Chapter 3: Ritual Tempo in Al-Jalil

a. From Beirut to Al-Jalil

Upon arriving at the Beirut International Airport in 2007 for what would be the longest stretch of my field research, I picked up my bags and headed straight to *Jisr al-Maṭar*[1] (Airport Bridge), where I took one of the many vans circulating between Beirut and Baalbek. *Jisr al-Maṭar* was a crossroads in Beirut that reflected the larger Lebanese territorial junctions. Located right next to Shatila Palestinian refugee camp, this transportation landing took advantage of a local crossway to divide the territory among those going to the south and southeast of the county. There were precise van locations for those wishing to go to any city. If van routes could not accommodate a passenger's desired destination, at least one form of transport could carry the passenger to the next local junction, where a vehicle to the final destination could be found. *Jisr al-Maṭar* was among the largest of the Lebanese road hubs. Another one, also in Beirut, was *Dawra*, which took passengers from Beirut to Mount Lebanon (including Dbayeh) and to the north and northeast of the country. Around such places, street commerce always flourished. Cigarettes, coffee, fast food, and little trinkets were the most common objects offered, along with van rides.

The first main intersection on the road was Chtaura, a busy crossroads between Lebanon and Syria. Although it was relatively far from the border, the frantic movement of people, things, and money reminded visitors that this was a type of border town. Besides its transit of those coming from Damascus

1 Throughout this book, localities and names known outside of the Near East will be transliterated as they are commonly written, while unknown places and names will be transliterated according to the transliteration system provided in the annex (full transliteration for written sources accompanied by the original in Arabic, and phonetic transliteration for vernacular Palestinian and Lebanese terms).

to Beirut, Chtaura also served as a complex internal border. It was a main crossroads between Sunni, Shi'a, and Christian majority areas and different political domains. From my van, I witnessed through the window a diversity of people. Frequently on the route from Beirut to Baalbek, there would be a van change in Chtaura, because drivers operated within their own territories, which reflected their confessional and/or political belonging and the tendency of different territories to be associated with one or the other of these, despite some diversity. Everyone passed through Chtaura, though.

From inside the crowded van, I admired the landscape of the Beqaa, a fertile valley located in the east of Lebanon, between Mount Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, the latter marking the eastern border with Syria. On that particular trip, the same van went all the way from *Jisr al-Matar* to Baalbek. Not long after Chtaura, we passed through Zahlé, known for its wine and *'araq*.[2] Zahlé was the demographic center of the valley and was inhabited by a large majority of Christians, especially Maronites and Armenians.

As we moved further into the countryside, still on the outskirts of Zahlé, Sunni political and religious symbols started to emerge, such as posters of Hariri, mosques, and people doing their *ṣalawāt* (the 5 daily prayers in Islam, plural for *ṣalāh*, or *ṣalāt*, prayer) wherever was convenient. Further along, the mosque-riddled landscape persisted, while the focus of the posters on the walls, particularly evocative of politics and religion, changed. We were now in Shi'a majority territory close to the large town of Baalbek, one of the most important strongholds of Hezbollah. This area was also rich in posters and other symbolic elements heavily inspired by religion and politics, but the Shi'a triad, "Allah – Muhammad – Ali," together with martyrs and leaders of Hezbollah, Amal, and smaller allies became more prominent. As we approached Baalbek, I was struck by one monument in particular. At the center of a public square stood, as a war trophy, an actual war tank on a tall concrete pillar surrounded by Hezbollah paraphernalia. The posters and flags suggested a relationship between the victory leading to the tank's capture, and the will and power of God. Those without linguistic and cultural proficiency may not notice this seemingly subtle transition in social landscape. My own Arabic was poor then and improved as I lived in the region, but it was already sufficient to communicate the basics and to allow me to read the signs. Moreover, I already had enough understanding of the Middle East and Islam to recognize the symbols, leaders, and messages. However subtle the change, there was no mid-

2 Levantine traditional anise flavored alcoholic drink.

dle ground. There was nothing in-between Sunni and Shi'i Islam, or between Christianity and Islam, or so one was supposed to think by looking at the symbolic arrangements. As I would learn later, nuances and shades between these orthodoxies did exist, but they could hardly ever be presented as such. The territories themselves, which seemed to be completely homogenous to the foreign onlooker, were in fact far more heterogeneous. Nevertheless, the somewhat diverse political and religious practices and everyday engagement with life did not efface the blunt polarization according to which so much of daily life was organized, and which individuals and groups felt compelled to follow.

At some point a young man sat beside me in the van and asked me where I was going with all of my luggage. I told him I was going to Al-Jalil refugee camp. He wanted to know what I intended to do there. I told him a friend was waiting for me, and I was also going to live in the camp for a while, both due to my research and to volunteer with a local association called *Markaz li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān* (Center for Human Rights).[3] He asked who was my friend, and I explained he was someone from Shatila who now lived in Al-Jalil and worked at the *Markaz*. I also provided his name and a brief description and told him I did not know exactly where to exit the van, as my instructions were to arrive close to Baalbek and then ask the driver to drop me off at the *mukhayyam* (camp). "He will know which camp, there is just one there," my Shatila friend had assured me prior to my arrival in Lebanon. However, as we approached Baalbek, I asked the van driver about the *mukhayyam*, and he asked, "which camp?" "The Palestinian camp," I answered. He laughed, "the Palestinian one, eh? What do you want there?"

The dialogue that followed, in my broken Arabic and the driver's broken English, lasted for quite some time, at least in my mind. Others in the van started interceding and making comments. They all assumed I was one more foreign tourist, like the many backpackers that visit Baalbek for its stunning and internationally known Roman ruins. I rejected any notion that I wanted to stay in the city instead of the camp. It was not that the driver did not know the location of Al-Jalil camp. Rather, he could not understand why a foreigner like me with all his luggage, and who probably didn't seem very tough, would want to go to the Palestinian refugee camp instead of his beautiful city. There were a few mocking comments about me and about the Palestinians before

3 I chose to change the name of the institution here, although keeping it related to its objectives, to avoid exposing individuals who might prefer anonymity.

the young man I was sitting next to finally confessed to me in a low voice, in English, that he was from Al-Jalil. Thus, the first thing I learned even before arriving at the camp, was that along with cooperation (as noted in the previous chapter), there was also tension between the camp and its surroundings.

We made our way from one end of the country to another aboard that van, across the mountains and across many different Lebanese social microcosms, but the whole trip only lasted about two hours. After all, despite the immense social diversity and deep divisions, Lebanon is a very small country. Probably within a mile from the main entrance to Baalbek, the young man addressed the driver in a loud, assertive but polite voice: *Nazilna bil-mukhayyam* (drop us off in the camp). Finally, at the entrance of Al-Jalil refugee camp, while I was searching for my money and before I could protest, he had already paid for us both and carried down the biggest of my bags. The young man asked me to wait near a Palestinian *ḥājiz* (checkpoint), where men with their Kalashnikovs and military gear stood seemingly entertained by my presence, while he entered to summon my friend. After about five minutes, the two men arrived together, signaling to inform whoever needed to know that I was finally home.

b. The Camp

According to UNRWA, today there are 8,806 Palestine refugees registered in the total area of 42,300 square meters of Al-Jalil (UNRWA n.d.). Interconnected concrete buildings formed a wall separating the camp from the outskirts of Baalbek. Larger buildings that once served as French barracks still stood at the center of such walls, buried underneath additional stories built by the residents to accommodate the ever-growing camp population. This configuration left just enough space for an asphalted street to cut across the wall and the center of the camp. The main street was shaped as a square, with an appendix opening to the outside world. It was slightly wider than one 1970s Mercedes 230[4] at its narrowest, and a little wider than two such cars at its widest. Narrow alleys connected the margins of the camp to its center in inconsistent fashion, enclosing men and women who chatted at the doorsteps

4 The most popular car in Lebanon at its time, the Mercedes 230 and others of its generation were still beloved and very popular in the country during my fieldwork, making up much of the taxi fleet.

of their houses and young men gathered to smoke *argile*. However, such numbers and boundaries can be deceiving. During my stay in Al-Jalil, many locals told me that about sixty percent of all Al-Jalil's populace (*Aḥl Al-Jalil*) live today in Scandinavia or Germany, and I myself met some as they flocked to the camp during summer to reconnect with their families and friends. In 2014, I also engaged in fieldwork in Aarhus, Denmark, where a large number of these refugees from al-Jalil lived. For this reason, Al-Jalil was known in other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon as the "Denmark Camp." However, as I learned during this fieldtrip, the majority of these refugees, along with Syrians, Somalis, Iraqis, and Kurds from across the Middle East, were also segregated from the rest of the country, even if the walls encircling them in Denmark were not made of concrete.

