

Ritualization, as the interaction of the social body with a structured and structuring environment, specifically affords the opportunity for consent and resistance and negotiated appropriation on a variety of levels. (Bell 1992: 209)

*The Marxist thesis is that the activities of the secular market – where all values are supposed to be measured by the strictest cannon of rationality – judgments are in fact influenced by mystical non-rational criteria. A full generation latter, Mauss (in *The Gift*), developing his theory of gift exchange form an entirely differently viewpoint, reached an identical conclusion. Exchanges that appear to be grounded in secular, rational, utilitarian needs, turn out to be compulsory acts of a ritual kind in which the objects exchanged are vehicles of mystical power. (Leach in Hugh-Jones & Laidlaw 2000: 167-68)*

Chapter 2: Settling in Lebanon: An Oral Historical Account

a. Palestinian Time Framing

To Lena Jayyusi, contemporary memory articulates a “past condition,” “a bibliographical event,” and a “historical facticity,” but always from the point of view of “present interests,” “viewpoints,” and “subjective (even also subjunctive) modalities.” She also suggests that the same can be said about history (Jayyusi 2007: 107) – a point similar to that made by George Stocking in *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1982), and one that resonates with Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *fusion of horizons* (2005).

According to this perspective, iteration of the similar yet different – in a metonymical relation where the difference is located within the similarity – is a feature of all collective identity, “constituting, shaping, and apprehending collective fate and experience.” In other words, the (re)-iterability of personal experiences makes possible the constitution of collective experiences. However, for collective memory to exist, iterability must be accompanied by “the simultaneity of the iterable narrativized event, present *within* the narrative itself, and iterated endlessly in one narrative after another” (Jayyusi 2007: 111).

The collective experience thus formed adds a layer to an individual experience “which can enhance its sharpness, its associated sense of the tragic, and the potentiality for continued remembrance through its entry into a public register.” Thus, collective experience frames personal experience. The simultaneity of the experience, its iterability, and its concurrent onset implicates thus “the very identity of the bereaved,” and for Jayyusi, such general features are also found in Palestinian narratives about the Nakba (Jayyusi 2007: 111). For her, these collective memories create a “subjunctive mood” that “encompasses both past and present” (ibid: 119). Memory is then often recast into this subjunctive mood, which is in turn interwoven with relationships between “past

to present,” “memory to the contemporary,” and “both to the future,” resulting in “different inflections of the relationship of the past to the present and the future, and distinct inflections of the subjunctive mood itself within memory” (ibid: 107).

Thus, Palestinian memory does not create a fixed past or “timeless symbols attesting history,” which Jayyusi calls “time out of time,” as much as it indexes “the vicissitudes of time,” “the works of others,” and “the presence and agency of the historical subject,” which she calls “time within time,” defined as “the pocket or fold of time unfolded, opened up,” that “provides the dynamic and power of that agency. It offers not merely a vision of, but a project for, the future” (Jayyusi 2007: 130). In this way, Jayyusi emphasizes the intellectual process of conceptualizing memory through the iteration of narratives. What follows is influenced by Jayyusi’s argument, but I prefer to highlight the performative quality of iteration rather than the intellectual work she ascribes to memory. I suggest that the mechanism of ritualization I described in the introduction is similar to the process of cumulative iteration Jayyusi describes through her notion of *time-within-time*; however, alongside narratives, I bring into consideration practices and techniques that discipline not only the mind, but also the body, generating dispositions, sensibilities, and affects which in turn directly frame behaviors, expectations, desires, moral imperatives, and practices, in addition to people’s engagement with space and time.

Al-Nakba means “the Catastrophe” in Arabic. Palestinians employ the term to refer to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The term’s valences, however, extend beyond the historical event itself and may include the historical processes leading up to it and the ongoing Palestinian dispossession, which is seen as a consequence of the loss of their country. Especially for Palestinian refugees, the Nakba evokes the origin and reason for their refugeeness. Today, it is widely recognized that *al-Nakba* has become, at the individual, community, and national level, “both in Palestinian memory and history, the demarcation line between two qualitatively opposed periods” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007: 3). But to Ahmad Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod, strikingly little has been written about the period of Palestinian history (and memory) known as the Nakba. Editors and contributors to the pivotal edited collection *Nakba* all seem to acknowledge *al-Nakba* as a turning point in Palestinian memory, and thus in Palestinian discourses about history and identity. As the editors point out, “Although Palestinians had various forms of identity before 1948,” it generally included “a sense of themselves as Palestinians” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007: 4; see also Beshara Doumani 1992 and Rashid Khalidi 1998).

However, the Nakba represents both in academic Palestinian history and popular Palestinian memory the “beginning of contemporary Palestinian history (...) the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time. The Nakba is the point of reference for other events, past and future. (...) The Nakba has become a key event in the Palestinian calendar – the baseline for personal histories and the sorting of generations” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007: 5).

Due to the disciplinary practices (narrative and otherwise) involved in shaping memory, and the protraction of general Palestinian material and symbolic dispossession, the Nakba cannot be relegated to a remote past. Re-counting Nakba memories is pivotal for Palestinianness in that collective life “adjusted these memories to each other,” producing a “canonization” of “some stories and symbols” (Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007: 7), and – I will add – individual and social practices. For Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, there are three aspects of the relationship between Palestinian memory and time that make it singular: a) There is practical urgency in remembering and chronicling the *Nakba* (among other events and periods), because Palestinian memories of 1948 serve as a basis for political claims; b) there is a sense of an ongoing Nakba, since most Palestinians still experience its effects and that of similar processes; c) the *Nakba* is seen as a marker of a generational time frame that upholds social processes of transfer (of “stories,” “memories,” “foods,” “anger,” “burden,” “the great significance of the past,” and “the inheritance of the identity”) from one generation to another (ibid: 19).

