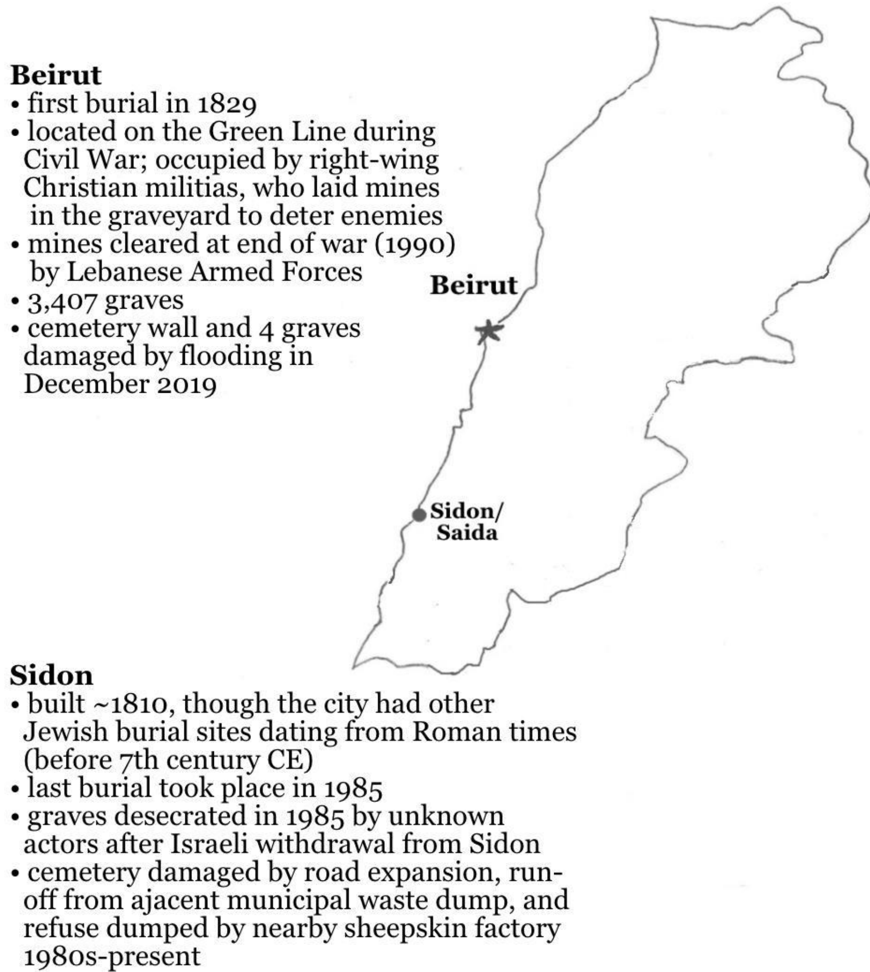

Figure 7. A map of Lebanon's remaining, locatable Jewish cemeteries. Map by the author. 2023.

The Jews of Lebanon in the pre-modern era

Jews are widely understood by mainstream Lebanese society to be native to the Eastern Mediterranean. During the reign of the Israelite kingdom (approximately 1047-930 BCE) Jewish communities formed as far north as Hasbaya, a town at the foot of Mount Hermon in the southeast of today's Lebanon. Jewish merchants from North Africa are said to have built a post in the town where they purchased cedar wood for the construction of King Solomon's temple

(see figure 5). Numerous travelogs, geniza documents, and written correspondences attest to the presence of Jewish communities throughout the territory that would become Lebanon prior to the Ottoman Empire (de Bar 1983). Documents unearthed from the Cairo Genizah tell of numerous marriages between Jews of Lebanon and those throughout the Levant and Egypt throughout the 11th century (Goitein 1967). This trove, as Schulze notes, attests to the state of Lebanese Jews and their connections to elsewhere: 12th century Jews, reported Benjamin of Tudela, lived interspersed with their Druze neighbors, with both engaging in trade and crafts (Schulze 2001, 14). Tuleda also reported a small number of Jews residing in Beirut, where the cemetery and synagogue were said to have been constructed in 1300. Though the Jewish practice of venerating local saints has received the most attention in the setting of North Africa, it was also an important element of the multi-confessional social fabric of the Levant. Saintly veneration, while disallowed by Jewish teachings, was a common practice for all religious communities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The religious landscape included numerous graves of great rabbis and other important religious figures, often anonymous. These saintly graves were often particular to a specific village or region, especially when visited by Muslim and Christian communities who, along with Jews, "kept their memory alive through inherited routines of prayer and visitation" (Grehan 2016, 89).

Despite its diminished importance in the modern era, the village of Hasbaya "featured much more prominently among Jews and non-Jews from outside Lebanon than any other community," demonstrating how the territory that today comprises the Lebanese state was once more closely associated with other regions, and their communities, in the Eastern Mediterranean (Schulze 2001, 21). This is largely owed to the fact that the village was easily accessible to those making the journey from Palestine. Situated in what is today's Lebanon's southeast at the foot of

Mount Herman, the region in which Hasbaya is situated played prominently in the spatial imagination of Jews throughout history: loose definition of "biblical Palestine" often includes the region of south Lebanon. Jews in Hasbaya were largely working poor and illiterate, tended to vineyards and produced silk and soap, which were marketed and sold throughout Lebanon (Zeidan 2012). The community of Hasbaya, as was custom for Jews throughout the region, imbued their religious practice with elements of mysticism: the tomb of one of Jacob's sons, as well as the burial place of Rabbi Reuven near Hasbaya, served as a point of pilgrimage and prayer for Jews and gentiles alike.

To the northwest of Hasbaya in Sidon—a town also often included in geographic constructions of *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel, or the Jewish conception of the southern Levant as depicted in the Hebrew Bible)—the presence of Jews has been accounted for since biblical times, and an organized Jewish community has existed since the 10th century (Zeidan 2020; see figure 5). The site where the current synagogue of Sidon stands, I was told during fieldwork, is rumored to be one of the oldest in the world (see figure 6). Located in what is known as the Jewish Quarter of Sidon's walled medieval city, the original synagogue was constructed in 833 CE, purportedly at the same location as an even older synagogue, said to have been built around the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

On the northern end of present-day Lebanon is Tripoli, where a Jewish presence dates to at least the 7th century (see figure 5). Though documentation of the community is scant, Zeidan's extensive research on Tripoli's Jewish past builds upon what little information is otherwise available. Arab author al-Baladhuri wrote that, under the rule of Damascene governor Mu'awiya (661-680), Jews were settled in Tripoli's abandoned harbor, situating the city's first Jewish neighborhood in close proximity to the sea (Zeidan 2021a). When religious minorities

were persecuted under the Fatimid Caliphate (10th-12th centuries AD), Tripoli's synagogue was converted into a mosque. When the Seljuks invaded Palestine in the 11th century, fleeing Jews again found safety in Tripoli. According to Zeidan, a number of French Jews, who had been banished in the 13th century, also took up residence in Tripoli, where they worked as bankers and tanners. The synagogue that would serve as the central place of prayer for Tripolitan Jews until the dissolution of the community was constructed in 1290 (Zeidan 2022, 101; see figure 6). Sephardi merchants joined the small community after the start of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478, increasing the Jewish population and its linguistic diversity as they conducted trade across the Mediterranean and Ottoman Empire. Zeidan's research shows that Tripoli was home to the first established Jewish cemetery in Lebanon, which was constructed in 1571 but no longer exists today (2020, 143). A second Jewish neighborhood, which would serve as the city's central area of Jewish habitation until the final dissipation of the community in the 1940s, was established in the area of Zahrieh, at the entrance of the Mamluk-era Khan al-Askar.

Figure 8. The former entrance to the synagogue (in the center of the image) in the Tripoli neighborhood of Zahrieh. The site has functioned as a tannery and dye factory for over half a decade. To the left of the entrance is the wall of the adjacent Greek Orthodox church. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. February 20, 2022.

Jewish life in Ottoman Lebanon

Lebanon first came about as a political polity through the establishment of the Emirate of Mount Lebanon as an autonomous region within the Ottoman Empire, which conquered the Levant in the late 16th century. As Fawaz Traboulsi explains, the conditions established during this period—namely, a Christian majority population; a pattern of European intervention on behalf of non-Muslim minorities; and the growth of a silk manufacturing industry oriented towards the international market—would set the stage for the "structure and developments of Lebanon in modern times" (2007, 3). The Emirate functioned according to the *iqta'* system,

which allowed chiefs to collect taxes from farmers, giving the feudal leaders a high degree of autonomy in exchange for payment to the Ottoman High Porte (Harik 1965).

Across the Ottoman Empire, citizens were organized by religiously-codified categories under the *millet* system. This positioned Muslims on the higher end of the social hierarchy under which were protected "people of the book." were protected. In exchange for a protection tax, Christians, Jews, and, in the case of Mount Lebanon, Druze, were largely excluded from service in the Ottoman military and administrative apparatus. Thus, non-Muslims who were not members of feudal families tended to undertake professions like artisanry, finance, commerce, and agriculture (Traboulsi 2007, 4). Through two feudal families—the Maans, of Druze lineage, and the Shihabs, a Sunni Muslim family that converted to Christianity—the Ottoman Porte governed Mount Lebanon indirectly through the mid-19th century. Though functioning as a separate political entity from its surroundings, Mount Lebanon was integrally tied to both the coast and the hinterland of the Eastern Mediterranean. From the early years of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish horse traders joined non-Jewish communities in Mount Lebanon to facilitate their businesses and allow for easy access to religious pilgrimage to historic Palestine.

Deir al-Qamar and its surrounding villages were, during the mid-1800s, home to not only Lebanon's largest mercantile hub, but also the area's largest Jewish community (see figure 5). Located in the Chouf Mountains to the southeast of Beirut, the town served as the administrative heart of Mount Lebanon and became the center of the Maan dynasty. Deir al-Qamar's synagogue was built in the 17th century in order to serve the Jewish members of Fakhr al-Din Maan II's entourage (see figure 6). By the 19th century, the town was also Mount Lebanon's regional center of trade. The community of Jews, who had established themselves as formidable

agriculturalists, were joined by Jewish merchants, peddlers, and money lenders who flocked from elsewhere to benefit from the town's bazaar (ibid).

Ottoman reforms known as the *tanzimat* (organization) enacted between 1839 and 1871 were aimed at modernizing an empire increasingly under pressure from European powers to enact secular reforms while safeguarding the concerns of non-Muslim minorities (Masters 2020). This enactment abolished the centuries-old Ottoman tradition of *dhimmi* status, where non-Muslims under Islamic rule were given certain communal oversights and protected under the empire in exchange for poll tax (*jizya*). This established an independent system pertaining to so-called "personal law," through which the religious courts of confessional groups were intended to rule over matters like marriage, inheritance, and community affairs. Before the 19th century, the *millet* was far less direct in its application than its modern form, with non-Muslims given autonomy over communal affairs independent of any larger legal structure. In Lebanon, this system of allowing territories a wide range of self-governance allowed for Mount Lebanon's leaders to wield autocratic authority in their oversight of both religious and secular community issues (Barkey and Gavrilis 2016).

Though Ottoman Jews generally welcomed the reforms, the fallout from the formalization of non-Muslim communities led to intercommunal strife. Scholars have argued that the Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms sealed the region's sociopolitical future as divided according to ethno-religious affiliation (Makdisi 2000). Regarding the region's Jews, Norman Stillman contends that the *tanzimat* hastened the decline of Jewish belonging in the Arab world by introducing Western notions of antisemitism through increased Christian affiliation with Western imperial and religious institutions (1979, 109). Most notable of these outbreaks was the Damascus Affair of 1840, in which Christians lodged blood libel accusations against the city's

Jews (Frankel 1997). Similar affairs played out regionally, including in Mount Lebanon: in 1848, a Christian boy was disappeared and later found dead in a forest, and Christians accused the boy of having been murdered by local Jews, affecting the community's daily life and the perception of the community by non-Jews in Deir al-Qamar (Zeidan 2021b). Though Lebanon never witnessed anti-Jewish persecution to the degree of other regional locales—let alone the pogroms Jews faced in Eastern Europe— rising anti-Jewish violence prompted Jews to flee Mount Lebanon for cities along the Mediterranean coast.

The Mountain War of 1860: the Tanzimat, *mutasarrifiyya*, and the Jews of Mount Lebanon

While the Ottoman administration was adept at overseeing urban areas, it faced pushback in much of the territory of Mount Lebanon, where the heads of local, autonomous feudal families collected taxes on behalf of the sultan (Kisirwani 1980). In the early 19th century, Bashir Shihab II was appointed lord over Mount Lebanon. The ensuing period, which saw the growth of Beirut's merchant class, put further strain on the feudal system: urban merchants, who loaned money to peasants, lessened the latter's dependence on their feudal lords, ushering in a period of cash-cropping (Fawaz 1984). Ibrahim Pasha, governor of Egypt and ally of Bashir II, invaded the Ottoman province of Syria. Bashir II's closeness to Mount Lebanon's Christian communities—along with local taxes—increased, leading to growing tensions between Maronite and Druze. In early 1842, the Ottoman Porte attempted to quell mounting tensions by appointing Omar Pasha as Mount Lebanon's governor. However, France and Britain were actively strengthening their respective relationships with Maronite and Druze communities, who began to view these imperial powers as protectors. Rather than viewing the mounting communal anxieties as the result of new forms of Ottoman imperial governance, Britain and France saw the strain as the

result of primordial identities and their discontents (Makdisi 2000). The European powers pushed for a division of Mount Lebanon along sectarian lines, and in 1842, two separate administrative districts were formed. As no clear geographic division of inhabitants existed—leaving Druze residents under Maronite rule and vice versa—communal tensions continued to rise. The massacres of 11,000 Maronites in Mount Lebanon in 1860, which would come to serve as a critical historical rupture in Lebanese national memory, gave European powers the push to intervene militarily. In a conference later in the year, Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and the Ottoman Empire devised a protocol to deploy tens of thousands of European soldiers to the region and to establish a new form of local autonomy known as the Mount Lebanon *mutasarrifiyya* (governorate) that, separate from Greater Syria, would be governed by a non-Lebanese Christian governor with support from a council comprised of representatives of religious communities.

As Kamal Salibi asserts, it was under this territorial arrangement of the *mutasarrifiyya* that "Lebaneseness" first acquired a legal definition (1971, 78). Maronite Christians, whose number was constituting the largest percentage of Mount Lebanon's residents, experienced this developing sense of pride most keenly. With increased connections to Europe through trade and missionary activity came the rapid development of the region, including its educational institutions and cultural activities, which were often sponsored by the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches (ibid). It is under these conditions that a framework of Lebanese nationalism, to which I will later in this chapter return, developed. During this period, Jews in Mount Lebanon were, by and large, politically unaligned, yet found themselves the victims of larger social conflict. At the start of the 1860 Mountain War, the Jewish community of Deir al-Qamar and the neighboring village of Barouk fled to safety in 'Aley, Tripoli, Sidon, Hasbaya, and

Beirut (see figure 5). The first group to migrate did so prior to the Mountain War in light of rising tensions; this band of families, primarily Jews of North African origin, relocated to Sidon and its surroundings, joining a long-established Jewish community. The second group made its way to Hasbaya near Mount Hermon in Lebanon's southeast. The last group, the largest of the three, followed growing economic opportunity in Beirut, where the region's Jewish community was fast centralizing around the growing port town (Schulze 2001, 19). Without local Jews to tend to its upkeep and carry out services, the synagogue of Deir al-Qamar was sold by the dispersed community in 1900.

Figure 9. The interior of Deir al-Qamar's synagogue, now overseen by the IFPO, today hosts dance and theater performances. Image courtesy of Maqamat Dance Theatre. November 28, 2017.

Figure 10. The exterior of Deir al-Qamar's synagogue. The original six-point star was replaced with an 8-point figure during recent renovations. Image by author. August 14, 2020.

The synagogue in Deir al-Qamar was the first in Lebanon to fall into disuse, it is one of the best preserved in Lebanon today, despite the fact that it has not served its religious purpose since the end of the 19th century. During research conducted in August 2019, I met Joseph and Rita, two friendly pensioners living in an ancient church-turned-home adjacent to the synagogue in Deir al-Qamar, where they act as unofficial guides for curious individuals seeking to locate the long-disused temple. With little visual evidence to mark the space as Jewish, I found myself poking hopelessly about the alleys of the village. Nearby, I spotted a couple who had set up a few plastic chairs and an *argileh* (water pipe) on the roof of a *khan* (caravanserai) that now hosted the Institut Français du Proche-Orient's Deir al-Qamar headquarters (the French Institute of the Near East). Rita called out to me, offering help. When I told them that I was searching for

the synagogue, Rita was not surprised. “It’s right over here! We get a number of visitors who are interested in seeing the synagogue,” she told me. Rita then led me next door to an unmarked limestone building. Though bearing no discernable signs of its Jewish past, the building was well-maintained and clean. She pointed above the door, gesturing to an eight-point star adoring the entrance. “There used to be a Star of David here, but it was removed during renovations,” said Rita. “The building is used for French classes and the occasional dance or theater performance, but otherwise it’s empty, but in good condition.”

The transformation of the sites of a religious group for other uses across the former Ottoman Empire is not uncommon. Though research into the transformation of spaces formerly maintained by one religious group at the hands of another in the post-Ottoman world is rich, the synagogue in Deir al-Qamar constitutes a space that was repurposed for secular uses. As Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Robert Hayden, and Aykan Erdemir insist, the alternation of such sites cannot be divorced from the historical situations under which these changes take place (2014). Deir al-Qamar’s synagogue was one of the first in the country to wholly fall out of disuse by its Jewish community; though a handful of Jewish residents would remain in the Chouf Mountains, they would never again constitute the numbers needed for a practicing community. Though Joseph and Rita could not provide an exact date of the removal of the six-point star, they insisted that it was well after the withdrawal of the invading Israeli army, who occupied the town in 1982. Much like the churches documented by Tanyeri-Erdemir et al., the synagogue maintains inconspicuous physical references to its past life; Deir el-Qamar’s synagogue served as a merchandise depot for many years before being acquired by IFPO. The transformation of the former Star of David into an eight-pointed decorative figure is not an erasure of the structure’s past, but an adaptation of its physical elements in light of both its present-day uses and the

violent history of an occupying force that wielded the religious image as a symbol of national belonging and imperial dominance.

Lebanon's Jewish life at the twilight of the Ottoman Empire (1860-1923)

Despite war in Mount Lebanon and the increased threat to Jews in places like Damascus, Jewish life across what would later become the Lebanese state prospered. The Beirut-Damascus railway line opened in 1895 brought with it an increased number of wealthy Jews from the inner hinterland, newly connected through easy transport, who sought escape from the heat of the summer in the mountain villages of Bhamdoun and ‘Aley. The synagogue in the town of ‘Aley, known as Ohel Jacob, was built in 1892 with funds from Ezra ben Yacoub Anazouth (see figure 6). The temple was, according to the ‘Aley municipality, a major source of revenue for the Bikkour Holim society, which provided free health services to the poor (Municipality of ‘Aley, 2018). Ezra ben Yacoub, a pious and wealthy Jew, set out to build synagogues near each of his many residences, naming each for his late father, purportedly so that he would not have to walk far on the Sabbath to pray. ‘Aley's synagogue had electricity, which synagogues in Beirut lacked at the time.

Regional hubs continued to host Jewish life; the manner in which they waxed and waned reveals the importance of their connections to other communities throughout the Levant. Hasbaya's close proximity to the growing Jewish settlements in Ottoman Palestine hastened its decline, even prior to the borders that would divide the region after the establishment of the French and British mandates of Greater Lebanon and Palestine, respectively. In its last century, the Ottoman Empire attempted to transform its polity to resemble that of a European nation-state. This led to the centralization of economic, political, and religious activity around some

provincial cities at the expense of others, as well as the development of singular industries in these provincial capitals. While, as Toufoul Abou-Hodeib shows, the ascent of these centers resulted in an increased interdependence between the geographies of the Levant, it also led to the solidifying of cities' and town's identities around a particular production or service, leading to a decline in the decentralized nature of these geographies (2020). The community of Hasbaya had long maintained strong relationships with Jews to their south, particularly through their relationship with Safed; Jews in Hasbaya considered rabbis in Safed, a center of mysticism and learning, to be their spiritual leaders (Schulze 2009, 336). Hasbayan Jews fostered a spiritual and physical connection to the biblical Land of Israel, attested to by the fact that community members buried their dead further south, which, unlike their locale, was squarely within the territory of the historic and religious Land of Israel (Schulze 2001, 24). Despite having a synagogue constructed through the funds of Baron Rothschild in the late 1880s, all that remains today is a single, ancient wall of the town's much older synagogue.[6] Zeidan reports that, as he discovered during research in Hasbaya, further traces of the synagogue remained into the 1960s, when stones from the synagogue were used to construct a cemetery and building on the property (ibid). Meanwhile, eastern locales in Lebanon drew in Jews from the hinterland and Syria. In the early 1900s, Jews from Damascus immigrated to the town of Zahlé, a growing agricultural center. Although a Jewish presence was recorded until the 1960s, a synagogue, cemetery, or other Jewish institutions were never established in the city (Farhi 2012).

[6] Edmond James de Rothschild (1846-1954) was a French-born member of the Rothschild banking family. Rothschild's significant donations supported Jews in and around Palestine and helped to buttress Zionist activity in the lead-up to Israel's declaration of independence in 1948.

The growth of Beirut and the centralization of Lebanon's Jewish life

In the late-Ottoman period, Beirut's reputation as a diverse port city was quickly growing. As Tomer Levi contends, Beirut's Jewish community became representative of a "distinct, Levantine type of Jewish community" precisely because it was so integrally tied to "Beirut's revival as a port city" (2012, 4). The rise of Beirut from a secondary port town largely inhabited by Sunni fisherman coincided with the violent events in Mount Lebanon. At the turn of the 20th century, Beirut was made the capital city of the Ottoman *vilayet* (province) of the same name, raising its profile as a center of commerce and culture. So, too, did this period see a significant growth in the city's Jewish population: it was not until the late 19th and early 20th century that the majority of Lebanese Jews—as was the case with most non-Sunni communities—migrated to Beirut in large numbers in order to place themselves in the midst of a regional trade center. Zeidan estimates that, by 1900, there were approximately 2,500 Jews living in Beirut out of an estimated 120,000 inhabitants (2020, 52; Wilson and Hogarth 1910, 123). The development of Beirut as a mercantile hub also drew increased interest from European powers, whose free-trade treaties with the Ottoman Empire intersected with the increased geographic access provided by the opening of the Suez Canal and the development of high-power steamships. As established Jewish traders had, for many years, facilitated exchange between Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, their knowledge of European languages and their personal stakes in the strengthening of international trade routes kept Jewish ties to European involvement in the region strong (ibid, 25). Unlike in cities like Alexandria, the number of European residents remained relatively low in Ottoman Lebanon, further inflating the intermediary role of Jews—along with their Maronite compatriots, whose historic connections to

Catholic France were strengthened by a longstanding missionary tradition—as facilitators of the trans-Mediterranean-European economy.

The rapid growth of Beirut's Jewish population led to the creation of a centralized network of institutions, such as schools, synagogues, and community councils. Prior to the First World War, Beirut was home to over 20 *midrashot* (Jewish schools dedicated to Torah study), most of which served particular segments of the Jewish community, who, in prayer spaces housed within private residences or schools, varyingly followed their religious rites and conducted affairs in Arabic, Ladino, and other languages.

Jewish educational institutions, and the organizations that oversaw them, had a lasting impact on the lives of Lebanese Jews and the sentiments they formed for foreign powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Alliance Israélite Universelle founded its first institutions in Beirut in the second half of the 19th century: a girl's school, established in 1878, followed the opening of a primary school for boys in 1869 (Zeidan 2020). A branch of the Alliance Israélite Universelle was inaugurated in Sidon in 1902, furthering pupils' options for Jewish education (Schlaepfer 2021, 8). The impact of Alliance educational standards on the Lebanese Jewish community "cannot be overestimated," Schulze claims, as it profoundly added to their identity and, in the emerging national divide [between those calling for an Arab-oriented independent state and those interested in a Western orientation], placed them clearly in the Francophile and pro-Western camp" (2001, 27). Founded in Paris in 1860, the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU) movement aimed to provide financial, cultural, and moral guidance for Jews throughout the former Ottoman Empire, Mediterranean, and Persia. Its objective was, as outlined in the organization's prospectus, the emancipation of Jews from legal discrimination and the defense of Jews from persecution, particularly through education campaigns and the establishment of

Francophone schools (Rodrigue 1990). This mission was driven by a close association with France's colonial civilizing mission: a fondness and personal connection to France and French culture was fostered through French language and an appreciation of "French values." Given the centrality of French liberal political ideals, which promoted the integration of the Middle East into the spheres of *francophonie* and world capitalism, those carrying out the work of the AIU showed what was often a palpable distaste for political Zionism. Instead, it preached a gospel of Jewish assimilation to French language and culture (Laskier 1983).

If the majority of Jews in Lebanon were Francophone, and were thus educated in French-language institutions, nonetheless, the growing international profile of the Syrian Protestant College—later known as the American University of Beirut (AUB)—drew Jewish students, of both Arab and Ashkenazi origin, from Lebanon, Palestine, and elsewhere, with Jewish students from as far as Russia also joined their educational ranks (Levi 2012, 83). Notably, the AUB's Jewish students both promoted Zionist ideas and strengthened transnational networks between the university and institutions in Palestine. As Caroline Kahlenberg details in her study of Jewish student life on AUB's campus prior to 1948, despite the university administration's avoidance of fanning political conflict on campus, Jewish students actively participated in debates concerning identity and nationalist pursuits, at times collaboratively (2019).

A general Jewish enthusiasm for a Western-oriented modernization did not point to a blind following of French or European trends. Though Beirut's Jewish community tended to privilege entrepreneurial success over higher education, Lebanese Jews were among the intellectuals who contemplated the intersections of modernization, pan-Jewish political aspirations, and the future of a Lebanese nation-state. In this period, the Lebanese Jewish cultural sphere expanded, and new spaces for exploring themes both Jewish and Lebanese emerged.

Beirut-born Esther Azhari Moyal (1873-1948), founder of the Jewish newspaper *Sawt al-‘Uthmaniyya*, (an Arabic-language publication), sought to “reconcile the sociopolitical, cultural, and linguistic aims of [emerging] Jewish Euro-Zionists and Arab-Palestinian nationalisms” (Behar and Benite 2014, 30). Enmeshed in an Islamically-influenced cultural tradition and seeking to appeal to her compatriots, Moyal utilized literary tactics such as the employment of Qur’anic verses and Biblical references when stressing social and political goals (2014, 30). Moyal’s compositions simultaneously extolled the benefits of Western-based schooling (particularly with regards to education of women) while also urging her readers to “stop following Westerners in every situation” and to return to the Arabic language “along with the poems of our poets and the proverbs of our wise men" as an integral part of raising the next generation of Lebanese citizens (ibid, 43). Additionally, Lebanese Jewish playwrights, including Shihaybar brothers and Zaki Cohen, wrote and performed plays in Arabic and, later, in Hebrew (Sandgrove 1992).

Al-’Alam al-Isra’ili (The Jewish World), an Arabic-language Jewish newspaper published in Beirut, helped to circulate information among the Jews of Lebanon. Published from 1921-1946 by Selim Eliyahu Mann, the paper covered a wide range of current affairs, local issues, and community business, including the activities of the growing Zionist movement in Palestine (Levi 2012, 15). According to Schlaepfer, Mann hoped that al-’Alam al-Isra’ili would grow to become the “main organ" for current affairs news among Arabic-speaking Jews in the Levant (2021, 8). It also published opinion pieces written by Jews and, occasionally, by non-Jews. Additionally, Toufiq Mizrahi kept Jewish businesspeople up to date with the publication of the French-language magazine *Le Commerce du Levant* (Schulze 2001, 37). Finally, B’nai B’rith published a French-language periodical from 1923-1937 (ibid).

Beirut's continued growth encouraged Jewish immigration from locales such as Izmir, Baghdad, Kurdistan, Istanbul, Russia, Damascus, and Aleppo. What resulted was the diversification of a Jewish sphere that had, up until the second half of the 19th century, been dwarfed by the likes of Sidon and Deir al-Qamar, as well as by Jewish centers in Syria and Palestine (Levi 2012, 80). Despite the positive growth of Jewish life, this expansion put both financial and social strain on existing Jewish social institutions. Tomer Levi reports that the vast array of customs and languages amongst Jews in Beirut did not always meld easily, and that the lack of an organized, central Jewish administration during this period left those in need to "seek their own livelihoods and manage their own welfare" (ibid, 81).

Confessionalism, centralization, and Jewish community under the French Mandate (1923-46)

The end of WWI led to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which had long been losing control of its peripheral territories. At the San Remo conference in 1920, Britain and France came to an agreement on how the Arab lands of the former Ottoman Empire would be divided, to maintain imperial jurisdiction over oil production and communications networks (Salibi 1988, 20). France, which took control of the mandates of Greater Lebanon and Syria, was tasked with establishing a new constitution under the auspices of fostering autonomy toward an independent state. The Republic of Lebanon in the form of "Greater Lebanon" was declared on September 1st, 1920. The new territorial configuration was nearly twice the size of that of the Mount Lebanon *mutasarrifiyya.*

Affiliation with Judaism had long dictated belonging to a sociopolitical community whose interests extended beyond religious rites, but it was under the French Mandate that

religious community became the absolute marker of social belonging. The French High Commission, overseeing the Lebanese government, institutionalized the political system according to confessional belonging that was based on the 1932 census—the last to be officially conducted in Lebanon. This established sixteen official religious communities—one of them being the Jewish, or Israelite community—as recognized by the French. In 1922, the Electoral Law was passed, declaring that parliamentary seats would be distributed based on confessional proportion (Decree No. 1307). Though the Jewish community in Lebanon had been officially enshrined in Ottoman protective law since 1911, the community did not have its own seat of representation: under French control, the Jewish community was spoken for by a minority parliamentary seat, which also represented Syrian Catholics, Chaldeans, and Jacobites (Syriac Orthodox), among other communities, of which Jews were the largest in numbers. The French Mandate ushered in a multi-confessional representational system as codified in the constitution that became the basis of the National Pact—to be discussed further in this chapter—following Lebanon's independence in 1943. Through this pact, representation of Lebanese Jews was awarded to the community leader rather than to a chief rabbi, thus further inscribing the community as both a religious and a sociopolitical entity.

Just as many aspects of economic and social life became centralized in the growing Beirut, so too did Jewish religious and community organization follow. The Ottoman authorities had recognized the newly established Israelite Community Council of Beirut as the central body governing on behalf of Jews; smaller community councils, like those in Tripoli and Sidon, were made to answer to the authority of Beirut (Schlaepfer 2019, 7). In 1922, the head rabbi of Beirut was proclaimed chief rabbi of Lebanon. Following the First World War, Lebanon's Jewish community reorganized itself under the tutelage of its president, Joseph Farhi. Most notable was

the establishment of an elected community council and president, which was to serve as the executive and centralized body of Jewish affairs in Lebanon. Until this time, local Jewish communities were fragmented along lines of religious rite, language, and place of origin. They largely functioned as independent but intertwined entities, each with their own interests extending beyond their immediate geographies and populations (Schulze 2001, 41).

The French Mandate period coincided with the further modernization of Lebanon (1923-46). Many Jewish families who had for generations worked as merchants transitioned to finance-oriented work, thus leading to the development of an urban Jewish petit bourgeoisie (ibid, 37). Alongside Christians and Muslims of similar class affiliation, the Jewish upper middle-class took an interest in Western-oriented fashions and entertainment; these class-based commonalities fostered socializing across ethno-religious lines, and Jews would often host Muslim and Christian dignitaries during weddings and holidays (Levi 2014). Though the AIU remained the largest educational institution in Beirut, the growing middle class's France-oriented gaze encouraged wealthier Jewish families to enroll their children in private, Christian-administered schools, where the level of instruction was generally better, providing further opportunities for Jewish-Christian social relations to flourish.

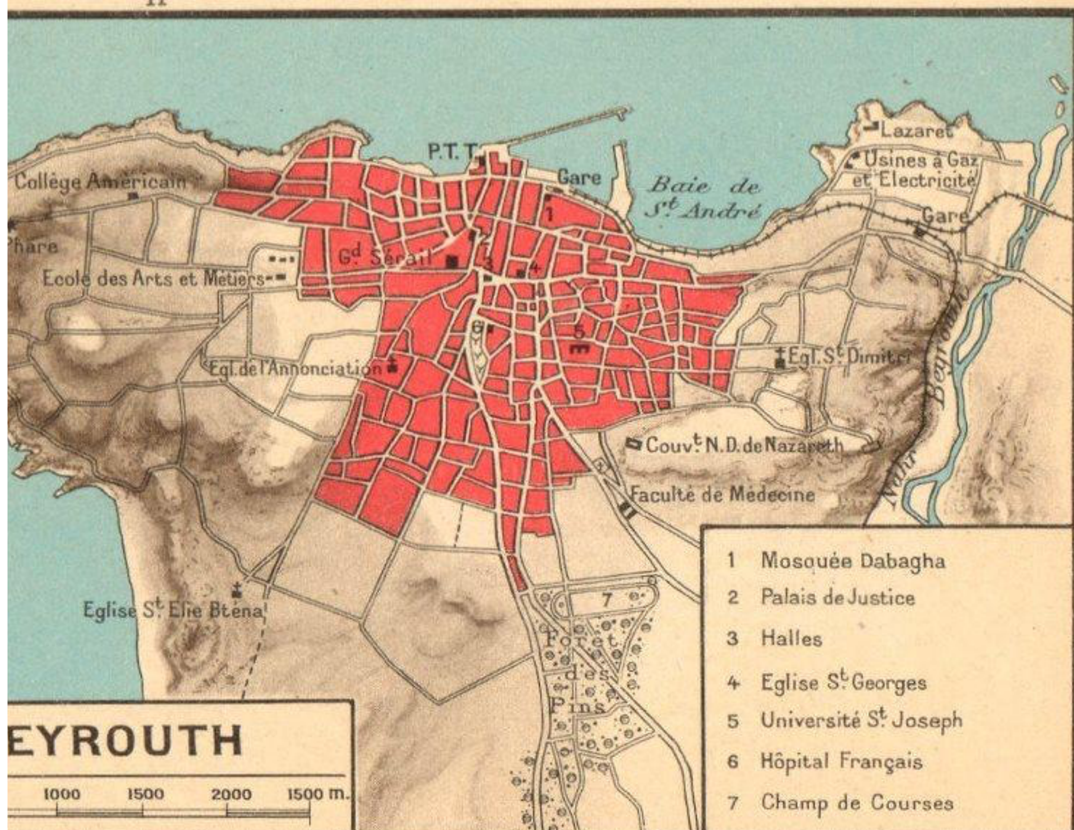

Figure 11. A French Mandate Forces map of Beirut, with built-up areas coded in red. Map by Commandant P. Pollacchi. 1938.

Beirut's first modern synagogue was constructed near where the French would build the Place de l'Étoile in the 1920s on the site of an earlier souk; the synagogue stood until 1922, when it was demolished (Schulze 2001, 27; Place de 'Étoile and the synagogue were located slightly to the southeast of the Ottoman-era Grand Serail [see figure 11; the "Gd. Sérail" appears in the northwest quadrant of the red built-up area]). Before the centralization of Beirut's Jews, most Jews who had settled in the city built their homes in the areas of Souk Sursock and Dalalin. Jews began to move to the neighborhood of Wadi Abu Jamil in the late 19th century, establishing their regional center of religion, commerce, and culture. In 1927, a donation by Moshe Ben-Avraham Sassoon of Calcutta made possible the construction of a new central synagogue. Built in memory of his father, Avraham Sassoon, who had lived in Beirut, Magen

Avraham Synagogue became the largest and most stately house of worship in Lebanon (see figure 6). Magen Avraham also housed a community center, the rabbinate's central office, a Talmud Torah school, a communal library, and the headquarters of Bikkur Holim, a charitable organization and mutual aid society that provided assistance to sick and elderly Jews. Magen Avraham was built to be Beirut's largest, and provided a grand, communal setting in a neighborhood of small, family-run synagogues. Its vaulted, European style architecture bears resemblance to other large Mediterranean synagogues such as those in Alexandria and Oran, though its interior, with light blue ceilings and striking, striped arches give a distinctly neo-Moorish flavor, an element that will be explored in the context of contemporary Wadi Abu Jamil in Chapter 2.

<u>The decline of Jewish life outside of the capital</u>

Ultimately, the growth of Beirut's Jewish world and the centralization of its religious and political authority around the city led to the slow diminishing of Jewish communities elsewhere in Lebanon. Sidon had, until the end of the Ottoman Empire, been the most important center of Jewish life in Lebanon (Levi 2012, 75). However, with the inclusion of territories hitherto separated from Beirut under the flag of Greater Lebanon, the demographic structure of Jewish communities was altered in favor of Beirut.

Tripoli's Jews recognized the authority of the newly-established Beirut Jewish community council and its newly centralized leadership over Lebanon's Jewry. The Jewish community of Tripoli all but ceased to exist by 1920, and the synagogue was shuttered that year (see figs. 5 and 6). The city's Jewish cemetery, the oldest in the country, witnessed its last burial around 1905, after which it became the grazing land of abandoned animals (Zeidan 2020, 143).

Citing *Al-'Alam al-Isr'ili*, Zeidan notes that the secretary general of the Jewish community in Beirut visited Tripoli in 1922 to oversee the former community's neglected properties and endowments. The last Tripolitan rabbi died in 1946 and was buried in Beirut's Jewish cemetery given the neglected nature of the burial ground in his home city (2021b). During my own research trips to Tripoli, I was told of a Jewish cemetery that had long ago been paved over, though my interlocutors could not precisely place its location. Tripoli's former synagogue, located in the neighborhood of Zahrani, was repurposed as a tannery and dye factory, though faint Hebrew etching can still be located in its stone exterior.

Figure. 12. Faint Hebrew letters can be seen on the exterior of Tripoli's former synagogue. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. June 12, 2022.

The region of Bhamdoun and ‘Aley, which had served as summer getaways for upper-middle class and wealthy Jews and non-Jews since the late 1800s, were the exception to the decline of communities outside of Beirut; this is due to the fact that the towns functioned as summer vacation destinations for upper-middle class Jews, who provided the market for new hotels, restaurants, and casinos (see figure 5). The Bhamdoun Synagogue was constructed in 1922 (see figure 6). Its purpose was to serve the influx of summering Jews who flocked to the village, thus lessening their need to travel to ‘Aley or Beirut to pray. Referred to as “the new temple” by the community, it was the last temple to be constructed in Lebanon. Bhamdoun’s synagogue would serve as the center of religious and social life for the myriad Jews summering in the Lebanese mountains. Grand steps at the front exterior of the building led to its patio. Attendees would, from here, enter their respective seating areas, with women and children seated upstairs in a large, vaulted gallery. Wooden chairs faced a central bimah, which sat in front of the recessed area, painted a deep blue, within which the Holy Ark was kept.

Regional Jewish networks under the French Mandate (1923-46)

Despite the establishment of new imperial borders, social and economic connections between Lebanese Jews and the Jewish communities of British Mandate Palestine remained rich throughout the first half of the 20th century (Abou-Hodeib 2015). Practices like religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed, and Hebron, among other locales, remained strong, and would continue well into the French Mandate period. Despite the distinct separation of the British Mandate of Palestine from Lebanon and Syria following the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Lebanon’s economic success during this time owed much to its connections abroad. Jews in

Palestine, too, found an eager market in Lebanon, which served as one of two major markets for the sale of products produced by Jewish factories in Palestine (Schulze 2001, 36).

The imposition of the borders between what became British Mandate Palestine and France's Mandate in Lebanon introduced a new level of separation in a geography that, for millennia, had been tethered by social and economic interreliance. As Toufoul Abou-Hodeib shows, the "Class A" mandatory model, as it was defined by the Convent of the League of Nations, was to be applied to "advanced nations" who, despite having developed to a point where "their existence as independent nations [could] be provisionally recognized," were determined to be not yet ready for independence (2020, 48). In the case of Lebanon, Ottoman systems of legal representation were further entrenched through a focus on sectarian representation toward an ultimate goal of national independence. This, shows Abou-Hodeib, introduced a "sense of progressive time," in which states-to-be were imagined as separate geographic and cultural entities under imperial tutelage. "In order to be heard" by their imperial masters, citizens of the new mandates "found themselves obliged to approach the authorities along the new lines of national, ethnic, and sectarian" categories (ibid). For Jews, as well as other communities, different and flexible identifications had long allowed for overlapping identities and geographies held simultaneously, thus constituting "part of political, social, and regional time-space configurations both modern and more ancient" (ibid, 47).

The redrawing of borders and the hardening of national identity as the sole marker of belonging during this period—though they were to be followed by a "multiplication of genocides and collective catastrophes"—continues to be an important node of memory for Lebanese Jews. Although those alive today have not experienced the permeability of borders in the Levant, the awareness of a landscape that had once allowed for an easier connection of communities remains

an important point of reference. The trauma of this geographic and familial fragmenting remains resonant for Lebanese Jews, despite the fact that many are now two generations removed from those who experienced the drawing of the Mandates' borders. Though Marianne Hirsch coined the term "postmemory" to describe how knowledge is mediated by the generation that follows those who have witnessed collective trauma, the case of Lebanese Jews demonstrates how the familial inheritance of such memories can stretch across a number of generations, thus shaping personal memory "by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which [one] grew up" (2008, 106). Dinah Diwan, a Lebanese Jew who descended from a prominent Sidonian family, recounted her grandmother's life story to me from her home in Los Angeles on May 21, 2021. "My grandmother was born in Damascus but grew up in Mutallah, which became Metulah [when Israel was formed]," a town which is, today, on Israel's border with Lebanon. A Jewish farming settlement had been founded in 1896, and most of the Jewish inhabitants during the British mandate were Russian immigrants, like the original settlers. Dinah's great-grandfather had not been Ashkenazi, but had joined the growing settlement so that his family might receive the best possible Jewish education. The family was not alone in gravitating toward Jewish life in what became northern Israel; many of Hasbaya's Jews had relocated to Rosh Pina, established as a *moshava* in 1888 by Romania Jews. Dinah's grandmother had married into a Sidonian family and moved north, but continued to read and correspond in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian, which she had learned in school while living in Mutallah. "She was rather observant" and a voracious reader, said Dinah; during her childhood, "my father would go to Europe and return with books for her." Her multilingualism and connections to the British Mandate of Palestine wasn't something that was hidden during her grandmother's youth or through much of her adulthood; it was only during Dinah's childhood that her grandmother's collection of Hebrew literature

became a point of anxiety. By that point, Dinah and her family had started referring to Mutallah—and Israel as a whole—as *"huneik"* [over there]. Dinah's intergenerational inheritance of a time in which her Jewish family simultaneously belonged to communities that stretched beyond the borders of present-day nation-states informed the ways she addressed geographies during our interview. Dinah had not experienced such a map herself, she had inherited connections to places abroad beyond the scope of the religiosity that orientates Jews toward the Land of Israel.

Lebanese nationalism

In 1926, Grand Liban was reformulated as the Lebanese Republic, with a new Lebanese Constitution. Maronite Lebanese nationalists, who had imagined the *mutasarrifiyya* (governate) as a positive but incomplete step toward national independence, celebrated the foundation of the Republic (Salibi 1971, 79). Despite the Republic's theoretical advancement toward independence, discrepancies remained among Lebanese with regard to how the character of the state was imagined. Discourses of pan-Arabism; unity with greater Syria as one nation; and Lebanese independence drove disagreements as to how to form a future state. In the *mutasarrifiyya*, Maronite Christians, who had developed a keen sense of Lebanese nationalism based on their status as a religious minority in a Muslim-majority Arab world, held clear numerical supremacy. In the nascent Republic, however, Maronites were but one—albeit the single largest—community. Though no ethno-religious group was monolithic in its support for one form of nationalism, trends in allegiances did emerge, each with their own justifications shaped by political interests and communal experiences. Some Muslims, among them Sunni communities who had long resided in the port cities that had been previously subsumed by

Grand Liban like Sidon and Beirut, saw a union with Syria and the greater Arab world as their most promising option. While some Greek Orthodox were invested in the idea of an independent Lebanon, others felt that Lebanon's inclusion in a Greater Syria would offer a challenge to Maronite leadership's hegemony, as in Syria, unlike in Lebanon, Greek Orthodox formed the majority of Christians. Still other communities, like Shi'a and Druze, were either split in their allegiances or hesitant to upend the goodwill they shared with other ethno-religious communities. Thus, the hegemony of Maronites and their allies in formulating a nationalist block faced no real organized challenge; it was "largely left to them to develop a workable formula for the country" (ibid).