There were no trees or other plants in Al-Jalil, only concrete. In terms of infrastructure, the camp was in itself a small city, for it had: stores for food, house cleaning and hygiene products, medicine, gas, and the necessities of daily life; political offices (*maktab al-siyasiyya*, plural, *makātib al-siyasiyya*); NGO and charitable organization centers (*markaz*, plural *marākaz*; or *jam'aiyya*, plural, *jam'ayāt*); a mosque; an UNRWA school; the UNRWA administrative office; and its own taxi drivers – some of which operated illegally but were tolerated by Baalbek authorities, provided they kept to their own territory – linking the camp to the outside word. Public gathering spaces almost always faced the main street. Among the stores, there were at least two pharmacies, four or five food markets, two manakish[5] bakeries, a falafel sandwich shop, a *qahwe* (coffee shop), a second *qahwe* that also offered *argile*,[6] an internet games room with six computers, a room with a pool table and a football table, four or more barbershops, a trendy CD store, and a general store where one could buy anything from frying pans to blankets. Besides these shops, a cooking gas store, a garage shop, an internet café, another barbershop, and a cell phone shop all stood facing the road to Baalbek.

Al-Jalil boasted twelve political parties or "movements" (*ḥarakāt al-siyāsiyya;* singlular *ḥaraka al-siyāsiyya*[7]) at the time, most of which had their

5 Near Eastern (mostly Lebanese) traditional pastry

6 This shop was opened after my arrival in Al-Jalil by two refugee brothers from Nahr El-Bared who found shelter in Al-Jalil after the destruction of their camp in 2007 by the Lebanese Army. Their shop closed before I left due to community pressure claiming that the store was promoting bad behavior among the youth.

7 Or *tanẓimāt* (organizations; singular, *tanẓim*) as they were also called

own offices there. Among these groups, the most important were Fatah, Fatah al-Intifada, PFLP, Hamas,[8] and Islamic Jihad (not in any particular order of importance). Moreover, the UNRWA's administrative office was only one among the many other offices of charitable organizations, cultural centers, and NGOs, such as the *Markaz li-Ḥuqūq al-Insān* (henceforth, just *Markaz*), *Al-Najda Al-Ijtim'aiyya*, *Beit Aṭfāl Al-Ṣumūd*, and Caritas. It is important to note that other groups were also active in Al-Jalil, even if they did not have offices of their own. These groups tended to consist mostly of children, and they could either be fairly independent, as in the case of one *dabke* group and a musical band, or associated with an association or socio-political movement, as in the case of another *dabke* group, the boy scouts, and a football team.

While the shops provided services for the community and economic sustenance for their owners, the political offices, the centers, and other associations and NGOs performed, above all, a social function. Being active in such organizations entailed a certain status, as did owning a pharmacy, a barbershop, or an *argile* store. Barbershops and the *argile* shop were very important gathering places for the youth, for example. Thus, owning such an establishment generally led to an accumulation of social capital, along with economic benefits.[9] Status cannot be understood in terms of a hierarchical form of social organization, as generally people were respected above all for their contribution to the community.

As previously indicated, the main entrance to the camp was guarded by a checkpoint. This checkpoint was built next to one of Fatah's offices located to the right of the camp's entrance. To the left of this checkpoint was the *zāwya* (corner), a spot clear of buildings, regularly used as a gathering place for speeches, demonstrations, strikes, celebrations, and other public collective expressions. The UNRWA office was located just behind this *zāwya*, and thus always loomed large when event speakers were photographed and filmed by local organizations. In this way, the UNRWA office was a symbolic connection to the world at large, and particularly to world powers. While UNRWA was thus often attacked for its incompetence, self-serving goals, and/or institutional arrogance (for thinking it knew what was best for refugees before

8 Hamas' office was inaugurated during my fieldwork.

9 Although the *argile* shop was morally ambiguous from the broadest perspective in the camp, it was quite popular with a significant part of the youth. It was among this youth that the owners of the shop gained social capital.

consulting them), speeches addressing the USA or Israel would also often be held in front of the UNRWA headquarters.

c. Ritual Tempo

Posters and flags marked the camps, even more so than in their surroundings. Among many others, the variety of posters included the following images, all against a black background: portraits of martyrs with prayers; pictures of Shaykh Ahmad Yassin along with Qur'anic verses; Arafat's portrait; a particular political symbol made of crossed Kalashnikovs, a grenade, and the pre-1948 map of Palestine; another symbol containing the pre-1948 map of Palestine, the Dome of the Rock, Kalashnikovs and the dictum "God is the Greatest" in Arabic. Each of the abovementioned stores and institutions had such posters on their walls. While the most overtly political or religious of these places would display their own symbols or those they supported, others would simply hang on their walls whatever was available. Whenever a poster was affixed, such as, for example, one of a dear Palestinian martyr who had given his or her life to *al-Qaḍiyya al-Falasṭyniyya* (the Palestinian Cause), few would dare take it down, since, in this case, a martyr was deserving of God's blessings, whatever "the cause" may mean to one or another resident. People strongly felt they had a social responsibility which extended beyond the individual, that they shared a common history and predicament, and that they needed to keep together to change their situation. This, in turn, put emphasis, but also stress, on social norms, collective action, and processes of identity construction. The national "we" in Al-Jalil was more important than in most other places I was aware of, which also meant that disputes about "us" tended to be more severe.[10] Furthermore, inasmuch as "we" is always multiple and contextual, their refugee condition, or that which brought them together to this camp to live shared predicaments and to experience similar events, occupied much of their hearts and minds, and was firmly tied, as it were, to nationhood.

In this way, daily social interaction in Al-Jalil was marked by ubiquitous symbols of Palestinianness, such as the Palestinian flag, the images of the fighter and the martyr, the key, the map of pre-1948 Palestine, and others. While the Palestinian flag and the map evoked the continuity of the nation

10 I was never part of this collectively, although I was mostly seen as an aggregate, sometimes an ally, and very often with suspicion, as I develop in *Chapters 1 and 7*.

in Palestine and in exile, the fighter, the martyr, and the key evoked the process by which the community engaged in searching for the utopian union. Referents were mobilized and took shape inside the offices, public gathering places, social organizations, and creative minds of individuals, and were reproduced and dispersed throughout the community via group networks and public performances constitutive of what I call the *ritual tempo* of the community.

Al-Jalil camp had a very defined and frequent set of public practices and discourses, ranging from simple day-to-day social interactions to a vernacular repertoire and a calendar of events. It had a certain rhythm of life, a tempo, that mobilized referents, dispositions, affects, and sensitivities that, in turn, socialized and disciplined members of the community into a set of values, practices and behaviors, providing frameworks for understanding and engaging the world, greatly influencing the organization of memory, history, and geopolitics, and demarcating the boundaries of the community vis-à-vis others.

