Chapter 4: Ritual Tempo in Dbayeh

a. Dbayeh's Invisibility

Before visiting Dbayeh for the first time, I had not met a single Christian Palestinian refugee living in a camp. I knew many Christian Palestinian refugees who lived in Lebanese neighborhoods or abroad. I also knew that the relatively tiny (when compared to other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon) Mar Elias,[1] located near the boundaries between east, west and south Beirut, was once a Christian Palestinian majority refugee camp. However, after so many massacres in the other refugee camps, including Tel Al-Zaatar, Qarantina, Sabra & Shatila, Nabatieh, and more, Mar Elias's population soared and changed in character. At the time of my fieldwork, most families in Mar Elias were Muslim, but the camp still contained more Christian families than any of the other eleven Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon except Dbayeh.

At the time of my fieldwork, Dbayeh's main demographic difference from other refugee camps in Lebanon was that only 0.78% of the camp was Muslim, and all other inhabitants were Christian of different denominations (59.9% Catholic – including Melkites and Roman Catholics – 29.17% Maronite, 8.59% Orthodox, 0.78% Latin, 0.52% Evangelical, and 0.26% Jehovah's Witness) (World Vision 2007). According to UNRWA's published official data, in 2010 there were 4,211 individuals grouped in 67 families registered as Palestine refugees in Dbayeh (UNRWA 2010) living in some of the 464 houses in the camp (World Vision 2007). The actual number of refugees living in the camp, however, was considerably lower, and many of the houses included in the World Vision figure above were actually occupied by Lebanese. Like

1 This was by far the smallest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, with only 615 people registered with UNRWA, according to UNRWA's official website (UNRWA 2010).

Dbayeh, other Palestinian camps in Lebanon – and Shatila is a good example – also had a high percentage of Lebanese inhabitants. The specific historical reasons leading to Dbayeh's Lebanese population will be explored later in this chapter.

While still living in Al-Jalil, I thought that if only I knew one Christian family living in a Muslim majority camp, then I could gain access to Dbayeh. I took for granted that most members of the Christian Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon would have close ties, as is frequently the case with religious or ethnic minorities in the Middle East. The problem, however, was that not a single Christian lived in Al-Jalil, and I did not know any Christian Palestinians living in the other camps. Moreover, almost none of my friends and interlocutors in Al-Jalil could help. An opportunity to meet someone from Dbayeh arose when I encountered a Palestinian circus troupe, which included members from many different Palestinian refugee camps in the country. They used to train in Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp (near Shatila), and two brothers from Al-Jalil were among the performers. I knew these young men well, and from them I learned that the troupe was rehearsing for a refugee camp tour. This was my opportunity, I thought. Also interested in the troupe's work itself, and especially in its inter-camp character, I asked the older of the brothers if I could join them in Burj al-Barajneh to get to know the group, take pictures of the performances, and perhaps be introduced to members from Dbayeh, given that I planned to do field research there. He agreed and told me that the troupe itself included a young man and a young woman from Dbayeh. Although my interlocutor did not know them well, he offered to broker the contact, suggesting that, with their help, I might be able to talk to one of the camp leaders about the possibility of researching in Dbayeh.

We left from Al-Jalil early, by van, on the Beirut-Baalbek road, arriving in Burj al-Barajneh two hours later. The brothers usually made the trip twice a week to rehearse with the troupe, staying overnight with relatives in the camp. There was constant movement between the camps, either during formal occasions, in which people from different camps could come together as a community, or because of family or business. Dbayeh was somehow exceptional in this matter. There was some traffic from Dbayeh to other camps, especially because UNRWA registered refugees in Dbayeh had to go to Burj al-Barajneh for consultation and treatment at the UNRWA run hospital serving all the camps around Beirut. Dbayeh was also vaguely connected to other camps through relations of kinship. Conversely, Palestinians from other camps rarely visited Dbayeh, setting it very much apart from life in the other camps.

In comparison to Shatila or to what once was Nahr al-Bared, Burj al-Barajneh was not as well equipped to receive foreign researchers, journalists, and social workers. Both Shatila and Nahr al-Bared served as the main Palestinian centers in Beirut and Tripoli respectively. Cultural spaces, however, were common throughout all Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. In contrast to Al-Jalil, where *dabke* and other performance groups generally had to obtain a rehearsal space from the local UNRWA school or a political party, the much larger Burj El-Barajneh, with its 16,066 registered residents (UNRWA 2010), offered plenty of space for cultural programs such as the circus troupe. Again, in contrast with the other camps, Dbayeh neither had cultural space nor any local groups performing cultural activities, except those organized by one of the local churches, including a theater play (*masraḥiyya*) held about twice a year, a chorus group, and some other transient activities generally geared toward children. Dbayeh had no boyscouts or *dabke* groups.

The cultural center where the troupe trained in Burj al-Barajneh was fairly large. To the left of the entrance, there was a one-meter-tall stage, and to the right, a large empty space on concrete floor. An enormous panel painted with Palestinian themes covered the wall to the left of the stage. The panel featured a Palestinian martyr's burial consisting of a procession carrying a body covered with a Palestinian flag. The martyr's head was wrapped in a Palestinian themed scarf with the inscription *shahīd* (martyr). Around the body, there were people carrying another Palestinian flag, a flag of a Palestinian party, and the prophet's green flag. Depicted on the panel were also: tents representing the beginnings of a refugee camp; al-Aqsa Mosque; the Church of the Holy Sepulcher; a fallen Intifada hero with a stone still in hand; olive trees; a *fidā'iyy* (singular for Fedayeen in Arabic) whose Kalashnikov featured a rose bursting from the gun's muzzle; a running horse partially morphed into a Palestinian flag; teenagers firing their slingshots at an Israeli tank, and burning tires with fire and smoke.

As we entered the cultural center, the younger of the Al-Jalil brothers pointed to the two Dbayeh residents. I sat in the back of the room and watched until practice was over. During the rehearsal, the Dbayeh couple seemed actively included, which encouraged me to approach them. I walked up to a man in his early thirties and introduced myself. We talked for a while before I mentioning I was interested in getting to know Dbayeh. He gave me his phone number and asked me to call him to set up a tour of the camp. Over the following days, I called him many times, and never received a positive answer. The couple of times that he actually answered my calls, he indefinitely

postponed the trip. As I realized his reluctance, I tried a different approach. Since I had recently been associated with a Lebanese University based in a village near Dbayeh, I asked for help from the university's internal personnel, who gave me the contact of the Caritas Migration Center.

At that time, I thought this connection was facilitated because both institutions were interested in the theme of migration. The university was interested in the Lebanese *mahjar* (the diaspora)[2] from an academic perspective, while the branch of the Christian NGO Caritas was interested in migrants to Lebanon from a social service perspective. I made several attempts to reach someone willing to talk at Caritas, but responses were slow to come back, and when they came, they were never inviting. For instance, as I had done in Al-Jalil, I offered to teach English in the camp as a volunteer. The general manager, however, insisted on more email communication. I resolved to visit the institution personally, hoping to stand a better chance in a face-to-face conversation.

I made my way to Dbayeh on a bus leaving Beirut from *Dawra* towards the North on the Beirut-Tripoli Road. I was instructed that the camp would be near the Lebanese area with the same name, Dbayeh, just after an Armenian conglomerate close to Antelias. Thus, I informed the driver in a loud voice (just as I would do around Baalbek), *Nazilny bil-mukhayyam, 'aml ma'ruf* ("Drop me off at the camp, please"), to which he gave me a lost look and responded, "where?" I explained that I was heading to the Palestinian refugee camp, to which he answered there was no such thing in the area. Dbayeh still seemed to me almost as much of a myth as it did to Palestinians in Al-Jalil, and I worried that I had taken the wrong bus or had wrong directions. The driver suggested that if indeed I wanted to look for a camp in the area, then Dbayeh had two exits I could take. I chose to leave the bus at the first one. The trip did not last longer than twenty minutes from *Dawra* to the first Dbayeh exit. After asking for directions unsuccessfully there, I walked toward the second exit, where I found a gas station and a school – its name written both in Arabic and in French: *Madrasa Al-Maqdysa Rytā – École Sainte Rita*. I asked about the camp at the gas station, but again no one could help. I also had no luck with passers-by, who were puzzled by me request. A local taxi driver waiting next to the gas station finally called me, asking where I wanted to go. He claimed

2 The literal word for diaspora in Arabic is *shatāt*, but *mahjar* conveys both the place of immigration and the community of immigrants themselves.

to live up the hill and know everything around, including where to find the Palestinians. For *Alfen* (2,000.00LL)[3] he took me there.

Going up the will, we crossed the Royal Hotel, a local landmark that contained its own water park, and about four minutes later he dropped me off in front of the Caritas Migration Center Dbayeh office, just past the UNRWA office. The houses did not seem like they sheltered refugees, and the place indeed did not feel like a camp to me. The physical environment of the camp was quite open, as modest houses lined the narrow streets. Unlike al-Jalil, trees stood amidst the concrete. In addition, a fresh breeze from the sea blew at the top of the hill, making the environment much more pleasant than the dusty air around Baalbek. In Lebanon, those who can afford to live in the mountains do so, mainly to avoid the summer heat. It seemed to me that Dbayeh was the Palestinian refugee equivalent of those Lebanese summer residences, and I understood then why most among those Palestinians who knew or had heard about Dbayeh envied its inhabitants. Mar Elias was very well organized and Al-Jalil was by far the cleanest of the camps I had visited, kept so only by its residents, but Dbayeh had unparalleled fresh air and lush vegetation, contributing to its seeming openness.

While both were in sight of the entrance, the door to the small UNRWA office was closed, so I went straight to that of the Caritas office. There, I saw elderly people, some with canes, playing cards and drinking tea, while a couple of young women looked up a little puzzled by my presence. I spoke to one of them explaining who I was and that I had been communicating with their general manager for a while over email. I asked if I could perform any type of volunteer work in the camp. She was evasive, presumably because she did not have the authority to make such decisions. I thanked them both and left. From my initial email interactions with Caritas until then, I was made to understand that I needed Caritas' approval to enter the camp. Interestingly, while never answering my questions directly, the organization never redirected me to or even mentioned the local UNRWA office. I decided to not leave just yet and explore the camp on my own.

