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## *Editorial*

Palma Journal's special issue on migration aims at contributing to this area of study in a unique manner. By providing a forum for non-veteran scholars in the field to share their current research findings with a broader public, Palma has joined hands with the Lebanese Emigration Research Center in celebrating LERC's sixth anniversary serving international and interdisciplinary scholarly discourse between Lebanon and the rest of the world.

The migration special issue owes its inception to a conversation between Beirut und Buenos Aires, in which Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, an Austrian-American researcher at LERC, and the eminent Argentinean migration scholar, Ignacio Klich, developed the idea for a special migration issue and presented it to the LERC research team. This Libano-Austro-Iberian link laid the foundation for an exciting collection of articles, which I have had the privilege to guest edit. The rest of the story is embodied in the volume at hand, made up of six submissions dealing with the various facets of Lebanese migrants' lives and their relations with their country of origin.

Some of the most insightful work currently being undertaken on Lebanese migration is presented here. This volume is made up of two articles on migration history and four on contemporary topics. The first historical piece, Anne Monsour's "*New century, old story! Race, religion, bureaucrats, and the Australian Lebanese story*", provides an overview of the history of Lebanese settlement in Australia and discusses these immigrants encounter with racial classification and discrimination. She starts with the current perception, common in Australian society, that the Lebanese community is somehow linked to rape, riots, and the "war on terror" campaign and maintains that this perception rests on a historically transmitted image that painted the Lebanese pioneers as "undesirables" or "enemy aliens." Mansour asserts that these pioneers attempted to overcome this 'categorization' process by emphasizing their "whiteness" at the expense of their "Eastern" characteristics. She argues that the restrictive Australian migration policies of the past continue to play a significant role in the lives of the Lebanese immigrants today.

The second historical article, "*The Transnational Imagination: XXth century networks and institutions of the Mashreqi migration to Mexico*", by Camila Pastor de Maria y Campos, addresses the issues of networking, institution formation, and role of the Lebanese community in Mexico from its inception until the present. It argues that migration networks and institutions were organized along confessional lines and through colonial ties mainly to the French Mandate, and that, following the founding of nation states in the Middle East, institutions became more sectarian as they became more 'national'. The author reasons that the "shifting boundaries of these networks reflect the overlapping transnational imaginaries and practices of migrants and colonial and

ecclesiastical authorities.” She contends that the Lebanese migrants to Mexico, whose loyalties in the past were cultivated politically and ecclesiastically and who were instrumentalized as transnational entities, were being cultivated and used in a similar manner following the end of the Civil War in Lebanon.

The first among the contemporary articles deals with gender. In “*Balad Niswen – Hukum Niswen: The perception of gender inversions between Lebanon and Australia*” Nelia Hyndman-Rizik addresses the issue of gender roles of male emigrants from the village of Hadchit in North Lebanon now living in Sydney. She maintains that their self-perception has been emasculated by the migration process. On the one hand, they are confronted with racism and subjugation in Australia, as well as with war and violence in their country of origin, about which they can do very little. On the other hand, changes in the roles of women within the immigrant communities, due to the education of their daughters and the participation of their wives in the Australian economy, further threatens the gendered status quo. Hyndman-Rizik found that these men “have come to imagine the Australian state as a matriarchal state, which is “*hukum niswen*”, ruled by women, as symbolized by the Queen of England as the Head of State.

“*Diaspora and E-Commerce: The Globalization of Lebanese Baklava,*” was written by Guita Hourani. The paper argues that new technologies allow small and medium enterprises in developing countries, especially those with “ethnic” or “nostalgic” merchandise, to carve a niche for their products in the international market. Taking e-commerce in baklava production as an example, this study shows how the main producers of this delicacy used ICT to tap into the Lebanese diaspora, as described in “business to diaspora” theory. The paper argues that shipping across international borders has required the producers to comply with international standards and to be creative in packaging and labelling their products. This process has also created the need for Lebanese financial institutions to facilitate credit card payment and verification. In conclusion, a case can be made for the need for a more enabling legal and telecommunication environment in this sector if it is to expand and thrive in the future.

Rita Stephan’s paper, “*Lebanese-Americans’ Identity, Citizenship and Political Behavior*” examines Lebanese-Americans’ political behavior in order to better understand the correlation between identity politics and ethnic minority citizenship. Stephan surveys how Lebanese, and Arab-Americans as a group, identify themselves and how they are identified by US society. She illustrates how the self-identification of Lebanese-Americans varies according to historical, political, ideological and cultural factors, how Lebanese-Americans vote, how they “frame their activism within the Arab-American framework in promoting their hyphenated community’s interest... and [how] Lebanese sovereignty and independence seems to be a common theme among many Lebanese-American organizations”. She suggests that “Lebanese-American political behavior offers ethnic studies a linkage between identity politics and ethnic citizenship by

contesting the permanency of individual and collective identities and linking voting behavior among ethnic minorities to their broader social identity.”

The final article on contemporary issues “*Pathways to Social Mobility: Lebanese Immigrants in Detroit and Small Business Enterprise*” was written by Sawsan Abdulrahim. Abdulrahim aims at understanding the roots of the Lebanese immigrants’ decision to engage in small-businesses in their new home. She reviews the “middle man” and “the ethnic enclave economy” theories and discusses the role played by social, physical, and economic capital as determinants in these decision making processes. Abdulrahim views these decisions in their relation to structural integration. She argues that “structural conditions and the ability to combine capital resources proved to be extremely important” in the Detroit context. She concludes, with respect to Lebanese small entrepreneurs, that while the move into the business world is the result of hard work and determination, it is likewise “an outcome of the structural discrimination they face and their inability to move into the professions they originally intended to work in.”

As guest editor of this special issue of Palma Journal, I wish to thank the editorial board for putting these pages at my disposal in order to expand discourse on Lebanese migration. In particular, I would like to thank Palma supervising editor, Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, for initiating this process and accompanying me in the selection of articles and the arduous task of preparing this volume for final publication. I trust that the reader will discover many new insights into the field of empirical migration studies and the ongoing debates on migration theory and that this issue will further dialogue between scholars in the West and those in the Middle East.

Guita G. Hourani  
Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center



## **The Transnational Imagination: XXth century networks and institutions of the Mashreqi migration to Mexico**

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### **Abstract**

At the beginning of the XXIst century new and established ‘Lebanese’ migrants to Mexico and the population ‘of Lebanese descent’ in the country have a median income which falls within the top decile of the national income distribution.<sup>1</sup> I use original archival and ethnographic research as well as earlier historical scholarship to trace the institutional landscape which migrants navigated throughout the XXth. Relationships initially based on kinship, shared travel experiences or a common village of origin, were cultivated over the next century through participation in a variety of networks and institutions generated by the migrants. I argue that it is crucial to recognize the confessional and socioeconomic diversity of the population that traveled to the Americas, since it afforded the institutionalization of particular networks. Some of them were local, others international- most were shaped by social fields spanning at least two distinct regions- the *Mashreq* on the one hand and ‘Mexico’ on the other. The earliest were aid institutions often organized through confessional ties or visiting patterns. Many decades later participation shifted to institutions conceived of and labeled as representing ‘national’ populations. The shifting boundaries of these networks reflect the overlapping transnational imaginaries and practices of migrants and colonial and ecclesiastical authorities. The French Mandate officials sought to actively cultivate and facilitate migrants’ social and economic ties to the *Mashreq*, much as today’s political and religious authorities have attempted to do since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, constituting the region as part of a global political entity and its subjects as transnational beings.

Keywords: migration, postcolonial, transnationalism, Syrio-Lebanese, class, French Mandate

According to *Don Alvaro Nguib Aued*, the first migrant from the *Mashreq* disembarked at the port of Veracruz, Mexico on 1878.<sup>2</sup> ‘Father’ Boutros Rafful was soon followed by hundreds of thousands who left what are now Syria, Lebanon and Palestine for *amrika*- a continent of opportunity.<sup>3</sup> In the 1920’s thousands arrived at large Mexican ports with international traffic: Progreso, Tampico and Veracruz; they came via Marseille, New York and La Habana.<sup>4</sup> Just as often *Mashreqis* arrived in Mexico after undertaking ventures elsewhere in the Americas- in Haiti, Colombia and the United States among other places.<sup>5</sup> Migrants also arrived through Pacific ports like Acapulco and

various land borders: Ciudad Juarez and Laredo in the north, and various points along the border with Guatemala. Thousands of people have arrived from the region since then, though other areas of the world have emerged as preferred destinations over the past three decades, notably Europe, the Arab Gulf and Australia.<sup>6</sup>

The increasing visibility of some of these migrant families in positions of political and economic power traditionally monopolized by culturally European elites throughout Latin America has been remarked by a wave of new scholarship.<sup>7</sup> How to understand the extraordinary success of these families when European migrants and *criollos* have effectively excluded other non-European migrations and local *mestizo* and indigenous populations from power/resources for hundreds of years? Regional economic histories, national economic trajectories and migration policies, and postcolonial ideologies of difference and distinction have been woven into particular landscapes of opportunity and inequality by *Mashrequi* migrants in different regions of Latin America.

I argue that *Mashrequi* migrants' participation in a variety of institutional locations affords an unexplored window on the migrants' trajectories in Mexico and Central America. I have compiled a list of 93 institutions active between 1900 and 2008.<sup>8</sup> I will focus on institutional life as it is visible from Mexico, largely from Mexico City, since that is where most of the documented institutions have clustered. Some have their centers of gravity or an important presence elsewhere, however, and when national boundaries, between Mexico and Guatemala or Honduras, for example, are superseded by transnational processes I will discuss processes outside of Mexico as relevant and in fact constitutive of 'local' dynamics. My goal in this paper is to explore this chronology for what it can tell us of the migrants' circulation within power fields shaped by regional, national and trans/international agents and processes, especially by colonial and postcolonial regional histories.<sup>9</sup>

While a variety of activities, responsibilities and pursuits have brought different segments of the migrant population together into more or less formal association, a handful of important processes appear to organize the development and consolidation of their institutions in Mexico. The patterns that emerge reflect the changing circumstances and needs of the migrants. They also tell us of shifts in the distribution of power within the migrant population, marked by distinctions in class-civilizational practices and political allegiances that indexed migrants' relative proximity to colonial authorities and their projects. The landscape that emerges is complex. Given the global hierarchies established through European imperial practice over the past centuries and the relevance of colonial arrangements and discourses for postcolonial trajectories, I



suggest we interpret this shifting geography of interlocking regional landscapes of power as an initially colonial, now postcolonial global.

