

CHAPTER 4

Contested rule and fragmented space in French Mandate Syria

Abstract

In Syrian tourism development, the French Mandate Government was the dominant actor. Tourism was not only advertised in order to disseminate propagandistic messages, but the presence of tourists was part of French strategies of imperial rule. Local urban initiatives aiming at tourism development were circumvented by the French authorities, but also by Syrian nationalist notables, who began to use tourism in a political sense only in the late 1930s. Due to the weakness of Syrian political institutions and the exclusion of the middle classes, a coherent vision of a Syrian nation did not emerge, and tourists continued to perceive the country in either Orientalist or geopolitical terms.

Keywords: tourism; French occupation of Syria; social classes; modernity; nationalism; Syrian history

The regions of the Near East united under the name of Syria and Lebanon are politically divided into two States, the Lebanese Republic and the State of Syria, and two 'governorates': those of Lattaquieh and Djebel-Druze. [...] They are bounded by Turkey on the north, Irak on the east, Transjordan and Palestine on the south, and the Mediterranean on the west.¹

This is how the guidebook *Syria and Lebanon: Holidays off the beaten track*, published around 1930 in both English and French under the patronage of the French High Commission, introduced the French Mandates of Syria and Lebanon to its readers.² The clumsy introduction describing the administrative divisions of the mandate territory and its borders exemplifies the territorial approach of the French mandate power towards the region under their tutelage. The editors presented an overview of the new post-Ottoman political and geographical structure to potential visitors, which in fact was still in the making. After all, the spatial order described above was far less evident than the introduction suggested. A variety of actors nourished different and often competing hopes regarding the future order of the

region. Anti-colonial conflicts and imperial competition entered into the debate, just as inner-Syrian conflicts and rivalries did.

The French mandate for Syria was harshly contested from the outset. An overwhelming majority of the Syrian population rejected the idea of mandate rule *per se*, and French rule in particular. The British, whose troops far outnumbered the French military presence in the Middle East, had installed the Hashemite Prince Faysal as King of Greater Syria, but accepted the French mandate to avoid threatening the British-French alliance. That the French overthrew Faysal's Government at the battle of Maysalun in 1920 and expelled him into exile caused consternation among the British.³

The British and French regimes installed in Syria revealed their respective views of Syria and strategies of governance. Both mandate powers preferred to collaborate with allegedly aristocratic elites rather than with the urban middle classes, often broadening the power base of the former compared to the pre-mandate era.⁴ While the British had backed Faysal to reward an ally, the French mandatory based their administration on divide-and-rule tactics, a strategy which they had previously implemented in Morocco. They had been granted the mandate for Syria against Syrian resistance and realised their ambitions by means of diplomatic and military pressure. Whereas the notion of the mandate comprised promises of economic and political development, French rule in Syria was marked instead by a lack of investment, violent campaigns of counterinsurgency, the hampering of democratic institutions, and attempts to play some groups off against others. Generally suspicious of the urban bourgeoisie and their claims for independence, the French mandatory attempted to find allies among religious 'minorities' as well as rural leaders and played groups of notables off against each other.⁵ The geographic division of the French Mandate along alleged religious or ethnic lines was part of this strategy. With the separation of Syria and Lebanon being the most stable division, there was a constant reshuffling of administrative boundaries, particularly during the 1920s.⁶

The political system of the Mandate, based on the French model of governing Morocco, made it difficult for Syrians to participate in processes of decision-making. Demands for a liberal parliamentary constitution were overheard by the mandate power and, once a chamber was introduced, French manipulations of elections, as well as suspensions of the chamber, more often than not hampered its functionality.⁷ The highest authority in the French Mandate was the High Commissioner for Syria and Lebanon, seated in Beirut. Collaboration with local officials was avoided as far as possible, and the mandatory rather relied on French officials (often with limited understanding of local society) and intelligence services. On the lower levels of the administration, Syrian bureaucrats such as district governors were 'assisted' by French advisors overseeing political decisions.⁸ Only after the Syrian Revolt

from 1925–1927, when rebels in the hinterlands and supporters among the urban notables had aimed to overthrow French rule, the French modified their position to some degree and established cooperation with Syrian urban notables, who had wielded significant political influence under the Ottomans. These notables, they hoped, would serve as an intermediary between the mandate power and the potentially insurrectionist lower classes. The notables, in turn, although striving for an end of French rule in Syria, opted for cooperation with the French in order to build a power base that would allow them to take over after independence. From 1930 onwards, a French-imposed constitution defined offices such as a Syrian president, prime minister and a legislative assembly, but French vetoes, dissolutions of the chamber, and the manipulation of elections did not allow Syrian representatives to effectively participate in political decision-making.⁹

Despite fundamental and violent opposition against French rule since the inception of the mandate, colonial officials and supporters of French imperialism started to discuss options for tourism development early in the 1920s. In this chapter, I argue that for the French mandate power, tourism development was part of their military strategy, as tourist movements served as a tool to define, order and control space, thereby resembling the Zionist approach to tourism and French policies of tourism development in North Africa.¹⁰ Yet, in contrast to both the Yishuv and French North Africa, in Syria the French officials could not build on the support of a local settler community. As in the Yishuv, settlers in Morocco, for example, contributed to realise tourism development policies by establishing both infrastructures and disseminating information, but they also constituted a reservoir of potential travellers.¹¹ In Syria, by contrast, French imperial tourism development often built on military officials as proponents of tourism development, and the number of tourists did not create the spatial presence the French High Commission might have intended. Still, the French mandatory maintained its ambitions for political reasons: in contrast to other means of exercising territorial control, tourism development was an economic and cultural undertaking in accordance with the mandate regulations, and even testifying to the good administration of the territory.

Syrian approaches to tourism development were less systematic and less coherent. The Syrian notables in the Chamber of Deputies had a marginal interest in tourism and seem to have used tourism development policies mainly as a commitment to secure loyalties in the Syrian *estivage* regions. As in Egypt and Palestine, the middle classes were the main advocates of tourism development in Syria, which was supposed to support their claims for self-governance and assist in laying the grounds for a historically rooted national consciousness.¹² For these burgeoning Syrian middle classes though, the French approach to governing Syria limited the opportunities to participate in processes of political and administrative

decision-making. Their access to both Syrian national politics and the French mandate administration was limited, and the nationwide implementation of tourism development policies did not occur. As they lacked a forum for debate in Syria, narratives of Syrian history, emancipation, historicity and modernity remained particularistic, often limited to urban contexts rather than acquiring national relevance, and passed largely unnoticed by travellers. The European tourists themselves either questioned or defended the legitimacy of the French presence, yet without questioning the necessity of imperial rule as such. Both critics and advocates among the tourists derived their arguments from debates led in their home countries and their national press, rather than from considerations of Syrian claims.

Competing narratives presented to tourists thus emerged in Syria, which were tied to different spatial scales. Syrian middle-class actors in the urban centres largely argued for Syrian modernity on a local level, while the French mandate power and its British imperial rival assumed Syrian backwardness in need of imperial assistance, perceiving Syria as part of a larger Middle Eastern geopolitical framework. On a national level, Syrian notables shaped politics within the limits of French rule, though without pursuing the aim of creating a national idea.

Since the French principles of governing had, to a large extent, deprived the Syrian urban middle classes of political representation, parliamentary debates hardly represented their positions. The first section on picture postcards is therefore an attempt to grasp their perceptions of Syria as opposed to the views of European visitors. The second section considers potential actors in tourism development more systematically. While the room for manoeuvre of the Syrian middle classes was limited, the Syrian notables shaping national politics were barely interested in reaching out to tourists. Tourism development in Syria was therefore a largely French imperial ambition and, as such, connected with French attempts to establish territorial control. The four case studies in the final section show that in Syria, a coherent national Syrian tourist space did not emerge. The competing and often contradictory dynamics in tourism development impeded the existence of both a coherent, overarching narrative, and unanimously acknowledged tourist places.

The two sides of the same postcard

In the summer of 1927, Lucie Dufour, the fiancée of André, a French soldier stationed in the Mandate of Syria, received two picture postcards showing “general views” of Hama, a town in northern Syria. Despite similar captions identifying the dense urban structure in the photographs as *Panorama de Hama*, the two illustrations gave very different impressions of the town (fig. 14, 15).¹³ In the foreground of the black-and-white postcard, the minaret of a mosque directed Dufour’s gaze further

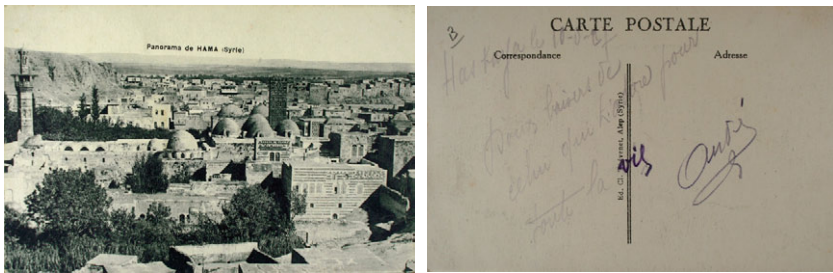


Figure 14: Clovis Thévenet's panoramic view of Hama (Photographer: Clovis Thévenet. Reproduced by kind permission of The Fouad Debbas Collection / Sursock Museum, Beirut)



Figure 15: Wattar Frères, Panoramic view of Hama (Photographer: Wattar Frères Credits: Reproduced by kind permission of The Fouad Debbas Collection / Sursock Museum, Beirut)

towards several striped stone buildings with half-dome roofs, thereby highlighting the Oriental aspect of the city. The second postcard showed a hill with brightly coloured buildings. The minaret in this photograph, though in central position, was hardly recognisable among the numerous rectangular buildings, and the landmark attracting the most attention was a large white building of late-Ottoman shape, the white vaulted arches of which formed a sort of arcade. The most exotic sign in this picture, from Lucie Dufour's point of view, must have been the words in Arabic script, a translation of the French caption. We may assume that, for her, the most important message of both cards consisted in the tender greetings expressed by André on the verso side. But these personal messages were complemented by a second one: the broad ideas the picture side spread about Syria.

As both postcards were sent to France by the same person to the same addressee within a few weeks, neither the mindset of the sender nor the context of communication accounted for the different representations of Hama. In this case, the editors made the difference. Both had their studios in nearby Aleppo, yet the first postcard

was edited by French citizen Clovis Thévenet (who had his studio between c. 1905–1927), and the second by the Syrian photographers *Wattar Frères* (c. 1921–1930).¹⁴ The presence of foreign visitors and the popularity of postcards provided these photographers and postcard editors with the opportunity to shape visions of Syria among faraway audiences, and to inform the expectations of future travellers.

Writing postcards used to be a popular tourist practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Low fares, increasingly well-connected postal systems, and the collectability of images contributed to the rise of postcards as a means of communication across long distances. Whereas in the late nineteenth century mostly bourgeois women collected picture postcards, they turned into a means of mass and non-elite communication during and after World War I.¹⁵ As postcards were affordable for large parts of the population and circulated widely, both in a geographical sense and among different social classes, they provide access to social strata which otherwise barely leave written traces in history. In Mandate Syria, the authors were not only bourgeois tourists, but also soldiers and officers from various social backgrounds who were stationed in the country.¹⁶ However, often only bits and pieces of communication remain: the traces of communication rarely ended up in public archives and while postcard collections offer an opportunity to access them, most collectors tend to focus on the picture sides, rather than the senders' stories.

Many of the studies based on postcards have contoured these ambiguities and uncertainties by opting for an understanding of postcards as a form of "visual mass media".¹⁷ Such an approach led Malek Alloula in his study on North African postcards to suggest that the often erotic representations of Algerian women allow critical observers to draw conclusions about the French colonial imaginary. Tellingly, Alloula's analysis ends in 1930, when erotic motifs stopped circulating. Alloula explains that "their mission is accomplished. Colonial cinema and tourism will take their place."¹⁸

In my opinion, this explanation is hardly convincing, as a growing number of tourists, whose Orientalist visions had been nourished by colonial cinema, was likely to result in an increasing circulation of Orientalist postcards. Moreover, the approach overlooks the practices attributing meaning to the individual postcard.¹⁹ The mere existence of a postcard neither testifies to the availability of the motif in bookshops, kiosks, and hotels, nor does it inform us about the number of persons purchasing certain images or about contexts of use. Therefore, it is necessary to consider both producers and distributors of images; to reconstruct their audiences and ask how postcards were used, commented on and sent. That is, to do justice to their function not only as visual media, but also as a means of private communication.²⁰

For analyses of postcards, the historian depends to a large extent on collectors' preferences, interests and sources of acquisition. The reflections in the present

chapter are mostly based on postcards from the extensive Fouad Debbas Collection; in addition, Wolf-Dieter Lemke kindly showed me a significant part of his collection. I also included major websites offering postcards for sale in my analyses.²¹ The sample comprised 524 postcards written and sent during the 1920s and 1930s, with 416 of them depicting motifs from Lebanon and Syria. Due to the dependence on the preferences of individual collectors, a bias in the sample cannot be ruled out. In my particular sample, the overwhelming majority of postcards from Lebanon and Syria were written by male French soldiers or military officials. Fouad Debbas collected his cards predominantly in a francophone context, so most of his cards were sent by French writers to France. Similarly, on German websites for collectors, cards authored by French senders prevailed, whereas on British websites, very few cards represented Syria and Lebanon. The high percentage of postcards written by members of the military may indicate actual proportions, but it may also be attributed to practices of conservation among the receivers. In my sample, soldiers or army officials stationed in Syria or Lebanon wrote around eight times as many cards as tourists, mostly to their parents, wives and fiancées.²² It is likely that the families of military personnel attributed great value to the letters and postcards they received and thus preserved the correspondence. Given the number of postcards sent annually from the British Mandate of Palestine (more than three million in the 1930s), it has to be assumed that a large number of postcards sent by civilian visitors have not been preserved.²³

The majority of the recipients were female. Soldiers sent cards to their wives, fiancées, mothers and sisters, and more rarely to brothers, fathers and former comrades. Travellers addressed couples, female friends and relatives.²⁴ Very often, the cards were sent in envelopes, so the recipients cannot be identified. In such cases, the date of expedition is lacking as well. The photographs displayed on the picture cards are not dated. Many photographers reprinted their images various times or sold the rights to reprint to other photographers and editors.²⁵

With these circumstances in mind, I gathered two different corpora of postcards for the analysis. In general, I considered only postcards that had been posted: that is, that showed traces such as written messages or addresses and stamps. For the analysis of senders' reflections, I consider postcards sent by tourists. Postcards authored by military staff members or expatriate residents are only included in the event that they describe the author's touristic activities. They often reported upon excursions to famous monuments or trips around the region during their leave; during these activities, I assume they were part of the general tourist movement. In the second part on postcard producers, I include cards of both tourists and soldiers that were sent between 1920 and 1940. It must be assumed that, regardless of the military background of the senders, these pictures shaped the idea of the metropolitan audience of the region, as well as the expectations of potential visitors.

Recto: "They are of absolute indifference –"

By far the largest number of postcards tourists or visitors sent from Syria (excluding Greater Lebanon/ the Lebanese Republic) showed Damascus on the picture side (17 postcards). Few tourists sent postcards from Hama (6); even fewer from Aleppo (4), Homs (2) and Palmyra (2). This corresponds roughly to tourists' itineraries and the number of visitors to the respective cities. While soldiers tended to report more exhaustively on their short trips or excursions, most authors used the cards to send brief greetings or to announce the next stops of their planned trip, rather than to comment on their experiences. These few general remarks turned the photograph into the main element of communication. The following text, part of a longer message spread over a number of different cards, which are now missing, is a rare example in which a visitor to Damascus commented on the picture side, explaining his choice:

2) I am not satisfied at all with this series of cards. Nothing good exists here in this regard, and one has to stick to this poor selection. What is most fashionable are the persons, Arab types, more or less dressed women, etc. ... This is not what one sees in the streets and this one [referring to the postcard] looks like a ready-made painting, at any rate "conventional". If I find a better series, I'll send it to you, but it is not likely.²⁶

The author had opted for a coloured photograph of the municipality building in Damascus: in the background is a mountain range, and in the foreground Marjah square and a partly visible wagon, possibly part of the tramway. Though the author was not convinced by the picture, he stated that he preferred it over the seemingly ubiquitous postcards representing "Arab types", among them erotic photographs of women.