I understand my own concept of ritual tempo as building upon what Rosemary Sayigh called "the tempo of daily life" in *Too Many Enemies*:

With the expansion of PRM [Palestinian Resistance Movement] programs, the tempo of daily life in the camps changed, becoming charged with commemorations and celebrations: international days such as 1 May and 8 March. All these were occasions for speeches by Resistance leaders, displays of handicrafts, performances of plays, songs, and dances. Such events became part of and helped people to absorb, the continual attacks and losses. 'We mourn and marry on the same day' is the way one young PRM cadre expressed this new popular culture of resistance. (Sayigh 1994: 104)

Like Sayigh, I am interested in public performances such as commemorations and celebrations (*iḥtifalāt*), rallies and demonstrations (*masirāt*; *muẓāharāt*), strikes (*iḍrabāt*) and other collective public performances as means for expressing social belonging. My development of the concept is therefore geared towards a more explicit understanding of such practices as part of a ritualization process. This, in turn, helps to account for disciplinary and socialization practices entailed in this ritualization process, and their connection with social organization and interaction between different groups inside Al-Jalil. To begin this account, I will describe some of the most overt celebratory expressions of Palestinian identity in Al-Jalil.

d. Yawm al-Nakba

The day before the 2007 local commemoration of *Yawm al-Nakba* (*Nakba* Day) was slated to take place, locals instructed me to bring along my photo camera. On the day of the event, the first image I saw as I stepped out of the *Markaz* (where I was volunteering as an English teacher for children and staff), was a child wearing a cap with a Brazilian flag holding a plastic Palestinian flag. As he spotted me, he posed for a picture, as most children in the camp would. *Ṣawurny! Ṣawurny*! ("Take my picture! Take my picture!"), he insisted. Children participated in all such public events in Al-Jalil just as much as adults . Not only were their numbers soaring, making their presence a reflection of local demographics, but they were also usually enthusiastic about the prospect of a "party," especially if they could somehow play a role in it. More importantly, however, adults saw the socialization of children in such events as central to the continuity of their efforts towards their national cause. It was part of their education, just as much as going to school and learning from their parents' examples.

A children's band dressed in blue shirts and white scarves beat their drums in a steady pace. They were some of Al-Jalil's boy scouts. Palestinian flags were everywhere: on walls, in the windows of houses, on the hoods of the few parked cars, engraved on the front pockets of the boy scouts' shirts, and brandished by the rallying crowd. Closely following the drummers' march, a single boy, who must have been 8 or 9 years old at most, ceremoniously waved a Palestinian flag taller than himself. Another boy was dressed in military clothes not easily identified with any particular faction. He was succeeded by a group of 8 or 9 children carrying together the biggest of the flags. They were dressed in black and white t-shirts displaying the pattern that became a famous Palestinian symbol by virtue of Yasser Arafat's scarf.[11] The t-shirts were plain with no writing on them, and the only clear sign of a political party was

11 Before Arafat (and until today for a minority of Palestinians) the different patterns and colors in the traditional Palestinian and near Eastern scarves (*kufyāt*) in general were sometimes a sign of one's *ḥamūla* (Palestinian traditional clannish organization based on extended family belonging – see (Atran: 1986). The symbol was thus re-appropriated by the PLO leader as a national signifier of peasanthood and thus attachment to the historic pre-1967 Palestinian borders. Although many Palestinians understand that Arafat's *kūfiyya* symbolism extends well beyond Fatah, the symbol is also still strongly attached to Fatah.

worn by a child wrapped in a big yellow Fatah flag, with Arafat's head and arms displayed on his back.

The rest of the crowd followed the largest flag carrying posters and other symbols like amulets and keys. The amulets had slogans emphasizing the connection of Jerusalem to Palestinianness, and the keys symbolized the "opening" of Jerusalem for Palestinians. Other posters contained phrases such as "No alternative to the Right of Return,"[12] "We reclaim our promised return to Nahr El-Barid – The Association of Social Support,"[13] "No to the *tawṭīn* [becoming a local citizen]. Yes, to The Return,"[14] "Sanction the Human and Social Rights to the Palestinian refugees. Support the truth about the Right of Return. The Association of Social Support,"[15] and "No to the negotiation. No to the abdication,"[16] among others. Plain black flags were also waved, signaling mourning for the martyrs and for the loss of land. In a very rare instance, one of the children even carried a Lebanese flag.[17] Also on display were balloons in the colors of the Palestinian flag with variations of the mottos above, like "yes to the return," "no to the *tawṭīn*," or simply "Palestine." Along with the political and nationalist slogans, people also voiced Islamic inspired lines – such as God's will (*irāda Allah*), God's retribution (through, for instance, *Allah al-Shakūr*, or God is the most grateful, which is one of God's names in Islam), God's grace (*'aṭā' Allah*) – all linked to the overall notion of a fate (*al-qadr*, or as is *maktūb*, meaning "it is written"), but also suggesting that this destiny is contingent upon one's actions. When such slogans are interwoven with national themes, as encountered in the context of *yawm al-Nakba* celebrations, the subjective is no longer an individual, but a collective, i.e., the Palestinians, or even a country/nation, Palestine. It is important to note that this identification of collective subjects and even land as bound to God's destiny has been common in Islamic theology from the outset and expressed in

12 لا تبديل الحق العودة

13 نلطلب بعودة الى نهر البارد. جمعية النجدة الاجتمعية

14 لا للتوطين. نعم للعودة.

15 اقرار الحقوق الإنسانية والاجتماعية لا لجئين. دعم حقيقة لحق العودة. جمعية النجدة الاجتماعية.

16 The negotiation and the abdication here is associated with the Oslo peace process initiated by Arafat that did not mention the Right of Return. The original in Arabic was: لا للتفاوض. لا للتنازيل

17 Instances when Lebanese symbols would be displayed in Al-Jalil were very rare, and this time it partially meant that Palestinians and Lebanese believed in the same ideal: Palestinians in Lebanon should not remain in Lebanon, but return to Palestine.

concepts such as *Dār al-Ḥarb/Dār al-Salām* (Land of War/Land of Peace),[18] *ahl al-bait* (the Prophet's bloodline), and others. Associations such as these were present in virtually all events I witnessed in Al-Jalil and widely expressed as part of local vernacular politics, as I describe throughout this chapter.

The socially engaged youth of the camp coordinated the children and participated in the event by recording the rally with their point-and-shoot cameras or cell phones. They would then show and exchange the footage among themselves, and post videos on the internet, making them available for Palestinian and non-Palestinians abroad. I was also given such tasks since I worked as a volunteer in the *Markaz*. At these events, a group of children always fought over the possession of a megaphone, which this time was managed by an adult woman in a short black *ḥijāb* (headscarf) and very colorful tight clothes. Some of the girls also wore headscarves, but most of the younger ones did not.

Throughout the parade, which was restricted to the main street of the camp, two girls – one wearing a headscarf, the other not – carried a paper containing song lyrics. They quietly rehearsed their song the entire time while the parade completed one full turn around the camp's main street, reaching once again the *zāwya,* the initial starting point. It was there that the two girls finally sang their song, which spoke about the beauty of Palestine and Palestinian suffering, invoked God's grace and pleaded for mercy. This was a very important moment for the girls, and they were visibly emotional, as were their relatives and some others around them. The event ended with one of the older boys delivering a speech about Palestine and the Palestinians, in tune with the song and the rest of the celebration. Another boy held the megaphone for the speaker, and a third one, the smallest of them all, stood in front of the crowd fixated on the older speaker in utter admiration. While the song was meant to be touching and moving – a moment of deep connection to Palestine and introspective mourning – the final speech was meant to mobilize the residents' dissatisfactions around the Palestinian cause. Subsequently, the crowd dispersed, and participants went about their own affairs, many with a reassured sense of belonging and motivation to carry on.