Despite the fact that France governed its new mandate with an aggressively pro-Catholic sectarian hand, locals also contended with themes of sectarianism in context of what Makdisi refers to as the region's ecumenical frame. As self-determination through the model of the nation-state gained local currency, citizens of the French Mandate in Lebanon grappled with the place of national identity in a religiously diverse society. Socially marginalized communities might be particularly committed to the promises of pluralism, though many utilized sectarian language in describing these political aspirations. The ways in which this minoritarian discourse played out depended on how said individuals conceived of themselves structurally: "there was," for example, "a crucial distinction between thinking of oneself as a Christian Arab and describing oneself as a Christian in, but not of, the Arab world" (Makdisi 2019, 121).

Though Lebanese Jews were not the central voices calling their fellow imperial subjects to adopt Lebanese nationalism, they found resonance in how it positioned non-Muslims in the Arab Islamic world. Jews in Lebanon were not alone in contending with changing notions of nation and ethnicity which, at this historical moment, were in flux globally (Brubaker 2002). As

Orit Bashkin shows in the context of Iraqi Jews, the process of state building under continued colonial control deeply shaped the ways in which Jews would come to define their social and political identities (2012). Unlike various Lebanese Muslim communities, who feared that disconnection from Syria and the Arab world would mean that they were but one ethno-religious group among many, Jews found comfort in the prospect of a federation of minorities (Schulze 2001, 33). Michel Chiha, a banker, intellectual, and second-generation Lebanese whose Assyrian family had originally hailed from Iraq, was highly influential in shaping the movement that came to be known as Lebanonism. Writing in French, Chiha argued that Lebanon's uniqueness lay in its federation of Muslim and Christian communities who, living in close proximity, interacted with mutual respect (Salibi 1971, 80). This cooperation, along with a long history of engagement with the greater Mediterranean world through trade and seafaring, helped to shape claims to the uniqueness of Lebanon's character as quintessentially pluralistic. "It was this sea that perhaps saw the first boat and the first oar," wrote Chiha in 1944. "The Mediterranean seems to be the chosen sea—a providential and necessary factor in the course of creation…it is above prejudice and violence and is a sign of brotherhood and harmony" (Hartman and Olsaretti 2003). As the inheritors of this history, Chiha argued, the modern Lebanese people were tasked with brokering the crossroads between East and West as both traders and cultural intermediaries by historic providence. The survival of the Lebanese nation, to Chiha, depended on the fostering of each angle of this network of relationships: between Muslims and Christians, Europe and Lebanon, and Lebanon and the Arab world, in a spirit of independence and impartiality. This fraternal spirit of coexistence, however, was presented as an element to be enlivened by an educated, prosperous elite, who would then preside over an ignorant body politic that could not be entrusted to peacefully oversee their own affairs. In the context of the soon-to-be-independent

Lebanon, calls for coexistence provided a "buttress for a manifestly unequal [class] hierarchy" through which political elites legitimized their right to "negotiate, gain, distribute, or defend a share of the state's jobs, revenues, seats, resources and privileges for their respective communal constituencies" (Makdisi 2019, 145). Such ideas of who could legitimately govern the system of coexistence, I will later show, would again arise around the involvement of the "commercial/financial oligarchy" in Lebanon's Jewish tangible heritage following the end of the Civil War in 1990 (Traboulsi 2007, 118).

The trope of the Phoenician was utilized by its proponents to call attention to Lebanon's cultural uniqueness; it was also taken up by more radical advocates in order to dismiss the many millennia of Islamic influence on Lebanese society as the product of Arab conquest over an ostensibly non-Arab society. Phoenicianism, explains Franck Salameh, imagined modern Lebanese, as the descendents of Phoenecians, "as skillful cultural intermediaries and eloquent cosmopolitan polyglots…[who] were at home in several cultural settings…and who must, therefore, never be confused with their Arab neighbors and neer be reduced to a single, monistic identity" (2010, 44). Jews did not reflexively identify their lineage with ancient Phoenicians: their family origins in the Middle East and Europe were diverse. However, the idea that Lebanon had, since time immemorial, served as a home for both Jewish and Christian communities who were present before Arab conquest strengthened the underpinnings of a shared national agenda; likewise, Jews found familiarity in their own stories with the historical role of intermediary and merchant. Illustrative of this shared agenda are the Passover celebrations in Beirut in 1936, where the Jewish community hosted an array of political elites of Lebanese and French origin. Following a retelling of the exodus story, community president Joseph Farhi focused his address on the connection between Lebanon and its Jews. Farhi underscored the ancient ties between

King Solomon and the Phoenician King Hiram, who is said to have provided both friendship and the timber used to build Solomon's temple and palace. Farhi ended his eulogy by underscoring the "spirit of fraternal union" shared between Lebanon and France (Schulze 2001, 38). Jews embraced the idea of a "multi-cultural Levantine state with almost as much enthusiasm as the Maronites, for [they felt that their] religious, social, political and economic position had not only been safeguarded but enhanced" (ibid., 33).

The continued resonance of Jews and Lebanonism

Though, ultimately, Lebanese nationalism as a direct continuation of Phoenicianism did not have the deep impact on statecraft and governance in the way that the institutionalization of sectarianism under the French Mandate did, it continues to provide the discursive terms for local understandings of what binds the so-called Lebanese people. Though many of my interlocutors rejected the idea that a Phoenician genealogy was directly relevant to the modern Lebanese people, many expressed sympathy with ideas related to its conception as a political force: the Lebanese, they articulated, were historically linked to the rest of the world through migration and trade, while also boasting an enormous amount of internal cultural and religious diversity. I explored this topic with Dima, a recent university graduate who actively engaged in discussions about Lebanese Jewish history online. "Phoenicianism is a ridiculous concept," Dima emphatically told me. She rejected the idea that Lebanese should identify with Phoenician and not Arab. But what did appeal to her were those elements of "Lebaneseness" that others often identified with Phoenicianism, Though scholarship on Lebanese nationalism has challenged the notion that nations can exist divorced from the workings of state-building projects, Lebanese nationalism is nonetheless a "solidifier of interpersonal solidarity, or [a] a potent social force in

its own right," as Dima shows (Weiss 2004, 243). Although my interlocutors often denounced the system through which ethno-religion came to serve as the primary marker of belonging and the prism through which personal status and representation were enacted, many insisted that these elements of cultural intermediacy, in and of themselves, part of what it meant to "be Lebanese."

Dima and I had first met through Reddit's Lebanon forum, where topics on Jewish Lebanon are posted from time to time.[7] "I'm Shi'a and grew up in Dahieh [a predominantly Shi'a suburb in southern Beirut] but I was educated in a French Catholic school, where we were more or less taught that nothing good happened in Ottoman Lebanon." The French, by contrast, were presented to Dima as those who encouraged the Lebanese to look back to their Phoenician roots. As a non-Christian in a predominantly Christian environment, Dima clung to the idea of social and religious diversity—and a respect for this element of Lebanese society—as a major uniting factor among not only her diverse group of friends, but as a critical element of what made her, and others, belong to the Lebanese nation. Dima's family hired a driver to transport her from Beirut's southern suburbs to and from her school, which was in the eastern part of Beirut. "We'd pass Wadi Abu Jamil daily," she told me. With massive amounts of construction underway, there was always something new in the built environment to discuss. "My driver had grown up nearby in the neighborhood of Zoukak al-Blatt [near the Jewish neighborhood of Wadi Abu Jamil], and would tell me stories of what the area was like when he was young. This is how I first learned about Lebanon's Jewish history. My parents never said bad things about Jews growing up,

[7] Reddit is a news, content rating, and discussion site where users submit material (such as links, discussion topics, images, and videos) to specific topic-based forums (called "communities"), which are then discussed and ranked according to users (known as "Redditors"). The r/Lebanon community has over 92.4 thousand members and is in the top one percent most active communities on the website.

despite the fact that my family's house in the south was destroyed by Israeli shelling during the 1980s. My father even told me stories of occupying Israeli soldiers who would pass out candy to the neighborhood children. But their Jewishness, or Jews in general, wasn't something they discussed."

When Dima discovered online that Magen Avraham, the synagogue in the neighborhood she passed each day en route to school, was set to be renovated, she excitedly shared the news with her parents. They were respectful, but clearly anxious: "they told me not to go there." Instead, Dima carried on conversations about Jews in Beirut with her driver, which were interspersed with life lessons: "when we encountered beggars, he'd always give them change and talk with them, telling me that I should treat everyone with respect, 'like all our religions tell us to.'" Dima told me that, despite this surface-level respect for religious diversity, she often felt lost and in search of an identity throughout her childhood. When she arrived at AUB as a graphic design major, her professors urged students to take inspiration from their own Arab culture instead of looking westward. "I didn't know where to look," she admitted. "Where was I supposed to find this preserved heritage?" It was in this frame of mind that Dima reencountered the history of Jews in Lebanon. "Exploring this history felt like a missing link," she confessed. With the continued silence around the civil war years, Jewish Lebanon felt to Dima like a stand-in for the things she had not been told about her own country. Dima began sharing the things she learned about Lebanon's Jewish history with her friends, alongside "Arab-Jewish" musicians she discovered, "some of whom have Israeli musicians in the band." Some reacted negatively but others in her social circle were eager to engage. All of this research, Dima explained, made her feel closer to both her Arabness and Lebaneseness, despite the difference in religion and nationality of those she was learning about. "Rediscovering the fact that Jews were an important

part of Lebanon, for me, was about rediscovering diversity in our Mediterranean history in a social environment where people—especially young people—are constantly looking to the west for examples on how to live." To Dima, reflecting on a time in Lebanese history in which difference, as she understood it, was an essential element of Lebanese society assured her that a diversity of tradition—whether it be artistic, architectural, or religious—could be found at home rather than solely in the West.

Maronite nationalism, Zionism, and Lebanese Jews

Though most Lebanese Jews remained primarily invested in establishing their place in Lebanese society, many were sympathetic to—if not always overtly in support of—a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The statements of support made by Maronite politicians and religious figures, and the allegiances that a handful of them forged with Zionists in the leadup to the establishment of Israel, strengthened the shared political interests of the two communities in Lebanon. Though the plight of Palestinians had struck a sympathetic chord with many Maronites, others who advocated for the concept of a "Christian national home" in Lebanon saw their aspirations as intersecting with those of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. For the Zionists, their reasoning was as much practical as it was ideological: Lebanon was the only place where the number of Christians outnumbered Muslims. Thus, perceptions of Lebanon as an inherently Christian nation anxious about its possible usurpation by Syria or the larger pan-Arab movement drove the alliance Zionists hoped to form with Maronites. As Laura Zittrain Eisenberg contends in her study of Zionist attitudes and policies towards Lebanon prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, the projects of political Zionism and political Maronism both involve self-conceptualizations as states for minorities in the broader scope of a Muslim Middle East. This

similarity of both agendas and circumstances was not lost on early Zionist leaders, who, building on economic ties established at the turn of the 20th century, forged political treaties on the foundation of continuing "ancient Phoenician-Israelite ties through a [modern] Zionist-Maronite relationship" (Schulze 1990). In the face of widespread opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine from both Muslim and Christian Palestinians, Zionist actors invested in the idea of a strong Lebanon with Christians in power. They aligned the perceived threat to Jewish political superiority with the waning number of Christians in Lebanon, who feared that the political supremacy they had established might follow the downward trajectory of their numbers (Eisenberg 1994, 14). Given the elevated political status of Christians in Lebanon, Jews in the *yishuv* developed a view of potential alliances with Lebanon as a "window in the wall of Arab enmity." With similar aspirations of "political dominion," many Zionist leaders viewed the two minorities as sharing a "natural harmony of interests" (ibid).

Some Maronites—most notably, Archbishop Ignace Mubarak, Patriarch of Antioch Antun 'Arida, and Emile Eddé, who served as president from 1936 to 1941—met this extended hand with enthusiasm. Despite the continued conversation between the parties, as well as appeals made to prime minister of France Leon Blum by Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, collaborative efforts met fierce opposition from the High Commissioner and local mandate government, who blocked official recognition of the Zionist project. Ultimately, the interests of Maronite figures interested in forging a relationship with the proposed State of Israel were overshadowed by more powerful Maronite politicians: Bishara al-Khoury, who would become the first president of an independent Lebanon, would go on to sign the National Pact of 1943, which stipulated that Lebanon was inextricable from the Arab world at large, and that Maronites would not seek

Western intervention into Lebanon's affairs in exchange for the abandonment of unity with Syria.

While, with the rest of the body politic, Lebanese Jews grappled with their place in an imagined, independent Lebanon, they simultaneously contended with the increasing influence of political Zionism over Jewish life. Indeed, the history of Lebanese Jewish involvement in the Zionist project is multifaceted. While there is little evidence for widespread interest in mass migration to a future Jewish state—and the curriculum espoused by Alliance schools favored a secular orientation rather than a Zionist outlook, religious or otherwise—some organizations and notables took a stand in support of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Indeed, the issue of Zionism became a flashpoint for more than just nationalist endeavors. The AIU archives document this divisive nature of Zionist activity: in 1919, a dispute between those in support of the establishment of a Zionist-oriented school—headed by community leader Joseph Farhi—clashed with the heads of the Alliance, whose monopoly over Jewish education was influenced by colonial competition between British and French interests (letter to M. Penso, AIUA, 1919). Because Lebanon's Jews hailed from myriad backgrounds, some institutions found themselves the unlikely host of Zionist activity. At the American University of Beirut, the Jewish student group *Kadima*, which was founded around 1908, promoted Hebrew language and Zionism on campus. Although both European and Arab Jewish students participated in the group, it was largely the European Jewish students, whose families had made the move to Palestine, who were most fervent in their campus activity (Kahlenberg 2019, 574).

Though Lebanese Jews largely remained uninterested in making *Aliyah*, or moving to a Jewish state, the circumstances to the south did not leave the community unconcerned. Following the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936-9), a number of Jews in Palestine (whose origins

are left unmentioned in archival correspondences) fled to Sidon seeking refuge. The number of Jews began to overwhelm innkeepers; community members called for a boycott of Jewish shops and urged Sidonians not to serve Jewish Palestinians. The anti-Jewish riots saw property destruction at Sidon's Alliance school and at Jewish-owned shops. (Letter to Rahmany AIUA, 1936). The Sidon community—who had historically conceived of themselves as part of the wider Jewish community in Palestine rather than members of a Jewish diaspora–was perhaps the hardest hit by the increase in tensions in historic Palestine. This history, whose afterlives continue to play out in unexpected ways, will be further addressed in Chapter 3.

Jewish life in early independent Lebanon (1943-1958)

The different confessional groups found unity in their push for a Lebanese state independent from France, even if their versions of what independence looked like varied widely. In November 1943, after a vote by the Lebanese government to amend the mandate constitution, a general strike in Beirut, and a series of widespread protests, the French Mandate for Lebanon was abolished. While Lebanese Jews had joined in the push for independence with fervor, the withdrawal of French powers from the country brought about a wave of anti-Jewish sentiment, particularly in the national press. In particular, *L'Orient*—a French-language paper founded in 1924 that had espoused a pro-French line—sought to distract from their culpability by equating Lebanese Jews with Jews in Palestine (Schulze 2001, 63).

As stated earlier in this chapter, it was under the tutelage of the French that the structure of independent Lebanon's power-sharing system was first formulated. The 1932 census—to this day the last conducted—provided the statistical basis for the system of confessional quotas that would make up the government structure. With a slight majority of 51%, Lebanese political

elites established that the Presidency and Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces would always be held by a Maronite; the Prime Minister would be a Sunni Muslim; and the Speaker of the Parliament would be Shiite. The ratio of the Lebanese Parliament would be a consistent ratio of 6:5 with Lebanese Christians receiving higher proportional representation. Importantly, the Pact positioned Lebanon as a unique country in the Eastern Mediterranean: belonging neither solely to the East nor West—understood as "Arab" and "Christian," respectively— Lebanon would be an independent mediator between the two geopolitical realms. It was agreed that Maronites would not seek foreign protection from European powers and that, in turn, Lebanon would not unite with other Arab states in a pan-Arab confederation (Hagopian 1989, 103). All confessional communities would be represented in the parliamentary cabinet according to their population numbers, a statistic calculated through the 1932 census, which remains, to this day, the last official census survey conducted in Lebanon. However, the smallest six of the ethno-religious groups did not receive the parliamentary representation they had hoped for. The Jewish community—along with Latin Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Syrian Jacobites, Nestorians, and Chaldeans—would be represented by one elected official. Of these six groups, Jews constituted the largest minority. Ultimately, the National Pact served to further the interests of a small political elite made up of various sectarian orientations.

Further complicating matters for Lebanese Jewry, Lebanon's independence from French rule in 1946 coincided with the era leading up to Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948. The Jewish community in Lebanon could not shield itself from the political implications of the heightened Zionist-Arab-British conflict. The general consensus among Lebanese Jews, however, was that Lebanon was not to blame for the sporadic and weak flare-ups of violence they experienced; rather, Jewish communities in Beirut and Sidon sought refuge in the protection

of the French (and later, Lebanese) forces, as well as amongst their Christian compatriots, who worried that severe violence in Palestine might bring a flux of refugees that would upset their slight majority at home (Schulze 2001, 65).

Lebanon served as a haven for Iraqi and Syrian Jews fleeing persecution in the wake of the rising projects of political Zionism and Arab nationalism. In the years leading up to and immediately following the declaration of Israel's independence, Lebanon contended with a growing regional Jewish refugee issue as its southern border became a smuggling point for those en route to Palestine. The Syrian government fired its Jewish employees and placed a curfew on its Jewish citizens in 1947; in the same year, Aleppan Jews fled a pogrom. This further encouraged mass migration of Syrian Jews to Beirut, nearly doubling the size of the city's community in a year's time (ibid., 77). Some of these refugees settled in the country; others, having not been granted Lebanese passports, sought temporary safety in the Lebanese capital before ultimately migrating to the Americas, France, and Israel.

The tension in Palestine was palpable for Jews in Lebanon. Taking advantage of their alliance with Maronites, Jewish boys began to enroll in the Kata'ib sporting club and scouts group to receive firearms training, should the need to defend themselves arise (Eisenberg 1996, 83). When the UN partition resolution was adopted in November 1947, Lebanese Jews celebrated at Magen Avraham; a small number of Zionist youth traveled to the southern border to join the Haganah (Schulze 2001, 69).

While growing tensions in Palestine in the lead-up to 1948 drew only a handful of instances of deadly violence directed at Jews in Lebanon, the community worried that, without the protection of French forces, spillover from strife in the south would bring on a fate similar to the Iraqi and Syrian Jews who, fleeing the violence conflation of Jewishness with Zionism, had

taken refuge in their country. While some Jews in Lebanon were personally enthused by the theoretical concept of a Jewish state, particularly given their exposure to the regional Jewish refugee crisis, their established social and economic positions provided little impetus for mass departure. Lebanese Jews—particularly those of middle- and upper class affiliations, identified strongly with the early days of the Lebanese state due to laissez-faire economic policies that helped the community to flourish. Steps were taken to distance both the Lebanese state and its Jewish community from the Zionist project. A national decree to implement the Arab League's call for a boycott of Zionist goods was issued, and Jewish youth organizations like the Maccabi sports club severed ties with head offices in London (ibid., 64). Despite this, the border between Palestine and Lebanon remained open, resulting in a seemingly paradoxical and continued connection between the two entities: in 1946, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, and Moshe Sharett traveled to a Zionist conference in Switzerland from Beirut's airport after the trio had trouble obtaining travel permission from British mandate authorities (ibid., 65).

Though these developments did not cause mass Jewish flight from Lebanon, they did foreclose numerous routes of regional and international collaboration. While paths for travel were left open for the political elite, they were simultaneously closed for everyday people. At the American University of Beirut, Jewish students had composed some 12% of the student body in the 1930s, and 14 faculty members and administrators had identified as such (Kahlenberg 2019, 572). Though the AUB had halted all student societies, including the Zionist group Kadima, at the outbreak of the Second World War, a number of Jewish students remained enrolled at the university. In January 1948, the university administration, along with the Lebanese General Security, asked Jewish students in Lebanon who were not nationals of Arab states to leave the

country (ibid, 583). In May 1948, the State of Israel was declared; Lebanon closed its southern border.

Despite the official closing of the border, the frontier between Israel and Lebanon remained active. Given the deteriorating conditions for Jews in neighboring Syria, Lebanon's proximity to Israel's Mediterranean shore made it a strategically important node for smuggling Jewish refugees into the country. Lebanese and Syrian Jews—sometimes including high-profile religious figures—worked to move Jews from Damascus, Aleppo, and the town of Kamishli on the Turkish border, who were at risk of having property seized by the Syrian state—south. While often tacitly ignored by Lebanese authorities, smuggling bands were occasionally arrested and accused of colluding with Zionist enemies (New York Times December 30, 1949, Page 9). As Lebanon remained the only avenue for exfiltration of Syrian refugees, its importance as a waypoint for Jews aided by foreign organizations like the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the Jewish Agency would continue into the early 1970s.

The size of Lebanon's Jewish community reached a peak in the mid-20th century, numbering between 10,000 and 14,000 (Farhi 2012; Schulze 2009, 1). This fact highlights the role of Lebanon as a haven for those fleeing anti-Jewish violence in Syria and Iraq in the wake of Israel's establishment and the corresponding expulsion of Palestine refugees from their homeland. Lebanon's commitment to a *laissez-faire* economic system and its bustling (though volatile) post-World War II market attracted Middle Eastern Jewish participation; and its vast ethno-religious diversity, where Christians held majority power in a confessionally-based political system, gave Jews a sense of safety. Beirut's Jewish population became doctors, bankers, merchants, and businesspeople in numbers disproportionate to the community's size, and many high-profile Jews embedded themselves in the upper echelons of Lebanon's pre–Civil

War economy. Indeed, many Jews were members of the Christian political party the Lebanese Phalanges (*Katā'ib*). Even as notable families began to relocate to wealthier neighborhoods in the 1950s, the numerous synagogues and *midrashot,* as well as the Alliance Israelite Universelle and Talmud Torah schools, kept communal life in Wadi Abu Jamil churning along steadily. Its numerous shops and its proximity to Beirut's central market resulted in intermingling with people of different religions and classes. As Beirut's Jewish community had ballooned with the arrival of Jews from elsewhere, it began to stretch beyond the territory of Wadi Abu Jamil, with well-to-do Jews moving to more posh and affluent neighborhoods.

The mass forced displacement of Palestinians altered Lebanon's reality on the ground as well as its political atmosphere. Following the violent expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland, over 110,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon. Whether or not to grant Palestinian refugees Lebanese citizenship became a topic of controversy, as doing so would undoubtedly challenge the numerical superiority of local Christians. In this atmosphere of heightened tensions, the issue of Palestine, and Jewish involvement, became a litmus test for identifying individual and communal allegiances.

The 1958 Crisis

In 1952, Camille Chamoun assumed the role of the second president of independent Lebanon. In the context of growing Cold War tensions, Chamoun was openly anti-Communist. Chamoun's government was the only in the Arab world to endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957, which gave signatories in the Middle East the power to request American economic and military assistance should they be threatened by Soviet or Soviet-aligned aggression. Tensions were exacerbated when, in February 1958, Syria and Egypt announced their unity under the flag

of the United Arab Republic. The signing of the Eisenhower Doctrine was seen as hostile to the National Pact, particularly by Sunnis and Druze, but also by leftists of all confessional persuasion who saw their own interests reflected in Nasser's movement. Chamoun, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Charles Malek, expressed fear that the unity of Syria with Egypt would subvert Lebanon's interests as they aligned with the West, and asked the United States for immediate aid (Little 1996). Chamoun, whose presidential term was soon set to expire, asked for American support in extending his rule beyond what was permitted by the Lebanese constitution.

The U.S. did not give its explicit support to Chamoun's political project, but this did not put a halt to calls for mass protest against the president's attempts to illegally extend his term. Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Arab nationalist, president of Egypt, and leader of the newly formed United Arab Republic, called for other countries to join in the federation. By May, often-violent demonstrations were underway; the Lebanese army, fearing itself fractured along sectarian lines, refused to take a stance for fear of widespread defection. Thus, protestors saw few peaceful options for achieving their goals: the opposition countered threats of Western intervention with arms supplied by Syria and Egypt (Rowayheb 2011). Chamoun requested American military intervention under the Eisenhower Doctrine, claiming that the socialist UAR was meddling in Lebanese affairs. US president Dwight Eisenhower authorized a response in July; the US marines secured control of the Beirut International Airport and port. With the approval of Abdel-Nasser, the Americans proctored a solution between Arab nationalists and Chamoun supporters. It was decided that Fouad Chihab would assume the role of president following the end of Chamoun's term in September. US forces withdrew from Lebanon in October, and Prime Minister Rashid Karami formed a national reconciliation government.

Though 1958 was a geopolitical crisis, it was also what Hicham Safieddine calls "a manifestation of socioeconomic malaise" and class conflict understood through the framework of unequal ethno-sectarian power sharing (2019, 99). The unencumbered laissez-faire approach to economic policies—which had proved alluring to men of capital, Jewish and non-Jewish alike—increased the concentration of the country's wealth in the hands of the few. The crisis of 1958, largely viewed as a lead-up to the Lebanese Civil War of 1975, saw the first mass wave of departure of Jews from the country. Numbering around 1,000 in total, the majority of those emigrating were Syrian and Iraqi Jewish refugees who worried that the violence they experienced in their home countries might be reproduced in Lebanon. The majority of those who left the country during the early years of Lebanon's independence, whether to Israel, Europe, or the United States, did not hold Lebanese citizenship. Despite these departures, Lebanon continued to serve as a refuge for Jews fleeing violence from elsewhere in the region. The majority of Jews who held Lebanese citizenship stayed, receiving armed protection of their homes and businesses from the Kata'ib when violence or tension was sparked (Schulze 2009, 339).

The period that fell between the crisis of 1958 (also referred to as the Lebanese Civil War of 1958) and the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 is popularly depicted in Lebanese national mythology as a time of unencumbered capitalist pursuit, wealth accumulation, and consumption. The U.S. Department of State described Lebanon's free enterprise system as "a living refutation of the teachings of Arab socialism" (Saifeddine 2019, 134). Given the large number of Jews participating in finance and trade, the 1960s presented a period of community growth, particularly as Jews from elsewhere in the Middle East sought refuge and economic prosperity in the country.

The façade of Lebanon's success as a bastion for economic and social liberalism was, however, quickly deteriorating. The domination of the Lebanese economy by Western corporations, controlled through bourgeois intermediaries and bankers who strongly favored lending to their own social circles, led to the indebtedness of small and medium-scale agriculturalists. Over the course of the 1960s, nearly one-fifth of those in rural areas would migrate to Beirut and its suburbs (Nasr 1978, 10). The social crisis that this sparked was felt particularly strongly in South Lebanon, where Israel's bombing of Palestinian militant sites destroyed agriculture and furthered forced migration. These issues of class were often expressed through the language of sectarian identity and the privileging of certain sectarian communities over others.

By and large, Jews in Beirut benefitted from the economic prosperity experienced by the capital's bourgeoisie. Those outside of Beirut, however, also felt the pull of migration; the period after the 1958 Civil War witnessed the further diminishing of Sidon's community. Though the number of Jews in Sidon waned throughout the early 1900s as Jews sought opportunity elsewhere, its dissolution was inevitable by the second half of the century. In 1962, the Sidon branch of the AIU closed; this shuttering was followed by the migration of the *shohet*, or ritual kosher butcher, in 1972. Though a small number of families remained residents of the city, the community had shrunk from 1,000 to 150; the end of Sidon's status as an ancient Jewish life-world had arrived (Schulze 2009, 339).

The 1967 war

On June 5, 1967, with rumors brewing that Abdel-Nasser would soon close Egyptian-controlled maritime territory to Israeli ships, the Israeli air force preemptively struck Syrian,

Jordanian, and Egyptian fighter planes. The Arab countries, which lacked the coordination necessary to pose a threat to the Israeli military, were defeated in short time. Israel gained swift control over new territory, occupying the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. While the Lebanese government expressed its solidarity with the Palestinian cause, President Charles Helou prevented the Lebanese army from getting involved and barred Arab armies from launching attacks from Lebanese territory. The army was sent to provide protection to Wadi Abu Jamil, encircling the neighborhood and ferrying nervous residents to villages in the Chouf Mountains to wait out the escalation (New York Times, December 30, 1968, Page 9).

The 1967 war significantly increased the presence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including the number of *fedayeen* (Palestinian militants belonging to a nationalist organization), who were free to move about the country with arms and in uniform. Upwards of 350,000 Palestinians were displaced by the 1967 war, with many refugees settling in Lebanon. Previously infrequent attacks launched by *fedayeen* against Israel from Lebanon increased, and the Lebanese security forces frequently clashed with the Palestinian fighters. In the absence of state-assured stability, and with anxieties increasing over the weakness of Lebanese consociationalism, ethno-sectarian communities began to amass arms and seek foreign protection. Those—chief among them Shi'a, Druze, and Sunni— who felt that Maronites had been given unfair leverage over the country's economic and political affairs found allies in the Palestinians.

Between 1967 and 1970, half of Lebanon's roughly 6,000 remaining Jews emigrated (Schulze 2001, 120). While the Jewish community was visible in Lebanese public and political life prior to the 1967 war, those who stayed faced mounting social anxieties and the occasional politically-motivated threat: in the lead-up to the Lebanese Civil War, multiple small-scale

attacks on Jewish shops, synagogues, and schools encouraged a protectionist relationship with Christian political parties who, in their early days of militarization, served as armed protectors. Such violence, however, remained comparatively uncommon, and historians conclude that the majority of Jews made the decision to leave Lebanon based on social uncertainty and economic downturn (Zenner 1990). By the end of 1967, 125 Jews had left for Europe with the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)—which had thus far helped numerous Syrian and Iraqi Jews find new homes after their stopover in Lebanon—and hundreds of applications were in process for Canada and the United States (Schulze 2009, 341). Given their established economic ties with the West, the majority of Lebanese Jews did not choose to immigrate to Israel, but rather joined Syrian and Lebanese-Jewish communities with established mercantile institutions, particularly in France and the Americas.

The increasing number of Jewish residences in Wadi Abu Jamil that were left vacant by emigrating families provided a "desirable destination" for displaced Palestinians seeking refuge in Beirut. Relations between Jewish and Palestinian neighbors were "cool" but not antagonistic, according to contemporary observers (Schulze 2001, 129). Meanwhile, the Lebanese government was losing control of public affairs. In an attempt to stop the spiraling conflict, Prime Minister Rashid Karami initiated talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Lebanese army. The Cairo Agreement, signed in November of 1969, gave the PLO the legal right to attack Israel from Lebanon and complete freedom of movement within Lebanon to fedayeen while also reiterating Lebanon's sovereignty over its own affairs. The Cairo Agreement altered the relationship between Palestinian armed fighters and the Lebanese state by allowing the PLO complete control over the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, thus allowing them to function as a "state within a state." The agreement also heightened the sectarian rifts between those

Muslim institutions and leaders who supported the armed struggle for Palestine, and those, both Christians and non-Christian allies, who felt that the Lebanese government was capitulating to Palestinian refugees.

The Jewish community was widely sympathetic to Maronite concerns that they were losing hegemony in Lebanon, and this period saw a growing sense of unease amongst Lebanese Jews. In January 1970, dynamite exploded outside of a Jewish school on the edge of Wadi Abu Jamil, causing several injuries at a nearby hospital. The Director General of the Lebanese security forces told the New York Times that the bomb was likely the work of a “criminal” seeking to undermine Lebanon’s legitimacy by attacking its Jewish community (Jan 19 1970, 9). Soon after, Edward Sassoon, a prominent Jewish theater manager in Beirut, was assassinated ; his killers were never identified, but the Jewish community speculated that he had been killed by Palestinian militiamen when he refused to pay an extortion fee. At the start of September 1970, Jewish community president Dr. Joseph Attie wrote in a correspondence with HIAS of growing anxiety amongst the country’s remaining Jews, many of whom, burdened by political uncertainty and economic turmoil, were strongly considering emigration.

Soon after, Jordanian forces drove Palestinian militants, who had established a “state-within-a-state” in Jordan and attracted reprisal attacks from Israel, from the country. In what became known as Black September, the 100,000 Palestinians banished from Jordan joined the more than 240,000 Palestinians already in Lebanon. The PLO’s new headquarters in Beirut establishedLebanon as the central operational headquarters of the Palestinian state-in-exile. The same year increasing constraints on the Jewish community’s freedom of movement and control of religious sites: yearly pilgrimages to the tombs of Ben Abisamak and Zebulon were halted (Schulze 2009, 350). Magen Avraham was, by that time, the only synagogue functioning in

Beirut. Despite this, the Alliance schools in the capital continued to educate roughly 350 students, and the commercial activities of the community—under the protection of both state authorities and the *Kata'ib*, remained favorable.

The beginning of the Lebanese Civil War and the dissolution of the Jewish community: 1975

By spring 1975, in retaliation for attacks by Palestinian militants launched from Lebanon, Israeli bombardments were nearly constant in southern Lebanon. Resentment against the Lebanese Christian elite expressed itself in sectarian clashes: On April 13, 1975, a scuffle ensued between a half-dozen PLO *fedayeen* and Kata'ib militiamen, who were diverting traffic away from a newly consecrated church in the neighborhood of Ain al-Rummaneh in eastern Beirut. One PLO member was killed, and in retaliation, members of the PLO returned a few hours later and opened fire on the church, killing four people. Armed Kata'ib militia members and their allies set up roadblocks in the neighborhood. When they stopped a bus transporting Lebanese and Palestinian members of the Arab Liberation Front, returning from a political rally, to a Palestinian refugee camp, Kata'ib militia members opened fire, killing all 28 people aboard (Khalaf 2002, 228). The incident became known as Black Sunday: 300 people would be killed in violence between right-wing Christian militias and Palestinian *fedayeen* and their Leftist allies in the next three days. The fifteen-year series of battles that would become the Lebanese Civil War was underway.

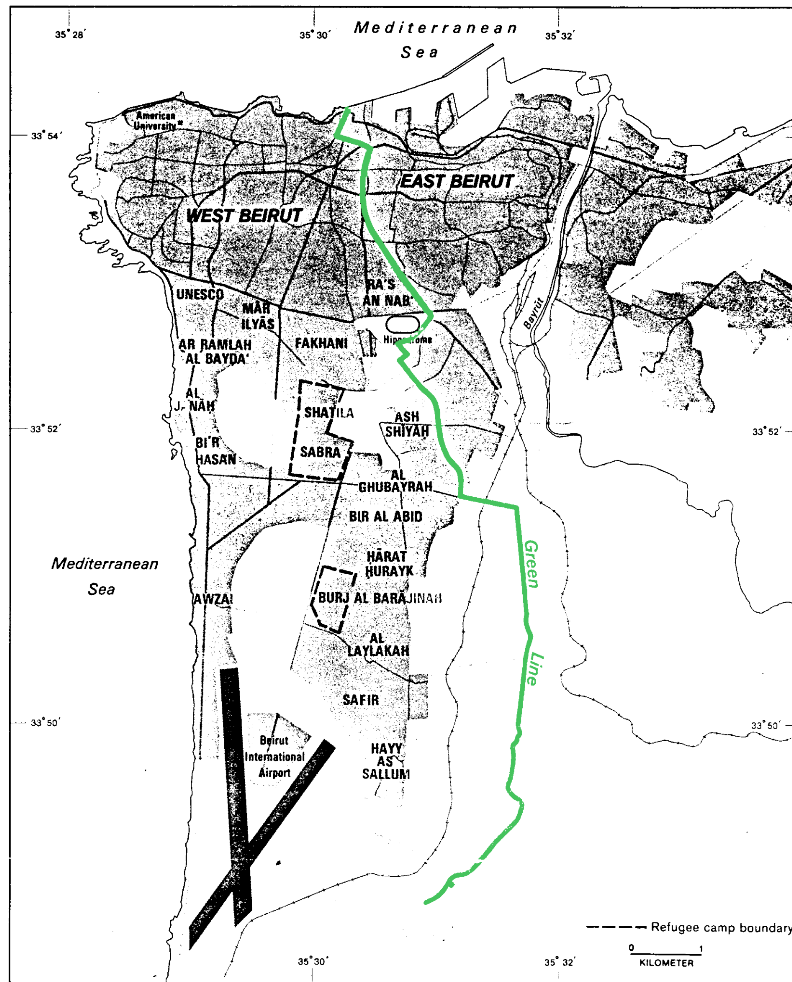

Figure 13. A CIA map of Shi'i-majority neighborhoods in Beirut, which clearly demarcates the "Green Line" dividing the city between (Christian) East and (Muslim) West. 1986. Courtesy of Wikicommons.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, some 5,000 Jews remained in Lebanon. By 1978, most of the remaining Jews in Beirut resided in the Christian-majority east of the city, with only a few elderly and sick Jews living in the west (see figure 13). The majority of Lebanese Jews who had remained in the country sought to move their families outside of the country. Dina told me about her childhood departure from Lebanon. She was 13 when the Civil War broke out in 1975; up until that point, her life had been "very joyful, easy." That said, in the years leading up to the Civil War, there were "a lot of tensions; because of the situation, every year we'd have more family members leave." Dinah remembers her family home slowly amassing the furniture left

behind by relatives. “We grew up with the idea that we’d also leave one day. At the very least, we’d study abroad. Every family who would afford it sent their kids abroad for the summer thinking they’d come back in September.” In the summer of 1975, Dinah was sent to stay with her uncle in Milan, where she waited patiently for her mother to call with information about her return flight. “School was about to begin,” Dinah reminisced, and she was eager to return to her friends. “Suddenly, my family suggested that maybe I should start school for a month or two at the local lycée…I would receive letters from my parents, who were trying to make [our separation and the war] a bit more fun, saying that they were sheltering in Bhamdoun, that it was weird but that everyone was okay. But then my parents came to visit in February and suddenly they felt very old to me, completely shocked and depressed.” Dinah reunited with her siblings in Paris later that year, but her parents stayed in Lebanon: her father operated an orchard near Sidon owned by his family, and would travel back and forth between Sidon and Beirut. “Even later in his life when he moved abroad, even though he eventually passed away in Paris, my father never truly left Lebanon,” Dinah said.

Despite widespread Jewish sympathy for, and alliance with, Lebanon’s Christian parties, not all Lebanese Jews forged such associations. Elias, who is in his late 20s and works at a Beirut-based nonprofit, was born to Jewish parents who converted to Catholicism during the war to avoid unwanted attention paid to their Jewishness. Despite this, he tells me, his parents both picked up arms to fight in a leftist militia during the Israeli invasion. “Before the *nakba*, my family had a lot of relations with people in Palestine. [For them,] seeing a Zionist flag in Beirut was too much to handle. Imagine: Jews, even if they’re [now technically] Catholic on paper, taking up arms to fight Israel. They could’ve taken the easier way out and emigrated, they didn’t. To me, choosing to stay in Lebanon, even if they converted, was the more difficult path to take.”

Other Lebanese Jews contributed to leftist causes through different means. Heiny Srour was born to a Jewish family in Beirut in 1945. Srour studied at the Sorbonne with anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch and Marxist sociologist Maxime Robinson. During her PhD, she first learned about a struggle taking place in Dhofar, Oman, led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) against the country's Sultan, who was supported heavily by the British. Srour spent two years making a film about the feminist movement that was an integral element of the rebellion called *The Hour of Liberation*, which, completed in 1974, was later selected at the Cannes Film Festival. During her childhood, Srour told Manny Shirazi in an interview in 1985, she was not encouraged to explore the arts: "Jews in Lebanon, being a minority without parliamentary representation, are obsessed with respectability" (98). What encouraged her, Srour tells the interviewer, was encountering Lebanese women writers who connected their social status as women to their critiques of society and their life experiences. "I wanted women to invade men's empire…not like Indira Ghandi or Golda Meir, but to change men's laws, change the game of politics…I want my films to express this intervention." This approach, however, ostracized her from the Jewish community in Beirut: "I am a freak in the Jewish community…but most of all I benefited from the cosmopolitan life in Beirut." Amongst various leftist circles, with the notable exception of her time with the PFLOAG, Srour's Jewishness was largely met with cowardice: she was often asked to conceal her religion in fear that it might arouse suspicion. When asked to reflect on an article that had recently been published in *off our backs*, an American feminist magazine, deploring the "oppression of the Jewish community in the Arab countries," Srour positions her Jewishness as but one intersecting element of her identity. She did not support the trend, she states, of claiming "your Jewishness [as] your first identity. I feel I am first a woman, then an Arab, Lebanese and

Jewish. I fight viciously against anti-Semitism [sic] and all types of racism…I don't think Jewish women in Lebanon are more oppressed than [other] Arab women." Yet, despite the insularity of the Jewish community in Beirut and the long arm of her family's expectations, Srour expressed the inextricability of her Judaism and leftist politics in an interview in 1993: discussing Isaiah in the Jewish tradition, she quotes "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:3-4). "Wasn't this" sentiment, she posits, "what had attracted me to Marxism, this hope that wars would disappear with the end of capitalism?" (Srour 1998).

The new era of bloodshed placed Wadi Abu Jamil at the geographic center of hostilities. Situated on what became the Green Line—the zone dividing the largely Christian East and mostly Muslim West of the city—Magen Avraham Synagogue suffered extensive damage during the fifteen-year conflict. Wadi Abu Jamil saw fierce fighting between the PLO and largely Christian Phalangists throughout the Civil War, with stories popularly circulating about the former's role as "protectors" of Magen Avraham. In 1982, during their invasion of Beirut, Israeli forces shelled Wadi Abu Jamil, hitting the synagogue; the few dozen Jewish families that remained in the area fled for safety.

Jewish schools remained closed from the outbreak of the Civil War—even when others opened during lulls in the fighting—and the community was without a rabbi, *schochet* (ritual slaughterer), and often without a *minyan* (the ten Jewish men necessary to constitute a quorum for prayer). Though Wadi Abu Jamil remained under Kata'ib protection during the early days of the Civil War, public life all but ceased. During a particularly heavy period of fighting, with Kata'ib and PLO forces vying for control of the neighborhood, Jews remaining in Wadi Abu Jamil took shelter in Magen Avraham. A phone call was made by the sheltering Jews requesting that the Lebanese army provide them assistance; however, in a gesture of goodwill, PLO leader

Yasser ‘Arafat sent food supplies to those seeking refuge and told his fighters to relay the message that they would not be harmed (Ohio Jewish Chronicle 1982).

Jewishness, space, and Israel’s occupation of Lebanon

The Lebanese adage that the Civil War was a “war of others” seems true, if not the only truth: many foreign powers located their own geopolitical interests in the war and both armed local militias and, in the case of Syria, invaded Lebanon directly. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon—known in Israel as “Operation Peace for Galilee”—began in June 1982 with the explicit goal of eradicating the PLO’s presence in Lebanon. In six days and with the help of its Christian allies, the Israeli army seized Beirut. It then besieged the city for three months. Israeli Forces, with the help of allied Lebanese Christian militias, seized control of large parts of the country. Forcing the PLO out and helping to install a pro-Israeli government, Israel hoped, would lead to a peace treaty with Lebanon. Surrounded in West Beirut, the PLO negotiated safe passage to Tripoli for its members. Israel’s plan for a compliant regime in Lebanon, however, failed: the designated president-elect, Bachir Gemayel, was assassinated before taking office.