Apparently, he expected the postcard to provide the addressee with an impression of Syria that corresponded to his observations on contemporary daily life, thereby contradicting arguments of De Roo and Alloula, who argued that the attraction of erotic postcards consisted in showing the inaccessible places visitors assumed to exist behind the doors of local houses. In fact, in the postcard collections of Fouad Debbas and of second-hand postcard distributors, around the turn of the century Syria seems to have been represented particularly by so-called 'type photographs' of the erotic or the exotic kind.²⁷ However, after World War I, few tourists actually sent such exotic images to friends or relatives. Among the 98 Syrian postcards in my sample, only 14 cards belonged to the 'ethnographic' or 'type' category of photography. Moreover, the authors of all such postcards were members of the military stationed in Syria rather than civilian tourists, and only one had been sent by a soldier on a touristic excursion.

The absence of Orientalist ‘types’ did not imply that tourists did not share the condescending feelings towards the local population associated with Orientalist thinking. Visitors easily combined denigrating remarks about locals with postcards illustrating the modernity of the region, as another postcard demonstrates: the sender commented on a photograph of the *Serail*, the residence of the Governor of Syria in Damascus, taken by the local photographers *Soubhi & Aïta*.²⁸ The author noted that he saw the *Serail* illuminated the day the Syrian Federation was enacted: “The illumination was intense and the ensemble was magnificent. No need to add that no Muslim deigned to turn the head to see it. They are of absolute indifference —”²⁹ From his point of view, the late Ottoman, specifically Hamidian, modernity these pictures illustrated did not necessarily presuppose the modernity of the Syrians. As observed in comments on Cairo’s modernity, the coexistence of assumed Oriental backwardness and the witnessed ‘modern’ standards did not perplex tourists. The author adopted colonialist narratives attributing modernity to the successful efforts of the colonisers, and the assumed ignorance of the local population confirmed the necessity of continued European presence.³⁰

In contrast to the trends observed in Williams’ travel photographs from Egypt, which portrayed local inhabitants and scenes of daily life, most senders of postcards preferred images of cities and monuments to illustrate their travel experiences. Monuments, sights, public buildings and general views were more frequent among the cards written and sent. Apparently, at least in the 1920s and 1930s, the Orientalism on the picture sides was not as pronounced as the works by Said and Alloula lead one to expect. The disappearance of ‘type’ photographs must partly be attributed to preferences of the senders, such as that of the author who did not consider such views sufficiently authentic. As such views of a local population enjoyed continued popularity in travel photography, however, an alternative explanation for the changing views will be discussed in the following section: changes among the suppliers.

Verso: Showcasing urban modernity

On the supply side, a major variable in postcard production changed. In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of local photographers and postcard producers in the Arab East took over the business from their European competitors, most of whom left the region after World War I. This process was particularly pronounced in Beirut and Jerusalem.³¹ In Syria, notably in Aleppo, several European photographers kept their businesses running and older postcard motifs continued to be sold (available from stock or as reprints), bought and collected in the 1920s and 1930s. The new images produced at the time differed significantly from the preceding motifs. Both the shift in production and new Syrian self-conceptions,

inspired by Ottoman ideas of modernity as well as nationalism, were responsible for this change in the imagery of postcards.

In the nineteenth century, European photographers had been producing most of the picture postcards available in the Arab East. The photographs were edited in Europe, printed, and reimported to travellers' hubs such as Jerusalem, Cairo, or Beirut.³² The pictorial programmes produced by studios such as *Lehnert & Landrock*, *Bonfils*, or *Neurdein Frères* typically represented local societies as 'backward' societies. The activities of some photographers were directly linked to the French colonial expansion, as the example of *Neurdein Frères* shows, a postcard editor partially funded by the French Government. DeRoo argued that *Neurdein Frères*, famous for their views of the French North African territories in particular, disseminated postcards putting forward the civilisational distance between the French colonists and the local population.³³

After World War I, type photographs from the region continued to be produced by the remaining European photographic studios, such as *Clovis Thévenet* in Aleppo. *Thévenet's* photographs showed entirely veiled women, peasant women or members of the Bedouin population in gloomy light and dark, shaded tones, thereby reproducing conceptions of a mysterious, threatening and archaic Orient.³⁴ Similar representations distributed by local photographers were rare in the 1920s. I came across one example resembling the type photographs at first sight, but it was framed very differently: a postcard by *Wattar Frères* depicting a group of heavily armed fighters. However, *Wattar Frères* did not label their sitters as 'types', but rather named and individualised the protagonist in the caption: *Aleppo. The Emir Moudchem with his followers* (fig. 16).³⁵ The caption of *Wattar Frères* thus individualised the sitters and turned the postcard motif into a portrait. Rather than representing a generic *La Syrie*, the photographers shifted attention to the represented individual and the way these men wished to be seen.

It is not entirely clear whether this shift was part of a larger trend. In Williams' amateur photography, after all, we have seen a similar consciousness among the sitters about how to pose in front of the camera – both among the tour guide, Mahmud, but also among the young woman carrying the jar (cf. fig. 5). Regarding professional photographs, Egyptian deputies indeed attempted to control and reduce the circulation of erotic views. Laws prohibited the importation and circulation of erotic postcards, and in 1927, parliament members suggested that the derogatory 'type' photographs should be banned as well.³⁶ Similar legislation was not introduced in the French-governed mandates, and the remaining European studios continued to offer familiar Orientalist views. In Syria, the shift in representing the population seems to have been a choice of the photographers rather than a reaction to legislation, but the arguments put forward in the Egyptian debate might have well been reflected in the photographs of *Wattar Frères*.



Figure 16: Portrait rather than type photograph: *Wattar Frères*, Aleppo (Photographer: *Wattar Frères*. jd private collection)

As shown in the previous section, most tourists preferred cards representing urban settings, panoramic views of cities, as well as monuments. This way of representing places, was, according to Wolf-Dieter Lemke, due to a general shift in taste around the turn of the century, which can be observed in European photography and postcards too.³⁷ In the Ottoman Empire, it emerged during Hamidian times and remained popular even after World War I, at least in Syria, where it was adopted by an increasing number of local photographers. *Wattar Frères* and *Chouha Frères* produced in Aleppo, and *Terazi & Churbadji* and *Soubhi S. & Munir Aïta* were popular postcard producers in Damascus. Moreover, the portfolio of some photographic studios from Beirut, such as *André Terzis & Fils* and *Dimitri Tarazi & Fils*, comprised similar motifs from the Syrian part of the Mandate.³⁸ These locally produced postcards portrayed the major Syrian cities and drew attention mainly to the built environment, complementing the exoticism of postcards produced by European photographers by exhibiting symbols of progress.

Some of these postcard motifs date back to Hamidian times. Sultan Abdülhamid II had consciously fostered the technology of photography in order to promote his politics of modernisation and to demonstrate the achieved progress to Western great powers.³⁹ He gifted a famous photograph collection to European and American representatives and libraries, which captured buildings of new administrative

or military institutions, or insignia of modern infrastructures such as tramways, steamships, or bridges of steel, but also formations of athletes or military parades.⁴⁰

The Syrian postcards of the 1920s presented similar visions of modernity. They showed panoramic views of major cities, institutions such as the Municipality of Damascus or the *Serail*. Others captured major historical monuments, for example the ruins of Palmyra, the watermills (Noriahs) at the Orontes River, or the Ummayyad Mosque in Damascus.⁴¹ It was the vision of a well-administered urban Syria with a long historical tradition, described best in its urban landscapes, its institutions and its historical sites. The postcards hence perpetuated the idea of Syria as a polycentric structure, where the noteworthy sights were to be found in urban centres.

Such views of Syria as a country characterised by its urban centres contrasted with representations of the neighbouring Mandate of Lebanon. Not only was Lebanon covered more extensively on postcards than the much larger Syrian territory, but landscape photographs of Mount Lebanon far outnumbered representations of the Lebanese cities. The production of one of the earliest and most prolific local photographers, *Sarrafian Brothers*, shows that local fashions of picture postcards changed in the 1920s. These pioneers of local photography, based in Beirut, were among the first local photographers who started to commercialise their photographs as postcards. The three brothers Abraham, Boghos and Samuel Sarrafian had been born into a Protestant Armenian family in Diyarbekir, leaving the region as a consequence of the 1895 massacres. In 1897, they settled down in Beirut, where they opened a photographic studio. In the following thirty years, *Sarrafian Bros.* would publish more than a quarter of all available postcards depicting Lebanon.⁴² The various series of 'type' photographs in their repertoire, showing inhabitants in their supposedly authentic costumes, dated back to Ottoman times. Whereas these cards can be read as an expression of 'Ottoman Orientalism' and a condescending view of rural populations by urban dwellers, the visual programmes of the *Sarrafian Brothers* changed in the post-war period.⁴³ Series of landscapes and monuments began to largely dominate their production.

In the Mount Lebanon area particularly, the Sarrafian brothers covered seemingly every mountain village, and many of them from numerous angles (fig. 17). This is significant insofar as the hinterland of Mount Lebanon constituted a key element in the emerging national narrative; it was a central element in the distinction from neighbouring countries, as well as a major asset in the advertising strategy for tourism to Lebanon. The high mountain chains, snow-capped in winter, caused a relative abundance of water in comparison with the arid lands of *Bilad al-Sham* and nationalist narratives referred to the 'nature' of the nation, literally and metaphorically, as well as to its mythic origin and its landscapes.⁴⁴ Waterfalls and rivers, shady valleys and forests characterised Mount Lebanon in the perception of *Shami* people and postcards representing these landscapes thus spread its key visual symbols.



Figure 17: Views of 'Aley (Photographer: Sarraffian Brothers. Reproduced by kind permission of The Fouad Debbas Collection / Sursock Museum, Beirut)

In the French Mandate of Syria, the Syrian visual self-representation vis-à-vis outsiders exhibited its urban civilisation and a well-ordered state in (post-)Ottoman terms. The representations of urban centres on postcards, in particular Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and, to a lesser extent, Palmyra and Homs, illustrated local notions of belonging of the urban population. These representations suggested that Syria continued to be perceived as a network of cities. The urban middle-class photographers and editors did not include the hinterland in the visual representation of the country, nor did they claim a territorial rootedness as postcard editors did in neighbouring Lebanon.

The postcards of Syrian photographers, exhibiting post-Ottoman culture and civilisation while insisting on the centrality and pioneering role of the urban spaces, thus not only claimed the noteworthiness of an urban middle-class modernity consciously ignored by the French mandate power. Compared to trends in neighbouring Lebanon, they also indicate that the Syrian urban middle-class actors, of which photographers and editors were a part, did not attempt to define Syria as a national entity. Rather, their postcards suggest that notions of belonging continued to be imagined in Ottoman categories, referring in particular to towns or cities.⁴⁵ Photographers expressed their pride in the Syrian urban modernity, but visual representations of a territorially integrated Syria and a sense of an overarching national belonging were not discernible.

Urban pride and the imperial politics of tourism

During the 1920s, the French High Commission and commercial entrepreneurs seemed to have been the major actors in developing and establishing tourism in Syria – where it often legitimised and implemented French rule, specifically in regions of anti-French resistance. Among Syrian actors, the interest in tourism was restricted to a small area in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains throughout the 1920s. Syrian notables rather focused on diplomacy in order to present their claims about the future of Syria on an international level and it was not until the late 1930s that some Syrian nationalist politicians created an information bureau addressing tourists, among others. The way tourists approached Syria bears similarities to visitors in Palestine: while both British and French visitors initially perceived Syria as a rather unspecific part of an Oriental continuum, after the Syrian Revolt their perceptions and judgements were much more influenced by international debates about contemporary conflicts. At the same time, the diaries and travel notes of my sample did not reflect particular interest in local perspectives.

The High Commission: ‘Pacification’ and touristification

Suwayda was a small town in southern Syria, in the area of the Jabal al-Druze. Despite its small size and remote location, a postcard presented the place to a French audience (fig. 18).⁴⁶ It was published by L. Ferid, a bookseller and photographer with studios in Istanbul and Beirut, who maintained connections to the French mandate power.⁴⁷ On the picture side, it showed the photograph of four officers standing next to a car in a desert landscape, discussing the situation. The caption informed the viewer that the man at the centre of the group was General Andréa, who led a military column to Suwayda in September 1925.⁴⁸ Similar motifs showed French military activities in Musayfrah, a village and military camp located between Suwayda and Darʿa in the Jabal al-Druze.⁴⁹ These postcards presented the Jabal al-Druze as a territory under the control of French officers and generals. Mostly sent by soldiers during the revolt, the dissemination of images from southern Syria accompanied military conquest and marked places on the mental maps of the metropolitan French. Actual tourist visits to the area remained low, but a guidebook to the region authored by a French officer indicates that the anticipated tourism development was a core element of the French imperial presence (cf. p. 209).

Three hopes were placed in tourism that explained the interest of the French mandate power in the phenomenon. First, tourism was expected to contribute to regional economic development; second, it created an opportunity to address both the French metropolitan population and an international audience; and third, tourism as a method of controlling space was part of the strategies to establish

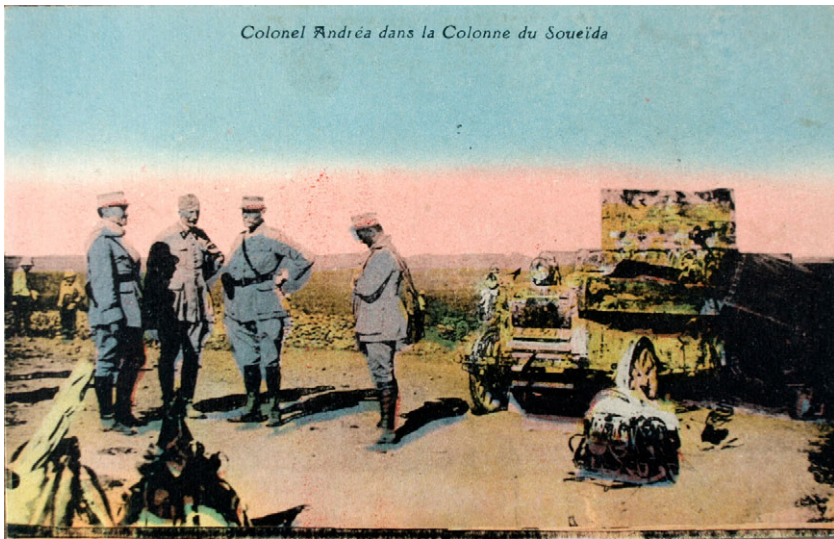


Figure 18: Greetings from the Jabal al-Druze (Photographer: L. Férid. Reproduced by kind permission of The Fouad Debbas Collection / Sursock Museum, Beirut)

French rule.⁵⁰ The most obvious benefit of tourism was its contribution to economic recovery after the Great War. Around the time France was confirmed as the mandate power of Syria, Albert Sarraut, at the time Minister of Colonies, published his tract on the *mise en valeur* of the colonies. Sarraut, the former Governor General of Indochina, proclaimed the idea that France as a colonial power should pursue a colonial policy beneficial to both the colonies and the colonial power, an important pillar of which was 'economic development'. The French overseas territories should generate sufficient profit in order to financially sustain themselves and lighten French expenditure on the empire.⁵¹ For the metropolitan economy, tourism was considered to have a doubly positive impact: a stronger local economy and a higher level of taxation would lessen the expenses necessary to administer the colony; moreover, observers expected beneficial effects for French companies.⁵²

Moreover, as economic development was considered a valid argument in favour of French foreign rule, the importance of strengthening local tourism was evident to the High Commission. Already in the early reports to the League of Nations, the High Commission identified tourism as a significant future source of revenue. The potential was particularly evident in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain chains, where an accommodation sector attracted *estiveurs* mainly from the cities of *Bilad al-Sham*, Egypt and Iraq. Whereas the larger part of the *estivage* area belonged to the state of Greater Lebanon after the division of the Mandate, a

small section remained with Syria, and the High Commission registered a growing interest in the branch in the Syrian part of the Mandate.⁵³

In the early years of the mandate, the High Commission generally approved of initiatives to strengthen tourism, yet its functionaries did not actively foster the business. Instead, the Mediterranean shipping companies seem to have played a key role. The *Messageries Maritimes*, a French company with close relations to the Parisian Foreign Office and the mandate administration, was one such active proponent of tourism development. The first tourist roundtrips organised with French official support targeted the Lebanese and Syrian youth: agents of the company planned a trip to France for school pupils and adolescents during the summer holidays of 1923, which would introduce the major French cities and some famous historical sites to “young people who have absorbed the French culture”.⁵⁴ In a letter to the High Commission, the organisational team expressed their hopes to enhance the good reputation of the mandate power and its prestige in Syria.