In the streets, everyone looked at me. Some gave me warm greetings, others just tried to pass by unnoticed. The elderly would crane their necks to see me until I was totally out of sight. I finally found what seemed to be a café, went in, and ordered an *argile* and tea. The owners brought me both and proceeded to ask questions about who I was and what I was doing there. I

3 Approximately 1.5 American dollars at the time

explained everything, and they suggested it would be better if I returned another day and talked to a certain man, I will name here Charbel. The next day, I returned and ordered tea and *argile* again, hoping to meet Charbel. A couple of hours later, the café owners took me downstairs to a pastry shop where Charbel was drinking coffee and smoking a cigarette. He offered me some coffee, and I accepted. After meeting Charbel, I stopped dealing with Caritas, and we spent days talking over coffee, as he wanted to be sure to know my intentions in detail if he was to be responsible for my admission to the camp.

I was told, and later learned for myself with regard to Mar Elias, that Palestinian Christians living in other local refugee camps tended to be adapted to life among their Muslim neighbors. Christian Palestinians living outside the camps in Lebanon or abroad tended to have their Arab social circuits more circumscribed to Christians (especially Palestinian), although frequently they had close ties to Muslim Palestinians too. Dbayeh's Palestinians, however, seemed isolated from other Palestinians in a way that I had never seen before. How and why was this the case? This was one of the first questions I had in mind once I bridged the distance and started to live in Dbayeh. I did not move from one camp to the other all at once, but rather, the process lasted about ten days after my first contact with Charbel. As it turned out, he arranged an apartment for me in the camp. Neither Caritas nor the UNRWA ever objected to my staying in the camp, mostly because Dbayeh was seen as something other than a camp, as I will go on to explain.

From atop Dbayeh, I could see first the enormous and luxurious Hotel Royal, followed by the Beirut/Tripoli highway, and the vastness of the Mediterranean Sea beyond. To the right (north), Nahr al-Kalb was just down the hill. The camp was only twelve kilometers northeast of Beirut, after the town of Antelias – well known in Lebanon for housing the *Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia*. Only one street led to the entrance of the camp, at the top of the hill where both UNRWA and Caritas were located. *Deyr Mār Yūsif Al-Burj* ("Mar Yussif Tower Monastery"), a Greek Catholic (*Melkite*) monastery/church to the left of Caritas, marked the entrance to the camp, which was distinct from its surroundings. Its buildings, small and tightly packed together, formed a rectangle with its longer sides parallel to the sea. Since all its entrances were on the same side, the camp resembled the prongs of a fork, with the houses arranged one next to the other forming lines, and the streets forming the gaps in between. The main road leading to the camp ended in a three-way junction in front of the Caritas office: the first way led out of the camp and down the mountain, the second, to the

left, led to the Mar Yussif church. The third, to the right, became one of the streets of the camp, ultimately leading to a dead end. At Mar Yussif church the street curved to face the top of the hill once more, and after springing 3 more streets to the right, it bent to the right, becoming a dead end soon after the last house of the camp. These main streets were called only by their numbers (no.1; no.2; no.3…). Narrow alleys, mostly made of stairs, cut up and down through the main streets, connecting the entire camp. Unlike Al-Jalil, there was no main street or *zāwya* serving as a public square apart from the headquarters of social institutions like the church, UNRWA, and Caritas. The relative lack of community life in Dbayeh when compared to Al-Jalil was evident.

Although virtually entirely Christian, it can be argued that Dbayeh was religiously and nationally more diverse than Al-Jalil due to the different Christian denominations of its residents, and to the Lebanese component. Only 67.41% of the camp's inhabitants were registered Palestinians (or Palestinian/Lebanese double citizens), and 31.34% were Lebanese[4] (World Vision 2007). Although there were some Palestinian Maronites, most of the Maronites were Lebanese, while most Christians of other denominations were Palestinian. According to the locals, most of the registered Palestinians who at the time of my fieldwork identified as Maronites were converted from another denomination in Lebanon. There were also a few Armenians in the camp (Catholic and Orthodox), some of whom lived in Palestine before the creation of Israel, and some of whom moved to the camp due to matrimonial ties with Palestinian families. All the Armenian families had Lebanese citizenship.

b. Ethnicity as a Local Frame

Most Lebanese and Palestinians in Lebanon perceived and engaged with their different nationalities somewhat similarly to how Fredrik Barth (1969) understands *ethnicity*, that is, as a dynamic and contrastive figment of social belonging, in which one group constructs itself in relation to others. As such, it is "a matter of social organization above and beyond questions of empirical cultural differences"; "a matter of self-ascription and ascription by others"; and "cultural features of greatest import" are to be found as "boundary-connected" (ibid: 6). In other words, the differences between being Lebanese and being

4 Not including three Syrians, one unregistered Palestinian, and one Iraqi refugee.

Palestinian around Dbayeh (and in Lebanon at large) were represented much as a feature of a "boundary-making mechanism" (ibid: 10) through which both Palestinians and Lebanese constructed and experienced national belonging. However, while Barth highlights the work of consciousness and entrepreneurship, I highlight the inseparability of practical, strategic, and conscious reason on one side, and informal, embodied, unconscious dispositions, affects and sensibilities on the other. In other words, being Lebanese or Palestinian in Dbayeh was not only a matter of conscious choice, but nor was it a non-negotiable reality, even if generally naturalized as such by locals.

The differentiation between ethnicity and race in *fuṣḥa* ("Modern Standard Arabic") is not so clear, and terms such as *'irq* and *'unṣur* or *'unṣuriyya* are used to express both ideas. While the latter two were used to express prejudice (as in "racial"), the former was virtually never used anywhere in Lebanon during my fieldwork to express racial identity. *Arabness* was usually expressed simply by the term "Arab" itself. However, ethnicity was also commonly expressed in Al-Jalil, Dbayeh, and in Lebanon in general by way of *qawmiyya* ("nationality"), and also often conflated with religion, depending on the context, as I will develop in what follows. Thus, the attribution of naturalized qualities through national identification constantly highlighted the difference between Palestinians and Lebanese, where this difference was thought of as an ethnic inherent distinction.

With the exception of Lebanon, Muslims are the overwhelming majority in the Middle East. Thus, it is common that Muslims there think of Islam as overlapping with nationhood and Arabness. Perhaps due to the role of the PLO during the Lebanese Civil War, around Dbayeh, where the Lebanese population is almost completely Christian, Palestinians were also commonly represented as Muslims, even if virtually all Lebanese Christians consciously know of the Palestinian Christian population and of the importance of Palestinian Christian symbols such as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem, and others. This sacred Christian Palestine was usually relegated to the past to the detriment of the mundane present, allowing Christian Palestinians in the present to be understood, if anything, as an exception to what Palestine currently represented to them. As I suggested in the previous chapter, this association was also strong in Al-Jalil, where – to illustrate even more emphatically – a resident once told me that "in the beginning there were Palestinians and Christians in Al-Jalil," when referring to Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians. This slip was not commonly heard there, but it is illustrative of

the extent to which, in Lebanon, the association is often present in the minds and hearts of Palestinians themselves.

As religion, ethnicity, and nationhood often overlapped, so did corresponding ethnic attributes. For example, Christian Palestinians were not often thought of as part of armed militias, in association with religious extremism, as refugees, and so on. This, in turn, helps explain Dbayeh's invisibility (as presented above) in the eyes of the Lebanese living so close to the refugee camp itself. Yet, as I develop in what follows, this is merely another factor in an intricate process of social belonging in which nationhood, ethnicity, and religion are often intertwined, and which Dbayeh's invisibility illustrates.

Moreover, when, in a given context, these terms (religion, national and ethnic belonging, political positioning, and others) were shown to not overlap, Palestinians and Lebanese alike often found it difficult to make sense of the subject's identity, and thus to align and to position themselves in relation to it. Taking one element as a signifier for one's ultimate belonging was a common local way of negotiating such a difficult classification. For instance, one was often taken as ultimately Palestinian, or Christian, or politically pro-Aoun, or a refugee, in positive or negative ways, depending on the context. In this way, motivated by embodied dispositions, affects, and sensibilities as much as by practical reason, Dbayeh's Christian Palestinians could be thus contextually perceived more decisively as Christians or Palestinians, or less decidedly as both. At times, ambiguity had "positive" effects for Dbayeh's Palestinians, and at other times it did not.

The hierarchization of belonging categories of Christian Palestinians in Lebanon – more or less instrumental depending on the case and context – was often a part of people's process of making sense of themselves and others. The classified subject(s) would typically still hold a more or less uncertain place in the minds of those engaged in the act of classification. That is, they could never be entirely trusted, for their group affiliations made for divided loyalties. It was through this lens of divided loyalties that many Muslim Palestinian refugees and Lebanese alike saw the Palestinian Christians of Dbayeh. It was common to hear in Lebanon phrases such as "in the end everyone goes back to their own roots." Irrespective of how much one pledged allegiance to one or another group, he/she was at times still expected to act according to his/her own "true" belonging, being that whichever the classifier suspected. This search for the "true" locus of belonging usually exceeded simple practical reasoning. However, there was no "true" belonging for Christian Palestinian

refugees in Lebanon. They also engaged in difficult self-classifications such as mentioned above, and only partially following practical reason. Different subjects hierarchized their belonging differently and contextually, and while generally much importance was ascribed to one's national and religious belonging, expressions were diverse and variable to a degree.

Departing from such a conceptualization of ethnicity can shed light on the matter. Since ethnicity might be easily conflated with nationalism and/or religion, it would be unwise to single out any one of these categories as the ultimate source of a subject's belonging. This can explain the relative infrequency of interreligious marriage in Lebanon – among Palestinians in Lebanon the situation was no different – when compared, for example, to the Americas or Europe. Furthermore, the way in which most Lebanese tended to be politically aligned with a representative of their own sect was also telling of the importance of ethnicity. The Lebanese state's confessional democratic system tended to greatly reinforce this ethnicity, since some of the most basic rights and duties of citizens (like those of ownership, inheritance, and marriage) were defined by the political organs of their own religious sect, rather than by the Lebanese state in general (Saadeh 1993). Such a confessional system thus defined and constrained the proper official place for social belonging, first by not allowing for the possibility of secular marriage itself, and second by strictly regulating secular matrimony entered into abroad. Interreligious marriage was therefore rare in Lebanon, and Palestinian refugees formed a type of addendum to the country's confessions, given that, by definition, they were not citizens and as such did not legally fit the established classifications of either Sunni Muslims or Christians in Lebanon.

At the time of my residence in the refugee camps, the Lebanese constitution defined the rights and duties of the Palestinian community in a distinct manner, in many cases differently even from other migrating communities like the Syrians, Filipinos, Sudanese, and Sri Lankans. Palestinians were legally considered a group set apart even from other Arabs due to their stateless status and the politics of reciprocity. Thus, on a societal level, despite the initial positive attitude the Lebanese exhibited toward refugees, most Lebanese Christians, but also many Shi'a and Sunnis, conflated Palestinians with the actions of the PLO, whose alleged attempts at assuming control over Lebanon were perceived as having precipitated the Lebanese Civil War and both Israeli invasions (1978 and 1982). Most in Lebanon then perceived being Palestinian as an almost inescapable index of political attitude that was usually inarticulately and largely unconsciously attributed to inherent ethnicity.