The Jews who remained in Lebanon, and their buildings and sites, faced diverse fates under the Israeli occupation. Members of the IDF, some of whom were from families from the Levant who had made *Aliyah* and others of whom had no personal connection to Lebanon, visited Jewish areas, and were reported to have been pleasantly surprised by the presence of Jews and Jewish spaces despite wide-scale emigration. In 1982, Israeli soldiers reported that the ceiling of the synagogue in ‘Aley had suffered cosmetic damage in fighting between the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) and right-wing Christian forces (see figure 14). After the IDF withdrew from the Chouf Mountain region in 1983, the synagogue fell victim to those battles,

which destroyed all but its basic structural elements of the walls and foundations (Zeidan 2020, 125).

Figure 14. The remnants of Ohel Jacob, ‘Aley’s synagogue. The roof was destroyed during fighting between the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and the Lebanese Forces, a right-wing Christian militia. Photo by author. August 17, 2020.

Bhamdoun’s synagogue was recorded as undamaged in November 1982 by Israeli officer Raphael “Rafi" Sutton who, born in Aleppo, had lived with his family in Beirut before immigrating to Israel in 1949 (Zeidan 2012; see figure 15). In an interview with the *Jewish Telegraph* in 1982 Sutton reported that, having celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in the Bhamdoun Synagogue, he returned to find “no malicious vandalism against the synagogue, despite reports of the contrary” (Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1982). While the Torah had been removed during the early days of the Civil War, prayer books remained neatly shelved and the community

mikveh was unharmed. A handful of local Muslim and Christian families, Sutton reported, had tended to the safety of the building, which had been closed by the Jewish community since the arrival of the invading Syrian army in 1976; the last wedding had been held in the synagogue earlier the same year (JTA 1982). Zeidan's research corroborates the colonel's report: despite having been occupied by both the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and Fatah at various points during the Civil War, it had suffered little physical damage. Israeli forces occupied the western Beqa' and the northern portion of south Lebanon until June 1985 (2020, 43). Upon their entry to Sidon's Old City, soldiers met the Levys—the last remaining Jewish family of Sidon—who proved their Jewishness to the army by showing them the *mezuzot* that adorned the doorframes of their home (Schulze 2001, 162). Here, the synagogue was also a point of fascination for the Israelis. The story of Israeli soldiers' encounters with Sidon's Jewish spaces will be further explored in Chapter 4.

Figure. 15. The entrance to the Bhamdoun Synagogue, replete with its grand exterior staircase leading to a reception foyer. A banner warns would-be trespassers that the synagogue is private property. Photo by author. September 10, 2019.

Though a handful of Lebanese Jews made their return in the invading Israeli army, the majority of Lebanese Jews were never to return; non-Jewish Lebanese were left to contend with the recent loss of their friends and neighbors. The haste with which such departures were made after the 1967 War is detailed by Schulze through documents from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society archive. Until 1967, the organization had not received any appeals for help from Jews in Lebanon; in the aftermath, HIAS received hundreds of applications for help with resettlement. For the first time, wrote the director of the HIAS Geneva office in the aftermath of the fighting, “Jews are worried about the future in Lebanon…[they are] leaving for the first time in Lebanese history…[and] the Lebanese seem hurt about this” (2009, 341). The quickness with which these

migrations were carried out—often without saying goodbyes or giving warning to their social circles—lead to feelings of abandonment, confusion, and wistful nostalgia for those close to Jews who left.

Quintessentially representative of this life cut short seemingly overnight is a volume of collected stories entitled *Wādi Ābu Jamil: Qiṣaṣ ʻan al-yehūd Beirūt* (*Wadi Abu Jamil: Stories of the Jews of Beirut*) by journalist Nada Abdelsamad (2009). The text recounts the lives of the Jewish residents of Beirut as narrated by the non-Jewish Lebanese who remember them. Jewish members of the community are portrayed in the stories as caring doctors happy to treat poor non-Jewish Lebanese for free; upper-class neighbors who opened up their living room to neighbors for nightly TV-watching; and businessmen who worked on Shabbat to attend to the needs of their non-Jewish clients, despite the disapproval of the community rabbi. In each of the stories, religiosity and community insularity are portrayed as secondary in importance to each Jewish individuals' role as a caregiver and active contributor to his or her larger Lebanese community, which is emphatically non-sectarian in nature.

I encountered a number of stories of non-Jewish Lebanese who had feelings of unresolvedness after their Jewish friends departed. Some of those who told me these tales were reminded of the Jews who left as they witnessed the Israeli army invade, despite the fact that the majority of Lebanese who migrated did not go to Israel. Walid, who belongs to a prominent Sunni political family, had been a young boy living in the neighborhood of Clemenceau, in west Beirut, when the 1967 war broke out. During his childhood, Walid had forged a close friendship with Nessim, a Jewish neighbor around his age. While many Jews had made hasty departures without telling friends and neighbors in the wake of the war, Nessim had shared the news with his friends. Omitting the fact that he'd be moving specifically to Israel, Nessim promised his

friends that, someday, he'd return to Lebanon from abroad. Walid reminisced about his friend often. During the 1982 invasion, Walid remained in his childhood home. One day, he heard an unexpected knock on the door and, realizing the Israeli army was outside of his house, became quite fearful. He opened the door nervously; standing in front of him was an Israeli soldier who, despite the time that had passed, Walid immediately identified as Nessim. "Don't you recognize me, asshole?!" Nessim joked, embracing his childhood friend. "I told you I'd be back!"

Non-Jewish Lebanese also recall encounters with Israeli soldiers who took interest in Jewish sites. Over coffee in their home, Rita and Joseph, the couple living adjacent to Deir el-Qamar's former synagogue, recounted to me the story of two Israelis who had held their wedding at the synagogue during the Israeli occupation in 1982. Two colonels, neither of whom the couple remembered to be Lebanese in origin, were pleased to find a synagogue in such good upkeep, and decided to hold their wedding there. "It was a huge celebration," said Rita, recalling that many in the town had been invited to participate in the festivities, including an elderly woman who had been the sole Jew residing in the area. "Even Ariel Sharon came," she remarked, gesturing to a nearby building where she reported that he had landed his helicopter on the roof. While Joseph and Rita did not overtly praise Israel or its occupation of Lebanon, the celebration—which had provided a short-lived joyous occasion in the midst of seemingly never-ending war—remained a stark memory of a short return to social normalcy during a period otherwise marked by bloodshed.

Israel’s protracted occupation of South Lebanon (1982-2000)

Figure 16. Map of South Lebanon featuring Israel’s occupation zone (known as the “Blue Line”) and the Litani River. Image courtesy of Wikicommons.

Though Israel withdrew the majority of its troops from Lebanon in 1985, it continued to exert control over south Lebanon’s “buffer zone” through its support of the South Lebanon Army (SLA), a quasi-military whose leadership was dominated by Maronite Christians (see fig 16.). Though, as Munira Khayyat notes, Israel tended to show favor to South Lebanon’s Christians, the SLA also co-opted Shi’a (as well as lesser numbers of Sunnis and Druze) into the ranks of its foot soldiers (2013, 70). A new militia, known as Hezbollah, emerged at this time to wage battle against Israel and its Christian allies alongside Palestinian militants and leftist allies. The group was formed by Shi’a clerics inspired (and funded) by the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran with the explicit goal of “putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land" and resisting Israel (El-

Housseini 2010). Hezbollah drew recruits from its ever-widening network of social, religious, and educational institutions that spread in the vacuum of the Lebanese state's inability to provide for its residents, particularly those in the historically-neglected south (Azani 2013, 904). The failure of "Operation Peace for Galilee" to install a functioning Lebanese government that was friendly to Israel's interests resulted in the loss of a privileged political standing for Maronites. The new Lebanese parliament elected Bachir's older brother Amine Gemayel as his successor soon after. Unlike his brother, who frequently wielded "religious discourse…to reconstruct reality by positioning [himself and the party] as guide to social practices," Amine was considered a more "moderate" option (Hage 1992, 28). This replacement in leadership divided those Maronites loyal to the assassinated Gemayel's political ideals—which included an isolationist policy separate from the Arab world and the advancement of Maronite community interests at the expense of other Lebanese (and Arab) concerns—and those Maronites advocating for a strategic alliance with Syria (Hagopian 1989) . The handful of Lebanese Jews remaining in the country, who had benefited from the protection of a powerful united Maronite front, had to maintain relationships with both sets of politicians in order to eke out safety. Jews feared a closer relationship with Syria as an existential threat, given that Syria had expelled its Jews to Lebanon only a decade earlier.

Lebanese Jews became one of the currencies used by Hezbollah and its allies to make demands on Israel. Between 1984 and 1987, eleven Lebanese Jews were kidnapped by a group calling itself the "Organization of the Oppressed on Earth"; only a handful of their bodies were recovered. In each case, the Organization demanded the cessation of Israel's operations in South Lebanon, including in the security zone, for their release. Jews across classes, professions, and

neighborhoods were targeted. The three bodies that were eventually recovered all bore signs of torture (Washington Post 1985).

With lessening support at home for its ongoing war in Lebanon, Israel withdrew its forces to the so-called security zone by 1985. This zone is known in South Lebanon as *al-sharit al-hududi* (the border strip): a 10 kilometer-deep territory of over 150 villages and towns home to over 180,00 people. Though Israel managed the area's overall security, day-to-day functions were overseen by the South Lebanese Army (SLA), which controlled the notorious Khiam Prison, where political prisoners were routinely tortured and denied access to the Red Cross by Israel.

The Israeli occupation of South Lebanon only heightened the sense of forbidden but familiar closeness of what lay across the border for residents of South Lebanon. I explored this subject with Nour, a non-Jewish history student who had first taken up studying Hebrew—a language in which she was now fluent—because of her exposure to it during her youth. Born in the mid-1990s, Nour had grown up in an occupied village a short drive from the nearest border crossing with Israel, and the presence of Israel in her life amounted to more than encounters with soldiers in her village. "The first cartoons we watched as kids were in Hebrew," she told me. "We were very poor, so while other families had satellite networks, we'd pick up whatever our antennae could catch, which was often Israeli TV, given our proximity. My sisters and I would spend hours watching the Moomins [a Finnish children's cartoon] dubbed into Hebrew. That was how I first began to pick up the language, though it was everywhere during the occupation: on the radio, printed on products, spoken by the soldiers walking the streets. Growing up, it was impossible not to be fascinated by what I'd see just over the two-meter border wall," Nour explained. "You can see the settlements from the house I grew up in. The frontier is strikingly

green because of all the irrigation on the Israeli side. It's such a stark difference and when you look you almost want to avoid it. But I couldn't help myself; when something is so close but unknown, it's very intriguing to a young kid."

Fig 17. Nour, who grew up in a village on the Lebanon-Israel border, learned Hebrew by watching Finnish cartoons dubbed into the language picked up by her family's satellite dish. She'd go on to perfect her Hebrew skills—spoken with a Yemenite accent—through online correspondences with an ultra-

Orthodox Jewish teen in Jerusalem of Yemeni descent. While studying at university in Beirut, Nour used Hebrew to harangue “clueless” Israelis she matched with on mobile dating applications like Tinder when visiting her family during university vacations in South Lebanon, again using the proximity of Israel’s mediascapes and airwaves to the advantage of her language learning. Illustration by the author. Acrylic and pen on canvas, 2020.

The perceived orderliness of Israeli land and society—symbolized in the contrast between South Lebanon’s muted hills and the vibrant green of northern Israel—was an element my interlocutors commented on with fascination. As the occupation wore on, particularly in the absence of a visible Jewish community in Lebanon, “things Jewish” became synonymous with Israel, which claimed to protect Jewish life worldwide. The contrast between the well-financed machine of the Israeli state and impoverished wartime (and, later, “distant, neglectful, cronyist and corrupt” (Khayyat 2013, 241) Lebanon was particularly stark. Nour’s fascination with this inequity was shared by Joud, who was aware that many of those who, controversially, collaborated with Israel in her village were driven by economic and social desperation. As Mounira Khayyat writes in her account of life in the aftermath of South Lebanon’s occupation, many people, “out of opportunity or out of need or coercion,” took day jobs in Israel that paid well by Lebanese standards (ibid, 239). Joud, a university student in Beirut in her early 20s, grew up in a village in the Bint Jbeil district in South Lebanon called as-Sultaniyya, where Lebanese villagers were bussed into Israel daily to work blue-collar jobs. The village, however, had previously been known as al-Yahudiyya, and had changed its name in the 1960s (PEF Survey of Palestine). According to local lore, Joud told me, the village’s name— meaning the Jews or the Jewish woman—likely came from a Jewish resident who had once lived there, who oversaw a lodge in the village for travelers and pilgrims on their way to Palestine. Journalist Muhamad Abi Samra posits that, in the wake of the 1967 defeat of Arab states at the hands of Israel, and with growing sentiment for the Pan-Arab movement and a sense of solidarity with the plight of

Palestinians, residents replaced the old name with one that was rhythmically and thematically similar without the same geopolitical connotations (Almodon 2022). Placenames are elements of "the systems that structure and nuance the way we see, understand and imagine the world," writes Julie Peteet. Though Peteet's focus is the erasure of Palestinian landscapes through ascribing new Hebrew titles in the nascent Israeli state, similar logic holds true in the case of Lebanon: changing the long-held name of Yehudiyya was an attempt to shift the "moral grammar that underwrites and reproduces power" by taking away associations that could be drawn between its name and Israel (2005, 153-4). As in the case of Palestine, the renaming of Yehudiyya took place "within the context of mass displacement [and] dispossession" of those living in South Lebanon, who lived in the midst of foreign occupation, long-term guerilla warfare, "and a sustained resistance movement" in both the forms of Palestinian resistance against the State of Israel and Hezbollah's resistance to Israel's occupation of Lebanon (ibid 158). Even before Israel occupied Joud's village, its population had lived in the midst of Palestinian attacks launched from the south as well as the chaos of various militia warfare playing out across the country. Joud told me that the choice to change the village's name in an attempt to distance itself from Israel was notable, given that the village would go on to produce its fair share of collaborators with Israel. Many, Joud said, would later flee across the southern border during the 2000 withdrawal, seeking protection from the retributive attacks they were sure would follow. Those who had little to lose, without wide social nets or other means of sustenance, sometimes turned to collaboration; doing so might even provide permits to travel to Israel or sponsorship for their family members to work inside the country. Yet, as Joud noted, throughout the occupation of the village, some of the elderly residents' IDs still register their place of birth as al-Yahudiyya. Despite the shame brought upon the village for their

collaboration—or for the village's prior name—this attempt to forget through renaming could not do away with the material conditions of South Lebanon that were exacerbated by Israel's invasion, which Joud identified as the driving factor behind the majority of decisions to collaborate.

Post-Civil War

Following the signing of the National Reconciliation Accord in 1989, Lebanon's former militias—rather than facing justice for war crimes—were recognized as political parties. The former militia leaders became "a new economic and political caste" (Arsan 2018, 213). The Ta'if Agreement, which heralded the official end of the Civil War, was signed in November 1989. By this time, it was clear that Christians were no longer the numerical majority in the country. Amendments were made to the National Pact's political structure: while, in the past, the Sunni prime minister was accountable to a Maronite president, the prime minister would now be responsible to the legislature. While the National Pact identified the end of the country's sectarian political system as its ultimate goal, it did not establish a timeframe for its elimination. Further, though the number of seats in the parliament was increased to allow for an equal representation of Muslims and Christians, it did not implement universal suffrage, instead leaving National Pact's system of confessional representation as the backbone of the country's political system (Hudson 1997).

Syrian and Israeli occupations remained a reality throughout the 1990s (with the former ending in 2005 and the latter in 2000), and, in the absence of mass diasporic return or national truth and justice process, physical reconstruction took on the air of sociopolitical reconciliation. Rather than memorializing those lost to nearly two decades of warfare, efforts were made to

erase the built environment's physical scars and to showcase historic sites that could undergird a collective history shared across ethno-sectarian affiliations. The most high-profile of these efforts was undertaken in Beirut's downtown, including the former center of Jewish life, Wadi Abu Jamil. With the goal of "resurrecting a cosmopolitan Beirut," shows Tarek Saad Ragab, those spearheading the rehabilitation efforts sought to "crystalize the intangible meanings of Lebanese cultural identity" (2011, 107).

The area of Wadi Abu Jamil has become the focal point for those interested in Jewish Lebanon not only because of its pre-war importance, but also because it is the location of the only refurbished synagogue in contemporary Lebanon **(**see figure 6**)**. In the late aughts and early 2010s, Magen Avraham synagogue was renovated, a project made possible through a combination of diasporic donations and support from Solidere. Following a slew of high-profile political assassinations near Wadi Abu Jamil in the mid-2010s, the entirety of the neighborhood, including Magen Avraham and its surroundings, were cordoned off from the public by concrete barriers, private security, and militarized checkpoints. The present realities of Wadi Abu Jamil under Solidere's purview will be explored in the following chapter.

Beirut's Jewish cemetery, geographically close to the elaborately reconstructed Magen Avraham, provides a stark contrast to the idealized but superficial version of the past that Magen Avraham embodies (see figure 7). Located on Damascus Road, the cemetery, like Wadi Abu Jamil, suffered from its location on the former Green Line. The cemetery, which dates to at least the mid-19th century, was scattered with land mines by Christian forces, who used the cemetery as a shelter from their adversaries, during the early years of the Civil War. Even so, Jewish burials continued throughout the Civil War, although they took place with haste and discretion (Zeidan 2020, 143).

Figure 18. The aftermath of the collapse of an external wall of the Beirut Jewish Cemetery. December 27, 2019. Photo by author.

During fieldwork, I witnessed the extent to which the cemetery had been neglected by the Beirut municipality in the post-war years. On Christmas night in 2019, a portion of its exterior wall collapsed, spilling the contents of graves onto Damascus Road which, today, serves as a main north-south thoroughfare through the center of the city (see figure 18). The season's torrential rains—a standard element of winter in Beirut—had proved too much for the city's unkempt drainage system, and water flooded the graveyard, causing the landslide. For days, the wreckage and soil lay strewn across the sidewalk. The municipality eventually pitched in to repair the cemetery wall, perhaps due to the international media attention that the event attracted and the outcry from the Lebanese Jewish diaspora, many of whom requested the assistance of locals close to the Jews outside the country to check up on the state of their relative's graves. Yet, as an interlocutor close to the efforts to repair the wall told me, the shoddy craftsmanship

again employed by the municipality meant that another such tragedy was just a matter of time. "Not even the dead can rest peacefully in Lebanon," he told me, shaking his head.

`

CHAPTER TWO
Walking the Wadi: Navigating and Narrating Beirut's Former Jewish Neighborhood

Figure 19. Walking the Wadi. Painted map by the author. Acrylic and ink on canvas. 2022.

Tour stops: 1- Starco Building, | 2- Villa Abdelkader | 3- Ahlia School parking lot | 4- St. Elias Church/Lebanese Army checkpoint | 5-Besançon School | 6- Wadi Abu Jamil checkpoint and entrance | 7- garden behind Elie Saab | 8- corner of Ahmad Daouk and Bab Idriss streets | 9- Rue de Banques

Site of interest: A- possible archaeological remains of Roman hippodrome | B- Joseph Tarab School |C- houses razed by Solidere during Qana Massacre (2006) | D- partially unearthed archaeological site | E- headquarters of the Council for Development and Reconstruction | F- Grand Serail | G- ring road | H-Burj al-Murr | I- Hariri "countdown to justice" billboard

Introduction

"If you stand on your tiptoes and look through the gating like so, you can see the synagogue's placard with the Ten Commandments," Janan told our [tour] participants. It was a May afternoon in 2019 and our motley group of ten—eight clients and two guides—had assembled an hour before for a walking tour of present-day Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut's historically Jewish neighborhood. I had organized the tour collaboratively with Janan, a housing advocate and architect in her mid-twenties who, after having given tours of Beirut's historic colonial and modernist buildings to visiting friends for years during her studies, began marketing her architecture tours to visiting travelers. It was through her successful weekly tour that we had first connected. Our current point of pause was an unusually green nook nestled between Elie Saab's central fashion atelier and an unfinished, privately guarded property. We had gathered here so that we could, one by one, take a peek through the bushes and wrought-iron fencing to catch a glimpse of Magen Avraham Synagogue. Even before the official cessation of the Civil War in 1990, Wadi Abu Jamil and its synagogue—once the largest in the country—had been under the domain of the company that would become known as Solidere, a public-private development enterprise that has continued to shape what was once a commercial neighborhood to suit the taste of wealthy investors and tourists. Without a nearly impossible-to-acquire permission from both the security services and the largely symbolic president of the tiny Jewish community remaining in Lebanon, or a personal invitation from a resident inside the gated neighborhood, this was as close to the building as the tour could get.

The neighborhood of Wadi Abu Jamil was usurped by the mandate of Solidere (an acronym for *Sociéte Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth*), the most notorious of Lebanon's public-private post-war real estate developers owned

by the assassinated tycoon-cum-Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, which was responsible for the total transformation of downtown into a series of high-end, elitist, and securitized shopping malls and condominiums.[8] Though officially under the purview of the representatives of Beirut's Jewish community, access to the surrounding neighborhood is controlled by private security associated with the development project and high-ranking political officials as well as the Lebanese police. From its inception, Janan and I were under no illusions that our walking tour was likely to include the synagogue's interior. In fact, none of the half-dozen walking tours of the area in which I had previously participated had included an authorized stop at the synagogue, or even a trip inside of Wadi Abu Jamil's heavy fortification. Despite this, we had gone through the motions necessary to acquire permission to visit, which had included contacting the Lebanese Jewish Community heads through both email and social media; Solidere deferred to the Jewish Community representatives); and, finally—what had seemed like a promising lead—a man whom an interlocutor described as "the one with the keys and the final say." He turned out to be the vice president of the Jewish Community Council and, despite a personal introduction, my numerous email inquiries went unanswered. As Janan and I had found, Lebanese and foreigners trying to access Magen Avraham routinely face the same scenario, going on to air their frustrations on social media. Whether due to security concerns of accessing property close to the homes of political elites or a wish to control circulating images and stories of Magen Avraham, this silence from the community officials was nothing new.

Undeterred, we began to think about what it would mean to organize a tour around the sense of absence with which we, and doubtlessly many others, were left: despite being lauded as

[8] Though Solidere refers to the name of the joint-stock company that continues to oversee the development of Beirut's downtown, it is also the name by which this new area—a conglomerate of redeveloped neighborhoods—is popularly known. The area is also referred to interchangeably by Beirutis as "downtown" and "the city center."

an admiral reconstruction project by political parties ranging from Hezbollah to right-wing, Christian-led former militias, the synagogue and its neighborhood remained notably off-limits to Lebanese and visitors alike. As we prepared for the tour, we spent hours attempting to navigate and document the built environment surrounding the synagogue. Army checkpoints, private security guards, and the metal roadblocks known as "Czech hedgehogs" interrupted the sidewalks, inadvertently directing pedestrians into the middle of the street. Buildings with French Mandate-style facades—recently built though nostalgic in their architecture—butted up against the fencing surrounding still-unfinished developments, advertising luxury communities like "Wadi Hills." They left few gaps through which to get closer to Magen Avraham and, along with a main checkpoint equipped with explosive-sniffing dogs and an always-parked tank, made sure that the uninvited knew they were unwelcome.

As we moved ahead, we imagined our tour as a chance to describe the histories of no-longer-existing places that haunted the neighborhood as we navigated today's Wadi Abu Jamil. In addition to accounting for spaces unseen, including those lost to the destruction of war and demolition schemes, we aimed to collectively think about the uneasy but still-palpable ways that the Jewish history of the area is overlaid with heavy securitization and the remaking of a minority neighborhood into a gated, securitized community. We hoped that our participants might leave asking similar questions to the ones we'd been churning over: why would various state actors, elite developers, and savvy members of the political class invest their support—and perhaps their money—in the project of preserving a Jewish Lebanon, only to sequester it from its surroundings and public? How did Wadi Abu Jamil and Magen Avraham's revampings mirror, or defer from, the transformations made to Beirut's downtown in the name of post-war rehabilitation and moving beyond the Civil War's atrocities as a nation (Makdisi 1997)? And

was the element that developers sought to showcase—a sense of uniquely "Lebanese" tolerance as showcased through a picture-perfect but inaccessible synagogue—the base from which those narrating history from alternative vantage point, like walking tour guides, might use to better understanding how social difference fits into their notions of belonging in the body politic?

Figure 20. Map of Beirut's Heritage Trail. Wadi Abu Jamil is roughly demarcated in red, with Rue Wadi Abu Jamil underlined (edits made by author). Solidere Annual Report. 2008.

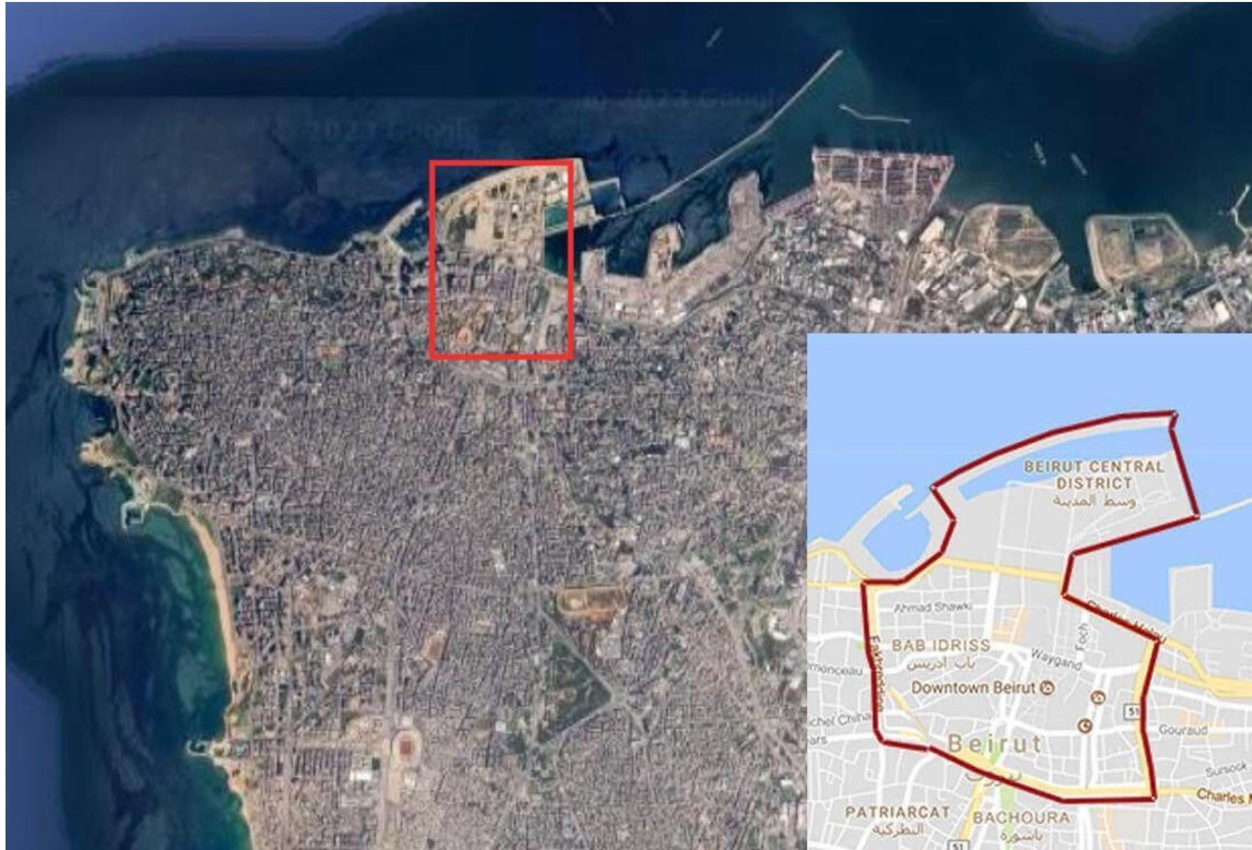

Figure 21. Solidere's domain as located on a satellite map of Beirut. The significant infill of the "Beirut Central District" visible on the satellite image—previously known as the Normandy landfill and notoriously full of wartime rubble and trash—is absent from the zoomed-in map. Image by the author.

Figure 22. Solidere's domain holdings in relation to available land banks. Solidere Annual Report. 2017.

In this chapter, I argue that walking tours present alternatives to post-war reconstruction schemes that dominate Beirut's city center—and its Jewish neighborhood—through experiential storytelling legitimized through the process of walking and narrating. The Jewish past of these spaces, and the themes that arise around the Jewish history of Wadi Abu Jamil, open doors for examining what forms interaction with social difference have taken since the official cessation of the Lebanese Civil War, and encourage walking tour participants to consider whether these "actually existing cosmopolitanisms" diverge from, or align with, the top-down efforts of reconstruction efforts headed by Solidere (Robbins 1998). I consider these tours and the narratives they put forth against the backdrop of Solidere's treatment of Wadi Abu Jamil—whose history is detailed in Chapter 1—as a "residential neighborhood," particularly within the

scope of the Beirut Heritage Trail and the adjacent neighborhoods over which Solidere also has purview. The Heritage Trail, an often-inaccessible but publicized pedestrian route undertaken by the company and the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Beirut, spans the course of a 2.5 kilometer circuit, promising participants a celebration of the "multi-layers of Beirut's rich heritage" through the linkage of "historic public spaces and heritage buildings" that take "the visitor through a historic journey" of the city's "key sites and monuments" (Solidere 2012). The reality of walking the Heritage Trail is much different: factors like security closures often make completing the Trail difficult. What's more, navigating the trail to and from its surroundings, like Wadi Abu Jamil, is not an option. In light of a Heritage Trail and Master Plan (see figures 20 and 22) that ignores the interconnectedness of the historic built environment, I affirm the walking tour as a modality that, as Naomi Leite writes, "enables the materialization" of that which is cannot be seen or experienced in the landscape, thus showing how objects—or their stark absence—participate in the "mutually constitutive nature of subject and object, person and thing, and, by extension, tourist and destination" (2007, 3).

Solidere's role as the guardian of Beirut's downtown, which was brought into fruition in 1991, when the Lebanese parliament voted to approve Law 117, granting the Council for Development and Reconstruction the power to outsource reconstruction to real estate developers. Effectively, this vote gave precedent for private corporations to take over public works tasks (Arsan 2018, 214). Solidere's supporters posited that the framework of a private-public venture was the most viable option for reconstructing Beirut's downtown, as the Lebanese government was in dire financial straits following wartime hyperinflation, and the task of uniting all stakeholders in the project—including those who had left for the diaspora—was nearly impossible. Thus, Solidere became a tax-exempt, joint-stock company responsible for financing

infrastructure, property management, and real estate development. Crucially, this gave Solidere the power of eminent domain and codified the joint-stock company in law. Property owners and the displaced were compensated with Solidere shares below the true market value of their homes; an estimated 80 percent of the built environment under Solidere's purview was cleared. When preparing for our tour, I had asked Salem, the planner, how Hariri had managed to gain his hold over what was publicly remembered as a space of inter-class and inter-sectarian interaction. "Ultimately, a single vote privatized the entire downtown," mourned Salam. "With that vote, every decision became Hariri's to make. And with that, what does and does not count as heritage was tied to a bourgeois value system" of what would attract foreign investment and encourage high-spending consumption.

Wadi Abu Jamil's central location in the fabric of Beirut's downtown (see figure 21) has led to its close association with post-war spatial concerns even when neither the neighborhood nor its history is the direct point of contention or interest.[9] Wadi Abu Jamil's proximity to the capital's former center of commerce, coupled with the absence of its previous community, opened it up to a vacuum for imagining both a postwar downtown and national narrative more generally (Ragab 2011). In my research, I have found that actors—whether they be individuals telling personal stories or corporations seeking to garner investment—turn to the idea of cosmopolitanism as inherent to an historically "Lebanese" way of life. The variations of these discourses and the way in which they configure Jewish belonging to the nation, I contend, offer insight into how a no-longer-present minority community can serve as a prism through which

[9] The center of Beirut has served as a space, in different iterations, where people of different class, ethno-sectarian, and other social differences have intermingled over commerce, socializing, and political protest. Though without hard demarcations, the area, which can be likened to the downtown of many major metropolises, contained the city's central popular market and seat of governance prior to the Civil War. See Khalaf, Samir (2006). *Heart of Beirut: Reclaiming the Bourj*. London.

different actors engage with the role of difference in the Lebanese past and future. As Saree Makdisi proclaims, the Lebanese Civil War was, in many ways, fought over Lebanon's self-image and national identity (1997, 664). Moreover, the urban fabric of central Beirut has been a particularly visible locale in which notions of heritage collide with market-driven growth and neoliberal consumption practices aimed at the tastes of a globalized, moneyed elite: though only one-third of the structures in Beirut's downtown were irrevocably damaged by the decades of war, 80 percent of the area's structures were razed under Solidere's watch (Makdisi 1997; Puzon 2019). In considering how this narrative battle continues to play out under the pretense of spatial repair, I adopt Deen Sharp's claims that, despite an official cessation of wartime hostilities in 1990, this battle continues to be waged through the ways in which different actors engage with the history of the built environment, in which Jewish spaces like Wadi Abu Jamil are included (2020).

Methodology

In addition to co-designing and conducting a unique, one-time walking tour, I draw on participatory observation conducted on a half dozen different walking tours in Beirut's downtown, some conducted multiple times (2010, 2012, 2018-2020). These span from general interest tours that visit some of the most famous sites that are showcased by Solidere and the Ministry of Antiquities (which oversees archaeological and historic sites) to those tours with the overt mission of sharing critical histories of the area's recent redevelopment.

The fact that little remains of Wadi Abu Jamil's built environment as it existed prior to 1975 is but one layer of the overlapping spatial erasures at work. During our interview, Majid, a political science student, tour guide, and activist pointed to the importance of Wadi Abu Jamil on

his own route: “The Wadi Abu Jamil stop was the one where you could clearly see what I was trying to do at every stop.” As Majid explained, Wadi Abu Jamil may have been known as Beirut’s “Jewish district,” but it was never ghettoized or cordoned off prior to Solidere’s involvement. “There was never a ‘downtown’ with legal limits to the area, but today, Wadi Abu Jamil is Solidere’s reimagining of a so-called residential district. You used to have what was a fluid zone—sure, the Jewish quarter—but now it has actual physical, policed limits. It says a lot about how the city changed.” Whether one participates in an organized walking tour or attempts to complete the self-guided Beirut Heritage Trail, one quickly realizes the difficulty involved in traversing the fragmented terrain, let alone accessing each of the advertised places. Areas like Wadi Abu Jamil and the nearby Saifi—now advertised by Solidere as an upscale “artists’ quarter” but known in pre-war times as a red-light district and transportation hub—are separated from the center’s touristic core by massive and barren parking lots, unfinished builing and multi-lane thoroughfares with poor pedestrian infrastructure. As each of the tours I joined showed, Wadi Abu Jamil, as well as the surrounding area from which it is cordoned off, is securitized and privatized through a number of intertwined forces. Privately hired security guards stand at residences, construction sites, and businesses; and cameras, armed soldiers, and roadblocks give passersby the sense of omnipotent surveillance. Given the sequestered nature of Wadi Abu Jamil, the fact that much of its surroundings are meant to be navigated primarily by car only enhance the alienation of the built environment from the majority of Beirut’s residents (Monroe 2016).

Due to the non-traditional methods that went into designing our tour, Janan and I encouraged participants—and not the least ourselves—to approach the tour as a way of culling evidence or inspiration for their own projects and interests. Anthropology has long relied on multimodal forms of cultural representation; yet, as Letizia Bonanno notes, “the tendency to

relegate visuals to the rank of para-textual accessories…proves hard to shift." (2019, 39). I composed sketches of tour routes taken to help me in documenting and making sense of the anecdotes I encountered as I gained a better spatial awareness of Wadi Abu Jamil and its surroundings, thus aiding in my reconnection of "observation and description with moments of improvisatory practice" (Ingold 2011, 2). In the case of our co-designed tour, we used municipal cadastral and zoning registries to form the base of a creatively-minded map (figure 2.1) that would show the route taken during the tour and highlight some of the stories and physical features of the built environment as experienced on our shared walk. I then expanded this map to include anecdotes and stories shared during other walking tours I joined, and included data that highlights the breadth of changes undertaken to Wadi Abu Jamil's terrain.

Historian Andrew Arsan suggests that the ambling walk, or *mishwar*, can make palpable the workings of contemporary Lebanon's infrastructure, political economy, and state (2019, 211). The detours that one is often forced into due to the sheer inaccessibility of much of the city to the pedestrian, he argues, "is one of the most mundane, most immediate, symptoms of a system designed for accumulation and founded on an understanding of the citizenry as an aggregate of atomised consumers" (211-12). Following this approach, I allow the shape of this chapter to follow the trajectory that the tour took, selecting some of the most pertinent points of discussion that arose as Janan and I shared the story of Wadi Abu Jamil and its centrality to the modern history of Lebanon's Jewish community. We narrated this history while taking note of the current realities of Solidere's Wadi Abu Jamil, which often presented themselves starkly in the form of heavy securitization and privatized inaccessibility. We culled information from a variety of sources, including interviews with historians, planners, and others who knew the recent past of Wadi Abu Jamil and Beirut's city center well. We also turned to social networking

websites like Facebook, where those interested in the history of both Beirut's downtown and Jewish Lebanon have sizable respective interest groups and pages. These platforms, coupled with cadastral maps and the work of local historians, provided the blueprint for places (and missing spots) of interest.

Despite the limited ways in which Beirut's Downtown, and Wadi Abu Jamil especially, are intended by Solidere to be traversed and experienced, walking-as-methodology can reveal how everyday movement through space challenges the intentions of those in power, even when such actions are not overtly in protest. Even as people take part in "practices proposed by strategies, such as the consumption of goods, or the use of public services, [they also] take opportunities to challenge, subvert or resist" the intended uses of strategists and planners (Kelly and Mitchell 2010, 8). The ways that tour guides speak to the absence of what was once a neighborhood dotted with prayer houses, Jewish-owned businesses, and middle-class homes, all while navigating a built environment in which these elements are starkly absent, showcases how such tactics can push back against official strategies of top-down heritagization. The strategies of storytelling employed by walking tour guides, explains Brian Morris, need not directly challenge the narratives produced by the upper echelons of Lebanon's heritage-planning industry; they offer fragmented glimpses into lesser-known histories that poke holes at the seeming settledness of Lebanon's past (2004, 678). Rather than accepting dominant heritage discourses or, alternatively, ignoring the built environment because it fails to take actually-lived history into account, the experience of the walking tour can serve as a setting in which the history narrated by guides sits uneasily alongside the built environment as it is experienced by participants "without being able to keep it at at distance" (ibid). In this way, argue Chih-hung Wang and Yu-ting Kao, walking tours help to "break through the once-rigid boundaries of…authorized heritage

discourses" by highlighting "dynamic, everyday forms" of spaces occupied by everyday people "for social aims other than heritage shaping" that "entail no official authority" from the state or state-associated actors (2017, 1002). Ronnie Chattah, who founded one of Beirut's first and most well-known walking tours, Walk Beirut, stressed the importance of storytelling in relaying a fragmented and often barely-visible history. More than the aspect of walking, "or even the location," he insisted, a successful walking tour relies on "bringing certain chapters of the city to life through storytelling."

In many places where Jewish communities are today absent but their former spaces remain, Jewish history is incorporated into walking tours through the juxtaposition of Jewish spaces alongside non-Jewish locales. The case of Beirut, however, presents a different scenario: Wadi Abu Jamil's formerly Jewish spaces are all but destroyed or wholly inaccessible. As material remains of the community are far and few between, Beirut exemplifies what journalist Ruth Ellen Gruber refers to as "virtually Jewish" space, where "Jewish cultural products," seemingly erased as they may be, "take precedence over living Jewish culture" (2002, 27). Given this absence, as Sabine Stach argues in her focus on Warsaw's Jewish history-specific walking tours, historical relics and direct access to Jewish sites are not the main factors that illustrate a sense of historical presence or contemporary loss. Rather, tours that incorporate the city's Jewish history rely largely on "emotional, intellectual, and corporeal experiences [that] stand side-by-side" yet are often unconnected (2017, 78).

Walking tours and Lebanon's tourism economy

In contested environments, particularly in divided post-conflict cities, memory, space, nationalism, and access form a complex nexus. In downtown Beirut, the project of peacebuilding

has dovetailed with the wholescale redevelopment of what was formerly the capital's center of intersecterian commerce and socializing. This has involved the protection of a select number of religious, cultural, and historical sites, in which Magen Avraham is included. The shops, institutions, and housing that now make up the Downtown area, and that many of the heritagization projects undertaken in Solidere's vicinity are either unfinished or inaccessible. Despite its recent history, in addition to the area's past as a no-man's-land on the Green Line, which separated the divided city during the civil war, as John Nagle explains, the city center cannot be wholly severed from its history as a "civic, cosmopolitan space" where "individuals can come together to constitute new forms of community that transcend" ethno-religious divides (2020, 2). Walking tours of Beirut's city center have, in the past decade and a half, proliferated in both their number and their popularity, and routinely attract Beirut's tourists, foreign residents, and members of the Lebanese public. With themes such as "Downtown: Memories of a Ghost City" and "Beirut's Forgotten Modernist Architecture," many of these walking tours deliberately push back against the ways in which central Beirut's landscape has been selectively preserved and displayed for heritage, while other, arguably more historic elements have been sidestepped or destroyed. In the context of post-war downtown Beirut, the process of selecting particular sites for national patrimony has not necessarily included widening access to these places. Much as the Solidere has reconstructed the facades of downtown Beirut's historic French mandate structures while gutting their interiors, the focus of these heritage sites has been focused on producing picture-perfect exteriors of which images produce a particular narrative about, rather than an immersive experience of, Beirut. Considering heritagization in cities in states of (post-)conflict, like Beirut can reveal the ways in which narrating spatial history can, as Audra Mitchell and Liam Kelly explain in the context of post-conflict Belfast, serve as "contestation[s], [forms of]

resistance and everyday action," in addition to presenting alternative ideas of how history should be preserved, to whose benefit, and for what future gains (2010, 6).

Despite the foreign-facing gaze of walking tours—all spell out, in one way or another, the basics of the country's modern history, and all tours I joined were conducted in English—there is plenty to be gleaned for locals and Lebanese expats as well.[10] Much as the downtown's showcased archaeology and colonial architecture may appeal to visitors from abroad, Beirut's reimagined downtown is, as C. Nagel explains, not only a matter of rehabilitating physical infrastructure: it is one of excavating and projecting a united idea of "Lebaneseness," not least among Lebanese themselves (2002, 21). It would be remiss to view a country's approach to, and history of, tourist engagement as a purely external enterprise. Lebanon's tourism sector, as Judith Rowbotham asserts, is one that developed "in a way that mirrors the nature of [its] engagement with both the West and the Arab world" (2010, 39). So, too, has Lebanon's tourism industry been enmeshed with its political elite and their national aims (Hazbun 2008). Jack, a guide who ran weekly English-based tours, had originally planned to conduct his walks in Arabic. While working in international education, his boss had asked him to lead visiting colleagues on a tour of downtown, knowing that he had a keen interest in the history of Beirut's center city. With the success of the initial tour, Jack applied to the Ministry of Tourism for a license to conduct weekly walks in Arabic, but was met with confusion: why would local Lebanese want to spend four hours on a walking tour of their own city, wondered the ministry's administrators? "There was this feeling that the downtown was *fait accompli*—that everyone knew its history." In order

[10] While most walking tours in Beirut are conducted in English, Arabic-language tours also take place. Of particular note are tours that engage with the lesser-known history of the city's popular neighborhoods, such as those conducted by Public Works, a multidisciplinary urban research and design studio. The tours, advertised in English as the "Another City" series, examine narratives of housing, neighborhood, and belonging in areas often overlooked and underserved, such as Tariq El Jdide and Mousseitbeh. For more on this important initiative, see https://publicworksstudio.com/.

to conduct tours in Arabic, Jack would need to undergo a series of courses and exams through the Ministry of Tourism to prove his knowledge; the course, however, was on indefinite pause. "I started giving tours in English simply because that's what my permit said I could do," shared Jack. "And ultimately, I was scared to step too far out of line." Jack's encounter illustrates the difficulty faced by those engaging with tourism outside of the confines of official understandings of heritage and history, forcing those who stray from the expected script into non-compliance. The laissez-faire policies that privilege the granting of touristic licenses through personal relationships and connections also dictate what elements of the built environment are deemed heritage-worthy and thus included in the downtown's touristic sphere (Fawaz and Krijnen 2010).