Similarly, Rosemary Sayigh views *al-Nakba* as a constitutive element of Palestinianness, a site in memory that, citing Sa’di, she calls an *eternal present* (Sayigh 2007: 135). While history is epistemic and is concerned with a way of knowing the world, heritage is ontic, deals with a way of being in the world, and usually takes the form of ritual or myth. Heritage has no beginning or end, and it is open toward the future (Sayigh 2007: 137). Along with the more generalized approach to Palestinianness in her classic ethnographies on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Sayigh’s seminal work examines gendered differences in the ways Palestinians relate to themselves and their collective past. Adopting Valentine Daniel’s concept of heritage instead of history, she describes two different varieties of Palestinian narratives, one traditionally associated with men, and the other with women. She associates the Palestinian fable, or folk tale mode of narrative, *hikaya*, to the way women narrated events before the Nakba, and accounts of actual happenings, *qissa*, with men’s narratives. In the Palestinian refugee camp Shatila, most women, whose oral histories of the Nakba she collected, did not recount the Nakba as a

“fact in history, or as an internal conspiracy,” but rather as “experience crafted into the form of *hikaya*.” Nonetheless, the Nakba – she says – bridged much of the gap, as women also often engaged in *qissa* while describing events associated with it (Sayigh 2007: 153), especially after 1968 and the Six Days War. Moreover, she points to a generational difference in understanding and dealing with Palestinianness very much intensified by the Six Days War, which recast much of the feeling of dispossession into a need to maintain steadfastness (*sumud*) in the “revolution” (*thawra*). The different generations I could distinguish as a result of my own fieldwork were the *Jil al-Filasṭyn* (the Generation of Palestine), *Jil al-Nakba* (Generation of the Disaster), *Jil al-Thawra* (Generation of the Revolution, highlighted in Lebanon), and the *Jil al-Intifada* (Generation of the Intifada, which stands out in the Occupied Territories and spans the current generation). The main generations Sayigh points to when discerning modes of narrative are the *Jil al-Nakba* and the *Jil al-Thawra*. For her, it was only with the Generation of the Revolution that narratives of the Nakba took other forms “in recollections of camp conditions as experienced by a child, or of national commemoration days in school, or in declarations of Palestinian identity” (Sayigh 2007: 140). Furthermore, given that the generation of the revolution – very much inspired by Occidental leftist secular thought – was responsible for popularizing much of this frame, religion is only one more component embedded as much as others in such a temporal frame. Its importance is relative to every particular group and individual iteration.

Along with *al-Nakba*, Lila Abu-Lughod also recognizes that *al-ʿAwda*, meaning “the Return” in Arabic, especially for Palestinian refugees living outside the Occupied Territories,

...evokes nostalgia for the homeland they were forced to flee in 1948 and a reversal of the traumatic dispersion that sundered families, ruined livelihoods, and thrust Palestinians into humiliating refugee camps or individual adventures to rebuild lives armed with little more than birth certificates, keys to the homes they left behind, and the stigma of having somehow lost their country to the alien people. (Abu-Lughod 2007: 77)

Beyond collective utopia, Abu-Lughod recognizes through her own memories a personal experiential dimension to *al-ʿAwda*. Her father, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod – a well-known Palestinian political scientist, Middle East expert, and political activist – lived in the USA for many years following the events of 1948. Before leaving Palestine he even “skirmished with the Zionists,” but despite

having an American passport, he refused to go back to Palestine for many years fearing what he would see. At some point in his life, however, after having raised Lila Abu-Lughod in the USA, he made the decision to return to Jaffa, where he was born and raised. As she recollects, he faced his return as his personal *ʿAwda*, which was publicly recognized and celebrated at his funeral by Palestinian personalities such as Mahmoud Darwish and Edward Said (Abu-Lughod 2007). As this personal experience of *ʿAwda* suggests, I hold that, for Palestinian refugees, beyond nostalgia, *al-ʿAwda* is as much a marker of popular and historical time frames as is *al-Nakba*. Unlike *al-Nakba*, it is not a marker of memory, but a utopia which projects the romanticized and venerated past into the future and locates the present in-between such idealized times.

Although Sayigh does not discuss narratives about *al-ʿAwda* in particular, she assumes that a cyclical concept of history is fundamental to expressions such as “Only God moves history, not men; it is He who will eventually restore the Palestinians to Palestine” (Sayigh 2007: 143). In other words, she seems to acknowledge that *al-ʿAwda* entails the return to that which was lost in the past. Alongside gender (her focus) and the generational gap (which is not as much developed in her work), Sayigh emphasizes the necessity to identify diversity within the Palestinian experience and identity. As she states, “internal differences need to be written into the unwritten collective story” (Sayigh 2007: 136), and:

Disparities of power or status between classes, sects and ethnicities, city and rural residents, the educated and the uneducated, men and woman: all are glossed over in nationalisms that lead to, and follow, the establishment of a state. Historians of the Palestinian people need to reflect on whether the predominant model of ‘history’ – with its focus on ‘facts’ and the ‘public domain’ – is inclusive enough to match the full reality of a unique difficult struggle. (Sayigh 2007: 136)

In the following pages, I will attempt just such a recognition of differences.

b. Settling in Al-Jalil

I had already been living there for several months when I first interviewed Abu 'Abbas,¹ a first generation (*Jil al-Nakba*) resident of Al-Jalil refugee camp, or *Wavel*, according to UNRWA's official naming. The story I heard from him reflected the nuances of his personal trajectory, while also being strikingly similar in many respects to the stories of other first-generation refugees in Al-Jalil. I will recount Abu 'Abbas's narrative in considerable detail to give the reader a sense of one personal story. Furthermore, I will juxtapose this account with notes from interviews with other first-generation Al-Jalil occupants to illustrate how 'Abbas's biography reflects a broader collective narrative of displacement and resettlement in Lebanon, as recounted by numerous others in the camp.

At times, Abu-'Abbas would trace his origins back to the main port city of Haifa in what he still called Palestine. Whenever he wanted to be more precise, though, he would mention that he came from *Shifa 'Amar*, a village located just some 20 miles away from today's Israeli port city. Most Al-Jalil inhabitants originated from the village of *Lubia* in the Galilee, north of Palestine. Galilee in Arabic is Al-Jalil, hence the popular name of the camp among the local residents, despite UNRWA's official naming. As Abu 'Abbas recalled, during the Nakba, Palestinians fled to different places. In general, those from the South tended to flee to the Gaza Strip or Egypt, those from the East tended to flee to the West Bank of Jordan, and those from the center regions tended to go to Jordan and Syria, along with some others fleeing from the North. Their trajectories were not always as straightforward as that. According to 'Abbas, in Shifa 'Ammar different people were pushed to different places. The village was inhabited by Christians, Druze, and Sunni Muslims. He was a Sunni Muslim, as were at least by denomination all the other refugees in Al-Jalil. Almost all the Christians and Muslims from Shifa 'Ammar were displaced from Palestine. Most of them fled to the West Bank or to Lebanon and became refugees. Christians and Muslims from Shifa 'Amar who settled in Lebanon tended to join neighbors or kin in one of the sites where the refugees were gathering. But this general trend was by no means without exception. Groups of Shifa

1 To protect the people whose lives I discuss in this book, all names are fictitious, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

'Amar residents also fled to different places in Lebanon.² Some of his former village neighbors took alternative routes and wound up in other places in the Middle East. Moreover, a few in his village “made agreements with the Zionists,” and remained in place or went elsewhere (especially Haifa) in what became Israel. Local Druze often chose this path, as they tended to follow their political leaders who struck deals with the newly established Israeli government and armed forces. As a result, today the Druze community of Israel enjoys many privileges, such as, for example, what Abu 'Abbas and others saw as the (financial) “opportunity” to serve in the Israeli army.