*Theoretical genealogies*

The *Mashrequi* migration spans a century and a half during which Druze, Jews, Maronites, Orthodox Christians, Melkites and Sunni and Shia Muslims of various walks of life travelled to and from the Mashreq as entrepreneurs seeking accumulation and mobility, refugees fleeing war and famine, economic migrants looking to make a living, brides and grooms, children, siblings, parents and fellow townsmen of migrants, political activists, and men of religion in pursuit of national projects. Distinct peaks in the pulse of this circulation reflect political and economic crises affecting subjects differentially. As Nadjie Al-Ali has argued for Iraqi women's migrations, the historical moment and politico-economic circumstances in which people choose to or are forced to travel shapes the contexts in which they move, but also their experiences and expectations of movement, the affect involved in the process and the directionality of subsequent trajectories.<sup>10</sup>

There are many things this paper is not. It is not an attempt at the reconstruction of a period or an exhaustive social history of the migration or of the regional contexts that have framed these lives in movement. It is not a 'total ethnography' of 'the migrant community' either. Many and very competent scholars have provided such narratives.<sup>11</sup> I write as an anthropologist, in the spirit of creating ethnographies of the particular and a history of the present that restores some of the missing links in our geographies of the past (Abu-Lughod, 1991). I suggest that transnational practice brings about entanglements which we have to theorize.<sup>12</sup> One of this paper's contributions lies in destabilizing received boundaries by bringing transnational studies to the archive. Boundaries attempted through national and state projects, but also scholarly boundaries erected between 'migrants' and the 'second generation', 'sending' and 'receiving' countries, are upset or at the very least re-sketched if we take 'the natives' point of view' and recognize transnational practices.

I will use analytic tools and textual strategies developed by scholars of transnationalism, subaltern studies and historical anthropology to argue that crucial insights emerge when we approach migratory processes through (historical) ethnography<sup>13</sup>. The ethnographic imagination approaches the 'document', the archival artifact, as both content and discursive footprint, as relevant for whatever it may tell us of the 'real' conditions of the past, as for what we may read in it of the discursive formation within which it operates. I will also bring insights from ethnography to my reading of archival material, and vice versa. This is an exercise in the anthropology of the colonial encounter and the subaltern studies project of reading the archive for processes of

subalternization<sup>14</sup>. As we step beyond methodological nationalism to imagine the world of the migrants, two aspects of the *Mashreqi* migration become visible: the migrants' own experience in spinning transnational life-worlds, and a transnational imagination at work in the administrative practices that they were subject to by the French during the Mandate and by postcolonial governments and religious authorities since then.

### *A century of (gendered) transformations*

The early patterns of association are elusive, since relationships were less institutionalized and there are no living subjects who experienced the early days of the migration. Interviews with elderly subjects who are children or grandchildren of migrants provide the richest material for this period.<sup>15</sup> An analysis of periodical publications also provides surprising insights into the class diversity of the early migration, and the elites' allegiance and orientation to Ottoman and then Mandate authorities and mediators. The earliest institutions reflect the migratory process itself- its social dynamics, the transportation technologies available to migrants, and the spatialization of opportunity in Porfirian Mexico.

The bulk of this paper will focus on the next, and best documented moment, which corresponds to the period of the French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon, officially in place between 1920 and 1943. It constitutes the most recent colonial experience of the *Mashreq* and played an important role in shaping the region's current social landscape and postcolonial developments. It was also crucial to the class trajectories of migrants in Mexico and Central America. Between 1919 and 1947 the policies and interventions of the Mandate administration shaped institutional dynamics at three poles of the transnational field generated by the overlap of *Mashreqi* migration and French imperial pursuits. They shaped processes in Paris, the metropole, where policies were authorized; throughout an archipelago of French consulates in the Americas, and at the mandate headquarters in Beirut, where administrative practices were discussed and implemented in dialogue with 'local' agents and dynamics. Diplomatic and administrative correspondence with consulates in the Americas encompassed a number of French representatives, sometimes concerning particular cases, yet often addressing local officials and migrant populations across national boundaries as part of a vaster administrative whole. French imperial practice intersected with the complex postcolonial dynamics of a 'Mexican' society deeply shaped by violent conquest, three centuries of Spanish colonial administration, half a century of wars of reform and liberation, the gilded age of the francophile Porfirian regime, the Mexican Revolution and postrevolutionary contracts and authorities.<sup>16</sup>

After the 1940's this landscape was complicated by the emergence of postcolonial nation-states in the *Mashreq*, and the development of nationalisms, sectarianisms, and classisms as ideologies that redefined legitimate access to power/resources and established new criteria for stratification. The role of the Maronite Church in particular and the close collaboration between Mandate authorities and the Maronite populations in Lebanon and in the *Mahjar* played a critical role in the development of these ideologies.<sup>17</sup> This partnership was also fundamental to the 20<sup>th</sup> century institutionalization of sectarianism and important shifts in the distribution of resources and opportunities away from the traditional Ottoman elites which were the mostly urban Greek Orthodox and Sunni populations towards the historically rural but rapidly urbanizing Maronites.<sup>18</sup>

In fact the intervention of religious authorities contributed to the mid-century shift towards the constitution of 'national' and ostensibly Maronite institutions, like the *Liga Libanesa* (Lebanese League), the *Union Libanesa Mundial* (World Lebanese Union) and the *Centro Libanes* (Lebanese Center).<sup>19</sup> This resulted in the erasure of non-Lebanese and non-Maronite *Mashreqis* and in their subalternization within the new 'Lebanese' spaces when they continue to participate in them.<sup>20</sup> Many of the subalternized populations created their own institutional spaces, such as the Greek Orthodox *Catedral de San Jorge*, and other less formal networks. The transformation of religious associations, which began as women's charity groups and youth clubs in the 20's, into the 'Councils' of the late 1940's indicates a reconceptualization of religious practice. A new set of predominantly political, masculine projects came to dominated public religious discourse, displacing though not replacing women's and youth organizations. Jewish *Mashreqis* faced a number of challenges given the conflicts that erupted in the region with the founding of an Israeli state in 1948, and their progressive marginalization in the decades leading up to that rupture. In Mexico they developed an extensive institutional landscape parallel to the one the rest of the migration participates in, including synagogues, social clubs, and perhaps most crucially a range of schools through which post-1960's generations have learned Hebrew and cultivate links to Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Muslim populations only developed institutional sites, like the *Mesquita Souraya* (Souraya Mosque) in Torreon and the *Centro Educativo de la Comunidad Musulmana* (Muslim Community Center) in Mexico City in the early 1990's. The *Mesquita Souraya* was built by descendants of the Lebanese Shia migrant population which historically settled in Torreon and the Laguna area in northern Mexico. The Muslim Community Center in Mexico City was developed by a more diverse group of migrants including Syrians, Moroccans, Egyptians, Pakistanis and Indonesian Muslims. Many of these were Embassy personnel temporarily living and working in Polanco, the neighborhood where the Center-Musallah is located. The building however is lent to the community

by a successful Pakistani restaurateur, who also generously hosts the larger Eid el Fitr gathering in a separate venue in Polanco.<sup>22</sup>

Given various traditions of preferred homosocial association in many areas of the *Mashreq* (Keddie 1991) and Mexico (Lagarde 1998), and those imposed by modernity (Tilly and Scott 1978), especially gendered spaces of work and therefore of daily activity, it is not surprising that participation in institutions involves gendered patterns. I argue that women's activities, while less visible in public records, constitute a parallel public space.<sup>23</sup> It is important to look beyond the modern dichotomy that opposes women's domesticity to men's engagement with the public sphere to grasp how women's visiting and marriage brokering for instance, constitute another public, though in many ways a subordinate one.<sup>24</sup> I will also emphasize the interpenetration of public and private, arguing that men's power often operates through intimate sites.<sup>25</sup> Women tended to form and cultivate charity and 'cultural' associations that displayed their class status as 'ladies', while men dominated commercial and political institutions such as Chambers of Commerce, Leagues, and spaces of 'high culture' like journals written in *fusha*, a formal, literary register of Arabic which provided and indexed access to other kinds of resources.<sup>26</sup> Ladies' associations in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are largely concerned with the practice of memory and its reproduction.<sup>27</sup>

### Early networks: 1900 to 1920

Early migrants either concentrated in Mexico City or dispersed along the rail lines and other emerging economic corridors, such as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Given Mexico's history of strong economic and political centralization, the migrant population was caught in the tension between the concentration of wealth and power in the capital, and the opportunities available through the development of regional economies, and more specifically the emerging regional markets which they played a large role in developing. New commercial opportunities were inaugurated in 'the provinces' by the railway system completed during the Porfirian regime, connecting Mexico City to crucial ports and regional economic production. The rails were a modern tool which facilitated the old practice of concentrating wealth in the central highlands.<sup>28</sup> In fact the relationship between transportation technologies and migrant movement presents a paradoxical continuity. The early migration, organized through maritime and railway lines, was dominated by a single point of arrival. Zeraui calculates that 78.8% of the *Mashreq* migration registered in Mexico between the 1870's and 1952 entered through Veracruz, which emerges as a crucial gateway for the period of maritime transport. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when flight became available and multiplied (air)ports of arrival, nearly 100% of arrivals enter through Mexico City!<sup>29</sup>

Guest houses established by migrants to host fellow countrymen, like the *Albergue para paisanos* (guest house for fellow countrymen) run by David Saba and Julian Kuri at Correo Mayor #4, Mexico D.F. in 1900 were among the earliest institutions.<sup>30</sup> They became orientation centers where recent arrivals met more established migrants who could provide information on ‘local’ dynamics, as well as employment and credit. Migrants working as peddlers and those who settled in very small towns along the thriving commercial corridors and railway routes also stayed in these guest houses or at relative’s homes when they traveled to urban centers to re-stock merchandise. The guest houses and associated small eateries serving the cooking of ‘*el bled*’ provided opportunities to interact with fellow *paisanos*, to exchange information, and to recruit and counsel newcomers.<sup>31</sup> According to Maronite community lore, Don Domingo Kuri, a prosperous merchant who settled in Veracruz in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and an extraordinary individual by all accounts, mediated the sorting of migrants who arrived through the port according to kin and village networks. He made a habit of visiting boats docked at the port in search of ‘Arab’ or ‘Arabic speaking’ passengers. Greeting them warmly in Arabic, he facilitated migratory procedures with the local authorities and hosted travelers until they had recovered from the journey and could be sent on to their closest relatives or fellow villagers via the railway. This sorting was organized more broadly by communication between migrants and their relatives and towns of origin via the post and through news, packages and letters carried by migrants returning to the *Mashreq* to settle, invest, or visit.<sup>32</sup>

Among the earliest and most long-lived associations were those which brought together people from the same town or village. There are a number of examples- the *Asociacion Camarina de Mexico* gathered 400 families from Deir El-Qamar, a silk producing village in the Shouf region of Lebanon.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most outstanding due to its extraordinary longevity is *Islah Beit Mellet*, also known as the *Union Akkarista de Mexico*, which has operated since 1924 and continues to be active today. S. Matuk provided a brief glimpse into its functioning in the 1940’s: “My father belonged to the *Junta Akkarista*, because he was from Akkar... there were some monthly fees which were used to help needy people in that place, Akkar”.<sup>34</sup> They also organized weekly *sahriyes*, plays and fundraising to help the sick, poor, and those *paisanos* who had fallen behind on their credit payments.<sup>35</sup> In 2006 they published a new directory of families from the town of *Bait Mellet*, and they continue to coordinate new migration.

