

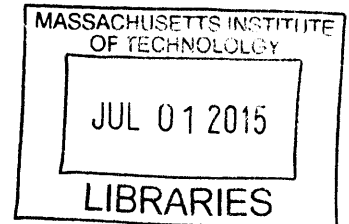
The Last Levantine City: Beirut, 1830–1930

by

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BArch, Lebanese American University, 2005
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

My thesis examines the urban transformation of Beirut between 1830 and 1930. Evolving from a local market city importing European goods and exporting local produce into a transit city for the re-export of European commodities, Beirut developed from a quadrilateral of thick crusader walls enclosing a labyrinth of narrow streets into a modern commercial center highlighted by the French-designed Place de l'Étoile. The new center connected the city with the port and with its hinterland through two major thoroughfares lined up with modern office buildings that, for the first time, accommodated underground storage spaces. My core questions are: What made Beirut develop in this direction? Why were the markets centered the way they were?

I argue that the urban transformation of Beirut in the nineteenth century through World War I was a manifestation of a French imperial policy that had been at play a century before the French Mandate. Seeking to extend infrastructural networks, France saw Beirut, particularly through its port, as an economic base that would facilitate trade with the region. '*Beirut al-Jadida*' (New Beirut) was ultimately created to provide a gateway for France to regain access into the region after an era of decline in French economic dominance in the Levant, in the wake of the Napoleonic Expedition into Egypt and Syria (1798–1801) and the abrogation of the *Échelles du Levant* system of trade by Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzar (r. 1775–1804). In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of the port (1887–1890) and the construction of the carriageway (1857–1863) and railroad (1895) between Beirut and Damascus, French dominance rose once again—this time in a new political (colonial) form.

The French agent intervening in the development of Beirut evolved from it being a financial investor—through private companies sponsoring the silk industry and other trades—in the early nineteenth century, to a major concession holder of various public works in the mid- to late-nineteenth century after the silk trade with the Levant had declined, to a military colonizer in the early twentieth century, when French economic dominance became a governmental pursuit no longer restricted to the operations of private businesses. My thesis seeks to explore how the change over time in economic and political activities, and in the interests of the colonizers in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods, was reflected in urban design and planning of the city.

In my work, I propose a framework of analysis that sees the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century development of Beirut as a continuous process of modernization and engagement with the international economic system in which both the Ottomans and French were invested, contrary to a significant number of scholarly works that tended to partition the city's history into two separate historical narratives tied to the two governing regimes.

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Sincerely,

Chantal El Hayek
May 21, 2015

Table of Contents

Summary	9

Chapter 1 - Historiography of a Levantine City	15
Divergent Trends in Recent Histories of Beirut	15
Theorization of Colonial Power	20
Real Time Narratives	21
The ‘French City’	23
The Levantinization of Beirut	25
The Rise of Beirut: An Ottoman-French Coalition	29
Conclusion	30

Chapter 2 - The Birth of ‘New Beirut’: French Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire	33
First Port: The Egyptian Rule and the Beginning of Urbanization	34
Before ‘New Beirut’: Declining French Trade in the Levant	35
French Power Rises after Decline: The <i>Mutasarrifiya</i> of Mount Lebanon	37
French Capitalism in Beirut: Port Construction and Infrastructural Reformation	38
Municipal Politics: Countering French Imperialism	42
Conclusion	43

Chapter 3 - Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l’Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut	45
Interpretations of the Étoile	45
History of the Étoile Site	48
Evolution of Radial Planning and the Parisian Place de l’Étoile	51
Urban Planning Post-Haussmann: The Place de l’Étoile of Beirut	56
Conclusion	60

Conclusion	63

Summary

Abstract

My thesis examines the urban transformation of Beirut between 1830 and 1930. Evolving from a local market city importing European goods and exporting local produce into a transit city for the re-export of European commodities, Beirut developed from a quadrilateral of thick crusader walls enclosing a labyrinth of narrow streets [fig. 1] into a modern¹ commercial center highlighted by the French-designed Place de l'Étoile. The new center connected the city with the port and with its hinterland through two major thoroughfares lined up with modern office buildings that, for the first time, accommodated underground storage spaces. My core questions are: What made Beirut develop in this direction? Why were the markets centered the way they were? [figs. 2-3-4-5-6]

I argue that the urban transformation of Beirut in the nineteenth century through World War I was a manifestation of a French imperial policy that had been at play a century before the French Mandate. Seeking to extend infrastructural networks, France saw Beirut, particularly through its port, as an economic base that would facilitate trade with the region. '*Beirut al-Jadida*' (New Beirut) was ultimately created to provide a gateway for France to regain access into the region after an era of decline in French economic dominance in the Levant, in the wake of the Napoleonic Expedition into Egypt and Syria (1798–1801) and the abrogation of the *Échelles du Levant* system of trade by Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzar (r. 1775–1804).² In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the expansion of the port (1887–1890) and the construction of the carriageway (1857–1863) and railroad (1895) between Beirut and Damascus, French dominance rose once again—this time in a new political (colonial) form.