The sectarian communities were themselves historically fragmented. During my fieldwork, the Lebanese Christian communities – particularly the Maronites – were as divided as they had been during the civil war and perhaps even increasingly polarized. Other sects were also highly politically divided in the past. For example, a Sunni might have supported Pan-Arabism (like the *Murabitun*), favored Lebaneseness, and supported the PLO, or many other political positions. Among the Druze, many supported the Jumblats, while a minority supported Talal Arslan. Likewise, the Shi'a were divided between Amal and Hezbollah after the second Israeli invasion, a division that was respectively associated with an anti- or pro-PLO stance, and therefore for and against Palestinian presence in Lebanon respectively, since Hezbollah had helped the major Palestinian factions in their fight against Amal during the war of the camps.

Because the Christians lost most of their bargaining power with the Taif Agreement that ended the Civil War, between 2006 and 2010 (and largely until today) the political arena was greatly polarized between the Sunni supporters of Hariri (and anti-Syrian interference in Lebanon) of the March 14 block, and the Shi'a supporters of Hezbollah (and pro-Syrian interference via financial and political backing) of the March 8 block. There were Sunni supporting March 8 and Shi'a supporting March 14 as well, but these were relatively rare. The Christian community was more wholly divided into factions on one or the other side of this divide. It is thus possible to claim that for the Christian Lebanese population, political belonging was not equated with religion and/or ethnicity, as on both sides, Christians joined forces with different Muslim groups. Furthermore, no matter which side was taken, the majority of Lebanese continued to see both Muslim and Christian Palestinians alike as they had done during the civil war, that is, as an unwelcome enemy, even when paying lip service to "the Palestinian cause" as an "Arab" or "Muslim cause." As a result, the Christian Lebanese around Dbayeh still saw the Christian Palestinian camp inhabitants as either a threat or an unpleasant and undesired presence that was to be avoided and preferably washed away.

Only a few secularist parties, like the Lebanese Communist Party composed of Christians and Muslims, still rallied in support of the Palestinians in Lebanon, but their numbers did not represent any threat to the overall balance of power, and hardly had any effect in the streets. Besides, these parties were scarce on the outskirts of Dbayeh, the only Lebanese piece of land where Dbayeh's presence was noticeable. There were always both Palestinian and Lebanese subjects that escaped an all-encompassing rationality that cat-

egorized all orders of people within an ultimate typology of ethnic belonging, but they tended to be rarer in more homogenous areas such as Baalbek and Metn,[5] since interpersonal contact between subjects situated in different categories were less frequent, allowing for stereotypes to remain unchallenged. Many Lebanese, and especially the Christians among them, saw themselves as distinct from other Arabs, and political belonging was frequently taken more as the natural consequence of an individual's religious belonging as indexed through the sect than as a choice. In contrast, the Lebanese primarily viewed Palestinians in Lebanon as an undifferentiated mass, and only secondarily as Christian or Sunni, or as aligned with Fatah or Hamas or any other party. Thus, as Barth theorized (1969), the ethnic label still survives, even when the ethnic divide is bridged by individuals or groups willing to do so. Sectarianism in Lebanon operated in such manner, and so did the Lebanese-Palestinian divide. They were never absolute, yet still powerfully operative.

Lebanese essentializing of Palestinians as a national/ethnic unit reflected the reality of the Palestinian political situation in Lebanon, since all Palestinians, aside from the few who were citizens, were barred from formal political participation. They could not vote, their opinions were rarely listened to and often not publicly articulated, and they were officially treated as foreigners with few civil rights, if any. For the Lebanese, therefore, the Palestinians' internal differences did not matter as much as their general exclusion. This attitude was reinforced by the principled refusal by the majority of Palestinians – both the public[6] and the political intelligentsia – to lobby for Lebanese citizenship. The predominant Shi'a and Christian parties in Lebanon supported this position out of fear that active participation of the mainly Sunni Palestinians in Lebanese politics would upset the country's precarious balance of power.

The Lebanese propensity to identify Palestinians by an ethnic national indexing, coupled with a widespread sense among the Lebanese that the Palestinians were troublemakers responsible for most of the nation's problems, had a powerful effect on the refugees, reinforcing their sense of foreignness and exclusion, and greatly enhancing their own views of their political and eco-

5 The Lebanese region just north of Beirut where Dbayeh is located

6 This does not mean that most Palestinian refugees did not covet Lebanese citizenship. Instead, it only reflects the prevailing gap between desiring it and publicly rallying around the issue as a political objective or civic right, as I will present in due course.

nomic[7] modes of belonging as embodied ethnic trait. In Al-Jalil, the Lebanese disposition towards Palestinians caused the refugees to over-state their Palestinianness; in Dbayeh, the same disposition led the refugees, especially the younger generation, to try to blend in and efface their Palestinianness. The aesthetic rules and tendencies of social relations in Dbayeh, coupled with the marking of calendar time with Christian rather than Palestinian themes, accentuated that blurring tendency, as will be demonstrated in the following sections of this chapter.

Due to their refugee condition, but also reinforced by the ethnic divides in Lebanon and the way Palestinians fit the overall ethnic landscape, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon tended to experience being Palestinian as their ultimate category of belonging. That is, their need to make sense of their presence, status, and daily lives in Lebanon collectively and above all as Palestinians. Thus, among Palestinians in general, Palestinianness and the polyphonic concept of *the Palestinian cause* also worked as a political equivalent to sectarian belonging, bringing some closer to the imagined community and pushing some away from it. Since the Lebanese also tended to see Palestinians as a distinct ethnic group, Palestinianness cut across religious, political, and economic belongings, although Dbayeh inhabitants tended to live these categories ("Christian" and "Palestinian") in ways allowing for greater levels of ambiguity than in Al-Jalil. Dbayeh was exceptional in this regard: firstly, because some refugees in Dbayeh were among the only Palestinian refugees to have citizenship in Lebanon – apart from Palestinian women married to Lebanese men of the same sect – and, secondly, because the Palestinian Cause had a more distant and complex place in the camp's quotidian life, as I will present in what follows.

c. The muwāṭiniyyn

World Vision data indicates a number of Lebanese living in Dbayeh. Most of these were Lebanese from the surrounding area who mostly came during the civil war for several reasons: some sought "protection" (according to a Lebanese perspective); some came with the Phalange militias to take over the camp and remained as of the time of my fieldwork; some came following the camp's evacuation in 1991, after the Lebanese army shelled the camp

7 As in, for instance, when Palestinians think of themselves as "peasants" (Swedenburg 1990; Sayigh 2008).

(their motivation was a belief that, since UNRWA had provided the camp to Palestinians, no one living inside its borders would have to pay rent); and, finally, some were of Palestinian origin (*aṣl Falasṭyny*) but had Lebanese citizenship (*jensiyya Lubnāniyya*). They appear in the World Vision assessment as simply "Palestinians." This last group comprised one of the major categories in the camp, and since all Palestinian Christians were offered citizenship in the 1950s,[8] the question of how some were naturalized is less important than why others were not. According to the camp's elderly community, Palestinians in Dbayeh without Lebanese citizenship (a significant part of the population) did not have it either because their ancestors refused it, or simply because they could not afford it, as a relatively small sum was needed to issue the proper documentation, which also entailed a bureaucratic process that many could not navigate.

The local term for naturalization was the general Palestinian one, *tawṭyn* (to take on citizenship; to become a citizen). Since to obtain Lebanese citizenship one had to renounce the right to Palestinian citizenship, *tawṭyn* was the formal process of a subject's "conversion" [9] into a Lebanese. In Dbayeh, nationally converted citizens were called *muwāṭan*,[10] which meant Lebanese citizens, given that no refugee had Palestinian citizenship. The term *muwāṭan* was also expressed as "Lebanese with Palestinian origins" *(Lubnāny aṣl Falasṭyny* for men and *Lubnānya aṣl Falasṭyniyya* for women).

Despite the proximity of devastating past wars, relations among non-Lebanese Palestinian refugees, Palestinian *muwāṭiniyyn*, and Lebanese living in Dbayeh were not particularly tense, at least on the surface. First of all, relations between non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians[11] and *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians

8 As with the Armenians, the major difference being that since the 1970s all Armenians are officially Lebanese citizens, while a few Christian Palestinians are still officially refugees and mostly located in Dbayeh.

9 This is my own term. Palestinians and Lebanese most commonly expressed the concept through the term *ṣyr* (to be/to become).

10 Both *tawṭyn* and *muwāṭan* refer to the word *watan*, meaning in its colloquial usage by Lebanese and Palestinians "nation." The plural of *muwāṭan* is *muwāṭiniyyn*.

11 I cannot use the term "Palestinian citizens" to refer to all Palestinian refugees who did not go under *tawṭyn* and therefore did not become *muwāṭiniyyn*. In the wake of the Oslo Process, Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories have had their right to a Palestinian citizenship recognized internationally, but the Palestinian Authority did not offer citizenship for the refugees living abroad, such as Dbayeh or Al-Jalil camp residents.

were very good and depended on individual and group affinity, even if the divide was always implicit in their relationships. There was also a sense of inferiority permeating non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians in Dbayeh, which was not as significant for Palestinians living in other camps who took on a different citizenship,[12] such as in Al-Jalil, where Palestinianness was much more celebrated. As a counterpart to this dynamics, *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians in Dbayeh tended to see themselves at an advantage, and at times preferred to stress their Lebaneseness over their Palestinianness, even amongst other Palestinians. For example, some *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians preferred to call the camp *đey'a* (or *kūra*; meaning "the village"), just like Palestinians and Lebanese alike call their villages of origin. This did not depend only on strategic uses of double belonging, as sometimes they felt compelled to display one or the other, due not only to external pressures, but also due to self-imposed reasons. Thus, double belonging as Palestinian and Lebanese did not constitute two entirely different identities, but most of the time a single composite not only contingent on strategy, but also deeply rooted in feelings and emotions. In other words, the extent to which subjects would emphasize Lebaneseseness or Palestinianness was contextual and depended on practical reason as much as on embodied affects, sensibilities, and dispositions.