#### *Periodicals in Ottoman Times*

Perhaps more surprising is the large number of publications, most of them bilingual or in Arabic, which sprang up in Mexico City before 1920.<sup>36</sup> *Al-*

*Sharq*, initially owned by Yussef Karam and later by Abraham Bechalani and Alejandro Gabriel, started out as a bilingual Arabic-Spanish monthly publication in 1905. It was apparently a success, since it soon began to come out every two weeks and then daily. Jose Helu's *Al-Khawater* developed along similar lines since its first 1909 bilingual Arabic-Spanish biweekly publication, and became a daily. *Saut Al-Mexique* was published between 1906 and 1940. There were a number of short lived periodicals. Some probably succumbed to mundane inviability, like the ephemeral *Vida Nueva*, founded by Rashid Khuri who arrived to Mexico from Brazil, or Jalil Daher's *Diario Era Nueva*. In other cases, the brevity of their circulation could be linked to the fact that they represented competing political projects, some of which bore no fruit. *Al-Kadaa*, for example, was created in 1909 to promote Nasib Bey Kuri as candidate for the post of Ottoman consul in Mexico. *Al-Huruades-Sucesos* was a Maronite religious magazine coordinated by 'father' Chekrala Juri.

The very existence, but also the multiplicity and longevity of Arabic language and bilingual periodicals early on in the migration should alert the reader to the early presence of a population in the *Mahjar* which was at least literate in Arabic and Spanish, but probably also in French. One could argue that this only reflects the long tradition of French and British missionary education in the *Mashreq*, especially in Christian areas.<sup>37</sup> Yet literacy itself represented considerable cultural capital in early twentieth century Mexico. Literacy in French however presented not only a potential shortcut to the acquisition of the Spanish language, but familiarity with a language and culture admired and emulated by the Francophile Mexican Porfirian elites.<sup>38</sup> Familiarity with French language and French ways was legible to Mexican populations as a marker of elite status.<sup>39</sup>

The privileges enjoyed by at least a few of the early migrants are also reflected in other early organizations and concerns, for example an association founded by Nasib Bey Kuri, Pedro Kuri, Alejandro Gabriel and Salim Pasha around 1905. Don Antonio Letayf was another key early figure. Nationalizing himself as a Mexican citizen in 1899, he married into the Porfirian elite and subsequently mediated redistributions and negotiated protections for other migrants, becoming very wealthy and very powerful himself in the process.<sup>40</sup> In 1909 he presided over the *Comité Otomano del Centenario de la Independencia de Mexico* (Ottoman Committee for the Hundredth Anniversary of Mexican Independence), which orchestrated migrant participation in the lavish official festivities which marked the occasion. He was also the head of the briefly circulating publication in 1912-1913, *Al-Etedal*, in collaboration with Jose Gastine. The pre-revolutionary migrant elite was clearly in dialogue with an Ottoman *Mashreq*, as their use of the Ottoman titles 'Bey' and 'Pasha' and their definition of the migrant population as an 'Ottoman colony' index. They were also clearly situated as elites in both *Mashreqi* and Mexican contexts.

*Ottoman collapse and Pan-Arab Aspirations*

A different set of concerns and institutions emerged towards the end of the second WW. For the first time associations calling themselves political parties appeared on the migrant horizon. Their names reflected the surging debate over the fate of the *Mashreq* after the impending Ottoman collapse and the territorial dismembering of the empire. These associations reflect the discussion between pan-Arabist groups advocating the independence of 'Greater Syria', a confessionally diverse entity incorporating Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and parts of Iraq and Jordan, and Lebanese factions seeking an independent (Christian) Lebanese nation.

A number of new periodicals reflected this turn of events, and the emerging French hegemony in the region. Jose Cheremonte, a panarabist who had earlier sought to be the local Ottoman consul, established the *Partido Siria Unida* (United Syria Party) and an associated publication *Diario Siria Unida* (United Syria Daily) in 1917. The periodical was published in French, Arabic and Spanish. There were others, such as *El Gran Libano* (Greater Lebanon) run by Jose Musalem, a Syrian migrant. He went on to establish *Al-Ghurbal*, which was published from 1923 to 1996, under the care of Juan Bichara for some time and eventually of Selim Abud. Originally in Arabic only but later bilingual Spanish-Arabic and with the Spanish name 'La Criba', *Al-Ghurbal* called itself an illustrated Arab weekly and proclaimed the goal of bringing together Arabic speakers of Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi nationality in brotherhood. *Al-Itihad Al-Suri* (The Syrian Union) was published in 1926, and Mahboub Chartouni, an Orthodox Christian, published *Al-Rafiq* in 1923, but these institutions are part of a new constellation of power brought about by France's Mandate in the *Mashreq*, which I will explore in the next section.

Germany's defeat in the first world war, its consequent international fall from grace and France's emerging right of rule over *Mashreq* populations are also visible in the transformation of the role played by these countries' embassies vis a vis the migrants in Mexico. Until 1919, letters of 'acknowledgement or protection' were extended to *Mashrequi* migrants at all German consulates in the republic. This was due to the friendship between Don Antonio Letayf, whom I have already mentioned, and Antonio H. Von Eckard, diplomatic representative of Germany in Mexico. These letters were greatly useful when initiating any kind of bureaucratic procedure, selling in public roads, opening businesses, contracting marriage and registering offspring.<sup>41</sup> German patronage was suspended after the war, and replaced in 1921 by services extended to the migrants by the French Embassy, located in Rio Lerma #35, Mexico D.F. Consul Eugene Meurehg, a Lebanese man born in Marseille, was in charge of attending to mandate subjects. The French Embassy assisted in

bureaucratic procedures and celebrated the national holidays of both countries until some of these functions were taken up by the Lebanese Embassy in 1947. Syria did not establish diplomatic representation in Mexico, which probably contributed to the erasure of the 'Syrian' from the 'Syrio-Lebanese' migration during the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup>

French consular activity in Latin America during the Syrian and Lebanese Mandates: 1920-1947

While scholars have emphasized that the bulk of the *Mashreq* migration to Latin America occurred between 1910 and 1930, immediately before and during the period during which Lebanon and Syria became French Mandates, the role played by French consular authorities stationed in Latin America in shaping the development of migrant associations during the mandate period has not been explored.<sup>43</sup> French authorities were concerned with the fate and circumstances of the 'Syrian and Lebanese Colonies of America' and making plans regarding their administration and the role they should play in France's relationship to the mandated territories even before the mandates were officially conferred. The 'numerical importance and the multiplicity of elements which compose them' made them attractive targets for regulation and intervention.<sup>44</sup>

French consular and mandate authorities became important interlocutors to migrants, displacing other sources of political patronage. They established new official institutional sites, but they also monitored and tampered with associations among the migrants. They destabilized networks and institutions which they considered suspect or threatening to French rule and rewarded those who collaborated with the mandate. This shifted the distribution of access to resources and opportunities and contributed to the polarization of the migrant population along class lines. Competing migrant factions organized resistance and allegiance to the mandate, and clashes between them led to the dissolution of important migrant institutions, for example several early Chambers of Commerce. Finally, the colonial encounter contributed to the synthesis of discourses of distinction which shaped postcolonial networks. The late twentieth century is characterized by fork-tongued institutions which narrate themselves as 'national' associations and simultaneously fragment and construct the nation along confessional lines.

*The French colonial imagination:  
transnational subjects of a global mandate*

French interest in the migrant colonies mirrored their interest in the mandated territories themselves, and centered on the extension of French political influence and economic ventures. An excerpt from a text addressed by



Parisian authorities to all consuls in the Americas provides a window on French priorities and strategy:

We have every interest in the development of the countries entrusted to our mandate as well as in the extension of our influence in meeting and consolidating these relations. Would you kindly inform me:

a) on the importance of the cash remittances sent by our protégés to their countries of origin, on the means currently employed [to do so], on the possibilities for our financial establishments in Syria (Banque de Syrie, founded by the Banque Ottomane, Banque Française de Syrie, controlled by the Société Générale) to open an agency in your city of residence or to at least have a correspondent there;

b) on the importance of the movement of travelers with France or Syria as their destination and on the possibility of assuring this clientele for our navigation companies.

You will surely be interrogated on the ends pursued by France and on what she has already done to satisfy the wishes of [the mandated] populations. You will be careful to show in all circumstances that we are exclusively inspired by the principles encompassed in the Pact of the Society of Nations and to demonstrate how spurious interpretations which cast us as pursuing a different goal are.<sup>45</sup>

Such transparent pursuit of a lucrative monopoly on financial transactions and remittance flows and transatlantic traffic is far from the ‘disinterested civilizing mission’ that France claimed as the rationale for her mandates, but the situation is more complicated than naked economic interest.<sup>46</sup> Diplomatic correspondence indicates that French authorities considered that they needed to “protect Syrians abroad in all circumstances” for what they hermetically call ‘political reasons’.<sup>47</sup> Are these references to the geopolitics of imperial competition; or to the administrative politics of state building? The answer is both; in fact these two processes emerge as mutually constitutive.