Lebanon: Laissez-faire Leisure

Lebanon is well-remembered by tourists and Lebanese alike for a pre-war trifecta of glitz, sun, and ancient history. In addition to its many sites of cultural and religious heritage, prior to the Civil War, Lebanon also served as a destination for leisure, real estate, and financial investment (Safieddine 2019). Yet before the 19th century, to the average (yet admittedly elite) Western tourist, Lebanon was primarily a "geographic concept" centered around Mount Lebanon and within the larger Syrian Ottoman province. Though not tourists in the traditional sense, Western Christian missionaries helped to form a foundation of affective attachment to the region through the reports they sent to funders and supporters in Europe and the Americas touting the region and its Christian heritage (Rowbotham 2010, 40). This helped to distinguish Lebanon as a specific—and Christian-oriented—entity within the broader terrain of the Muslim-majority eastern Mediterranean (Arsan 2016). Around this time, Lebanon's reputation as an adventurous itinerary for the elite Western tourist began to emerge as it was included more often in the

scheme of Grand Tours (Holloway 1981; Rowbotham 2010, 40). Freshly subsumed under the French Mandate following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War One, the Orientalist notion of Lebanon as ruled by unknown, potentially hostile Muslims dissipated. Since the inception of the Lebanese state in 1943, its economy—built on the pillars of banking, tourism, and real estate—has vied for participation from Lebanese abroad (Pearlman 2014, 61).

Since the heyday of Lebanon's pre-Civil War tourism industry, if not before, the country has relied on its bloated diaspora for fostering the booming sector. Lebanese migrants, driven by different forms of mercantilism, have long inhabited many corners of the world, synthesizing a transnational experience while maintaining economic and affective ties to home (Hage 2021). An "indigenous Lebanese consciousness" drove financial and affective connections beyond remittances, including the practice of returning to Lebanon with all of one's rosy diasporic imaginings of the homeland and the guilt associated with leaving (Rowbotham 2010, 42). This, argues Rowbotham, set the foundations for a "peculiarly Lebanese form of mass tourism to accompany the small-scale Western tourism" already in play (ibid). Following the official cessation of the Civil War in 1990, Lebanon turned to its large diaspora to reanimate its tourism industry. Largely, though not exclusively, tourists to Lebanon today are "migrants or diaspora visitors, their foreign friends and investors, their spouses and their families, and their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren" (Abdallah and Abdallah 2021, 11). Thus, tourism to Lebanon can be productively considered a "lifestyle" rather than purely an industry (ibid). Unlike those with few familial ties to Lebanon, expatriates are less deterred by ongoing political instability or security concerns (Pearlman 2014, 62). This flocking of the diaspora to the homeland is particularly visible in the summer months and holidays like Christmas, Easter, and the two Eids, when Lebanese worldwide descend on the country. Though Lebanese Jews

occasionally return to Lebanon, there have, to my knowledge, been no organized group tours or state-led efforts to encourage Lebanese Jewish tourism.

Our tour's niche subject of Jewish Beirut notwithstanding, our participants' demographics largely mirrored those I observed when joining other walking tours: though a large portion of individuals were foreigners, many were not short-term tourists. NGO workers, researchers, and those with personal (but not familial) ties to the region were present. Students studying at the American University of Beirut or Lebanese American University who joined in on tours were often of Lebanese or Arab descent. Lebanese living abroad—some having never lived in Lebanon for an extended period of time—were always present on these tours, as were Lebanese who, despite living within the country, were curious to hear national history narrated and to gain a better understanding of present-day space in Beirut. Particularly in light of the "fractured nature of history as a school subject," and the fact that Lebanese history is covered only up to independence in 1943 in most educational institutions, walking tours can offer locals a chance to become more familiar with particular narratives and the histories of specific neighborhoods (Sbaiti 2010).

Wadi Abu Jamil at the crossroads of Solidere

Our tour convened at the Starco Building, a commercial complex eerily unanimated in the lead-up to Lebanon's financial collapse of 2019 (figure 19, stop 1) Our group walked south on Petro Paoli Street, pausing at the corner of Rue Omar Daouk and Agrippa Street at a newly refurbished villa (stop 2). From this point, we "backtracked" along Rue Omar Daouk, walking westward to Saint Elias Church, where we paused at a parking lot that slopes eastward toward Wadi Abu Jamil, offering a surveying view of the gated neighborhood's otherwise inaccessible

built environment (stop 3). Passing an army checkpoint (stop 4), we made our way back down the thoroughfare, resting at the École des Soeurs-de-la-Charité (known locally as Besançon) (stop 5) before noting Wadi Abu Jamil's main checkpoint and point of entrance (stop 6). We walked to the fashion designer Elie Saab's showroom, gathering in a garden behind the atelier where we peeked at the synagogue's exterior (stop 7). We then passed where one might enter Wadi Abu Jamil on France Street if the thoroughfare was not cordoned off by the Lebanese army (stop 8). We then walked to the entrance of Rue de Banques, where our tour ended with a discussion of the role of Jews in modern Lebanon's economy and society (stop 9). Gathering at Starco, we showed participants a series of images on an iPad: some of the few plans Solidere had released to the public, photos of Wadi Abu Jamil's narrow streets prior to the war, and shots documenting spatial changes made under Solidere's purview. "Looking at these images you notice a lot of vacant lots and the endless construction projects. You might think to yourself 'wow, what damage war can do,'" said Janan.

Indeed, by the time that the Taif Peace Agreement was signed in 1989, the need to reconceive of the area that once housed Beirut's souk and seat of government, as well as its Jewish neighborhood, appeared a problem to be solved rather than a topic to be debated. The wholesale redevelopment of this area, we explained to tour participants, wasn't wholly due to fighting: during lulls in the war in the 80s and 90s, Ogero Liban, the precursor to Solidere headed by the Saudi-based billionaire-developer Rafic Hariri, had demolished swathes of buildings situated in proximity to the Green Line under the pretext of "cleaning up" the city center in preparation for post-war reconstruction (Makdisi 1997, 667). This process, which involved the destruction of some of the downtown's most historic—and often structurally-

sound—buildings, transformed downtown into a series of "naked sites" on which Solidere planned to develop Beirut as, its slogan promised, as an "ancient city for the future" (ibid, 662).

Figure 23. Villa Abdelkader, a recently renovated mansion in Wadi Abu Jamil owned by a wealthy expatriate art collector. Our tour participants noted its superficial similarity with Magen Avraham Synagogue. Photo by author. September 17, 2019.

We paused for a moment at the corner of Agrippa Street and Omar Daouk Street; to the left of us stood a newly refurbished villa (figure 19, stop 2). "I can't help but notice that this building looks a lot like Magen Avraham," mused a European researcher who had lived in Beirut for a few years (see figure 23). Having noticed a striking similarity in architectural styles—and the presence of photos of the building circulating on both Lebanese Jewish and "Old Beirut" Facebook groups—Janan and I had looked into the recent history of the mansion prior to our tour. According to two Lebanese Army soldiers stationed across the street from Wadi Abu

Jamil's main checkpoint, the mansion's revamping was at the investment of a rich Lebanese man in the diaspora and, despite the Mediterranean flair at the architectural level, had no relationship to the synagogue or the neighborhood's Jewish past in particular. Janan used this opportunity to probe our group on what struck a "Jewish" chord regarding the building. After a moment's pause, a Venezuelan student of Lebanese descent spoke up: the mansion's stone archway-framed windows and balconies made the architecture feel, according to our participant, like "something out of Andalusia." Constructed in 1926, Magen Avraham Synagogue's symmetrical Renaissance style was the work of Italian architect Bindo Manham, whose buildings throughout Lebanon became grand hotels and homes (Schulze 2009, 43). Magen Avraham synagogue was built to be Beirut's largest, and provided a grand, communal setting in a neighborhood of small, family-run synagogues. Its vaulted, European style architecture bears resemblance to other large Mediterranean synagogues such as those in Alexandria and Oran, though its interior, with light blue ceilings and striking, striped arches give a distinctly Moorish flavor. Funded by the Sassoon family—a wealthy Baghdadi Jewish family residing in Calcutta and known as the "Rothschilds of the East"—the synagogue has, as historian Kirsten Schulze affirms, defined the aesthetics of Wadi Abu Jamil to present-day (ibid). Although the mansion and Magen Avraham had no direct relation, they were both the products of international, personal investment constructed in widely recognizable styles.

Onward we walked, turning onto Zoukak Mroueh before pausing at the edge of a sprawling car park. From our vantage point at the top of the sloped lot at the western fringe of Wadi Abu Jamil, the group gazed eastward (figure 19, stop 3). Among the sea of new constructions—some furbished in the French colonial style of the buildings that had predated them—were a few pre-war structures, their weathered roofs a conspicuously deeper red than

those of their neighbors. During our research, Janan and I could find no official records from Solidere regarding which of Wadi Abu Jamil's properties had been wholly razed and which still stood, let alone one detailing the reasons why. During a walk-through of the tour, we had asked an employee of the parking lot about the changes to the neighborhood he'd seen. He'd told us that the remaining buildings were some of the few cases still held up indefinitely in court; the owners, for reasons unknown to the guard, did not wish to relinquish their rights to the properties.

Figure 24. A pre-war building neighbors new constructions in Wadi Abu Jamil. Substantial modifications made to the original structure, including its top floor, are visible. Photo by author. September 17, 2019.

Our tour group again rested in the humid heat when we arrived at stop 4 (figure 19). Here, an army checkpoint box sat atop the pavement near Mar Elias Maronite Church. Nearby was a billboard that had been erected following Prime Minister Rafic Hariri's assassination on

February 14, 2005 (figure 19, site I; figure 25) . Hariri, who had been a staunch critic of Syria's continued stranglehold of Lebanon, was one of 22 people killed when 1,000 kilos of TNT exploded as his motorcade traveled along the coast, near the perimeter of Solidere's domain. Hariri's murder set off a huge tide of protests that would ultimately end Syria's nearly 29-year long occupation of Lebanon (1976-2005). The sign, placed at a major intersection to the south of where Hariri had been killed, showed a smiling image of Hariri and demanded "*alhaqiqa liajal libnan*" (the truth for the sake of Lebanon). Erected by Hariri's party, the Future Movement, and replete with a digital counter, the billboard tracked the number of days since Hariri's killing; in 2009, when The Hague announced its Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) investigating the assassination, the billboard was altered to read "time of justice" and the counter reset to zero. Though Hezbollah denied involvement in the assassination and its top leadership, along with the Syrian state, was absolved of culpability by the STL, a supposedly lower-level Hezbollah operative was charged by the court in absentia in 2020. Hezbollah has refused to hand over any suspects to the court, and the wheels of justice remain stalled.

Figure 25. The billboard demanding justice for Hariri's assassination. In 2007, the sign's counter clocked 1,000 days since the politician-businessman's murder. Photo by Matthew Cassel.

During our interview, Salam, the planner, explained to me that Hariri drew inspiration from his experience and success as a Lebanese expatriate developer in Saudi Arabia building a Levantine-themed vacation destination. "There was this mindset that, if you just put money in the proverbial mouths of the people, that they'll forget about prior conflicts." As Hanns Baumann explains, Hariri was not only a billionaire contractor, but an envoy of Saudi interests in Lebanon who framed his post-war reconstruction efforts through the lens of a return to the free market liberalism of the pre-war era. Hariri viewed the war as having interrupted this economic model that solidified Beirut's place, Baumann argues, as "the financial, business, cultural, educational and health centre of the Middle East, [which was] converted into [an] archaic, over-bureaucratic, highly regulated, backward, and inward-looking economy" (2017, 4). Behind this rhetoric of so-called liberalization, Salam noted, was a set of policies that relied on "deeply illiberal practices," like the wholesale transferring of property rights from owners in Beirut's

downtown to a singular development company. In positing a megaproject in the center of the city as key to its post-war success, Hariri pulled from a set of neoliberal discourses and practices that tied his vision to that of developers worldwide whose visions further upper-class interests through privatized, speculative urban development. Hariri's status as a wealthy entrepreneur who spent his life (and made his money) outside of Lebanon allowed, initially, for him to exist outside of the sphere of sectarian power games, at least in the popular imagination.

Near stop 4, we discussed the fate of Wadi Abu Jamil's pre-war built environment, allowing participants, some of whom had witnessed the area's post-war spatial transformation in real-time, to contribute to the conversation. The immediate vicinity of Wadi Abu Jamil followed the fate of the larger downtown: throughout the 1990s and 2000s, historic homes, multi-use buildings, sites that once hosted Jewish schools and synagogues, and other institutions of the once mixed class, multi-confessional neighborhood were systemically flattened to make way for new, expensive real estate. We told participants the story of the last of Wadi Abu Jamil's well-preserved Jewish-owned homes, which had been adjacent to the synagogue (figure 19, site C). According to local historian Nagi Zeidan, the multi-family buildings languished in a protracted legal limbo until developers took advantage of a regional tragedy: in 2006, with the eyes of the media focused on the southern Lebanese town of Qana, bulldozers razed the sites (2020, 84). Magen Avraham had sat in ruin, protected at least superficially by a law decreeing the protection of religious buildings, until an opaque agglomerate of funds from diasporic Lebanese Jews, Solidere, and elsewhere brought about the start to the synagogue's refurbishment in 2009 (Haaretz 2010).

As we stopped in front of the private Besançon School (fig 19, stop 5), we chronicled how Wadi Abu Jamil's development over the course of the 20th century paralleled Lebanon's

national saga. In the twilight days of the Ottoman Empire, Wadi Abu Jamil boomed alongside the rapid industrialization, and expansion, of Beirut (Schulze 2009, 7). The neighborhood's close proximity to the city's souks, port, and banking district allowed easy access for the community's merchants and financiers. Jews, like many of their compatriots, sought employment in Beirut, centralizing the community and morphing what was once a mainly Sunni fishing town to a booming, international Ottoman city (Alff 2018; Kasaba, Keyder, and Tabak 1986; Levi 2012). A short stroll from beach clubs and the marina, numerous banking headquarters, and the seat of government, pre-war Wadi Abu Jamil was positioned in close proximity to numerous elements critical to the nascent nation's outward-facing identity: finance, leisure, and the service sector. It also played host to numerous artisan workshops, businesses, and middle and working-class housing that ensured that, even when the wealthiest community members moved to nearby posher districts, its visitors and residents remained diverse in both ethno-sectarian affiliation and class. After 1975, as the war progressed, the homes left by those who abandoned the dangerously exposed Green Line for safety elsewhere were occupied by those who, fleeing their own homes, had little options for finding shelter.

Wadi Abu Jamil's centrality would ultimately be its wartime demise: as the hostilities of the 1970s progressed into protracted violence and daily life in the neighborhood became increasingly untenable, residents Jewish and non-Jewish alike deserted their homes and businesses for safer areas or joined Lebanon's diaspora. In the context of ever-changing spatial divisions carved out for the ostensible protection of each minority community, Wadi Abu Jamil's social heterodoxy would prove to be the nail in its coffin of wartime safety as people retreated to ethnic enclaves protected by sectarian-affiliated militias. Like the rest of Beirut and Lebanon more broadly, the disintegration of everyday sociality during the Civil War led to ethnic

entrenchment that has outlasted the official timeline of the war itself. The relationship between Wadi Abu Jamil's recent history and the greater metamorphosis of Beirut's downtown is representative of larger questions of how the memory of a Jewish community factors into iterations of a collective Lebanese narrative and, in turn, how this narrative is legitimized (or challenged) through the built environment and how it is navigated. The ways in which Lebanese access the terrains of national heritage, particularly those marked as belonging to so-called "others," as Joanne Nucho asserts, "create[s] and shape[s] the subjects who can circulate through them" (2017, 23). The immense destruction wrought on central Beirut during the civil war years was matched only by the rapaciousness with which developers, beginning in the war's first lulls, sought to reshape the built environment in preparation for future periods of war and peace (Bou Akar 2018).

Solidere's heritagization of Wadi Abu Jamil

Heritage has a way of making its presence known even when you're not on its trail. Near Wadi Abu Jamil's checkpoint (fig 19, site 6), I told our tour participants of a recent personal mishap. Earlier in the year, I had a date to meet my interlocutor in Saifi Village, an historic neighborhood a stone's throw from Wadi Abu Jamil on the southern border of Martyr's Square that, like the Wadi, had been developed and was now a boutique, immaculate residential district of multimillion dollar homes. A half hour before our rendezvous, I was reading in a café near the Beirut Souks mall, when I dug my phone out of my bag to confirm that we were on schedule, but my phone—my recording device, camera, and, with power cuts increasing daily, my main mode of communication and news updates—wouldn't turn on. It was a Saturday night on the eve of a long bank holiday: if I didn't find a solution soon, I'd likely have to wait out the long weekend,

which meant rescheduling with an interlocutor who had driven from his home in Mount Lebanon to meet me. Hurriedly, I asked passersby to point me in the direction of the nearest phone shop and, disheveled, anxious, and with a book still in hand, began running toward the souks. As I rounded the corner, I felt my sneaker catch on an uneven point in the pavement, and down I went. Trying desperately to brush off the concerns of a large family and a separate, well-dressed couple who had rushed to my aid, I turned to humor: “what kind of shopping mall keeps their walkways so uneven?!” I remarked, just in time to realize that what I had tripped over was not indeed a defect in the asphalt but a circular bronze medallion affixed to the ground. The image of a dolphin wrapped around a trident met my eye, seemingly mocking my misfortune. I had, quite literally, tripped over the Beirut Heritage Trail.

My embarrassment aside, the Beirut Heritage Trail is surprisingly easy to overlook, even one is in close proximity to the maze of archaeological and architectural splendors of the historic area (figure 20). As Michel de Certeau contends, the spaces constructed by urbanists, architects, and heritage preservationists are often experienced quite differently from what is dictated by the built environment. Despite the “proper meanings” ascribed to these spaces as “normative level to which they can compare…figurative” uses of space by publics, he expounds, are rarely found in use (100, 1980). Newly acquainted with the Heritage Trail’s emblem, I kept my eyes peeled to the concrete as I later walked the short distance to Saifi: medallions were nowhere to be found. Later in the year, as our co-designed-tour group trudged uphill toward Wadi Abu Jamil’s perimeter, I asked our participants if any of them had heard of the Beirut Heritage Trail before; none had. If you were to ask the average Beiruti if they’d ever taken the path, they’d likely meet your question with genuine confusion: despite being advertised by hotels and tourist agencies as a viable activity, it is nearly impossible for the average participant to finish the trail as intended.

Solidere's Heritage Trail, which begins at the Beirut Souks—the site of a former popular market turned upscale shopping mall built along the axes of the original site—weaves a story of Beirut, as Craig Larkin states, as a "global, tourist friendly, cosmopolitan" city "which draws on the Lebanese traditions of commerce, pluralism, and innovation" (2009, 6). As a network of sites dating from the Canaanite to Ottoman periods, the Beirut Heritage Trail seeks to entwine historical sites, archaeological excavations, and heritage buildings in a 2.5 kilometer circuit (Solidere Report 2012, 20). The trail is part of Solidere's thirty-year Master Plan (1994-2024): like the master project itself, the trail remains unfinished, and many of the nodes along the way are inaccessible, in stages of partial completion, or simply do not yet exist. Other places marked along the Heritage Trail include Roman baths, a Canaanite Tell, restored Ottoman-era buildings (including the Ottoman-era Grand Serail, the Prime Minister's residence) and the French colonial walkways of Nejmeh Square (Place de l'Étoile), and the yet-to-be-completed but highly publicized Garden of Forgiveness. Signposts tell visitors about each location in Arabic, French, and English, though some of these free-standing placards have been defaced or removed. To my knowledge, there are no available media in forms like audio guides or mobile applications that might enhance the Heritage Trail experience.

By defining heritage primarily in terms of architectural aesthetics and archaeological finds, and limiting its geographic scope to that overseen by the company, Solidere's version of heritage focuses on a streamlined narrative of the Lebanese nation rather than the "overall tapestry of the city's history" (Sbaiti 2010). As Katarzyna Puzon writes, the Heritage Trail seeks to "demonstrate the legacy of the peaceful coexistence of religions," by positioning Muslim and Christian places of worship within the vicinity of Bronze Age and Hellenistic archaeological sites, thus positioning Solidere as a "heritage steward…[and] worthy heir of that past" (2019).

“As it connects the present with the past,” reads Solidere’s 2012 Annual Report, “the trail is expected to reveal spatial and temporal continuity, hence stressing the city’s unity and cultural identity” (20). The Beirut Heritage Trail, at least in theory, concludes at the yet-to-be-built Beirut City Museum, which is described by its architect Renzo Piano as “located between the Tell Archaeological Site—which represents [the city’s] ancient past—and the Martyr’s Square [sic], representing the recent past” (2016). In a somewhat ironic outcome for Solidere, attempting to complete the Heritage Trail at varying temporal moments might produce very different experiences: access is often blocked or rerouted by building projects, protests and police, or security concerns.

Even before Beirut’s ascent to the position of capital, explains Samir Khalaf, the city center was one where “physical and social space” overlapped. In addition to the realm of the home and family, proximity to the city’s port and market “offered the urban dweller a human scale and types of social networks that he could comprehend and in which he could find a uniquely individual space” (2006, 21). As the center city boomed in the late 19th and 20th centuries, neighborhoods that had once been relatively homogeneous in their ethno-religious makeup began to attract new forms of public life, “mixed lifestyles and mannerisms” (ibid, 22). Rather than imagine Wadi Abu Jamil as a neighborhood deeply intertwined with its surrounding urban fabric, as it had been in modern history, Solidere’s developers sought to rebuild the neighborhood as a place to which well-to-do residents would return after shopping, dining, and socializing elsewhere. “Solidere conceived of Wadi Abu Jamil as a residential district,” Majid, the tour guide, told me during our interview. Indeed, Solidere’s promotional material describes today’s Wadi Abu Jamil as “a cluster of stone buildings with terracotta-tiled pitched roofs…and harmonious pastel colors” that “cascad[es] towards the seashore” as elements that define the

neighborhood as a “Levantine Mediterranean hill town.” Beirut’s “only surviving synagogue” is positioned alongside “pedestrian alleys,” a communal garden, and a combination of infill developments and restoration as attractive features of the neighborhood. “Integrated into this fabric,” Solidere boasts, are “narrow single lane streets and tight sightline that encourage slow driving and no through traffic,” making no mention of the ways in which these elements are integrally tied to the neighborhood’s heavy securitization that makes these “exclusive residential accommodation[s]” a possibility.

Solidere has not managed to weave together the history of the city’s downtown in a way that speaks to its historic social and spatial continuity. As Nadya Sbaiti notes, specific neighborhoods under Solidere’s dominion are conspicuously absent from the information presented on the Heritage Trail, even when, like Wadi Abu Jamil, these neighborhoods are showcased as integral to both Solidere and Beirut’s history in other promotional material (Sbaiti 2010). With a focus on the premodern—Riad al-Solh Square being the only post-World War II site on the Heritage Trail—Solidere’s signposted signposts raises “questions about just who is supposed to comprise this ancient city in these modern times and precisely how these urban boundaries lie (in both senses).” These disjunctures and lapses, concludes Sbaiti, position the capital city as temporally and spatially “from the rest of Lebanon, effectively rendering it an exception to the country even as they seduce visitors into thinking it represents the whole” (2010).

At the level of Solidere-cum-government, the built environment in which these historic sites are cradled has changed drastically over the course of the company’s lifespan: much of Wadi Abu Jamil sat razed for some time before subcontractors made use of their purchased plots, leaving the synagogue and a few lone residences standing out against the flattened land. Despite

Magen Avraham having been spared demolition, portions of the synagogue's plot were not so fortunate. We told our tour's participants of the Selim Tarrab-Talmud Torah School, which was once located to the rear of the synagogue. The school, which was founded in 1919, moved to its final location when Magen Avraham was constructed in 1926 (fig 19, site B). The school was notable for the education it provided to needy pupils whose families could not afford dues to higher-priced institutions (The American Jewish Year Book 1965). According to a member of the Jewish community I spoke with who still resides in Lebanon, the school had been demolished by Rafic Hariri, who did not want the noise associated with a primary school in such close proximity to his personal residence. Though I could not verify this to be true, the sentiment points to a general belief that Hariri's interests in preserving the social dynamics of the built environment came second to promoting a particular sort of lifestyle for himself and those close to him. Today, the synagogue stands next to what some archaeologists think to be the archaeological remains of the Roman-era Beirut Hippodrome, once the largest in the Levant (figure 19, site A; figure 26). As is the case across Downtown Beirut, the archaeological site was unearthed by accident during the razing of the area in preparation for the laying of the foundations of new luxury homes and businesses (Khalaf 2006, 156). Despite previous orders from the Ministry of Culture to preserve the site *in situ*, correspondence leaked by the Lebanese newspaper Al Akhbar in 2012 show that developers were given the go-ahead to "reintegrate" the plot with its surrounding high-end private development (Alkantar 2012). Like numerous other archaeological sites scattered throughout Solidere's territory (including nearby site D) , the Hippodrome remains partially exposed, relatively unprotected, and without the relevant signage or infrastructure for visitors to understand its significance, even if they were granted permission to access the plot. As was the case during Magen Avraham's renovation, those interested in the

progression of Beirut's archaeological digs are widely excluded from decision-making processes. As Hans H Curvers and Barbara Stuart, two archaeologists involved with excavations in the city center, write, members of the press, who are routinely denied access to archaeological sites, are forced to "take pictures from neighboring buildings to monitor progress…and can only speculate about the results…The preservation of spatial memory, therefore, remains a process hidden in the darkness of great myths of covered with slogans" (2016, 17-8).

Figure 26. The reconstructed Magen Avraham Synagogue borders the excavation sites of what is thought to be the Roman-era Beirut Hippodrome. In the forefront of the photo is a landscaped garden for use by residents of the gated community. Image by author. April 1, 2023.

Figure 27. All that is visible of Magen Avraham from behind Wadi Abu Jamil's recent parameters is a small portion of the synagogue's peak, including its two tablets bearing the Ten Commandments. Image by author. March 24, 2023.

Despite the fact that Magen Avraham's renovation was lauded by a range of political elites, funding sources for the project are murky. Official data on the funding of Magen Avraham Synagogue are not available, though it is widely reported that the reconstruction project was financed by congregations and individuals in the Jewish diaspora, as well as donations from anonymous Lebanese at home and abroad. The rehabilitation project also received a $150,000 pledge from Solidere, the standard amount given to the preservation of religious structures under the territorial domain of the company. Though numerous interlocutors have claimed that the synagogue was supported by the likes of organizations like Hezbollah, it is likely that the political party gave support only in written and verbal terms. Support from the likes of Hezbollah, however, amounts to more than cheap words: it demonstrates the party's interest in

maintaining an air of tolerance for religious difference, at least as long as it does not challenge the group's political agenda. "We respect the Jewish religion just like we do Christianity," said a Hezbollah spokesperson in 2008. "The Jews have always lived among us. [What] we have an issue with [is] Israel's occupation" (The Times of Israel 2014). By rhetorically separating Judaism from Zionism, Hezbollah not only positions itself as a legitimate political party in the milieu of the Lebanese state, but justifies the fact that it was the only militia not to relinquish its weapons caches after the end of the Civil War in 1990 on the pretense of its continued struggle against Israel.

The question of Magen Avraham Synagogue's function within today's Wadi Abu Jamil, and Wadi Abu Jamil's larger disconnect from the city center came up as Janan and I carried out our tour. We addressed these themes as we took a pause in a small garden-like nook behind the Elie Saab store and Bank Audi's Beirut headquarters (fig 19, stop 7). From here, participants could finally get a glimpse of Magen Avraham Synagogue, which was otherwise made visually inaccessible by the neighborhood's privatization (figure 27). Diasporic attachment by Lebanese Jews to the former central house of worship seemed, to our participants, a reasonable investment. But why, asked a participant on our co-guided tour, given the lax stipulations concerning Solidere's development of religious sites, was Magen Avraham not repurposed for alternative uses, like a museum to Lebanon's Jewish past, rather than allowing it to stand finished but in total disuse? As Aris Anagnostopoulos illustrates, spatial projects that channel notions of cosmopolitanism in the former Ottoman Empire, as is the case with Lebanon, often focus solely on coexistence between ethno-religious groups over intermingling between gender, class, or linguistic factions. This leads to "oftentimes markedly aestheticized by the heritage industry," and thus often privileges the historic form of a site over whether or not the site functions

similarly to how it may have in the past (2016, 87). Given the significance of the downtown's central position along the corridor that formerly divided the city, the choice of architectural preservation over social revival, as took place with Magen Avraham, represents one of many attempts to symbolically transform this urban seam by imbuing the built environment with superficial symbols of religious diversity. In the case of Beirut's synagogue, the absence of a Jewish community allows the synagogue to act as a tabula rasa in service to Solidere's brand of national diversity and religious coexistence. As Rebecca Bryant notes, "'coexistence' is a term that acquires special relevance and meaning when it is no longer possible" (2016, 3). Developers' quest to reproduce historic elements of the built environment in hopes of encouraging inter-sectarian mingling only among the upper-class places the impetus on the individual moving through space to absorb and reinforce the tacit yet superficial markers of supposed coexistence (Makdisi 1997, 668).

The Beirut Heritage Trail—and, through its inclusion in Solidere's heritage agglomerate, Magen Avraham—does more to spatially fragment an already selective history than it does to weave an inclusive nationalist narrative, despite its attempt to reflect a legible, albeit particular, national history (Scott 1999, 2). If, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett claims, heritage can be seen as a present-day mode of cultural production with "recourse to the past," we can better understand how Solidere's arrangement of carefully chosen sites and structures serve to mediate and structure the ways in which what is on display comes to represent a collective Lebanese past (1998, 7). The Beirut Heritage Trail, and its cordoning off from sites like Magen Avraham, reflects a lack of local knowledge at the very level of the street, navigation and access, with no real relationship "to the order of life as it is experienced" by Lebanese in the everyday, instead adopting a system of "visual regimentation" whose quality is highly ceremonial (Scott 1999, 58).

When considered as part of a broader web of Solidere's pastiche history, planner Salam's reflection on Magen Avraham's renovations as aligned with the larger values of Solidere's project begins to make sense. The historic social function of the synagogue—as is the case with many of the sites under Solidere's purview—"were taken out of the context and instead replaced by a commodity life alluding to a past life in an acutely self-aware way" (Haugbolle 2010, 88). The synagogue acts as one node in a network of sites whose historic and cultural functions seek to contextualize the present-day image of Solidere through spatial pastiche. Indeed, company strategists for Solidere have readily admitted that Beirut's heritage has been put to use largely in service of distinguishing it from "'other regional centers, such as Dubai...that lack Beirut's historical richness' and hence the kind of flavor that Solidere can lay claim to" (Makdisi 1997, 683).

The synagogue, within the framework of Solidere, does not need its pre-war function as a center of community and worship to function as part of a larger heritage network. Hollowed of its original purpose, the empty synagogue functions through what Timothy Mitchell describes as a spectacle that is both produced by, and reproduces, a reflection of the "technique of rendering history, progress, culture and empire in 'objective' form...in a world where truth had become a question of what Heidegger calls 'the certainty of representation" (Mitchell 1991, 7). Magen Avraham's function as a visual symbol of tolerance, explain Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Eleonore Kofman, and Catherine Kevin, does not serve to "implicate the population in excellent cosmopolitan relations," but to convince Lebanese and foreigners alike of a historicized patriotism, given their "influence on the likely prosperity of companies and people attached to the locale" (2008, 6-7). By providing a sanitized and safe vision of a happy, prosperous past, the Solidere architects are producing a nostalgia whose commercial and tourist value is as significant

as it is repressive of more personal, troubled memories. Solidere's reconstruction of the city center provides what John Nagle deems a "a sanitized version of localism" by pairing a destination for upscale consumption with archaeological and cultural sites Solidere hoped would come to serve as national *lieu de memoire* (Nora 1989). Such models of urban development either tame or romanticize the disorderliness of the lived city, its logic flattening out complex spatialities and replacing them with physical "signs" in the built environment that aim to signal a shared history and set of cultural values. By situating Lebanon's Jewish history within the same topographical frame as other selective sites of heritage, Solidere proposes a shared attachment to a "Levantine lifestyle" in which the Jewish resident of Beirut was both an elite, productive member of society and attached to the conceptualization of Lebanon as a haven for confessionally-based diversity.

Walking Tours and Actually-Existing-Cosmopolitanism in Wadi Abu Jamil

Figure 28. PLO fighters in front of Magen Avraham Synagogue. December 1975.

"Is it true that guerilla fighters from the Palestinian Liberation Organization guarded the synagogue during the Civil War?" asked a European aid worker rather abruptly who, having lived in Beirut for five years, had joined our walk. The participant was referring to a story I had encountered many times in both journalism and conversations with Lebanese collaborators, popularized by a photo of PLO fighters in the foreground of Magen Avraham's exterior that, today, remains a frequent site on social media (figure 28). Myths concerning the synagogue—particularly how it was treated during the wartime years and by whom—were, as I found in other

conversations with interlocutors, evoked far more often in our conversations than concrete historic fact. Though it sustained considerable damage throughout the various invasions and guerilla battles during the civil war, Magen Avraham Synagogue's structure remained intact; over the course of the war, as we explained to our tour participants, Magen Avraham served as a shelter for the displaced, a medical station for militiamen, and, like all of West Beirut and much of the Green Line, was a direct victim of Israeli shelling during the 1982 siege of the capital. Details on exactly how the PLO interacted with the synagogue and its neighborhood are scant; though neither Janan nor I could attest with certainty that the PLO had intended to protect Magen Avraham as a Jewish structure in service to its community, this tour participant raised an important, popular understanding of a muddled history. Supported by the evidential nature of photographic proof, Wadi Abu Jamil was imagined in this narrative as the victim of foreign, imperial aggression, of which indigenous Jews were the casualty, accidentally or otherwise. This historical narrative, whether deviating from fact or not, positioned Palestinian militias as the unlikely protectors of a minority space. Janan and I asked the participants whether or not they believed the story to be factual. "If it's true, maybe it doesn't really matter if they cared for the building as a religious space," mused another Lebanese participant. "Sometimes shared interests bring very different people together in despite of everything."

To differentiate between cosmopolitanism as a moniker for a globally-minded, jetsetting class—the sort of cosmopolitanism conjured by Solidere—scholars have turned to the concept of *convivencia* (conviviality), which, as Ulrike Freitag suggests, aims to capture the concrete actions, organization, and daily lived experience, not necessarily with a focus on "interactions between 'us' and 'them' but on 'how we work things out between ourselves'" (2014, 376). As Deniz Neriman Duru elaborates, distinguishing cosmopolitanism from conviviality places

emphasis not only "on the need to share space with persons who we already presume to be different," but also firmly "on the production of place through shared attitudes and experiences" (2016, 159). After peering over the wall to get a glimpse of the synagogue from afar, Janan paused our group on the corner of Rue de France and Omar Douk outside the polished doors of the headquarters of Bank Audi (stop 8). Nearing the place where a small street known as Zaroub Mann had, throughout Wadi Abu Jamil's recent history, hosted a number Jewish schools and synagogues, we recounted how Wadi Abu Jamil had, in the past, encouraged convivial interaction between Jewish residents of different classes, linguistic communities, and religious rites. At the time of Magen Avraham's inauguration in the late 1920s, Beirut boasted an estimated ten additional, smaller houses of worship. Hosted within private homes and schools, this multitude reflected the linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity of Beirut's Jewish population as well as its divisions, mainly along lines of origin (Schulze 2009, 43). Though Beirut's population was largely Arabic speaking and identified religious with Sephardic Rites, there were additional communities: Beirut had been home to a number of Ashkenazi Jews, particularly those who had come to the city in the interwar period between World War I and II; there was also a small Ladino-speaking community of Spanish Jews. The fact that Lebanon was the only country in the Arab world in which the number of Jews increased following the establishment of Israel held our group's interest. Janan and I told participants that Syrian and Iraqi Jewish refugees had fled increasing anti-Jewish violence at home, making their way to Lebanon, which was perceived to be more tolerant to Jews and Jewish interests. By the 1950s, Wadi Abu Jamil's more well-to-do residents began to move to posher, nearby neighborhoods, where they lived, often in confessionally-mixed neighborhoods, alongside middle and upper-class Beirutis. Unlike wealthier Jews who were often engaged in finance and commerce, those

who moved into Wadi Abu Jamil were artisans in the soap, glass, and garment industries as well as peddlers (ibid, 6). Yet, even as wealthier Jews moved to other neighborhoods, Wadi Abu Jamil remained the center of Jewish spirituality, community events, and education, in addition to its flourishing businesses.

The idea that everyday concerns like the security of a formerly mixed-use, middle-class neighborhood during wartime might provide opportunities for quotidian "getting along"—as our participants felt the photo of Palestinian fedayeen guarding the synagogue demonstrated—provides an alternative understanding of difference when juxtaposed with the glitzy cosmopolitanism tokenized by Solidere. As Diane Singerman and Paul Amar contend, such an approach to the concept of cosmopolitanism can provide a way to highlight evidence of "vernacular, bottom-up cosmopolitanisms of enhanced agency and claims-making practices among more and more individuals and collective forces" (2009, 10). Rather than equating cosmopolitanism with the explicit, and often elite, intent of coexistence, Bryant explains, these everyday convivial encounters rely on "proximity and interaction [which] can supply opportunities for…divergent parties to experience trust (as well as mistrust) between them" (2016, 180). Such quotidian interactions—in the contexts of labor and business, religious affiliation, and neighborly conviviality—both take place within, and influence uses of, the built environment.

This sentiment was echoed on Majid's tour: prior to the Civil War, he told us, Kurdish refugees had made their way to Lebanon fleeing violence and persecution in Turkey in the mid-20th century, taking up residence in Wadi Abu Jamil alongside the neighborhood's Jewish residents. Some months after I joined his tour, Majid and I would go on to discuss the fact that historical cosmopolitanism in the Eastern Mediterranean is often thought to be a by-product of

cities built around ports and seafaring, which encouraged the intermingling of people, languages, and ideas through trade. While Beirut—particularly in its modern configuration as a capital—certainly featured on the map of “coast dwellers,” who often oriented themselves “toward the wider world in terms of awareness, knowledge, kinship, and means of subsistence,” its inhabitants often encountered social difference out of the necessity of seeking refuge and a way to feed their families (Dreissen 2005, 131). The Kurds who had moved into Wadi Abu Jamil, as Majid had informed our tour, did so not because they sought proximity to other minority groups, but simply because the neighborhood offered readily available shelter as more well-to-do Jewish families relocated to posher locations. Rather than painting the past with a broad, rosy brush, Majid’s interests lay with pinpointing historic examples of social intermingling, even if they happened on less-than-ideal terms. It also signals the interconnected historical trajectories and experiences that have shaped regional senses of belonging beyond the framework of the nation-state. For these reasons, Singerman and Amar suggest, evocations of cosmopolitan orientations have the potential to “challenge category distinctions that wall off the self off from class/national/gender/race others” that, when articulated alongside a critique of the ways in which the nation-state reifies these differences through political and economic domination, “can have a mobilizing potential” (26, 2009).

As we showed through our own walking tour’s itinerary, Wadi Abu Jamil’s history and present can illustrate how remembering historical instances of interaction across social divides need not be in service of elite interests. Janan and I stressed to our participants that, in order to do so in a meaningful way, it was necessary to look beyond the common ground that class-based gentry shared, no matter the linguistic, religious, or national lines they may have crossed. This meant that, instead of thinking of Lebanon as a home of social diversity across space and time,

one needed to locate what “getting along” across categories of difference that were particular to an historically-situated context. Looking at the Levant and its myriad historical moments as a set of temporally-specific chronotopes—which, according to Mikhael Bakhtin, from whom the term originates—insists that time and space become “charged and responsive” through mutual constitution. As Rana Issa and Elgar Wisen propose, this can reveal “configurations of relations and narratives studied in a dynamic context where social boundaries and relations are continuously redraw and re-entangled,” drawing attention to how “identity narratives” morph over space and time (2020, 2).

Instances of actually-existing-cosmopolitanism works by “facilitating geographies of coexistence” through interacting with surroundings—everyday convivial encounters rely on “proximity and interaction [which] can supply opportunities for...divergent parties to experience trust (as well as mistrust) between them” (Bryant 2016, 180). Cosmopolitanism, as Bryant notes, does not is not always a wholly positive experience. Wadi Abu Jamil’s vulnerable position on the no-man’s land of the green line led to its abandonment during the early years of the civil war. At a tour stop at the periphery of Wadi Abu Jamil during a walking tour conducted in March 2019, guide Jack told of an event that had happened over two decades prior: on February 15, 1996, a building in Wadi Abu Jamil housing squatters resisting relocation came crashing down on the Ayad family, who were Shiite, when its foundation was weakened by construction on a next-door site. Six of the Ayads, including a 3-month-old baby and 2-year-old toddler, were crushed to death alongside seven of the Egyptian and Syrian crew workers charged with dismantling the building (an-Nahar 1996). From a five-star hotel banquet, then-prime minister Rafic Hariri shared his regret for what he deemed the accidental loss of lives. What resulted was not a set of assurances preventing further displacement and death, but a political battle waged

between the mainly Shiite political parties Hezbollah and Amal and Hariri in an attempt to mobilize the tragedy to "squeeze" money from the Saudi billionaire. "If you think about it," reflected Salam, the planner, during our interview, "Solidere actually killed off more everyday encounters with difference than it did to support them." Even when the heritage representative of a cosmopolitan nation is ostensibly available to all, "what this means is less a democratization" of space and access to the social "other," and more of a "hardening of a new hierarchy of access" (Amar and Singerman 2009, 32).

Conclusion

Our tour's final stop was the beginning of Rue de Banques, where major international as well as local banks have their Beirut branches (figure 19, stop 9). We ended our tour in proximity to two well-preserved Ottoman structures, a notable difference from much of Solidere's developments, which largely referenced French mandate architecture above all else (Bădescu 2019). To one side of our group, up a steep hill, sat the Grand Serail: the Ottoman-era barracks built in 1853 that now served as the headquarters of the Prime Minister. The Council for Redevelopment and Reconstruction (CDR), hosted in the former Ottoman Military Hospital, is but a stone's throw from this governmental palace (site E). Along the way—as we had encouraged those who joined our walk to do—participants had culled pages of notes, stealthily shot photographs, sketches, and sound recordings for their own creative and research endeavors.

Here, we asked participants to reflect on their experience on the tour. "In terms of Jewish history, what you can't see is just as important as what you can," concluded one participant. She paused for a moment in thought. "Actually," she corrected, "that's true in terms of the whole history of Beirut's downtown." The Jewish history of Beirut is but one of a multiplicity of

interwoven communal narratives that constructed a sense of ordinary, everyday social difference; yet, the treatment of Wadi Abu Jamil's complexities by postwar developers reveals a system that understands its citizenry as well-to-do, undifferentiated consumers. Though the route one must take to navigate Wadi Abu Jamil and its surroundings is replete with diversions and zones of forbidden access, this form of *mishwar* is not only symptomatic of a built environment that flattens the city's historical fabric and recasts it in the banal bourgeois register of global urban branding: it also aims to reconfigure how those who traverse its concrete perceive their place in the nation.