Yawm al-Nakba (*Nakba* Day) was but one among many other national/civic holydays celebrated in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. As with *Nakba* day, there was also Land Day, Jerusalem Day, Deir Yassin remembrance celebrations, and many others – not all of them holydays, but still part of the same national calendar. Most of these celebrated a specific chapter in the

18 Referring to the lands where to practice Islam is respectively unsafe and safe.

recent history of Palestine associated with the struggle culminating in the creation of Israel and the subsequent Palestinian refuge. Other commemorations also closely followed the Palestinian national calendar, as I will show in this chapter. Some were more specific to a political party, but still of national significance, such as the founding of the PLO, or the martyrdom of Shaikh Ahmad Yassin. These commemorations, being primarily national, political, ethnic or religious, usually took the form of remembrance rites important for their mnemonic, disciplinary, and motivational potential.

The date was May 15 and therefore *Yawm al-Nakba* for Palestinians and *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Independence Day) for most Israelis. The year was 2008, which added drama to the event as it marked 60 years since the initial date. Palestinian citizens of Israel can commemorate one or the other, or even both on certain occasions – since, at least for a minority, celebrating "the catastrophe" does not necessarily entail the desire to dismantle the Israeli state. For most Palestinians, and for all Palestinians living in Al-Jalil that I knew of, *Nakba* Day was a period of both mourning and rallying against the Israeli state.

In Al-Jalil, they mourned the loss of the land and with it the loss of tradition. During *Nakba* Day they reminisced more than usual about their relatives' houses, businesses, displacement, and quotidian routines. They recalled their villages, the neighbors, the animals and plants, and the fertility of the land. They also remembered the cities, with their streets, shops, neighborhoods, and places of reference such as the most important squares and mosques. Most of the participants had never been to Palestine, but they had been socialized into these memories. Of course, the oldest generation was generally the only one to have seen Palestine firsthand, but these memories were no less vibrant in the minds of younger generations. Sometimes, these secondhand memories could be even more inspiring, as the experienced reality was supplanted by sheer imagination and will. I rarely met a Palestinian in Al-Jalil who spoke negatively about the dryness of the land, the lack of jobs, exploitation by landlords, the food, the culture, or about anything that came from Palestine. Even on the rare occasions when criticism was voiced, it was offset by more pleasant memories of the great days in Palestine before the *Nakba*.

Sadly, few witnesses of the *Jīl al-Nakba* were still alive in 2008, but I was privileged enough to have had hours of interaction with some of these men and women. My own experience confirms Rosemary Sayigh's observation (2007) that men generally talk more about politics and women provide more vivid descriptions of daily life. It was not that men were less interested in ordinary events and women not interested in political matters. Women also

pulled their weight, for example, including children in performances such as the ones described above, especially since many of them were involved in managing children's educational activities. In Al-Jalil, however, without it necessarily being a general rule, there was a sense that politics was a male domain while private matters pertained more to women's affairs. Depending on the topic of our conversation, they would recommend that I talk to this or that person of the opposite sex in order to obtain a more detailed picture of what I wished to learn. However, education in the camp was no small task, especially given the importance of Palestinianness to the younger generation, showing the path toward the cause, and demonstrating the perseverance and steadfastness needed to embody the community's values, and therefore to live with dignity. This was so much so, that on this particular event marking the 60th official anniversary of their loss, the parade consisted mainly of children under 14 years old. Among the most striking aspects to me was the conspicuous absence of older men. Apart from some personal memorials, the rally itself was staged to express a more cultural than political idiom, and the initiative for the parade came especially from informal voluntary associations and other informal groups of people, like those in the associations signing the posters described earlier. By contrast, there were many young men, most of whom helped to organize the children, although some simply followed the parade through the main street of the camp. The majority of adults present were women, and their authority seemed to supersede that of the young men. These women were not sent by men to perform the task; rather, they proudly sponsored the event themselves.

Younger and older men and women alike would always have plenty to say about Palestine. Typically, in events such as this one marking the anniversary of the *Nakba*, a powerful socialization and education system was put into motion. Much of this was consciously and strategically organized by party leaders, but much also came from NGO and local voluntary association representatives, and from lay people. Overall, those actively engaged in these events sincerely believed that they were taking necessary steps to achieve *'adl* (justice, also understood as God's justice)[19] in Palestine, which in turn was intrinsically tied to ideas of God's will and destiny. While not all Al-Jalil residents were particularly pious, the disciplinary practices involved in celebrations such as *Nakba* Day mobilized these religious referents as values

19 *'Adl* is also one of the names of God in Islam.

engendering and reinforcing what Michel Foucault defines as *regimes of truth*, which residents embodied beyond piety. According to Foucault,

> Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which it induces, and which extend it. A 'regime of truth'. This regime is not merely ideological or superstructural. (Foucault 1980: 133)

Foucault conceives regimes of truth as processes and mechanisms producing that which is considered to be true in a given context. As I understand it, celebrations such as *Yawm al-Nakba* are among the most important mechanisms producing the regimes of truth shared in Al-Jalil. In fact, I was not the only one to think so, as the local leaders and most active members of the community of refugees constantly pointed out the importance of such events, often surrounding them with an aura of sacrosanctity. In Al-Jalil, seeking the truth was often considered a duty. It is not that all these Palestinians necessarily equated their understanding of the *Nakba* with a Divine duty. Instead, for many of them, a sense of humanitarian justice was usually associated with how they understood their national past, their present predicament, and the need to resist the forces identified as having put past and present in motion. Thus, religion was intertwined with nationalism by way of a local sense of duty that was both infused and often even confused with the divine. Consequently, celebrations like *Nakba* Day, and others I will present in what follows, powerfully assembled and mobilized a wide range of actors, including women and men, children and adults, and both more and less religiously observant subjects, instilling a sense of belonging and motivating thought, feeling, and action.

e. The 2008 Pro-Gaza Demonstration

Events such as those associated with *Yawm al-Nakba* have been frequent in Palestinian history, and each one of them has the potential to be transformed into a memory of struggle, just as every fallen Palestinian has the potential to become a national martyr. As these events become part of the Palestinian collective memory, commemorating them is not simply a strategy deployed by Palestinian leaders to disseminate ideology and assemble partisans, but also a popular rite, efficacious in dealing with suffering and in attributing meaning to being Palestinian. The 2008 Israeli invasion of Gaza to combat Hamas

had from the start the potential to become a similar commemorative event, as were the first two Intifadas. Just as in 1976, when Palestinian refugee camps across Lebanon held *muẓāharāt* (demonstrations) against land expropriations in Galilee, in 2008 Al-Jalil inhabitants mounted a large *muẓāhara* (demonstration; singular) in support of Gazans, rather than commemorate a past event.

In 2008, Gaza was already controlled by Hamas, and the party was caught in a political deadlock with Fatah regarding the administration of the Occupied Territories. During the demonstration, however, the first image I saw was that of a little boy dressed in a military uniform, struggling to hoist a Fatah flag twice his size. With the flagpole on his belly, he pressed his lip in an expression of effort and proudly refused any help offered. Only the father had his hand gently placed over the boy's shoulders, pressing the little figure against his own body in support. Irrespective of the extent to which one *ḥaraka* supported or disapproved of the other, celebrations, rallies, festivities, demonstrations, and other events of this kind were also venues for public expression. In this case, besides the parties' leadership in organizing the event, people brought their own rally materials from home, their own ideas, feelings, and motivations. Men, women, and children attended this event, every one of them displaying a particular collection of nationalist and/or religious paraphernalia. Flags hung throughout the camp, as well as posters representing one or another political faction or simply displaying general popular support.