From Shifa 'Amar, Abu 'Abbas fled to *Bint Jbail* in South Lebanon, along with relatives and neighbors. He recalled that “there was nothing; no hospital, nothing.” He suffered from the cold, as they had no clothes or blankets to protect them from the hardships of winter. He remained there for two months, deciding to move with a group of Palestinian refugees stationed in Bint Jbail to *'Anjar* in the Beq'a Valley, some fifty kilometers away from Beirut on the Beirut-Damascus road and close to the *Masn'a* crossing. 'Abbas then moved to *'Anjar* because of a rumor touting vacant houses in the area. Once there, he indeed discovered a few empty houses, but also that the village harbored a large group of Armenian refugees. During our conversation, he did not remember if the Armenians were there by chance or if they had been settled there by Lebanese authorities. However, his narrative matched the known fact that thousands of Armenians coming from Turkey had been resettled to *'Anjar* between the 1920s and 1930s (Sfeir 2008; Verdeil et al. 2007).

Around September of 1948, clashes erupted in *'Anjar* between the Armenian and the Palestinian refugee groups. Abu 'Abbas could not remember the reasons precisely, but they were related to the occupation of the empty houses. The clashes took significant proportions. As a result, the roads around *'Anjar* were closed and the Lebanese authorities drove the Palestinian refugees away from the Armenian settlement. The Palestinian refugees then went to where they thought would be best. Once more, neighbors and kin tended to stay together. He and his group decided to go to another Palestinian settlement in the Beq'a valley, known by the name of *Ghoro*. UNRWA did not exist at

2 Abu 'Abbas remembered that although Palestinian exiles were frequent even before the post-Nakba international recognition of the Israeli state, the only organized resistance to Israeli occupation was mounted by the *Jeysh al-Inqath* (Salvation Army) – an “army” of Arabs from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq that started its operations in the “*el-Filastyn el-musta'amarat*” (Occupied Palestine).

that time, and the only existent *marākaz al-khudma al-ijtimā'iyya* (social work centers) or *jam'ayāt* (associations, such as the Red Cross) during the first year after the Nakba was the one headed by the Grand-Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Muhammad Amin Al-Husseini.³

Abu 'Abbas only gradually remembered the presence of the International Red Cross in the area. This lapse perhaps was due both to the fact that the Red Cross did not work with all the refugee groups coming into Lebanon, and that Hajj Amin's charisma (despite his polemic character) occupied a central position in Abu 'Abbas's memory. However, from 1948 to 1950 the International Red Cross was in fact the main organization that assisted Palestinian refugees, providing them with tents, clothes, water containers, and food (as detailed in AJIAL 2001).

Meanwhile, Palestinian refugees who had also been in *Anjar* prior to the group's expulsion joined other refugees in a similar situation and settled in a French barracks close to the main entrance of Baalbek. The barracks was named after a general who once commanded the battalion stationed in the Beq'a Valley, General *Wavel*. In 1948, these barracks remained in French hands and officially "unused" by the Lebanese government (in Abu-'Abbas' words, "the soldiers were using the barracks just to relax"), and neither Abu 'Abbas nor others I spoke with remembered the arrangement through which French authorities first took in a few Palestinian refugees.

Many of those who left *Anjar* with Abu 'Abbas went on to join other Palestinian refugees in the Wavel barracks, and in 1952 UNRWA transformed the site into a Palestinian refugee camp. At the time of our interview, Abu 'Abbas did not mention any other reasons for the transformation of the French barracks into a refugee camp for Palestinians, but the deal was struck as part of the armistice negotiated in 1949 between Lebanon and Israel, in which Lebanon agreed to refrain from settling Palestinians close to the Israeli border (Sfeir 2008). Although Wavel is still the official name of the camp for both UNRWA and Lebanese authorities, its dwellers, most of them from Galilee, named the camp Al-Jalil. As I found out from Abu-'Abbas, unlike most other Palestinian refugee camps set up in Lebanon, Al-Jalil was not a "rich man's land" donated or sold to UNRWA. Prior to the establishment of the camp, the land had been government property. According to him, UNRWA was able to

3 Al-Husseini was then also the leader of the Palestinian resistance, known at the time as the "National Movement."

buy such land from “these rich people” or to rent it from the Lebanese government due to “money coming from all over the world” to support the UN General Assembly Resolution 194 from 1948. The resolution called for a “right of return” for Palestine refugees (*al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAwda*, in Arabic) and it was the document that gave rise to the symbolic notion of *Al-ʿAwda*, as previously discussed in relation to the Palestinian framing of time.

Since Ghoro had no schools and was close to Al-Jalil refugee camp, its young refugees attended the newly built UNRWA school in Al-Jalil. The physical proximity of the camps and the shared experience of nationhood, dispossession, and displacement brought a number of Ghoro refugees closer to the community from Al-Jalil. Abu ʿAbbas’s stay in Ghoro only lasted for a brief period. The site was soon reclaimed by the Lebanese army, in part due to pressures from the Christian right-wing party *Katāʿeb al-Lubnāniyya*.⁴ He left Ghoro and resettled in Rashidieh, another site originally created by the French authorities to receive Armenian refugees.

Rashidieh today is the southernmost Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. It is located five kilometers south of the Lebanese city of Tyre and only some fifteen kilometers away from the Israeli border. According to what I learned from other Palestinian refugees, the “new camp” was added to the original Rashidieh site in 1963. It had been established explicitly to receive families arriving from Ghoro and from El-Buss Palestinian refugee camps. Abu ʿAbbas did not remain in Rashidieh for too long either. After a few months, the Red Cross transferred him to Al-Jalil refugee camp where he met other former Ghoro inhabitants as well as other Palestinian refugees from various Palestinian villages who had previously been gathered in different sites around Lebanon.