The relations between the *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians and the Lebanese were also informed by what they both perceived to be ethnic differences, despite the fact that many *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians were born and raised in Lebanon and felt sometimes culturally closer to the local population than to other Palestinians. This closeness was articulated in a variety of ways, ranging from their accent, behavior, and social practices, to their interests and self-identification. The scars of recent conflicts and political views about Lebanon and Palestine were ever present, however, and could resurface easily, depending on the situation. For instance, a few of the *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians I met in Dbayeh were soldiers in the Lebanese army. This was a common strategy for social and economic ascendance among poor Lebanese in general, but it also demonstrates a certain level of identification with the Lebanese nation among the refugees.[13] Joseph, a young *muwāṭan* Palestinian from Dbayeh who was a soldier in the Lebanese army, told me that despite his identifying as a Lebanese

12 Usually, Scandinavian or German in the case of refugees from Al-Jalil. Those would typically not live in the camp, but only return to visit fairly rarely.

13 In Al-Jalil, in principle the few *muwāṭiniyyn* could join the army, but to my knowledge, none did.

citizen, his *muwāṭan* Palestinian background was recorded in his army documentation and marked forever within the institution, possibly leading to his loyalty being questioned and thereby jeopardizing any ambitions of advancement. The identification of Dbayeh *muwāṭiniyyn* as also Palestinian was further evident in their choice to remain in the camp rather than live elsewhere in Lebanon, justified by most as a result of the strong personal bonds they had with their family and neighbors, Palestinians or not. However, this choice was just as often at least secondarily justified by economic concerns. As far as I understood, no *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinian participated in the war against the Palestinians, since both the Lebanese and the Palestinians in general strictly enforced the boundaries between Palestinianness and Lebaneseness during the war.

Finally, relations between non-*aṣl Falasṭyny* Lebanese and the non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians in Dbayeh were also marked by the same tensions found in the relations between the other categories. On one hand, many non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians expressed resentment toward their Lebanese neighbors, blaming them for their predicament, citing incidents in which their property had been seized, a family member killed, or they were driven into forced labor by a Lebanese neighbor. On the other hand, many non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians in Dbayeh also described one or another specific Lebanese in Dbayeh as a "good man," citing their helpfulness in difficult situations, and thereby painting a more nuanced picture. In turn, the Lebanese living in Dbayeh played down accusations, usually by stating that "the past is past" and that things had been different then. As an illustration of the general underlying tensions, Ayub, a non-*muwāṭan* Palestinian, told me that after about two decades of living together, all these groups developed close ties with each other. In his words, "today we marry their women, and they marry ours; they buy in my shop, and I pay visits to them." Although these practices existed in reality, one could never be certain of how much tension had accumulated below the surface. The issue was generally avoided and rarely, if ever, brought up publicly. As a *muwāṭan* Palestinian once told me, "for decades we had to learn to share the camp (…) now, everything is fine, but if there is a new war nobody knows and cannot know what will happen."[14] Thus, the past was generally tentatively blurred or buried in the public sphere due to the fear of stirring up conflict and out of a desire to move forward.

14 This dialogue was written in English in my fieldwork diary.

d. Further Divisions

Dbayeh stores all faced one of the five main streets. The camp had one *foren*[15] (literally, oven, in this context, a pastry shop), one *ṣāj*[16] shop, a butcher's shop, a sandwich/*argile* shop, as many as four or five food markets, two general stores, a shoe shop, and a couple of other smaller stores. In addition, there was only one barber shop, and one café located across the street of the camp's border and later owned by a man I will call Butrus, who for a while during my field research owned the restaurant located in *Nahr El-Kalb,*[17] less than 2 miles away from the base of the hill where Dbayeh is located. As in Al-Jalil, relatives and friends tended to frequent stores according to their level of social and physical proximity with the owners, whenever they had a choice. The barbershop also served as a gathering place for the youth but was not as integral to daily life and social interactions as barbershops were in Al-Jalil. The sandwich/*argile* shop was also very important, especially since it featured the only public computer with internet access in the camp.[18] Customers close enough to the owner did not always pay for its use, but others were required to pay a very small fee. While older Lebanese and Palestinian men alike (on average above their fifties) frequented the café, Palestinians rarely frequented the restaurant in Nahr Al-Kalb, which opened and then closed its doors during my stay in the camp. The division of space mirrored the generational conflict, which was much more pervasive than in Al-Jalil. This conflict developed in part as members of the older generation in Dbayeh were still deeply attached

15 A shop that sold pastries and provided the service of baking dishes made with dough, pre-prepared by the women living in the camp or around, or dough made by the owner of the establishment.

16 Near Eastern flatbread baked over a convex metal surface

17 Nahr El-Kalb is the Arabic name for the short ancient Lycus or Eleutherus River that once served as the border between Egyptian and Hittite land. The place where the river meets the highway is the site for monuments raised by Ramses II, Marcus Aurelius, and more recent conquerors. It also harbors a monument commemorating the Lebanese independence.

18 When I returned to Dbayeh in 2009, the place had been totally transformed into a cybercafé with about 10 computers. While it still maintained its pool table in another room where only youngsters would gather, the kitchen was permanently closed. The owner of the shop also sold corn and *fūl* (beans, Lebanese style) in the street in front of the café.

to their Palestinianness, while many of the younger generations disguised, blurred, or even entirely effaced their Palestinian roots.

Non-*aṣl Falasṭyny* Lebanese, *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians, and non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians dwelled everywhere in the camp, and no one space was reserved for a particular group. However, another deep divide pervaded Dbayeh: kinship and neighborhood ties. If one were to look at the totality of the camp from above, one could divide the rectangle representing the whole into four neighborhoods. These neighborhoods not only revealed kinship ties – collateral, by descent, and by marriage alliances alike – but also spatially represented parties that disputed resources, especially water distribution. Thus, in addition to the continuum between Palestinian and Lebanese, political divides, and kinship ties, neighborhood alliances also inscribed different subjects into different allegiance groups in the eyes of the locals. Again, these divisions often tended to overlap, but not always.

Dbayeh youth also walked around the camp in groups, though usually much smaller ones and without displaying their ties with as much intensity as the youth of Al-Jalil. Above all, visible spaces were much more fragmented between one neighborhood and another, which were demarcated by the streets. When taking me to interview some elders on the upper streets, Charbel told me that it had been about three years since the last time he walked down those streets. This would be impossible in Al-Jalil. Nonetheless, he still waved to most people peering from their windows and verandas.

Along with the stores, the Caritas, and the UNRWA offices, the camp included: two churches; a Little Sisters of Nazareth house[19] – a branch of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), which is in turn an agency of the Holy See; an office for World Vision Lebanon; a "clinic" or health post, only open for a few hours a couple of days a week; the Joint Christian Committee for Social Services in Lebanon, and a couple of other NGOs. Apart from the foreign nuns of the Little Sisters, employees were usually Christian Lebanese. None of them were Palestinian, although some of them employed Palestinians in the lower ranks of their staff. These organizations tended to find it easier to hire someone from within the local community to pass on their own educational agenda. In that regard, some Palestinians complained

19 The Little Sisters of Nazareth had nuns stationed in Beirut since 1971. After the war started, however, they moved to Jordan in 1976, and upon returning to Lebanon in 1978, the Pontifical Mission provided the living quarters in Dbayeh that they occupy today.

that the services provided were not made for Palestinians, and that most of the beneficiaries were in fact "Lebanese" (a category that, as we saw, could include, or be completely composed of the *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians).

Contrary to Al-Jalil, where authority over the camp was heavily disputed among the UNRWA appointees, the many socio-political movements/parties, traditional leaders, and to a lesser extent, NGO or association presidents, Dbayeh seemed to be firmly ruled by the Lebanese. The same Palestinians who would complain about the charitable work in Dbayeh also complained that the manager of the local UNRWA office was a Muslim non-resident of Dbayeh – contrary to the organization's stipulation that the manager of a camp should always be a local refugee. Nevertheless, the actual manager of the camp was not UNRWA. The *de facto* manager of the camp was Caritas Lebanon Migration Center, at least according to many Palestinians living in Dbayeh.[20]

As opposed to Al-Jalil, there were no political organizations inside the camp whatsoever, neither Palestinian nor Lebanese. However, graffiti covered the walls of houses around the camp, and especially near its southern border with the Lebanese surroundings, marking the territorial dominance of the *Katā'eb* (Phalangists) or the *Quwāt al-Lubnāniyya* (Lebanese Forces, or L.F). The residents voiced political preferences in terms of Lebanese politics, and almost never in terms of the Palestinian ones. A sizable part of the camp supported "General Aoun," a Maronite Christian known for his recent alliance with Hezbollah and for ordering the army shelling of the camp in the 1990 conflict. Having experienced the destruction, these Palestinians nonetheless tended to see Aoun as an ally who came to liberate the camp from the hands of the Phalangists. However, some also supported the Lebanese Forces (L.F.), which had split from the *Katā'eb* prior to the party's militia invasion of Dbayeh. These two groups were seen as completely distinct from one another in Dbayeh as in Lebanon, but not among almost all other Palestinian refugees. During my entire stay in Dbayeh, I saw only three posters in support of Aoun, and no poster whatsoever for any other politician. However, I used to see a sixteen-year-old boy brandishing an LF flag on the moped he used for work to deliver all kinds of goods to the area surrounding the camp. Once, upon encountering him at the local L.F. office located just up from the gas station at the base of the hill, he told me that he worked for the party.

20 As explained in the introductory section of this chapter, I had to ask authorization from Caritas (and not UNRWA) to be able to conduct field research in Dbayeh.