Along with local offices of other Palestinian parties in Al-Jalil, Fatah also sponsored the event. The rally was avowedly in support of the Gazan people rather than of Hamas. Perhaps part of Fatah's leadership was satisfied with the military weakening of Hamas, which it blamed for the disaster befalling Gaza and its people. Nevertheless, Fatah still had to maintain and enact support for a single and cohesive Palestine, an ideal it has helped foster since the late 1960s, or otherwise lose legitimacy. Moreover, Al-Jalil inhabitants were in general genuinely horrified by the events and demanded from their own leadership (and the world) some type of action.

A few residents, though, took the opportunity to show their support for Hamas or simply their discontent with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA). One sign read "No to the Judaization of Jerusalem. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command."[20] This was only one such sign among many others by this political group. Another example declared: "No to the *tawṭīn* (Lebanese naturalization). Yes, to the Right of Return to Palestine.

20 لا لتهويد القدس. الجبهة شعبية القائدة العامة.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command."[21] Although these signs did not directly criticize Fatah itself, their very presence and the way in which they were waved by PFLP-GC members and sympathizers were meant to express dissatisfaction and to mobilize residents around their position. The fact that the PFLP-GC was greatly present at the event was no coincidence, as the group was a splinter from the PFLP and founded by an ex-military officer of the Syrian army who believed the PFLP devoted too much time to Marxist philosophizing and not enough on armed struggle. The group was considered pro-Syrian at the time, and it therefore stressed solidarity with Gaza through its links with Hamas. Along with other groups, such as Fatah al-Intifada, the PFLP-GC was the internal response of early PLO groups to Arafat's negotiations with Israel. Arafat generally avoided the issue pertaining to the right of return for refugees in order to reach an agreement with Israel. As a result, many Palestinians in Lebanon tended to feel abandoned by the mainstream faction, no less in Al-Jalil, which, as I already noted, was physically and politically close to Syria.

The camp's proximity to Syria and the fact that its territory was located inside one of the main Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon (previously Amal's dominion) meant that general support for the Syrian government and political support for some pro-Syrian groups in Al-Jalil were thriving. However, since the War of the Camps in Lebanon (1984-1990), during which Al-Jalil local leaders brokered a deal with Amal and the Syrian government, a bond with Syria was also promoted by embodied dispositions, affects, and sensitivities transmitted no less through the type of practices I describe in this chapter. The young, who were the most exposed to this environment, tended to express these dispositions, affects, and sensibilities more frequently and overtly. For instance, the Syrian government, unlike the Lebanese government during its rule, allowed construction material inside the camp after taking over that region of Lebanon, a fact widely cited not only as a logical argument for Palestinian support of the Syrian government, but also as having forged an emotional bond. This support for Damascus, it is important to note, did not only follow the local brokered military deal cited in the previous chapter, but was already emerging in the camp prior to the war itself. Among young and older generations in the camp, Hezbollah was generally seen as having inherited the role of main resistance against Israel, and, because it was allied with

21 لا لتوطين. نعم لحق العودة إلى الفلسطيني. الجبهة شعبية القائدة العامة.

Syria at the time,[22] than so should be the Palestinians. Very rarely did I meet anyone in Al-Jalil who was deeply critical of Hezbollah. That said, not everyone in Al-Jalil was pro-Syria, and Fatah still enjoyed relatively strong support. The fact that political allegiance to Fatah, as exhibited by some of the residents, could still survive in Al-Jalil, did not necessarily preclude a concomitant thrill over what they perceived as Hezbollah and Damascus victories. As I discuss in more detail in *Chapter 7*, allegiances were a far more complex matter than just standing with one's preferred party or movement.

Back at the pro-Gaza demonstration, a boy scouts group vigorously beat the drums as it paraded through the camp's main street among the growing crowd. One of the local sheikhs handed out small plastic Palestinian flags to everyone, while organizing and motivating the scouts. Women actively chanted nationalist and religious slogans, such as *Allahu Akbar* ("God is the Greatest") and *Al-Falastyn Lina* ("Palestine is ours"). At times the march would come to a standstill, as they waited for an old truck loaded with sound equipment that lagged behind. Atop the truck, men switched places at the microphone. Their speeches stressed the political situation, referring often to Islam for terms and encouragement, thereby aligning the times of the Prophet with the modern Palestinian predicament. The truck was a moving stage, setting the pace of the march.

Following the truck, older men, recognized as leaders and ceremoniously dressed in suits, marched with their arms hooked together forming a human-chain, as the remaining participants paraded behind. Everyone gave way to the mighty chain. At a corner midway through the camp, the convoy stopped before the human chain, and another elegantly dressed man shook the hands of all the elders before joining the line. At one point, when the procession reached the *zāwya* (corner) in front of the camp, one of the Palestinian elders wrapped his arm around the latecomer's arm. The latter man's fist was closed, and he seemed to slightly struggle with his part of the ritual, since he was not one of the locals and therefore not completely accustomed to such a ritual. After all, he was not Palestinian but Lebanese, a representative of Hezbollah, which was officially supporting the event. At the *zāwya*, there were speeches as usual. Several of the local leaders spoke, as did the Hezbollah representative. Local Palestinian institutions were present with their cameras, just like me

22 That Hezbollah was not allied to Syria during the Lebanese Civil War, and in fact fought against Amal, only reinforced the support of most Al-Jalil residents to Asad's government, given that the two forces were allied now.

since I had been invited to photograph the event. Some had professional video cameras over their shoulders, and this time even a small group of Hezbollah's television network, Al-Manar, was filming and interviewing participants.

With Hezbollah's support, the event spread beyond the camp for the first and only time during my stay, as it reinforced solidarity and cooperation among Lebanese and Palestinian political factions, in part legitimized by Hezbollah's actions in the 2006 Lebanon War,[23] stated to have been in support of Gaza during the previous siege. The truck left the *zāwya*, took to the street, and roamed around the surroundings outside the camp. Night had already fallen, and lit candles were beautifully placed on the street at the entrance of the camp. Interrupting the traffic on the Beirut-Baalbek road, the candles evoked mourning, rather than the authority imposed by military checkpoints so common in Lebanon. With local Lebanese support, Palestinians stopped traffic, respectfully asking passers-by for a small financial contribution to Gaza. Almost all those who crossed the checkpoint contributed something, filling a few baskets with Lebanese money to be sent to Palestine. However useful the money was, the event was highly symbolic, marking solidarity between the camp residents and those outside.

Touched by the expression of humility and solidarity I had just witnessed, I made my way back to the camp and towards the truck, which had just returned. The crowd around the truck suddenly pushed to the side, while running in my direction with a burning Israeli flag. Many young men around me jumped in to express their anger by vandalizing the flag, while others preferred to avoid the scene. Flag desecration was not a common sight in Al-Jalil's demonstrations, which is why I was taken by surprise, but this was a time of even deeper crisis, and burning a flag was among the few things that some felt they could do to quench their anger and resentment against the massacre in Gaza. Among this flag-burning group, some would direct their anger at Israel, the USA and/or *al-ṣahayūniyya* (Zionism), and some would blend politics, religion and ethnicity, directing their war cries against *al-yahūd* (the Jews). Having never traveled beyond Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, most of those in the latter group had never interacted with a Jew, and therefore could not understand the difference between the terms Jew and Zionist. Besides mourning and promoting a sense of belonging and solidarity, the flag burning and war cries were a reminder of the power of these events as channels for expression

23 This war is known in Arabic as *Ḥarb Tammūz*, or "July War."

and the mobilization of people's affects and sensibilities in whichever form they take.