Abu ʿAbbas’s entire journey lasted several years, until he finally settled in Al-Jalil in 1964. When I interviewed him in 2008, he was living in the same apartment building he had occupied since his arrival from Rashidieh, and that had once served the French soldiers. Among his most enduring memories from the early days in the camp was a *ḥajiz* (checkpoint) that the Lebanese erected at the entrance of the camp to limit entry to only the refugees themselves and those allowed by the Lebanese government and UNRWA. Proudly, Abu ʿAbbas recounted how, in 1968, The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) finally took over the checkpoint. Many problems emerged in the early days from the assemblage of diverse groups and individuals making up what

4 Henceforth, *Katāʿeb*, the Lebanese Phalanges Party, or simply the Phalangists.

became the Al-Jalil refugee community, until finally the deepest divides were at least partially bridged. Even though all of the camp's population was Sunni Muslim, there was a wide economic and cultural gap between what Abu 'Abbas called "those who used *bantalón*" (pants) and "those who used *jallābiyya*" (traditional Arabic one-piece long garment), referring to those who came from the cities and those who came from the countryside, respectively. As a third category, there were nomads – the *bedawī* (beduins) – some of whom tended to circulate throughout the Near East and happened to be settled in Palestine in 1948. Drawing on Abu 'Abbas' testimony, one can argue that Palestinianness had both subjunctive and particular dimensions from the start, and much of the shared Palestinian subjunctive – at least in the refugee camps in Lebanon – took shape through the socialization brought about by the PLO, which consisted not only of discourses, but also of disciplinary practices, including national rituals such as celebrations, rallies, education, festivities, and others. This point is also widely acknowledged in literature about the PLO's Lebanon years.

Many other first-generation Al-Jalil inhabitants mentioned having lived in Ghoro until the 1960s, then joining the group that went to Rashidieh, and finally Al-Jalil. One such person recalled that up to 15 people would initially share same lodging. He also remembered that relations with the Lebanese around him were generally "good" when he settled in Al-Jalil – there were those who were "not nice" and those who were "nice," "depending on the case" – although relations with the Lebanese government were already very problematic.

'Abdallah, yet another elder, this time a resident of Shatila Palestinian refugee camp, also used to live in Ghoro, but instead of Rashidieh, he went to Shatila in search for job opportunities. Because Shatila was located on the southern outskirts of Beirut, demand for cheap seasonal work was always high. He too went to school in Al-Jalil camp, where, at the time of my interview, he still had friends despite having left the area many decades before. Managing to escape with most of his family the 1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacre, which was led by the *Katā'ib* in cooperation with the Israeli army following the departure of the PLO from Lebanon, 'Abdallah moved to Mar Elias, another Palestinian refugee camp located in the southwestern area of Beirut. One of the main reasons leading him to Mar Elias was to join relatives already living there. At the time, he was officially affiliated with *al-Jabha al-Sha'abiyya li-tahrīr Falastyn* (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [or simply, PFLP]). UNRWA had originally created Mar Elias to accommodate Christian

Palestinian refugees, among whom the abovementioned Marxist group found many supporters. Thus, the PFLP was strong in this camp. According to 'Abdallah, at the time of the Lebanese Civil War, due to the relative ability of Christian Palestinians to emigrate to Europe, America, Canada or Australia, and because many Christian Palestinians assumed Lebanese citizenship, Mar Elias gradually lost its Christian population and replaced it with a new Sunni component that came from destroyed Muslim-majority Palestinian refugee camps, such as Tel Al-Z'atar, Karantina, and Jisr El-Basha. Between 2006 and 2010, there were still a few Christian families living in Mar Elias, although the camp's overwhelming majority was Muslim. The PFLP continued to enjoy large support in the camp, a fact 'Abdallah attributed to both Palestinian political negotiations and the large number of Christian *shuhada* (martyrs) buried in Mar Elias' soil.⁵ Due to the turmoil in Shatila, one of 'Abdallah's sons lived his entire childhood in Mar Elias, only to return to Shatila when the camp was rebuilt. 'Abdallah's son also considered himself a communist and took pride in following the same political path as his father. As he and I became good friends, I visited his home in Shatila many times during my fieldwork. Che Guevara posters hung on the walls of his and his brother's room. The figure of the revolutionary prompted discussions about my own background in Latin America, which brought us closer.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to PLO defeat and the evacuation of the Palestinian resistance movement from Lebanon to Tunisia, leaving behind militiamen in the refugee camps and a profoundly altered national culture, riddled with standardized PLO symbols and institutions. Although one of the conditions of PLO withdrawal was the guaranteed security of Palestinian refugees in the camps, given the power vacuum left behind by the organization, Lebanese militias proceeded to attack the inadequately protected camps. Above all, the famous "War of the Camps" pitted the main Palestinian factions against the Shi'i social movement/political party AMAL and small Palestinian guerillas, who saw in the conflict an opportunity to reinforce their position *vis-à-vis* the dominant cadres of the PLO. Some camps were particularly targeted for their geographical position or strategic value. The Baalbek area was then dominated by AMAL, which at the time was allied

5 In an interview to me in 2007, Dr. Anis Sayigh – a well-known historian, himself a Christian Palestinian refugee and very active in Lebanon despite his old age – attributed the arrangement to a possible compromise between the different religious groups.

with Syria against the PLO, and Al-Jalil's proximity to Syria ensured some support to Palestinian factions allied with Syria, such as *al-Sa'iqa*. According to an Al-Jalil elder, AMAL had little interest in engaging in direct war with Al-Jalil residents, if it could have their allegiance instead. Because of the camp's proximity to Syria, residents had developed close ties with their Syrian neighbors, whose main client in Lebanon at the time was AMAL. Therefore, due both to the camp's political composition and its relative isolation from other camps, the PLO in Al-Jalil was compelled to strike a deal with Syria.

As I was told by Hamza, another Al-Jalil elder, in 1983 Syria already had control over northern Lebanon and the Beqa' Valley (where Baalbek is located), which allowed the Asad regime to influence local Palestinian politics more directly. In April of that year, Fatah units stationed in the Beqa' revolted against 'Arafat's central leadership, establishing the Palestine National Salvation Front (PNSF) in Damascus. Also in 1983, another split in Fatah commanded by Abu Musa gave birth to the Fatah al-Intifada and its socialist ideology. Syria then supported the attacks of Palestinian groups such as the PNSF, al-Sa'eqa, and Fatah Al-Intifada against the Nahr Al-Bared and Beddawi camps in northern Lebanon, forcing 'Arafat's expulsion from his last stronghold in Tripoli. Only later, mainly between 1985 and 1987, did AMAL lead the War of the Camps against 'Arafat's PLO. However, there was no fight between AMAL and the PLO in their camp because the camp was not a strategic post, given its small size and its relative isolation from other camps in Lebanon. Other Al-Jalil elders, however, contested Hamza's account of the events, recounting that conflict was averted when PLO loyalists at the time gave up their weapons to AMAL and its proxies in exchange for safeguarding Al-Jalil's peace. At the time of my fieldwork, one of Fatah al-Intifada's most important strongholds in Lebanon's camps was still based in Al-Jalil. It is partially Al-Jalil's location in such a Shi'i stronghold that has allowed it to develop its unique character, explaining, for instance, the relatively strong partisanship of *ḥarakat* (social movements) such as Fatah al-Intifada and the PFLP-General Command.