Due to the local political *modus operandi*, it was common even among those against the Phalangists or the L.F. to try to maintain at least one *wasṭa* (intermediary; fixer) in one of these parties to be able to deal with official state matters, emergency situations, or simply for access to certain privileges that might improve daily life. This state of affairs merely reflected a general preference for interpersonal relations over formal and institutional ties in Lebanon[21] - which informed not only Lebanese politics, but also Lebanese and Palestinian quotidian life in the country. Drawing on the observations above, it is possible to argue that, since politics in Dbayeh was expressed through support for one or another Lebanese party, this alone would have been enough for Al-Jalil residents – and those of any other Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon – to claim that Dbayeh refugees had become Lebanese.

e. Ritual tempo in Dbayeh

Drawing on the insights gathered during my field trip there and recounted so far in this chapter, what I call the ritual tempo in Dbayeh was significantly different from that of Al-Jalil. First and most importantly, it did not revolve around the public articulation of a certain explicit Palestinianness. Precisely the opposite was true: Palestinian identity was mostly constructed and articulated in private, so as to eschew the resurgence of old conflicts with the local population. The open celebration of Palestinianness was in general relegated to the private sphere, especially for those who – like me – had close ties with Palestinians from other camps. Second, social life in Dbayeh was much more dispersed than it was in Al-Jalil as a result of a number of factors. These included: the different categories of belonging (non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians, *muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinians, and non-*aṣl Falastyny* Lebanese); the diffuse physical environment of the camp; the absence of the Palestinian institutions brought by the PLO and the corresponding political vernacular expressed in support of Lebanese politicians; the priority of local kinship and neighborhood disputes over manifestations of political and ethnic identity; and the residents'

21 Again – just like anywhere else in Lebanon – there were also those in Dbayeh who refused such bonds with anyone that was not from a specific category of belonging deemed among the most respectable ones for these subjects. However, in Dbayeh, ideologies such as any political or nationalistic ones tended to lose much of their appeal in the eyes of the locals, who generally regarded local community gains, losses, and other local and personal issues as much more important than any greater cause.

attachment to Christian values and perceptions of themselves as Christians and therefore different from other Palestinian refugees, which related to an effacement of the Palestinian national character as an identity marker, and to its substitution with a desire to mingle with their Lebanese neighbors. Third, and most striking to the observer, Dbayeh's ritual tempo was subtle, slow, much less formalized, and often marked by hypo-expression of identity, especially when compared to the fast-paced, formalized, and hyper-expressed ritual tempo of Al-Jalil. This, however, does not mean that there were no public celebrations in Dbayeh as well.

f. Church Ceremonies

Contrary to all other refugee camps, in Dbayeh, there were never demonstrations, rallies, strikes, or any other organized mass public manifestations of political belonging defined by either ethnicity or the national order of things. Moreover, apart from weddings, birthdays, and funerals, there were practically no public ceremonies and celebrations, and the few that occurred were held inside the two churches and involved only invited guests.

Along with the Maronite Monastery of Mar Yussif at the entrance of the camp, which owns the 84 *dunums* (84.000 square meters) of the camp, Dbayeh also accommodates another church: *Kanysa mār jāūrjys li-l-rūm al-malkiyyn al-kāthūlyk al-mukhayyam* (Church of St. George for the Roman Catholic Melkite – The camp).[22] However, in the words of a local Palestinian resident, the Melkite church was less popular than Mar Yussif, and the only public ceremonies it held were the regular Christian services (masses, prayers, funerals, etc.). Between 2006 and 2010, this church was frequented mostly by Lebanese living in one of the neighboring villages outside the camp. Mar Yussif was effectively the most common site for religious rituals and celebrations, in spite of the large number of Palestinian Melkites in the camp, given that the Christians of Al-Bassa were overwhelmingly Melkites. There has been at least another church in Dbayeh, the Roman Catholic church of the Pontifical Mission,

22 I took the full name, containing the suffix "*al-mukhayyam*" (the camp) from a poster of a local itinerant religious festival mentioning all visited localities, hence the need to further qualify the church. Since this suffix is not commonly added, I kept the suffix separated in my translation. Besides, it is also worth noticing that "the camp" was mentioned in such a poster not because it is a known entity, but probably because the festival had the support of the international organization, the *Catholic Near East Welfare Association*, which is in turn active in supporting Dbayeh's refugees.

which Dr. Anis Sayigh's father helped to build in 1974 (see *Chapter 2*). However, it was destroyed during the civil war. Despite the wishes of some local Palestinians, the priest was a Lebanese nonresident of the camp, who made his formal appearance in the church only about twice a week.[23] Therefore, the church was geared to appeal to the interests of the whole mixed parish, and not the particular interests of the Palestinians.[24]

As a consequence, in Dbayeh, the calendar of celebrations and other organized events of mass participation were exclusively dependent on the Christian calendar and did not involve ethnic or national themes. However, social references springing from these motives were still constitutive of daily life in Dbayeh, and especially through the pivotal socializing role the *muwāṭiniyyn* played in the camp. Furthermore, organized mass participation events that highlighted social belonging and did not coincide with the foreseeable local calendars did not occur during my field trip, with the exception of one event that I will describe in what follows. As in Al-Jalil, marriages, funerals, births, anniversaries, and other more personal celebrations often provided motivation for social gatherings. In Dbayeh, such celebrations represented the extent of social occasions, alongside church led events and a small number of tentative meetings to establish a social work association.[25] In addition, due to local divisions, they tended to occur in smaller enclosed spaces, such as the church itself or private houses, and in attendance of just a few Dbayeh residents

Celebrations tended to be much less public in Dbayeh because there was not as much social common ground for celebration as there was in Al-Jalil, and because events such as marriages were typically family matters. I was formally invited to a few weddings in Al-Jalil. For some of them, part of the marriage ceremony was conducted in the mosque, followed by more private festivities held in community centers. The party was never held at the mosque. I also attended a wedding in Mar Elias in Beirut, where the same happened. However, in Dbayeh marriages were a private matter, and I was actually never invited to one. For instance, when a local friend's sister was married, I learned about her wedding only upon inquiring about the reason for the fireworks

23 This was also the case with health agents and the UNRWA administrator (although the latter was a Muslim Palestinian nonresident of the camp).

24 The conflict over the given church being a place for Palestinians to voice their own demands and desires will be more fully developed in the next chapter.

25 This theme will be developed in conjunction with the role of the church in the next chapter of this book.

display in the area, since as far as I was aware, there were no major political events that night. Someone informed me of the marriage, and when I walked down two streets (I used to live on the fourth street up the camp), I could hear loud and happy chatter coming from my friend's parent's house. On the following day, when I congratulated him for his sister's marriage, he excused himself saying that, since it was his sister's marriage, he was not permitted personal guests.

In Al-Jalil, I hardly needed an invitation to go and listen to the sheikh's speech about the couple and the union, which was also almost always charged with national and religious themes and the way in which the couple related to them. However, since the local ritual tempo of Dbayeh was much more reserved and did not revolve so much around the public celebration of an overarching community theme, the local social fragmentation made events such as marriages much more private and personal than they were in other camps in general. While formal ceremonies were frequently held outside the camp, only the closer relatives and friends were invited for the ensuing party. On the day of my friend's sister's wedding, I had already suspected that someone was getting married due to comments I overheard. However, since I took for granted that marriage ceremonies would be as public as those in Al-Jalil, I initially assumed that this wedding ceremony could not possibly take place within the camp.

In fact, marriage ceremonies outside the camp were fairly common during my field research in Dbayeh, as many Palestinians who could work did so in villages and towns around the camp such as Antelias or Jal Al-Dib. If they were *muwāṭan*, chances were that they would wed a Lebanese partner. Such an outcome was highly desirable among the younger generations in the camp, since it could resolve or at least help mitigate their refugee status. Which is not to say that such marital unions were purely pragmatic; they naturally also entailed sincere romantic bonds between the parties. Unfortunately, women had a much higher likelihood of finding such unions. This was because Lebanese women and their families tended to avoid what was often considered a hypogamic marriage with a Palestinian refugee man. In a culture where rights and much more, including citizenship, are passed on to the next generation through the male lineage, a union between a Lebanese man and a Palestinian woman was far less inconvenient than the reverse. Due to Lebanon's patriarchal descent rule, only women could gain Lebanese citizenship and thus become *muwāṭanat* (feminine plural of citizens), while in the much rarer cases of

non-*muwāṭiniyyn* Palestinian men marrying Lebanese women, the man would still be considered Palestinian along with his descendants.[26]

In a rare intersectarian instance, a Palestinian woman from Dbayeh with no Lebanese citizenship married a wealthy (for Dbayeh standards at least) Muslim from Tyr in south Lebanon. She moved from the camp to south Lebanon and converted to Islam. It was not clear to me how much the conversion was motivated by her and her children's rights and obligations versus a spontaneous change in her beliefs. If she had remained Christian, she and her children could not inherit anything from her Muslim husband (Sa'adeh 1993) and being Palestinian would only complicate matters further. Her conversion to Islam was manifested in, for example, not allowing any man, even kin, to kiss her children on the cheek, as was common practice among Christian Lebanese, stating that such behavior was religiously interdicted (*ḥarām*). Neither she nor her daughters wore a *ḥijāb* (headscarf), but her brothers – still Christian – reinforced the respectful treatment of their Muslim nieces.

The Tyr case aside, such international (or interethnic) alliances were very rare in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and whenever they did occur, the couple would as a matter of course live outside the camp. In fact, an entire area along the highway near Al-Jalil (i.e., from the camp towards Zahlé) was also known to be demographically Palestinian, although symbolically and politically within Lebanese territory. In addition to the many Palestinians who moved there due to the lack of space inside the camp or in search of a more comfortable financial situation,[27] those who married local residents of Baalbek generally found refuge in this neutral place as well.

In Dbayeh, the borders of the camp did not define community as much as they did in Al-Jalil. For example, when considering wedding guests, different subjects would typically invite family and friends from outside the camp, but not invite many of the camp's inhabitants. Closeness to one's heart (*qaryb 'al-qalb*, as it was commonly expressed to me) was the main criterion for such

26 This was partially why it was much rarer (although not impossible) to find a Palestinian man married to a Lebanese woman.

27 This was the case, for instance, for those many who had relatives living in northern Europe, such as Sweden or Denmark. Some local political offices and one of the sheikhs estimated that about 50% of all registered camp residents were living in northern Europe, as these countries were known to be friendly towards Palestinians, having offered citizenship to many refugees and funded social work inside the camps.

decisions. Equally important, however, what defined the number of guests was usually the financial situation of the couple's families. While wedding celebrations traditionally and ideally included hundreds of guests, in practice this number had to be greatly reduced to a few dozen, naturally leading to a selection process among the camp's residents. In contrast, this selection was not as pronounced in Al-Jalil, where marriage ceremonies would typically be held in open spaces accessible to all, even when outside the camp.

In Al-Jalil, the mosque and other institutions would help finance weddings (or funerals) for those who could not afford them. Conversely, residents told me that there was no such practice in Dbayeh, indicating the relative lack of civic unity in the Christian camp. However, as in Al-Jalil, a man in Dbayeh had to show proof of his stable financial situation and an ability to provide for his future family in order to gain the woman's parents' permission for the marriage. In both camps, one common (formal or informal) requirement was to build a separate residence in the camp, or to make arrangements for such a place outside the camp. More than once, I witnessed men working by day, and by night building another story above their parents' house or elsewhere in the camp alone or with the help of colleagues. They did so either when they already had a bride in mind, or even when they still only dreamed of marriage without yet any particular person in mind.