Similarities between this demonstration and the *Nakba* Day celebration reinforce the value and currency of certain themes and practices within the camp. Vernacular politics with strong Islamic undertones was coupled with a prevalence of nationalist motives in these ritualized practices, even when the participants belonged to secular groups inspired by Marxism or even founded by Christians, such as Fatah or the PFLP, which was still somewhat popular in Al-Jalil. Palestinian nationalism was steeped in Islam as a tradition and as an idiom of everyday life, rather than just mere theology. In this way, even Palestinian Christians from other mixed camps, such as Mar Elias, shared most of these national and quotidian expressions originally of Islamic inspiration, as I will elaborate in *Chapter 6*.

f. Yawm al-Arḍ

Along with local celebrations inside the Palestinian refugee camps across Lebanon, *Yawm al-Arḍ* (Land Day) was also celebrated in 2007 in a Lebanese convention center in Beirut. This was not a common occurrence, as usually Palestinian celebrations were restricted the refugee camps or smaller Palestinian-friendly spaces such as Ta-Marbuta, Café Yunis or Le Barometre[24] – all left leaning, alternative cafés, the first two located in Hamra, and the last next to the American University of Beirut (AUB), all within the secularized, non-sectarian and alternative intellectual center of Beirut. Residents of all camps joined this celebration, which drew even the largely wealthier Palestinian population residing outside the camps, the Lebanese population sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, and a handful of foreign activists and sympathizers. Therefore, unlike my presentation of the first two rites, I present this Land Day *iḥtifāl* (festivity, celebration) in part to discuss the ways in which and the extent to which such rites may assume meaning outside a camp such as Al-Jalil.

Land Day is the annual celebration of the violent events of March 30, 1976, when Palestinians in Galilee (then already part of Israel) and the Negev desert carried out strikes and political demonstrations against an Israeli government

24 Le Barometre's location was supposedly a PLO headquarters during the Lebanese Civil War.

decree that expropriated land with the intention of building new Jewish settlements. In parallel, as is frequently the case, protests were also held in the rest of the Palestinian Occupied Territories and in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. As a result, a violent clash erupted in Galilee between Palestinians and the Israeli security apparatus led by the IDF. Several Palestinians were shot dead, about one hundred were wounded, and many others imprisoned. Besides the political and human impact of the event in Israel and the Occupied Territories, in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon this became one more day to associate Palestinianness to suffering, to what they called the Palestinian Cause, and to ideals and practices of resistance.

Rather than a parade followed by political speeches, as I learned was common in Al-Jalil from other events of this kind such as the ones described above, the 2007 Beirut Land Day was an event partly organized by enthusiasts of grassroots art themes, for whom the Palestinian drama and common Arabness loomed large. The event was thus organized as a series of art performances meant to showcase and celebrate Palestinian folklore. To the Palestinians, and perhaps especially to the refugees among them, folklore was seen as evidence of the Palestinian rootedness to their land and of their timeless existence as a people before 1948. A mix of unique national foods, dialects, clothing, music, crafts, and others were put on display. Therefore, to most Palestinians present at this event, it was important not only to maintain their "culture" (*thaqafa*), but also to broadcast it to the world at large. In the process, to perform Palestinian culture was imbued with an aura of resistance, and thus, being Palestinian, which in turn meant to somehow also perform the culture off stage, was often understood and presented as a form of resistance. This perspective was at the root of the performers' motivation on that day, as I could observe and was told by some of the proud Al-Jalil residents, who had tirelessly rehearsed to give their best at that moment.

In the spirit of the commonly held belief above, the show was meant to exhibit the rich and, though assaulted, still unblemished Palestinian folklore. The first performer walked onto the stage in silence, displaying a tranquil countenance in front of the relatively large crowd formally sitting in the auditorium. There must have been more than a hundred and fifty people present. He was a flute soloist, but his instrument was special. He played what the Palestinians called a *shibbabe*, or a short duct flute made from reed and open on both sides originally used by shepherds to herd their flocks. That day, however, the performer was playing contemporary and meditative themes to a much more discerning audience. The instrument had already been adapted

along the years, being "folklorized" as time went by. As the master played, the public respectfully sat in silence. The audience seemed touched after the *shibbabe* recital. The flutist left the stage for the next part of the show. A young woman came next, bearing no instrument but her own voice. She was dressed in jeans, a fitted black shirt, and preferred to wear her *kufiyya* around her neck, letting her brown curly hair cover part of her face. Supplicating to God and the public, she sang of Palestinian suffering, moving slowly and closing her eyes on each high note, punctuating the drama of the performance. The crowd was very pleased, and many among the men commented on her beauty and on their own yearning for Palestine.

The third performance of the day utterly transformed the solemn *jaww* (social atmosphere) of the event. The lights suddenly turned much brighter and more colorful, as the stage was quickly taken by a group of boys dressed in dark jeans and *kufiyya* patterned white t-shirts, over which hung scarves with the Palestinian flag on one side and their *dabke* group logo on the other. They wore bandanas and necklaces featuring the pre-1948 Palestinian map to match, while a lone boy – not special in any way – carried *Handala*[25] on his chest. The music became louder, while drumbeats and stomping from the boys' feet on the wooden stage dominated the soundscape as they danced the Palestinian *dabke*. At this point, the public, already quite moved by the flute and vocal performances, seemed fully taken by the boys' energy. Like much of contemporary Palestinian *dabke*, their movements were references to their land. The dancers mimed the sowing and reaping of the country's soil, while other movements evoked the olive trees and birds of Palestine, at which point the audience eagerly reacted by clapping their hands and moving their bodies to the beat. The *dabke* then faded into the background, as two of the boys moved forward to center stage to sing a dialogue about the current lives of Palestinians in Palestine and in refuge. As one of the boys left, the other sang a final monologue and finished with a salutation. One of his hands still held the microphone, and the other was raised in divine contemplation, the palm invitingly opened and facing up. As the song stopped, the palm closed into a tight fist, remaining so for the duration of the crowd's thundering applause.

The next performer entered the stage wearing an elegant black robe with detailed golden embroidery. Covering the top of his head was a black and

25 A Palestinian character who always carries symbolic messages about the occupation, and is always represented as barefoot, and turning his back to the onlooker, suggesting that he is just one more in a crowd.

white scarf held in place by an *'agāl*[26] (a circle of white rope), as he carried a *mizmār al-iskotlandy*[27] (Scottish bagpipe). Palestinians took the bagpipe from Scottish soldiers stationed in Palestine during the times of the British Mandate, and Palestinian scout troops were the first to play them, at first for the same purpose as the Scotts. The instrument is thus evocative of Palestinian troops before 1948. However, the bagpipe has been repurposed over the decades and turned into part of the Palestinian cultural idiom. Within the Near East, Palestinians are the only ones who play the bagpipes, and therefore this instrument is especially representative of Palestinian uniqueness in relation to its neighbors. As a result, today, for example, a bagpipe performance is an essential part of Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. No wonder, then, that a bagpipe performer had a special place in the Beirut Land Day celebration, and the man in the black and golden robe did not disappoint the audience, skillfully playing his bagpipe against the background of a large Palestinian flag.