#### *Institutionalizing Protection over Migrating Colonies*

In January and February of 1921, correspondence between Paris and French diplomatic and consular agents in the Americas informed the later that “The Mandate for Syria and Lebanon which should be shortly conferred on France by the Society of Nations will lead us to take more careful interest in the numerous Syrian and Lebanese colonies of America. As of the recognition of the mandate, we will have to accord them a protection no longer officious and based

on tradition but official and resulting from a treaty. A variety of questions will arise on which I wish to receive complete reports as soon as possible, as well as your opinion".<sup>48</sup>

French diplomats, like other representatives of European geopolitical and economic interests in the region, had a long tradition of 'protecting' Ottoman subjects in the *Mashreq*.<sup>49</sup> Though mandate subjects are still referred to as protégés in the AMAE, the political transition towards an official mandate required that informal practices of 'protection' be systematized. The boundaries of the French state *vis a vis Mashreq* subjects needed to be re-sketched and proper loci and procedures for interaction with the new subjects defined. Either it took some time to define more systematic policies or the transition was not quite thorough in practice. In any case, during the early years of the mandate there is overt continuity with pre-mandate practices. This is visible in interventions by consuls posted in the Americas regarding travel permits for subjects who had been protégés and consular employees in the *Mashreq* before the mandate and who wished to migrate, especially those joining family members.<sup>50</sup> It is also possible that there were aspects of the 'protection' dynamics that French authorities reproduced in new institutional settings because they were built into the colonial logic, for example the practice of establishing preferential relationships to collaborating subjects.

In order for French authorities to develop official policies for the administration of 'their subjects' in the Americas they had to know them. Censuses of the migrant 'colonies' throughout the Americas (throughout the world, in fact) were commissioned. Consuls were requested to determine which migrants intended to maintain links to their country of origin as part of the census, and to initiate the registration of name, age and place of birth of those who wished to be registered. They were also instructed to inquire as to 'the motives due to which certain elements would abstain [from registration]'. They should rely on the migrants' declarations and also collect relevant information from [other] qualified sources. A format for recording and reporting the statistics (the census) was provided. Migrants who registered with the French consulates had a vote in appointing compatriots as local consular aides.<sup>51</sup> These were sometimes referred to as 'auxiliary *dragomans*', a term used to denote the translators which European consulates had historically employed in the *Mashreq*. The AMAE confirms the allocation of funds to hire an auxiliary *drogman* for the Mexican consulate in 1924.<sup>52</sup>

Establishing authority in the mandated territories involved establishing authority over the human tentacles constituted by the migrant colonies. If the colonies were to play the role of subjects however, they needed to remain politically Syrian and Lebanese. A French census report reminds the central authorities in 1921 that "[we] have an immediate political interest in reinforcing

the ties that unite our protégés to their country of origin and prevent them from melting into the masses of the country to which they have emigrated".<sup>53</sup> The French sought to actively cultivate and facilitate migrants' social and economic ties to the *Mashreq*, much as today's political and religious authorities have attempted to do since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, constituting the region as part of a global political entity and its subjects as transnational beings.

Portrait of 'the community': 1923

A certain M. Charpentier was in charge of applying the census and producing a general report for Mexico. He states that the authorities of the *Liga Sirio-Libanesa en Mexico* (Syrio-Lebanese League in Mexico) calculated a total of 20,000 Syrians and Lebanese living in Mexico, the Lebanese being many more. He also mentions that 'rival sources', which he doesn't name, claimed a total of 30,000 *Mashreqi* migrants.<sup>54</sup> While institutions favorable to the mandate, such as the *League*, became instrumental mediators between the migrants and French authorities and the later were often happy to take the information such 'allies' provided at face value, as Charpentier does with the number here, French authorities complemented the accounts of influential migrants with observation. He describes the migrants as divided into two 'categories':

Having established this question of population, a second observation imposes itself immediately, namely, the distinction between the Syro-Lebanese established and living in cities or the "pueblos" (towns), and the ambulants or peddlers...

In fact, the Syro-Lebanese class of urban centers represents a wealthy nucleus, the element which 'arrived'. It generally possesses, along with its language of origin, knowledge of French and Spanish. It exercises, politically, a dominant action on compatriots directly dependent on it in urban centers.

In contrast, the ambulant peddlers which constantly move from one end of Mexico to the other penetrating in the most remote places, often on foot and carrying packs of merchandise themselves, on their backs, appear in a number of cases to be reluctant to engage with this enterprise.

It follows from this, and I would go so far as to argue that the means to be employed to make each of these categories of protégés understand the feats accomplished by France in their country should not be identical, given that the first possess a certain culture, and the others little or none.<sup>55</sup>

We glimpse the early divide between migrants arriving with wealth and those seeking it in far away corners through back-breaking effort, and the different economic, cultural and linguistic resources of each group. We also get a flavor for the French categorization of a sector of the migrant population as possessing some (French?) culture- that is, as being somewhat civilized subjects, while the others are tossed into the savage slot.

The consul proceeds to enumerate the people settled in Mexico City- more than 300 families, most of them numerous- encompassing an average of 7-8 people; and 500 ambulants. He goes on to describe the population in the capital as the most heterogeneous and divided religiously and politically; about half of them being Francophile and half Germanophile.<sup>56</sup> A long list of 34 provincial cities and large towns follows, for each of which the consul provides an estimate of migrant owned shops and their relative local importance; the number of peddlers associated with the area, and the number of this total who favor either France or Germany. Occasionally politically active individuals are singled out, either as potentially useful as instruments of French policy or as threats to it.

He makes special emphasis on the importance of the trading populations in Pachuca, Acapulco, Toluca, Chihuahua, Guadalajara and Merida. Not surprisingly, these dense and thriving 'communities' are the ones most rife with strife and political competition. They fell into two opposing camps of equal strength which pitted those loyal to France, Francophiles, usually described as Maronite, Melkite and Lebanese, against elements 'of disorder' labeled anti-French, Faysalistes, ardent Germanophiles, and described as Greek Orthodox and Syrian. He considers Muslims and Jews to be largely neutral and in the last instance pro-French elements.

Shops, which probably indexed more established merchants, were numerous in some areas. In Puebla, for example, he estimates that there were only 72 peddlers but 40 establishments! In regions that were geographically isolated from the rest of the country, or less densely populated, such as Guerrero, peddlers were present in larger numbers, constituting four or five times the number of settled migrants. As the consul acknowledges, peddlers presented problems for the census takers. Given that these were reported to be individuals and not families like those of the settled merchants, their mobility coupled with their geographical and social isolation made their number 'impossible to determine with exactitude'.<sup>57</sup> It was difficult to estimate numbers for migrants who settled in rural areas in general, especially for those who took up agriculture and herding instead of commerce. Charpentier mentions that this was especially the case for people who settled in the north, in the state of Nuevo Leon, for example. This population also seems to have had little interest in local or *Mashreq* politics; they are consistently labeled as 'indifferent' in his report.

Regarding how these people might be reached by French authorities, the consul suggested that the 'superior class' could become a legitimate interlocutor for the High Commissary of the French Republic in Beyrouth, who might address them periodically. The main Arabic language journals published in the *Mashreq* as well as official statements in Arabic regarding French-led progress in the region should be circulated among them. The systematic distribution of these to peddlers in the main urban centers could also be arranged through the *League*. Periodic conferences and film screenings were also recommended, and were to be organized by 'a number of Syro-Lebanese who have studied in Beyrouth, Paris, etc. and are of confirmed loyalty'.<sup>58</sup> Cooperating *Mashreqi* migrant elites were granted the High Commissioner's ear, and their local mediation of the mandated *Mashreq* was consolidated. Their institutions would distribute official information in Mexico and Central America and represent migrant interests to the Mandate authorities.

Charpentier's report is an extraordinary document. It provides detail on the size and geographic distribution of the migrant population and its composition at the onset of the mandate which is not available from any other source. It is also a window on the mandate administration's logic vis a vis their migrating colonies. Two axes of distinction organize Charpentier's discourse; both sort migrants according to their 'proximity' to French ways and the colonial project. One is a 'class' axis, which sorts migrants according to their proximity to France as the cultural apex of a civilizational hierarchy. Migrants either belong to an urban bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie of small shop owners and established merchants, or to a nebulous mass of wanderers who subvert the French colonial project and the concerted efforts of the migrant elite to collaborate with it by taking little interest in their politics. Capitalist and middle class positions are equated with (French) civilization, and marked by its trappings: competence in European languages, active participation in public life, belief in the moral soundness of European imperial practice. His description of the peddling ambulants on the other hand recalls nineteenth century narratives on Europe's 'undeserving poor', a suspect, footloose domestic savage.<sup>59</sup> This class-civilizational distinction, echoed by the migrant elite, contributed to legitimizing the differential relationships established by the mandate authority with the early migrant elite and the peddling majority. It also justified and in fact called for the migrant elite's institutional leadership and cultural and economic mediation.

The other axis sorts migrants according to their proximity to France as expressed through allegiance to the mandate project. The crucial political rift among the migrants at the onset of the mandate is between 'francophile' and 'germanophile' factions. These categories of allegiance to European states were only secondarily associated with confessional labels. Maronite, Melkite and

Lebanese subjects were more likely to be Francophile. Yet Antonio Letayf, a migrant notable, was a Maronite with strong German ties, as we have gleaned from his productive relationship to German diplomats in Mexico. Greek Orthodox and Syrian subjects were more likely to be Germanophiles. Jews and Muslims were politically indifferent! Who would have thought, given the post 1948 conflict primarily associated with tension between these two categories. As the mandate progressed, distinction was expressed more and more often through emerging 'national' labels. Perverse Trojan horses, these subsumed confessional boundaries which came to dominate the logic of access to political power in the postcolonial 'confessional balance' of the Lebanese state.