The talk I had overheard about my friend's sister's wedding was in fact gossip regarding the list of invitees and other details about the event. As one might expect, some people were entrusted with more detail than others about who would be invited or not, and such topics as related to the wedding, the engagement, or the marriage. Although the families of the bride and the groom allegedly wished to keep a low profile about wedding details, purportedly to not offend those not invited, even a foreigner like me was privy to a number of rumors. With only an acceptable command of the language and culture, it was fairly easy even for me to survey information about the wedding, since people normally would have private (and not so private) contests over who could display the most inside information. Besides, the wedding celebration did take place inside the camp at the bride's parents' house with music, *dabke* dancing, and fireworks. The next day, people resumed gossiping about the party, and life went on.

As I left the camp, I became convinced that not only was a certain measure of leaked information about such private events normal, but also it was desired by those at the center of the "secret" (*sir*), such as in the abovementioned wedding celebration. In other words, perhaps the whole sharing and conceal-

ing of information can be better understood, at least in part, as a struggle to become closer to the protagonists, and/or to become closer to the center of the event itself. As such, this is a good example of the ritualized social practices that were central to the dynamics of social life in Dbayeh, and that in *Chapter 7* I shall call politico-moral local economies of trust. Such practices were by no means absent in Al-Jalil, but while in Al-Jalil they were part of a much more normative ritualized tempo, in Dbayeh they were almost all there was to a collective ritualization of daily life, evoking and enforcing embodied collective sensibilities, affects, and dispositions to camp residents.

g. Pilgrimage to "Our" Lady of Lebanon

Family related celebrations held semi-publicly in the camp and widespread subtle ritualized practices of interpersonal relations were almost all there was to the ritual tempo in Dbayeh. However, a few religious events such as Christmas, Easter, and others also dotted the public calendar of the camp. This Christian calendar was, however, by no means restricted to Dbayeh, but also shared with the Lebanese surroundings. A major collective event of this sort was the Pilgrimage to Harissa, which had been a common topic of discussion for at least a week by the time May 2008 came around, a month known in Lebanon as *al-Shahar al-Maryamy* (The Virgin Mary's Month). I recall one day in particular when we were all talking about it, including Charbel, two young men in their thirties, a man in his seventies, some children running around, and me, along with whoever else went down the stairs to order something from Charbel's *pastry shop*. Even passersby made comments about the event from the street level down to us in the *pastry shop*.

Harissa is the name of a village in Mount Lebanon located on a mountain top east of Jounieh and about 12.5 miles north of Beirut. It was one of Mount Lebanon's most important tourist attractions, and visitors could reach the top of the mountain either by means of a 2,130-foot-tall *téléferique* (cable car) located in Jounieh, or by car following the paved road on the western face of the mountain. Harissa was named after the 15-ton statue of the Virgin Mary,[28] which was also locally known as *Sayda Lubnān* (Arabic), *Notre Dame du Liban* (French), and Our Lady of Lebanon. It was located atop the mountain near the tiny Virgin Mary Cathedral. Many Lebanese, both Christian and Muslim,

28 Harissa was inaugurated in 1908, is made of bronze, and painted in white. Until today, it is under the auspices of the Maronite church.

believed that a teardrop fell from the statue's eye during the Lebanese Civil War. A dark vertical line descending from its eye was taken as proof of this miracle and a clear sign of the Virgin Mary's disapproval of the war.

On the day we were discussing the pilgrimage at Charbel's *pastry shop*, the group told me that all Christian denominations alike participated in the event. No one was really sure, however, since all of those present were Catholic, like most Palestinians in the camp. They were also not sure if the statue and cathedral were Roman Catholic, Melkite, or Maronite, which did not seem to matter much in their eyes.[29] Of most importance was that the Pope[30] himself once visited the site. When most of them expressed a desire to join the pilgrimage by walking from Dbayeh to the statue, I declared that wished to join them. No one questioned my intentions, but some of them did question my actual willingness (and even capacity) for such physical effort. After all, it would take many hours of walking to reach our destination. Looking around me, I judged that I was not in the worst of physical fitness among us all, and I confirmed my willingness. It was then agreed that we would all meet at night and leave together from the camp. I arranged to meet one of the young men at the *pastry shop*, since I did not know the location of the house where the others were gathering. The group expressed a wish to spend the night at the pilgrimage site itself, at which point Charbel regretted that while he wished to join us, he could not leave his shop, as he had to open early in the morning.

Later that night, I returned to Charbel's shop, where the man who was to accompany me was already waiting with a friend. They were all wearing their best clothes and advised me to go back home (two streets above) and do the same. Once I came back to the shop, we finally moved on to the meeting point. There, the two men and I met a woman in her early forties taking care of one child, while her other child, a boy of about thirteen, curiously asked me questions. We all waited for one more person before leaving, and I wondered out loud what had happened to the others who had expressed interest earlier that day, not to mention other camp residents in general. I was told that, while some would go alone and meet us on the way or at the top, most of the others would not be joining us, since they had to work the next day.

29 I later learned that the shrine belongs to the Maronite patriarchate.

30 Jean Paul II visited Harissa on May 10, 1997. Dbayeh Palestinians and Christian Lebanese alike commonly reported to me that it was already a pilgrimage site before Jean Paul II's visit, but that the site's popularity drastically increased after.

I thought that most residents would make the trip another time, since there was no agreed upon day for the pilgrimage and people would continuously visit the site, walking up and down the path to Harissa, throughout The Virgin Mary's Month. However, it was also true that most people who would go on pilgrimage would do so at the beginning of the month, especially on the first day as we were doing. Hence, for one reason or another, the Dbayeh inhabitants participating in the pilgrimage were few in number when considering the camp's demography as a whole. I asked the woman whether there were other pilgrimages, and she said there was Jerusalem, but that Palestinians (meaning those living in Lebanon) could not join. That was all she could remember. Therefore, Harissa was the only pilgrimage most Dbayeh refugees would generally undertake.

When the last person finally joined our little group, we set out, cutting through the concrete stairways of Dbayeh's narrow, meandering alleys. Shortly thereafter, we arrived in front of a pile of trash that marked one of the official boundaries of the camp at the back of a Lebanese sports club. Some in the group commented in disgust at how the Lebanese discarded their trash at the boundaries of the camp, explaining that this practice revealed a general disrespect for the camp's Palestinians. Soon after, however, they were smiling again. The pilgrimage, as experienced by the local Palestinian refugees, was at least as much a happy occasion to come together and celebrate as it was a time of penitence. It was not a time, however, for socio-political critique, as such an event would have been in Al-Jalil.

After a short walk, during which we casually chatted about many things, we reached the gas station at the base of the hill and then headed north along the Beirut-Tripoli highway. We seemed to be the only ones resembling a group on a pilgrimage. The rare other pedestrians we encountered were those in the most urban areas, walking along the opposite side on the highway's coastal lane, and carrying plastic supermarket bags or other hand luggage suggesting they were not participating in the event. That said, however, perhaps we did not much resemble pilgrims either, but a group of friends going to a party instead. Little by little, I started seeing small groups of individuals coming out of cars and public buses. Then, as we walked across the Nahr El-Kalb monument site at the mouth of a highway tunnel, the number of pilgrims dramatically increased. As people gathered, it finally felt to me that we were in fact on a pilgrimage. Both older and younger people joined in, but mostly young adults walked alongside us.

In Al-Jalil, children or youth played an important role in public performances, which was understandable not only given the usually high number of children in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon,[31] but especially due to the perceived need to pave the future path of "the Palestinian Cause" towards "the Return." Thus, in celebrations of national events such as Nakba Day or Land Day, children played a central part. Likewise, in the pilgrimage to Harissa, an even larger number of young people participated for different reasons. First, I noticed older people only joined the procession closer to the statue site, as the physical challenge of the long walk was an impediment to many. Those who could not complete the walk starting from Nahr al-Kalb or further away, were usually dropped off near the statue where they could take the final steps of their pilgrimage. The most important aspect of the pilgrimage was to challenge one's will and physical limitations in a sign of penitence and respect. Second, as we walked along, I realized that, for the youth, this was also an opportunity to bond and have fun, as most who had agreed to join were not in fact eager to be challenged out of their comfort zones and showed signs of weariness right away. Thus, it could be argued that, although many of the camp's residents were considered "religious," and while organized Christianity along with embodied affects, sensibilities, and dispositions greatly influenced by religion did in fact impact much of the camp's routine, most of Dbayeh's residents should not be considered particularly pious. While the same could be said about many in Al-Jalil, the overall conformity to religious principles of behavior and expectations concerning the observation of religious rituals and tenets was much stricter there. In this way, the group I joined for the Harissa pilgrimage was only partly motivated by piety, while also motivated by habit, social expectation, prospects for social gathering, management of community social standing, and others, all inextricably linked with each other. The remainder of this story helps to substantiate this argument.

At a certain point, one of the young men looked at me and asked if I was tired and if I preferred to take one of the buses that delivered people to the highway leading up to Harissa. I assured him I was fine, but, looking at the unhappy faces of the younger ones among us, I asked in turn if he preferred to take a bus. He answered no, but that the others should probably do so. I agreed, as another young man laughed teasingly at a tired boy. Throughout

31 Dbayeh was again exceptional in this sense, given that only about 49% of the population were children or young adults (World Vision 2007).

the walk, this boy had been a source of amusement for our group, especially since he had to find where to relieve himself along the margin of the highway in the middle of the way. While the others tried their best to be respectful and maintain an aura of sacredness about the procession, even they did not quite manage at that moment, bursting into giggles as they pointed and made faces at the boy, only to regret it later. This cycle of mundane mockery and regret recurred throughout our pilgrimage.

Close to Jounieh, we all stopped for refreshments at a small market. I bought water and went outside to wait for the others who came out and sat on the curb. While the boy had a juice bottle, the adults opted for beer to quench their thirst. This pause was also an opportunity to light cigarettes, despite the visible lack of breath of some and particularly of the young woman, whose nose, forehead, and neck were covered in sweat. I asked whether it was perhaps contradictory to smoke and drink while on pilgrimage. They found my point about smoking curious and answered that smoking did not represent a problem. As for drinking, one or another beer was normal, they explained, but they certainly had no intention of becoming drunk, especially because there was still a long way to go.

About 4 hours later, having joked and chatted all along the way, but also having repeatedly evoked the sacredness of the ritual, we finally reached the base of the mount leading towards the Virgin Marry statue, and took a cheap bus to reach the top. However, there was some fear of being seen in the bus and consequently not being taken seriously. The pilgrimage would not produce the desired effect this way. Somehow, the efficacy of the pilgrimage and the likelihood of being seen by others on a bus – rather than taking the bus whether or not anyone would see it – was at times entangled in the group's talk. So, we all agreed to remain on the bus only until the last curve before the statue, and to approach Harissa walking.