The audience, itself mostly composed of Palestinians young and old, had so far been entertained, but showed special interest when the next performers rushed onto the scene, bringing the *dabke* back with them. They were a mixed gender adult troupe and wore long, colorful Palestinian peasant clothes, evoking the deep relationship between Palestinians and their native land. Like the other performers, all of them wore headscarves, and the men carried small threads of rope in one hand, whirling them to excite the multitude and bridge the stage distance. According to some Al-Jalil residents present, "even some Lebanese" participated in that dance group, inspired by the Palestinian cause and the appeal of the Palestinian *dabke* itself. These members rehearsed in the troupe's headquarters in Burj al-Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp (located in Beirut). Playing well-known themes and dancing together, alternating between two lines and a circle, the group moved with contagious energy, inspiring some in the audience to dance in their seats and cheer loudly. When they finally left the stage, the audience remained highly enthusiastic, maintaining the same atmosphere for the next mixed gender adult *dabke* troupe to enter

26 This word has no-Arabic roots, hence the exceptional *g* – pronounced as in "garage" – in my transliteration.

27 Although many Palestinians refer to this instrument simply as *mizmār*, this term in Arabic means any single or double reed wind musical instrument, like the Levantine and Iraqi *mijwiz*.

the scene. In addition to the same thematic scarves, used this time as bandanas, these performers all wore military uniforms, and one man used yet another scarf, tied to his hips, as a belt. The music was loud, the beat strong, and their *dabke* gestures were bold and wide. The military style *dabke* drove the crowd to yet another level of excitement. People rose from their seats, clapping their hands and singing in unison. Some women ululated.

At this point, the last performer took the stage. He entered in silence, alone with his oud. The excited crowd once more sat down and became silent. His oud was aided by the emotional tone of his trembling voice pleading for the lost land in the name of its virtuous people. The audience was once more led to mourn and contemplate. As I understood then, the expressive fluctuation engendered by the structure of the event kept the public interested and emotionally tied to the performances. It would not be entirely accurate to think that the mobilization of symbols and referents by both event organizers and performers were all calculated to produce certain effects in the public. There was certainly intentionality, as the performances were conceived by the performers themselves, and the entire program was curated by the organizers. However, it would be too simplistic to say, for example, that the invocations of land, olive trees, birds, peasants, sowing and reaping, and others, were all drawn from the offices of political parties only to produce obedient subjects, or even to say that the whole event was produced, for example, to mobilize the audience towards an oneiric view of pre-*Nakba* Palestine, a sense of Palestinian cultural and political unity, the need to remain steadfast in the face of predicament, or the legitimacy of the use of military force against Israel. All of these could have emerged or been strengthened as embodied dispositions, affects, and sensitivities. They were not, however, simply commanded by a conscious and manipulative elite to be instilled into an unconscious and naïve crowd.

Upon exiting, relatives and friends were met in front of the convention center by the performers, still dressed in their outfits and most of whom were refugee camp residents. Within the community, they were respected both for their art and as national symbols of what all recognized in one way or another as the Palestinian Cause, regardless of political allegiances. The public left the convention center roused by the quality of the performances, but the effectiveness of the event as a disciplinary practice did not rely exclusively on its success, perceived by either audience or performers. The event's evocation of symbols such as the land, olive trees, birds, peasants, sowing and reaping, and so on, is not unique to Palestinian folklore. Such evocation is in accordance

with Liisa Malkki's (1992) general thesis regarding the importance of *botanical metaphors* highlighting rootedness to the earth to invoke and legitimize the connection between a people and their land, which is especially strong among refugees (as the uprooted). The work of disciplinary practices, such as the rites I described above, is thus far more complex, involving different levels of consciousness and intentionality, along with embodied drives and predispositions to not only think, but also perceive, feel, and act. To understand how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon relate to religion and social belonging, what is needed are less geopolitical considerations of the Palestinian question and more archeology of Palestinian knowledge and the social body.

Meanwhile, Land Day was also celebrated in the refugee camps. In al-Jalil, political groups were overtly among the sponsors, and the celebration looked similar to *Nakba* Day. Among the many signs carried or clothes worn by the children, only a few were symbols of party affiliation, and most were in fact sponsored by voluntary associations like *Jam'aiyya al-Najda al-Ijtim'aiyya* (The Association of Social Support) – a local voluntary association composed mainly, if not exclusively, of women engaged in social service and cultural activities in the camp. To call attention to the similarity of the messages between *Nakba* Day and Land Day celebrations in Al-Jalil, among the many posters by *Al-Najda* was one that read as follows: "No concession from our fixed positions; withdrawal of the occupation to June 4 of 1967 borders; an independent country with full sovereignty and Jerusalem as its capital; Return of the refugees to their homes according to Resolution 194. The Association of Social Support."[28] Religiosity, albeit never central to the events, was present in both Land Day celebrations. Nevertheless, in contrast to the festivities in the refugee camps, Beirut's Land Day celebration exhibited a more cultural idiom, while being no less political. Since celebrations were generally restricted to the camps' perimeter, festivities like this one, in which refugees could meet and get to know Palestinians from other camps[29] were rather infrequent and were especially popular among the youth. Moreover, the event showcased Palestinian

28 The original was: لا تنازل عن ثوابتنا. جلاء الاحتلال حتى حدو 4 حزيران 67 ودولة مستقلة كامالة السيادة وعاصمتها القدس صودة اللاجئن إلى ديارهم وفقا للقرار 194. جمعية النجدة الاجتمعية.

29 It is also interesting to note that when Palestinian refugees in Lebanon met other Palestinians, personal introductions usually followed the pattern described by Julie Peteet (1996). That is, subjects were interested in first learning which camp their interlocutors were from (if any), and then which village in Palestine.

culture and artistic talent not only to Palestinian refugees themselves, but to the general public in Beirut. This was a special occasion, and some spoke about it for days in Al-Jalil. No less importantly, participants enjoyed their enhanced personal statuses as well, and others in the camp considered taking part the following year. By way of this event, in a process we could call *folklorization*, a single broad Palestinian popular culture and its tie to the Palestinian nation and the claimed pre-1948 Palestinian borders was naturalized, internalized, showcased as representative of the nation, and life was made meaningful.

g. Mawlid al-Naby

One of my local interlocutors, originally from Shatila, laughingly recounted an incident that happened to him: "Once, Amira came to visit us in Shatila and found me in my shorts, sandals, and tank top. She was horrified and told me to go put some clothes on. I told her, relax, you are not in Al-Jalil." He constantly pointed out that Al-Jalil was morally conservative and pious when compared to "his" camp. Having lived in Al-Jalil for months, I tended to agree with his assessment, until one of the locals told me in English[30]: "Come, it is carnival!"[31] Surprised, I left my lodging in the camp and took to the streets to see with my own eyes. Yet, being Brazilian, my idea of carnival was markedly different from what I encountered, namely, *Mawlid al-Naby* (the Prophet's Birthday). The birth of the prophet was celebrated with the hope that God's justice would free Al-Jalil inhabitants from their supposedly temporary yet concretely protracted existence in the camp and place them in a hoped-for idyllic Palestine. The optimists would say that whatever the enemy destroyed, they would later rebuild.

A sea of flags flew over the camp's sky, once more evoking political and religious motifs. Some exhibited the traditional green of Islam, while others wore party colors. A few had both. Many were the political parties that sent

30 Although most of my fieldwork was conducted in Arabic, English was also present, especially when I was teaching the language at the *Markaz*, when I needed clarification on the meaning of words I did not know, and when locals wanted to speak English themselves. Very few in al-Jalil were able to have full conversations in English, but many were keen on trying the language even if just for a salutation or a word or two.

31 I occasionally heard the term in English, used to translate the Arabic word *iḥtifāl* (party, or celebration) for the many occasions on which Al-Jalil's community found to celebrate.

representatives to demonstrate support for the prophet's cause, amalgamating Islam and Palestine. Given that secularism in Al-Jalil did not necessarily preclude faith, even secularist, Marxist factions were represented. Thus, in Al-Jalil, as with the other more openly political and nationalist events above, The Prophet's Birthday was also celebrated amidst religious, political, and nationalist themes.