*Syrio-Lebanese, Lebanese or Arab?*

*Indexing resistance and cooperation with the mandate*

French officials developed a set of off-the-record colonial pursuits parallel to the public censuses and registrations. Metropolitan authorities recommended discretion when agents were instructed to scout for opportunities to monopolize financial transactions derived from migration. A second sphere in which state practices were veiled involved the surveillance of attitudes and activities regarding French rule in the *Mashreq*. A final note in the administrative document already cited instructs: "You will attach, as a confidential document, indications on the sentiments of Syrians in regards to France, their opinions relative to the regime which they wish to see established in their country; finally, on the various committees and leagues which they might have already constituted and the relevance of these committees to other more general groups having their headquarters outside of your country of residence".<sup>60</sup> The practice of such state espionage allowed the French to identify transnational troublemakers and boycott their networks and events in the Americas and in the *Mashreq*. Troublemakers could be upstart mandate subjects or rival European governments, as anxious references to 'British propaganda' and its relative effectiveness in the colonies attest.<sup>61</sup> That strategic French intervention in the region in fact encouraged and discouraged particular alignments among the migrants is suggested by a report submitted by the French delegate in Guatemala City on August 10, 1931.

The delegate was concerned about a complaint placed with the High Commissioner in Beirut in March of 1931, alerting him to the plight of 'compatriots established in Guatemala' during recent insurrections, which had been 'aggravated by the lack of protection from the French authorities'.<sup>62</sup> The delegate clarified that he had investigated the case and found that the reported distress of Syrians or Lebanese during the events was a fabrication. The individual instigating it, a M. Jorge Blanco, was identified by the delegate as '*le plus riche Libanais d'ici*' (the richest Lebanese [man] here). He had naturalized himself as a Honduran citizen during the great war, yet he wanted to lead the

'Syrio-Lebanese' colony in Guatemala. He had opposed the formation of a Syrio-Lebanese union suggested by the local French delegate, fearing that his Honduran citizenship would prevent him from presiding over such an organization. The delegate reports that this man, a year back, had spent a great deal of time and energy hosting a M. Habib Stefano, establishing a '*Comite Arabe*' (Arab Committee) after Stefano's departure and at his bidding, of which he had become the president.

The Committee 'mixes together Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian elements and displeases a number of Syrians and Lebanese who have refused to join it; and I am making efforts to substitute it with a Syrio-Lebanese grouping with the aid of elements who can counterbalance M. Blanco's influence'.<sup>63</sup> The French authorities' endorsement of the 'Syrio-Lebanese' label and their active efforts to disband other clusters, especially those suspected of pan-Arabist preferences, are evident here. The complaint regarding lack of protection during the *coup* was interpreted by the consul as an excuse to request the establishment of a Lebanese Consul or Agent in Guatemala, who, the delegate is quick to point out, would naturally be M. J. Blanco.

The consul was convinced that Blanco was merely following Stefano's program, and 'I ask myself if it is not linked to a more vast plan of Dr. Stefano's, who was formerly an adviser to the Emir Faysal in Damascus, as I later found out'. The delegate goes on to speculate regarding the consequences of Estefano's activism: 'I suspect a sort of propaganda with far reaching consequences among the Syrio-Palestinian colonies in Latin America in favor of the Emir Faysal and M. Habib Estefano. In spite of all the obvious differences, I can't help recalling that the 1911 revolution that upset the Manchu dynasty in China was prepared by the actions of Sun Yat Sen among the Chinese colonies outside which provided the necessary funds. The two Orient, the Far one and the other, enjoy engaging in occult maneuvers which one sometimes ignores or underestimates until the moment when one sees their results'.<sup>64</sup> Estefano was active throughout Latin America, is usually described as an articulate and fiery orator and seems to have been widely popular. He toured the 'colonies', making a number of appearances in Argentina, Mexico, the United States and Central America. Crucially here, the categories of 'Syrian' and 'Palestinian' are constructed as Arab, as Oriental, and as political traitors to the French cause.

The migrant population in Mexico was larger and more diverse than in Guatemala and Honduras, but the same counterinsurgency logic was in place. A list of associations constituted in Mexico was forwarded by the Minister of National Education of Lebanon to the High Commissioner in 1937, recommending those associations to the French authorities in Beirut and in Mexico City. The list is mentioned by the French Charge d'Affaires in Mexico City, who wants to verify that it is appropriate to include them as sites for circulation of official

documents in July and August of 1937 regarding ‘options for Turkish nationals of Lebanese origin’.<sup>65</sup> Being a member of or in contact with an association had concrete consequences- in this case, the network shaped access to information regarding nationality and nationalization opportunities.

Given the practice of preferential allocation of resources and opportunities to those who expressed loyalty to France, such expressions are frequent and effusive in correspondence addressed to the Commissioner in Beirut and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris- publicly performing gratitude and allegiance. These were often telegrams, like the one sent to M. Paul Doumer in 1931 by M Alexandre Afif in the name of the Lebanese colony in Puebla, congratulating him on being elected President of the Republic. Diplomatic archives indicate that M. Afif should be thanked for his gesture!

### Protecting Economic Interests

Another index of the early economic strength and prosperity of certain migrants were their attempts to coordinate lobbying efforts to protect economic interests through a formal institution, a Chamber of Commerce. What were initially regional commercial pacts (the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce probably grouped part of the population settled in Mexico City) were brought together in a larger ‘confederation’. It is not clear why once the *Camaras de Comercio* were established they were so short lived. The AMAE provides a brief comment in passing, embedded in a larger discussion of sect and race as obstacles to unity among Mashreqis. M. Perier tells us in 1924 that “for a long time now, they have been trying to establish a Syrio-Lebanese chamber of commerce which, at the instance of the French Chamber, would defend their interests. But their efforts have until now remained in vain: fragmented into a handful of groups, they are inept for common action”.<sup>66</sup> What kind of rivalries pulled the Chambers and their Confederation apart?

<b>Camara de Comercio de Puebla</b> -founders: Amado Harfusch, Lorenzo Aarun, Jorge David, Vicente Budib, Jorge Bojalil	Puebla, Puebla	~16 indivs (photo)	1924
<b>Camara de Comercio de Tuxpan, Veracruz</b> -Junta Directiva: Julian Nasr, Abraham Kuri, Angel Visten, et al.	Tuxpan, Veracruz	~12 indivs (photo)	1925
<b>Camara de Comercio</b>	Mexico		1925



<b>Siriolibanesa</b> President: Chami	D.F.		
<b>Camara de Comercio Libanesa</b> Initiative: Julian Slim	Mexico D.F.	--	1926- 1938
<b>Confederaciones de Camaras</b>	Mexico D.F.	~14 indivs	1932

*The 'Druze Revolt' of 1924*

The resistance to the French mandate anchored in Damascus in the early 1920's sparked off a lively succession of confrontations in Mexico.<sup>67</sup> The 'francophile' contingent was careful to clean their reputation with the mandate authorities, and a flurry of telegrams provides insight into the question of the Chambers. What the consul describes as 'a small Druze group', probably the Druze League or its antecedent, sent telegrams to the governments of the United States and Britain and the Society of Nations criticizing French procedure in Syria. The Syrio-Lebanese Chamber of Commerce immediately sent their own missive to Paris: "More than twenty thousand Syrians Lebanese of Mexico protest Latin America cables and approve French policy Syria Lebanon= Chami President. Chambre Commerce Syrio-Lebanese".<sup>68</sup> Chami, we know from interviews, was a Maronite migrant who facilitated paperwork for migrants, in fact a brother of the Maronite priest who is credited with introducing the sectarian project to the migrant population, as I will discuss in the next section: "There was a Mr. Chami who processed all the passports. It was an office-where you said 'listen I want to become Mexican, I want my passport' and he took care of it for you. He was a lovely gentleman, his daughter as well".<sup>69</sup> If the total of the migrant population in the early 1920's was 20,000 people, as the Syrio-Lebanese League reported to Charpentier, the Chamber claims to speak on behalf of the total migrant population in Mexico. Though such a claim should seem suspect, Chami was duly thanked by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Two weeks later, a group from Puebla sent a similar text: "Twenty thousand Syrio Lebanese Mexico support France mandate this medium. We alert League of Nations, Geneve, enemies of ours have sent false telegrams without our knowledge or authorization. Authorized by colony Vicente Budil Alfredo Trad Miguel E Abed Luis Arabi Jose Ganime Alejandro Yunes".<sup>70</sup> It is unclear if these gentlemen spoke on behalf of *another* 20,000 migrants or for the same population as Chami, but given that we are dealing with a different set of representatives issuing statements from a different geographic location, it seems plausible that wild claims inflating figures and claiming particular populations to

be representative of the totality of the migration and authorized to speak for them were flying about.

Later that year the French consul at Veracruz was informed by a reliable source that funds were sent to the Druze rebels from his area through the post, care of one Hussein Keis of Hasbaya.<sup>71</sup> The tip was relayed to the High Commissioner in Beirut. Could the reliable source have been the president of the colony, Don Domingo Kuri, whom we've met before greeting new arrivals on the boats? Of the Maronite tradition as well, he signs off on a telegram sent around those dates in the name of the Syrio-Lebanese colony of Veracruz which echoes the ones sent from Mexico City, Puebla and Toluca. The telegram from Merida was particularly severe in its condemnation of the rebels, and florid in its praise of France- "Lebanese League of Yucatan protests energetically against the atrocities committed by Druze rebels and respectfully requests French government to treat them with great severity rid Grand Liban of these *coscriminets* conserving its autonomy with help from Glorious France".

Despite this frantic flood of migrant notables declaring allegiance to France in both the content and the form of their statements- they clearly label institutions as per mandate preference: Syrio-Lebanese, the 'Druze' rebellion, or rather the idea of an independent (Greater) Syria, had its migrant supporters. An Archimandrite Antoine Bchir traveled on a French passport preaching for the rebels. The French consul in Veracruz and Don Domingo mobilized the Lebanese notables of Merida against him before he even arrived in Yucatan. He was reported as suspect to all French legations in the Americas so that his passport would not be renewed, even a photograph was circulated.<sup>72</sup>

The honorary French consul in Merida, M. Ailhoud, reported on the visit and provides further detail. Bchir is said to be the spokesman for two rich Syrians living in Cairo and working for the Emir Faysal and the Druze Sultan Al-Atrash. He reports having been informed that money had also been sent to the Druze rebels from Merida; care of Keis and Assad Dabaguy. "As surely at this moment postal censure must have been put in place it will be easy to verify the exactitude of this information" he concludes.<sup>73</sup> It was the politics of *Mashreq* reaction to French rule that fractioned the chambers of commerce in Mexico. People described as mobilizing and organizing against French authority are identified by sect, implying causation between sectarian affiliation and political activity even when the sectarian diversity of those organizing suggests different axes of mobilization.