On this final stretch, as we walked up the hill, there were many tents and improvised huts selling food, refreshments, and souvenirs. Many stands were also giving away food and other items for free. These non-commercial stands were all subsidized by Christian Lebanese political parties, mainly the *Katā'eb*, the L.F., and the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun. They handed out water bottles, pastries, and other refreshments, as well as party t-shirts and caps. Upon seeing such a scene, I remembered that on the day before, I had worked hard to help Charbel produce hundreds of pastries to be distributed at Harissa. The work, he said, was commissioned by a politician. He did not, however, reveal the politician's name, and so I avoided asking. After all, had

he been working for Aoun, whom he openly supported, he would have had no shame in telling me about it. Instead, he confessed about the pastry order in a hushed voice, indicating he would not have accepted it if he did not need the revenue.

On the hill, young people also gathered around their cars communicating agitatedly among themselves, some with their car trunks open to help spread the sound of political hymns playing on their radios in a bid to be louder than the others. I was especially struck by a military march for Samir Geagea's LF, which sounded stronger than any Palestinian hymn I had heard while living in Al-Jalil. This display was nothing less than impressive and even surprising to me, given the supposedly religious character of the pilgrimage. Similar to Palestinian political hymns, the LF recording featured a men's chorus singing nationalist mottos in deep guttural voices, while marching drums set a rallying tone. None in our group directly approached such politically charged areas. If in Dbayeh religious rituals were generally not coupled with political activism as they were in Al-Jalil, the pilgrimage to Harissa in this Lebanese setting certainly was.

At the top of the mountain, I began to see more Muslims, who were easy to spot due to the veiled women. I then realized that the political attitude I had been witnessing was territorial in character. Given the status of the Virgin Mary in Islam, and that the area was a common tourist attraction, many Muslim pilgrims also participated that night. Muslim men and veiled and unveiled Muslim women made their supplications and prayers at the same statue where the huge Christian-majority multitude was gathering.

On top of the hill but outside the fenced area demarcating the sanctuary, composed of the statue and a couple of churches and shrines, the youth set up their tents where they intended to spend the night. Others, including a small number of travelers from places such as Syria and Jordan, camped as well. Inside the fenced area, thousands of people filled the sanctuary. The basilica alone fit about four thousand, and people came and went in all directions inside and outside the many buildings and around the central plaza. The modern basilica was built next to the Harissa Cathedral in the 1970s by the Maronite patriarchate[32] to receive the pilgrims, but the most imposing building of them all was the Melkite Basilica of St. Paul. To the Dbayeh pilgrims, however, the most important building, besides the statue, was the Apostolic Nun-

32 Located a few miles below the site

ciature.[33] To me, this preference, coupled with the fact that among the Palestinian refugees in Dbayeh the Maronite monastery was more popular than the Melkite church, signaled that many of the camp's Palestinian refugees did not put much stock into following the theology and religious network of their own Christian denomination. Besides these observations, there were also other instances confirming my assessment. For example, some of the Melkite residents belonged to the Maronite monastery children's chorus, while others enrolled their children in the Maronite school bellow the camp. Practical reasons, such as convenience, seemed to be among the most important factors driving this trend, but community life – both within the camp and in relation to its surroundings – strongly influenced the practice of engaging different churches and Christian denominations.

At the entrance of the sanctuary, we met other Dbayeh Palestinians who had made the pilgrimage, some of whom had taken a bus or car straight to the top. They were not many, and most roamed around to meet people while accomplishing their few pilgrimage obligations, which consisted of lighting a candle for each prayer, as well as walking to the sanctuary or at least visiting its sacred sites. Following the lead of my group, I bought some candles at the store next to the cathedral and lit them while praying. I myself was also not a particularly pious person, nor did I especially adhere to the tenets of my Roman Catholic upbringing, but so was the case with the others in my group, after all.

To my surprise, we began our return to Dbayeh not long after reaching the top of Harissa. I reminded the others that we had intended to spend the night at the site, but they explained that they were tired – the young woman added that she had to wake up early to work in Jal El-Dib, where she was a house cleaner for a Lebanese family. I began to wonder if they would have even made the trip, had it not been for my repeated nudging and inquiry into their commitment to the event. While I will probably never know, what matters here is to note the way in which the group had to live up to expectations only minimally so as to reaffirm their Christianity, and, with it, their character. Even if this time they went through with the pilgrimage only because of my prodding, I understand that had it been that of anyone else in the camp or its surroundings, the result would have been the same. This, in turn, illustrates how subjects, while not necessarily individually committed to this and other such rites in Dbayeh, collectively they were. We walked halfway down the hill

33 Papal embassy

and embarked on a bus back to the gas station at the bottom of Dbayeh. Wishing everybody a good night, I knew that on the next day we would be telling tales of that year's pilgrimage, reaping the social but also internalized personal rewards for having done it. After all, they were pilgrims not just in the eyes of the others, but also in their own eyes.

Following my experience in the previous camp, I expected to find in the Harissa pilgrimage the equivalent to all those rituals that had set the tempo of daily life in Al-Jalil. I found instead that, when compared with Al-Jalil, Dbayeh's lack of an ideological commitment to a cause and its lack of a vibrant community life were also reflected in its relative absence of common ritual life. It seemed that there were not many shared messages, rules, and utopias set forth in Dbayeh. There was no evidence of a single people striving towards a common goal, as I had found in Al-Jalil. Instead, Dbayeh residents in general were struggling in an entirely different way. While the younger generations, partially represented in the Harissa pilgrimage, tried to assimilate as much as possible, the elderly strove to keep a safe distance from everything that represented the outside, including both the Palestinians from other camps and the surrounding Lebanese population.[34]

Finally, just as in Jalil, religion permeated every single social institution in Dbayeh and tended to hold sway over both the discourse and the actions of local Palestinians. Once more similar to Al-Jalil, religion was not always a binding and imperative manual of behavior, but more of a general moral compass for social and personal actions. In other words, people often did not behave precisely according to what they read in their divine books, or what they heard from their clerics. Rather, these orthodoxies evoked dispositions, affects, and sensibilities as they intermingled with other traditions, practices, and discourses found in the context of each camp. Therefore, it was not that Dbayeh Palestinians were less religious than Al-Jalil ones. In general, they were less pious than many in Al-Jalil, and followed less closely religious, ethnic, national or even political imperatives. This, in turn, accounted for the lack of communal goals relative to Al-Jalil, greatly contributing to the fragmentation of the local social fabric and concomitantly opening it to the surrounding community – our Lady of Lebanon being thus also theirs. However, the consequent lack of public ritual life in the camp, especially turned inwards but also in general, did not prevent religiosity in Dbayeh to continue to inform the refugees' quotidian routine and their understanding of themselves just

34 This is in accordance with the theme of suspicion developed in *Chapter 1*.

as much as it did in Al-Jalil. So far, I had not yet seen Dbayeh acting as a community, but I had not yet seen it all.

h. The Funeral and the Groom

One afternoon, I was walking around Dbayeh when I noticed people running from one place to another in a panic. The sight of an old lady standing, covering her open mouth with one hand, and supporting her elbow with the other was enough for anyone to realize that a tragedy had occurred. I was told that Suleyman, a 31-year-old young man from the camp, had been accidently electrocuted while taking a shower. As the day went on, someone would continuously appear carrying news about the incident. First, we were told the details of the accident, then of plans to take him to the hospital, and after that, we were informed that the victim was *en route* to the hospital. People were eager to hear news updates, and the atmosphere in the camp was tense – so much so, that I thought Suleyman, the victim, may have had especially strong ties to my section of the camp, though he lived far from it. After a while without news, we were finally told that he had died. I was faced with the tragic death of a young *muwāṭan* who died in an accident. He was not an especially prominent member of the community, but the commotion after the shock of the incident mobilized everyone. At the time of my fieldwork, this was as big as news would get in the camp, and it was the only time I saw the entire camp coming together and acting as a community.

Immediately upon hearing of his death, I went to see some neighbors who were close to the victim. Like everyone else in the camp, apparently, they already knew of the incident. Tragic information traveled remarkably fast. Fifteen minutes later, I went home to change into better clothes. Along the way, almost all pedestrians either asked if I already knew what had happened, or greeted me sharing the tragedy, taking for granted that I had already heard about it. Shortly thereafter, I went to the deceased's house, accompanying my neighbors who were intimate with the victim. His mother was beyond consoling, and others cried copiously at the sight of her state.

A couple of hours after the confirmed death, Muslim women arrived by taxi. It was not the first time I had seen Muslim women visiting the camp, as occasionally they came in small groups of two or three to visit relatives. It was much more unusual to see Muslim men. Muslims in general were a rare sight in Dbayeh, and the event I was witnessing brought many more than usual. As

Suleyman's mother recognized one of the Muslim women exiting the car, she rushed toward the veiled lady, bursting into tears upon contact.

One boy approached me pointing to a photoshopped poster that featured a picture of the deceased posing in front of a flowered garden with his arms crossed. The poster hung from a utility pole, and the inscription at the bottom read: *Lan nansāk abadan*[35] (we will never forget you). As I looked around, I noticed others like it everywhere.

Suleyman's parent's house had set up an improvised mourning room in the small yard and garage with many chairs and a canopy covering the entire place. Judging by the number of chairs, it was likely that many had been brought by relatives and neighbors, who would have helped the family prepare the space. The body was still in the hospital, but many people came and went and trays with refreshments and cigarettes were passed around, especially to the elders occupying the chairs. Young men stood embracing and leaning on each other for support as they cried loudly.

The next morning, some people stood outside the camp at the corner of the Royal Hotel, awaiting the body to arrive from the hospital. Strangely, for me, in contrast to the previous day's mourning, the mood was celebratory as the sound of a *derbake*, *daff*,[36] and singing filled the air. The music sounded like *dabke* to me. As I made myself available to help with whatever was needed, I waited up on the hill for about 30 minutes along with a few friends from the camp. We finally spotted the motorcade. The cars honked, and each was decorated with a silky white ribbon tied from front to rear or from one side to the other. The majority of Suleyman's closer relatives did not wear black. When the car containing the body reached the corner of the street, a group of twenty-five to thirty women in black came down the camp yelling and wailing. Although wearing black, they all held white flowers in their hands. Fireworks cracked as the coffin was lifted from the car. A friend who had been driving one of the procession cars came to me with a key in hand and entrusted me to park it in a designated area next to Suleyman's parents' house, as he was busy with other preparations. I did this quickly, so that I could go back and watch the rest of the ceremony.