CHAPTER THREE

"It Was our Home and Sadly We Will Never Return": Nostalgia and the Circulation of Images in Lebanese Jewish Virtual Communities

Introduction

On August 4, 2020, a massive stockpile of ammonium nitrate, haphazardly stored for years at the Port of Beirut, exploded. Among the innumerable heritage sites and homes damaged, and over 200 lives lost in the blast, was Lebanon's only restored synagogue, Magen Avraham. Following the blast, the Lebanese Jewish diaspora took to online platforms to track the damage to and restoration of Magen Avraham. Unlike most spaces damaged in the explosion, Magen Avraham was swiftly rehabilitated through a partnership of private donations and government support. Although most participants on social media discussing the plans for repairs were glad to hear the news, others expressed confusion: why privilege the structural wellbeing of a synagogue in disuse when 300,000 individuals had been rendered homeless by state-sanctioned negligence, particularly when the country no longer had active Jewish communities.

This was the second time that Lebanese Jews watched the synagogue's rehabilitation from afar, relying on communication networks and non-Jewish participants on the ground for updates. Though most people remained physically distant from the project, Lebanese Jews around the world converged on social media following the 2009 announcement by Isaac Arazi, the official representative of Jewish interests in the country, of the intent to renovate Magen Avraham. The effort to refurbish the synagogue received explicit written or verbal support from political parties ranging from right-wing Christian former militias to Hezbollah (Kaplan 2015). The project brought together the Lebanese Jewish diaspora in social media groups, mostly on

Facebook. Originally developed to keep donors and fans up to date on the synagogue's progress and connect long-lost friends and family, these Facebook groups have evolved to encompass discussions between Lebanese, both Jews and non-Jews. These conversations are tinged with nostalgia as participants recall life in Lebanon prior to the departure of the vast majority of its Jews. The content that often spurs the most engagement is photography: anonymous archival family snapshots and recent images of the synagogue taken by amateurs.

By focusing on photographs pertaining to the historic Jewish neighborhood and its central synagogue, I address in this chapter the ways in which three Facebook groups and pages—the "Lebanese Jewish Community Council," "Jews of Lebanon" (Juifs de Liban), and "Lebanese Jews," which combined share more than 12,000 members—serve as realms for debating, challenging, and reconstructing concepts of belonging as they relate to remembering a shared homeland and communal life in Wadi Abu Jamil.[11] Furthermore, the chapter explores the ways in which the nostalgic circulation and sharing of photographs of the community's pre-Civil War life, and the restored but shuttered synagogue, privilege a particular perspective on how life once was. This perspective, focusing on realities within the photographic frame and the historical narrative, creates a sense of shared history to think about the Jewish community in the present without necessarily culminating in an imagined return to Lebanon. The lived realities of different ethno-religious communities in Lebanon have arguably become only more fragmented and insular since the totalizing violence of the Civil War and subsequent dispersal of Lebanese people around the world (Clancy and Nagle 2019). Feelings of nostalgia evoked by the sharing

---

[11] While Jews of Lebanon and Lebanese Jews fit Facebook's technical definition of a "group," the LJCC maintains its presence through a "page." The difference in these categorizations lies in the central role of a single administrator, who, in the case of pages, filters all potential posts and content supplied by users. For additional info, see "Facebook Tips: What's the Difference between a Facebook Page and Group?" Facebook, Feb. 24, 2010, https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/facebook-tips-whats-the-difference-between-a-facebook-page-and-group/324706977130/.

and consumption of photographs have led to collaborative reflections on Lebanon's past. Furthermore, these discussions raise the question whether the social bonds foreclosed by war can provide insight into how belonging to Lebanon is conceived of outside the framework of the state but in relation to it.

While social media participants may have differing social identities and political agendas, the joint acts of identifying photographed individuals and imagining the circumstances behind what was photographed facilitate a shared sense of cultural belonging predicated on the feeling that there once was a social place for many Lebanese—including religious and ethnic minorities—prior to the destruction wrought by the Civil War and rapacious redevelopment of the physical landscape that followed.

Special attention to photographic mediation dovetails with what Svetlana Boym deems the "disease of displacement." Photographs, as indexical traces of what was, are magnetizing forces for diasporic communities. Mnemonic devices such as photographs, she argues, deepen nostalgic reverie by arousing sensorial memories that "reconfigur[e] the concept of 'locale,' [which] is not merely a context but also a remembered sensation [triggered by] the material debris of past life" (2002, 258). Photos circulated in these groups and pages rekindle vivid memories, despite members' distance from a Lebanon they once knew. This allows for a continued (and evolving) conceptualization of what it means to be Lebanese, for Jews and non-Jews alike. In the context of the Jewish community's near total absence from Lebanon, and the fact that Magen Avraham is largely a forbidden space for most Lebanese today, Jewish spaces—both physical and digital—can be understood not simply in the context of contemporary Jewish practices, but also within the visual cues of the built environment and in photographs that capture how Jewish life was once experienced. In this context, active engagements between participants

on social media evoke a sense of what Victoria Bernal calls "emotional citizenship," in that conversations concerning belonging, while revolving around a geographic space, are not limited by legal citizenship or state borders (2006).

Expressions of mourning from non-Jewish Lebanese for the loss of an important confessional community are commonly found on the pages and groups explored in this chapter; similar statements of longing can be found on blogs and article comment sections that are hyperlinked on Facebook.[12] In the group photo discussed below, which captures Magen Avraham in full attendance, a participant asks diasporic Lebanese Jews to remember that "Lebanon remains your true country," and not to "cut your ties to your homeland like many of your compatriots—of various faiths—have unfortunately done" (S. T., Nov. 2, 2014, 7:40 a.m Comment on LJCC Facebook post, Nov. 2, 2014). A comment posted on *Point of No Return*, a blog that often covers Lebanon's Jewish community offers one response: "I am a Jew of Lebanese heritage," writes an anonymous respondent. "My heritage is not lost, we keep our traditions and our customs, [but] the land of Lebanon we once lived in is one that does not exist [today]" (Bataween, Dec. 14, 2006, Comment on "Revealed: Shi'i Muslim behind the Jews of Lebanon Blog," Point of No Return , Sept. 15, 2006). Given the temporal (and often geographic) separation of Lebanese Jews and their allies from the photographs at hand, I draw on works that help explore the connection between circulating anonymous photographs and collective nostalgic reverie for a state that is believed to no longer exist. Though participants in the Facebook groups may possess basic knowledge of the events captured in the circulated photographs, it is not a

[12] Though distinct in their function and forms, the Facebook groups and pages I discuss are very much reliant on the information produced and circulated on the blogs that preceded them. They also frequently reference one another, demonstrating the ways that knowledge, digitized ephemera, and members are shared between social networking sites.

photo's indexical nature that creates the greatest sense of personal and communal resonance. As Elizabeth Edwards posits, considering the nonlinear ways in which photographs travel between people and places—as they circulate and are consumed—opens the door for scrutinizing the diverse "social biographies spread over divergent" trajectories of how the photograph might travel (2012, 223). Furthermore, studying the life of photographs as multifaceted and divergent allows for an analysis of the social relations embedded between the moments of circulation and consumption.

Though forums that host conversations between Lebanese residing in the country and diasporic Lebanese Jews can unearth genealogical facts or details about property and friends left behind, they offer more than clarity on a complex and traumatic past. Anthropologically speaking, Facebook groups and pages tailored to the interests of Lebanon's Jews produce ways of collective belonging that both affirm the liveliness of the former Jewish community and grieve the supposed disappearance of the social conditions that are pictured in old photographs. Facebook communities serve as platforms where both Jews of Lebanese descent born in the diaspora and non-Jewish Lebanese in Lebanon learn about, debate, and reformulate the intersection of Lebaneseness and Jewishness. Given the lack of an active Jewish community in present-day Lebanon, those born after the Civil War often discover their country's Jewish history through family stories and news articles, or by connecting with others on the Internet. In this regard, non-Jewish Lebanese are tasked with serving as cultural brokers of what Ruth Ellen Gruber calls "virtually Jewish space" (2002). In addition to transforming, occupying, and maintaining physical, formerly Jewish spaces in Lebanon, these individuals help attest to the histories of Jews in everyday, in-person conversations, written accounts, and more recently, on virtual forums. Like in other locales where a historically present Jewish community no longer

exists, this cultural brokering involves the preservation of Lebanon's Jewish history and helps maintain the ways in which its memory circulates in society.

Digital forums like Facebook have changed the way in which people engage with history by allowing participants to "preserve and promote, stock and share," and tether their own questions, comments, and perspectives to visual artifacts (Müller 2017, 12). Together, non-Jewish and Jewish Lebanese from across the world converge on Facebook to explore the country's Jewish past. As elucidated in the dissertation's introduction, the wake of the Lebanese Civil War resulted in both a proliferation of "memory cultures" and a state-level silence concerning culpability for countless wartime atrocities (Haugbolle 2010). The time prior to the war in which there was an active Jewish community in Lebanon—coinciding with a period in which Lebanon's status as a center of economic and social refuge—has become, for many on these forums, a point of fascination and social pride. Remembering the only ethno-sectarian community that virtually ceased to exist through their enlivened spaces, I argue, is a form of resistance to the sense of loss of the social elements thought to have once united Lebanese, not in the least of which is a perceived tolerance for social differences. Often, memories of a feared-to-be-disappearing past converge around the tangibility of physical places, though the forums they appear in may be digital. In this way, individuals gather around Lebanese Jewish-related Facebook as virtual forms of what Pierre Nora deemed a "memory site" (*lieu de mémoire*), leading to novel forms of collectively dealing with the past (1996). Such virtual sites of memory fall into what Timothy Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper refer to as "arenas of memory articulation" advanced around a particular social subsphere or area of interest, such as the spaces left behind by a community in exile (2002). Expanding on this concept, Matthew Graves and Elizabeth Rechniewski suggest that the technological advancements of the 20th and

21st centuries have led to the dissemination of oral and other modes of unofficial history-keeping, many of which have been hosted online (2010). This has led to a wider receptive audience and the chance for interested individuals to find like-minded peers.

Digital lieu de mémoire, particularly the sort like Facebook groups and pages which allow users to actively and directly contribute, challenge the institutionalized, official nature of Nora's conceptualization of sites of memory as distinct from oral history (1989, 17). As elements of official history, Nora posits, lieu de mémoire are static, organized, and "[bound] strictly to temporal continuity…[and thus] can only conceive of the relative" (9). Conversely, writes Nora, "memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual…[while] history's goal and ambition is not to exalt but to annihilate what has in reality taken place" (ibid). Yet, as Müller argues, the interactive nature of digital sites of memory allows participants to debate what gets canonized. This opens digital memory sites up to changes in the cultural contexts within which these sites are embedded; in the case of the former spaces of Lebanese Jews, such sites are refracted through the realities of living in the diaspora or amidst the shortcomings of the contemporary Lebanese state.

Methodology of the "Participant Webserver" and the Genealogy of Virtual Lebanese Jewish Forums

Online communities shared by Lebanese Jews and non-Jews are fruitful sites as both the subject of—and forum for—ethnographic study. Since 2016, I have engaged in "participant webservation" on these forums (Bernal 2006). Introducing myself as a Jewish American anthropologist with familial and social ties to Lebanon has caught the interest of participants. Lebanon faces continued geopolitical tensions with Israel, and the living memory of Israel's

violent occupation and wars against Lebanon remains palpable. The common though widely contested notion that Jewishness can be equated with Zionism is also discernible. This means that some participants, particularly Jews residing in Lebanon today and non-Jewish Lebanese who are anxious about the implications of appearing to associate with their southern neighbors, have chosen not to engage with my research. That said, I have been met with mostly positive affirmations from participants, and many of the relationships I have built with those who frequently and thoughtfully share or comment on materials posted to Facebook groups and pages have moved offline into in-person friendships and collaborations. By viewing the act of nostalgic reverie as a generative process by which participants build "virtual communities of memory," I have witnessed these forums serve as spaces to reiterate a shared cultural identity predicated on affective ties rather than nationalism or citizenship (Boum 2014, 598).

The groups and pages explored in this chapter are distinct online forums that host a range of content, including anecdotes, photo albums, and article links. Facebook groups and pages pertaining to Lebanese Jewish history have precedents in earlier internet-based forums and genealogical projects made public through personal websites. Such online efforts fostered connections between Lebanese Jews, Jews from the Middle East more broadly, and Lebanese of non-Jewish faith through the collaborative process of identifying shared friends, family, and histories. In 1999, businessman and avid genealogy researcher Alain Farhi established a site hosting a family tree with more than 1,200 names stemming from the Farhis, whose lineage spread throughout the former Ottoman Empire. Once the personal project of an Egyptian-born Jew who discovered familial ties to Lebanon during his own geological sojourn, *Les fleurs de l'orient* today claims a virtual tree of more than 238,000 individuals and 170,000 families (Farhi 2015). The website also hosts an open archive. Prior to the widespread adoption of Facebook,

Lebanese Jews also utilized a private chatroom, Cyber Wadi, to stay in touch. Hyperlinks shared on Facebook and other digital projects demonstrate how groups and pages continue to act in a network of knowledge production rather than functioning as sequestered communities.

The use of Facebook groups as a platform to share digitized photographs and scans of ephemera among a defined community is not incidental. Beyond providing a means of constant communication, arenas such as Facebook groups and pages grant users opportunities to "meet" others concerned with Lebanese Jewry who were previously outside their social networks and immediate geographies. In the context of the Lebanese Jewish diaspora, social networking sites build on political scientist Benedict Anderson's notion of print media and radio as fostering emotional attachment to the nation despite having little to no face-to-face contact. As the world's largest social networking site, Facebook at its core is a tool for "sharing knowledge regardless of time and space" (Oiarzabal 2012, 1469). In addition to allowing users to upload their own content, social networking sites such as Facebook have led to the sharing of content at an unprecedented rate and speed. What can result, as media studies scholar Marta Marcheva explains, is a "common vision or myth about the homeland" that binds diasporic communities not through the simultaneous consumption of the same media, but through said media's role as a "technological intermediary" that allows for "people in one country [to] now participate actively in [the happenings of] another country" (Marcheva 2011).

The Lebanese Jewish Community Council (LJCC) is what Facebook deems an "open" page, meaning that followers or members are unscreened. Among the forums on which I focus, it has the largest number of followers, some 10,500, and is the only open one. It most closely resembles blogs, which predated Facebook; materials may be submitted to the page, and sources credited in posts, but only the moderator creates posts. Comments on posts are where the

discussion takes place, as with the comments sections of blogs and web-based articles. Though the page presents itself as connected to Magen Avraham's restoration, its moderator is semianonymous inasmuch as their identity is not addressed in their posts. The moderator will occasionally post clarifications or dispel rumors but does not appear to have influence over access to Magen Avraham. The two Facebook groups examined in this research are "closed," meaning that anonymous moderators approve the membership of each participant and verify every message before it is publicly posted. The groups are significantly smaller than the LJCC's page following, with Jews of Lebanon hosting roughly 750 members and Lebanese Jews hosting about 960 members.[13] New members are encouraged to share photos and stories or build on existing posts. By sharing and narrating photographs, members participate in what cultural historian Annette Kuhn describes as "an intertext of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image . . . cultural contexts [and] historical moments" (2002, 9). Through the processes of selecting, sharing, and analyzing photographs and the memories they evoke, the community engages in the "process of making itself" (ibid, 19). "This past-in-the-present, this nostalgia-in-prospect," Kuhn writes, aims to "produce desires hinging on a particular kind of story" (ibid, 25).

Sites such as Facebook and personal blogs have also led to the participation of non-Jewish Lebanese individuals, who were previously not privy to the diasporic religious and social institutions of Lebanese Jews.[14] In 2006, the LJCC's page was reportedly operated by a

---

[13] The LJCC, despite its name, does not act as the official representative for the unknown number of Jews remaining in Lebanon; this is the role of the Lebanese Jewish Community and its current president, Isaac Arazi. The LJCC serves as a nonprofit organization that worked to centralize fundraising efforts at the beginning of Magen Avraham's renovation.

[14] Lebanese Jews have made homes across the world, and the forms their religious and social institutions take vary depending on location and the other social entities with which they are constructed. Lebanese Jewish communities can be found in France, Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Israel, among other locations. Much of their recent

Lebanese-American of Muslim origin. While running a blog dedicated to the preservation of Lebanese Jewish history, this individual teamed up with diasporic groups to raise funds for the renovation of Magen Avraham.[15] Nagi Zeidan, a community historian who has taken an interest in Lebanon's Jewish history, has embraced a far more public-facing role: after building trust with Lebanese Jews abroad through Facebook connections, Zeidan chose to make his findings—community histories and archival documents—accessible through his Facebook page. Before his untimely death in November 2022, Zeidan also posted these materials on the three Lebanese Jewish Facebook groups and pages mentioned here, widening his audience and encouraging others to engage with his work. As is the case in much of the present-day Middle East, in places where Jewish life once flourished, non-Jewish engagement with these foreclosed histories plays out for myriad reasons (Boum 2013). The longing for a Jewish presence in the country is often coupled with other Civil War losses, including the perceived tolerance of difference.

Members of the forums discussed here occasionally reference scholarly literature but more often engage with personal accounts and journalistic storytelling. These participants draw from a wide range of popular literature, articles, and media, including Nada Abdelsamad's *Wadi Abu Jamil: Qusus* '*an al-yahoud Beirut*, a collection of oral histories and stories relayed to the journalist by individuals who counted Lebanon's Jews among their former neighbors, friends,

---

histories overlap with the trajectories of local Sephardi and Mizrahi communities, but more research is needed to understand how a Lebanese identity has persisted—or changed—in these new settings.

[15] The moderator of the LJCC page does not appear to have directly addressed their own identity on the Facebook page, though interlocutors have reported that it is the same individual who, in the early 2000s, ran a popular blog called *The Jews of Lebanon* detailing the history of the community. Confusion arose around the identity of the individual behind the blog after the historical accuracy of details posted by the author were questioned. Heated discussions followed online as to whether or not a member from outside the community had the authority to write this history for a greater, English-speaking audience. It is not known if this is the only moderator or there are additional individuals behind the account, though replies to individual comments would suggest the latter, as references are made to the author's belonging to a well-known Lebanese Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. For more, see "Revealed."

family, and business partners (2012). Many of these stories come from individuals who lost their Jewish friends and neighbors, seemingly overnight and without warning, to migration. Community-based historians also do the work of providing information on long-lost loved ones and unearthing documents and biographical information on particular people. Before his death, Zeidan both contributed to and served as a popular reference on the forums, and his recently published book *Juifs du Liban: d'Abraham à nos jours, histoire d'une communauté disparue* forms a collection of archival documents, family trees, and other knowledge, which he freely shared on his personal Facebook page in both French and Arabic (Zeidan 2020).

Doing Things with the Past: Group Photographs, Nostalgia, and the Communal Imaginary

Facebook groups catering to Lebanese Jews and their allies act as open source scrapbooks, where members mediate family and archival photos through their recollections and conversations. On July 23, 2017, a participant responding to a post by the LJCC lamented that the Civil War had brought an end to the Jewish community's prosperity and safety, drawing to a close "400 years plus of relative peace" (Y. S., July 25, 2017 , 5:45 a.m.). In response, another member of the forum asked why she would not return, stating "you are needed here . . . to strengthen the Lebanese [national] identity over all other sectarian ones." (N.A., July 26, 2017, 5:51 a.m.). No, the original commenter stated, she would not be returning to Lebanon. Though she identified as a Lebanese Jew, "Lebanon was our home, and sadly we will never return" (Y.S., July 25, 2017, 5:45 a.m.). Such statements, which at once idealize the importance of belonging to the prewar "Lebanese dream" and accept that a Lebanese Jewish future can flourish only in the diaspora, are crucial to this exploration of the role of nostalgia in community-making.

I turn first to two images documenting wedding celebrations at Magen Avraham Synagogue. The photographs were shared on August 24, 2016 by the LJCC's moderator.[16] The source of the archival photographs and the individuals captured in them remain unverified. Forum members admired the photographs, adding a significant number of "likes," and shared them to private Facebook profiles, and left comments with sub-conversations forming new threads on the original responses. Though participants were not present for the documented celebrations and do not know the individuals in the photographs, the photos reposition an ostensible reality as easily "relatable." Geographer Gillian Rose notes that the very concept of a public or shared imaginary "comes into being when a certain object . . . gets read or looked at or listened to or, in other words, is articulated through a practice" (2012, 78). The collection of bulk-posted Magen Avraham wedding photos is undated and lacks captions, but the photos appear to have originated from two different weddings. Among the photos is a couple's black-and-white portrait that shows the bride and groom standing at the center on an aisle rug that runs from the foreground to the background, disappearing behind the synagogue's wooden front doors. Above the doors is an ornate, four-paneled glass window.

[16] LJCC moderator, Aug. 24, 2016 (4:35 a.m.), Post on LJCC, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/BeirutSynagogue/posts/pfbid0NPBgbPpzpcVrbTwyKjAkkpEdRcHY7r2xWNFkAbW1s9eumdTMffrGUPZSGfRKwxBSl.

Figure 29. Bride and groom wedding portrait in front of Magen Avraham, undated, posted to LJCC by the moderator, August 24, 2016 (4:35 a.m.).

The bride, wearing a white wedding dress, stands to the left of her groom. Her hair is mostly covered by a veil that extends down the length of her back, but her face is framed by large, styled curls that were popular at the time (one commenter suggests the photos are from the 1930s, to which the moderator replies that they were likely taken in the 1940s, 50s, or perhaps even 60s). The bride's hands are clasped at waist level, holding what seems to be a bridal bouquet. Her face, painted with dark lipstick for the occasion, is relatively placid but sports a slight smile emphasized by the appearance of dimples. The groom stands to the right of the bride

and appears to be slightly older than his wife. Dressed in a formal suit and hat, he leans to his left to be closer to his bride for the portrait. His western-style suit includes a vest, tie, and contrasting pocket square. He wears a light-colored corsage and a modest smile. In front of the couple, a floral arrangement marks the celebratory atmosphere of the occasion. In the background, the presence of the synagogue enables us to place the couple and identify them as Jewish: a plaque in French names the synagogue as Magen Abraham and its benefactor as a Sassoon of Calcutta. Another version of the plaque's text, in Hebrew, adorns the right side of the entrance to the synagogue.

Though a cursory knowledge of the history embedded in the photograph helps the viewer grasp the photo's context, one need not know the individuals represented in a photograph to identify deeply with the scene and sentiments evoked by the image. Though the original intentions of the photographer and power of the photograph may be swallowed up by the passing of time, Facebook forum participants, commenting on the foreclosed nature of a Jewish future in Lebanon, recall the spirit of the times reflected in the photo, which they see as missing in today's Lebanon. "Tarabish days!" exclaims a Jewish diasporic contributor, though no *tarbush*, the Ottoman-style hat worn by men of all confessions, is visible in the photographs (S.B. Nov. 12, 2012, 9:17 p.m.). The participant uses this shared point of cultural reference to point to a collective sense of belonging that transcended religious community. Yes, "those were Lebanon's golden days," contends a non-Jewish participant (F.A. Nov. 12, 2012, 4:39 a.m.). "There's no place on earth like Lebanon," the same participant goes on to post under another wedding photo. For this participant, wedding photographs convey a sense of "peace and serenity between us all" that is absent from present-day Lebanon and precludes a Jewish presence in the country. "Those

are the days that we do miss!" (F.A. Nov. 12, 2012, 4:41 a.m., comment on LJCC post, Nov. 2, 2012). Community history, as embodied by the photographs, is prosperous and joyous.

Posting celebratory photographs in a Facebook group does more than turn one moment into an event for historical cataloging. The photographs speak to a preference for remembering Magen Avraham as it stood in relation to a particular time and place—in this case, a moment of relative prosperity prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. The individuals photographed in the portrait are mostly unnamed, yet their presence at Magen Avraham gives life to the space as a functioning, lively social arena, allowing viewers to consider the synagogue as more than a relic; the photo can be treated as a representation of the "spirit" of the time.

Figure 30. Group photo of wedding attendees in front of Magen Avraham, undated, posted to LJCC by the moderator, August 24, 2016 (4:35 a.m.)

The large group photo above is another among the images posted in bulk by the moderator of the LJCC's page. The photograph shows a bevy of wedding guests occupying the bottom three-fourths of the frame. Much like the first photograph, this shot evokes the circumstances that made Jewish prosperity possible in Lebanon. Despite the photo's celebratory nature, one participant cannot help but mourn the lack of such events in the country today: "This is sad," she writes. "Where are all of the Jews of Lebanon today?" (S.K.R., Nov. 2, 2012, 4:00 p.m.). In response, a Lebanese Jew responds: "I was 12 years old in this picture . . . the Jews [of Lebanon] are today on all continents, and [we] still love Lebanon [and the] beautiful memories [it gave us]" (J.M., Nov. 13, 2012, 2:42 a.m). The photo becomes a way of "certifying experience" (to use writer Susan Sontag's phrase) but also sidestepping the violent history that led to the Jewish dispersal (1979, 177). Capturing a moment of communal bliss, the photograph conjures nostalgia that continues to unite Lebanese Jews and those who remember them, despite their absence from the country.

Like the first image, the photo's subjects are a bride and groom. They stand in front of the synagogue's main entrance, and from this vantage point, two Greco-Roman style columns, presumably elements of the synagogue's structure, are visible. The bride stands in a crowd of some 50 individuals, and without identifiable emotion, looks directly into the camera as she holds a blooming bridal bouquet. To her left, her husband smiles widely, wearing his suit and cap, which tilts slightly to the left. While the faces in the crowd remain unknown, it seems likely that the photo is composed of the bride and groom's extended families. Children stand in front, looking every which way as they smile, laugh, frown, or seem genuinely uninterested in the documentation process. Behind them, adults assemble in no discernible fashion other than the familiar "squeeze" needed to fit everyone into the camera's eye. To the right, a middle-aged man

bends his knees to allow the photographer to capture the faces of those behind him. In the back row, shorter participants vie for spots between the shoulders of taller family members. Two male and relatively young figures position themselves on tall objects unseen to the viewer, holding onto the columns for support. The subjects are visibly dressed for a celebration, with children outfitted in pinafores, hair bows, suspenders, and suit jackets. The adult men don suits and ties, while the women sport dresses of varying styles.

Photographic images are crucial to the conceptualization of a community's present, not only its past. Images of Lebanese Jewish life reinscribe a communal past and renew its potential meanings for the present, evoking overlapping if distinct memories as they are shared beyond individual pages and groups. Although viewers may not have experienced firsthand what is captured in the photos, they are often knowledgeable about the spaces and places photographed, whether personally or through family lore. Photos posted on the Lebanese Jewish Facebook groups instigate conversations and communal reverie that shape members' understandings of their relationship to the community's history. Enabling viewers to virtually situate themselves in this reality, the images left by an unknown photographer at synagogue events give onlookers a sense of being there, even as they emphasize the distance created by exile.

Through photography and its circulation, what was likely one of many celebrations at the synagogue becomes an object that serves to showcase a vivid fragment of Lebanese Jewish history. "May Wadi Abu Jamil rest in peace," laments a participant in response to the wedding photographs, "and may Beirut rest in peace, too. All that it was has been killed, most recently by Solidere" (M.M. May 28, 2017, 12:34 a.m.). Beyond the photographic frame lie social and historical realities that shaped everyday life in Wadi Abu Jamil before the war and Solidere's subsequent transformation of the neighborhood. Elements such as class, congregational

affiliation, and the social ties that make a marriage desirable evaporate from the frame. What cannot be captured on film is precisely the conditions that evoke nostalgic responses and interest from forum members viewing the images. Photographs have the power to affirm a shared sense of the past but can also elide divisive historical details, Sontag notes, “by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic” (1979, 77). The Jewish wedding photographs do not tell us who funded the celebration or hired the photographer. Noting what is absent from the images emphasizes the concentration of a later-exiled community, its financial means to celebrate, and the practicing of religion in a safe, stable homeland.

The Productivity of Nostalgia: Constructing an Imagined Future for Magen Avraham

In the following section, I argue that photos posted to Lebanese Jewish Facebook groups and pages generate conversation about the prospects for a Jewish future in Lebanon, not only discussions of the community’s presence foreclosed. Through the use of photography, members present images of an imagined future by including and excluding certain concepts through the selection of archival and anonymously created images. First, I turn to an image of the nearly completed synagogue, and in considering this photograph, explore the fantasies projected onto Magen Avraham as it stands today.

Figure 31. New construction of Magen Avraham, posted to LJCC by R.L., April 26, 2017 (11:20 a.m.).

The materiality of Magen Avraham's current reconstruction—a project spawned by communal longing and the role of that structure within Lebanon's postwar revitalization—is captured by an amateur photographer and clandestine visitor to the synagogue. Similar photographs appear across the groups and pages; while some are posted by the photographer, many more are reposts of others' snapshots. Reposted by the moderator of the LJCC on April 26, 2017, is a shot taken by R.L., captioned "Magen Abraham synagogue-Beirut" of the reconstructed Magen Avraham synagogue. Taken from the front, the shot is candid but reveals the architectural intricacies of the synagogue's exterior. The photograph is not attributed and bears no caption. In my research, I discovered that the original photographer submitted the photograph to the page's moderator and also shared it on his personal Facebook page. In an

interview, he told me of the lengths to which he had gone to snap the photo, despite his social proximity to elites connected to Solidere. Eager to share updates with Lebanese Jewish friends he had made online, the photographer got as close as possible to the synagogue and stopped to take some images with his phone. Within a minute, he was approached by private guards who insisted that he show them the photos he took before ordering that he delete them for security reasons. "The rebuilt synagogue is beautiful, but we [Lebanese] deserve access to that part of our history. Jews don't have a reason to come back to Lebanon these days," he lamented during our conversation. "We share the same sense of what it means to be a member of this society. Our cultures are one. I want to keep the spirit that they loved so much in this country alive [by sharing updates], even if it often seems to be a dying spirit."

Situated in the center of the frame, the synagogue displays a Mediterranean-style exterior similar to the architecture of the building's surroundings. Composed of tan stone with slightly darker embellishments, the building's ruddy tile roof, typical of the region, peaks at a statue of the Ten Commandments. The roof's downward slopes are met with a level portion of roof on either side, suggesting a cathedral ceiling inside the building. The exterior, embellished with stonework that streamlines the roof and the frontal exterior, leads to three curved windows in the upper center of the structure, and the middle window is the most ornate. Below the center window, a plaque reads "*Beit knesset Magen Avraham*" in Hebrew (Magen Avraham Synagogue). Below, three arches reminiscent of Andalusian design lead to a covered doorway that shades visitors from the sun upon entering. Carved but relatively austere columns support the arches. The center part of the building is flanked by two imposing entrances, above which an inscribed plaque can be seen. Portions of the doors are blackened, suggesting that they were salvaged from the original structure. Above the plaques are two circular windows. The central

entrance and its veranda host a black cart, presumably used in ongoing construction work. A courtyard stretches from the veranda to a black wrought iron fence supported by four stone pillars, atop which four lights facing inward are found. Inside the courtyard and on both sides of the synagogue are two detached smaller buildings, each inscribed with text on the front. Due to the camera angle, the text is unreadable to viewers of the photo, but these small buildings are likely separate entrances for men and women. The courtyard stands empty except for two well-established, short palm trees. Behind the synagogue tower green construction barriers shield the public from the construction work. In the distance, one can see a building in the same stone style, the exterior of which has darkened with time.

Many photographs of the refurbished synagogue that appear on these groups and pages underscore a tension: though the synagogue is all but ready for ceremonial use, it is without a congregation and rabbi. Because Wadi Abu Jamil remains indefinitely closed to the public, due to ostensible security concerns, and has otherwise been transformed into an inaccessible, gated community for the ultra-wealthy and political elite, Lebanese are kept away from this element of their national past. Shared images of the synagogue in the final stages of construction allow those for whom visiting is impossible to bear witness to the presence of the structure and thus to the presence of Jewish history in Lebanon.

The Facebook participant chose to post a picture of the nearly complete renovation of the synagogue rather than an image of its destruction. Furthermore, given the heavy security presence in the area, the photographer did so secretly, making efforts to go unnoticed. This narrative, however, falls beyond the purview of the camera lens. "In addition to romanticism about the past," explains Sontag, "photography offers instant romanticism about the present (1979, 177). In the photo, the synagogue stands elegantly and near completion, as if tomorrow it

might house a congregation. Not captured in the photo are the guards who mingle outside the synagogue's gate and the high security presence in the area due to the synagogue's location. In this context, the photographer is not simply the messenger but also the creator of a particular lens through which the viewer approaches the synagogue.

That the synagogue seems to remain perpetually closed due to renovations and security threats encourages nostalgia. Because visitors are not able to approach the structure, it remains an ideal target on which to project personal and communal fantasies about the Lebanese Jewish community's role in the past and present. Photos of progress in the reconstruction of Magen Avraham are often accompanied by statements and questions concerning the synagogue's future opening. "Chairs now installed . . . looking forward to welcoming the congregation!" reads one caption of a photograph of the synagogue posted by the moderator of the Lebanese Jewish Community Council on September 12, 2019. "Congratulations!" exclaims a respondent, adding warily, "Do you have a commitment from a Lebanese Jewish rabbi?" (A.H., Nov. 14, 2019, 11:32 p.m.) "My husband was born in Lebanon," another user says, "[and] I'm a Jewish-American . . . my husband's mother is a Syrian Jew . . . we have raised our beautiful children in the Jewish faith . . . how can any of us visit this amazing shul? If it's not possible, why?" (L.H. Sept. 16, 2019, 4:22 a.m.). At first, I assumed these questions were posed by new participants unaware of the security situation in the neighborhood. As I continued to encounter similar comments during my research, however, I realized that these frequently posed questions embody a tension between a collectively imagined future and the realities the community presently faces. In the other groups and pages mentioned in this chapter, details are paltry, leaving participants to speculate about what the synagogue's future role will be.

Nostalgia, then, is not concerned with debating the past (or whether the past is properly represented in the new Magen Avraham) but in rousing personal fantasies and communal conceptualizations of the group's future. Indeed, participants' associations with the synagogue as an object through which to project a possible future dominate discourse and imagery in the Facebook groups. There is a noticeable dearth of images of the synagogue before the Civil War began in 1975 and no photographs at all documenting the synagogue's slow destruction during the 15-year conflict. Much like the wedding photos explored above, the choice to share such photographs demonstrates a desire to imagine the structure as more than a mere building; photographs portray Magen Avraham as an inhabited building, a central site of community life.

Conjuring a Feeling: Nostalgia, Nation-Making, and the Power of Anonymous Photographs

I conclude my analysis with a photograph of Magen Avraham's congregation and sanctuary taken in the 1930s. This photo fosters nostalgia as a feeling of togetherness by evoking language and images of solidarity, not to suggest a true return to prewar Lebanon but to elicit what group participants imagine to be a shared communal ethos of the past that they wish to project into the future.

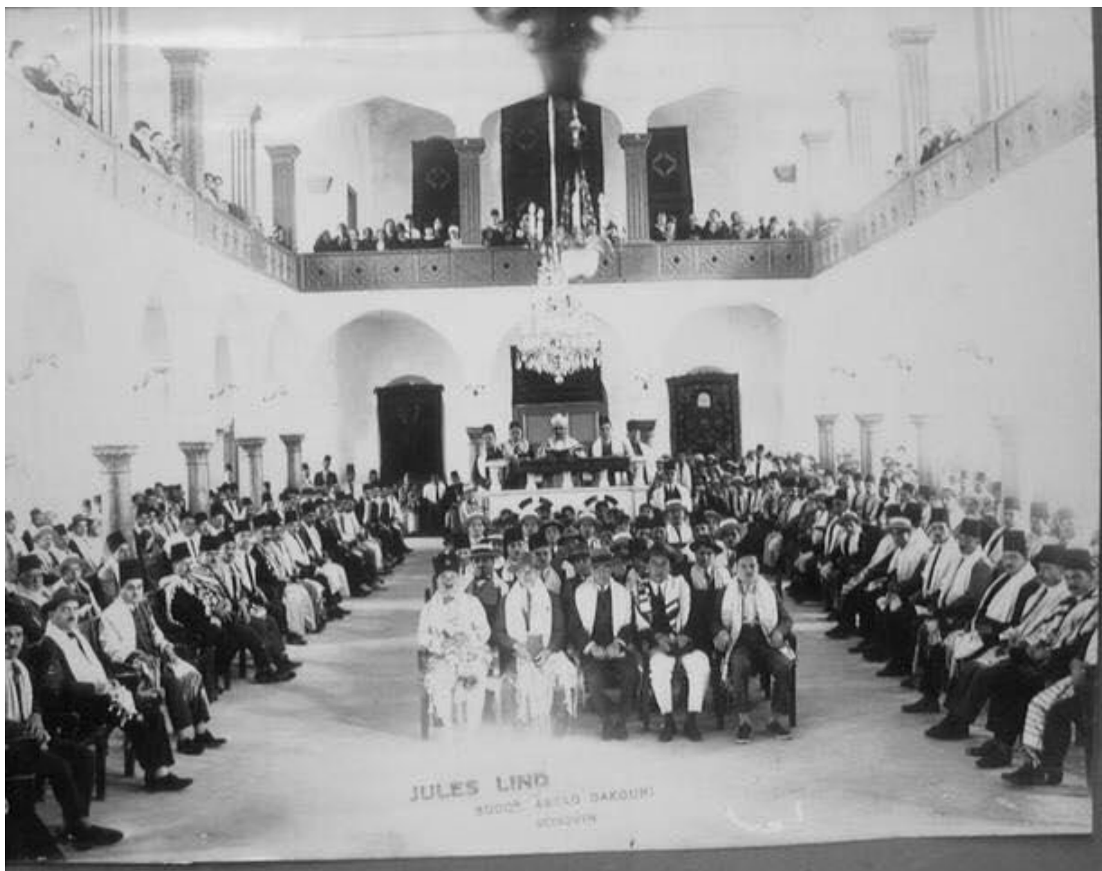

Figure 32. Magen Avraham sanctuary, 1930s, posted to the LJCC by the moderator, November 2, 2014 (4:10 am).

A staged photograph of Magen Avraham's congregation serves as a visual representation of a socially cohesive Jewish community. Posted by the anonymous moderator of the LJCC on its forum on November 2, 2014, is an image of Magen Avraham's congregation. It is captioned simply, "Magen Abraham, 1930s." The photographer faces the synagogue's exit, capturing the congregants in totality. Members are shown seated in rows on all sides of the bimah, which is centrally placed according to the traditional Sephardi location. Men donning *ṭarabish* and prayer shawls occupy the first level of the synagogue with all gazes fixed on the camera. Four men are seated on the bimah, suggesting they hold important religious roles within the synagogue. Though it is not possible to make out the faces or the dress of those seated in the balcony, its place as a women's section is corroborated by posts in the comments. An elegant chandelier

hangs above congregants seated directly in front of the bimah. Another chandelier slightly obscures the photographer's view and can be seen from the close, unfocused gaze of the camera. The inside of the synagogue resembles the exterior captured in the photographs analyzed above, with columns and arches supporting the structure's frame. The photo's watermark is partially legible as "Jules Lind." Upon research, I discovered Jules Lind to be the German-born proprietor of a photography studio based in Lebanon, though elaborations on the watermark are absent from the Facebook comments thread.[17]

Speculation in the comments that accompany the photograph demonstrate a desire to understand the practices, customs, and lived realities that united members of Magen Avraham's congregation. Forum participants focus on visual clues that suggest unity, both the internal Jewish community's and in its relationship to Lebanese society. Participants pay close attention to the sartorial choices of congregants; one participant, a former resident of Beirut, takes note of the men's dress, noting that his grandfathers, rabbis, and Jewish schoolteachers wore *ṭarabish* rather than kippot, suggesting at least a superficial affinity with the cultural standards of the time, even in fully Jewish or religious settings.[18] Building on the discussion, another participant comments that not only were the clothes worn by his grandparents similar to those of other Lebanese at the time, but his family used, and continues to use, common shared religious language, such as *rab* (lord, god).[19] While certainly not an unusual case for Jews throughout the

---

[17] Though I first encountered this photograph on Facebook, it appears widely across blogs focusing on "Old Beirut/Lebanon" as well as those interested in the preservation and archiving of Lebanese photography. The photo can also be found on Flickr, where the comments section shows participants reflecting similarly on the place of Jews and the perceived tolerance and pluralism of Lebanon prior to the flight of the Jewish community. S. C. "Large photo taken by Jules Lind in Beyruit [sic]," Flickr, Aug. 5, 2007, https://www.flickr.com/photos/9679871@N04/1021115396.

[18] A. E., Nov. 2, 2014 (9:29 p.m.), Comment on LJCC, "Magen Abraham, 1930's."

[19] D. Z. E., Nov. 2, 2014 (5:19 p.m.), Comment on LJCC, "Magen Abraham, 1930's."

Arab world, the musings of participants on the Facebook group suggest an appreciation for the Jewish community's shared cultural norms with Lebanese society.

Such sentiments, however, do not necessarily signal a wish to rehabilitate the Jewish community's role in Lebanese society. Further commentary on the picture reveals two participants who recognize men in the photograph; one notes that before leaving for Montreal, the man in question—the participant's cousin—was the commissioner general of the Beirut police force. Another participant, noting the presence of women but the absence of particular religious clothing, posits that perhaps non-Jews were present for a special event at the synagogue when the photograph was taken. Though such comments emphasize a collective interpretation of the past whereby members of Lebanese society shared cultural markers and ostensibly acted as equals, instead of suggesting a desire to return to Lebanese society today, the comments that follow the photograph suggest a nostalgic admiration for a time when the community was both integrated into and integral to Lebanese society.

Conclusions: Nostalgia as a Tool for the Future

As I have explored in this chapter, nostalgia is not simply a symptom of a once geographically bound community facing a future in exile. As displayed in the analyzed Facebook groups, nostalgic reverie, sparked by the sharing of photographic images, serves as a catalyst for identifying a cultural heritage that might unite Jewish and non-Jewish Lebanese participants. Identifying aspects of a shared history—however glorified and incomplete it may be—provides a framework for maintaining Jewish communal identity. Despite participants' disinterest in returning to Lebanon, this framework fosters emotional attachment to the circumstances that non-Jewish Lebanese face in the country. Furthermore, conversations triggered by the circulation

of anonymous photographs, alongside discussions pertaining to the renovation of Jewish spaces such as the Magen Avraham, help nurture a connection to contemporary Beirut. While following events "on the ground," participants remain removed enough to idealize the projects from afar. Public forums such as Facebook groups and pages give insight into the ways in which nostalgia flourishes in the diaspora in ways that build on former concepts of nation-making and the circulation of communal ideals.

Given the realities of postwar Lebanon, the example of the Lebanese Jewish diaspora's interaction with non-Jewish Lebanese in digital realms provides a useful case study for considering the ways that the greater Lebanese diaspora conceptualizes both its future abroad and its continued connection to Lebanon. Furthermore, the circulation of photographic images among the Lebanese diaspora remains a crucial catalyst for conjuring memories of and sentimental ties to the ostensible homeland, and thus encourages the flow of, among other exchanges, investments, remittances, and tourism. It is my hope that as an analytic framework, analyses of nostalgic sentiments evoked by the economy of photographic images might serve as a framework through which to examine possible future relations between nation-states and their displaced, but nonetheless crucial, communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Whose Jewish Sidon?: Cultural Stewardship and the Material Legacy of Jews in a Southern Lebanese City

Figure 33. Sidon (Saida) shown on a map of coastal southern Lebanon, with the medieval Old City outlined in red. The location of Sidon's Ḥarat al-Yahūd (the Jewish Quarter) is marked by a red circle. Map by author. August 2023.