Originally, the programme had been drafted for Egyptian school pupils. For the *Messageries Maritimes*, the extension of the programme to Syrian (including Lebanese) pupils and the collaboration with the High Commission was a pragmatic choice. The company presumably intended to fill cruise ships on their return trips, after having transported Arab summer guests to the Eastern Mediterranean. Supporting the mandate appears to have been rather an intended side effect.⁵⁵ By contrast, the advisor for the Department of Education considered the suggestion to be of “political” rather than educational significance and strongly recommended that the High Commission support the project.⁵⁶ The idea behind these tours was to create bonds with France among the future Syrian and Lebanese generations.

In the context of the Great Syrian Revolt, the High Commission began to more comprehensively exploit the propagandistic potential of attracting tourists to Syria, as if to re-establish their reputation after the bombings of the old town of Damascus and many civilian casualties had caused an international outcry.⁵⁷ In the French reports to the League of Nations, tourism, in particular the protection and promotion of Syria’s historical heritage, was now presented as a contribution to the economic and “civilisational” development of Syria.⁵⁸

Additionally, tourism was expected to popularise the overseas possessions among the metropolitan population, parts of which had started to question the expenses necessary to maintain the empire. Increasing resistance in the colonies necessitated both monetary funds and military force, neither of which was available in abundance in the aftermath of the Great War and in the context of the economic depression.⁵⁹ Letters such as the one addressed to High Commissioner Henri Ponsot on 17 October 1930 were therefore more than welcome: the industrialist and adventurer Georges-Marie Haardt, a director of the *Citroën* company and leader of popular car expeditions across the Sahara and the African continent,⁶⁰

was planning an expedition through Asia, including a visit to Syria. Haardt asked the High Commissioner to establish a programme for their intended visit, reasoning that the expedition would be an opportunity to draw public attention to the important humanist and scientific projects of Frenchmen in Syria.⁶¹

Not only among the High Commission, but also among the highest echelons of French metropolitan politics, reaching up to the President of the Republic, such arguments were met with interest. Philippe Berthelot, General Secretary at the Foreign Office in Paris, recommended a visit to the ruins of Palmyra, Tyre, Acre and Baalbek to Haardt.⁶² From a French imperial perspective, these destinations stood for the historical presence of France in the region: in Acre and Tyre, Crusaders' monuments were among the major attractions, whereas Palmyra and Baalbek were famous for their impressive Roman ruins. Such references were put forward as historical truths testifying to the long-standing French-Syrian connections, simultaneously reaffirming the legitimacy of French rule and passing over the Islamic heritage of the region.⁶³

Interestingly, the energy French actors devoted to excavating antiquities and promoting tourism focused in particular on unruly regions. This illustrates a further function of tourism from a French imperial point of view: tourism served the implementation and stabilisation of colonial rule after the conquest. Both the 'Alawite state and the Jabal al-Druze were advertised as tourist destinations shortly after the suppression of the insurrections. Authors of guidebooks and brochures, often French officers, promoted the archaeological sites in both areas as attractive destinations to the French public.⁶⁴ As in the 'Alawite region, tourism development measures ranging from archaeological excavations to public promotion of the destination were applied in the Jabal al-Druze. In December 1930, Abbé Joseph Mascle, a military chaplain based in Suwayda, drafted a plan for the tourism development of the area.⁶⁵ Mascle stated that after the 'pacification' of the region, the French administration had brought new life to the area, in economic as well as cultural terms:

The Jabal al-Druze, pacified by our arms and resurrecting to life under the aegis of the French Administration, today attracts not only those who are interested in the economic evolution of a country, but all those who, due to professional obligation or cultured spirit, dedicate themselves to the study of ancient monuments.⁶⁶

The author highlighted in particular the modern infrastructures, guaranteeing the easy accessibility of the Jabal al-Druze, and the comfort awaiting the visitor in *Hôtel Royal* in Suwayda. The greatly improved road network he mentioned, in fact constructed to facilitate French warfare, granted easy access – the French military had literally paved the way for tourists.⁶⁷ Terms such as “pacify”, “resurrect to life”, and “economic evolution” were understood by Mascle in a colonial sense. According to

him, the ancient – Roman, thus pre-Islamic – heritage of the Jabal al-Druze was not only of historical interest, but also allowed tourists to comprehend the legitimacy of imperial rule, evident – from his point of view – in the ruins of the past and the contemporary beneficial effects of French colonialism.

Colonial officials of the Third Republic, such as Louis Hubert Lyautey and Joseph Gallieni, had firmly anchored the idea in French colonial thought that after the end of military conquest, the so-called pacification should secure long-term rule. Lyautey in particular had acquired a reputation as a benevolent governor of Morocco, whose colonial regime was based on cooperation, respect and civilian governance, rather than outright military force. This reputation resulted from proclamations that military conquest should be accompanied by measures of reconstruction – that is, by rebuilding infrastructures, developing the local economy and establishing institutions. Yet, such measures were part of a more encompassing strategy to reshape colonised societies in a way to facilitate colonial rule, which implied harsh measures of colonial force.⁶⁸ Tourism development as an imperial strategy bore striking similarities to the general concept of pacification, and the encompassing tourism development activities of French settlers in Morocco as well as their praise for Lyautey and his successors support the assumption of a close connection.⁶⁹ Tourism was supposed to bear the potential of arousing sympathies for and identification with the French imperial project.

On the ground, however, it served the French administration not only as an occasion to convince and persuade, but also as a resource of domination. The number of military staff members involved in touristic publications is considerable: guidebook author Noël Maestracci, Joseph Mascle and the author of the *Guide bleu* on the Mediterranean, J. Chardon,⁷⁰ were all affiliated with the French military. Similar observations regarding tourism in the Algerian Sahara during the interwar period have led historian Arnaud Berthonnet to attribute a pioneering role to the French military in making regions accessible to a larger French audience. Yet this success story of the military and strategic exploration to the benefit of the masses needs to be questioned, as it overlooks the negative side of the functional alliance of tourism and territorial control.⁷¹

Tourism implied bringing civilians to newly ‘pacified’ places. Daniel Neep argued that one of the main goals of French counterinsurgency strategies consisted in evoking the illusion of densely controlling the territory: the French military aimed to create mobility, rather than establish a static presence.⁷² Hence, mobile tourists, whose main activity was to discover and see, may be conceived as civilian allies of the military. They circulated on the same roads, accessed towns, villages and buildings; they demonstrated the presence of Europeans and thereby supported, voluntarily or not, the project of penetrating the spaces of the insurgents. Similar to Zionist tourism development, the interest of tourism did not only lie in

the dissemination of imperial propaganda, but also in its contribution to establishing effective colonial rule in the long term.⁷³

Tourism thus provided a civilian continuation of military conquest, and within French attempts to control the insurrectionist regions effectively, the vision of developing tourism was linked to the idea of firmly anchoring colonial rule. From an imperial perspective, tourists ideally adopted and spread positive views about mandate rule and, more importantly, they reinforced the French presence in the country. Through defining noteworthy sights, places, and monuments; through framing history, and through shaping territories, borders and belongings, concepts of tourism development served the French administration in stabilising, anchoring and spreading their own vision of the mandate territory. Beyond that, tourists created a physical European presence in the area; they justified military presence and thereby contributed to controlling and supervising the spaces of insurgents. As a resource of colonial dominance, tourism was hoped to establish effective rule after military conquest.

Syrian initiatives: Local initiatives or national efforts?

In contrast, tourism development on a local Syrian level seems to have been the concern of individual entrepreneurs, such as the bankers Asfar and Sara from Damascus, who had conceived the idea of building a hotel to international standards already in May 1926. They had acquired a large plot of land next to the railway station and asked the High Commission for a credit to facilitate the realisation of the project.⁷⁴ Although hotel credits were a widespread instrument to support tourism development in the French Empire, in the case of Asfar and Sara – the Syrian Revolt meanwhile intervening – the authorities did not respond to the request.⁷⁵ After the end of the revolt in November 1927, the investors therefore approached the High Commissioner's delegate once again. Joined by the experienced hotel entrepreneurs Joseph and Elias Khaouam, they renewed their solicitation.⁷⁶ The Syrian Government under Ahmad Nami, appointed by High Commissioner de Jouvenel during the Great Revolt, had apparently expressed their support for the project, regretting the lack of a modern and spacious hotel in Damascus, expected to be a “future tourist centre and transit station for convoys to Iraq and Persia”, yet having refrained from making any financial promises.⁷⁷ Likewise, the delegate of the French High Commission, Desloges, approved of the project in principle, but refrained from making any financial promises. That the initiative succeeded and the hotel was constructed resulted from the insistence of the respective signatories, Asfar and Sara, as well as the Khaouam brothers.⁷⁸

The hotel project exemplified a general pattern in Syrian tourism development. While neither the French High Commission nor the Government of Syrian notables

dedicated more than occasional attention to the matter, some entrepreneurs or other interested individuals pursued tourism development in a more energetic way. These middle-class actors pursued their entrepreneurial, cultural, or political interests largely without support from official institutions or deputies. The initiatives themselves were centred around concrete, local projects, rather than drafting a comprehensive plan for tourism development.

It is difficult to assess the capabilities the Syrian Government had to back local projects such as the hotel in Damascus, or even to draft larger plans, as the reality of decision-making in the French Mandate of Syria remains somewhat nebulous. Nominally, the Syrian Government was to oversee legislation and implement measures concerning internal affairs, such as tourism. In practice, Syrian ministers and administrations were 'assisted' by French 'advisors' who are considered to have had a significant influence on Syrian policies.⁷⁹ Even when a parliament was established, it was hardly an efficient institution. The French regularly manipulated the election process and suspended parliament meetings, while Syrian nationalists, in turn, boycotted elections and parliament sessions, all of which impeded a continuous debate. As a result, the major programme of economic development introduced in Syria, which included measures to develop tourism, was – more or less – dictated to the Syrian Government installed by High Commissioner Damien de Martel in 1934.⁸⁰ The authorship of political measures is therefore not always evident, and other agents might have been involved than the ones who signed laws or decrees.

For the deputies, tourism development was no political priority, and, according to the *Journaux officiels*, it played a subordinate role in legislation – in contrast to neighbouring Lebanon. There, as the following chapter will demonstrate, support for tourism generally united the assembled deputies, regardless of their backgrounds, and a variety of actors, often organised in committees and commissions, placed tourism high on the political agenda. In Syria, where tourism was of lesser economic significance and the tension between Syrian representatives and the French much more pronounced, deputies gave priority to other projects.

Two commissions concerned with tourism development existed in Syria, though their impact remained limited. The so-called *Commission of Tourism*, established by the French High Commission in 1923, covered both Syria and Lebanon, but the tourist brochure *Holidays Off the Beaten Track* mentioned above (cf. p. 193) appears to have been its only output.⁸¹

The second attempt to anchor tourism at an administrative level occurred in 1933, shortly after a new, moderate government came to power.⁸² This *Commission of Tourism* was established as part of the Agricultural and Economic Services, an agency of the Syrian Ministry of Finance. It was charged mainly with executing a decree established in 1928, the realisation of which had presumably been postponed due to the economic crisis: the commission would decide the tax exemptions to be

granted to ten new hotels and one hundred 'villas' erected in the Syrian *estivage* centres. The composition of the institution reflected the modest nature of these responsibilities. Its four members were administrative staff members without any particular interest in tourism: namely, the General Director of Hygiene and Public Health, the Chief Engineer of the Ministry of Public Works, the *Chef de bureau* of the Ministry for Agriculture and Commerce, and a financial auditor.⁸³ The commission was obviously designed to guarantee the functioning of administrative procedures, but it would not actively shape tourism development.

In contrast to Zionist and Lebanese tourism development policies, the programmes of the Syrian Government did not aim to use tourism as a means of realising a political agenda, or of spreading national narratives. Measures and regulations concerning tourism development focused almost exclusively on the region around Bludan and the Zabadani River, an area where tourism was already well established.⁸⁴ Here, *estivage* played an important role in the local economy and interested spokespersons managed to attract attention, investments, and subsidies, whereas in other areas the Syrian notables did not envision tourism as an encompassing development strategy for the entire country. In Syria, local actors, rather than national institutions or representatives promoted tourism development.

Not before the late 1930s did local initiatives and tourist development associations did receive political and financial support in Syria. From April 1936 onwards, thus after the election of a new leftist government in France (the 'Popular Front') and the opening of negotiations for a Franco-Syrian treaty, the budget regularly comprised funds for projects related to tourism, mostly advertisements.⁸⁵ The Syrian Government now granted subsidies to institutions which edited brochures advertising tourism to Syria and Lebanon, among them the *Revue archéologique d'Alep* (cf. p. 227), Georges Samné's *Information and Tourist Office for Syria and Lebanon* in Paris, and the *Société d'encouragement au tourisme* (SET), based in Beirut.⁸⁶ Moreover, the Government created incentives to improve the accommodation experience of travellers. A new hotel was planned in Bludan, and facilities such as a permanent tourist office should enhance the comfort of visitors.⁸⁷ Thus, the Syrian subsidies benefited both the well-established *estivage* regions within Syria and various Lebanese associations, as in the cases of Samné and the SET. The limited number of projects, the fragmentary measures and the coincidence of French-installed governments and tourism development policies applied outside Syria suggest that the measures were inspired by French 'advisors'.

Only around 1938 did some Syrian notables begin to promote tourism more systematically, apparently intending to disseminate their own spatio-political visions. According to the Italian orientalist and journalist Virginia Vacca,⁸⁸ who regularly reported on Syrian economic development, the Damascene *Arab National Office for Public Enlightenment* gathered information and spread Syrian nationalist

perspectives among institutions and media inside and outside the country, in particular in France and England. While informing tourists was not its primary concern, the office also worked on 'multilingual' tourist guides and published books on Arab countries targeting a tourist audience. The office itself had been founded in 1934 by Fakhri al-Barudi, a former ally of King Faysal and known Arab nationalist, but only in 1938 do sources mention its activity in tourism advertisement, thus in a time when the conflict with France over Syrian independence and debates about reunification of Syria and Lebanon entered a new stage.⁸⁹ It appears that the *Arab National Office* hoped to profit from the growing number of foreign visitors to the region in order to spread its viewpoints. Officially, the *Arab National Office* was an apolitical organisation. Yet Vacca argued that, given the influence al-Barudi wielded in Syrian politics, it had to be understood as a quasi-governmental institution, "which, in the long transitory period from mandate to independence, is about to take actions that the government cannot yet perform directly."⁹⁰

In this context, it is significant that al-Barudi's *Office* continued to defend the idea of a united Syrian space, which comprised the Lebanese territory. The development of tourism and *estivage* al-Barudi envisioned included Lebanon, although Vacca commented that, to her knowledge, Lebanese representatives were not involved in the office's activities.⁹¹ This observation is telling. By the late 1930s, the Lebanese administration had established its own institutions of tourism development, including a Ministry of Tourism, which advertised tourism to a Lebanese nation-state, and excluded Syrian destinations. Al-Barudi's initiative did not resonate beyond the Anti-Lebanon Mountains.

While al-Barudi continued to claim Syro-Lebanese unity, protectionist tendencies became increasingly discernible on a practical level, assuming and perpetuating the order of nation-states in the region. In political measures and regulations, the Syrian Government aimed in particular to protect Syrian labour, while it paid lip service to the idea of a united *Bilad al-Sham*. In 1938, tourist guides and dragomans addressed a petition to the Syrian Government, demanding the prioritising of Syrian guides over their foreign colleagues. As justification, they pointed at their superior experience and knowledge of the country, adding that Syrian guides were not allowed to guide tourists in neighbouring Lebanon and Palestine either.⁹² Until then, foreign guides who possessed an official certificate issued by their respective governments were allowed to perform the function of guide in Syria, in the case that they accompanied a tourist group on its entire trip across the *Bilad al-Sham*.⁹³

Although the issue was closed without further modification, as the accusations could not be verified,⁹⁴ the petition of the guides and dragomans testified to an ongoing spatial fragmentation of the region in two regards. First, by the late 1930s, the guides obviously assumed that Palestine, Lebanon and Syria were distinct countries competing for tourists, as well as jobs and income linked to tourism.

Second, their argument relied on the assumption that historical and archaeological knowledge specific to the nation was required in order to present these states to their visitors. This assumption indicated that history and heritage in the three countries under mandate had come to be conceived of as separate, nationally distinct trajectories. Even though the disentanglement of narratives was driven by business interests rather than manifestations of belonging, the claim as such was remarkable. As the guides argued that understanding each country required unique expertise in its respective national past, by this point, the larger unit of *Bilad al-Sham* as a historical and cultural entity had apparently lost its relevance.