Ululating and shouting a blend of nationalist and religious slogans, women roused the crowd gathering in the main street of the camp. Participants chanted *la illaha ila Allah* ("There is no God but God"),[32] while circulating around the main streets of the camp, just as Muslims do when circling the Kaaba[33] (*ṭawāf*) during the Hajj or lesser pilgrimages to Mecca. The center of the camp was definitely not venerated as the Kaaba, but the ritual resemblance was evocative of religious symbolism empowering local performances, be they religious or not. The event was sponsored by the local mosque, and as always, children participated by circulating through the crowd and attempting to imitate the adults. This time, the women were in charge of organizing the children on behalf of the mosque representatives. As in the events described above, many children played specific roles, such as carrying flags, chanting certain slogans, or reciting the Quran. They learned much by imitating, and by being reprimanded when behaving out of place. The procedures and techniques of one public event were reminiscent of past ones. As always, most children were keen to participate, and so made their way among the others to find the best spots or simply to provoke their peers. From where they stood, the anniversary of the prophet was at the least a great opportunity to celebrate and eat delicious treats, but also, being virtuous or not, they could gain the admiration of the adults and of the other children.

Mawlid al-Naby was an explicitly religious celebration, whereas *Nakba* Day and the pro-Gaza demonstration had a predominantly political character, while Land Day in Beirut had a prevalently cultural tone. However, like all other celebrations, rallies, strikes,[34] or demonstrations, the characteristic

32 Phrase constitutive of the *shahāda*, as explained in the introduction.

33 The cube that is at the center of the *Masjid Al-Ḥarām* mosque in Mecca, venerated in Islam as the most sacred place in Earth. It is to the Kaaba that Muslims turn five times a day to pray.

34 Even though in practice most Al-Jalil camp residents could not go on strike (*iḍrāb*), because they had no jobs with bosses beyond the local internal economy of the camp and one or another service they would (sometimes illegally) provide in Baalbek, they would also mark strikes, whenever other Palestinians did, as demonstration.

blend of religious, political, and nationalistic (or ethnic) themes was also present during religious celebrations such as this one. Furthermore, such religious celebrations took a similar form to the other ones in Al-Jalil, consisting of a parade around the camp that tended to appeal to everyone and allow local organized groups to display their paraphernalia, followed by speeches generally delivered by adult men, as most women and children dissipated from the crowd. In addition, however, unlike the other events presented here, the Prophet's birthday was also celebrated within people's homes, over and above the public social gathering outside. Festive meals were cooked and much of the day was filled with prayers, many of which, public or private, were directed toward the Palestinian collective or the land of Palestine. The Prophet's birthday took on multiple facets: on the more personal level it constituted a time to celebrate Islam, bond with the family, meditate and pray, while on the community level it was also another opportunity to remember Palestine and the struggle.

h. Quotidian tempo

There were many other ritualized performances in Al-Jalil beyond the regular events, such as the ones described in the above sections. Ritualized celebration or mourning occurred sometimes as often as on a weekly basis, depending on the time of year and the political situation. Most political public performances were restricted to the innermost space of the camp and were only rarely taken to the camp's entrance or to the city streets. However, not all of these celebrations observed such restrictions, as the examples of Land Day at the Lebanese Convention Center and of the pro-Gaza rally in Al-Jalil illustrate. Performances geared to and manifested outside the camp, such as the pro-Gaza demonstration, had the approval of Hezbollah as a sign of mutual understanding and of Palestinian acceptance of their guest status in Lebanon. When such performances of Palestinianness reached an even larger audience, as was the case with Land Day celebrated in Beirut in 2007, they had to count not only on official permission, but also on local sympathy. Partially influenced by the sectarianism (*ṭā'ifiyya*) instilled by the so-called Lebanese confessional-democracy, Lebanese mobilization of sympathy towards Palestinians, in turn, was frequently bound to ethno-religious politics, beyond pure practical reason.

The day after the abovementioned celebrations of the Prophet's Birthday, the general mood in the camp had not completely changed. Some flags were

still up, as they had been before the event. Posters still covered the walls, as they had before. Military marches, odes to Palestine, and chanted prayers continued to radiate from political offices, local associations, shops, and the mobile phones of passers-by. The mosque continued its daily calls to prayer, and the sheikhs continued to invoke Palestine in their sermons. The same held true after the pro-Gaza demonstration, *Nakba* Day, Land Day, and any other given day. Day after day, refugees steadfastly performed Palestinianness in the quotidian through the ritualization of both sacred and mundane aspects of their lives. There were always celebrations ahead, for which one needed to prepare, but quotidian life was in itself often ritualized.

Children went to school, the *Markaz*, or other similar facilities, where they drew pictures that almost always featured Palestinian symbols. Birds, olive trees, rivers, the sun, and everything that represented happy settings were generally framed by Palestinian flags, a key element symbolizing the "re-opening of Jerusalem," the map (with political borders of historical Palestine before 1948), the Dome of the Rock, or other symbols of idealized Palestinianness. Children negotiated their future and present by way of the same symbols, conveying dreams, hope, and despair. They did not draw on or talk about these subjects only at school, but everywhere. Expressions of these themes, formalized into discourse and inscribed into the residents' bodies, were part of the quotidian, and their pervasiveness was only seldom noticed by the refugees as a ritualization of daily life. Since most Al-Jalil residents were in fact children, they tended to mobilize on a daily basis, several times a day; they embodied dispositions, sensibilities and affects like those mobilized during calendric celebrations. The same national themes were repeatedly expressed, discussed, reaffirmed, and contextually mobilized on a daily basis. The iteration of national and religious referents and symbols through disciplinary practices inscribed Palestinianness in the bodies of the residents, which in turn embedded dispositions, sensibilities and affects in the quotidian lives of refugees. Beyond calendric events, the very rhythm, or tempo, of daily life was thus marked by such disciplinary practices, as the invocation of certain discourses or the enactment of embodied practices made up much of the camp's own routine.

Even though not all camp life was ritualized, time itself was often the object of ritualization. More than 60 years of resistance against protracted refuge entailed a general rejection of the present as it was lived in the camp and a ritualized objectification and portrayal of this present as Lena Jayyusi (2007) called a *time-within-time* – which I presented in *Chapter 2* – bound, by

God's will or not, to vanish through the refugees' mythical or actual return to Palestine. Yet, the temporary condition of refugeeness was also simultaneously lived as perennial. Often, the residents' faith in what was identified – much through the refugees' own predicament – as the Palestinian cause was shaken, sometimes along with their religious piety. There was a general sense, even among the most secular residents that, if God existed, then their suffering would be mitigated, either here or in the afterlife; however, hope in the national cause and religious piety were intertwined in more complex ways than just through faith. Belief in God did not necessarily entail believing that they or their children would return to Palestine, but it gave hope. I never met anyone in Al-Jalil who would simply admit to not believing in God, but even to potential unbelievers, I understand that hope is beyond faith as much as it is beyond rational choice. Rallying around the cause was first and foremost an embodied and disciplined general framing for life that could indeed be challenged, as I show particularly in *Chapters 1* and *7*. However, as the very context through which much of the quotidian was framed, "the cause" was entrenched in much of peoples' lives, rather than simply being a matter of rational or conscious choice, or religious zeal. In sum, "belief" or "hope" in the cause were not necessarily tied to the actual conditions of possibility for its outcome. Moreover, as much as hope was also an important element mobilizing the residents' dispositions, affects, and sensibilities, the ritualized practices inscribing Palestinianness into the quotidian did not depend exclusively even on hope, as residents would still rally around whatever each one of them considered to be the Palestinian cause, even if they had no hope of achieving it.

Thus, the total context of ritualization in Al-Jalil, what I call the local *ritual tempo*, was an adaptive structure continuously readjusting people's feelings, thoughts, aspirations, desires, and actions. If "the cause" was polyphonic, as it meant different things to different people, being Palestinian in Al-Jalil could also take different forms and be in fact very diverse. However, Palestinianness still emerged much as an entailment of individual and group grappling with the kinds of forces I have so far presented, disseminated in the ritual tempo of the camp.