Part I: Introduction

This chapter explores the afterlives of Jewish spaces in Sidon, Lebanon's third largest city. Chapter 2 of this dissertation addressed the ways in which state and state-adjacent actors have incorporated Lebanon's Jewish past into the post-war built environment in Beirut. Chapter 3 considered how Jewish and non-Jewish Lebanese collaboratively reminisce about a shared national past through the circulation of photographs of an enlivened Magen Avraham Synagogue on online forums. This chapter looks at a locale that, as opposed to Beirut's downtown, has received little attention from those in high-up positions hoping to showcase Lebanon's Jewish past. Rather than considering how Lebanon's Jewish history is configured within an elite

narrative of who and what the post-war state and its past serves, as I have addressed previously in this dissertation, this chapter engages with the non-elite appropriation of formerly Jewish spaces. Magen Avraham occupies the category of what Amy Mills deems an "intentionally commemorative landscape:" though competing memories may converge on the site, its Jewishness and place in Lebanese history is mediated, at least in part, by elite actors and its? the state's heritage agenda (2010, 6). Conversely, looking at quotidian spaces in Sidon, as opposed to elite, prohibited spaces like those in downtown Beirut, calls attention to how interactions with the urban vernacular "mediat[es] the tensions of national belonging" at the local level (ibid).

Unlike in Beirut, where the city's formerly Jewish neighborhood has been transformed into a gated residential community, Sidon's Jewish neighborhood and its current residents, as well as the surrounding landscape that once formed the crux of Jewish life in Sidon, have largely been overlooked by the upper echelons of the Lebanese state. The Jewish Quarter—commonly referred to as both *Ḥay al-Yahūd* and *Ḥarat al-Yahūd* (the Jewish Neighborhood/the Jewish Quarter), is located within Sidon's walled medieval city, a neighborhood largely deemed undesirable by middle and upper-class Sidonians for its high level of poverty, lack of municipal services, and crumbling infrastructure. The Jewish Quarter is today home to a large number of Palestinian and Syrian refugees and migrant workers who made their homes in the abandoned properties of Sidon's Jews, including the neighborhood's ancient synagogue.

I first came to explore the afterlives of Sidon's Jewish spaces through their proximity to the Tomb of Zebulun. This unassuming, domed structure is situated in a field adjacent to a mosque to the south of the city's ancient core. Thought to be the burial site of the biblical prophet Zebulun, the tomb was an important springtime pilgrimage point for Jews from the

Middle Ages until the lead-up to the Civil War. When first visiting the site in 2016, I found it amidst an unkempt field, with the main path to the locked entrance blocked by briars.

Figure 34. The locked Tomb of Zebulun sits in an unkempt field adjacent to a mosque in the city of Sidon. Photo courtesy of Diarna.org.

No one in the adjacent mosque knew, or was willing to disclose, who held the key to the shrine. When I asked a Lebanese friend with familial ties to Sidon whether or not they had ever visited the site, he replied that he hadn't; but, he asked, did I know about the families residing in the city's ancient synagogue nearby in Sidon's Ḥarat al-Yahūd?

Sidon's Jewish Quarter has risen to prominence in the public eye over the course of recent years, suggesting its centrality in a number of intersecting memoryscapes. Over the past decade, the residents of the synagogue have become a source of fascination for visitors and journalists wishing to understand more about the overshadowed elements of Lebanon's Jewish past, whether they themselves be Jewish or otherwise. Articles in English, Arabic, and Hebrew

have echoed the tones of surprise in "discovering" that, for many years, the residents now inhabiting the neighborhood's ancient synagogue were ignorant of the space's prior religious function.

Sidon's Jewish Quarter has also been the site of performative efforts by local actors to "rename" the neighborhood in solidarity with the ongoing plight of Palestinians. These two acts have involved replacing the neighborhood's Arabic name placard, which hangs rather unassumingly above an archway of one of the neighborhood's narrow alleys. The taking down of the sign, which will be explored in full in this chapter, has been the work of different initiatives: both an Islamic sheik and a group of neighborhood youth have, in response to political upheavals, staged ceremonious removals, stating that their actions are undertaken as acts of support with current events in Palestine/Israel. The removed sign was, in each of the two instances, replaced with a placard bearing a "new" name for the neighborhood which, in both instances, bore references to different geographies in Palestine.

While Wadi Abu Jamil is located in close proximity to some of downtown Beirut's most touted heritage sites, Sidon is, as a whole, farther from the beaten path of tourists and international attention. Despite this, efforts have been made by family foundations, *awqaf* (religious charitable organizations), most commonly Islamic but also Christian and Jewish, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) to revamp nearby historic sites, once-stately family homes, and a small number of streets. The residents who live in or interact with the Jewish Quarter thus contend with rehabilitation projects that largely aim to put Sidon on Lebanon's tourist map while doing little to better their lived reality. At the same time, these inhabitants are, by nature of living in a formerly Jewish neighborhood, made to serve as the unlikely representatives of an absent community's history: in 2012, for instance, the Jewish

Quarter's residents received a delegation of American ultra-Orthodox, anti-Zionist rabbis, who made widely-publicized visits to Sidon's synagogue and cemetery in addition to meeting with local residents before joining in a solidarity march to mark Land Day.[20] Despite the interest that has arisen around Sidon's Jewish heritage, issues around how much control non-Jewish heritage brokers should be able to exert have arisen. So, too, have questions of custodianship come to the forefront as Jewish artifacts have been unearthed in the vicinity of Sidon.

I begin this chapter with an overview of the theory informing my ethnographic reading of the afterlives of Jewish spaces in Sidon. I proceed with a brief synopsis of Sidon's general history, as well as an introduction to the city's Jewish past. I then divide the remaining chapter into two parts: Part II explores the history and present of Ḥarat al-Yahūd, where contestations over the naming and labeling of space have taken place in recent years. I also consider how Palestinians and Syrians now living in the Quarter have become inheritors of the neighborhood's Jewish past, acting as the default stewards of its history through their interactions with visitors to its ancient synagogue. I then consider the non-Jewish cultural stewards in Sidon interface with local politicians, and how these interactions play out according to markers of social status and citizenship. In the third portion of the chapter, Part III, I describe two cases of "discovered" Jewish artifacts: the first, a Torah taken from Sidon's synagogue to Israel by Israeli occupying forces during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon (called Operation Peace for Galilee in Israeli military parlance); the second, another Torah discovered by a Palestinian refugee and safeguarded by a local Lebanese historian who, although not himself Jewish, maintained deep

[20] Land Day, a commemoration held annually on March 30, marks events held in 1976 by Palestinian citizens of Israel (and in the occupied territories in solidarity) in response to Israel's plans to expropriate thousands of *dunam*s of privately held land for state purposes. Protesters organized a general strike and country-wide marches, in which six unarmed Palestinians were killed and hundreds wounded and arrested. Today, the events are marked by Palestinians worldwide as a watershed moment in the struggle against their ongoing displacement.

ties to the Lebanese Jewish diaspora before his sudden death in 2022. I address these two cases in order to demonstrate how issues of cultural stewardship are related to broader themes of representation and ownership of an absent community.

Literature Review

Though Sidon's "Jewish" character and past is the focus of my inquiry, the ways in which this history is recalled, both in the material landscape of the city and by its current residents, are filtered through a range of personal experiences, political orientations, and social networks. As Yael Navaro writes in the context of Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus, the ways that the past remains embedded in the built environment despite the passing of time cannot be understood as separate from how this history is imagined phantomically—through the perception of the neighborhood's now-absent residents—by those who engage with its materiality (2012). Despite their absence from Sidon today, the Jews who once called the city home exert a lingering presence through the spaces they left when migrating, and by the ways they continue to interact with these spaces both monetarily and affectively by, for example, collecting small sums of rent on their properties or funding the clean-up of Sidon's Jewish cemetery.

I also draw on Walter Benjamin's notion of "constellations" in order to think through how disparate spaces, historical narratives, and present-day actors are connected, often non-casually (2019). Benjamin coined the phrase "homogenous, empty time" to capture the ways in which the notion of time has been divorced from human history, gaining its meaning only in how it orders particular events. It is only in observing the ruin or monument, Benjamin claims, that individual historic events or stories become distinguishable. By contrast, the notion of the constellation acknowledges that the material world both stores a multiplicity of histories and

dictates how these histories unfold in the present (1940, 7). Reading these sites through the lens of the constellation is to acknowledge the instability of the formation: the ways in which people, places, and histories are woven together are constantly in flux, adapting to incorporate new elements and taking new trajectories. As such, the objects and spaces that may, at first glance, seem to "anchor" the constellation—in this case, Sidon's Jewish spaces—are, as Andrea Krauß asserts, "both the instrument and the object of reading, mutually intertwined with each other in complex interaction" (2011, 440). In the cases explored in this chapter, the formerly Jewish spaces of Sidon are both the sites in which political disputes play out and material elements of the built environment that, in both hosting and influencing social relations, impact how personal and communal imaginaries take shape.

I employ Michael Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory in my effort to assess how the constellations in which Jewish history and space is embedded act as a prism through which actors come to understand other geographies and narratives of displacement and exile (2009). Rothberg argues that, against the notion that the legacy of the Holocaust supersedes the violence of colonialism, racism, occupation, and slavery in popular memory, actors come to understand these legacies of violence alongside, rather than in competition with, the aftermath of the Holocaust. Sidon, too, acts as a space in which "different histories of extreme violence confront each other in the public sphere" (2011, 523). Rather than cancel each other out, Rothberg contends, memory work begets more memory work, even when different social group's history of victimization is a key component of their collective identity. In the case of Sidon, where the memory of no-longer present Jews intersects with the protracted displacement of Palestinians from their homeland and the refusal of the Lebanese state to incorporate them into its citizenry, the intersection of these memoryscapes is particularly stark.

Finally, I wish to return to the theme of the tour in order to frame my own associative spatial and historic analysis, through which I aim to upend the seeming disconnect between Sidon's Jewish Quarter's past and present through relational storytelling. Treks such as the grand tour, mostly undertaken by elite, educated young men who, in their sojourn, stripped "cultural knowledge down to its barest essentials," which provided historic, literary, and intellectual fodder the grand tour's sibling: the military expedition, like the one undertaken by the Israeli battalion explored later in this chapter (Buchanan 2016, 596). The organizing concept of the grand tour motif seeks to present an unknown land according to a hegemonic, highly regulated order by presenting the Western tourist with a linear series of stories through which he comes to understand his surroundings. As I contend in Chapter 2, Lebanon's popularity as a tourist destination, its heavy economic reliance on tourism, and its inclusion in 17th-19th century grand tour itineraries have deeply shaped the present-day tourist encounter. My experience in Sidon diverges from fieldwork conducted in Wadi Abu Jamil (Beirut's formerly Jewish neighborhood, explored in Chapter 2) as both a tour guide and a walking tour participant, where the professionalized guide serves as the designated "host" through which participants interact with what Ed Bruner calls touristic border zones (2004). In such circumstances, the professional tour guide acts as, through different forms of performance and communication, the selector of relevant information, the narrator of history, and the interpreter of what the tourist senses on the ground (Cohen 1985). In Sidon, as I will elaborate, my guides were not professionalized in the traditional sense, having amassed experience in narrating their lives and surroundings to visitors outside of official or mainstream avenues such as the Ministry of Tourism or tourism companies. Indeed, their mediating role is one spurred by the happenstance of dwelling in, or having been raised amidst, a formerly Jewish neighborhood whose history—while a topic of fascination for its select

visitors—remains largely outside the interests of official state discourses. The "performance" of such ad-hoc tour guides, as Jackie Feldman and Jonathan Skinner assert, will differ from trained guides, necessitating "the need for grounding the multiplicity of guide-tourist in specific local histories, power situations and institutional frames" (2019).

Sidon: a Jewish-focused historical overview

Sidon is located on the Mediterranean coast some 35 kilometers to the south of Beirut.
The city of Sidon has, since time immemorial, featured prominently on the mental map of Jewish communities in the Holy Land. According to the Greek geographer Strabo, Sidon is the oldest city in Canaan (Jacobs and Ochser 2007). The ancient core of Sidon, at the western edge of the contemporary city, has been a site of settlement since antiquity and came to fruition in its current form at the end of the Crusader period (1095-1302; Nahas 2007). Until the 19th century, Sidon's role as a fishing town, port city, and entryway to the Levantine hinterland overshadowed Beirut's social and economic importance. In the last century of the Ottoman Empire, Sidon—as well as Tripoli—were the primary ports of the Eastern Mediterranean. As recently as the French Mandate period, Sidon was conceived as an integral node on the region's economic map: its location on the Haifa-Beirut-Tripoli railway placed Sidon within the social and physical network of cities in modern Palestine and Lebanon.

By the end of the Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831-40), however, the growth of Beirut's size and prominence led to the waning of Sidon's status in favor of Beirut's processes of capitalization (Fawaz 1983; Hanssen 2005). As Aline Schlaepfer accounts, recordings of historians and local notables who internally witnessed Sidon's financial and cultural decline describe a "crushing" of the city by Beirut, which was met with local "nostalgia and despair"

(2021, 3). As was the case within the leadership of various local religious councils, Schlaepfer contends, the sidelining of the city posed existential problems for the Jewish community of Sidon.

The Jewish community in Sidon once functioned independently from the institutions that would, in the early 20th century, coalesce around the new capital, Beirut. Following the establishment of France's mandate in Lebanon, all local Jewish councils, who had independently overseen community affairs without much central oversight, became subservient to a central governing body in Beirut. This followed the model of the *consistoire* (consistory), a system established by Napoleon I in 1806 to centrally govern Jewish congregations throughout France and its imperial territories. In 1922, Beirut's chief rabbi was made the chief rabbi for the whole of Lebanon, strengthening Sidon's reliance on the capital for decision-making and further severing historical links to Jewish life in Palestine by granting Beirut-based religious and community leaders final say over the affairs of Sidon (Schlaepfer 2021, 7).

Though Jews in Sidon, as was the case with Jews across Lebanon, never faced the state-sanctioned anti-Jewish violence found in neighboring countries, the fate of Sidon's Jewish community demonstrates the historical intricacies lost when painting the case of Lebanese Jews with an overly-broad and rose-colored brush. Much of the scant scholarship on Lebanese Jews has aimed to challenge the narrative that Jews of Arab countries all faced major, state-sponsored persecution by showing an historic disinterest in the Zionist state-building project. Yet, as Yaël Mizrahi-Arnaud points out, these efforts to de-essentialize the fate of Jews in the Middle East can sometimes obscure the fact that creation of the State of Israel, and indeed the very notion of a Jewish homeland in the Eastern Mediterranean, emphatically *did* change the lived reality of many Jews in Lebanon (n.d.). The Jewish community in Sidon had a complex relationship with

the *Yishuv* (Jewish settlement in Palestine prior to 1948) and with the concept of political Zionism more generally; Sidon's geographic proximity to what would later become Israel meant that, historically, the Sidon community heavily invested itself with Jewish life to the south. As Mizrahi-Arnaud shows, while the Sidonian community did not show its enthusiasm for Jewish efforts to settle in Palestine through organized mass relocation, it did demonstrate a "keen appreciation" for the idea of Zionism through material support to the Yishuv and a close association between Sidonian and Palestinian rabbis. According to Kirsten Schulze, Sidon's Jewish community was likely the most heavily hit by the social implications of Israel's establishment and the Palestinian Nakba of 1948. In 1947, amidst rising tensions, representatives of the Jews of Sidon visited the Permanent Office for Palestine to complain about local attacks made on their community. As a group, they declared their condemnation of the Partition of Palestine, but "the Palestine question had brought to the surface the sectarian divisions to such an extent that the incidents against Lebanon's Jews almost paled into insignificance by comparison" (2009, 71).

Sidon's proximity to historic Palestine, some 70 kilometers north, and its status as a majority Sunni city, made it an important refuge for Palestine refugees following the *nakba* in 1948. The Palestinian refugees who, when forcibly displaced from their land found themselves in Sidon, settled predominantly in two refugee camps: Ein El-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh, located on the periphery of the city. Some, particularly those who did not register with the United Nations after arriving in the wake of the 1967 *naksa* or others who found the conditions in the camps unlivable, made homes within Sidon's Old City, where vacant properties were most available. Sidon has long been well-known throughout the Levant for its rich agricultural terrains. Farmers of the city have historically grown figs, oranges, and pomegranate in the many orchards that

encircled the periphery of Sidon's urban core. Some of these orchards were, and remain, on Jewish-owned land that is today on the outskirts of the city. Even as Jewish families moved to the capital, many commuted back south to tend to their agricultural businesses.

Property rights in post-Civil War Lebanon are notoriously difficult to assert, as family properties are often co-owned by numerous individuals dispersed across the diaspora; according to Lebanese property law, all must be physically present in Lebanon in order to assert or relinquish their shares, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deadlocked and often derelict properties across the country. What's more, Palestinians are, by law, barred from purchasing property in Lebanon (in addition to holding over 20 white-collar professions or, in most cases, obtaining citizenship) (Ibrahim 2008). The entanglement of properties once occupied by—and still owned by—Lebanese Jews is further apparent when one examines the farmland on which Sidon's aforementioned largest Palestinian refugee camps now sit. With the arrival of Palestinian refugees, some of this land was rented to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to build camps and schools for the displaced, which today stretch far beyond their original allotted territory to accommodate Palestinians displaced from other areas during the Civil War. According to my interlocutors, Jewish families in the diaspora continue to collect paltry, almost-symbolic rent on the land leased to UNRWA, though in most cases this very small amount is paid on the original land rented to the organization and does not include its expanded domain. In at least one case, a Lebanese Jewish family in the diaspora brought UNRWA to court in Sidon to assert their right to collect additional rent on their land, which expanded far beyond the original rental agreement. Though I was not able to view the court documentation, I was told that the family was successful in their lawsuit. Success, in this case, was not measured by a large financial benefit, but by symbolically

asserting the family's continued ownership over their historic land on which, perhaps someday, the present-day camp might become obsolete if Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are allowed their right of return or—perhaps an even more out-of-reach dream, given the xenophobia and legal barriers they face— naturalized by the Lebanese state. In a surprising turn of events, agricultural land owned by Jewish families would become centers of Palestinian commando efforts: the Politis, a Jewish family from Sidon, owned the orchards in which Yasser Arafat was sheltered when hunted by enemies (Ammon News 2007).

Feelings of neglect at the hands of the capital's officials were common amongst Sidonians, Jews and non-Jews alike, and would plague Sidon far beyond the Ottoman and French Mandate periods. This discomfit was especially heightened during and preceding Israel's violent invasion of Lebanon, which transformed into a protracted occupation of the south of the country. Though external to Israel's so-called buffer zone, where occupation lasted until 2000, Sidon's status as the capital of South Lebanon made it inextricable from the surrounding geography.

A mix of residences and commercial establishments, the Old City today—referred to interchangeably in Lebanese Arabic as al-Balad (the town) or Saida al-Qadimeh (old Sidon)—contains many historically important sites, the largest number of which date to the Ottoman era. The Old City remained fully enclosed within walls until the 20th century, when access points were constructed along the sea road. Many of the religious centers in the Old City today are thought to have been built atop the remains of earlier structures (Al-Harithy and Guadagnoli 2021). The winding, pedestrian-only pathways of the Old City provide a glimpse of life under the Islamic era (637-1110) that are increasingly rare in Lebanon. It is within this section of Sidon that the city's Jewish Quarter is located.

Several factors have contributed to the current makeup of Sidon's Old City. Today, there are roughly 5,200 residents of the Old City, less than half of whom are Lebanese. According to a recent UN Habitat study, most of these non-Lebanese residents are Palestinian, hailing in particular from the coastal areas around Haifa and 'Akka (Acre), though the Syrian Civil War has introduced a large number of Syrian and Syrian-born Palestinians to the neighborhood. Sidon was struck by a devastating earthquake in 1956, which prompted more well-to-do Lebanese moving out of the Old City as Sidon's new boulevards were built (UN Habitat 2019, ii). The Israeli invasion and occupation of Sidon (1982-85) also caused untold damage to Sidon's Old City. There is a dearth of public urban and social services, with international non-governmental organizations stepping in to provide service provisions where Sidon Municipality has fallen short. NGO-led projects aimed at improving the livelihoods and conditions of Old City residents sit side by side with more recent urban renewal projects, which, through private means, have sought to revive some of the Old City's stately and culturally important institutions. One example of this is the Audi Soap Museum, which, revived and overseen by the Audi Family Foundation, transformed an abandoned family residence and its immediate surroundings into a tourist destination focused on Sidon's ancient practice of artisanal soapmaking (Al-Hagla 2010, 234). Another attraction for Lebanese and foreign visitors is the well-preserved Khan al-Franj (French Caravanserai), dating to 1612 (ibid).

Part II: Sidon's Ḥarat al-Yahūd

As Henri Lefebvre contends, everyday practices and broader schemes of capitalism and imperialism converge to produce space that, in turn, reproduces the ways in which that space is navigated and conceptualized (1992). Space is thus treated as a product of historical

accumulation. The built environment, in serving as a home for myriad different people across time, physically accumulates "discarded residues of the past as a kind of involuntary memory" (Murray 2008, 39). In order to lay claim to part of that history in the present, argues Martin Murray, actors "elicit this city memory" through actions that both point to the realities of the space's past and present "a prescient foretaste of what is to come" (ibid). In the case of Sidon's Jewish Quarter, this unfixed nature of a place's identity comes to the forefront in contestations over signage and the naming of the neighborhood.

I first met Ahmed at his cafe during a break on a research trip to Sidon with Janan, a Lebanese architect, housing advocate, and close collaborator in her mid-20s with whom I designed a walking tour of Beirut's formerly Jewish neighborhood, Wadi Abu Jamil (see Chapter 2). Ahmed is a Palestinian in his late fifties who was born in and has spent his whole life in Sidon. I made his acquaintance when Janan and I stopped for a juice and rest in Sidon's Old City. Ahmed, who is in his mid-fifties, is the proprietor of a cafe located in a refurbished square in close proximity to the Jewish Quarter. It was a slow morning at the cafe, and Ahmed approached our table to ask what had brought us to Sidon. When I shared my research plans, Ahmed was enthused, and offered to escort us to the nearby synagogue. The synagogue had been the home of different waves of Palestinian and Syrian refugees and workers for some time. As a Palestinian owner of a popular business frequented by locals and tourists alike, Ahmed was well acquainted with the neighborhood's residents; indeed, what was usually a five-minute walk between the cafe and the synagogue became an unhurried amble as Ahmed stopped to greet neighbors and friends along the way.

The synagogue, formerly the center of religious life for Jews in Sidon, has been divided into multiple, separate apartment-like arrangements. After the end of the Civil War, a Syrian-

Palestinian man who had come to Lebanon seeking work had found the building derelict, so he cleaned it up and made it a home for his family. In 2016, the man, Jihad al-Muhammad, told "The World" that he had not been aware of the building's former significance until, in the years after the cessation of the war, a stream of visitors began knocking on his door asking to see the building's interior.

Fig 35. The placard reading Ḥarat al-Yahūd announces one's arrival to Sidon's Jewish Quarter. Photo by Iraqi journalist and researcher Hussain Abdul-Hussain. 2023.

Figure 36. On the left, Sunni Sheikh Khader al-Kabsh replaces the neighborhood's placard with one reading Harat Ghazza (Gaza Quarter) in solidarity with Palestinians facing Israeli bombardment. In 2017, the original sign was again replaced with one "renaming" the neighborhood Harat al-Quds (Jerusalem Quarter), this time by neighborhood youth protesting then-US president Trump's plan to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. Photos courtesy of saidadays.com (2009) and al-akhbar.com (2019), respectively.

Sign Battles

Ahmed, Janan, and I made our way through the maze of small streets, periodically moving to the side of the path to let a motorbike or a wooden cart pass ahead of us. On our way to the synagogue, we passed a placard marking the entrance to Ḥarat al-Yahūd (see figure 33). Ahmed told us that the placard was just one of the three to be recently hung above this very archway: the Ḥarat al-Yahūd sign was first removed in 2008, when Sunni Sheikh Khader al-Kabsh replaced the sign with one reading *Harat Ghaza* (Gaza Quarter). In a speech attacking Israel, the *sheikh*,

who is close to Hezbollah and later went on to fight with their forces in Syria in 201, raised the sign, he claimed, as a symbol of solidarity with Palestinians and against Israel's bombardment of Gaza. Though the placard reading Ḥarat al-Yahūd was eventually returned by the municipality, it was again removed in 2017 and replaced with one reading *Ḥarat al-Quds* (Jerusalem Quarter), this time by a group of young residents of the neighborhood protesting President Donald Trump's announced plan to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and declare the city the capital of Israel. The sign was replaced, the youth told newspaper al-Akhbar, again as an act of solidarity, this time with calls for a general strike across Palestine (Khalil 2019). Though the original sign had been returned by the municipality, Ahmed chuckled that perhaps it would soon again come down, depending on what events were to play out with neighbors to the south. Though the placard in question may seem small, both in terms of materiality and in the context of an otherwise impoverished neighborhood, the debate it sparked are demonstrative of how political claims are inscribed onto the built environment.

Those replacing the neighborhood sign in Sidon have done so in explicit expressions of solidarity with the ongoing plight of those in Palestine and in opposition to Israel's military and territorial actions. This symbolic renaming of Ḥarat al-Yahūd engages, from afar and in an inverse fashion, with the Israeli state's practice of reproducing power in the built environment by replacing Palestinian place names with ones relevant to Israeli nationalism and culture. Processes of (re)naming, explains Julie Peteet, are "not only components of a repertoire of mechanisms of rule and a prominent part of historical transitions but are, methodologically speaking, themselves a means of tracking power" (2006, 154). Though they may at first appear as attempts to reconstitute lost geographies at the expense of other communal histories whose names lay claim to the same space, in Sidon, these actions can be understood as an argument claiming

Palestinians' right to exist and a reminder for all who access that space that its residents' are suspended in an ongoing exile. Peteet, whose research concerns the geographies of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, suggests that the geography of exile constructed by Palestinians reflects that of their former homeland; it is layered with references to the Palestinian experience of displacement. Although the actors in Sidon physically replacing the neighborhood sign are not exclusively Palestinian, Sidon's historic proximity to Palestine, its status as one of the largest centers around which Palestinian refugees converge, and the toll the Israeli occupation left all offer fodder for the battle of the signs in Ḥarat al-Yahūd. Such performative statements, with effects that linger past the original sign's removal, claims Noam Leshem, "distil[l] a rich political history and expos[e] the unfinished effort to remake the spatial history of Israel-Palestine…through [references to] intricate temporalities and spatialities" (Leshem 2017, 105).

Despite the multiple changes in signage, the Jewish Quarter continues to be referred to as Ḥarat al-Yahūd by its residents today. Ahmed, our impromptu guide, could not place the date that the original sign had been hung, so we decided to ask around. The Jewish Quarter has been known as such for a "very long time," an elderly shop owner in his eighties on the outskirts of the neighborhood told me, although he too could not quantify the age of its unofficial title, nor did he remember when the controversial sign in question was originally raised. Like others with whom I spoke, the owner of this small corner store selling foodstuffs and household items, who is Lebanese and grew up in the Old City, remembered his Jewish friends from the neighborhood with fondness. He would sometimes undertake the role of Shabbat helper, he told me, leveraging his status as a non-Jew to help his Jewish neighbors with cooking or operating electrical appliances. During his childhood, there were many long-established Jewish businesses in the Old City that contributed to the economic and social life of the neighborhood. Jews in Sidon were

well-known for their role as money lenders and exchangers—as were many Jews across the Ottoman Empire—occupying a role forbidden for Muslims by Islamic law (Gerber 1981). Other Jewish families in Sidon were goldsmiths, traded textiles, and worked as tailors, all classic Jewish professions across the Middle East and North Africa.

Sidon's synagogue

From the small corner store, we continued on toward the synagogue. I had visited the synagogue before, but its residents had not been home to let me peek within. This time, Ahmed insisted enthusiastically, it would be different. And indeed it was: we descended into a covered entrance, where blue paint similar to the kind that had once adorned the synagogue peeled from the stone. After knocking on the door, Ahmed told the young woman who answered that we were foreign researchers—brushing over the fact that Janan was Lebanese—and that I was Jewish, and that we were interested in seeing the synagogue. Could we have a look around? The woman who had answered our knock, dressed in her house clothes, nodded without smiling and let us in. She moved to the side, as if to get out of our way; as if she was used to the whole affair, and living in the synagogue came with the burden of temporary inconvenience for the sake of history. I had been told by Jewish Lebanese interlocutors prior to this visit that the synagogue's current residents paid a small sum of rent each month to the Jewish waqf. Though I had told Ahmed that my main interest was the role of the synagogue as domestic shelter, he could not help focus on the building's structure over its present-day use: did I see the Stars of David affixed to the ceiling's wrought iron, he asked (see figure 35)? There weren't many "Jewish" elements of the building left, he said, but this was one of them. Sensing that our presence was an intrusion on the lives of the residents, I decided to make no mention of the peeling blue paint and its connection

to Mediterranean kabbalistic ideas of luck and protection, as it was said to be (amongst its many attributed symbolisms) the color the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle or temporary shelter), in which the Israelites dwelled in the desert following the Exodus (see figure 36; Sagiv 2017). "Have you lived here for a long time?" I asked the resident, attempting to strike up conversation. "My whole life," she said, her eyes still focused on the ground. Sensing her disinterest, I tried to show my sympathy and acknowledge her generosity in allowing us to interrupt her afternoon. "I suppose you get visitors like us often," I offered. She shrugged, looking elsewhere: "it's normal."

Though abandoned religious buildings turned into makeshift homes for refugees have rarely been taken up as a topic of academic study in their own right, religious sites have a long history of secondary purpose as shelters for the displaced, whether due to war or other circumstances. Perhaps receiving the most attention in this vein has been the practice of sanctuary, which, dating to practices in Europe during the high Middle Ages, invokes the higher power of "divine justice" to justify the use of spaces of worship in protecting persecuted persons (Hung 2019). Though not a perfect fit in terms of comparison, the case of Cairo's City of the Dead is a useful juxtaposition for thinking through themes of religious space-as-refuge. Today, upward of 50,000 people live amidst the sprawing necropolis in Egypt's capital, sometimes within mausoleums and gravesites. Beginning in the late 19th century, intensive urbanization resulted in a severe housing shortage as formerly rural-dwelling people sought work in the capital, who were were later joined by poor and working-class Cairenes who were displaced by the state's efforts to modernize the built environment, which involved tearing down many of the city's existing buildings (El Kady 2007). Again the population of the City of the Dead boomed in the second half of the 20th century as Egypt failed to adequately incorporate new waves of migrants from other parts of the country; unsanctioned construction boomed in and around the

cemeteries, where structures built to house family tombs provided improvised shelter. While a long history of tomb visitation in Egypt provided cultural legitimacy to those living in the City of the Dead, the residents, like those of Sidon's Jewish Quarter, face social stigma for the area's association with poverty and crime, despite a lack of clear connection between the City of the Dead and prominent illicit activity. Stigma aside, the area's residents, like those of the Jewish Quarter, play an important, though happenstance, role in safekeeping the area's innumerable tombs, some of which date to the 7th century. Residents today, asserts Lindsey Bertrand Logan through ethnography conducted amongst those who live in the City of the Dead, narrate the region primarily as a cemetery rather than as a series of residential neighborhoods despite having lived there for generations (2020).

Truth be told, the inside of the synagogue resembled the homes of the working poor that had welcomed me during my time in Lebanon, particularly the homes of those living in the Palestinian refugee camps throughout the country which, today, are the residences of numerous non-Palestinian workers. Such homes often creatively divide what were once larger, cohesive spaces into small, distinct quarters, allowing for increased privacy for growing, multi-generational households or unrelated different families, increasing the rent that can be collected from its tenants. In the synagogue, checkered wooden boarding, which reached a likely 10 feet, failed to fully cordon off the separate living space that had been constructed from the former women's section. A propane stove butted up against a concrete cinder block wall, above which laundry and kitchen towels dried in the dank air.

In many ways, the state of the synagogue and its present-day function mirrored refugee housing arrangements elsewhere in the world: Renée Hirschon, for instance, writes of the ways in which Greek refugees expelled from Turkey in the 1923 population exchange were initially

settled in Kokkinia, where they constituted a relatively homogenous group. Over time, however, the availability of housing at affordable rates attracted immigrants, leading to increased diversity and altering the social fabric of the neighborhood (2023, xix).

The division of the small synagogue into a multiple-family space also relates to the unsettled nature of rental arrangements in Lebanon where, until recently, a rent freeze had been in effect. Anxieties have heightened for tenants across Lebanon in the past decade concerning their rental arrangements. Though it wasn't a topic we discussed with the synagogue's residents, it had come up in conversation with Ahmed before our visit to the neighborhood. Until 2014, all rental contracts initiated before July 1992 were subject to rent control under Laws 159 and 160. Put into effect after the Civil War, rent control aimed to ameliorate the housing crisis that resulted from the mass internal displacements that resulted during the decades of fighting. Rent control allowed migrants and refugees to remain in the urban centers they had come to inhabit despite the exponential growth of rent prices since the official cessation of the war in 1990. This law, referred to colloquially as "old rent," applies only to urban residential properties across the country; "old rent" leases renew automatically each year on the condition that the tenants are present in the property, barring exceptions for violent conflict (Kanafani 2016, 100). Though property owners are permitted to recover their property for redevelopment or sale, they must begin construction within six months of evicting tenants and complete the project within a six-year timeframe. Adding to the hurdle, landowners must compensate old rent tenants with a buyout between 25 to 40 percent of the property's worth at the time of the settlement; most landlords, I was told, would rather continue to collect paltry sums of rent than foot the bill for restoration and legal mediation.

In 2014, a controversial law was passed by the Lebanese parliament to slowly unfreeze rent rates to lessen the discrepancy between rent-controlled rates and rental agreements signed after 1992, which are subject to the whims of the ever-fluctuating free market (Marot 2014). Despite the fact that the old rent law was never intended to be extended in perpetuity, the Lebanese government failed to arrange for, or invest in, affordable housing options during the span of the ten years in which the rent freeze law was extended yearly. Despite having passed a law to liberalize rent control some years prior to my visit to the synagogue, the law had failed to go into effect for a lack of political will and a lack of bureaucratic mechanisms to implement the changes (Kanafani 2016). Despite this, the fear of further displacement lingered among the residents, Ahmed told me; whether turning to legal mechanisms or making use of other forms of economic and social pressure, the threat to Palestinian and Syrian homes and businesses loomed large and, as I will shortly demonstrate through Ahmed's personal debacle, did and fact come to fruition.

Inside the synagogue, I felt uncomfortably stuck between Ahmed's expectation that I'd marvel at the structure for its Jewish past and the fact that I seemed to be interrupting the daily routine of the woman who had opened up her home to us. The elements that distinguished the spaces as "Jewish" were unremarkable unless one knew what to look for: the most obvious was the cabinet that once safeguarded the synagogue's Torah scrolls, which had been repainted and fitted with a mount for a TV and wifi router. The Bible verses in Hebrew script and Jewish-themed adornments that had framed the cabinets had been covered with red paint, though one could see the multicolored art peeking out from beneath the crimson coats. Nearby, a bookshelf was filled with personal and family memorabilia, including framed photographs, trinkets, and a number of teddy bears. The resident who had allowed us inside returned to her chores as I

awkwardly snapped a few photos of the synagogue's fading details, careful to exclude as much of her private space and belongings as possible.

Figure 37. Small wrought-iron Stars of David around the synagogue-cum-home's ceiling are one of the few symbolic vestiges of the structure's former function. Photo by author. March 2020.

Figure 38. Blue paint, which once adorned the synagogue and its exterior, peels from the domed ceiling's stone at the structure's entrance. Photo by author. June 2018.

We thanked the woman, who Ahmed had not introduced us to by first name—and left. Returning outside, I explained to Ahmed that I had felt somewhat uneasy about interrupting the daily lives of the individuals who, without other options, had made the synagogue their home. Unlike the case of Beirut, where residents of the gated community that had formerly been the city's Jewish neighborhood paid upwards of a million dollars for their luxury properties, those inhabiting the synagogue were making do with what structures were available to them. Ahmed dismissed these concerns. "But you're a Jew!" he said, verbally gesturing to the hegemony of the notion that the

people who first occupy a space confer their rights to the property indelibly, and that my vague belonging to a religious group trumped the fact that I was not Lebanese or Palestinian.

Indeed, it was this association made between my abstract “Jewishness” and the venerated past of the synagogue, despite the fact that I had no personal connections to the synagogue’s history, that sparked my discomfort. Though I did not have the words for the sensation at the time, I felt as if I had come to prostrate in a space that, venerated for its former use, had been stripped of its afterlife; as if my visit intrinsically rejected the presence of inhabitants who had little say in the place they had made their home. In her exploration of the border zone that separates present-day Turkish Nicosia from its Greek counterpart, Yael Navaro admits her own unease with inhabiting a space where, out of necessity and the threat of violence, the original inhabitants had fled. To Navaro, “eeriness [seemed to] spoke through the ruins”; yet the Turkish residents who took up residence in formerly Greek spaces insisted that they had “gotten used to” inhabiting the border zone (133). It was not the ruins from which the “creepy wave” of feeling was emitted; rather, Navaro realizes, it was her own subjective position that produced such unease. Borrowing from sociologist Gabriel Tarde, Navaro describes this “dis-resonating feeling” as one of “irritability”—as opposed to the comfortability of “enchantment,” where one feels a kindredness with their material surroundings—positing a way of interpreting the uncomfortable reflexions provoked as humans process the afterlives of depopulated spaces (212). By focusing on the uneasiness and uncanniness transmitted between humans, the general environment, and the objects “and their dilapidated qualities” located within the latter, Navaro suggests that we may better understand the disharmony felt by the anthropologist (or anyone else attuned to it, for that matter) as an interplay between “qualities of the objects [at hand], in relation to the viewer’s knowledge about their contexts” (214).

In The *Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre posits that capitalism's tendency to commoditize transforms space, with its many layers of historical traces and complex, overlapping narratives, into something easily consumable (1991). Gaston Gordillo includes the ruin within Lefebvre's category of "abstract space," albeit one that is naturalized through its presentation as a "priceless spatial quality, that is, 'heritage'" (2014, 8). Around the time that I began fieldwork in Sidon, a number of journalistic articles were published that, with an air of astonishment, detailed the lives and home of the synagogue's current residents. "It took this man 10 years to realize he was living in a synagogue," exclaims one such article published on The World, an American radio program, paying little attention to the daily hardships and often-violent realities that may have prevented the resident from investigating the building in which, with few alternatives, he had transformed into his home (Collard 2016). Similarly, rather than encouraging efforts to better the lives of the synagogue's (or neighborhood's) residents according to their own needs, posts on social media forums dedicated to Sidon's Jewish past mourn the degradation of the structure. "One of the oldest synagogues in the world, this is an important heritage and legacy of multicultural and pluralistic Lebanon," reads a post made by an anonymous moderator of the Friends of the Saida Jewish Community Facebook page on February 13, 2013. "So it is our collective responsibility as Lebanese but also global citizens to ensure its re-appropriation and renovation." The "pastness" of the synagogue is the element most valued rather than the site's present-day uses. Whether through actual heritage preservation or abstractly within the minds of visitors, this "pastness of the past is crystallized in efforts to present ruins as objects separated from the present" (Gordillo 2014, 8).

While the synagogue's current use as a home for poor families diverges from its intended religious uses, this disparity offers a space to examine how intertwined imperial histories linger

in the material environment. In the case of Sidon's synagogue, the histories of competing nationalisms, European state-building projects, and Civil War are refracted through, and experienced within, the built environment. By considering "what people are 'left with'" in the ruins of imperial pursuit, how social relations take place, as Ann Stoler writes, in "relation to materiality and ruin, of "the aftershocks of empire, to the material and social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things" (2008, 194). A few weeks after my first conversation with residents of the synagogue, Lebanon, like the whole world, faced a new threat: the COVID-19 pandemic. With lockdowns swiftly ordered countrywide, I would be left churning over my short visit, my wish to dig ethnographically deeper unfulfilled, at least for now.

Neighborhood memory and neighborhood contestations

Figure 39. A poster affixed above a metal door in Ḥarat al-Yahūd, Sidon. The poster shows a photograph of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and is flanked by images of two political leaders: on the left, Osama Saad, leader of the Popular Nasserite Movement; on the right, Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah. The words Harat al-Quds (Jerusalem Quarter), nestled between two graphics of Palestinian flags, are obscured by dangling electrical wires and Ramadan decorations. March 2020.

We regrouped back outside the synagogue, where a few residents mingled in the informal courtyard. Adjacent to the synagogue was a pile of crumbled stone; like many points in the Old City, it was hard to determine what had stood before the structure had decayed and collapsed. Nearby, affixed to the peak of an archway above a set of metal doors was a poster displaying an image of al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem flanked by two smiling men; even from a distance, I

could make out that one of them was Hassan Nasrallah, the Lebanese cleric and secretary general of Hezbollah (see figure 37). Children ran about in play while two women sipped coffee, carrying on conversation with an elderly man sitting in a plastic chair across the open space. Among them was Basma, a woman in her early thirties with two small kids running around underfoot. Her family hailed from Acre just under 76 kilometers south on the shoreline of the Mediterranean, having first fled the coastal city in 1948 to what would become the Jordanian occupied West Bank. In 1967, when Israel conquered the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights, her family again fled, this time north to Sidon. Basma told me that she had lived in the quarter all of her life. Given her age, she had no memory of the Jews who had once given the neighborhood its name, but she told us that on occasion older relatives would mention memories of their former Jewish neighbors in passing. One such event to have spurred such recollection had taken place in 2012, when two US-based ultra-Orthodox rabbis had paid a visit to the synagogue. As members of the Neturei Karta movement, a Haredi group known for their anti-Zionist views and activism in solidarity with Palestinians, the rabbis had come to Lebanon on a solidarity trip.[21] "They prayed here, in the synagogue," Basma recalled while gesturing to the alleyway from which we had just emerged. Basma added that it was the first time that Jewish prayers had been held since the neighborhood's last Jewish residents had left in the 1980s. The neighborhood had greeted the rabbis, who donned keffiyehs and placards around their neck reading "a Jew, not a Zionist," with enthusiasm (Kessler 2012). The rabbis then joined in on a procession marking Land Day, which

[21] Neturei Karta, founded in Jerusalem in 1938, are a small subset of the larger anti-Zionist, ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. Neturei Karta, like the much larger Satmar hasidic dynasty, is characterized by religious and social conservatism and notable anti-Zionist activity framed within a refusal to acknowledge Israel as legitimate using religious rationale that returning to Jewish rule over Israel must only take place under divine auspices. For the members of the worldwide sects living in Israel, this involves a refusal to pay taxes, serve in the Israeli army, or visit the Western Wall. Unlike the Satmars, however, members of the Neturei Karta movement have been visible elements of the Palestine solidarity movement worldwide: the movement's former leader, Moshe Hirsch, served as PLO president Yasser Arafat on Jewish affairs.

commemorates the protests and general strike held by Palestinians against Israel's attempts to appropriate privately-owned Arab land in 1976. I asked what the atmosphere had been like during the rabbis' visit. The younger residents especially had been curious, Basma told us, as "they only see Jews on TV, on the news that talks about their occupation of Palestine." Older residents like Basma's mother, however, often retained the memories of their neighbors prior to the Civil War and Israeli invasion. "She told me of the Jewish kids who had been her friends, who had left by the time the Zionists [Israelis] invaded," Basma said. Though her mother didn't like to talk about the bloodshed she had witnessed during Israel's invasion of Sidon, Basma said, it was impossible, Basma said, that she had forgotten any of it.

After our chat with the neighborhood's residents, we accompanied Ahmed back to his cafe at his insistence that we join him for a lemonade. As we left the courtyard, thanking Basma and the other neighborhood residents, I stopped to get a better look at the poster of al-Aqsa (figure 37). Facing the smiling *sayyed* (meaning lord or master, as Hassan Nasrallah is popularly known among his supporters) on the left side of the image was a superimposed headshot of Osama Saad, head of the Popular Nasserite Organization, whose armed wing had been trained and supported by Fatah—the Palestinian nationalist party once headed by Yasser Arafat. Electrical wires hung over the poster obstructing my view as they no doubt stretched the reach of much-needed electricity to underserved corners of the neighborhood. Decorative crescent moon-and-star lights, left hanging from Ramadan celebrations some months ago, added to the tangle. While posters in support of political figures and parties are anything but a rarity in Lebanon, I was struck by the text that stretched atop the image: in bold, white Arabic script, flanked by two Palestinian flags, read the words "Harat al-Quds." I snapped a quick photo before Ahmed hurried us off.