Tourists: Mouthpieces of the French High Commission?

By the 1920s, travelling to Egypt was a routine practice; guided trips to Palestine were becoming increasingly popular, and the extension and improvement of the Lebanese accommodation and transport network were in full swing. In Syria, the expansion of organised tourism was less pronounced than in the neighbouring countries. First, the infrastructures for large-scale tourist accommodation remained to be constructed. In contrast to the well-established Nile tourism or Palestinian experiences in accommodating pilgrims, in many parts of Syria tourism and travel had barely played a role. Second, the armed resistance against French rule in the early 1920s, as well as the Syrian Revolt between 1925 and 1927, kept many potential visitors from travelling to the country.⁹⁵ However, the French High Commission identified tourists as potential targets for political messages: in their places of origin, they confirmed the state of security reigning in Syria as eyewitnesses.

As argued above, the French High Commission paid attention to improving the experiences of visitors in order to defend its presence and policies in Syria. This ambition was facilitated by the fact that in the early years of the mandate, it was rather common for travellers to contact the French Foreign Office, respectively the mandate authorities, before departure.⁹⁶ The habit diminished from the late 1920s onwards; it is likely that at the time tourism to the mandate was well established and better organised, so information was more easily available and the support and protection of the French authorities were no longer necessary. Consequently, most persons who did leave traces in the archives in the 1930s were travellers whom the mandate authorities considered potentially troublesome, or those pursuing special projects, such as André Citroën and Georges Marie Haardt during their “*Croisière Jaune*” across Asia (cf. p. 208).⁹⁷

Especially in politically difficult times such as during the Great Revolt, tourists and visitors were assisted by the High Commission. Receptions with the High Commissioner or assistance in the preparation of travel routes were provided not only to French nationals such as Charles Le Gras and his group of pilgrims,

but also to British visitors, such as Humphrey Bowman, the Director of Education in the British Mandate of Palestine, or Norah Rowan-Hamilton, who had joined a delegation of the *British Archaeological Society* for a visit to Syria.

The Foreign Ministry in Paris cared particularly about tourists who were likely to report on their impressions during the journey. Since the French mandate was concerned about the public image of the mandate both within France and on an international level, writers and journalists travelling across Syria were important assets, all the more so when they were not French citizens and thus considered neutral observers. When the Belgian journalist Louis Piérard planned a trip of two weeks across the Syrian Mandate in early February 1927, which he would report on in the Belgian papers *Peuple* and *Soir*, the expenses during his stay in Syria were covered by the High Commission.⁹⁸ As the French authorities reasoned that an international audience would accept the reports of journalists, authors, publishers and moviemakers as independent eyewitness accounts, they endeavoured to provide these travellers with positive experiences.⁹⁹

Alongside the international press, the French High Commission also targeted individuals supposed to have close ties with the League of Nations, such as Henry Vallotton-Warnery from Geneva, a member of the Swiss National Council and of the *Swiss Touring Club*. In 1926, he undertook a trip by car from Paris to Cairo via Istanbul, Alexandretta, Aleppo, Baghdad, Beirut and Jerusalem. At the time, the French were harshly criticised for their measures to crush the Syrian Rebellion – not least in Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations and the place where the Permanent Mandates Commission gathered. Given that Henry Vallotton-Warnery not only published his *Impressions of Syria* in a local newspaper, the *Journal de Genève*, but also wielded a certain influence in his hometown and in the Swiss National Council, the French High Commission hoped that his positive testimony would back the French mandate power.¹⁰⁰ On the visit to the Jabal al-Druze, Vallotton-Warnery was accompanied in person by the delegate of the High Commission in Damascus, de Reffye. While there is no evidence on the nature of their exchange, the reports Vallotton-Warnery published after his return confirmed official French explanations of the Syrian uprising, which suggested that the French military intervention had set an end to Syrian armed robbery, restoring peace and stability to the benefit of the local population. Moreover, it was probably more than welcome that Vallotton-Warnery dispelled potential worries of future visitors and recommended a visit to his readers: In late October, when the article was published, the French strategy of controlling space to quell the insurgency began to take effect.¹⁰¹ An increased presence of European tourists was thus in the interest of the French mandate power aiming to establish territorial control.

It seems as well that the French High Commission encouraged in particular French travel groups to spend substantial time in the French Mandate. At least the

itineraries they suggested to French groups included more stops in Syria and recommended longer stays than the advice they gave to other nationals, such as groups of Romanian and Bulgarian pupils, Italian university students, and Polish pilgrims. The French High Commission seemed to accept that for these groups, the Mandate was a mere stop on the way to their final destination: Palestine, and their recommendations pointed out the main highlights.¹⁰² In contrast, it was assumed that for French groups, Syria was at the core of their journey and even minor sights should be visited.¹⁰³

While in the 1920s, numerous visitors to the Mandate – school classes, as well as individual travellers – seem to have exchanged information with the French authorities, in the 1930s, the communication between individual travellers, clubs and organisations and the mandate authorities declined, presumably due to a lack of requests from travellers. By that time, travel agencies had set up well-organised trips, and tourists did not require the assistance of the French High Commission any longer. Paradoxically, the expansion of organised tourism increased the possibilities for actors other than the High Commission to shape travellers' ideas of Syria.

No common ground: The divided landscapes of tourism in Syria

Throughout the mandate period, divergences in perceptions of tourism, and of Syria, among travellers, the French administration and Syrian actors persisted. Four case studies exemplify different approaches to the Syrian territory and demonstrate that neither of these groups managed to impose a coherent interpretation, nor did consistent collaboration between some of the actors lead to a compromise in developing an overarching narrative for a space that was considered temporary, while practices rendered it permanent.

The case of Damascus illustrates the diverging views of Syria among British and French tourists. After the French bombardments of the city during the Great Revolt, Damascus (and Syria) turned into a focal point of Anglo-French imperial rivalry in the region, which led tourists to perceive Damascus in terms of this geopolitical ambition. This perception was framed as a debate about the legitimacy of French rule, while visitors ignored Syrian voices.

Nationalists from Syria instead perceived tourism and *estivage* in terms of mobility and sociability. The section on the *estivage* region of Bludan and Zabadani shows that the mountainous area, marginal on French strategic maps, was a centre of pan-Arab interaction and nationalist agitation. While the mountain villages were convenient places for exchanges within elite circles, they were not attributed meaning in communication – neither towards visitors nor other sections of Syrian society.

By contrast, communication was the key strategy of middle-class actors such as Kamil al-Ghazzi and the *Archaeological Society* in Aleppo, who suggested

alternative mechanisms and principles of claiming (national) sovereignty. Notions of historical lineage bore the potential for turning the preservation and presentation of historically relevant sights into narratives of national belonging. In theory, the interest in the history and traditions of a place could have served as a basis for communication between the Syrian middle-class actors and their European visitors. Yet the latter failed to hear the voices of al-Ghazzi and the *Archaeological Society*, which did not have the necessary networks at their disposal to establish regular communication with international tourists.

Finally, the example of Palmyra represents a place that was promoted as an attraction for tourists – to the detriment of its inhabitants. In Palmyra, an educated urban middle class, as in Aleppo or Damascus, barely existed, and the French administration, backed by French media, promoted both the ancient ruins and the supposedly archaic way of life in the desert as potential tourist attractions. The exhibition of the ruins, however, required the expulsion of the inhabitants. Thus, the integration of Palmyra into the Syrian tourist space was fostered by actors alien to the place and often perceived as a threat by locals.

Damascus: Tourists on the battlefield

It is a big and very ancient street, it has a roof of iron riddled with holes from machine gun-fire either during a civil war or during wars with foreign countries. [signature illegible]¹⁰⁴

After the end of the Syrian Revolt, the historical *Street called straight* in Damascus, the name of which had provided puns and anecdotes for numerous guidebook authors and travellers, turned into a site for ‘dark tourism’. The photograph on the postcard (fig. 19) showed a street scene, even though, due to the underexposure of the photograph, the passers-by in the street were hardly discernible. Light entered the roof by some rectangular windows as well as by the holes that the author mentioned, which dotted the ground with tiny spots of light. Although the photograph (“a real photograph”, as the editors stated expressly on the recto side) testified to French acts of warfare in the inner city of Damascus, the author had apparently heard contradictory explanations about the origin of the holes and remained vague in his explanation. While narratives still had to be created, the images documenting the violence of the recent events were quickly edited into postcards.¹⁰⁵ What is therefore certain is that the revolt, as cynical as it may sound, provided the visitors with new and unseen sights. The destruction challenged prevailing narratives of an Oriental Damascus and tourists had to situate the city in a new, geostrategic context.

After all, in the imagination of tourists searching for the Orient, Damascus had been one of the places where these expectations crystallised. French visitors



Figure 19: Postcard showing the destruction in Damascus, similar to the motif described above (Photographer: Luigi Stironi, jd private collection)

in particular continued to frame Damascus and Syria as archetypes of the Orient throughout the mandate period, picturesque in their daily life and markets, and culturally defined by Islamic traditions and architecture, while biblical stories connected them to familiar traditions and histories.¹⁰⁶ In British narratives, however, a marked change occurred in the autumn of 1925, when the French bombardment of Damascus turned the city from an Oriental oasis into the capital of a war zone.¹⁰⁷

Before the event, British travellers perceived Damascus as a place of picturesqueness and ancient tradition, similar to descriptions of French tourists and in accordance with Orientalist representations. George H. Williams, who commented extensively on the long history of the city, probably quoting passages from his guidebook, described the flourishing Damascene civilisation in antiquity and the medieval period, which declined after the arrival of the Mongols and subsequently the Turks.¹⁰⁸ Typically, the travellers expressed disappointment given the transformation of Damascus to a modern city, assuming that the daily life and living conditions had lost their allegedly authentic Oriental flavour. Williams' father had visited Damascus "30 or 40 years ago" and recommended a visit to Damascus as the perfect place to discover Oriental life in the bazaars, but Williams junior found them much less picturesque than the bazaars in North Africa: "the Holy Land is a mass of delusions."¹⁰⁹

During the Syrian Revolt, the descriptions of Damascus in British travel accounts lost the overtones of Oriental picturesqueness that had prevailed in

Williams' diary. From now on, they tended to narrate their travel experiences as illustrations of the recent political events, thereby transforming the story of Syrian picturesqueness into the narrative of an oppressed population. Although the French mandate power had not been held accountable for the attacks, which had caused a large number of civilian casualties, the British press had debated the events and questioned the French capability for governing Arab populations.¹¹⁰ Even the *Mediterranean Guide* of the shipping company *Blue Star Line* denounced the illegitimacy of French rule and regretted that Syria had suffered from bad rule and worse rulers for centuries. Unlike Arab nationalists, however, the authors and travellers did not come to the conclusion that Syrian self-government might be a solution. Instead, they insinuated the necessity of a disinterested rule of experts in imperial administration: the British.¹¹¹ Rather than empathy for the population of Damascus, it was the Franco-British rivalry which set the tone.

British travelogues came to resemble investigation reports of wartime correspondents. Norah Rowan-Hamilton, the widow of an Irish lieutenant killed in 1915, who visited Palestine, Jordan and Syria with a group of British archaeologists, was particularly harsh in her judgement of the French presence in Syria. In her travel report, published in 1928, the title of her chapter on Damascus read "War". Her travelogue, in which descriptions and dialogues often conveyed political messages, read like a eulogy of the British Empire at the expense of the rival French colonial system. Although her narrative comprised the standard tropes about Damascus and her illustrations showed the sights any tourist would visit there such as the "Street called straight", the story she told barely referred to the Damascus of the tourist.¹¹² Instead, Rowan-Hamilton described a gloomy atmosphere reigning in the city. She accused the French rulers of having wrapped up the city in barbed wire, dotted its buildings with bullet holes, and sent in colonial troops accused of pillage and rape. She reported that, as a consequence of French action, the economy in general and tourism in particular had broken down, and that the formerly colourful Oriental street scenes had given way to scenes of warfare. Her ironic comments showed that she considered the French notoriously incapable of handling Syrians who "just want a firm but kind hand".¹¹³ In her account, the Syrian Revolt thus served as an argument justifying British claims in Syria. The contested nature of the newly created state of Syria was not attributed to the demands of Syrian nationalists and their rejection of colonial rule, but to the inadequate French approaches, experiences and capacities in governing an Arab state.

The diaries of Humphrey Bowman, Director of Education in the British Mandate of Palestine, show that such critical judgements were directly related to the bombardment of Damascus. While Bowman had described Damascus as a picturesque Arab town during his first visit in 1922,¹¹⁴ Bowman's view of the Syrian capital changed during his second visit in 1926. Invited by the French High Commissioner de Jouvenel,

his descriptions were dominated by reports on the inadequate behaviour of his French travel companions and on the destruction resulting from French warfare.¹¹⁵

The events not only left their traces in travelogues written during the revolt, but durably changed perceptions of Damascus. Even years after the end of the revolt, observations on French colonial policies had become a part of the visiting programme of British tourists.¹¹⁶ Since the mid-1920s, the violent repression of the Syrian Revolt framed the region in British travel accounts as a battleground, and Damascus became a symbol of French incapacity in handling the Arab population. Ultimately, from their perspective, Damascus had come to represent the legitimate British ambitions to play a leading role in the Middle East.

In terms of geographical conceptions and mental maps, the revolt and French warfare in Syria led to an increasing differentiation between the two major sections of the French Mandate: the State of Greater Lebanon (from 1926 onwards, the Republic of Lebanon) and the State of Syria. When Humphrey Bowman informed the Director of the American University of Beirut, Bayard Dodge, about the invitation to visit Damascus in the spring of 1926, the latter was somewhat concerned. Dodge warned him that “the Americans still regard ‘*La Syrie*’ as the Eastern side is called as in a state of war [...]”. So far, Bowman had subsumed both Syria and Lebanon under the name of Syria, which was not unusual. After all, at the time, the separation was a mere administrative divide, without further implications for the imaginaries of travellers and with a limited impact on their practices. Other tourists had a similar comprehensive vision of Syria. The revolt, however, and specifically the French reaction to it, contributed to the formation of separate, distinctive visions of Syria and Lebanon in the minds of travellers. From that time, the Mandate was divided into a troublesome warzone to the East, and a more stable Lebanon to the West.

For French travel authors instead, Damascus remained an Oriental city, the architectural and cultural character of which was preserved thanks to the efforts of French administrators. Again, Morocco served as the blueprint for a preservation discourse advertised by the mandate power and confirmed by French visitors. While in Norah Rowan-Hamilton’s account the famous sights of Damascus were silent testimonies to the destructive consequences of French rule, Charles Le Gras, who visited the city in the same year on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, painted a very different picture. In familiar Orientalist tropes, he described the typical activities of any tourist in Damascus: Le Gras bought souvenirs in bazaars swarming with people, strolled in the streets, and observed the coexistence of an archaic past and a modern present: veiled women, donkeys and other animals shared the streets with bourgeois Syrian women in European-style dresses.¹¹⁷

Like the British visitors, Le Gras saw and recorded traces of war: he described destroyed quarters and houses in ruins, the traces of bombardments, machine guns

and barbed wire, and the tight French regime in the city. Yet whereas for Rowan-Hamilton or Bowman such measures had been reason to question the legitimacy of French mandate rule, Le Gras' report did not suggest French responsibility. His descriptions of the destroyed quarters were written either in the passive voice or chose impersonal constructions. Rather than humans, he chose weapons or occurrences such as "bombardments" as the semantic agents in his sentences. Consequently, the syntax of his sentences did not allow for the identification of actors. He never mentioned French perpetrators in the context of the military campaigns.¹¹⁸ Detailed descriptions of destruction and human suffering, in particular of innocent victims such as civilians, women and children, were omnipresent in Rowan-Hamilton's story, yet marginal in the account of Charles Le Gras. In his report, the events appeared as a quasi-natural consequence of warfare against insurgents.