Al-Jalil's political trajectory was an outlier among Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon at the time, and such historical developments are among what make it a unique place today. During my fieldwork, decades after these events, Al-Jalil youth were being socialized in an environment in which the majority of the camp supported Hizbollah and Syria, which was not common in other neighboring camps. This socialization hinged upon a series of embodied dispositions, affects, and sensibilities in great part generated by ritualization practices I introduce in *Chapter 3*. In what follows, we shall see

that history took a different route in Dbayeh, a camp located on a hill overlooking the road linking Beirut to Tripoli near Kaslik and deep in Christian territory.

c. Settling in Dbayeh

"I can understand why people don't know about Dbayeh, because in Dbayeh they are Christians," responded Dr. Anis Sayigh when I mentioned my difficulties in finding someone who had the community's trust and could thus vouch for me and my work in the camp. Although Dr. Sayigh was not a camp inhabitant, I contacted him due to his vast knowledge about Dbayeh and Palestinians in Lebanon at large, and his close connections with Dbayeh residents. I chose here to use his real name because he is a public figure known for his scholarship and political activism, and because he preferred it this way. As with the above section on Al-Jalil, in which I followed closely individual memory threads, the following succinct oral history traces closely the narratives of a few individuals, including those of Dr. Sayigh.

Like Dr. Sayigh himself, most Dbayeh refugees originated from a village on the northwestern Palestinian border with Lebanon called *Al-Bassa*. During my fieldwork, I was told repeatedly that, both because of its proximity to the Lebanese border and because of its high Christian component, Al-Bassa had close connections with Lebanon. In Dr. Sayigh's words, "Al-Bassa was the most Lebanese town in Palestine (...) good and bad traits." "They were so open to man and woman relations, love affairs, etc." This openness, he stated, was mainly among the Christians themselves, and there were almost no inter-religious marriages. Al-Bassa was split by one street, effectively segregating most Muslims and Christians from each other. According to Dr. Sayigh, however, like many places in the Middle East, the village was not sectarian, since he understood "sectarianism" as a political attitude rather than religious or communitarian. In other words, the fact that different religious congregations would choose to live among themselves would sometimes cause tensions, but these at no time manifested in the political arena, and in Palestine – he claimed – Muslims and Christians did not fight for political hegemony as they did in Lebanon.

According to Dr. Sayigh, "at the beginning there were very few of us who became Lebanese, but then there were more. From their questions you would know. Such as: what is your religion?" Thus, "becoming Lebanese" for him was a question of cultural attitude rather than simply taking up citizenship, and

“becoming Lebanese” could entail embodying a disposition toward sectarianism. “Christians in Palestine tended to be more educated⁶ and had more money,” he told me. The majority of the Christian population was living in or around the biggest cities and the most important centers of trade and industry. Furthermore, a high percentage of them also worked in liberal professions such as law and medicine. Most of these educated Palestinians went to study in Lebanon. The alternative was going to Damascus to study, but since Lebanon was an important center for Christians, the Christian Palestinian community had firmer ties with Lebanon than with Syria, and the tendency after 1948 was to go to Lebanon. Still, according to him, even those who did not study in Lebanon would have probably engaged in some form of trade with Lebanese merchants or would travel there to sell and buy goods on their own. Finally, there were those who, despite having none of these ties, would still frequently choose Lebanon as a holiday destination. However, Dr. Sayigh also added that a significant number of Christians living in northern Palestine were peasants cultivating land for local or absentee landlords. The *fellahyn* (peasants) were excluded from these ties with Lebanon as they were not interested in education, did not engage in trade, and could not afford to travel for vacation. Dr. Sayigh’s remarks notwithstanding, if one takes into consideration that many of Palestine’s landlords were absentee landowners, that many of them lived in Beirut, and that during the late Ottoman Empire many parts of northern Palestine were under the jurisdiction of the Sanjak of Beirut (Khalidi 1997), even the Christian *fellahyn* can be thought of as having a distant historical connection with Lebanon.

As Dr. Sayigh pointed out, these economic and education ties, and the general cultural affinity of Christianity, motivated Christians fleeing Palestine after 1948 to set out for Lebanon. Most of them came from Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberias, Jerusalem, or from the northern countryside of Galilee. Regardless of their cities of origin, since at the beginning “they thought, they would return to Palestine,” wealthy ones, who had no need for tents and rations, did not register with UNRWA. In addition, the Lebanese government had its own plan to deal with the refugees. Initially, President Camille Chamoun offered citizenship to any Palestinian Christian who came to Lebanon. The Lebanese president was “very sectarian,” and the plan was to increase the number of Christians in the country in order to maintain the *status quo* in which Christians (mainly Maronites) were the hegemonic political power in Lebanon. However,

6 He meant here strictly that Christians tended to have more access to education.

“it [Citizenship] was just for the Christians,” added Dr. Sayigh. In practice, Christian refugees knew about this plan since priests often informed them in church after mass. In fact, most Palestinian Christians did not even come into Lebanon as refugees, and the wealthy and connected ones could also obtain citizenship in Western countries, such as the United States, Canada, or in Europe.

Thus, an important consequence of the 1948 war was the vanishing of a large number of Palestinian Christians from official numbers and history, since, having taken up other citizenships, they started to figure in books, journalist pieces, and official data as something other than Palestinian. Disappointed, Dr. Sayigh pointed out that, after the Nakba, more and more Christian Palestinians were cast to the shadows, so much so that few people today know that, prior to 1948, the Palestinian Christian community was thriving in number and in economic, political, religious, and social matters. He also lamented that as early as the 1930s, part of the Christian Palestinian community was already aligned with the Zionists, and between 1936 and 1939 the national movement killed many of them and expelled others from Palestine. “I have to be very careful when I talk about that,” he added, “perhaps 1000 people. I don’t want to say that the Christians sold their souls to the Zionists.” After Hajj Amin Al-Huseini went to live in Germany following British persecution, many of these exiled Christians went back to Palestine.