Back at Ahmed's cafe, we sat in the shade of an umbrella at the periphery of a large, renovated public square. From our table on the cafe's patio, Ahmed pointed across the open space: "see that cafe [over there]?" he gestured. "I used to be the owner." For many years, Ahmed told us, he had overseen a cafe that was immensely popular with locals and tourists alike. Ahmed had established his business in an historic building where an earlier iteration of the cafe had originally been established in 1810. The business was known for its locally-styled lavish breakfast spreads, but was also a frequent stop for tour groups who came to admire its very old stained glass and well-preserved, original stone architecture. The square on which both cafes sit is called Bab al-Saray Square after the adjacent mosque of the same name, which was built in 1202. The square, the Old City's largest public space, was constructed in the early 17th century in order to connect the area's markets, mosque, and seat of governance. When a nearby 13th century mosque and the surrounding square—where Ahmed's cafe sat—was restored by an Islamic charity in the early 2000s, Ahmed felt that his days were numbered. The hurdles of renewing his business license as a Palestinian without Lebanese citizenship had always been burdensome, but the increased tourism to the square made the cafe a lucrative business.

Ahmed's worries would soon prove warranted. In 2008, a partnership between two private family foundations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was initiated to renovate Bab al-Saray Square amidst a wave of heritage renovation fever, which spread across Lebanon with hopes that a big post-civil war boom in tourism would follow. One of the family foundations behind the initiative—the Audi Foundation, whose mission is "the promotion and revitalization of craftsmanship…in Lebanon and particularly in the City of Sidon…[through the revitalization of] historic sites of the city," was also responsible for the development of the nearby Soap Museum (Arab Foundation Directory). The Audi's had

partnered with the Hariri Foundation who, it turned out, had more to gain from the project than cultural legitimacy.

When the initiative to revamp the square began, Ahmed was pressured, over and over again, to sell the business. Ahmed held his ground for nearly two decades; eventually, in the late 2010s, Ahmed gave into harassment and moved his business to a more austere building across the square. "What about people like [Osama] Saad?" I probed, referencing the political leader whose image had adorned the Harat al-Quds sign I had just photographed. "Doesn't he care to support Palestinian businesses?" Ahmed chuckled. "Politicians care about Palestinians at their convenience."

Whether inhabiting the spaces of another displaced group or being displaced themselves, the recent history of the city's Palestinians—like its Jews—seemed to serve as cards to be played toward the political gain of local actors. When I asked him who had exerted the pressure, Ahmed was vague. "You know, the two parties [*hezbayn*]." Ahmed was making a veiled reference to the two organizations who largely dictated the workings of local Sidonian politics: the Future Movement and the Popular Nasserite Organization. The former is the party of the slain former prime minister Rafik Hariri, who was born to a prominent Sidonian family; the Future Movement remains the country's principal Sunni party. Bahia, Rafik's sister, served as the party's parliamentary representative for Sidon for many years, and the family continues to dictate the mission and actions of the organization today. The latter, also headquartered in Sidon, is headed by Osama Saad, the son of the party's founder Maarouf Saad, whose assassination by the Lebanese Army during a dock strike in Sidon in 1975 provided fodder for the country's growing civil unrest. The Future Movement plays the political field "as if they were a minority" in the wake of Hezbollah's dominance of Lebanese politics despite Sunni numerical supremacy in the

country (Knudsen 2020). Conversely, the PNO's current head, Osama Saad, has fostered a close alliance with Shiite-led Hezbollah—as visually represented by the Harat al-Quds sign— further widening the gap between these historic political rivals. Ahmed's cafe had brought business to the neighborhood far before the square had made it a focal point for tourism; yet, when it came down to personal and familial gain, politicians , even by those who publicly claimed to champion their rights easily displaced Palestinians like Ahmed.

Renovations of Sidon's Old City had been carried out in a fragmented way by "charitable" organizations—often tied to political parties—and private initiatives. Rafik Hariri spearheaded early efforts to alter the city's built environment, much as he had in Beirut, in the midst of the civil war; between 1993 and 2000, the Hariri Foundation led 14 restoration projects of varying sorts, including open spaces, mosques, and monuments (Al-Harithy and Guadagnoli 2021, 14). The World Bank, along with third-country sponsors, had partnered with Lebanon's Council for Development and Reconstruction and the Ministry of Antiquities to preserve historic sites like the citadel. Still other private foundations led primarily by well-to-do Sidonian families, focused their efforts on renovating the Old City's souks in hopes of attracting increased tourism to the area. What resulted was a patchwork of disconnected restoration projects that left some areas of the Old City polished while other corners remained derelict. Regardless, Ahmed told us, the vast majority of these projects had focused on superficial renovations rather than increasing access to things like electricity, clean water, or other services for the Old City's residents. And, given that the municipality itself could not afford such restoration, it was all too content with letting private interests take the lead.

Control over historically Jewish spaces in Sidon mirrors the efforts of the city's political elite to both exert control over, and financially benefit from, its history. Some months earlier, I

had met Antoine, a native of Sidon who had formed a close bond with a set of three Sidonian Jewish siblings living in the United States when spending time with their mutual friends in France. When the siblings expressed interest in donating money towards the renovation of Sidon's Jewish cemetery, where their family members had long been buried, Antoine agreed to serve as their "man on the ground." In his late 50s and born into one of the most prominent, well-to-do Maronite families in the city, Antoine went on to act on behalf of the family by collecting small rents on their properties and liaising between the current residents and the family abroad. As an architect and a knowledgeable collector of antiques and antiquities, Antoine became a go-to person for many "things Jewish" in Sidon, including Jewish relics found by residents during renovations. With a deep commitment to Sidon's history and future, today Antoine works as an advisor to many different researchers and activists, including those creating surveys of present-day Sidon, actors working to strengthen Sidon's cultural and physical infrastructure, and archivists of the city's history.

Though Antione is not Muslim, as the majority of Sidon's residents are, his status as a descendent of a wealthy and politically influential family hailing from the city affords him the attention of local political authorities and assures that his efforts and requests are taken seriously by them. Despite the fact that Sidon's Jewish cemetery is one of the country's oldest and largest remaining Jewish burial sites, and that the renovation was to be privately funded, the prospect faced numerous bureaucratic and political hurdles. Knowing that the renovations would arouse suspicion from the political parties controlling the city, Antoine devised a plan to present Sidon's political elites with three possible projects, of which the plan to repair the Sidon cemetery would seem like the least controversial option. Along with one of the three siblings, Antoine set up a meeting with Bahia Hariri (sister of the late Rafic Hariri, who invested heavily in his home city

before his assassination), who, at the time, represented Sidon and the powerful Sunni Future Movement party, in the Lebanese Parliament. It was through her that all proposed renovation projects were required to pass. With the siblings' private donation, Antoine suggested, a team of volunteers could undertake any of the three initiatives: renovate Sidon's synagogue; establish a "multi-religious non-profit" that would renovate Sidon's remaining Jewish properties for the benefit of its current Palestinian residents; or renovate the city's Jewish cemetery. "Of course, [Bahia] told us that she couldn't handle the first two projects politically," Antoine told me during a conversation in June 2020. "So she told us, 'renovate the cemetery.'" Bahia Hariri's response suggested to Antoine that any governmental effort seen to be in material support of Palestinians in Lebanon—particularly if it hinted at naturalization through making their presence seemingly more "permanent"—would threaten the party's standing in Sidon.

Part III: Keepers of Jewish Material Heritage

In what follows, I tell two stories concerning the material heritage of Sidon's Jewish community. The first concerns the Israeli invasion of Sidon, the last Jewish family to depart Sidon, and the so-called "discovery" of a Torah hidden within the synagogue's walls. I frame this account—informed by a travelog article written in English by an Israeli paratrooper many years later—within the frameworks of imperial ownership of material culture and military conquest-cum-tourism.

The second account I detail follows the work of Nagi Zeidan, a local historian who, during his life, was deeply engaged in the documentation of Jewish history and the safekeeping of Jewish space and artifacts. Zeidan's work documenting the Jewish history of Lebanon made him immensely popular with the Lebanese Jewish diaspora; as explored earlier in the

dissertation, Nagi fostered many of these relationships online, particularly through his use of Facebook as an open-source archive that documented his findings for all to see. At the same time, his eagerness to participate in community affairs—in this case, the dating and safekeeping of an ancient Torah that was found by a Palestinian family in Sidon—prompted disagreements between official representatives of the Jewish community and a local historic activist around authority over tangible heritage.

<u>Israel's Invasion of Sidon and the Hidden Torah</u>

Figure 40. Israeli paratroopers escort a Torah unearthed from the Sidon synagogue through the streets of the Old City. Photo by Avi Aviel (segulamag.com). 1982.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon—known in Israel as Operation Peace for Galilee—began in June 1982 with the aim of extinguishing the PLO's growing armed presence in Lebanon.

The IDF's eventual siege of Beirut was made possible by a three-pronged invasion: troops cut off access to Beirut via the Beirut-Damascus highway; another group moved along the Syrian-

Lebanese border; and the third traveled from the south to the capital along the coast. It was this third group's experience, occupying and "pacifying" coastal cities and towns, that is told by Itamar Brenner in a narrative reflection for *Segula Magazine* published in 2018. Brenner, the cousin of a slain member of the battalion to whom the Torah from Sidon would later be dedicated *in memoriam*, shares the story of members of the 7056th Battalion of the Northern Command paratroopers reserve unit, who were called for deployment shortly after Israel's invasion of Lebanon commenced. Brenner draws heavily from the wartime diary of Rafi Gil, an assistant commander in the unit who, in the early 2000s, died in a car accident, to tell the tale of a group of soldiers who, in their sweep of Sidon, encounter the city's last Jewish family, recover their hidden Torah, and transport it with them to Israel.

Brenner tells us, quoting from Gil's written account, that the invading soldiers were in the midst of rounding up the men of the Old City on Sidon's beach, aided by informants who helped them sort the "terrorists" from civilians. "'All of a sudden a man wearing a beret came running toward us shouting in English,' recalls radio operator Avi Aviel. 'I thought he was a terrorist and nearly shot him before I realized he was calling out 'Don't shoot, I'm Jewish!'" The soldiers soon confirm, by examining his ID card, that the man in question is indeed Jewish. Isaac Levy (whom the Israeli paratroopers call by the Hebraicized version of his name, Yitzhak Halevy, leads the soldiers to his house in Sidon's Old City, where members of the Levy family have been sheltering during the invasion. Though much of his extended family had already left, as the synagogue's *shammash* (beadle), Isaac felt a responsibility to stay. Within the synagogue's walls, Isaac had kept safe his family's Torah scrolls which, given the departure of other families from the city, were the only known remaining scrolls.

The narrator then tells of the collective journey to retrieve the Torah scrolls from the "squalid [neighborhood]," as he dismissively describes the setting, "full of Palestinians who'd fled from Haifa and Jaffa in the War of Independence" and transport them back to Israel. In the hours before Shabbat, with Isaac Levy and the battalion's rabbi in tow, a handful of soldiers made their way "through the labyrinthine alleys" until they recognized the outline of a mezuzah in the synagogue's doorway. Already, reports the diarist, a Palestinian family had taken residence "there in unbelievably cramped condition." Yet the suffering of Palestinian civilians who, having faced displacement from their homeland and were now contending with an occupying army and a civil war, was no deterrence to the "sense of discovery" of the Torah, which collectively made their "hearts swell." Isaac Levy, who had not stepped inside the synagogue in five years, "broke down and cried bitterly" as he was given a hammer to pry away the wall's boards that covered the Torah ark. The battalion's rabbi wrapped the scroll in a prayer shawl and carried it back to IDF field headquarters (see figure 38). With Shabbat quickly approaching, the soldiers festooned two tractors they'd "appropriated from the terrorists" with a camouflage net, providing the soldiers with an "improvised field synagogue" in which the torah they'd just "rescued" was positioned. "Even a heretic like me" found the whole affair "inexplicably moving," writes the diary-keeper. "Battle-worn soldiers [sang] Sabbath hymns in the very heart of uncircumcised Sidon."

As Rebecca Stein writes, Israel's invasion of Lebanon was cast by both Israeli and international media, particularly in the first portion prior to the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, "in the language of leisure travel with the Israeli soldier illustrated as…navigat[ing] Lebanese space with a consumer's itinerary" (2008, 648). Employing the literary tactic of the travelog, Stein argues, was a way for Israelis to "make sense" of Israel's aggression, particularly as the

occupation quickly lost popular support at home and abroad (ibid). In the context of this military conquest-cum-tourism, the paratrooper's "discovery" of Jewish life in "uncircumcised" Sidon—ostensibly savage, backward, and unclean—positions the Israeli actors as saviors of a fast-disappearing, threatened minority in which they see themselves reflected. Like historic adventure-travelers (and anthropologists), Israel saw its invasion into Lebanon as a salvage mission, both politically and culturally. In aiming to support newly elected president Bachir Gemayel's government, Israel hoped to "salvage" a peace settlement that would make Lebanon a friendly neighbor. By positioning the wellbeing of Jews, including the safekeeping of their cultural heritage, within the domain of Israeli interests, Israel gave legitimacy to its military project in Lebanon. This sort of cultural brokering mirrors the salvage missions common to both military and ethnographic pursuits, in which imperial actors approach "ethnographic presents" as fast-disappearing pasts (Clifford 1989, 73).

While the paratroopers' narrative is striking in its ability to gloss over mass bloodshed and displacement with the catchall "terrorist," it is far from unique. As Andrew Buchanan explains, all modern military conquest repurposes elements of the "grand tour," which I've explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Like those who returned home from their grand tours with troves of cultural booty, Israel's occupation of Lebanon involved numerous instances of plundering material treasures—most notably of the Palestine Research Center—which aligns with Israel's history of taking written material and archives as "war booty." While Stein's account goes on to explore the more ostentatious manifestations of Israeli occupation tourism—like figuring out what to do with your gun when dancing with local girls at nightclubs—all of these instances follow in the path of warmaking that "actively obfuscate[s] scenes of military violence…[by] recasting [for an Israeli public] incursion and occupation in not merely

nonviolent but positively pleasurable terms” (2008, 661). In the scope of both the grand tour and the military occupation, the goal was cultural appropriation. This case in Sidon gives the Israeli actors a more altruistic bent—providing physical refuge for what is likely one of the city’s last Torahs and supporting the only remaining Jewish family—while maintaining the essential tropes of “rendering the strange familiar [and] translating threatening images into benign ones” (ibid, 647).

There have been no organized challenges, to my knowledge, of the IDF’s transfer of the Sidon Torah to Israel. This is likely due to the fact that the Levy family’s torah was one of many that had been used in services at the synagogue and that the Levys themselves, under whatever duress of the circumstances, gave their permission for the IDF to do so. Yet the story of the Sidon torah shares many facets with other instances of religious artifacts that surreptitiously found their way to Israel only to be officially appropriated by the state or local institutions under the pretense that nowhere would be more suited for its safekeeping than the Jewish State. In 2015, a *hachnasat sefer Torah* (an inauguration of a Torah scroll) was held for a 200-year-old Torah from Iraq that, under opaque and secretive circumstances, abruptly appeared in Jerusalem. The Torah, which was given a case that originally belonged to the Jewish community of Aleppo, Syria, was dedicated for use at the office synagogue of the Foreign Ministry. At the ceremony, then-Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman equated the Torah’s journey with the redemption of the Jewish people: “People try to expel us and destroy us,” reported the Times of Israel, “but in the end we arrive in the Land of Israel.” Yet, the Torah’s sojourn from Iraq to Jordan and on to Jerusalem was more so the working of imperial plunder than of divine providence: it is likely that, like so many artifacts looted in the aftermath of the United States’ invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Torah was smuggled out of the country, perhaps with the aid of U.S. military personnel.

What has resulted from Israel's insistence in acting as the un-appointed caretaker of Jewish artifacts worldwide—particularly those of dwindling Jewish communities across the Middle East and North Africa—is an extraordinary hodgepodge of items of varying provenance (Fischbach 2008). In separating the items from their location and culture of origin, state actors like the U.S. and Israel uphold the "Jewish" essence of material heritage over any other element, including the very distinct functions and forms that might distinguish, for example, Lebanese Jewish and Iraqi Jewish artifacts.

Similarly, in early 2023, an Israeli rescue mission was sent to earthquake-ravaged southern Turkey to aid with the ongoing search-and-rescue mission. After finding the head of Antakya's Jewish community dead in the rubble of his home, the Israeli team visited the city's synagogue, which was destroyed in the earthquake. From the rubble, the Israeli team took with them two 200-year-old scrolls from the Book of Esther that, according to the Israeli media, had been offered to them for safekeeping by an elderly Turkish Jewish man. "With our proximity to Syria, I'd hate to see the scrolls fall into the wrong hands," said the man, according to the Israeli military official who received the scrolls. "Please guard them and make sure our community is remembered." Yet, upon hearing the news that the scrolls had been taken out of the country, an uproar on Turkish social media ensued; the scrolls were soon after returned to Turkey, where they were received by Istanbul's chief rabbinate (Middle East Eye 2023).

The departure of Jewish communities from the Middle East and North Africa, including Lebanon, raises a number of questions for the tangible heritage they left behind. The impetus for states to hoard Jewish artifacts—particularly under the auspices of repair and safeguarding—allows for a stockpiling of proverbial cards to be negotiated with on the international stage (Al Quntar 2017). Unlike individuals and groups, state-to-state actors can, and do, leverage the

repatriation of patrimony, particularly items plundered by imperial powers during colonial conquest. In accordance with the UNESCO 1970 Convention which aims to curb the illegal trade in cultural items, it is only nation-states, however, that can argue for the repatriation of items in the sphere of international law, rather than cultural or ethno-religious groups (UNESCO 1970). This further complicates the eventual return of items whose historical origins are considered secondary to their Jewish character (Prott 1995).

The Cultural Broker versus The Community Council

Figure 41. Nagi Zeidan, local historian of Lebanese Jewish communities, and Jihad al-Muhammad, resident of the Sidon synagogue, with the sefer Torah discovered by al-Muhammed. Photo courtesy of Nagi Zeidan. April 2022.

Nagi Zeidan began researching Lebanon's Jewish community nearly 30 years ago. During an interview conducted on January 7, 2020, Nagi told me that, growing up, his father had been a leader in the Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), which promotes the idea of a Greater Syrian nation that encompasses much of the Fertile Crescent. Zeidan, who was encouraged to rise through the ranks of the SSNP's youth wing by his father, was drawn to the

party's mission of uniting the region under a common history and culture. Yet, when he encountered antisemitic rhetoric in the party's propaganda, espousing ideas like "our only common enemy is the Jews," Nagi was suspicious. He had a handful of Jewish friends in Lebanon; how could they so easily be excluded from the idea of a nation and its culture, he wondered? When, later in life, Nagi delved deeper into the history of Jews in Lebanon, his family denounced his research. Yet Zeidan, who was trained as a hairdresser, was undeterred, and began tracing Jewish family histories in the 1990s, translating electoral records and pouring over newspaper archives in order to create a comprehensive history of the country's Jewish communities. Zeidan published his first article on Lebanese Jews in the popular Beirut-based Arabic newspaper *an-Nahar* in 1995. Some expressed suspicion: who was this non-Jewish man, Lebanese Jews in the diaspora wondered, and why was he so curious about community history to which he did not belong? He was questioned, numerous times, by Lebanese authorities who tried to connect his research to Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. Yet Nagi worked diligently to gain the trust of Lebanese Jews across the world, tracking down properties and sending pictures of burial plots to families in the diaspora. "What hurts the Jews the most is that they can't pray on their fathers' and mothers' graves," Nagi told *Arab News* for a special report on the Jews of Lebanon. "Every Jew I met asked me for a picture of his ancestors' grave" (2020). Given his knowledge and connections to the diaspora, Nagi was asked to help organize the project to repair Sidon's Jewish cemetery, including overseeing the Syrian laborers hired for the project's more physically arduous tasks. He soon began posting updates on the restoration project on his Facebook, which greatly expanded his network of Lebanese Jewish friends worldwide. Nagi's popularity amongst Lebanese Jews in the diaspora only increased with the publication of his book, *Juifs du Liban: d'Abraham à nos jours, histoire d'une communauté disparue*, in 2020. In

the last years of his life, Nagi undertook research on the trajectory of Lebanese Jewish life before and during the Lebanese Civil War, [during which…etc?] the disappearance and murder of multiple Jewish residents of Beirut, most of whose bodies were never recovered. In Spring 2022, Nagi, who held a French passport and in recent years split his time between Lebanon and Belgium, was on his way back to his home in Europe when he was stopped at the Beirut Airport on suspicion of smuggling antiquities and his passport confiscated. Some weeks earlier, Nagi had been contacted by a family who had lived in the Sidon synagogue for over a decade. They had located what turned out to be two old Torahs in the wall of the synagogue-turned-home (see figure 39). According to Point of No Return, a UK-based blog "dedicated to preserving the memory of the near-extinct Jewish communities, which can never return to what and where they once were -even if they wanted to," the deerskin scrolls were in poor condition. Nagi estimated the scrolls to be up to 400-years-old, but had sent a fragment to be dated at the American University in Beirut. According to the blog, the Palestinian-Syrian family who found the scrolls were hoping to sell them for a hefty price of $100,000. Upon being shown the scrolls, Nagi realized that their poor condition made the items *pasul*, or religiously unusable, "defective" in Hebrew. On his Facebook page, Nagi wrote that he had reached out to the vice-president of the community whose, largely symbolic role, involves oversight of properties under the Jewish *waqf*. Nagi said that he had written to the vice-president's lawyer, who also serves as the *mukhtar* (a head of a neighborhood or village) of the Beirut neighborhood in which the formerly Jewish area of Wadi Abu Jamil is situated. Given the state of the scrolls, Nagi told *Point of No Return* that he hoped the items would be buried in a genizah, perhaps in Beirut's Jewish cemetery (2022). He was detained and interrogated for many hours by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) (the national security and police force of Lebanon), an ordeal he detailed on his Facebook page. The ISF had

imposed a travel ban on Nagi following a complaint made by the vice-president of the Lebanese Jewish community, who, in a claim filed in the court of Sidon, accused Nagi of planning to smuggle the torah scrolls out of the country to sell on the antiquities market. In an interview with Point of No Return, Nagi said "that it was absurd to suggest that he would smuggle out scrolls weighing 50 kilos in his luggage."

Following the ordeal, a heated discussion took place in the comment threads of multiple of Nagi's Facebook posts. "Great news," says one such comment, made on an unrelated photograph that Nagi had posted on May 15, 2022, depicting the remnants of Tripoli's former synagogue. "The Jewish community's lawyer, Mr. Bassem el-Hout, has just informed me that the police forced Nagi to return the sefer torah…[which is now] on [its] way back to the Jewish community." Nagi comes to his own defense, positing that, as the accusatory commentor's Facebook account was newly created and had no "friends" to speak of, it was an alias of the community's vice president, who had lodged complaints against Nagi's work in the past. The public drama enacted on Nagi's Facebook in the wake of the Torah's discovery in Sidon points to a tension between the official representatives of the Jewish Community Council—a topic I explored in Chapter Three of this dissertation—and those who have, unofficially or without explicit oversight from the Council, undertaken the work of memory brokerage. Nagi wonders why, given the Council's power to have his passport seized, such power isn't wielded to protect the wellbeing of Jewish spaces beyond Magen Avraham. "Are you based in Lebanon?" asked a participant to one of Nagi's detractors on the thread, referring to the fact that the president of the Community Council lives abroad. "[I'm] just asking why the [official] community [who is abroad] is doing nothing while non-Jews are doing [the] job [of preserving Jewish history]." This is reflective of broader themes on digital forums like Facebook that are frequently used by

Lebanese Jews and those interested in the country's Jewish history. Those without the proper social connections frequently find it difficult to arrange visits to synagogues or cemeteries through the Council, and displays of frustration to the council's unresponsiveness are not uncommon on social media. Questions addressed to the Community Council, whether on these forums or by email, are reported by participants to go unanswered, leading to a view of the official representatives as murky and removed from how Jewish spaces are actually experienced.

The Council's opaqueness and disconnection from sites on the ground is seen by some as proof of its embroilment in larger issues of power and representation in Lebanon. Most of those with governing positions in the Council live outside of the country, where they do not frequently interface with the Jewish sites they technically oversee. This demonstrated tension between Nagi and the Council's vice president, I posit, also points to strain between the latter's impetus to memorialize and ossify Lebanon's Jewish past—as exemplified in Magen Avraham's renovation but continued closure—and Nagi's interest in attending to Lebanon's less-celebrated Jewish sites and histories—like the country's cemeteries or the fate of Lebanon's disappeared Jews—which remain important in the living memory of Lebanese Jews abroad. "Where is your will to restore synagogue[s other than Magen Avraham in Beirut]?" Nagi asked the vice-president on his Facebook wall. "I think the synagogues of Sidon and Tripoli and Aley and Bhamdoun and Deir El Qamar and Hasbaya don't interest you because you abandoned them. What interests you is only Magen Abraham [sic] Synagogue." Addressing the fact that even visiting Lebanese Jews from the diaspora have been prevented from visiting or photographing Magen Avraham, Nagi lodges an insult: "the entire Jewish community of Lebanon knows you are puppets of [Rafic] Hariri" (May 18, 2022).

While the majority of Lebanese Jews I've conversed with showed immense appreciation for Nagi's work, others displayed various levels of suspicion: what drove an avowedly secular man of Greek Orthodox extraction, whose training was in business rather than history or ethnography, to undertake the work of documenting Lebanese Jewish history? If Nagi did not stand to financially or socially gain from his pursuits, neither did he seek to romanticize Jewish life in Lebanon or Jews themselves. As opposed to "salvage" projects, Virginia Dominguez suggests that cultural "rescue" efforts are built on "genuine love, respect, and affection, not categorical 'identity'...[it is a] tough love at times but never disengagement or hagiography" (2000, 365). Disenchanted by affiliations with sectarian groups and political parties, Nagi nonetheless remained inspired by the tenets of what drew him to leftist movements in his youth: "To them, human beings were equally respectable regardless of their religion" (Arab News 2020).

The non-Jews serving as caretakers of Jewish heritage, as Cory Thomas Pechan Driver explains, have the potential to influence an individual's identity, by which he means "both a social sense of who someone is in her community and a personal moral imaginary of the self" (3). In tending to the neglected aspects of Lebanon's Jewish history, including Sidon's cemetery, family lineages, and artifacts, Nagi felt he was doing a small part to right the wrongs of the Lebanese state and society who, despite having benefited from Jewish commitment to the national project, were unable or unwilling to protect the Jewish community in the wake of civil war and political upheaval. It was Nagi's hope, he told Arab News, that his work would "touch a few hearts and prove that there are bridges between people and communities" (ibid). "I have become a different man," Nagi told *Arab News*. "All my Jewish friends respect me, and I have gained self-respect, too."

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the way in which different actors in Sidon interact with the city's Jewish past through traces of the community's past in the built environment. Some of these individuals, who are themselves non-citizens, contend with their own displacement by reflecting on the Jews who once called their current neighborhood home. As a disenfranchised neighborhood where many Palestinian and Syrian refugees made their homes in the spaces abandoned by the city's migrating Jews, Sidon's Ḥarat al-Yahūd has become the unlikely setting in which residents stage public performances of their collective history and solidarity with Palestinians elsewhere. At the same time, the neighborhood's residents recognize the continued importance of a Jewish connection to the city, and serve as hosts to visiting Jews, whether they be diasporic returnees visiting family properties or Orthodox Jewish rabbis visiting in solidarity with Palestinians in Lebanon.

Non-Jews who guard and maintain spaces that were once central to Jewish life in the Middle East and North Africa have been a source of fascination since the dispersal of Jews from these regions in the wake of Israel's establishment in 1948. Scholarship concerning these caretakers highlights not only the essential services they perform on behalf of an absent community, but also the ways in which their own relationships, social status, political contentions, and relationship to the state are refracted through their caretaking role. A range of academic and public scholarship, literature, and film have worked to demystify the afterlives of formerly Jewish spaces and their often-unseen guardians. They have, variously, explored how these roles have changed from the colonial-era positions with a fixed place in the imperial state's social apparatus to the inheritors of the memory of a group that is, by and large, no longer

present in its country of origin (Bilu and Levy 1996; Driver 2018; Levy 2023). Much as scholarship concerning the "host" role of the tour guide has done, those detailing the experiences of non-Jewish caretakers and cultural mediaries has insisted on the necessity of situating this role in its locally-situated dimensions. This focus seeks to demonstrate how the experience of material caretaking is both dependent on, and can the product of, elements such as international migration and exile, the movement of people and money, and the infrastructure of religious pilgrimage in the current moment of fraught geopolitics (Ben-Ami 1998; Boum 2013; Jay 2013; Levy 2003). My research in Sidon builds on these works, offering a view into the tensions and power struggles that arise when non-Jewish individuals take up these roles not by way of colonial legacy, but through their own personal motivations, convictions, and interests. The actors introduced in this chapter, who work in different ways to both preserve Lebanese Jewish material heritage and disseminate information amongst the Lebanese Jewish diaspora, are reminded of their own social positions when their efforts butt up against the interests of social and political authorities, whose agendas often conflict with the ongoing work of these heritage brokers.

In Beirut's Wadi Abu Jamil, where nearly all of the neighborhood's pre-war residents (and all of the neighborhood's Jewish residents) have been relocated to make way for intense post-war gentrification and development, the fully refurbished synagogue, Magen Avraham, reflects the larger atmosphere of this quarter: perpetually locked, heavily securitized, and inaccessible to the average person. Magen Avraham can, therefore, function as an emptied shell through which a positive image of Lebanon's Jewish history is woven into the built and narrative fabric of the present-day state. By contrast, Sidon's formerly Jewish neighborhood is, despite its undesirability in the eyes of many Lebanese, very much a quotidian site, where the pastness of

places like Sidon synagogue directly intersects with the lived experiences of its current inhabitants. Through the examples explored in this chapter, I have argued that the material remnants of what was once one of Lebanon's largest centers of Jewish life acts as a space through which political power, regional histories of displacement, and daily life are contested and negotiated.

CONCLUSION

Privatized Spaces, Personal Relations: A Vignette of Returning to the Field

Two and a half years after leaving the "field" in Beirut—having never visited Magen Avraham Synagogue—I finally got a chance to go inside.

I began my dissertation fieldwork a year before Lebanon as I had come to know it over the past decade and a half ceased to exist. In 2018, following the sage advice of the anthropologists who had come before me, I began slowly settling into my new home in Beirut rather than diving into my work unbridledly; gaining the trust of interlocutors and learning a terrain takes time, I had been told. To avoid the dreaded anthropological burnout that so many had warned me was sure to result from attempting to answer all of one's research questions in one fell swoop, I adopted a routine of conducting fieldwork as I strove to develop the support and networks I'd need for a life well lived. After conducting interviews or spending the day lost in an archive, I'd join new friends for drinks, which always commenced far too late in the evening for a homebody American. On other evenings, I'd cook dinner with Kareem, my husband, using the edible plants I'd foraged from the strip of green space adjacent to the disused Ottoman-era train tracks that ran rusty through our working-class, historically Armenian neighborhood. On Fridays, I'd often go dancing with members of my seemingly ever-widening social circle, feeling safe and comfortable enough in my own skin—for the first time in my life—to arrive at the smoky, dark club on my own. On the early mornings that followed dancing till dawn, Janan (my research assistant and friend) and I would meet in a state of half-sleep and guzzle down a shared *raqwa* (Turkish coffee pot) of strong, muddy espresso before embarking on a research day trip to Tripoli, Bhamdoun, or Sidon. Inevitably, we'd stop for a long, late lunch

of fried fish at a seaside restaurant en route back to Beirut, where we'd linger and talk through our observations. My husband and I welcomed visiting family and friends every month or so; we enjoyed putting them up in our guest room, taking them for lunch *chez Teta* (Kareem's maternal grandmother), and sending them home with suitcases full of Lebanese *mouneh* (preserves). All of this is to say: a year into my fieldwork, I still felt far less than an expert on the subject I had come to investigate. And yet, with each day, the conversations I'd carry on with new interlocutors became longer, more in-depth, and more numerous. I was making headway on my research, albeit slowly, in tandem with establishing a life-world of my own. Then, one day in late September 2019, when attempting to withdraw money from my neighborhood ATM, I was surprised to find that US dollars—to which the Lebanese currency had been pegged at a rate of roughly 1.5 thousand lira for over two decades—were no longer available.

My small, short-lived life-world, as well as my research plan, changed forever on October 17, 2019, when the Lebanese cabinet announced new taxes on tobacco, gasoline, and, most controversially, the voice-over-internet application Whatsapp, whose use is ubiquitous across the country. Within days, the majority of those I knew, Lebanese and foreigners alike, were descending on city and town squares to join mass protests. Collectively, they called for an end to sectarian rule; reforms to dig out the stagnating economy; and an end to banking secrecy laws seen by most as protections for the oligarchy. In the midst of the tear gas and financial freefall, it felt naive at best, and insulting at worst, to ask those around me to dedicate their time to my questions about an absent Jewish community. How could my research be relevant, or even ethical, in times of such crisis? What could be learned more broadly from the case of Lebanon, and from the history of Jews in Lebanon in particular, that might inform this terrible present?

My anthropological anxiety was further heightened when, in early March 2020, Lebanon announced the closure of its airport in the face of the growing COVID-19 pandemic. This new reality of pandemic-era living only increased the crises of hunger and political stalemate already playing out in Lebanon. Faced with the option of boarding a chartered flight back to the United States, Kareem and I chose to stay in Beirut, not only for the sake of my research but out of a sense of fidelity to the community we'd built. As aspiring academics already plagued by the dreaded "two-body problem," we were thankful to finally be in the same place and, both having moved around tirelessly, did not wish to leave our network of family and friends so suddenly. Bored, isolated, and physically detached from my field sites and interlocutors, I borrowed a set of watercolors from a close artist friend and painted prolifically.

Then, on August 4th, 2020, at 6:07 pm local time, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored clandestinely by the Lebanese government at the Port of Beirut caught fire and exploded soon after, killing over 220 people and destroying a massive swath of the capital. Our home, where I had been at the time and was some mile and a half from the port, had been largely shielded from irrevocable damage by our neighborhood's hill. Still, Kareem and I concluded, if a government could knowingly hoard corrosive, highly explosive materials so haphazardly as to blow up a massive portion of the city, was there any way to anticipate what possible future dangers lay ahead? With the constant sound of crunching, sweeping broken glass in the background—the soundscape of the city for months to come—we made the difficult decision to return to the States, our domesticated Beiruti street cat, confused, safely in tow. Painting aspects of my fieldwork became, from afar, a way of coding my data; it also became, in a moment of such intersecting global crises, incredibly therapeutic.

In March 2023, I returned to Beirut wearing my ten-month-old son strapped to my chest in a baby carrier. For three years, I had grappled with *how to grapple with* the fact that I hadn't been able to finagle a visit to Magen Avraham, despite the multiple avenues I had pursued. And yet, on this short ten-day visit, I found myself waiting outside the synagogue's wrought-iron gate on a Sabbath morning. To my anthropological discouragement, it wasn't the hard-earned trust of the leaders of Lebanon's Jewish community that had granted me access, nor was my visit due to a political shift in the power dynamics of Lebanon. Ultimately, my visit to Magen Avraham was purely a result of *wasta* (personal connections). During the financial collapse, a relative through marriage had bought property in Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut's former center of Jewish life. In the first years of the banking crises, many upper-middle class and wealthy Lebanese sought to transfer the money they (correctly) feared they'd lose to Lebanese banks into property investments. Those selling their properties in Lebanon allowed buyers to pay with a bank cheque, thus allowing "lollers," as they became colloquially known, to escape the withdrawal limits and "haircuts" placed on depositors. Moving one's money into property remains one of the few ways, in theory, to preserve financial deposits made in Lebanese banks. The apartment my relative had purchased, with its floor-to-ceiling windows, allowed for a full, uninterrupted profile view of Magen Avraham. I spent the first days of my visit, much to the entertainment of the neighborhood's militarized security guards, gawking at the empty synagogue from the apartment's balcony.

Getting into the synagogue, it turned out, was relatively simple once the proper social connections were established. The relative in question had become friendly with a soldier often stationed at Wadi Abu Jamil's main checkpoint; the guard got the go-ahead to pass the phone number of the Jewish Community vice-president on to the relative, who then made the

appropriate arrangements to visit on my behalf. While anthropologically frustrating, my experience in finally gaining access to Magen Avraham mirrored the power dynamics I had faced during fieldwork, and gestures to the larger issues surrounding the varying states of Jewish sites across the country. Finally inside, I wandered slowly through Magen Avraham's beautifully restored, dusty interior, running my hand along the smooth white marble of the *bimah* as my son's coos echoed through the nearly-empty interior. Notably, I wasn't able to take a photograph, as it was Shabbat.

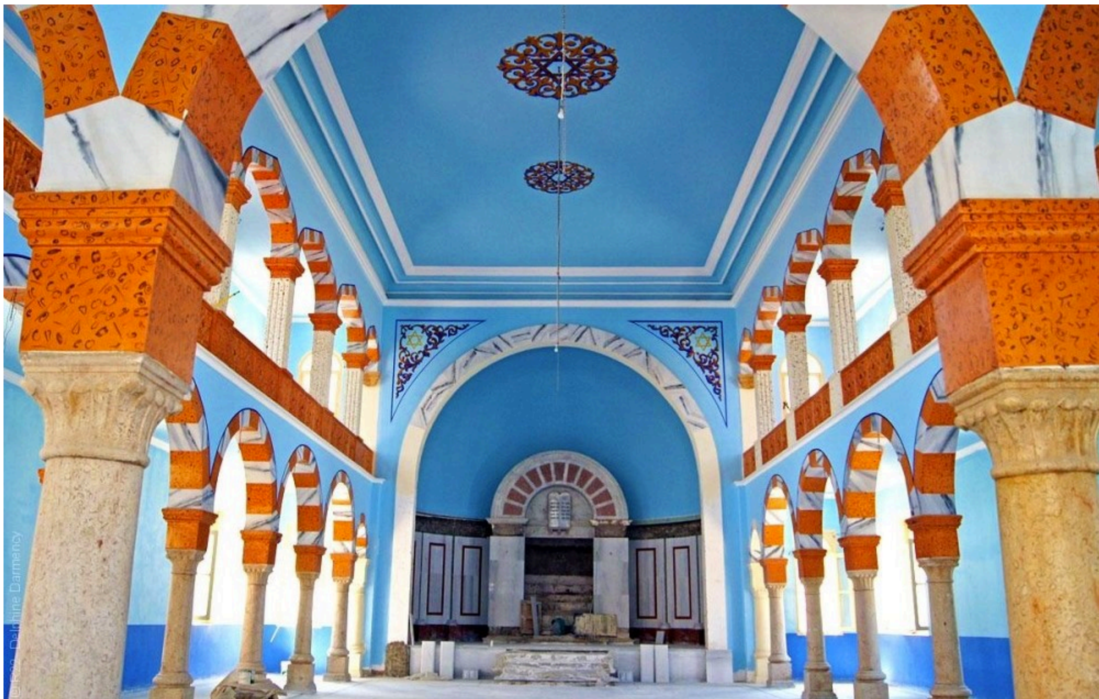

Figure 41. The interior of Magen Avraham Synagogue as seen from the *bimah.* Photo courtesy of Lebanon Untravelled. 2016.

Situating Spatial Relations

This dissertation traces the afterlives of the spaces of Lebanon's former Jewish community who, today, live almost exclusively in the diaspora. It explores what has become of sites that were once at the center of a thriving and prosperous Jewish community not as isolated

locations, but in relation to present-day Lebanon's fragmented body politic, disjointed post-civil war collective narrative, and the very different notions of national identity and history that various communities hold about the country, social difference, and Jews. In this way, I seek to show how the chasm left by the only community that virtually ceased to exist in the leadup to, and in midst of, the Civil War, provides both physical and discursive space for those who interact with them to consider the implications of the fact that there was once room for Jewish life to flourish.

My work relies on previous scholarship that asserts the necessity of studying Jewish communities of the Arab world as integrally enmeshed with societies more broadly, rather than as separate "minorities" within a larger "host" community (Hourani 1947; Shenhav 2006). As I illustrate throughout this dissertation, the ways in which Jewish spaces are situated in relation to their social, material, and geographic surroundings dictate the trajectory of their very different afterlives. Accordingly—and given my social position as a foreign researcher and an American Jew (with a spouse from a well-off family)—it was no surprise that property ownership, proximity to wealth, and kinship served as my key to accessing Wadi Abu Jamil.

The circumstances in which Jewish sites and embedded within their particular contexts varies, and, accordingly, so do the conditions in which individuals in Lebanon interact with them in the present. While Magen Avraham has been splendidly reconstructed to its former glory through public-private and diasporic funds, its continued enclosure in a heavily militarized gated residential community has resulted in an entirely different social function than its previous form as an active space of worship. Locked off from the public and without a present congregation, Beirut's only remaining synagogue today serves as a material testament to an imagined time, prior to the civil war, where Lebanese society is imagined to have been uniquely diverse. This

historic Lebanese conviviality, so the collective narrative goes, extended as far as to absorb particular groups of refugees from throughout the region, like Kurds, Armenians, and Jews, into the Lebanese nation. For elite actors like Beirut's post-war developers, Magen Avraham's reconstruction speaks to a local cosmopolitanism that carries significant social and financial capital within the so-called community of nations (Baumann 2016; Makdisi 1997).

Yet the condition of less-celebrated Jewish spaces shows a different collective narrative angle of the same nation: the structural decay of Sidon's ancient synagogue corresponds to the southern city's slow decline in the early and mid-20th century as, with the hardening of imperial state borders, Beirut became the primary seat of political and economic life at the expense of other ports (Abou-Hodeib 2015; Schlaepfer 2021). Sidon's synagogue's current use as adaptive housing for Palestinian refugees is emblematic of the inability—and unwillingness—of the Lebanese state to absorb the massive number of refugees (chiefly Palestinian but also Syrian and Iraq) living in the country due to the fact that their naturalization would threaten the demographic sectarian power-sharing arrangement that presently enriches the (sometimes former) warlords and oligarchs financially while maintaining their political power. The happenstance of seeking protection in the city's synagogue has made today's residents of Sidon's former Jewish neighborhood the unlikely narrators of the place's past; yet, shouldering this legacy has not lessened their hardship stemming from the same intersecting imperial projects that ultimately made Jewish life in Lebanon untenable.

In post-war Lebanon, where truth and reconciliation processes have failed to come to fruition, many aspects of Lebanese history remain shrouded in the trauma of civil war, resulting in the proliferation of often starkly different memory cultures between communities (Hannsen and Genberg 2001). Much as the present realities of Jewish spaces across Lebanon differ

enormously, so too do the reasons motivating non-Jews in Lebanon who engage with the country's Jewish history. Given the absence of Jews in Lebanon today, the work of maintaining Jewish sites and disseminating the community's history has largely been the work of non-Jewish "heritage brokers" (Gruber 2002). In addition to occupying and tending to Jewish sites across the country, these individuals spread awareness of the country's Jewish history in in-person conversations and, more recently, on the many active virtual forums frequented by Lebanese Jews and non-Jews at home and across the Lebanese diaspora. As I have shown in this dissertation, though the political and social orientations of these heritage brokers may vary, they are similarly motivated by the fact that Jewish life continued to thrive in Lebanon at a moment in which Jews faced grave threats in other parts of the region. In light of the violent rupture of civil war, this nostalgic longing for a time in which there was space for Jews in Lebanese society serves as an attempt to understand a collective past in the absence of historical narrative cohesion. Through the prism of Jewish belonging, I argue, individuals refract their own social aspirations, understandings of the state's shortcomings in terms of moving beyond the horrors of the civil war, and a sense of regional geopolitical stagnancy.