Instead, Le Gras inserted signs and symbols creating the impression of a legitimate French presence. The French flag at the border to Palestine marked the empire's outpost in the Eastern Mediterranean, welcoming the visitors on seemingly familiar ground.¹¹⁹ On the ten pages covering his visit to Syria, three anecdotes identified bonds connecting France and Syria: the author perceived similarities between Syria and the French South, analysed the characteristic shape of Roman architecture "in their numerous colonies in the Orient", and lauded the preservation policies of General Gouraud aiming to safeguard the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage.¹²⁰ This strategy of justifying the mandate by referring to the shared Mediterranean geographical and cultural heritage, as well as the beneficial effects of French cultural policies, was a common trope. Not only the French High Commission emphasised these connections in reports to Geneva; they were also confirmed by various – notably French or francophone – visitors, who displayed a fundamental loyalty to French mandate rule.¹²¹

While both British and French narratives clearly marked Syria as French territory, after the Great Syrian Revolt they did so with opposing overtones. French authors assumed the legitimacy of French rule. Even if they did not approve of the violence during the suppression of the revolt, they accepted it as a necessity in the struggle against illegitimate insurgencies. From a British point of view, the French were illegitimate rulers over Syria, who had usurped power. Their condescending paternalism with regard to "the Arabs", deemed unable to govern themselves, led them to conclude that a British mandate would have been preferable.

After the Great Syrian Revolt, Damascus became a symbol of the geopolitical rivalry of the great powers, even for visitors without any apparent interest in politics. Although the actual visits centred on well-known historical sights and places, the stories tourists narrated in diaries and travelogues celebrated the imperial governance of the British and the French respectively. Apparently, the literary creation of authenticity relied on the consideration of current debates and events. Like the

Palestinian case, in a time of intense press coverage of foreign affairs, assuming timelessness was no option. Instead, both British and French tourists agreed that the challenge of administering mandates consisted in establishing “good rule” over potentially “unruly” subjects, thereby reproducing the colonial paternalism of their respective colonial administrations. Sharing similar perceptions of the population of Damascus, they differed in their judgement of French imperial policies. The efforts of the French High Commission to reach out to tourists, accompany them on their journeys and circulate certain visions of Syria, as we have seen in the previous section, were only partly successful. Whereas the British tourists, whose expectations had been shaped by critical British press coverage, were not convinced; francophone visitors were more likely to accept the interpretation of the mandate power. In the end, both approaches consolidated the position of Syria as a discursive battlefield for Anglo-French geopolitical rivalry.

The Syrian summer resorts: Hotbeds of agitation?

After many years of absence, the Palestinian Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husayni, was back in Lebanon and Syria in the summer of 1935. The French authorities had finally granted him a visa, after they had denied him access to the Mandate for political reasons in the previous years. The journalist Laura Vecchia Vaglieri, who reported on the journey in her overview of news from the local press, quoted a source close to the Mufti who confirmed that he was looking forward to a pleasurable, relaxing summer holiday. In fact, the journey was very likely intended to strengthen the standing of the Mufti and to forge political alliances.

Estivage seems to have served as a pretext to al-Husayni for a trip that did have political implications. In Ehden, a mountain village in Northern Lebanon, Amin al-Husayni met the famous anti-French rebel Ibrahim Hananu “and other Syrian nationalists”. In Tripoli, a Sunni stronghold, the (equally Sunni) Mufti mediated in a fight between rivalling families of ‘his’ religious community, an act corroborating his reputation as a leader, and in his visit to Homs, he was accompanied by the anti-French Syrian notable Hashim al-Atasi. The Jewish press in Palestine guessed that the actual purpose of al-Husayni’s visit to Syria was to meet with various Arab leaders and find a common position in the event of an Italian-Ethiopian war.¹²² Whatever the content of the discussions, it is indeed obvious that al-Husayni’s journey was far from being an apolitical one. Yet, the example shows that even though the French authorities were deeply suspicious of pan-Arab agitation, the reference to the habitual holiday practice of *estivage* served notables as a convincing pretext for travelling and provided ‘natural’ gathering places for exchanges with other Arab leaders.

After the French Mandate had been divided into the states of Greater Lebanon and Syria, the *estivage* region around Bludan and the Zabadani district in the

Anti-Lebanon mountain chain remained a part of Syria. Politically, the *estivage* practice of the notables turned the region during the summer months into a meeting point for members of pan-Arabist and anti-imperial networks.¹²³ It appears that the *estivage* villages were ideal meeting places for pan-Arab activities, providing opportunities for communication among actors whom the French authorities considered potential insurgents, or at least suspect political leaders. In the mountain villages, the French network of spies and informants was not as dense as in the urban centres.

Moreover, ambitions of the High Commission to develop tourism as an economic branch often translated into strengthening the Syrian *estivage* resorts and travel restrictions almost inevitably led to protests among the local population. Initially, political incentives strengthening the tourism and *estivage* business had been limited in Syria, but the economic programmes of the 1930s comprised measures to support this endeavour. Many adopted measures suggested a significant French influence. Initiatives such as hotel credits, tax exemptions, or the renovation of villages had been employed by French colonial administrations in various parts of the empire (and in metropolitan France).¹²⁴ It is therefore likely that the French High Commission, considering tourism as a somewhat universally applicable pill to cure all economic illness, had inspired a great number of the decrees adopted by the Syrian Government.

Despite the widely accepted notion that tourism would strengthen the economy, particularly during moments of political and/or social crisis, a certain ambivalence with regard to its potential persisted among the French mandate officials. In 1936, a large general strike launched in the early months of the year across the major cities of Syria paralysed the country and demonstrated to the French not only the limits of their own control, but also the limits of the Syrian notables whom they had chosen as their primary collaborators. While it is commonly accepted that the new, leftist government in France modified its politics about Syria and that the French approach in general became more favourable towards concluding a treaty, on the ground, the protests seemed to confirm a prevalent French mistrust of the Syrian population.¹²⁵

Political processes thus continued to be strictly controlled, including incentives to strengthen economic development.¹²⁶ When the Syrian entrepreneurs Osman Zayn Beyhum, ‘Abbud ‘Aoun and Chéhadé Ghattasse, for example, launched an initiative to recreate the village of Mount Kassioun as an *estivage* centre, the French administration tightly supervised the decision-making process. A commission was formed comprising the Minister of the Economy, Mustafa al-Qusayri, representatives of his ministry and the Ministry of Interior, in addition to three French ‘advisors’. The fact that even a commission of reduced impact was made up of an equal number of French and Syrian representatives shows the determination of

the High Commission to supervise any political processes. At the same time, the active support of the Syrian Government and political representatives remained limited. To the representatives in the Chamber, the *estivage* business was neither economically vital nor did it play a significant role in their plans for the future of the country. Support for the measures aimed at attracting a greater number of tourists was expressed once more by members of the middle classes: the journalists in the acknowledged nationalist paper of Damascus *Alif Ba* approved of the measures.¹²⁷

Whereas the French High Commission tried to strengthen the *estivage* centres for economic reasons, they were suspect meeting places for political – anti-French – activity. Indeed, they were an ideal opportunity for gathering. In contrast to the rivalling urban centres such as Aleppo, Homs and Damascus, the smaller towns and villages in the Anti-Lebanon were, in a way, “neutral ground”. They were not strongholds associated with major families and, as various notable families from the entire Eastern Arab region used to spend their summer there anyway, they facilitated meetings and exchange among notables across mandate borders.

While the Syrian notables remained the main actors in Syrian politics, a camp for scouts taking place in the summer of 1936 indicated that the notables adopted new patterns of political mobilisation. Scout camps, taking place in the summer resort of Bludan, were subsidised by the Syrian Government.¹²⁸ The boys were welcomed by the Syrian prime minister and other representatives of the Government, and the Damascene nationalist newspaper *Alif Ba* covered the camp as an event of national relevance, arguing that it pioneered in establishing a true Syrian scout movement.¹²⁹ The presence of prominent politicians and the coverage by one of the most important nationalist newspapers reflect the relevance and the pronounced political implications of youth movements. Anti-imperial mobilisation included, as in many countries in the 1930s, youth organisations. The continuity in choosing the *estivage* centre of Bludan as a meeting place and the fact that politicians and representatives of the notable families uttered the introductory words reaffirms that new forms of political action and new groups of actors in Syria did not emerge in opposition to the spatial formations and political structures associated with the Syrian notables. Rather, old patterns of legitimacy and new forms of mobilisation joined forces in opposing the mandate power.¹³⁰ As rivalries between the urban centres persisted, the choice of Bludan as an enclave for the Syrian anti-French youth may have been not only a pragmatic choice, but also a consciously set symbol for the reinvigorated resistance against French rule.

To the French secret service (*Sûreté générale*), the mountain villages were suspect, as their remoteness and comparatively difficult access made them hard to survey.¹³¹ These fears seem justified, given that ‘suspect individuals’ such as Amin al-Husayni exchanged information and ideas there, shielded comparatively well from observation of the authorities. Yet, the villages should not be mistaken for

carefully selected hiding places – from the Arab notables' point of view, they were a rather natural choice. From their perspective, the mountain resorts were centres of sociability, rather than remote villages. They had already become political centres during summer in Ottoman times, and under the mandate regime the *estivage* practice provided the additional advantage of justifying meetings between Arab notables from the entire region. Whereas the French High Commission applied the criteria of military access and intelligence-gathering, the notables read the space in terms of sociability and exchange. From their point of view, the importance of the villages was three-fold: first, in comparison with the cities, French supervision was less pronounced there; second, they brought together notables from entire *Bilad al-Sham*; and third, they were not defined in national or factional terms. This kind of neutrality distinguished them from the urban centres such as Hama, Aleppo and Damascus. In the urban centres, 'the street' expressed resistance against the French in demonstrations of force, which often had strong local references and overtones. Thus, the *estivage* resorts served – on purpose – as transnational centres for meetings and as pan-Arab platforms for the expression of big ideas and political visions that aimed at a larger restructuring of the region in its present state.

Aleppo's isolated middle classes

Great divergences in reading and interpreting spaces not only occurred between Syrian notables and the French mandate administration, but also between the middle-class inhabitants of the Syrian cities and European visitors. Even though both groups spoke a similar idiom of modernity: many city-dwellers had been educated in European missionary schools or in Europe, and worked in liberal professions such as journalism, bureaucracy, law or medicine.¹³² In order to advocate their interests and to establish social networks, they typically formed circles and clubs defined by the topics they aimed to advance. Often, these associations facilitated their members to establish contact with similar circles in other countries, such as the tourist development associations in Palestine and Egypt, for example. Whereas a comparable body did not exist in Syria, a group of middle-class members in Aleppo founded the *Société Archéologique d'Alep* (Archaeological Society of Aleppo).¹³³ Beyond pursuing their archaeological interests, the group also provided analyses of tourist movements and lobbied in favour of better advertisement campaigns as well as the improvement of accommodation facilities.¹³⁴

The case of the *Société Archéologique d'Alep* not only shows the significance these local middle classes attributed to tourism, but also indicates their position in political decision-making. For their project, they needed to win over the French High Commission as well as the local upper and middle classes. Aleppo suffered from the new spatio-political realities in terms of tourism, since the mandate

borders had deprived Aleppo of important connections.¹³⁵ In late 1930, an average of 4 tourists visited the city per day. Such a low number could not only be attributed to the economic depression – after all, Damascus was frequented in the same year by 15 visitors per day.¹³⁶ In fact, most travellers on trips around the Eastern Mediterranean skipped Aleppo. George H. Williams did not visit the city, and Mary Steele-Maitland, whose travel route led her and her husband from Egypt via Palestine and Syria on to Turkey and the Balkans, passed Aleppo on the train, but the couple did not stop for a visit, over which Steele-Maitland expressed her regret: “[...] we reached Aleppo. Such a pity we couldn’t see it. From the train – as it was nearly full moon we could see a fine citadel and it like Damascus is part of the edge of the desert.”¹³⁷ The obvious touristic potential of the city remained unexploited.

In May 1931, the delegate of the French High Commission in Aleppo forwarded the sample of a new bilingual review (written in French and Arabic) to the High Commission in Beirut. It was the first publication of the local *Archaeological Society*, which the delegate presented as the result of a French-Syrian collaboration aiming to attract the interest of the inhabitants of Aleppo (*“les éléments locaux”*) in the study of history.¹³⁸ Kamil al-Ghazzi, one of the founding members of the *Archaeological Society*, who was also on the editorial board of the review and the author of its Arabic preface, was most likely involved in the drafting of the French preface too. This foreword stated the main purpose of the society and its publication as follows:

On the occasion of its foundation in January 1930, the “Archaeological Society of Aleppo” declared that its objective is the dissemination of information on archaeological matters regarding Syria, the protection of monuments that constitute the national heritage, and the expansion of tourism in Northern Syria. [...]

This review will be the journal of the “Archaeological Society”, but also the one of the intellectual archaeological and touristic movements in Northern Syria; and the voice of a people which is becoming aware of itself, and which – thanks to the support provided by the French mandatory nation – is striving to reach as fast as possible the intellectual level of the European nations.¹³⁹

In this passage, the author demonstrated the significance of archaeological research and tourism development by referring to notions of cultural heritage, nation-building and the civilisational evolution of nations. He defined Aleppo and its *Archaeological Society* as being part of various networks: spatially, he situated Aleppo at the centre of a region termed “Northern Syria”, thus implying the existence of a Syrian entity. Moreover, he predicted that Aleppo would become an international centre, manifest in the fact that tourists and archaeologists visited the region. Such ideas were in line with the mandate treaty, which had conferred the responsibility of enabling Syrians to self-govern to the French mandate power. This

implied creating the conditions for political independence as a nation-state.¹⁴⁰ The preface framed the activities of the society in a self-confident manner, but in a way that revealed opportunities for cooperation between the *Archaeological Society* and the High Commission, as the author assumed that they shared the goal of educating broader segments of the population.

In the Arabic version, al-Ghazzi also connected archaeological excavations and tourism, but this time he addressed a local Aleppan public, rather than an international audience:

The aim of this magazine is: [...] To inform about the quality of these antiquities [of Aleppo] and to provide illustrations of their beauties [...]. This booklet is distributed among the scholarly associations and in public places in the famous Western kingdoms and foreign countries, so the lovers of ancient ruins will see [the illustrations] and they will long to see them [the antiquities] and render themselves there and Aleppo will make a huge financial profit from it, which should not be underestimated: Such a profit as make the regions of Egypt and Beirut and Lebanon and Baalbek and Tadmor and other places, about the historical greatness of which tourists know thanks to photographs and publications on the pages of newspapers and scientific magazines specialised associations have founded for the specific aim of making tourists come to the region from all corners and directions. The benefits from it are so huge that the pen cannot describe it.¹⁴¹

Both texts advertised the value of tourism, but the reasoning aimed to convince different audiences in divergent terms. The major argument of the Arabic version, which addressed Aleppo's educated middle and upper classes, was economic: the inhabitants of Aleppo, who were at the time facing a harsh economic crisis, might profit economically from the influx of tourists. Well-known tourist destinations such as Egypt, Beirut and Baalbek had proven the economic potential of tourism. In contrast to the French text, this perspective embedded the city of Aleppo in the spatial context of a larger post-Ottoman region. Locating Aleppo within a national Syrian territory did not play a role here. Rather, al-Ghazzi referred to the notion of an imperial *Bilad al-Sham*, ordered in networks of interconnected centres. For the Aleppan inhabitants addressed in the Arabic text, as for the postcard editors we encountered in the first section of this chapter, interurban networks and cities in competition within a larger region had apparently remained relevant categories of spatial order.¹⁴²

The editors of the review thus sought to address both a French and a local public not only by using their respective languages, but also by drawing on concepts and ideas meaningful to them. According to Keith Watenpaugh, this capacity to translate notions into various idioms characterised the representatives of the modern Aleppan middle classes. Among them was al-Ghazzi, an educated city-dweller,

editor of a newspaper, and author of a chronicle of Aleppo (published in 1926), which was based not only on Arab, but also on European, sources. Since 1925, he had been an active member of local archaeological societies. (It might be interesting to note here that the first of these associations, *Jamī'iyat 'Adiyat Halab*, was sponsored among others by the family owning the *Hotel Baron* in Aleppo. Evidently, the hotel owners well understood the link between tourism and archaeology.)¹⁴³

Al-Ghazzi's double-sided reasoning also implied that he was searching for allies to win over with promising arguments. Despite his reputation and qualifications, al-Ghazzi's political influence remained limited. As a result of the French-Syrian policy of "honourable cooperation", Syrian notable families had emerged as the dominant actors in local urban and national political spheres in Syria, while the French consciously circumvented the often nationalist urban middle classes. Inspired by General Lyautey's approach in the French protectorate of Morocco, especially after the Syrian Revolt, the French strategy consisted in finding members of the major notable families who were willing to cooperate with the mandate power. The strategy of cooperating with notables was informed by prejudice about the alleged tribal structures of Arab societies. The mandate administration and their Parisian interlocutors hoped to turn the notables into mediators between the French and local society.¹⁴⁴

Watenpugh described how the middle classes, aspiring to participate in politics, attempted to establish relations with Aleppan notables. Although they managed to achieve some sort of communication, the notables did not consider these educated middle classes as persons of equal status. Kamil al-Ghazzi, too, experienced that his educational and historical projects did not attract significant support from locally influential notables.¹⁴⁵ For the patterns of political mobilisation of the notables, the creation of a historical consciousness envisioned in the French preface, as well as the creation of identities in order to mobilise larger groups of the population, were not (yet) relevant. The economic prospect of tourism development by contrast was expected to benefit the urban middle classes rather than the sectors in which the notables or their clientele held interests.