Incidentally, it is important to acknowledge evidence for the existence of certain sectarian tensions, despite Dr. Sayigh’s best efforts to deny the fact. Throughout my fieldwork, the denial of even a hint of sectarianism among Palestinians was a common narrative among activists and political figures, whose attitude toward the subject reflected much of the ideals propagated by the PLO and other social and political movements, especially during the *ayam al-thawra* (“days of the revolution,” as the Palestinians in Lebanon tended to call the period when the PLO was headquartered in Lebanon). Given Dr. Sayigh’s extensive understanding of the topic, it would be clearly wrong to interpret this denial as stemming from lack of knowledge. Given his reputation as a scholar and as a human being, it would be also wrong to suppose he and so many other Palestinians were simply lying. Rather, I understand this recourse to denying the existence of that which is undesirable in their eyes (and in my eyes, as well), as a dispositive or technique of collective cultivation akin to those Hirschkind and Mahmood describe elsewhere about self-cultivation and the cultivation of religious values (Hirschkind 2011; 2006; 2001; Mahmood 2005).

According to Dbayeh's elders, however, not every Christian Palestinian in the camp took Lebanese citizenship. The most important reasons for this were the following: a) many believed they would soon return to Palestine; b) others simply refused to take Lebanese citizenship based on the notion that they would be "selling out" their Palestinianness; c) a few ideologists and politically conscious individuals had already realized and convinced others that, by accepting citizenship, they would be surrendering a key asset. For, the refugee status was a prerequisite for a future return to Palestine and for any claims to compensation for lost property; d) finally, among those Palestinian Christians who sought Lebanese citizenship, some discovered they were ineligible, as obtaining the necessary documentation in practice required the payment of a relatively small sum to the Lebanese government. Although I did not learn exactly why this payment was necessary, I was told that in a few cases it prevented poorer Palestinians from becoming Lebanese citizens, either for simply not having the sum, or for not knowing how to proceed with the process. As a result, many of those who ended up in the camps were peasants or the least financially and socially privileged.⁷ For Dr. Sayigh, "those who bought [citizenship] did it so they could travel. There were no passports then. It was more for the passports than for the citizenship."

Dr. Anis Sayigh's father was among the group who, according to Chamoun's rules, was entitled to Lebanese citizenship. When we talked, he highlighted that his father was from the Golan Heights, but his family had often relocated within the Levant, between what are now Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria⁸ (Sayigh 2015). In 1948, his father became a refugee just like others of non-Palestinian origin who happened to be living in Palestine at that time. Once Dr. Sayigh's father reached Lebanon, he built a Protestant church in Dbayeh – the North Church, which at the time of my research was in the hands of the Lebanese – even though he did not live as a refugee in the camp. With the help of a *wasta* (middleman; fixer), Dr. Sayigh's father was guaranteed Lebanese citizenship for his whole family without having to pay a fee to Chamoun.

The fact that most Christian Palestinians were offered citizenship is well documented, but Dr. Sayigh brought to my attention a much less known de-

7 A few Christians who became Lebanese citizens did not do so through a payment to Chamoun.

8 His brother, the well-known Palestinian economist and activist Yusif Sayigh, lived for a few years also in Iraq (Sayigh 2015).

tail: Palestinian Shi'a were ostensibly also offered Lebanese citizenship immediately upon entering Lebanon during *al-Nakba*. The argument was a cultural one, based on the assumption that all Shi'a in that area were Lebanese. Very little is known about this even today, and it could not be verified. Yet, I have heard it also as a local popular story among the elderly in Dbayeh and among some other Christian Palestinian elders. It does reflect the complexity of how older generations of Palestinian Christians tended to perceive their arrival, establishment, and place in Lebanon in relation to other Palestinian religious groups. Nevertheless, from the point of view of Dbayeh's elderly in general, as opposed to that of Dr. Sayigh, Christian Palestinians were offered Lebanese citizenship not only as a political privilege serving as a tool for the Lebanese president at the time, but often also as a positive cultural acknowledgement of their common Christian identity. Be it just popular myth or historical fact, I could not learn much about Palestinians who were Shi'a before moving to Lebanon. A common counter-narrative is that there were no Shi'a in northern Palestine, as opposed to the south of Lebanon. Therefore, the Palestinian Shi'a case was often mobilized by Christian Palestinians to show that Christians were not the only ones who benefitted from Lebanese citizenship, but seldom mobilized by Sunni Palestinians so as to reinforce the privilege argument.

As Dr. Sayigh explained, it was commonly known that the very south of Lebanon comprised a Shi'a majority with a significant Christian population. The French and the British set the borders between southern Lebanon and northern Palestine after they had drawn the territories designated for their mandates in Lebanon and Palestine. Given that the areas constituted a social and political continuum rather than a divide, the Shi'a also inhabited northern Palestine, although Palestine is not commonly considered to have had a Shi'a population. If Dr. Sayigh and the other Dbayeh elders who confirmed his account are correct, then there was an unspoken and deeply cultural assumption after the creation of Israel that to be Shi'a in that part of the world was *ipso facto* to be Lebanese.⁹ These Palestinian Shi'a who supposedly assumed

9 This cultural assumption was created mainly as a result of the border dispute between the French and British mandates after World War I and confirmed by several documents of the time, as noted, for example, by Asher Kaufman: "*Henri Gouraud, the first High Commissioner of the French Mandate in Lebanon, directed the French officer in charge of negotiating the border in the Paulet-Newcombe Boundary Commission to try to include all the Shi'i villages within the borders of Lebanon, on the grounds that they were a natural part of it. Gouraud added that if he proved unable to include them all, it was preferable to leave several*

Lebanese citizenship were all from *Kura Saba'* (The Seven Villages – today located in northern Israel), and according to Dr. Sayigh's memory, they were actually between about 21 and 23 villages. When asked if he would agree with the assumption that all Shi'a in Palestine were in fact Lebanese, Dr. Sayigh told me that he thinks "they [the government] were right. They were Palestinians and Lebanese at the same time."

Abu George, a *Jil Al-Nakba* elder from Al-Bassa, told me how he arrived in Dbayeh. Following the 1948 events in Palestine, he initially settled in Rashidieh among other Palestinian refugees, Muslims and Christians, from cities and villages alike. Only after about three years did he move to *Dbayeh Al-Ta'het* (Lower Dbayeh). As far as he could recollect, his motivation to move to Dbayeh was to "avoid problems," but he preferred not to elaborate on this topic. Other *Jil Al-Nakba* Dbayeh residents, on other occasions, explained to me that a number of Christian Palestinians went from Rashidieh to Dbayeh at the invitation of a Lebanese priest. According to their accounts, the reasons behind the invitation were mainly to keep the Christian Palestinian community safe by placing it under Christian protection and bringing it closer to Christian territory. The monks of a monastery¹⁰ in Dbayeh then set up a tent camp in close proximity to their own land, and only in 1956 did UNRWA take the camp under its mandate with the help of the Pontifical Mission of Palestine, founded by the Vatican to help Catholic Palestinian refugees.