Despite the notion that nostalgic reverie is an isolating, dead-end endeavor, an interest in Lebanon's Jewish past brings together individual Jews and non-Jews alike, both online and in-person. Though the majority of Lebanese Jews may be severed from their "home" country, they are joined by a number of non-Jewish Lebanese on Facebook and other social networking sites, where they converge to explore Lebanon's once-vibrant Jewish past by sharing stories and circulating photographs. This nostalgia for a seemingly more cosmopolitan moment in Lebanon's history provides a realm for debating, challenging, and reconstructing concepts of belonging as they relate to remembering a shared homeland that doesn't necessarily culminate in

an imagined Jewish return. Participants on these forums have different social positions and often espouse contradictory political agendas. Yet the shared act of viewing and sharing photographs and imagining the circumstances excluded from the photographic frame allows for a sense of shared cultural identity built on the feeling that there once was a social place for many Lebanese—including religious and ethnic minorities—prior to the social and physical destruction of prolonged intercommunal strife.

Building on scholarship examining what has become of Jewish spaces across the Arabic-speaking world, my work contends that Lebanon offers a unique case for analysis, as Jews both abandoned and lost their homes and neighborhoods as a result of the overarching violence of the Civil War, rather than as the result of an organized, antisemitic campaign. Indeed, Lebanon's status as the only country in the Arab world where the number of Jews rose after Israel's establishment in 1948, as I show throughout the dissertation, speaks to Jewish investment in the Lebanese state project (and its commitment to unencumbered, Westward-facing laissez-faire capitalism) and the comfortability that Jews felt as but one of 18 religious groups in Lebanon's ethno-sectarian mosaic (Levi 2012; Schulze 2001; Safieddine 2019).

In conclusion, I return to the intellectual anxiety that has lingered with me since leaving Lebanon in 2020: what good does it do to ask about Jews at a time of acute and compounding global crisis? Lebanon's comparatively small size notwithstanding, its contested landscape has long helped anthropologists to understand the necessity of, for instance, historicizing sociopolitical categories like "sect" in order to stress their modern politicization and interaction with the state; gendered discourses of citizenship; and the entanglement of kinship, political economy, and access to health and education amongst refugee communities (Allen 2014; Deeb 2020; Mikdashi 2022; Nucho 2014). Despite Lebanon's unique position in the 20th-century

history of Jews in the Middle East, the conditions Lebanon faces today are not unique, nor are the contestations in which formerly Jewish spaces are embroiled unique to the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, we need not search far for proof that the multiple catastrophes Lebanon and its Jewish sites face today will soon be at the doorstep of each nation, if they aren't already: issues of refugee housing, the rampant privatization of historically public spaces in the name of heritage, and oligarchical negligence at the expense of an increasingly vulnerable citizenry. My abrupt departure from Lebanon, accompanied by the realities of Lebanon's ongoing crises, have left me dwelling on a remark made by an interlocutor as we discussed the country's seeming social freefall in June of 2020: "Lebanon is what happens when neoliberal values are left unchecked, but this country is the example par excellence rather than the exception." Having addressed the historically produced, present-day conditions of Jewish spaces across Lebanon, as well as the ways in which they offer a lens through which actors imagine a collective future for Lebanon, I leave the matter as intellectual nourishment and inquiries for future fieldwork.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

‘Aley Municipality. 2018. "‘Aley’s Synagogue." Accessed July 16, 2020. https://aley.gov.lb/en/details/617/aley-s-synagogue.

Abaza, Mona 2011. "Critical Commentary. Cairo's Downtown Imagined: Dubaisation or Nostalgia?" *Urban Studies.* 48 (6): 1075-87.

Abdelhady, Dalia. 2007. "Cultural production in the Lebanese diaspora: memory, nostalgia and displacement." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology.* (35) 1: 39-62.

Abdelsamad, Nada. 2006. *Wādi Abu Jamil: Quṣuṣ ‘an al-yahūd Beirut.* Dar an-Nahar.

Abi Samra, Muhammad. 2022. "ārth 'alāma al-muslimin bial-masīhīn..fi sīrat a-ḍurīr a-shī'ī "al-ānjīlī." *Almodon*. Accessed October 5. 2022. https://bitly.ws/32IjD

Abou-Hodeib, Toufoul.
2015 "Sanctity Across the Border: Pilgrimage routes and state control in Mandate Lebanon and Palestine." *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates.*

——2020."Involuntary history: writing Levantines into the nation." *Contemporary Levant* 5 (1): 44-53.

Abu Ghaida, Susanne and Alia Al Zougbi. 2005. "Oral Histories of Ras Beirut Nostalgia, Memory and the Construction of History." *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*. 15 (2): 379-92.

Aburish, Said. 2009. "The Last Jew in Beirut." *Contemporary Arab Affairs.* 2 (1); 162-7.

Agnew, John. 2005. "Sovereignty Regimes: Territoriality and State Authority in Contemporary World Politics" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers.* 92 (2): 437-61.

Ahmed, Taleb Kara. 2019. *Al-ṭā’ifa al-yahūdīa fī Saīda*. Dār Basaiūni lilṭabāʿa.

Al Quntar, Salam. 2017.
"Repatriation and the Legacy of Colonialism in the Middle East." *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*. 5 (1): 19-26.

Al-Hagla, Khalid S. 2010. "Sustainable urban development in historical areas using the tourist trail approach: A case study of the Cultural Heritage and Urban Development (CHUD) project in Saida, Lebanon." Cities. 27 (4): 234-48.

Al-Harithy, Howayda and Giulia Guadagnoli. 2021. Report: Saida Urban Sustainable Development Strategy: Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Alff, Kristen. 2018. "Levantine Joint-Stock Companies, Trans-Mediterranean Partnerships, and Nineteenth- Century Capitalist Development." *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* 60 (1): 150-77.

Alkantar, Bassem. 2012. "Minister of Culture "Dismantles" Beirut's Roman Hippodrome." *Al-Akhbar.*

Allen, Diana. 2014. *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile*. Stanford University Press.

Alpar Arun, Resmiye and Naciye Doratli. 2009. "Walls in cities: A conceptual approach to the walls of Nicosia." *Geopolitics.* 14 (1): 108-34.

The American Jewish Yearbook. 1965. American Jewish Committee. 66. Springer.

Ammon News. 2007. "ḥāret al-Yahud: ḥikāyat al-ā'thriā' fi ṣaidā al-lubnānia al-qadima." *Ammon News*, January 22, 2007. Accessed 7 August 2021. https://www.ammonnews.net/article/853

Anderson, Jon. 2014. "Talking whilst walking: a geographical archaeology of knowledge," *Area.* 36 (3): 254-61.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1988. *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective.* Cambridge University Press.

Arsan, Andrew. 2019. *Lebanon: A Country in Fragments.* C. Hurst & Co.

Ashplant, Timothy G., Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper. 2000. "The politics of war memory and commemoration: Contexts, structures and dynamics." *Commemorating War.* Routledge.

Ashworth, G.J. And J. Turnbridge. "Old cities, new pasts: Heritage planning in selected cities of central Europe." In *Managing Heritage and Cultural Tourism Resources: Critical Essays, Volume One*, edited by D. J. Timothy. Routledge.

Ashworth, G.J. 2002. "Holocaust Tourism: The Experience of Krakow-Kazimierz." *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education*. 11 (4): 262-67.

Ayadin, Mustafa. 2017. "The Levant: Search for a Regional Order." Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Azani, Ertan. 2013. "The Hybrid Terrorist Organization: Hezbollah as a Case Study." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism.* 26 (11): 899-916.

Azoulay, Ariella. 2015. "Photographic Conditions: Looting, Archives, and the Figure of the 'Infiltrator.'" *Jerusalem Quarterly.* 61 (6).

Bădescu, Gruia. 2019. "Traces of empire: Architectural heritage, imperial memory and post-war reconstruction in Sarajevo and Beirut." *History and Anthropology.* 30 (4): 366-81.

Barkey, Karen and George Gavrilis. 2016. "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary Legacy." *Ethnopolitics*. 15 (1): 24-42.

Bashkin, Orit. 2012. *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*. Stanford University Press.

Baumann, Hannes. 2016. *Citizen Hariri: Lebanon's Neo-Liberal Reconstruction*. Hurst.

Behar, Moshe and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite. 2014. "The Possibility of Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.* 41 (1): 43-61.

Beinin, Joel. 1998. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry.* University of California Press.

Bender, Barbara. 2016. "Time and Landscape." In *Indigenous Archaeologies: A Reader on Decolonization.* Edited by H. M. Wobst, M. Bruchac, and S. Hart. Routledge.

Bender, Barbara and Margot Winer. 2001. *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place. Routledge.*

Benjamin, Walter. 2019a. *Origin of the German Trauerspiel.* Harvard University Press.

——2019b. *Illuminations*. Mariner Books Classic.

——1990. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader,* edited by S.E. Bronner and D.M. Kellner. Routledge.

Bernal, Victoria. 2006. "Diaspora, Cyberspace, and the Political Imagination: The Eritrean Diaspora Online." *Global Networks*. 6 (2): 161-79.

Beydoun, Ahmad. 1992. "The South Lebanon Border Zone: A Local Perspective." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. 21 (3): 35-53.

Bonanno, Letizia. 2019. "I swear I hated it, and therefore I drew it." *Entanglements: Experiments in Multimodal Ethnography*. 2.

Boy Akar, Hiba. 2018. *For the War Yet to Come: Planning Beirut's Frontiers*. Stanford University Press.

Boum, Aomar. 2014. "'The Virtual Genizah': Emerging North African and Muslim Identities Online." I*nternational Journal of Middle East Studies.* 46 (3) 597-601.

——2013. *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco*. Stanford University Press.

Boym, Svetlana. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books.

Braun, Bruce. 2005. “Writing Geographies of Hope.” *Antipode*. 37 (4): 834-41.

Brenner, Itamar. 2018. “Torah from Sidon.” *Segula Magazine*. Accessed June 14, 2021. https://segulamag.com/en/articles/torah-from-sidon/.

Brenner, Neil, Bob Jessop, Martin Jones, and Gordon MacLeod. 2003. *State/Space: A Reader.* Blackwell.

Brenner, Neil and Nik Theodore. 2002. “Cities and the Geographies of ‘Actually Existing Neoliberalism.’” *Antipode*. 34 (3): 349-79.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2002. “Ethnicity Without Groups.” *Archives Eurpéenes de Sociologie.* 43 (2): 163-89.

——1996. Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe. Cambridge University Press.

Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper. 2000. “Beyond ‘Identity.’” *Theory and Society*. 29.

Bryant, Rebecca. 2016. “On critical times: return, repetition, and the uncanny present.” *History and Anthropology*. 27 (1): 19-31.

Buchanan, Andrew. 2016. “‘I Felt like a Tourist instead of a Soldier’: The Occupying Gaze-War and Tourism in Italy, 1943-1945.” *American Quarterly.* 68 (3): 593-615.

Castells, Manuel. 2020. “Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age.” in *The City Reader*, edited by by R.T. LeGates and F. Stout. Routledge.

Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins. 1998. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. University of Minnesota Press.

Ciezaldo, Anna. 2007. “Sect Symbols.” *The Nation.*

Clancy, Marie-Alice and John Nagle. 2019. “Power-sharing after Civil War: Thirty Years since Lebanon’s Taif Agreement.” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*. 25 (1): 1-8.

Clifford, James. 1989. “The others: Beyond the ‘salvage’ paradigm.” *Third Text.* 3 (6): 73-8.

Cohen, Erik. 1985. “The tourist guide: The origins, structure and dynamics of a role. *Annals of Tourism Research.* 12 (1): 5-29.

Collard, Rebecca. 2016. "It took this man 10 years to realize he was living in a synagogue." *The World*. June 1, 2016. Accessed December 29, 2019. https://theworld.org/stories/2016-06-01/it-took-muslim-man-10-years-realize-he-was-living-synagogue

Connor, Walker. 1978. "A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a…" E*thnic and Racial Studies*. 1 (4): 377-400.

Connorton, Paul. 1989. *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge University Press.

Corbin, Alain. 1996. "Divisions of Time and Space." in *Realms of Memory: Conflicts and Divisions,* edited by P. Nora. Columbia University Press.

Coward, Martin. 2006. "Against Anthropocentrism: The Destruction of the Built Environment as a Distinct Form of Political Violence." *Review of International Studies*. 2 (3): 419-37.

Crang, Mike and Penny S. Travlou. 2001. "The city and topologies of memory." *Environment and Planning.* 19: 161-77.

Curverns, Hans H. and Barbara Stewart. 2007. "Beirut Archeological Heritage Management (1993–2015): A metaphor of text and theater." *Beyrutus* LV. 263-91.

Davidson, Tonya K., Odine Park, and Rob Shields. 2011. *Ecologies: Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Dayikh, Ghada, Kawthar 'Isa. 2019. "A-Sulṭānia...balada nashiyṭa bi'āhlhā wa baladiyatha khārij āhtimām a-dawla." *Al-Binaa*. Accessed May 29, 2021. https://www.al-binaa.com/archives/article/25904

De Bar, Luc. 1983. *Les communautés confessionnelles du Liban.* Editions Recherche sur les civilisations.

Deed, Lara. 2020. Beyond sectarianism: "Intermarriage and social difference in Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 52 (2). 1-14.

Deeaene, Michiel and Lieven De Cauter. 2008. *Heterotopia and the City: Public space in a postcivil society*. Routledge.

Dominguez, Virginia. 2000. "For a Politics of Love and Rescue." *Cultural Anthropology.* 15 (3): 361-93.

Donald, Stephanie Hemelryk, Elonore Kaufman, and Catherine Kevin. 2008. *Branding Cities: Cosmopolitanism, Parochialism, and Social Change.* Routledge.

Driessen, Henk. 2005. Mediterranean port cities: Cosmopolitanism reconsidered. *History and Anthropology.* 16 (1): 129-41.

Driver, Cory Thomas Penchan. 2018. *Muslim Custodians of Jewish Spaces in Morocco: Drinking the Milk of Trust.* Palgrave Macmillian.

Duru, Deniz Neriman Duru. 2016. "Memory, Conviviality, and Coexistence: Negotiating Class Differences in Burazadasi, Istanbul." in *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict,* edited by Rebecca Bryant. Berghahn Books.

Eastmond, Marita. 2010. "Introduction: Reconciliation, reconstruction, and everyday life in war-torn societies." *Focaal.* 57: 3-16.

Eisenberg, Laura Zittrain. 1996. *My Enemy's Enemy: Lebanon in the Early Zionist Imagination, 1900–1918.* Wayne State University Press.

Farhi, Alain. 2012. "The Jews of Lebanon: History and Records." *The 32nd IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy*. Accessed April 20, 2020. https://www.farhi.org/Documents/The Jews of Lebanon.htm.

——2005. "History of Les Fleurs de l'Orient Website." *Les Fleurs de L'Orient.* Accessed April 20, 2020. https://farhi.org/Fleurs_history_english%20(2004).htm.

Fawaz, Leila. 1984. "The City and the Mountain: Beirut's Political Radius in the Nineteenth Century as Revealed in the Crisis of 1860." *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 16 (4): 489-95.

Fawaz, Mona and Marieke Krijnen. 2010. "Exception as the Rule: High-End Developments in Neoliberal Beirut." *Built Environment.* 36 (2): 245-59.

Feldman, Jackie and Jonathan Skinner. 2019. "Tour Guides as Cultural Mediators: Performance and Positioning." *Ethnologia Europaea*. 48 (2): 5-13.

Firro, Kais M. 2004. "Lebanese Nationalism vs Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha." *Middle Eastern Studies.* 40 (5): 1-27.

Fischbach, Michael R. 2008. "Claiming Jewish Communal Property in Iraq." *Middle East Report.* 248. 5-7.

Fishman, Louis. 2020. "Creating [Jewish] Sites of Memory in Turkey Where Jews No Longer Exist: From Physical Sites to Virtual Ones." in *Turkish Jews and their Diasporas,* edited by K. Öktem and I. Kocaömer. Palgrave Macmillian.

Frankel, Jonathan. 1997. *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics and the Jews in 1840.* Cambridge University Press.

Freitag, Ulrike. 2013. "Cosmopolitanism' and 'Conviviality'? Some conceptual considerations concerning the late Ottoman Empire." *European Journal of Cultural Studies.* 17 (4). 375-91.

Fuhrmann, Malte and Vangelis Kechriotis. 2009. "The late Ottoman port-cities and their inhabitants: Subjectivity, urbanity, and conflicting orders: In memory of Faruk Tabak (1953-2008)." *Mediterranean Historical Review*. 24 (2): 71-8.

Galviz, Carlos López, Nadia Bartolini, Mark Pendleton, and Adam Stock. 2017. "Reconfiguring Ruins: Beyond Ruinenlust." *Geohumanities*. 3 (2): 531-53.

Gelber, Yoav. 1995. "Druze and Jews in the war of 1948." *Middle Eastern Studies.* 31 (2): 229-52.

Gerber, Haim. 1981. "Jews and Money-Lending in the Ottoman Empire." *The Jewish Quarterly Review.* 72 (2) 100-18.

Gérin, Annie. 2006. "The Virtual Memorial: Temporality, Interactivity, and the Internet." *Canadian Art Review.* 31 (1/2). 42-54.

Geva-Kleinberger, Aharon. 2017. "On the dialectological landscape of Arabic among the Jewish community of Beirut." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarun Hung.* 70 (1): 31-47.

Gilroy, Paul. 2005. *Postcolonial Melancholia.* University of Columbia Press.

Ginsberg, Robert. 2006. T*he Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason.* Peter Lang.

Ginsberg, Faye. 1987. "When the Subject Is Women: Encounters with Syrian Jewish Women." *The Journal of American Folklore.* 100 (398): 540-7.

Giri, Anita Kumar. 2018. *Beyond Cosmopolitanism: Towards Planetary Transformations.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Goitein, Shlomo. 1967. *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. 1: Economic Foundations.* University of California Press.

Goldberg Harvey E. and Chen Brown. 2007. "Sephardic/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews: Reflections of Critical Sociology and the Study of Middle Eastern Jewry within the Context of Israel." *Studies of Contemporary Jewry.* 22:227-56.

Gordillo, Gastón. 2014. *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction.* Duke University Press.

Gottreich, Emily. 2006. *The Mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim Space in Morocco's Red City.* Indiana University Press.

Graves, Matthew and Elizabeth Rechniewski. 2010. "From collective memory to transcultural remembrance." *Portal : Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies.* 7 (1).

Grehan, James. 2014. *Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine.* Oxford University Press.

Gruber, Ruth Ellen. 2002. Virtually Jewish: *Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*. University of California Press.

Gualtieri, Sarah. 2001. "Becoming 'White': Race, Religion and the Foundations of Syrian/ Lebanese Ethnicity in the United States." *Journal of American Ethnic History.* 20 (4): 29-58.

Haddadn, Elie. 2007. "Between Myth and Reality: The 'Tuscan Influence' on the Architecture of Mount Lebanon in the Emirate Period." *Journal of Design History.* 20(2). 161-71.

Hage, Ghassan. 2021 *The Diasporic Condition: Ethnographic Explorations of the Lebanese in the World.* University of Chicago Press.

——1992. "Religious Fundamentalism as a Political Strategy: The evolution of the Lebanese Forces' religious discourse during the Lebanese Civil War." *Critique of Anthropology.* 12 (1): 5-96.

Hagopian, Elaine C. 1989. "Maronite Hegemony to Maronite Militancy: The Creation and Disintegration of Lebanon." *Third World Quarterly.* (11) 4: 101-17.

Hamul-Halabe, Liz. 1997. "Re-creating community: Christians from Lebanon and Jews from Syria in Mexico, 1900-1938." *Historic Studies in Migration, Ethnicity, and Diaspora.* 16 (1-2): 126-45.

Hanly, Will. 2008. "Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle Eastern Studies." *History Compass.* 6(5): 1346-67.

Hanssen, Jens-Peter and Daniel Genberg. 2001. "Beirut in memoriam: a kaleidoscopic space out of focus." *Crisis and Memory in Islamic Societies: Proceedings of the Third Summer Academy of the Working Group Modernity and Islam Held at the Orient Institute of the German Oriental Society in Beirut.*

Tarik, Ilya F. 1965. "The "Iqta" System in Lebanon: A Comparative Political View." *Middle East Review.*19 (4): 405-21.

Hartman, Michelle and Alessandro Olsaretti. 2004. "'The First Boat and the First Oar'': Inventions of Lebanon in the Writings of Michel Chiha." *Radical History Review.* 86: 37-65.

Haugbolle, Sune. 2012. "The (little) militia man: memory and militarized masculinity in Lebanon." *Journal of Middle Eastern Women's Studies*. 8 (1):115-39.

——2010. *War and Memory in Lebanon.* Cambridge University Press.

Hayden, Robert M. 2016. "Intersecting Religioscapes in Post-Ottoman Spaces." In *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict*, edited by R. Bryant. Berghahn Books.

Hayek, Ghenwa. 2014. *Beirut, Imagining the City: Space and Place in Lebanese Literature.* I.B. Tauris.

Hazbun, Waleed. 2008. *Beaches, Ruins, Resorts: The Politics of Tourism in the Arab World.* University of Minnesota Press.

Hell, Julia Andreas Schönle, Julia Adams, and George Steinmetz. 2010. *Ruins of Modernity.* Duke University Press.

Hermez, Sami. 2017. *War Is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon.* University of Pennsylvania Press.

Herzog, Ben. 2009. "The road to Israeli citizenship: the case of the South Lebanese Army (SLA)." *Citizenship Studies.* 13 (6): 575-92.

Hirsch, Marianne. 2012. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust.* Columbia University Press.

Hirschen, Renée. 2023. *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe: The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piraeus.* Bergahn Books.

Hourani, Albert. 1947. *Minorities of the Arab World.* Oxford University Press.

Hudson, Michael. 1997. "Trying Again: Power-Sharing in Post-Civil War Lebanon." *I International Negotiation*. 2 (1): 103-22.

Humphrey, Michael. 2004. "Lebanese Identities: Between Cities, Nations and Trans-Nations." *Arab Studies Quarterly.* 26 (1) 31-50.

Hung, Carla. 2019. "Sanctuary Squats: The Political Contestations of Piazza Indipendenza Refugee Occupiers." *Radical History Review.* 135: 119-37.

Huyssen, Andreas. 2010. "Authentic ruins: Products of modernity." in *Ruins of Modernity,* edited by J. Hell, A. Schönle, J. Adams, and G. Steinmetz. Duke University Press. 17-28.

Ibrahim, Jennifer. 2008. "The Discrimination against Palestinian Refugees Living in Lebanon." *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture.* 15 (1/2): 83-90.

Inda, Jonathan Xavier. 2005. *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics.* Blackwell.

Issa, Rana and Einer Wien. 2020. "Levantine chronotopes: prisms for entangled histories." *Contemporary Levant.* 5 (1): 1-12.

Jacobs, Joseph and Schulim Ochser. 2007. "Zidon (Sidon)." *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Accessed May 22, 2022. https://rb.gy/qrhxmi

Jay, Sara. 2018. "Grave connections: Algeria's Jewish cemeteries as sites of diaspora-homeland contact." in *Jewish Property after 1948*, edited by J. Labenz. Routledge.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency. 1982. "Israeli Soldier Re-visits Scene of His Bar Mitzvah—in Lebanon." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency,* November 13, 1982. Accessed July 16, 2019. https://www.jta.org/archive/israeli-soldier-re-visits-scene-of-his-bar-mitzvah-in-lebanon

Kahlenberg, Caroline. 2019. "The star of David in a cedar tree: Jewish students and Zionism at the American University of Beirut (1908–1948)." *Middle Eastern Studies.* 55 (4): 570-589.

Hart, Laurie Kain. 2006. "Provincial Anthropology, Circumlocution, and the Copious Use of Everything." *Journal of Modern Green Studies.* 24: 307-45.

——1999. "Culture, civilization, and demarcation at the northwest borders of Greece." *American Ethnologist.* 26 (1): 196-220.

Kanafani, Samar. 2016. "Made to Fall Apart: An Ethnography of Old Houses and Urban Renewal in Beirut." PhD diss., University of Manchester.

Kaplan, Michael. 2015. "The Mystery of Lebanon's Maghen Abraham Synagogue." *The Forward.* May 15, 2015. Accessed March 2, 2020. https://forward.com/culture/307619/the-mystery-of-maghen-abraham/

Kappler, Stefanie. 2017. "Sarajevo's ambivalent memoryscape: Spatial stories of peace and conflict." *Memory Studies.* 10 (2): 107-240.

Kasaba, Reset, Caglar Keyder, and Faruk Tabak. 1986. "Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities and Their Bourgeoisies: Merchants, Political Projects, and Nation-States." *Review* (Ferdinand Braudel Center).

Kastrissianakis, Konstantin, Dima Smaira, and Lynn A. Staeheli. 2019. "'Synthesis Is Not the Same Thing as Uniformity'' The Cosmopolitics of Youth Citizenship in Lebanon." *Geopolitics.* 1-22.

Kaufman, Asher. 2006. "Between Palestine and Lebanon: Seven Shi'i Villages as a Case Study of Boundaries, Identities, and Conflict." *Middle East Journal*. 6 (4): 685-706.

Kessler, Oren. April 5, 2012. “Anti-Zionist rabbis pray at Lebanese synagogue.” T*he Jerusalem Post.* Accessed November 1, 2019. https://www.jpost.com/jewish-world/jewish-news/anti-zionist-rabbis-pray-at-lebanese-synagogue

Khalil, Amal. 2019. “Kitāb li-Talib Qāra Ahmed: ho'walā' hum yahūd ṣaidā...wa tilk ḥikāyatihum.” *Al-Akhbar*. June 15, 2019. Accessed April 25, 2021. https://al-akhbar.com/Literature_Arts/271915

Khayyat, Munira. 2013. “A Landscape of War: On the Nature of Conflict in South Lebanon.” PhD diss., Columbia University.

Kisirwani, Maroun. 1980. “Foreign Interference and Religious Animosity in Lebanon.” *Journal of Contemporary History.* 15 (4): 685-700.

Kossaify, Ephrem and Nagi Zeidan. 2020. “Minority report: The Jews of Lebanon.” *Arab News.* Accessed October 1, 2020. https://bitly.ws/334Ku

Knudsen, Are John. 2020. “Competitive clientelism in secondary cities: urban ecologies of resistance in Lebanon.” *Third World Thematics*. 5: 3-6.

Krauß, Andrea. 2011. “Constellations: A Brief Introduction.” *MLN.* 126 (3): 439-45.

Kuhn, Annette. 2002. *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination.* Verso.

Larkin, Craig. 2012. *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past*. Routledge.

——2010. “Beyond the War? The Lebanese Postmemory Experience.” International Journal of *Middle East Studies.* 42 (4): 615-35.

Laskier, Michael M. 1983. “Aspects of the Activities of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in the Jewish Communities of the Middle East and North Africa: 1860-1918.” *Modern Judaism.* 3 (2): 147-71.

Lässig, Simone and Miriam Rürup. 2017. “Introduction: What Made a Space "Jewish"? Reconsidering a Category of Modern German History.” in *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*. Berghahn.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1992. *The Production of Space.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Lehrer, Erica. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places.* Indiana University Press.

Leite, Naomi. 2007. “Materializing Absence: Tourists, Surrogates, and the Making of ‘Jewish Portugal.’” in *Things That Move: The Material Worlds of Tourism and Travel,* edited by D. Carl. Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK.

Leshem, Noam. 2016. *Life after Ruin: The Struggles over Israel's Depopulated Arab Spaces.* Cambridge University Press.

Letter to M. Penso. 1919. Archived Material: Alliance Israelite Universelle Archive, Historic.

Letter to Mlle. Sidi, head of the girl's school in Beirut 1928. Archived Material: Alliance Israelite Universelle Archive, Historic.

Levi, Tomer. 2012. *The Jews of Beirut: the Rise of a Levantine Community, 1860s-1930s.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Levy, André. 2023. "Screening Out Their Own: Muslim Gatekeepers of Jewish Spaces in Morocco." *Religions*. 14 (2).

——2003. "Notes on Jewish-Muslim Relationships: Revisiting the Vanishing Moroccan Jewish Community." *Cultural Anthropology*. 18 (3): 365-97.

Levy, Avigdor. 1993. *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire.* Darwin Press.

Levy, Lital. 2008. "Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the 'Mashriq.'" *The Jewish Quarterly Review.* 98 (4): 452-69.

Lewicka, Maria. 2008. "Place attachment, place identity, and place memory: Restoring the forgotten city past." *Journal of Environmental Psychology.* 28: 209-31.

Little, Douglas. 1996. "His Finest Hour? Eisenhower, Lebanon, and the 1958 Middle East Crisis." *Diplomatic History*. 20 (1): 27-54.

Logan, Lindsay Bertrand. 2020. "The City of the Dead as a place to live: unpacking the narratives about tomb communities." MA thesis, Kansas State University.

Maffi, Irene. 2014. T*he Politics and Practices of Cultural Heritage in the Middle East.* I.B. Tauris.

Makdisi, Saree. 1997. "Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidere." *Critical Inquiry.* 23 (3): 660-705.

Makdisi, Ussama. 2021. *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Middle East.* University of California Press.

——2000. *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon.* University of California Press.

Makhzoumi, Jala M. 2009. "Unfolding Landscape in a Lebanese Village: Rural Heritage in Globalising World." *International Journal of Heritage Studies.* 15 (4): 317-37.

Maktabi, Rania. 1999. “The Lebanese census of 1932 revisited. Who are the Lebanese?” *British Journal of Middle East Studies.* 26 (2): 219-41.

Malek, Amy. 2019. “Subjective nostalgia of postmemorial art: Remediated family archives in the Iranian diaspora.” *Memory Studies.* 14 (2): 140-58.

Marcheva, Marta. 2011. “The Networked Diaspora: Bulgarian Migrants on Facebook.” *M/C Journal.* 14 (2).

Marot, Bruno. 2014. “The End of Rent Control in Lebanon: Another Boost to the ‘Growth Machine?’” *Jadaliyya.* Accessed November 10, 2023. https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30811

Marroun, Marianne. 2008. “What's so great about home?: Roots, nostalgia, and return in Andrée Chedid's La Maison Sans Racines and Hanan Al-Shaykh's Hlkayat Zahra.” *Comparative Literature Studies*. 45 (4): 491-513.

Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space.* Sage.

Masters, Bruce. 2020. “The Ottoman citizen between millet and nation.” *Routledge Handbook of Citizenship in the Middle East and North Africa*.

Middle East Eye. 2023. “Turkey earthquake: Israel returns antique Jewish scrolls taken from Antakya.” *Middle East Eye*, February 20, 2023. Accessed September 23, 2023. https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-earthquake-israel-jewish-scrolls-antakya-returns

Mikdashi, Maya. 2022. *Sextarianism: Sovereignty, Secularism, and the State in Lebanon.* Stanford University Press.

Mills, Amy. 2010. *Streets of Memory: Landscape, Tolerance and National Identity in Istanbul.* University of Georgia Press.

Mizrahi-Arnaud, Yael. 2021. The Jews of Sidon and the Yishuv: A Story of Dynamism and S Support. Unpublished working paper.

Monroe, Kristin V. 2006. *The Insecure City: Space, Power, and Mobility in Beirut*. Rutgers University Press.

Morris, Brian. 2004. “What We Talk About when We Talk About 'Walking in the City'.” *Cultural Studies.* 18 (5): 675-97.

Müller, Katja. 2017. “Between Lived and Archived Memory: How Digital Archives Can Tell History.” *Digithum.* 19: 11-8.

Murray, Martin J. 2008. *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid.* Cornell University Press.

Nagel, Caroline. 2002. "Reconstructing Space, Re-creating Memory: Sectarian Politics and Urban Redevelopment in Post-war Beirut." *Political Geography.* 21: 717-25.

Nahas, Charbel. 2007. Report: Stakeholder analysis and social assessment for the proposed cultural heritage and tourism development project-Saida (Sidon).

Nasr, Ghassan. 2018. "Fairouz and the Rahbanis: Nation, Nostalgia, and A Lebanese Cosmopolitan Modern." PhD diss., Indiana University.

Navaro, Yael. 2018. Remnants (From the series: Speaking Volumes). *Cultural Anthropology Editor's Forum: Theorizing the Contemporary.* Accessed 1 October 2023. https://culanth.org/fieldsights/remnants

——2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity.* Duke University Press.

——2009. "Affective space, melancholic objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute.* 15 (1): 1-18.

Neumann, Birgit and Martin Zierold. 2012. "Cultural Memory and Memory Cultures." in *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture*, edited by A. Nünning and B. Neumann. De Gruyter.

The New York Times. 1968. "Lebanese Guarding Beirut Jews' Area." *The New York Times*, December 30, 1968.

——1949. "200 Syrian Jews Held; Lebanon Police Seize Them as Aides of Israel Immigrants." *The New York Times,* December 30, 1949.

Nora, Pierre. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past (3 Volumes).* Columbia University Press.

——1989. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieu de Mémoire." *Representations*. 26: 7-24.

Norton, Augustus Richard and Jillian Schwedler. 1993. "(In)security Zones in South Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies.* 23 (1): 61-79.

Nucho, Joanne Randa. 2016. *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power.* Princeton University Press.

Oiarzabal, Pedro J. 2012. "Diaspora Basques and Online Social Networks: An Analysis of Users of Basque Institutional Diaspora Groups on Facebook." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.* 38 (9): 1469-85.

Olick, Jeffrey K., Daniel Levy, and Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi. 2011. *The Collective Memory Reader.* Oxford University Press.

Olsen, Bjørnar and Póra Pétursdóttir. 2014. *Ruin Memories: Materialities, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past*. Routledge.

Oringer, Molly Theodora. 2021. Interview with Dinah Diwan, transcript of an oral history conducted May 21, 2021, Los Angeles, California, United States.

Palestine Exploration Fund. January 1878. Quarterly Statement.

Peleikis, Anja. 2001. "Shifting Identities , Reconstructing Boundaries . The Case of a Multi-Confessional Locality in Post-War Lebanon." *Die Welt des Islams.* 4 (3): 400-29.

Peteet, Julie. 2005. "Words as interventions: naming in the Palestine – Israel conflict." *Third World Quarterly*. 26 (1). 153-72.

Pinto, Diana. 1996. A New Jewish Identity or Post-1989 Europe. Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Point of No Return. 2022. "Discoverer of Sidon Torah detained at Beirut Airport." *Point of No Return*, May 15, 2022. Accessed May 31, 2022. https://www.jewishrefugees.org.uk/2022/05/discoverer-of-sidon-torah-detained-at-beirut-airport.html#about

Port, Lyndel V. 1995. "Repatriation of Cultural Property." *UBC Law Review.* 229.

Puzon, Katarzyna. 2019. "Saving Beirut: heritage and the city." *International Journal of Heritage Studies.* 25 (9): 914-25.

Ragab, Tarek Saad. 2011. "The crisis of cultural identity in rehabilitating historic Beirut-downtown." *Cities.* 28 (1): 107-14.

Rasmussen, Claire and Michael Brown. 2005. "The Body Politic as Spatial Metaphor." *Citizenship Studies.* 9 (5): 469-84.

Renzo Piano Building Workshop. 2016. "Beirut History Museum 2015—In Progress, Beirut, Lebanon." *Renzo Piano Building Workshop*. Accessed 8 July 2021. http://www.project/beirut-city-history-museum

Rodrigue, Aron. 1990. *French Jews, Turkish Jews: The Alliance Israelite Universelle and the Politics of Jewish Schooling in Turkey 1860-1925.* Indiana University Press.

Rose, Gillian. 2010. *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, the Public, and the Politics of Sentiment.* Routledge.

Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* Stanford University Press.

Rowayheb, Marwan George. 2011. "Political Change and the Outbreak of Civil War: The Case of Lebanon." *Civil Wars*. 12 (4): 414-36.

Rowbotham, Judith. 2010. "'Sand and Foam': the changing identity of Lebanese tourism." *Journal of Tourism History.* 2 (1): 39-53.

Safieddine, Hicham. 2019. *Banking on the State: The Financial Foundations of Lebanon.* Stanford University Press.

Sagiv, Gadi. 2017. "Dazzling Blue: Color Symbolism, Kabbalistic Myth, and the Evil Eye in Judaism." *Numen.* 2/3: 183-208.

Salameh, Franck. 2018. *Lebanon's Jewish Community: Fragments of Lives Arrested.* Palgrave Macmillian.

——2010. Language, memory, and identity in the Middle East: the case for Lebanon. Lexington Books.

Salibi, Kamal. 2005. *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered.* I.B. Tauris.

Sandgrove, P.C. 1992. "The Beirut Jewish Arab Theatre: a Question of Identity." BRISMES: Proceedings of the 1992 Annual Conference.

Sawalha, Aseel. 2010. *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City*. University of Texas Press.

Sbaiti, Nadya. 2010. "What's in a City? (Part 2)." *Jadaliyya.* Accessed June 6, 2018. https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23563/What%60s-in-a-City-Part-2

Scheid, Kirsten. 2020. "Start with the art: New ways of understanding the political in the Middle East" in *Routledge Handbook of Middle East Politics.* Routledge.

Schlaepfer, Aline. 2021. "Sidon against Beirut: Space, Control, and the Limits of Sectarianism within the Jewish Community of Modern Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 53 (3): 424-38.

Schneidleder, Adoram. 2018. "Discreet and Hegemonic Borderscales of Galilee: Lebanese Residents of Israel and the Israel-Lebanon Border." *Geopolitics*. 23 (3). 563-86.

Schulze, Kirsten. 2009. "Point of Departure: the 1967 War and the Jews of Lebanon." *Israel Affairs.* 15 (4): 335-54.

——2001. *The Jews of Beirut: Between Coexistence and Conflict.* University of Sussex Press.

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* Yale University Press.

Seigneurie, Ken. 2011. *Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon.* Fordham University Press.

Sela, Avraham. 2007. "Civil Society, the Military, and National Security: The Case of Israel's Security Zone in South Lebanon." *Israel Studies.* 12 (1): 53-78.

Sharp, Deen. 2020. Urban violence in war and peace: Lebanon's reconstruction. Geography and Environment Discussion Paper Series (11). Department of Geography and Environment, LSE, London, UK.

Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 1988. "Together in the Field: Team Research among Syrian Jews in Brooklyn, New York." *Ethnomusicology*. 32 (3): 369-84.

Shenhav, Yehuda and Hannah Havar. 2012. "'Arab Jews' after structuralism: Zionist discourse and the (de)formation of an ethnic identity." *Social Identities*. 18 (1): 101-18.

Shields, Rob. 1999. *Lefebvre, Love & Struggle: Spatial Dialectics.* Routledge.

Shirazi, Manny. 1985. The Other Half: an Interview with Heiny Srour. *Spare Rib.*

Shuayb, Maha. 2016. "Education for social cohesion attempts in Lebanon: reflections on the 1994 and 2010 education reforms." *Education as Change.* 20 (3): 225-42.

Singerman, Diane and Paul Amar. 2006. *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East.* American University in Cairo Press.

Slyomovics, Susan and Sarah Stein. 2012. "Jews and French colonialism in Algeria: an introduction." *The Journal of North African Studies.* 17 (6): 749-55.

Slyomovics, Susan. 2019. "Dismantling a world: France's monumental military heritage in Sidi-Bel-Abbes, Algeria." The Journal of North African Studies. 25 (5): 772-96.

—2019. "Is patrimoine good to think with?" *Journal of North African Studies.* 25 (5): 689-96.

—1990. *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Smith, Anthony. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation.* Oxford University Press.

Solidere Annual Report. 2012. Solidere.

Sontag, Susan. 1979. *On Photography.* Penguin.

Srour, Heiny. 1998. *Between Three Stools.* Translated by S. Matthé.

Stach, Sabine. 2017. “Narrating Jewish history in free walking tours: Warsaw as a case study,” *Kultura Popularna* 51 (1): 76-91.

Stein, Rebecca. 2008. “Souvenirs of Conquest: Israeli Occupations as Tourist Events.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 40 (4): 647-69.

Stillman, Norman. 1979. *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book.* Publication Society of America.

Stoler, Anne Laura. 2008. “Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination.” *Cultural Anthropology.* 23 (2): 191-219.

Strategic Communications. 2000. “Stuck in the Lebanese 'mud': Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon.” *Strategic Communications.* 6 (3): 1-2.

Suárez, Alejandra Álvarez and Francisco del Rio Sánchez. 2013. “The current Syrian popular view of the Jews.” *The Levantine Review.* 2 (2).

Suni, Anoush. 2019. “Palimpsests of Violence: Ruination and the Politics of Memory in Anatolia.” PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles.

Tamar, Salim. 2003. “Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City.” *Comparatives Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East.* 1 & 2: 173-80.

Tanyeri-Erdemir, Tuğba, Robert M. Hayden, and Akin Erdemir. 2014. “The Iconostasis in the Republican Mosque: Transformed Religious Sites as Artifacts of Intersecting Religioscapes.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 46 (3): 489-512.

Tarraf, Zeina. 2020. “Re(negotiating) Belonging: Nostalgia and Popular Culture in Postwar Lebanon.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies.* 41 (3): 255-69.

Terdiman, Richard. 1993. *Present Past: Modernity and Memory.* Cornell University Press.

Till, Karen E. 2008. “Artistic and activist memory-work: Approaching place-based practice.” *Memory Studies*. 1 (1): 99-113.

Times of Israel Staff. 2014. “Lebanon's Magen Avraham synagogue set to reopen.” *The Times of Israel.* May 19, 2014. Accessed 7 December 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/lebanons-magen-avraham-synagogue-set-to-reopen/

Traboulsi, Fawaz. 2007. *A History of Modern Lebanon*. Pluto Press.

UN-Habitat and UNICEF Lebanon. 2019. Old Saida Neighbourhood Profile 2019. Beirut: UN-Habitat Lebanon.

UNESCO. 1970. "1970 Convention." November 14, 1970. https://en.unesco.org/fighttrafficking/1970

Volk, Lucia. 2010. *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon.* Indiana University Press.

The Washington Post. 1985. "Shiite Moslem Faction Says It Holds 4 Lebanese Jews." *The Washington Post,* November 18, 1985.

Watson, Robert. 2017. "Next year in Beirut?: Lebanese Jewish identity and memory in the Mediterranean francosphère." *Francosphères.* 6 (1): 21-34.

Weiss, Max. 2009. "The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon." *History Compass.* 7 (1): 141-54.

Westmoreland, Mark R. 2009. "Post-Orientalist Aesthetics: Experimental Film and Video in Lebanon." *Invisible Culture: A Journal for Visual Culture.* 13.

Whitehouse, Tanya. 2018. *How Ruins Acquire Aesthetic Value: Modern Ruins, Ruin Porn, and the Ruin Tradition.* Palgrave Macmillian.

Zeidan, Nagi. 2020. *Juifs du Liban: D'Abraham à nos jours, histoire d'une communauté disparue.* VA Editions.

——2021a. "The Jews of Deir El Kamar" Facebook, May 5, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/notes/3396910467023656/

——2021b. "The History of the Jews in Tripoli, Lebanon." Facebook. May 5, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/notes/3396959373685432/

——2016. "Histoire du Synagogue de Hasbaya." Facebook, April 27, 2016. https://bitly.ws/334FH

——2011. "Les Juifs de Hasbaya." Discover Lebanon. May 25, 2011. Accessed 6 October, 2018. https://www.discoverlebanon.com/en/forum/viewtopic_t_272.html

Zerubavel, Yael and Dianne Esses. 1987. "Reconstructions of the Past: Syrian Jewish Women and the Maintenance of Tradition." *The Journal of American Folklore.* 100 (398): 528-39.