Such ideas spoke more to the French mandate power: the local French delegate enthusiastically forwarded the magazine to the High Commission. Yet while the French representatives approved of the project and granted some subsidies, no cooperation or joint efforts in tourism development resulted from al-Ghazzi's initiative. In the French approach to notable interlocutors, persons such as Kamil al-Ghazzi and their initiatives did not matter.

Neither the French administration nor the notables thus backed his efforts to popularise archaeology and develop tourism more systematically. Not even in 1934, when a major programme of economic development was drafted by High Commissioner Damien de Martel in an attempt to convince Syrian leaders and the

population of the beneficial effects of French rule, they attributed significance to his project.¹⁴⁶ Although the programme included measures of strengthening tourism, these measures were inspired by the French repertoire of tourism development applied in several other parts of the empire. Cooperation with local associations such as al-Ghazzi's *Archaeological Society* did not feature in the suggestions. Kamil al-Ghazzi's remark that Egyptian and Lebanese authorities and associations invested immense efforts in tourism development, therefore can be read not only as a reference to a successful model, but also as an expression of mild frustration.

In Syria, the urban middle classes who cared about these showcases of an educated modernity, of notions such as national identity, historical legitimacy and heritage, were not the ones shaping and influencing politics. Like their Egyptian, Palestinian and Lebanese counterparts they published articles in journals, wrote books, conducted excavations and research, and founded circles such as the *Société Archéologique*, but they were not at the core of decision-making. While they attempted to cooperate with politically influential notables, they remained in subordinate positions and depended on the (limited) goodwill and interest of their interlocutors.¹⁴⁷ The Syrian notables, however, did not have an interest in the creation of an integrated nation-state, and therefore were not inclined to adopt strategies aiming at the construction of a national consciousness beyond anti-French leanings. They maintained their system of mobilising supporters, which was based on socio-spatial adherence, rather than on categories such as class and convictions, political strategies and worldviews.¹⁴⁸

Whereas al-Ghazzi's local urban initiative aimed at the protection of ancient heritage, the development of a historical consciousness, and tourist accommodation, a coherent national strategy for developing tourism did not emerge as a result of the political structure in Mandate Syria. His local initiative remained geographically confined, expressing a local or regional – rather than national – sense of belonging. As the notables shaping national politics did not expect to profit from nationalist principles, discussions about the economic, educational and political potential of tourism did not reach the national level.

The approach of the *Société Archéologique* thus resembled the measures taken by the tourist development associations in the neighbouring countries: advertisements and practical advice in maps and guidebooks combined with efforts to improve accommodation infrastructures. Unfortunately, it appears that the initiatives of the *Société Archéologique d'Alep* did not meet with any response. Neither the High Commission nor the Syrian Government put the proposals into effect, and the few tourists who visited the city did not take into account what al-Ghazzi and his circle had to tell about the city, its history and culture.

As a result, local advocates of tourism development seemed to have difficulties in establishing contact with visitors and shaping their perceptions of Aleppo.

Humphrey Bowman visited the city in 1928, during his third journey to the French Mandate. The Syrian Revolt had marked his previous journey to Beirut and Damascus in 1926, when Bowman's indignation about French practices of rule had permeated his diary entries. Two years later, he described his tourist activities more extensively than during the previous visits. Despite his familiarity with the region, Orientalist expectations and frames shaped his vision of Aleppo. He indulged in the Oriental beauty of the *souks*, manifest in the ornaments of the *khans*, the abundance of goods and the quality of handcrafted goods. Aleppo was, according to him, "unspoiled by Frankish [referring to an Arabic term for Europeans, *jd*] taste".¹⁴⁹ Not even the markets of Damascus, he stated happily, could rival Aleppo in this respect.¹⁵⁰

Kamil al-Ghazzi, *Wattar Frères* and others had offered a variety of touristic perspectives on Aleppo: as an archaeological site and monumental witness to ancient empires; or as a city with vibrant street life and modern infrastructures. Yet, without the institutional support of well-organised associations or the mandate power, their interpretations did not reach Bowman, who rather denied to Aleppo the urban modernity that *Wattar Frères* had visualised.

It seems that in Syria, middle-class actors had difficulties in systematically shaping tourism policies, and thereby the narratives spread within the context of tourism. While the High Commission had approved of the proposal of the *Société Archéologique*, the initiative did not result in any form of cooperation or systematic tourism development, and the members did not seem to be involved in the actual communication with tourists. Orientalist visions, as on Thévenet's postcards, continued to circulate. Local perspectives hardly reached potential visitors. Moreover, the lack of recognition from official authorities implied that Syrian historians, archaeologists and intellectuals had greater difficulties in addressing tourists than Egyptian, Lebanese and Yishuvi actors in tourism had. Even in Palestine, the monopoly of access in certain monuments of Jerusalem provided Arab middle-class actors with better access to international visitors.

Palmyra: The desert on display

Palmyra (Tadmor) had the charms of a seemingly abandoned desert town. Very few postcards reached France from the Eastern Syrian desert; if they did so, they often showed the colonnaded street rising over the desert sands (fig. 20).¹⁵¹ The seeming neglect and disinterest of the local population in historical sites was a common trope in guidebooks and its visual manifestations on postcards often disguised the efforts photographers made to exclude the population and other visitors from their photographs.¹⁵² The trope of the Oriental void serves as a starting point for this final section. As far as tourists were concerned, the suggestion of emptiness on



Figure 20: The ruins of Palmyra (Photographer: Jean Torossian. Reproduced by kind permission of The Fouad Debbas Collection / Sursock Museum, Beirut)

the postcard does not seem entirely misleading. Although guidebooks suggested numerous travel routes which included a stop at this most impressive site of Roman ruins, the hotel in Palmyra was barely profitable. In 1933, High Commissioner Ponsot opined that its unfortunate owner, Pierre d'Andurain, had to be considered one of the nobles who “spends their heritage on equally ruinous as tempting undertakings.”¹⁵³ Despite the fame of the site, tourists were not yet abundant.¹⁵⁴

Since the early days of tourism to Palmyra, visitors had considered the *Hotel Zénobie* a symbol of the tourist movement to the region. Norah Rowan-Hamilton, who visited the town in the late 1920s before Pierre d'Andurain invested in the hotel, read its history as a symbol of the decline of the ancient civilisation. The story she told was one of missed opportunities: according to her, a French tour organiser had planned the hotel (though, as it appears, it was actually the Lebanese transport company *Kettaneh*), which was intended to contribute to the emergence of the town as a tourist destination. However, due to the Syrian Revolt, tourists never came and the hotel building was not completed. At the time of Norah Rowan-Hamilton's visit, she concluded, it was in a condition even worse than “Zenobia's ruined city”.¹⁵⁵ In her account, the romantic charm of decay and the gloomy atmosphere, as well as the longing for a bygone past, characterised the condition of both the town and of tourism there.

The inhabitants of Palmyra though were part of the attraction that fascinated Rowan-Hamilton during her visit. Referring to tropes of Oriental decline when describing Islamic elements in the town, such as the “squalid Arab village and mosque”, in other instances she sketched out the picture of a harmonious ensemble of ancient heritage and contemporary inhabitants. The “fine Greek traits” of the local women, for example, evidently established a lineage from their presumed ancient ancestors to the present-day inhabitants.¹⁵⁶

Obviously, Rowan-Hamilton's account followed the tradition of the famous explorers touring the Arab East in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁵⁷

The ‘discovery’ of a place fallen into oblivion long ago was a widespread motif, just as the sympathetic approach to the people living in the desert was, who were framed as ‘noble savages’. The trope, as identified by Wiedemann, was based on the idea that the isolation of the desert had prevented these people from mixing with supposedly ‘inferior’ races – an idea apparent in Rowan-Hamilton’s remark on the “Greek” faces of the inhabitants.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, the inhabitants of Palmyra served as a picturesque illustration of the scenery, and as a contrast highlighting the enlightened approach of the visitors themselves.¹⁵⁹ Similar to George H. Williams’ photographs in Egypt, she aimed to re-discover the Syria she was familiar with from other travel reports, the observations of which she confirmed.

As a consequence, the inhabitants of Palmyra, as a living attraction, were supposed to remain within a certain, clearly confined Other space. The desert, presumably populated by archaic tribal societies and difficult to access, was an ideal variety of such a space, which rendered tangible the distinction that members of self-proclaimed modern societies identified between themselves and the allegedly archaic communities inhabiting the Other space. Wang argued that crossing the civilisational boundary and accessing this space for a limited time allowed tourists to assert their own modernity.¹⁶⁰ Elements testifying to changing ways of life in Eastern Syria surprised Rowan-Hamilton, and she reacted to them with a similar mixture of astonishment and irony that we encountered in Williams’ descriptions of modern, urban Egypt. She noted with great astonishment, for example, that the sister of one of the local sheikhs had married a “gentleman from Paris”.¹⁶¹ Apparently, the physical and social mobility of the sheikh’s sister seemed to contradict her expectations concerning the lives that they were leading. The news about the marriage between the woman from Palmyra and a French man thus must have disconcerted Rowan-Hamilton. While tourists took their own ability to cross civilisational boundaries for granted, they did not expect it to happen on the Other side.

As tourism development was a recent phenomenon in Palmyra, Rowan-Hamilton had to face this irritation. At other tourist sites, the separation of the monumental from the ethnographic sites had already taken place. In Egypt, in Luxor, for example, but also in the Lebanese ruins of Baalbek, the monuments had already been “cleared” from local inhabitants living among and with the ancient ruins. In Palmyra, this process was still underway and the French mandate power did not proceed as smoothly as they expected. From their point of view, the population of Palmyra presented a major obstacle to the touristic accessibility of the site. Policies of heritage preservation justified governmental intervention in local settlement practices. From January 1930 onwards, the ground was to be turned into a so-called “National Archaeological Park”, and an entrance fee was levied.¹⁶² Under Damien de Martel, Palmyra was finally classified as a “historical monument”, which implied further restrictions with regard to the development of the town: across the

entire city and in all places in view of the “archaeological park”, housings had to be constructed in “the regional style”. Furthermore, the *Service des Antiquités* had to confirm the plans for any new representative building, such as municipality buildings, hotels, mosques and so on, which were to be constructed in Palmyra.¹⁶³

Under the premise of preservation, tourism justified the restructuring of an entire city. For the inhabitants of Palmyra who had lived in or next to the excavation sites, the idea to present Palmyra to a larger audience, meant first and foremost that they had to leave their homes. As the High Commission argued, living amidst the ruins had to be prevented with regard to future settlements, and the existing houses needed to be torn down. The archaeologically significant part of the town was to be evacuated “in the public interest” in October 1929.¹⁶⁴ While the exact number of persons who had to leave their homes is hard to establish, a document indicates that around 70 families were forced to move: in December the authorities issued a decree stating that 68 new houses, a health care centre and a school had to be constructed.¹⁶⁵

Yet several subsequent decrees insisting on the definite “clearance” of the site suggest that a number of inhabitants refused to leave their homes. The High Commission first set incentives, promising tax exemptions (July 1930) and parcels of land (1934), and finally announced expropriation: houses had to be destroyed in order to “isolate the temple of Baal” (1939).¹⁶⁶ The repeated decrees aiming to expel the inhabitants of Palmyra from the ruins demonstrated the resistance that the authorities faced when putting their plan into action.

Palmyra was not the only such case. In its report to the League of Nations in the year 1927, the mandate administration announced a similar proceeding about the “clearance” of the Crusader fortress Krak des Chevaliers (Qalʿat al-Husn) in the ʿAlawite state.¹⁶⁷ The inhabitants, on the one hand considered a source of interest due to their assumed picturesque qualities, were, on the other hand, separated from their homes amidst the ruins, which were exposed and cleared of seemingly anachronistic elements. Thus, the local population was transformed into an attraction – but an attraction set apart from the ancient ruins. This separation occurred both in narratives and in the spatial order.¹⁶⁸ Similar to travel photographs capturing either the population or ancient monuments, stories of glorious monuments and of mysterious local customs were separated spatially.

In Palmyra, such a separation occurred largely against the will of the inhabitants. Whereas in Aleppo, parts of the population embraced tourism development and considered it a beneficial option for the development of their hometown, such proponents of tourism did not exist in the relatively isolated and much smaller Palmyra. Here, tourism seems to have been the business of foreigners: the hotel had been a project of the Lebanese transport entrepreneur *Kettaneh*, taken over by a Frenchman, and catered to the interests of international travel and transport companies.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, creating tourist mobilities to a strategically important

outpost in Eastern Syria was in the interest of the French military.¹⁷⁰ The town, marginal during Ottoman times, grew only during and after the interwar period, as a result of two main economic factors: its position on the oil pipeline from Kirkuk, and the growth of tourism.¹⁷¹ The population was less heterogeneous, the level of education lower, and the economy less transnationally connected than in Aleppo. The middle classes, which Watenpaugh has described as the main agents of change in Aleppo, barely existed in Palmyra.

The local population therefore neither built up the business of tourism nor profited from its revenues. Rather, tourism emerged as a foreign undertaking, contradicting the vital interests of the inhabitants. As a colonial project, tourism was supported by the colonial state and its administration, rendered possible by urban entrepreneurs from across *Bilad al-Sham*, and carried out by privileged citizens from the imperial metropolises. It integrated the Syrian desert outpost into a larger Syrian entity and created a defining landmark for the French administration, but the processes of territorial consolidation were carried out at the expense of its local inhabitants. Paradoxically, to show the ongoing relevance and greatness of the Roman imperial heritage, the Roman ruins had to be cleared of the persons who lived on its very ground.

Conclusion

The Syrian tourism space as a whole was largely shaped by the French mandate administration, which saw tourism as a means to justify French governance and to tighten its rule across the Syrian territory. Whereas local urban initiatives aimed to foster tourism in their respective towns, a more general strategy of tourism development on a national level did not emerge. Rather, contact between the various levels of policy-making remained limited.

At a local level, representatives of the middle classes in the major Syrian cities had an interest in tourism as part of a larger project of 'modernising' the country. Economic interests often went hand in hand with the idea that tourism was an occasion to present their views on Syria and counter imperialist claims. They formed clubs and associations to promote these interests, and they attempted to propagate the vision of a modern, independent Syria, both among the local population and an outside audience. Printed publications, such as reviews and postcards, spread these visions for the country, strongly influenced by late-Ottoman ideas of an urban civic modernity.

Yet these members of the middle classes played a subordinate role in promoting tourism, because they lacked access to national institutions and the networks necessary for its realisation. Similar to Arab Palestinians, the urban middle-class

actors in Syria were largely sidelined by mandate policies, as the French mandatory opted for cooperation with the Syrian notables. Attempts to build relations with either of the sides and thereby secure influence were not successful. Their initiatives remained grounded locally and their media, with the exception of postcards, had a limited range. Their ambitions though resembled the aims of Egyptian advocates of tourism development: The *Archaeological Society of Aleppo* argued that transnational mobilities provided economic opportunities and hoped that tourism would strengthen the significance of the town on a national level. With regard to an international audience, picture postcards of local editors visualised the late-Ottoman modernity of the urban centres and thus their vanguard role in transforming local society while refuting denigrating Orientalist depictions. Due to their lacking influence in processes of decision-making and debate, however, the activities of the Syrian middle classes neither lead to the drafting of a coherent national narrative nor to the creation of a unified tourist and national space.