*Imagining sameness through sect:*

*Protecting migrant devotion during the Guerra Cristera*

While the Great Syrian Revolt developed in resistance to French occupation of the *Mashreq*, a complex confrontation between post-revolutionary

political leaders and the Church resulted in a popular uprising known as the 'Guerra Cristera', or the 'Cristiada' in Mexico.<sup>74</sup> Plutarco Elias Calles, a revolutionary general known as 'el Jefe Maximo de la Revolucion', dominated political leadership between 1924 and 1934. During his presidential term (1924-1928), he sought further constitutional reforms in order to implement the 1917 Constitution which continued the reform project of curtailing the political involvement and property of the Church. His 1926 sponsorship of article 130 of the Constitution afforded an escalation and radicalization of popular armies which clashed with the state's military over the next three years. The situation resulted in widespread state intervention in various forms of public devotion and popular religiosity.

The Guerra Cristera that followed the Revolution affected the possibility of religious congregation by Christian Mashreqis. When a law passed in December of 1931 suspended access to 300 churches in Mexico City alone, only 25 churches remaining in use, M. Jean Perier, Minister of France in Mexico, wrote to M. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangeres on April 7 of 1932:

In response to the quasi unanimous wish of the French and Syrio-Lebanese colonies, I was obliged, given the conditions, to concern myself with obtaining authorization from the Mexican government for the performance of religious rites in their two churches traditionally reserved for our compatriots and our protégés of the Maronite and Melkite rites... Basing my argument on a disposition of the law of January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1926 establishing Article 130 of the Constitution which furnishes foreign colonies the possibility of benefiting, in certain cases, from the services of a priest of their own nationality, I established negotiations to that effect with Minister of *Gobernación* ( the Interior) and the *Departamento Central* (Mayorship), negotiations which I was able to bring to good term in spite of the disgust of the Mexican authorities concerned, in conceding an authorization which in fact elevated, contrary to the vote of Congress, the number of Catholic priests for the Federal District from 25 to 27... The French church known as the 'Colegio de Niñas' is therefore at this time in the hands of Père Joseph Roustan of the Marist congregation. The Syro-Lebanese church of "Balvanera" was returned to Mgr. Kuri, prelate of the Maronite rite.<sup>75</sup>

Two months later, the High Commissioner reported the vibrant thanks of the Lebanese Government.

What is interesting about this intervention is the unproblematic equation of the needs of French citizens and those of the Christian Mashreqis. In fact as early as 1921, consuls report that ‘Syrian children are the best students at French schools’ in the region.<sup>76</sup> The interactions and equations afforded by participation in ‘French’ spaces surfaces again in the 1940’s and 1950’s when the children of the more affluent members of the colony rub elbows with the grandchildren of the Porfirian elites in private religious schools. Some of these were French, like the *Colegio del Sagrado Corazon*, a girls’ school established by the *Soeurs du Sacre Coeur*, an order of French nuns who also established the *Colegio de la Asuncion* a few decades later. These were explicitly elitist establishments, exclusively for ‘girls of good family’ who could afford the tuition and were recruited among the children of lady graduates of the earlier institution: girl children of the Porfirian elite. The boys’ schools were more often under the supervision of Jesuits, like the *Colegio Patria*. These childhood interactions provided access to the cultural habits and social networks of the local elites.

#### ‘National’ yet sectarian institutions: 1960’s to 2008

Institutions established following emerging ‘national’ logics acquired a degree of official scaffolding and international recognition that was not present in earlier associations. They tend to coordinate much larger numbers of people with much more standardized goals, and to be concerned with properly national pursuits such as inter-state relations, market regulation, and the production of particular kinds of subjects. Among these of course are embassies and consulates. There is a Lebanese Embassy in Mexico City, and honorary consulates in both Merida and Guadalajara. The Embassy was established in 1947, land and construction were donated by ‘the colony’, with a particularly generous contribution by Neguib Simon. Crucially, the Embassy’s diplomatic mission has regional jurisdiction, operating as the Lebanese state’s official representation before the governments of El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Haiti and Republica Dominicana.<sup>77</sup> It therefore functions as yet another site fostering transnational practice and classed marking of the ‘Lebanese’ category. Since migrants and their descendants in all of these nation states must travel to Mexico City for bureaucratic procedures, the ‘Lebanese’ who are able to cultivate ties to Lebanon through this official site are evidently only those who can afford this international travel.

The outstanding new social institution which emerged in the following decades, the *Centro Libanés* (Lebanese Center), appears to have the frivolous goals of sports, art exhibits, dinner parties, *dabke* contests, beauty pageants and cocktails. Primarily concerned with sponsoring various forms of socializing, it emerges as a site of important regulation of the boundaries of what begins to be

known as ‘the Lebanese community’ rather than the “Syrio-Lebanese colony” along class, sect, and national axes. Administratively and in terms of scale, it resembles the other ‘national’ institutions consolidated in this period. Just as the *Union Libanesa Mundial*, its bureaucracy, which provides avenues for political ascent within the Lebanese ‘community’, is mostly in the hands of men.<sup>78</sup>

### *The Centro Libanés*

That the current *Centro Libanés* is descended from earlier institutions becomes evident when we look at the names of founders and boards of directors. Its genealogy can be traced to the *Liga Libanesa* (Lebanese League) initially founded in 1937. Later known as the *Union Libanesa de Mexico* (Lebanese Union of Mexico), it had delegations in Tehuacan, San Luis Potosí, Tampico, Veracruz, Puebla, Chihuahua, and Matehuala. The League’s stated goals were:

- to facilitate government paperwork for members
- to extend certificates of good conduct requested at consulates
- to facilitate the entrance of Lebanese arriving into Mexico from other countries
- to maintain communication with French and British consulates in order to send help to relatives in need during the war
- to foster ties with the Lebanese associations of Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador and the United States<sup>79</sup>

Once again, transnational ties and intentions are evident.

On the League’s board of directors we find well known men: Miguel Abed, Alfredo Aboumrad, Elias Henaine, Amin Aboumrad, Julian Slim and Domingo Kuri. The founders of the *Sociedad Libanesa S.A. (Lebanese Society A.C.)* in 1941 present striking continuity with this initial group: Miguel Abed, Alfredo Aboumrad, Jose Musi, Elias Henaine, and their fifteen advisers; described on the Centers’ current webpage as ‘*hombres de negocios*’ (prosperous businessmen).<sup>80</sup> The society was established with the goal of building a Lebanese Center and by recommendation from the Mexican President Miguel Avila Camacho, who suggested that the Center include a school, a hospital, and a graveyard. With an initial capital of \$1,000, 000 the *Sociedad* was able to buy a plot of land on Ave. 20 de Noviembre. The Centro’s webpage continues the narrative as follows:

The 27<sup>th</sup> of February of 1959 the three gentlemen, Antonio Domit, Jorge Trabulse and Elías Fajer, as Delegates of the Assembly of the former *Sociedad Libanesa*, S.A de C.V., already transformed into the *Centro Libanés*, A.C., came before Lic. Alberto Pacheco, Notary No. 48, who, acting on the protocol of Notary No. 18, Lic. Rogerio R. Pacheco, both of them associates, confirmed the aforementioned transformation.

The objectives of *Centro Libanés, A.C.*, among others, would be the following:

- a. To foster social, cultural, sports, artistic and scientific activities among its members, to obtain discipline, unity and intelligence from them, and achieve friendship, good judgment and understanding.
- b. To ingrain and publicize interest by means of talks, concerts, gatherings, tournaments, festivities and everything necessary to achieve those ends.
- c. To finish and administrate the *Centro Libanés* in Mexico City
- d. To carry out the labor of bringing together Lebanese residing in Mexico and their descendants
- e. In general, the execution of all acts and celebration of all contracts and operations, as well as providing convenient and necessary documentation for the achievement of the aforementioned objectives, which in no case will have the objective of profit, but to guarantee the best and least costly provision of the services which constitute the Association's ends. In no case will utilities be distributed.<sup>81</sup>

It is interesting to note the disappearance of Greek Orthodox members from the board of directors.<sup>82</sup>

Explanations regarding the 20 year interval between the founding of the *Sociedad Libanesa S.A* and the building of the Centro which I received during interviews with Orthodox families revolved around controversies of naming. Orthodox contributors to the project of a 'community center' insisted that, given that many of them were Syrian, the club should be called the 'Syrio-Lebanese Center'. The confrontations that developed led to the withdrawal of the majority of 'Syrian' capital from the project, further fragmentation among the migrant elite, delays in the concretion on the project, and the eventual emergence of a 'Lebanese' center in which notable Syrian families refused to participate.

The Center currently has two locales; the 1962 one located on Hermes in the Colonia del Valle on a piece of land donated by the Fajer brothers in the early 1960's was built with donations from numerous members of 'the colony'. The second one was inaugurated in 1998 in Glaciár, Colonia Magdalena Contreras, and was built on land donated by A. Atalla, in memory of his son Freddy who died in a car accident. The list of donors who contributed to building expenses is displayed in gold lettering on a marble wall in the lobby, and boasts about thirty names of prominent and wealthy Lebanese men and some women. The older generations, especially groups of older men, tend to gather at the Hermes Club in

the mornings for business breakfasts and for coffee drinking and chatting. Hermes is where the *'paisanos'* go, even though there was also consensus that this kind of socializing is less and less frequent.

While many of my interviewees complain that 'the club' in general is no longer what it used to be and that there are now more Mexican than Lebanese members, everyone agrees that the Glaciar locale is socially marginal to 'the community', and 'more Mexican'. Large, luxurious, with a sweeping view of forested hills to the east of Mexico City and located near one of the largest television studios in the city, *Televisa*, it is favored by television and film industry stars. The *Residencial Cedros del Libano*, a retirement home sponsored by the Club, is an extension of the Glaciar installations. It houses some 50 older adults, of Lebanese, Syrian and Mexican ancestry.

The president of the Lebanese Club in September 2006, Rafael Mussi, estimated that the Club's membership was of approximately 2,800 families, with an average of four members per family, which comes to a total of around 12,000 active members.<sup>83</sup> He also estimated that around 250 of these families were *socios patronos*, or 'patron members'. These members pay a higher annual fee and "*tienen voz y voto en las asambleas y toma de decisiones*"- they have a vote at club assemblies and can participate in decision making processes. I also observed that people reminded waiters and other staff of this status when bills were not forthcoming or staff were hesitant in approving discounts or access to spaces, and 'knowledgeable staff'- that is secretaries and others middle and upper level administrators, were expected to be able to identify these members. The president calculated that everyday use of club facilities was more modest-averaging some 1,400 visitors to the Glaciar facilities and 1,200 to the Hermes installations.