Initially, the land around Dbayeh was still largely uninhabited, but as Christian Lebanese businesspeople began developing the area for agricultural production, Palestinians could find seasonal work there. Although not part of the elders' accounts, according to the anthropologist Rosemary Sayigh (1994), it is widely known that a common practice among Lebanese Christians and Muslims in Beirut and elsewhere before 1967 was to hire Palestinians for work, as they were willing to accept half the pay the Shi'a expected.¹¹

To Abu George, what made the Lebanese invitation even more attractive were the following: Christian Palestinians, at least in Al-Bassa, had already demonstrated a preference for living among other Christians while still in Palestine; the appeal of living under the guidance of a priest; and finally, the

villages within the boundary of the British Mandate so that one or two Shi'i villages would not remain isolated on the other side of the border" (Kaufman 2006: 688).

10 This monastery is later referenced in this book as the Maronite Mar Yusif al-Buri Monastery.

11 The Shi'a were the poorest Lebanese social group at that time.

opportunity to earn a living rather than rely solely on charity and favor. Considering the circumstances, most heeded the call to relocate to Dbayeh, where they were joined by relatives and Christian Palestinians from other villages. Therefore, as was the case with many other refugees from varying places in Palestine, inhabitants of Al-Bassa tended to maintain their village and family bonds upon arriving in Lebanon, and the refugee camp structure tended to reflect village belonging. Only in this case, al-Bassa Christian and Muslim communities were severed by elements characterized not only, or mainly, by conscious choices, but also greatly by restrictions imposed by a historical situation engendered by the Lebanese context. In other words, as Christian Palestinians repeatedly informed me, they did not choose to be apart from their Muslim neighbors due to sectarian attitudes or theology. In moving to Lebanon, religion influenced these refugees' choices in far more complex ways. Regardless of their motivation, Abu George confirmed that "here [in Dbayeh], since the beginning, there were just Christians." A number of other Palestinian Christians settled in Jisr Al-Basha and Mar Elias, motivated by village and family belonging, which was of great importance both in Palestine and in Lebanon. UNRWA took up management of the gathering of Palestinians in Dbayeh only in 1956, renting the space for 99 years and converting it into a Christian Palestinian refugee camp along with Mar Elias, while Jisr Al-Basha also contained a Muslim component.

In 1975, after the beginning of the Lebanese Civil war, Dbayeh was attacked and largely evacuated in the same wave of violence that destroyed Tel Al-Zaatar and Karantina. After the end of the civil war, previous residents returned to the camp. This time, although the majority of them were Palestinian Christians, Lebanese and Palestinians from other religious backgrounds also settled there. Abu George remembered the harsh conditions in which they lived in the beginning. After abandoning the tents, they moved into wooden houses with roofs made of zinc where there were no private bathrooms – only what he called *mushtaraky* (shared). After many years and following the camp's first conflict, they finally moved to *Dbayeh Al-Fawq* (Upper Dbayeh), as they had been preparing the land for settlement. Because of this conflict, Abu George points out, not everybody in Dbayeh "is from 1948," or even Palestinian at all. In his words, it was *kullun ghurub* ("all strangers," as in Lebanese Christians) that came to live in the camp because it was "safe" during the Lebanese Civil War.

As Dbayeh's elderly told me, there were conflicts between Dbayeh's Palestinians and the Lebanese army as early as 1973. In addition, as soon as the

Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, the Palestinian refugee camps located in East Beirut (an area dominated by the Phalangists and other Christian militias) came under siege. Yasser Arafat, then chairman of the PLO, could not maintain his position in the northeastern suburbs of Beirut, and in the process of this struggle all camps in this region were either wiped out, or partially destroyed and occupied. Incidentally, Jihane Sfeir (2008) notes that the massacres of Tel Al-Z'atar and Karantina became infamous, but other less prominent camps fell in the same way, such as the Christian majority camp of Jisir El-Basha. The only camp that remained standing in the area was Dbayeh, and the reasons for that are due both to the camp's unique character and its early takeover by Phalangist militiamen.¹²

One of Dbayeh's elders insisted that the camp was actually the spearhead of an intelligence effort that also involved the camps of Jisir El-Basha, and Karantina, while others would agree that while the camp was never a fertile ground for PLO militiamen, it witnessed PLO intelligence efforts, given its advanced position in enemy territory. However, most agreed that as soon as the Lebanese Civil War erupted, there were simply no conditions for the PLO to maintain its headquarters north of Beirut, given that the area was a Phalangist stronghold. By 1976, after the destruction of Jisir El-Basha, Karantina and Tel Al-Z'atar, every line of communication was cut off, and Dbayeh inhabitants were left at the Phalangists' mercy. Although initially not as accusatory as others in the Christian camp, when talking about this issue Abu George simply mentioned that some Lebanese went to live in Dbayeh in 1976 "because of the *Katā'eb*."

Some in Dbayeh defended the idea that an early commitment existed between the camp's refugee community and the Christian community around, such that the fight for the Palestinian cause should not pit camp inhabitants against their Christian neighbors. While some Dbayeh elders attributed this attitude to an early religious identification with the local community (despite the heavy stigmatization of being Palestinian), others claimed that it would have been simply impossible to act differently in the highly Christian dominated area of Dbayeh without putting families' lives and livelihoods at risk. Conversely, Muslim inhabitants of other Palestinian refugee camps frequently

12 Some of whom would later form "*al-Quwwāt al-Lubnāniya*" (Lebanese Forces) and ally with Tel-Aviv in many of their operations inside Lebanon, as for example the "Sabra and Shatila Massacre" – operated by the Lebanese Christian group with Israeli logistic support.

told me that Dbayeh's residents were simply not "active in the Palestinian cause," while many in Dbayeh blamed the PLO instead for never having played an active role in the area because of its Christian inhabitants, thereby leaving them to be repeatedly attacked and subjugated.

As Abu George recounted, there were mainly four conflicts in Dbayeh that shaped the camp's life and relations with the Lebanese. The first occurred in 1973, the second in 1975, followed by the Israeli Invasion in 1982, and finally the conflict in 1990 after the Taif Agreement, which marked the official end of the civil war.