At a Syrian national level, notables continued to define politics with the general aim of gaining independence from France. New forms of political mobilisation were incorporated into the older forms of adherence, as the example of the scout camp demonstrated. Forms of popular nationalism, conceived of as anti-French agitation, continued to be shaped by personal bonds and alliances, and tourism – or *estivage* – was conceived of as a practice facilitating the exchange with notables from across *Bilad al-Sham*. Notions of drafting a national narrative or creating territorial cohesion by means of tourism were hardly relevant in the national political discourse. For the notables who promoted tourism to Syria, it was a means of supporting a particular clientele or region (such as Bludan and Zabadani), rather than related to an economic or ideological vision for a Syrian nation-state. This markedly differed from neighbouring Lebanon, although in both parts of the Mandate, the *estivage* centres aimed to attract a similar clientele. Only in the late 1930s did the initiative of Fakhri al-Barudi suggest that at least individual notables sought to profit from tourism development as a way of shaping images of Syria on an international level.

The French High Commission, by contrast, launched several initiatives to strengthen the tourism sector in Syria; however, their attempts ignored local needs and were not sustainable. From the perspective of the High Commission, two major arguments rendered tourism development a promising investment: First, the French mandatory perceived tourism as an asset in justifying French governance to the Mandates Commission in Geneva. Potential economic growth was one of the expected benefits of tourism development; the testimonies of travellers to the beneficial effects of the French presence were another one. Therefore, unlike the British mandatory in Palestine, the French High Commission set certain incentives to promote the tourism business, such as the introduction of hotel credits, and paid particular attention to accompanying and guiding tourists across the territory.

Since the French mandatory steered away from granting a high degree of autonomy to local Syrian bodies in general and the urban middle classes in particular, they resorted to a limited number of only partially effective incentives.

Second, tourism development served as a resource in establishing mandate rule and creating a coherent space under French surveillance. The comparison of Aleppo and Palmyra indicated that tourism development was tied to French security interests, prioritised over intentions of fostering economic growth. In a city like Aleppo, where economic development was desperately needed and local interest groups sought the support of the French High Commission, tourism never reached a high priority among French officials. In distant or 'unruly' areas such as Palmyra, the Jabal al-Druze or the 'Alawite state, tourism was harnessed, as it was intended to serve as a civilian continuation of military conquest and help maintain control.

This pattern resulted from the French strategy of 'pacification', intended to prevent further revolts. Collaborating with members of the major notable families while circumventing the urban, nationalist middle classes were a major pillar of this strategy. The French fear of anti-French national movements resulted in a general ignorance of middle-class visions of a 'modern' country, including notions such as 'national heritage' or 'national history'. Tourism, as a means of territorial control, was imposed as part of the 'pacification' strategies by the French military. As a colonial political tool, it remained devoid of the symbolic, nationalist overtones it had in Egypt (or Lebanon).

While not all tourists approved of the French way of ruling Syria, the French mandate administration remained their major interlocutor, presenting the country, providing access, and offering assistance in planning and undertaking the journey. As a result, tourists either accepted the concept of a *Syrie française* of the French High Commission or departed from the idea of an Oriental (and Orientalist) Syria. The Syrian Revolt had an ambiguous effect in this regard: on the one hand, Syria emerged as a distinct geographical entity in its own right, characterised by its geopolitical relevance. On the other hand, French and British narratives about the revolt reinforced the "colonial gospel": the stereotype of a desert country inhabited by ferocious tribes.¹⁷² The travellers of my sample continued to frame Damascus, Aleppo and Palmyra as situated in a diffuse Eastern continuum. Alternative narratives pertaining mainly to a local or national context were – with the exception of picture postcards – less likely to be consumed by tourists, for whom the idea of a backward Orient merged with the great powers' geopolitical ambitions in the 'Middle East'.

Notes

- ¹ JD PRIVATE COLLECTION, Commission du Tourisme des Etats sous Mandat, *Holidays Off the Beaten Track*, p. 3.
- ² The editor, the *Commission de Tourisme du Haut-Commissariat de France* had been founded in 1923 by the French High Commission. Monmarché, *Syrie – Palestine – Iraq – Transjordanie*, p. LXXXII.
- ³ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 29–40. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, p. 200.
- ⁴ For the British Empire: Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, pp. 108–116.
- ⁵ Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, pp. 198–204. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 27–70, esp. pp. 55–57. Burke III, 'French Native Policy'. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, pp. 108–110.
- ⁶ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 58–60.
- ⁷ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 264–265, 340, 346–350, 362–363. Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria*, pp. 67–69, 152, 157–159, 247–248.
- ⁸ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 72–81.
- ⁹ I refer to the term of "notables" in the sense Gelvin understands it, as a social elite that has emerged as part of and that was shaped by the Ottoman system of governance: Gelvin, 'The "Politics of Notables"', pp. 26–27. Cf. also Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 248–251. Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 218–224.
- ¹⁰ On tourism in French North Africa cf. Zytnicki and Kazdaghli, *Le Tourisme dans l'Empire français*.
- ¹¹ Cf. BNF TOLBIAC, Du Taillis, *Le nouveau Maroc*. BNF TOLBIAC, Du Taillis, *Motor-Touring in Morocco*. BNF TOLBIAC, Goud, *Le tourisme au Maroc*. BNF TOLBIAC, Fauré, *Guide pratique de Marrakech*. BNF TOLBIAC, ESSI de Rabat-Salé et sa région, *Guide touristique historique*. BNF TOLBIAC, Syndicat d'Initiative et de Tourisme d'Ifrane, *Ifrane, Maroc*. BNF TOLBIAC, Syndicat d'initiatives et de tourisme „ESSI“ Maroc, *Comment venir et voyager au Maroc*.
- ¹² On the term 'middle classes' in this context cf. Watenpugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 17–26. The implications of 'national heritage' with regard to power relations have been highlighted by Dieter Langewiesche: Langewiesche, 'Was heißt "Erfindung der Nation"?', pp. 616–617.
- ¹³ FDC, Thévenet, *Panorama de Hama (Syrie)*. FDC, Wattar Frères, *Hama (Syrie): Panorama générale*.
- ¹⁴ Marie-Hélène Degroise (1947–2012), formerly curator at the Centre des archives d'outre-mer in Aix-en-Provence, published an extremely useful blog, gathering information on an impressive range of photographers and postcard editors in the colonies and overseas territories: Marie-Hélène Degroise, Photographes d'Asie (1840–1944), <<http://photographesenoutremerasie.blogspot.de/>>, last accessed 05/04/2017.
- ¹⁵ DeRoo, 'Colonial Collecting', p. 85. Schor, 'Cartes postales', p. 12. Jaworski, 'Alte Postkarten als kulturhistorische Quellen'. Gunning, 'The Whole World Within Reach', pp. 27–29. Under the mandate, Lebanon and Syria became members of the Postal Union, which led to major improvements in postal services. The number of post offices in Syria and Lebanon increased from 68 in 1919 to 411 in 1939: Saliba, *Beyrouth*, p. 13. On the postal system cf. Bassil, *French Postal History in Tripoli*. Bassil, *Seventy Years of Postal History*.
- ¹⁶ Mizrahi provides detailed insights into the social background as well as previous experiences of the officers in the *Service des Renseignements*: Mizrahi, *Genèse de l'État mandataire*, pp. 186–202.
- ¹⁷ Moors, 'From "Women's Lib." to "Palestinian Women"', p. 23.
- ¹⁸ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, p. 5, footnote 5.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Çelik and Eldem, 'Introduction', p. 12. Sheehi, 'A Social History of Early Arab Photography', pp. 177–179, 190–193. Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler*, pp. 78–79.
- ²⁰ Cf. DeRoo, 'Colonial Collecting', p. 85. Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler*, p. 186 et pass.

- ²¹ I am deeply indebted to Wolf-Dieter Lemke for having invited me to see his impressive collection, and sharing knowledge about postcards as well as collectors' practices. Dominik Oesterle, in 2016 intern at the OIB Beirut, has informed me about the collection and Stefan Seeger and Dina Banna from the OIB Library kindly assisted me in establishing contact with Wolf-Dieter Lemke.
- ²² 327 of the postcards were sent by soldiers, 39 by tourists or soldiers on excursions. The sample was compiled between February and July 2017.
- ²³ Between 1928 and 1932, the annual number of postcards sent from the British Mandate surpassed 900,000 (with the exception of 1931). In 1933, senders posted almost 1.4 million postcards in Palestine, and in the peak year of 1936, 3.3 million postcards were sent from Palestine: Jarman, 'Report on the Administration of Palestine 1933', IV, p. 519. Jarman, 'Report on the Administration of Palestine 1936', VI, p. 291.
- ²⁴ The fact that in my sample most recipients were female corresponds to findings of previous studies, which pointed out that collecting postcards was a bourgeois feminine activity. Schor, 'Cartes postales', p. 12. DeRoo, 'Colonial Collecting', pp. 90–91.
- ²⁵ There are two works in particular on local postcard producers in *Bilad al-Sham*: el-Hage, *Des photographes à Damas*. Debbas, *Des photographes à Beyrouth*. For Beirut, Debbas has established an overview of motifs: Debbas, *Beyrouth: Notre mémoire*. The following introductions provide overviews of certain postcard series: Tarazi, *Vitrine de l'Orient*. Gavin, *The Image of the East*. Toubia, *Sarrafiān Liban*.
- ²⁶ AKPOOL, Terazi & Churbadji, *Damas. Maison la Municipalité*.
- ²⁷ On 'types': Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*. Gregory, 'Emperors of the Gaze', pp. 209–212. DeRoo, 'Colonial Collecting', p. 89.
- ²⁸ On Soubhi & Mounir Aita: Degroise, 'Photographes d'Asie'.
- ²⁹ AKPOOL, Soubhi S. & Mounir Aïta, *Damas – Le Sérail*.
- ³⁰ Simon Jackson has demonstrated the significance of the notion of 'development' in French colonial rule: Jackson, 'Mandatory Development'.
- ³¹ Palestinian photographic studios, however, barely seemed to be involved in postcard production. el-Hage, 'The Armenian Pioneers'. Lemke, 'Ottoman Photography'. Nassar, 'Early Local Photography in Jerusalem'. Semmerling, *Israeli and Palestinian Postcards*, pp. 6–10. Moors, 'Presenting People'.
- ³² Debbas, *Beyrouth: Notre mémoire*, p. 10.
- ³³ DeRoo, 'Colonial Collecting', pp. 85–87. Naomi Schor objected that exotic motifs such as the 'type' photographs were not limited to Oriental or colonial contexts. As photographers produced similar views of metropolitan landscapes, she attributed such styles to a general nostalgia for the past in a time of rapid modernisation and an allegedly disappearing 'traditional' way of life: Schor, 'Cartes postales'. In a similar way, John MacKenzie has explained Orientalism more generally: MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, xvi–xviii.
- ³⁴ AKPOOL, Thévenet, *Deir-es-Zor: Type*. Cf. also: FDC, Thévenet, *En Syrie: Porteuse d'Eau*. FDC, Thévenet, *En Syrie. Types Anazé*. FDC, Thévenet, *Alep: Type du Pays*., AKPOOL, Thévenet, *Turcomanes*. AKPOOL, Thévenet, *Alep: Type du pays*.
- ³⁵ AKPOOL, Wattar Frères, *L'Emir Moudchem*.
- ³⁶ AUB, *Séance Publique de la Chambre des Députés*, 28/03/1927, pp. 503–504.
- ³⁷ Lemke, 'Ottoman Photography', p. 248.
- ³⁸ Debbas, *Beyrouth: Notre mémoire*, p. 12. Tarazi, *Vitrine de l'Orient*.
- ³⁹ Shaw, 'Ottoman Photography', p. 181. Lemke, 'Ottoman Photography', pp. 242, 245–247.
- ⁴⁰ Beaugé & Çizgen, *Images d'empire*, pp. 230–240. Wolf-Dieter Lemke has highlighted the model character of these Ottoman buildings, which had similar shapes in various provinces of the empire: Lemke, 'Ottoman Photography', pp. 242–244.

- ⁴¹ The Serail: AKPOOL, Soubhi S. & Mounir Aïta, *Damas – Le Sérail*. FDC, Wattar Frères, Hama (Syrie): *Panorama générale*. FDC, Torossian, Palmyre. BARTKO REHER, Edition Gulef, Damas – *Cour de la Grande Mosquée*.
- ⁴² Debbas, *Des photographes à Beyrouth*, pp. 51–52.; Debbas, *Beyrouth: Notre mémoire*, p. 12. el-Hage, *Des photographes à Damas*, p. 37.
- ⁴³ Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', p. 795.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. for landscape painting: Scheid, 'Divinely Imprinting Prints'.
- ⁴⁵ Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 143–145.
- ⁴⁶ FDC, Férid, *Colonel Andréa*.
- ⁴⁷ Marie-Hélène Degroise remarked that Ferid edited French aerial photographs into postcards: Degroise, 'Photographes d'Asie'.
- ⁴⁸ Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, pp. 47, 93.
- ⁴⁹ FDC, Férid, *Alentours du Camp du Muséifré*.
- ⁵⁰ It is likely that these functions were relevant to the French imperial administrations not only in the Levant, but also in other contexts, in particular North Africa, where the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* and its charismatic president John Dal Piaz closely cooperated with the French governor Louis-Hubert Lyautey. On Dal Piaz and tourism development in the Sahara: Berthonnet, 'Le rôle des militaires français'.
- ⁵¹ Sarraut, *La Mise en valeur*, pp. 83–90. On the idea of "mise en valeur" in the context of the French civilising mission since the late nineteenth century, cf. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, pp. 37–65.
- ⁵² BNF TOLBIAC, *Dix ans de mandat, 1931*, pp. 62–63. On French economic policies in Syria cf. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 85–93.
- ⁵³ ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport sur la Situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1923–24*, pp. 36–37.
- ⁵⁴ CADN, Frédéric Martin, à M. le Haut Commissaire, 03/05/1923.
- ⁵⁵ CADN, Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes, *Voyage en France, 1923*.
- ⁵⁶ CADN, *Note par le conseiller pour l'instruction publique, 02/06/1923*.
- ⁵⁷ ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1926*, p. 149. Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 142–168.
- ⁵⁸ ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1928*, pp. 89–90. On the idea of the French civilising mission in the context of mandate rule: Osterhammel, "The Great Work of Uplifting Mankind", esp. pp. 372–373.
- ⁵⁹ BNF TOLBIAC, *Dix ans de mandat, 1931*, pp. 48–49.
- ⁶⁰ Already the Sahara crossing in the 1920s had been celebrated as a step towards opening the desert for ordinary tourists. André Citroën himself had immediately pointed out the possibility of tourism: Berthonnet, 'Le rôle des militaires français', p. 86.
- ⁶¹ CADN, *Lettre de Georges Marie Haardt, 17/10/1930*, p. 3.
- ⁶² CADN, *Lettre de Georges Marie Haardt, 17/10/1930*, p. 4. On Berthelot's impact on French policies in Lebanon and Syria: Dakhli, 'L'expertise en terrain colonial', p. 24.
- ⁶³ Jansen, 'Die Erfindung des Mittelmeerraums', pp. 195–199. Lorcín, 'Rome and France in Africa'. Furlough, 'Une leçon des choses', p. 455.
- ⁶⁴ For the 'Alawite region see BNF TOLBIAC, Maestracci, *La Syrie contemporaine*, pp. 188–191. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 57–60. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, p. 80.
- ⁶⁵ Mascle, *Le Djebel Druze*. In 1930 the Capuchins built a Church in Suwayda, headed by Joseph Mascle: <<http://capucinsorient.org/couvent-christ-roi-souaida>>, last accessed 11/08/2019.
- ⁶⁶ CADN, Mascle, *Le Djebel Druze: Aperçu archéologique*, p. 1.
- ⁶⁷ CADN, Mascle, *Le Djebel Druze: Aperçu archéologique*, pp. 1, 16.