On foot, the procession now made its way to Suleyman's house. There, the coffin was laid open in the mourning room that had been arranged the day before, and many of the same people now occupied similar spots. Mourners

35 لن ننساك أبدا

36 Two percussion instruments typical in the Levant

approached and looked through the top of the coffin, some braking down in tears. A group of women moved to the site and stood around the coffin, they then danced, each in her own place, singing a serenade to the deceased. The women bent their knees and swung their heads from side to side. Carrying white flowers in their hands, they simultaneously swung their arms from side to side and front to back, extending the white flowers to the coffin. The sight resembled the spread of smoke from burning incense in a priest's swinging censer during mass.

After a few hours, the coffin was once more paraded in the streets through half the camp as it made its way to the church in an indirect route. A group of about six men, all relatives, and close friends of the deceased, led the parade carrying the coffin. Some of the carriers switched roles at times, as they became too emotionally affected to bear the weight of the coffin, or even remain standing. As they marched inside the camp, fireworks cracked at every corner. Certain people were responsible for lighting them at strategic points signaling the procession's passage. The sounds of the *derbake*, *daff*, ululation, singing, weeping, and howling accompanied the fireworks.

The men shook the coffin by alternately bending their knees and arms, while beating it with the palms of their hands. I worried the coffin would turn or even break, but this never happened, and I seemed to be the only one concerned. People, some wearing black and some not, cried and threw rice into the streets from their houses as the marching group passed by. Others threw rice from the margins of the streets, while a few timidly and reluctantly tried to approach Suleyman's body for a last look. Besides those who participated by standing in the streets or hanging from the windows, doors, and verandas of their houses, I estimated around at least four hundred people following the procession.

At first, I did not understand the reason for the prominent use of the color white, the throwing of rice, the serenade, the *dabke*, and other such elements that did not fit with a traditional Christian funeral, as I knew it. I was aware that, traditionally, village funerals in Palestine tended to be celebrated with dancing and not bound by black,[37] but Suleyman's funeral was exceptionally white and more festive than what I had previously known. I thought perhaps Christian Palestinian and/or Christian Lebanese funerals were different like this, as the only funeral I had attended in Al-Jalil looked much more like

37 I had heard accounts of marriages celebrated as such in Lebanese villages as well.

the ones I was used to seeing in Brazil, Europe, the USA, or elsewhere. I remembered another funeral I once witnessed in Shatila, in which there was also dancing and a procession while the coffin was covered with a Palestinian flag, and then there was the symbolic burial of George Habash in that camp as well, as I described earlier in this book. In the Shatila cases, however, funerals were thus commemorated because the deceased was to be treated as a *shahyd* (martyr), for whom there should be celebration along with mourning.

While Suleyman belonged to the Lebanese army, he was not exactly a martyr. Later I realized this was indeed a special funeral, but for entirely different reasons. Suleyman may not have been a martyr, but it also was not his time to die. Looking back, the men seemed to have lost control over their emotions at the remembrance of Suleyman more so than the women, contrary to stereotypes. This revealed a certain depth in male-to-male friendships in Dbayeh (also valid for Al-Jalil). A single young woman, however, at one point fainted and had to be taken away by car. She, I later learned, was Suleyman's fiancé to whom he was soon to be married. As lamented by some of those present, "Suleyman was too young to die." It was "not right" for "the parents to bury their son." In fact, he was supposed to marry, and instead he died. Given the circumstances, his funeral was to be celebrated as much as possible according to what those present thought it should have been: a marriage.

As soon as Suleyman's body arrived inside Mar Yussif church, the *dabke* stopped. The coffin was then placed near the altar, while people filled the rest of the church sitting on the benches and leaning against the walls. A pair of Lebanese military trousers was placed on top of the coffin, signaling his army credentials. One young man in Lebanese army gear cried alone in a corner, and a Lebanese army officer with his cap and full chevron blue uniform greeted everyone. As he even greeted me, I realized he did not know many people at that funeral, however he warmly embraced the deceased's brother. A woman, looking a bit lost, chattered about the "*shab* Falasṭyny" (the Palestinian young man) while pointing to Suleyman. During the procession and especially at the church, many Lebanese were present from inside and outside the camp. Likewise, many Palestinians attended, a few also from outside the camp. An old Muslim woman in front of the altar silently examined the statues of the saints and their positions, while another one leaning on the wall near the door at the other end of the church prayed. Another Muslim woman sat amidst the rest of the congregation, where I was, in the middle of the church, asking a pair of Christian women next to her about eating the *host*, or sacramental bread symbolizing the body of Christ. After listening to their

answer, she made an expression of distaste. She then asked another question that I could not hear, the answer to which provoked the same reaction from the elderly Muslim woman. The two Christian women accompanying her did not seem to mind, however, and delicately accommodated the stranger. At some point, a man complained that "they" (Dbayeh residents) would go down to Rashidyeh, Shatila or Burj El-Barajneh on such occasions as this, but that the reverse was not true.

Although everyone was already at the church, the actual ceremony did not start until a few hours later. Some around me therefore suggested we leave for a while. Outside, free water bottles were provided for those who needed them,[38] and there were trays containing about a dozen brands of cigarettes that were rapidly being consumed. A group of Lebanese army soldiers stood at the entrance of the small room next to the church entrance where the cigarettes were being served. In the afternoon, the number of people seemed to have increased, and around thirty soldiers with two different uniforms were present. Most paid their respects and did not linger.

The same women danced around the coffin again, this time circling it, while onlookers inside the church contemplated the ritual. One at a time, the women cried out testimonies and loudly pleaded on behalf of the deceased in the afterlife. From time to time, one woman would substitute the other in their supplications, to avoid silence. At other times, they would all pause only to resume a few moments later. A Muslim elderly woman remained still next to the coffin for the whole duration of the dance. Suddenly, the women stopped and went to their places in the pews. The Lebanese priest of the church was already at the altar, and soon he started his collective prayers, which were much shorter than I expected. Soon, the same young man I once knew as the Dbayeh circus performer in Burj al-Barajneh took to the altar to speak about Suleyman's place in the community. I had already learned then that the performer was very much engaged in the church's activities, including the chorus and one or another sporadic *masraḥiyya* (theater play).

When it was time to take the body to its final resting place in the church cemetery, the same group of men who had carried the coffin to the church earlier now took it to the grave. During this process, just outside the church, a well-known Dbayeh resident who was also one of the carriers abandoned the

38 As recommended by local friends, I had bought some myself and brought them to the church.

coffin with his arms stretched wide open and his head leaning on his shoulder. His eyes were closed, and his eyebrows sharply contracted. After swirling away from the coffin, he fainted on the floor and was carried away from the scene. The whole movement reminded me of certain Sufi *zikr*[39] performances, although the person in question was a Melkite Christian. Once again, the rest of the carriers beat the coffin making Suleymans' body dance. When the body reached its final resting place, it was deposited without any more ceremony, except that some did not want to put the body into the grave. The whole ceremony marked expressions of feelings for the deceased in most radical ways. Apart from rare occasions, such as when the priest spoke, there was no calm or silence. Havoc was the rule, not the exception. Instead of manifesting acceptance of death, the whole ritual was marked by the pretense of a marriage ceremony. That is, many participants behaved as though the deceased was still alive, and the lack of formality to finally bury the body was thus in line with the rest of the ritual.

One year after the funeral, posters of Suleyman were still on the utility posts and walls of the camp and in portrait frames in a few Dbayeh living rooms. Only then did I fully appreciate the importance of the poster the boy had shown me on the day of the funeral: "we will never forget you," it read. Dbayeh residents refused to forget Suleyman, especially given the cause of his death and the events that followed it. The poster made in homage to his memory predicted and reinforced this. Among other things, the poster and the ceremony indicated to me that, despite a history of violence and ongoing disputes, divisions, and generalized suspicion, there was still a desire for a shared essence among most residents, Palestinians and Lebanese alike. This was not well represented by the camp's fragmented social institutions and daily interactions, because it mostly did not exist in the quotidian, however it existed as a shared yearning.

The emotionally powerful ritual, triggered by an unexpected tragedy that seemed to turn the ordinary world upside down, served to instill radical order and unity into a deeply divided social universe, if only momentarily and tentatively. However, the ritual would not have been efficacious, or even possible, were it not for a common widespread desired sense of community. As I mentioned earlier, that desire was there at least among the younger Palestinian refugees, but Suleyman's funeral showed me that, to some extent, it was also

39 From the classic Arabic ذكر ; meaning remembrance, or recitation. Zikr is the common term designating a richly varied gathering ritual performed by different Sufi orders.

present among the Lebanese inhabitants of the camp. Maybe some of these Lebanese were trying to cope with guilt. Maybe they simply wanted to efface Dbayeh's Palestinians refugeeness as much as they could. Maybe they were imbued that day with a great sense of neighborly solidarity. Maybe Suleyman was perceived differently from other local Palestinian refugees. Whatever the answer, the ritual drew strength and gained momentum from this still very much unarticulated common communal embryo, nowhere to be found in the camp's regular ritual tempo and daily routine.

As I have shown before, in Al-Jalil community life was an all-encompassing situation expressed by a variety of local social institutions and interpersonal relations. Community life in Dbayeh was not so simple or inclusive since the absence of overall grassroots social institutions allowed local divisions to multiply. Nonetheless, Suleyman's funeral demonstrates that a tentative way of giving meaning to suffering through the collective expression of grief generated a shared dimension that united Dbayeh's inhabitants as a community. To a lesser extent, happier occasions such as weddings, as I also described above, tapped into this same desire as well. In the case of Suleyman's funeral, this process passed through a reciprocated effort to integrate all camp inhabitants, and their most important *liaisons*, despite national and ethnic categories. I suggest that this effort, and the form it took in practice, can be seen as another expression of the local economy of trust, as I will discuss in *Chapter 7*.

Since in Dbayeh a broader local collective could not be easily defined through performances and expressions of national belonging, things like local religious funeral rites served as a basis for a collective rooted in neighborhood ties and religion. The collective display of suffering and the common denominator of conceptions of the afterlife effaced differences and provided felt experiences of unity. Beyond practical reason, at least for the Lebanese, the strong local moral imperatives relating to eschatology stemming from people's embodied shared religiosities, rather than from orthodox sacraments, further blurred the main local divides. However, differences between local categories did not disappear. Rather, the collective funeral rite is perhaps better seen as a cathartic collective display of emotional sharing and entrustment, strengthening, and creating further social bonds desired by many – bonds difficult if not impossible to maintain in the fragmented social reality of the quotidian. Finally, Suleyman's *muwāṭan* identity, at the center of the polarized ethnic division between Palestinianness and Lebaneseness, was perhaps the only possible locus for such general catharsis. What brought

the Palestinian refugees close to the Lebanese seemed to have been, after all, Suleyman's Lebaneseness.