The 1973 conflict transpired between the Palestinians in Dbayeh and the Lebanese army, which mounted a checkpoint along the highway below the camp and demanded that everyone going up the hill to the camp show an identity card. All those identified as Palestinian would be stopped and interrogated. Many were able to avoid problems at first, though, because they could pass for Lebanese. On the identity cards of many who obtained Lebanese nationality, "Palestinian" was omitted, since they were born in Lebanon. Abu George concluded that for these Palestinians, "one could only know it if [they] speak about it, or from the accent. But many know how to emulate the Lebanese accent, as many were born here." A number of Palestinians stopped at the checkpoint were beaten, and many others jailed. The few remaining PLO militants in Dbayeh fought the Lebanese army with their Kalashnikovs. As a result, the relationship between Dbayeh residents and the surrounding Lebanese Christians deteriorated even further.

With the triggering of the Civil War by the infamous *'Ayn Al-Rumene* bus incident,¹³ Dbayeh came under siege from January 7 to January 14, 1976. In a Phalangist effort to control the camp, fighting erupted between the Phalange Party, *al-Aḥrār*¹⁴ (free men; from *ḥurriyya*, meaning freedom), and the Palestinians. There was little resistance because, as Abu George indicated, the camp was "small" and did not contain many "PLO people." In the aftermath of the siege, *Katā'eb* militias finally occupied the camp by force and installed about five offices at different points in the camp. As Abu George recalls, many *Katā'eb* militants occupied Palestinians' houses, seized their money, and coerced them to fill and carry sandbags to their front positions in East Beirut.

13 The Lebanese opened fire on a bus carrying a number of Palestinians in 'Ayn Al-Rumene neighborhood of Beirut. This event is widely considered to mark the formal beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.

14 As I understood it, anyone that did not represent a political party or army.

As he told me, nobody tried to stop the massacre because such violence was not prohibited. *Ma kan fy dawleh!* (“There was no state!”). The camp remained under Phalangist control until the end of the war or, as some in the camp claimed, until “today.”

Near the end of the war, the Lebanese army, led by General Michel Aoun, started its “War of Liberation,” which was intended to eradicate all Lebanese militias as a precondition for the transition from Aoun’s military rule to the establishment of a civil Lebanese government. One of the Army’s main battles was with the *Katā’eb*, which refused to cede its positions, accusing Aoun of abuse of power. To Dbayeh’s misfortune, the *Katā’eb* territory bordered that of Aoun precisely at the campsite, and because the *Katā’eb* still held offices in militarily strategic positions in Dbayeh, the Lebanese Army shelled Dbayeh in 1990. According to Abu George, this time, the Palestinian refugees were not the cause of the conflict, but rather caught in the crossfire. According to UNRWA data, in 1990 alone, following the army’s success, a quarter of Dbayeh was turned to rubble (UNRWA 2010). Abu George spoke to me about these matters in his own residence and in a low voice, as, according to him, many of the Lebanese who sought shelter from the war and who came with the *Katā’eb* were his next-door neighbors. After the conflict, Dbayeh was largely evacuated, and its Palestinian refugees took up residence in many different countries, notably, the United States and Canada. Following the rebuilding of the camp in the late 1990s and early 2000s, most of these refugees living abroad were forced to return, as they were commonly denied citizenship or residency in other countries. Many of them were already widowed elderly men.

Therefore, unlike the experience in other camps, for Dbayeh residents the most important and immediate effect of the PLO’s coming to Lebanon was a final severing of their connections with the rest of the Palestinian refugee camps. This resulted in a sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced openness to the context around them under pressure from *Katā’eb* militiamen and Lebanese Christian social institutions, such as NGO’s, schools, churches, and hospitals. Thus, by the time the PLO started building its institutions in Lebanon’s Palestinian refugee camps, and with them the dispositions, affects, and sensibilities that would later motivate camp inhabitants to fight united under the PLO banner, Dbayeh was already cut off from the other camps in Lebanon due to multiple reasons. First, it is indeed plausible that, for the PLO, Dbayeh was not strategically worth the investment, given the camp’s small population and its location deep within enemy territory.

Moreover, since we know that few were those in Dbayeh who actively resisted the Phalangists with weapons – at a minimum because they did not have the necessary weapons – we can assume that identification with the Christian Lebanese must have played a role at least in allowing residents to minimize the effects of the occupation. At the time of my fieldwork, Dbayeh youth had been socialized in such a way as to avoid conflict with the surrounding Lebanese population, given that survival depended largely on their benevolence. Their parents, along with the hostile environment outside their houses – even within the camp itself – taught them to assimilate as much as possible, including adjusting their accent, their political expressions, social behavior, and even mannerisms and interests. If parents were afraid and wanted above else the wellbeing of their children, among the young there was a widespread will to conceal the stigma of being Palestinian and become like the Lebanese to be accepted by those around them. As a result, without necessarily concealing their Palestinianness completely, most would in one way or another articulate their genealogical heritage with their local present in Lebanon. With this disciplinary socialization, especially among Dbayeh Palestinian residents who had Lebanese citizenship, many understood that although Palestinian, they were not hostile like “the others” because they were different, and this difference was Christianity. While few rejected Lebaneseness more emphatically, others went as far as to even reject their Palestinianness completely, denying to me that they had ever been Palestinian, as I illustrate later in this book.

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These two broad and concise oral histories demonstrate that, from the inhabitants’ perspectives, the histories of their camps were unique, albeit sharing similar narratives of *Al-Nakba*. Dbayeh locals did not understand their camp’s uniqueness as a direct result of divergent religious affiliations. Rather, the homogenous Christian composition of the camp was a consequence of Lebanese efforts. A pivotal role was played by the Lebanese priest who recruited a select Christian sample of refugees from Rashidieh in south Lebanon, which incidentally was the same camp from where many left to finally settle in Al-Jalil.

It is a fact that, as Dr. Sayigh puts it, Christians, and Muslims tended to live and marry among themselves in Palestinian villages such as Al-Bassa. However, that Christians in Al-Bassa lived in different quarters did not necessarily mean they preferred to avoid Muslims in other areas of social life.

The fact that religion is a determining factor for identity construction among Christian Palestinians is not a novelty inaugurated by their arrival in Lebanon as refugees. Rather, as I suggested above and will substantiate in what follows, much of the way that some Dbayeh Palestinians today, especially the younger generations, blur their Palestinianness by affiliation with Christianity, is a result of their tentative accommodation to the Lebanese surroundings.

Finally, it is also important to note that practices of belonging in Dbayeh, both identitarian and relating to social organization, did not depend exclusively on practical considerations, for such considerations themselves were generally embedded in a broader idiom of dispositions, affects, and sensibilities evoked, for instance, by collective and personal memory, as shown above, and social practices, as I will show in what follows.