- ⁶⁸ Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, pp. 42–45.
- ⁶⁹ E.g. BNF TOLBIAC, Goud, *Le tourisme au Maroc*, pp. 1–2. BNF TOLBIAC, Michel, *Guide officiel de Safi*, pp. 11–12. BNF TOLBIAC, ESSI de Rabat-Salé et sa région, *Guide touristique historique*, p. 56. BNF TOLBIAC, Syndicat d'Initiative et de Tourisme d'Ifrane, *Ifrane, Maroc*, p. 3.
- ⁷⁰ JD PRIVATE COLLECTION, Chardon, *Méditerranée Orientale – Egypte*.
- ⁷¹ Berthonnet, 'Le rôle des militaires français', p. 95.
- ⁷² Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, pp. 103–105.
- ⁷³ Furlough, 'Une leçon des choses', pp. 443–445.
- ⁷⁴ CADN, *Lettre du délégué p.i. du Haut-Commissaire*, 22/11/1927.
- ⁷⁵ In Algeria and Indochina for example: Zytnicki, *L'Algérie, terre de tourisme*, pp. 120–122. Demay, *Tourism and Colonization in Indochina*, pp. 96, 157–158. BNF GALLICA, *De l'or pour la Syrie*, 24/10/1931.
- ⁷⁶ The revolt had been crushed by June 1927: Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 204. Khaouam Frères were running hotels in various cities and in the major *estivage* towns around Lebanon and Syria, such as Homs, Hama, Damascus, Beirut, and Baalbek, attracting notables and upper middle-class visitors. They were proud to announce that their hotels lived up to the standards of the renowned grand hotels in Europe and Egypt. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, Société de Villégiature au Mont Liban, *Guide de la Société de Villégiature*, 1925, p. 25.
- ⁷⁷ CADN, *Lettre du délégué p.i. du Haut-Commissaire*, 22/11/1927. On Ahmad Nami's ministry cf. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 198–200. He resigned in February 1928: Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 327.
- ⁷⁸ Monmarché, *Syrie – Palestine – Iraq – Transjordanie*, p. 298. Thomas Cook & Son, Lumby and Garstang, *Cook's Traveller's Handbook to Palestine, Syria and Iraq*, 1934, p. 305. Thomas Cook & Son et al., *The Traveller's Handbook for Palestine and Syria*, 1929, p. 6. BNF GALLICA, *Orient Palace Hôtel*, 08/1934.
- ⁷⁹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 77–79. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, pp. 64–66.
- ⁸⁰ Shambrook, *French imperialism in Syria*, p. 152.
- ⁸¹ ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban*, 1923–24, pp. 36–37. ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport à la Société des Nations*, 1926, pp. 149–150. JD PRIVATE COLLECTION, Commission du Tourisme des Etats sous Mandat, *Holidays Off the Beaten Track*.
- ⁸² The Government, though, did not enjoy great support. The nationalists perceived it as collaborationist and boycotted the parliament sessions in protest. Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria*, pp. 116–124.
- ⁸³ AUB, *Décret No. 1284*, 10/06/1933. The members changed in 1936, however, the measure seems to have been due to administrative reasons rather than to new responsibilities of the commission: AUB, *Décret No. 726*, 15/09/1936.
- ⁸⁴ E.g. AUB, *Décret No. 28*, 12/04/1937.
- ⁸⁵ Shambrook, *French imperialism in Syria*, pp. 204–211.
- ⁸⁶ AUB, *Décret No. 17*, 25/04/1936. Although the SET focused in particular on tourism development in Lebanon, it is likely that the SET also published the *Guide d'Estivage en Syrie*, purchased by the Ministry of the Interior in September 1936. In the same year, the SET published a lavishly illustrated brochure on Lebanon: BO, Ministère de l'économie nationale du gouvernement libanais and Société d'encouragement au tourisme au Liban, *Liban, Tourisme – Estivage – Sports d'hiver*. AUB, *Décret No. 735*, 19/09/1936.
- ⁸⁷ AUB, *Décret No. 50*, 05/08/1936, p. 210. AUB, *Décret No. 50*, 05/08/1936, p. 212. AUB, *Décret No. 658*, 25/08/1936. AUB, *Annexes au Décret No. 735*, 19/09/1936. AUB, *Décret No. 645*, 25/05/1938.
- ⁸⁸ On Vacca (*1891) cf. Gabrieli, 's.v. Vacca de Bosis'.

- ⁸⁹ Vacca, 'L'Ufficio nazionale arabo', p. 683.
- ⁹⁰ Vacca, 'L'Ufficio nazionale arabo', pp. 683–684.
- ⁹¹ Vacca, 'L'Ufficio nazionale arabo', p. 684.
- ⁹² CADN, *Lettre du Président du Conseil*, 27/02/1938.
- ⁹³ CADN, *Lettre du M. le délégué du Haut-Commissaire*, 28/05/1936, p. 3.
- ⁹⁴ CADN, *Lettre de Khalil Kseib*, 13/05/1938. CADN, *Lettre du Conseiller d'Ambassade*, 29/07/1938.
- ⁹⁵ CADN, *Lettre du Secrétaire général*, 11/03/1927.
- ⁹⁶ For example, M. Brame, 18/03/1923; Claude Anet, 27/03/1923; CADC, *Français en Syrie, Dossier général, 1922–1927*. Some of these visitors, grateful for the assistance, sent reports, brief memories or impressions to the Foreign Office after their return.
- ⁹⁷ Potentially dangerous visitors, to many of whom visa were rejected, comprised applicants suspected of supporting Arab nationalist movements (Max von Oppenheim, Georg Kampffmeyer) or being involved in espionage activities, mainly citizens of the wartime enemies Germany and Austria. CADC, *Passeports. Demandes particulières. 1922–1929*.
- ⁹⁸ CADC, *Voyages de personnalités – Tourisme 1924–1929*.
- ⁹⁹ Both Bowman and Rowan-Hamilton, for example, who visited Syria at the time of the revolt, remained highly critical with regard to French politics in Syria.
- ¹⁰⁰ CADC, M. Guerlet, *Chargé d'Affaires*, 15/10/1926.
- ¹⁰¹ CADC, Vallotton-Warnery, "Impressions de Syrie". Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, pp. 37, 75–76.
- ¹⁰² CADC, *Voyages de personnalités – Tourisme 1924–1929*. CADC, *Le Ministre des Affaires étrangères*, 01/03/1929. CADC, *Le ministre de France en Roumanie*, 8/11/1928. CADC, *Légation de Roumanie en France*, 17/12/1928. CADC, M. R. Dollot, *Consul de France*, 29/05/1929. CADC, *L'Ambassadeur de France en Pologne*, 22/02/1929.
- ¹⁰³ CADC, *Ministère des Affaires étrangères: Note pour la sous-direction*.
- ¹⁰⁴ AKPOOL, Edition Gulef, *Damas – La rue droite*.
- ¹⁰⁵ Daniel Neep provided further details on such photographs documenting the violence of the mandate power. He argued that the excessive violence shown in the photographs was considered to reflect the presumed extreme, irrational violence of colonised societies: Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, pp. 55, 58. While this is a convincing explanation for the photographs of hanged rebels at the gibbet, in my opinion it does not sufficiently explain the uses and intentions of photographs documenting the destruction of buildings and monuments, in particular given the international outrage provoked by the bombardments of Damascus. Similar photographs circulated of the destroyed Alexandria following British bombardment in 1882: Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler*, pp. 111–118.
- ¹⁰⁶ Cf. BNF TOLBIAC, Roux-Servine, *Sur les routes du Levant*, pp. 62–65.
- ¹⁰⁷ For a concise account of the bombardment of Damascus, as well as the press coverage and the international scandal cf. Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 142–168. Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, Ch. 3 provides an excellent discussion of the use of photography in the context of Victorian military practice.
- ¹⁰⁸ RCSA, Williams, *Travel Diary: Palestine and Syria*, pp. 23–29.
- ¹⁰⁹ RCSA, Williams, *Travel Diary: Palestine and Syria*, p. 23.
- ¹¹⁰ Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 147–148.
- ¹¹¹ BL, Blue Star Line, *Guide to the Mediterranean*, pp. 43–44.
- ¹¹² Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, pp. 247–248.
- ¹¹³ Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, pp. 247–261.
- ¹¹⁴ MECA, Bowman, *Diary*, Vol. Jan 1921–March 1924, 26–28/09/1922.
- ¹¹⁵ MECA, Bowman, *Diary*, Vol. August 1924–October 1926, 31/05/1926.

- ¹¹⁶ NLS, Steele-Maitland, *Diary of Visit to Egypt*, 21/01/1932.
- ¹¹⁷ Le Gras, *Le Lac Méditerranéen*, pp. 124–130.
- ¹¹⁸ Le Gras, *Le Lac Méditerranéen*, pp. 125, 128, 132.
- ¹¹⁹ Le Gras, *Le Lac Méditerranéen*, p. 121.
- ¹²⁰ Le Gras, *Le Lac Méditerranéen*, pp. 124, 126–127, 130, 132.
- ¹²¹ ANF, Vacaresco, *La Croisière Bleue*, in: *Croisières*, pp. 72–75. On Hélène Vacaresco: NA, *French cultural expansion in Egypt, 1929*.
- ¹²² Veccia Vaglieri, ‘Visita di Amin el-Huseini’. Around a week after Amin al-Husayni had left, his cousin Jamal, the leader of the Palestine Arab Party, also departed for an *estivage* stay in Lebanon and Syria.
- ¹²³ In history, Bludan is associated notably with the Congress held in the town in 1937, when major pan-Arabists expressed their support for the Palestinian Revolt: Vacca, ‘Inaugurazione del II Congresso panarabo’. Regarding the Lebanese summer resorts, the *Palestine Post* regularly reported on the departures of important families from Palestine for their *estivage*: Stanton, ‘Locating Palestine’s Summer Residence’, p. 50.
- ¹²⁴ E.g. Zytnicki, *L’Algérie, terre de tourisme*, pp. 120–122. Demay, *Tourism and Colonization in Indochina*, pp. 96, 157–158. BNF GALLICA, *De l’or pour la Syrie*, 24/10/1931.
- ¹²⁵ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 457–471, 485–493.
- ¹²⁶ Among them were tax exemptions for hotel owners, but also minor improvements in the presentation of towns, comfort and security in the region of Bludan and Zabadani: AUB, *Funduq Bludan*, 03/04/1936. AUB, *Décret Législatif No. 50*, 05/08/1936. AUB, *Décret Législatif*, 29/06/1937.
- ¹²⁷ AUB, *Funduq Bludan*, 03/04/1936. AUB, *La-Tashji’ al-Istiyaf fi Suriya*.
- ¹²⁸ AUB, *Iftitah Mukhayyam al-Kashaf fi Bludan*. AUB, *Annexes au décret législatif No. 66*, 28/09/1936, p. 331. AUB, *Décret No. 645*, 07/1938.
- ¹²⁹ AUB, *Iftitah Mukhayyam al-Kashaf fi Bludan*. Keith Watenpaugh and Jennifer Dueck have argued for the significance of the Scouts and their movements as political actors in Syria: Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 291–298. Dueck, ‘A Muslim Jamboree’. Dueck, *Claims of Culture*, pp. 219–220.
- ¹³⁰ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, pp. 18–22. Also in 1938, a camp of “young explorers” from Syria, Lebanon and Egypt gathered in the village. Vacca, ‘Campeggio panarabo di Esploratori’.
- ¹³¹ CADN, *Le Directeur de la Sûreté générale*, 09/06/1932.
- ¹³² Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 17–20.
- ¹³³ For Watenpaugh, the interest in history and archaeology is a central aspect in his characterisation of the middle class: Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 302–303.
- ¹³⁴ CADN, *Nouvelles touristiques*, 05/1931, pp. 19–20.
- ¹³⁵ The early pro-Ottoman resistance movements against the French demonstrated persisting Ottoman loyalties. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 160–173. Provence, ‘Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency’. Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 141–145. On attempts of establishing the national paradigm in Aleppo cf. Watenpaugh, ‘Cleansing the Cosmopolitan City’.
- ¹³⁶ CADN, *Nouvelles touristiques*, 05/1931, pp. 19–20.
- ¹³⁷ NLS, Steele-Maitland, *Diary of Visit to Egypt*, 22/01/1932.
- ¹³⁸ CADN, *Lettre du délégué-adjoint du Haut-Commissariat*, 05/05/1931.
- ¹³⁹ CADN, *La Direction, Avant-Propos*, 05/1931.
- ¹⁴⁰ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 44–45. Pedersen, ‘Eine heilige Aufgabe der Zivilisation’. Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 134–137.
- ¹⁴¹ CADN, al-Ghazzi, *al-Muqaddima [Preface]*.

- ¹⁴² Philip Khoury argued that the notables remained in an intermediary position between the (French) empire and (local) populations. Their position changed only after independence: Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 23.
- ¹⁴³ Al-Ghazzi also played a role in the reconstitution of the Chamber of Commerce in Aleppo. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 42, 126–127, 198–209.
- ¹⁴⁴ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 248. Dakhli, 'L'expertise en terrain colonial', p. 20. Burke III, 'French Native Policy'.
- ¹⁴⁵ Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, pp. 208, 222–229. Watenpaugh, 'Middle-Class Modernity'. Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 207–211. Charles S. Maier has argued that in many societies the old elites collaborated with the emerging intellectuals and middle classes, yet, without equally sharing power. Maier, 'Leviathan 2.0', pp. 99, 176–185.
- ¹⁴⁶ Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria*, p. 152.
- ¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the economic policies of the French High Commission did not seem to have systematically considered local perspectives: In 1933, Norman Burns stated that the High Commission in Beirut regularly exchanged with the economic department of the Lebanese Government, yet, he does not mention a Syrian equivalent. In Syria, the source of advice for the High Commission's economic policies, according to Burns, were the Chambers of Commerce: Burns, *The Tariff of Syria*, p. 18.
- ¹⁴⁸ Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 200–205. Maier, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History'.
- ¹⁴⁹ MECA, Bowman, *Diary, Vol. October 1926–May 1929*, 01/06/1928.
- ¹⁵⁰ MECA, Bowman, *Diary, Vol. October 1926–May 1929*, 04/06/1928.
- ¹⁵¹ FDC, Torossian, *Palmyre*.
- ¹⁵² For Palmyra, guidebook authors stated that the temples had been "destroyed and invaded" by the houses of the villagers, or that the site had been "occupied by an Arab village". JD PRIVATE COLLECTION, Chardon, *Méditerranée Orientale – Egypte*, p. 158. Thomas Cook & Son, Lumby and Garstang, *Cook's Traveller's Handbook to Palestine, Syria & Iraq, 1934*, p. 333. Similar phrases were used for ancient sites in Egypt: They had been supposedly "wantonly destroyed", or "plundered" by the local inhabitants: Thomas Cook & Son and Elston, *The Traveller's Handbook for Egypt and the Sûdân, 1929*, pp. 133, 186, 469. On this trope in an Egyptian context and how it justified colonial intervention: Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, pp. 40–41, 64.
- ¹⁵³ CADC, *Le Haut-Commissaire, 04/04/1933*. The "ruinous and tempting undertakings" Ponsot alluded to most likely included d'Andurain's adventurous wife who could not entirely clear herself from the reputation of having instigated the death of three male relatives, her husband among them. Moreover, rumours circulated that she was a spy: d'Andurain, *Marga d'Andurain, 1893–1948*, pp. 5, 10–11.
- ¹⁵⁴ CADC, *Le Haut-Commissaire, 04/04/1933*.
- ¹⁵⁵ Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, pp. 223–224.
- ¹⁵⁶ Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, p. 228.
- ¹⁵⁷ James Canton has analysed British travelogues from ca. 1882–2003 more systematically, interesting in this context is esp. his section on the accounts of female travellers: Canton, *From Cairo to Baghdad*, pp. 109–127.
- ¹⁵⁸ Wiedemann, 'Heroen der Wüste', pp. 64–65. Cf. also Canton, *From Cairo to Baghdad*, pp. 140–141. Cf. also for the French imaginaries, connected in particular to the North African Sahara: Roux, *Le Désert de sable*.
- ¹⁵⁹ In Rowan-Hamilton's case, it was her companion 'R', who revealed the implications of the Corinthian capitals he identified: Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, p. 228.
- ¹⁶⁰ Wang, *Tourism and Modernity*, pp. 19–20.

- ¹⁶¹ Rowan-Hamilton, *Both Sides of the Jordan*, p. 238.
- ¹⁶² AUB, *Arrêté No. 1622, 04/12/1929*.
- ¹⁶³ AUB, *Décret No. 2122, 15/02/1934*. AUB, *Décret No. 2156, 26/02/1934*.
- ¹⁶⁴ AUB, *Arrêté No. 1479, 14/10/1929*.
- ¹⁶⁵ AUB, *Arrêté No. 1637, 12/12/1929*.
- ¹⁶⁶ AUB, *Arrêté No. 2302, 26/07/1930*. AUB, *Décret législatif No. 54, 30/07/1934*. AUB, *Loi no. 97, 11/01/1939*.
- ¹⁶⁷ ANL, Ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République Française, *Rapport à la Société des Nations, 1927*, pp. 230–231.
- ¹⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 28–33.
- ¹⁶⁹ BNF GALLICA, *L'Intransigeant, 03/06/1933*.
- ¹⁷⁰ A garrison was stationed here: Monmarché, *Syrie – Palestine – Iraq – Transjordanie*, p. 326.
- ¹⁷¹ Bosworth, 'Tadmur'.
- ¹⁷² Burke III and Yaghoubian, 'Middle Eastern Societies', p. 8.

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