Regarding the administrative hierarchies at the club, which include the *Consejo Directivo* or board of trustees, the Presidency and other such administrative/political posts which rotate yearly, a successful woman politician (of Lebanese descent) pointed out to me that they are strictly hierarchical, requiring individuals to progress upward through the hierarchy before obtaining top leadership roles; and dominated by men. The portraits of former club presidents that line the walls of the president's reception hall in his office space at Hermes (magnificently furnished in massive wood-and-inlaid-shell furniture imported from Syria) are in fact all of middle aged men, often related among themselves.

Lebanese Centers exist in various other states in Mexico. While the *Centro Libanés* name is standard across these associations, they are independently run and have separate histories. Rafael Musi was able to provide rough estimates, which oscillate between 80 and 250 families, a small fraction of

the Mexico City membership. A club is being planned in Guadalajara as well, though according to my interviewees in November 2006 the project has been stalled due to problems with construction permits.

Centro <i>Libanés</i> A.C.	Total Membership	Socios Patronos	Daily users
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Hermes, Mexico D.F.	2,800 families 12,000 users	250 families	1,200
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Glaciar, Mexico D.F.	same	same	1,400
Centro Mexicano-Palestino- <i>Libanés</i> Monterrey (MEXPALI)	280 families		
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Puebla	200 families		
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Merida	200 families		
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Veracruz	150-180 families		
Centro <i>Libanés</i> Chihuahua	80-100 families		

Of six existing and one projected association, only one includes any reference to membership by either ‘Mexicans’ or other Mashreqi nationalities. I would argue that the process of inflecting a ‘Lebanese’ label attractive to the Mexican elites and middle classes in the past twenty years has involved cleansing it of ties with the ‘problematic’ national entities of Palestine and Syria. These have a negative valence in the global politics of the American century since the 1950’s, either through association with conflict (the Palestinian struggle) or socialism- Syria under Baath administration and now a member of an ‘axis of evil’ constructed through North American political discourse.

Unmooring the collective ‘boat’ from such tainted national imageries and linking it in the migrant and the Mexican public imaginary to a Phoenician past, and locally much more important, a French present, as was evident in the discussion ‘the colony’s’ relationship to the mandate authorities and their insertion into local Francophile elites, was a strategic move towards Mexican



respectability. Though there was resistance to this vision from men in of Syrian ancestry who contributed to the expenses of building the Hermes club and later refused to participate in it the club was named, in the end, ‘the Lebanese Center’.

Sparks of discontent with current labels and arrangements are expressed in alternate spaces by voices that are subalternized by the current landscape of power. These ‘others’ cluster around three analytically distinct and in practice thoroughly interwoven axes: sect, national identity and class. “The club was made by an elite, and meant for [use by] an elite”, a Druze friend points out during a conversation, revealing the emergence of the club as a step in the institutionalization of class distinctions within the migrant population. That not all people of Lebanese descent living in Mexico participate in the club is evident from the numbers- 12,000 of a conservatively estimated total of 400,000 is roughly 3%. The numbers available indicate that roughly 3% of the total population descended from migrants who arrived from the Mashreq participates in the largest migrant institution in Mexico City. There are a number of clues as to who doesn’t participate in this site. They are people who are not in Mexico City, or who can’t afford a yearly fee of \$100,000 pesos (\$10,000 dollars in 2006) per family, and or who refuse to be labeled ‘Lebanese’.

A variety of narratives of marginality emerged during my fieldwork, when I routinely asked people what kind of relationship their family had to the Lebanese club during our interviews. While my sample of one hundred extended families is small given the total numbers of the migration, the main trend that emerged was that people usually choose to participate if it is economically possible, and silence their difference during interactions at the club. People argued that in the context of Mexico, it is preferable to participate of the prestige associated with this ‘Lebanese’ space and label, even if one is marginal given ‘full membership’ criteria. The boat sails with a ‘Lebanese’ (Maronite) flag, and the affluent Druze and the Shia and the Syrians and Palestinians participate, quietly.

A generational shift is visible in this pattern however. Though most adults can identify other families by sect and economic status, the younger participants whom I interviewed spoke of being concerned only with being able to identify others, both in the club and in other settings, as ‘*jaye*’, from the Arabic ‘*aji*’, (my) brother. Most families who participate in this institutional space were proud to tell me that, of course, they are ‘always at the club’. Some explained that their participation waned and intensified according to family cycles- with (nuclear) families participating more when their children are young and individuals participating most intensely as teenagers or marriageable young adults. People whose participation was constant throughout their lives tended to

have been born in the *Mashreq* and be native Arabic speakers who sought out the company of other migrants.

There were two populations who openly expressed anger, pain or conflict in relationship to the club. One was recent migrants, especially Druze, Shia and Sunni migrants who felt ostracized at the club. S., a young male Sunni migrant from Tripoli, Lebanon, commented on practices of class distinction as we made our way home after a book presentation at the club. "*Los Libaneses son feos- te ven asi*", (Lebanese are nasty, they look [down their noses] at you) he said, imitating the gesture. The other population were migrants or their descendants who were marked by their genealogies and subalternized because their families struggled economically, or because they were of a marginal confession. "Everyone knew who your father was", is how migrants often phrase it. Eventually most of these people stop attending the Centro, contributing to its constant production as homogeneous. "Me? I've never been there. That place is for people who can afford to sit around and play cards, chat and do nothing all day" says one of my interviewees. The club embodies a Maronite vision of Lebanese nationhood.

### Conclusion

Transformations in the Mexican economy and deepening class gaps changed the urban landscape and the spatialization of class in Mexico and more specifically in Mexico City in the second half of the twentieth century. Migrants, who had initially clustered in the *centro*- the historic and symbolic core of the city, followed local criteria of status and mobility and dispersed across the expanding urban landscape according to their fortunes. The dispersion created important opportunities for redefining boundaries within the community. While initially the label 'Syrio-Lebanese' had 'naturally' included all migrants from *bilad al-Sham*, emerging political boundaries came to be naturalized as sectarian and class boundaries as well. 'Syrians' were shuffled out of sight, and the 'Lebanese' emerged as (Maronite) Christian, (upper) middle class, economically liberal, culturally Western, and distinct on all these counts from regional neighbors, Mexican, Mashrequi or otherwise. Unmooring the collective 'boat' from suspect national imageries in an international political arena polarized by the cold war and American hegemony and linking it in the Mexican public imaginary to a Phoenician past, and locally much more relevant, a French present, was a strategic move towards Mexican respectability and elite status

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### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> I have compared the reported income of migrants and migrant descendants to the INEGI database of household income.

<sup>2</sup> *Mashreq* is the Arabic term for the region comprised by a number of modern nation states and otherwise known as the Levant, which I avoid for its colonial overtones, or the Arab East, which populations who don't claim Arab identities in the region disavow. I would therefore argue for the use of 'Mashreq' when referring to the region in scholarship. Don Alvaro's story of the beginnings of the migration is quoted by Enrique Castro Farias 1965, *Aporte Libanes al Progreso de America*; also, Diaz de Kuri and Macluff. 1995. p. 46. See Zeraoui 1997 and Zeraui and Marin Guzman 2003 for discussions of early Arab presence in Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Scholars have documented the migration the length and width of the continent. See Civantos 2006, Martos 2007, Tofik Karam 2007, Orfalea 2007, Gualteri 2000, Marin Guzman 2000 among others. I have argued elsewhere that ‘*amrika*’, the Arabic word for America, was, and in a lesser degree continues to be, a blanket term for the continent which was perceived as a broad space where work and money were to be had (Pastor de Maria y Campos 2007). Other scholars, such as Nancie Gonzalez on her work on Palestinian migration to Honduras, have argued for the desirability of sites with emergent markets at the turn of the nineteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> See Alonso Palacios 1993 for an excellent reconstruction of an early voyage. For number of arrivals for the early migration see Zeraoui 1997, Velcamp 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Various interviews by the author with the Sayegh, Zghraib, and Marrun families, Mexico City, 2006-2007.

<sup>6</sup> Various interviews in Beirut and see Labaki 1989, Fargues 1980

<sup>7</sup> See Alfaro-Velcamp 2007, Martos 2007, Tofik Karam 2008, Logroño personal communication.

<sup>8</sup> I have compiled a chronology of institutions used or created by the migrants in Mexico, using three sources: previous published accounts of the migration (largely the pioneering work of Diaz de Kuri and Macluff 1995, Hamui et al 1989, Paez Oropeza 1976), the diplomatic archives (*Archives Diplomatiques*) of the French Ministry of Foreign Relations (*Ministère Français des Affaires Etrangères*), which have not been used for the Mexican or Central American migration, and my own interviews with migrants in Mexico and Lebanon. I have located a name, an approximate number of members, an address or at least a location of operation for each institution, and sometimes a list of its founders and directors or a brief description of its activities.

My analysis relies on my doctoral research, during which I participated in migrants’ everyday spaces, interviewed migrant families and institutional figures and consulted official and private archives. I was in Lebanon June-December 2005 when I was based in Beirut and then August-September 2008, when I was based in Trablus. I made several week-long visits to Damascus and Aleppo. I visited smaller urban areas and villages migrants travelled from in Syria and Lebanon; Ras Beirut, Douma, Saida, Jezzine and a few others in Lebanon and Homs and Hama in Syria. In Mexico I was based in Mexico City but also did interviews in Guadalajara and with families who had lived in Toluca, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Puebla, Merida and various small towns in Guerrero. The interviews were all done and transcribed by the author; the language of the interviews was Arabic, French, and Spanish in different proportions, the interviewees chose the language or languages they felt most comfortable with. The sample was a snowball sample, so that a small initial random sample of interviewees

suggested institutional spaces and personal contacts, and each subsequent interviewee was asked to do the same.

The archives I consulted were various personal archives in both regions (most families have collections of photographs, letters, passports and other personal documents); the Archivo del Instituto Nacional de Migracion (National Institute of Migration Archive) in Mexico City, the Archivo Historico de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Relations) in Mexico City and the AMAE microfilm housed in Kaslik in Lebanon. I thank the individuals and institutions that made this work possible, especially LERC for providing access to the Kaslik material.

<sup>9</sup> See Rouse 1991, Glick-Schiller et al. 1992, Clifford 1994 and 1997, Kearney 1995, Levitt 2001, Glick-Schiller and Levitt 2004 on transnationalism as an emerging analytic.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Ali 2007

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the new wave of scholarship already cited, see Knowlton 1955, Lesser 1995, Klich and Lesser 1998, Alonso Palacios 1983, Ramirez Carrillo 1994, Diaz de Kuri and Macluff 1995

<sup>12</sup> The first step is to take movement to be as constitutive of human sociality as dwelling, as Clifford recommends. (Clifford 1999)

<sup>13</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Guha 1994

<sup>14</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff 1991. Debates in the context of the Subaltern and Popular MRG at UCSB which I have been fortunate to participate in over the past year and a half have emphasized the subaltern as processual, encouraging the recognition of ‘subalternization’ rather than a subaltern subject.

<sup>15</sup> I rely on my own interviews and the rich work done by Diaz de Kuri and Macluff 1995, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately space does not allow me to elaborate on historical events in Mexico. Interested readers can refer to the excellent work of historians such as Gonzalez Navarro 1994, Pablo Yankelevich 2004, Alfaro Velcamp 2007, and Palma Mora 2006

<sup>17</sup> The *Mahjar* refers to the social space generated by the migration: to Syrians and Lebanese living outside of the *Mashreq*. Numerous authors describe the relationship that developed between the Mandate authorities and the Maronites. See Corm 1986 for a Lebanese perspective and Alfaro-Velcamp 2006 for a brief discussion.

<sup>18</sup> See Fuad Khuri 1974 on the urbanization process. Also, on Ottoman stratification, Hitti, Provence 2006 and my own interview with M. C.

<sup>19</sup> Various interviews, but especially those with Monseignor Jaques Najm and with S.

<sup>20</sup> Various interviews by the author with Druze, Shia, Sunni, Melkite, Jewish and Greek Orthodox families.

<sup>21</sup> I deal more extensively with the Jewish institutions elsewhere, given their almost complete independence of the institutional constellation discussed

here. They have been richly documented in the work of Liz Hamui de Halabe. Both the *Alianza Monte Sinaï* (Damascus migrants) and the *Centro Maguen David* (Aleppo migrants) community centers have published lavish community histories and have ongoing archival and oral history projects.

<sup>22</sup> Various interviews and participant observation by the author. There are other Muslim communities in Mexico City, like the Sufi center in the Condesa neighborhood and two other Sunni ones, one in Coyoacan and the other in Balbuena. All three of these are led and largely attended by Mexican converts to Islam. There is also a Muslim community in Chiapas, in southern Mexico, led by a Spanish convert.

<sup>23</sup> See Holmes-Eber 2003 for a similar argument in a Tunisian case.

<sup>24</sup> See Fraser 1992 on multiple public spheres.

<sup>25</sup> See Stoler 1991 for a masterful account of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia built on this argument.

<sup>26</sup> I have not had direct access to all the publications I discuss. However when I have, for example for *Al-Faraed*, established by Nacif Fadl in 1935, all Arabic portions were in *fusha*. It was eventually published only in Spanish by Julian Nasr y David Chartouni and renamed *Gemas del Libano* (Jewels of Lebanon) in 1950. In the case of *Al-Ghurbal*, if it was to be understood across dialectal regions as was its stated intent, it would have to be written in *fusha*, which is the standard form of the language. In fact given linguistic ideologies surrounding Arabic, texts in the regional dialects or *amiyya* are rare, both in the *Mashreq* and in the *Mahjar*, as Civantos has noted for Argentina as well (Civantos 2006).

<sup>27</sup> On the crucial role of memory practices for the (imperfect) continuity of social worlds see Slyomovics 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Francois Xavier Guerra, 1988 makes a similar argument regarding the political modernization of Mexico through old political practices of *caudillismo* and patron-client relations. For more details on regional markets in late XIXth and early XXth century Mexico see Alonso Palacios on Puebla's textile industry and Ramirez on the henequen industry in Yucatan.

<sup>29</sup> INM, interview 2006

<sup>30</sup> Diaz de Kuri y Macluff, 1995

<sup>31</sup> 'El bled' is the hispanization of the Arabic *al-balad*, 'the country', used to denote the *Mashreq*. *Paisano* is the term migrants and their children use to talk about themselves and their fellow migrants; it is a Spanish word which means 'of the country' and is also used by other migrant populations, for example rural Mexican migrants to the United States in the XXth century. Interviews by the author with C. Martinez Assad, J.L. Lopez Habib, S. Nacif, Sres Khalife. Also, various interviews in Diaz de Kuri y Macluff, 1995

<sup>32</sup> Numerous interviews by the author.

<sup>33</sup> AMAE

<sup>34</sup> Interview with the author 2006.

<sup>35</sup> *Sahriyes* are late afternoon or evening social gatherings. Diaz de Kuri and Macluff, 1995

<sup>36</sup> Unless I specify otherwise, all of the periodical names, dates of publication and founders come from Diaz de Kuri and Macluff, 1995. In fact, the material published in Mexico is part of a broader *mahjar* press, an illustrated press tied to political projects. Logroño 2008, and Chahuan, 2008 Casa Arabe/SEGIB/BibliASPA Conference.

<sup>37</sup> See Sbaiti 2008 for an overview of education in Beirut, also Makdissi 2000

<sup>38</sup> French literates had already been alphabetized in Latin script, and the linguistic distance between Spanish and French as Romance languages is much less than that between Spanish and Arabic.

<sup>39</sup> A factor that needs to be stressed when describing cultural aspects of access to resources and status is the fact of French cultural hegemony in Mexico during the Porfirian period (1876-1911). French culture was admired and imitated as the pinnacle of cultural and civilizational refinement. Local elites were French speaking and generally francophile. Ladies imported fashions from Paris as fashion magazines and clothes acquired during long months spent in Europe for recreational and medical purposes. Men of state imported administrative models and a civilizing mission. Elites appropriated French racial ideologies and imperial stance. Narratives on Francophile practices from author's interviews with T. Castello Yturbe and other descendants of Porfirian elites.

<sup>40</sup> Various interviews, particularly with J., 2006

<sup>41</sup> Diaz de Kuri and Macluff, 1995

<sup>42</sup> Currently Mexico does have an honorary consulate in Damascus, but the closest Embassy is in Antelias, a Christian suburb of Beirut.

<sup>43</sup> I thank Sofía Martos, Guita Hourani, Elianne Fersan and Michael Provence for calling my attention to the invaluable AMAE. Maria del Mar Logroño's recent work, based on the AMAE and early twentieth century periodical publications has made similar arguments for the cases of Argentina and Brazil.

<sup>44</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 5

<sup>45</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 4

<sup>46</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 186-b

<sup>47</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 55

<sup>48</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 5

<sup>49</sup> Fawaz 1983, Makdissi 2000

<sup>50</sup> Numerous examples in AMAE

<sup>51</sup> The 'protégés régulièrement immatriculés' – something like 'the migrants in good standing with the French authorities', designated qualified personalities as auxiliary agents in French consulates who were in charge of all

affairs regarding their compatriots. These agents' salaries were paid by a 'slight contribution' furnished by all the protégés. AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 6

<sup>52</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p.36

<sup>53</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 19-20

<sup>54</sup> AMAE, Section 407, p.60

<sup>55</sup> AMAE, Vol. 407, p. 61

<sup>56</sup> I have already noted the role of German consulates in extending protection to *Mashreqis* through 1919.

<sup>57</sup> AMAE, Vol. 407, p.63

<sup>58</sup> AMAE, Vol. 407, p.67

<sup>59</sup> See O'Connor's brilliant history of poverty in the US for discussions on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Euroamerican discourses of poverty, O'Connor 2001. Also Broch-Due 1999.

<sup>60</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 6

<sup>61</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 19

<sup>62</sup> The *coup d'état* in Guatelamal in December 1930

<sup>63</sup> '*Et je m'efforce d'y substituer un groupement Syrio-Libanaise avec l'aide des elements qui peuvent contrebalancer l'influence de M. Blanco*'.

<sup>64</sup> AMAE, Vol. 616, p. 229

<sup>65</sup> AMAE, Vol. 618, p. 367

<sup>66</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 11-b

<sup>67</sup> For an excellent analysis of the revolt as a popular uprising see Provence 2005

<sup>68</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 164

<sup>69</sup> Interview with S. 2006

<sup>70</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 180

<sup>71</sup> Vera Cruz in the AMEA.

<sup>72</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 187

<sup>73</sup> AMAE, Vol. 408, p. 188

<sup>74</sup> See J. Meyer 1976, 1983 and L. Meyer 2000 for further analysis of the conflict

<sup>75</sup> AMAE Vol. XXXX, p. 105. The text continues: L'un et l'autre ne sont autorisés, en vertu de la loi cite plus haut, a exercer le culte au Mexique que pour 6 ans, a charge pour eux de former, pendant ce delai, un pretre, Mexicain de naissance, qui sois susceptible d'assurer le ministere pour les colonies francaise et syro-libanaise. Le point de depart de ce delai, pour les deux pretres en question, remonte a trois annees. Lors de la derniere crise religieuse j'avais pu deja les faire autoriser une premiere fois. Il ne leur reste donc que trois annees pendant les quels ils se trouveront dans une situation legale. Auront-ils, au terme de ce delai, forme un pretre mexicain por les remplacer aupres de leur fideles de langue francaise et arabe? C'est peu probable, surtout dans le dernier cas. p. 104-107.

<sup>76</sup> AMAE, Vol. 132, p. 18-b

<sup>77</sup> Diaz de Kuri and Macluff 1995. They also tell us that the first ambassador was Joseph Aboukhater, accompanied by Munir Nsouli y Michel Chediak.

<sup>78</sup> Women who are successful politicians and bureaucrats in the national arena underscore their marginalization as political agents within these 'community' spaces during our interviews.

<sup>79</sup> Diaz de Kuri and Macluff 1995

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.centrolibanes.org.mx>

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.centrolibanes.org.mx/historia>

<sup>82</sup> Members of the Aboumrad family.

<sup>83</sup> Interview by the author.