The French agent intervening in the development of Beirut evolved from it being a financial investor—through private companies sponsoring the silk industry and other trades—in the early nineteenth century, to a major concession holder of various public works in the mid- to late-nineteenth century after the silk trade with the Levant had declined, to a military colonizer in the early twentieth century, when French economic dominance became a governmental pursuit

¹ The word 'modern' here denotes a new industrialized and commercialized town as opposed to the medieval market city.

² The *échelles* were Ottoman cities and ports where French consuls resided to control commercial activity, given power by the Sultan.

no longer restricted to the operations of private businesses. My thesis seeks to explore how the change over time in economic and political activities, and in the interests of the colonizers in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods, was reflected in urban design and planning of the city. In my work, I propose a framework of analysis that sees the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century development of Beirut as a continuous process of modernization and engagement with the international economic system in which both the Ottomans and French were invested, contrary to a significant number of scholarly works that tended to partition the city's history into two separate historical narratives tied to the two governing regimes.

Chapter 1 - Historiography of a Levantine City

The first chapter sets the stage through a historiographical analysis of recent studies on Beirut, focusing particularly on urban theories that advocate narratives that my project seeks to nuance. One underlines an imperial agenda of urban modernity and homogeneity, while the second presents European colonialism as the primary lens of historical analysis. After engaging a comparative analysis of the texts and relating their intellectual contribution to the larger body of literature on Beirut, I argue that the French intervention in the urbanization of the city, which preceded the French Mandate, obliges a historical study that ties the economic and political histories of the two governing systems.

Beirut, between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, acquired two distinctive statuses under two regimes; first it was capital of an Ottoman province (1888-1918) and later, post-World War I—with the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the inception of French colonial rule—it became the capital of the newly founded *Grand Liban* (Greater Lebanon) (1920-1943). [figs. 7-8-9] The two administrative positions compelled an urgent need for urban renewal. However, the intervention of European consuls—compelled by the need for regulating Ottoman debt owed to European banking houses that financed public works in the city, especially after the

empire's bankruptcy in 1875 and the establishment of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration³ in 1881 and facilitated by the establishment of the *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon—inverted the traditional balance of power, blurring the demarcations between state, society, and foreign powers.

Intellectual trends that separated the Ottoman imperial and French colonial rules were influenced by the tradition of splitting the two areas of study, Ottoman (1840⁴–1918)⁵ and French (1920–1943), as though the two histories never overlapped; nor were they integrated into one another. One trend advocated a pro-imperial/anti-colonial sentiment among the locals, and the other a pro-colonial/anti-imperial sentiment, of course only when the locals' voices were incorporated in the historical narrative. Modernity, as I conceive it in my thesis, is primarily an urban phenomenon that is neither ontologically European nor non-Western but appeared at the physical encounter between the two.⁶ This is best expressed in a statement by Philip Mansel, who specializes in the history of France and the Ottoman Empire—a focus that is antithetical to the tradition of splitting the two fields of study: “Beirut, the last Levantine city, was born from one of the most successful alliances between France and the Ottoman Empire.”⁷

Chapter 2 - The Birth of ‘New Beirut’: French Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire

Chapter 2 explores the construction of the port and the infrastructural reformation by French companies under Ottoman rule. Investigating the economic roots of French colonialism pre-Mandate, I argue that a special version of the Ottoman reformation system—the *tanzimat*

³ The Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA) was a European-controlled organization that collected the payments the Ottoman Empire owed to European companies in the Ottoman public debt.

⁴ 1840 is the year the Ottoman Empire reestablished dominance over Beirut after almost a decade of Egyptian occupation (1832–1840). Prior to 1832, Beirut was an Ottoman territory as well.

⁵ Beirut became an Ottoman provincial capital in 1888 through 1918.

⁶ Hanssen, Jens. *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 8.

⁷ Mansel, Philip. *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, p. 5.

(1839–1876)—was operative in Beirut as opposed to elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, yielding European countries and the Christian *Mutasarrifiya* an influential role in the urbanization of the city.⁸ European companies were granted concessions for the development of public projects.⁹ French concessionary companies promoted Christian merchants as their protégés. Exploiting their allocated extraterritorial rights and securing tax exemptions, their investments in public projects were by far the largest among other European companies.

The *Mutasarrifiya*, established midway between the era of financial investment and colonial rule, authorized French interference in Syro-Lebanese politics. Throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, a huge number of Christian Maronites settled in Mount Lebanon. The Druzes, who had earlier dominated the area, feared the Maronite settlements as a threat to their power. Clashes occurred between the two in the 1840s and 1860s. French on behalf of the Maronites and British on behalf of the Druzes intervened. In 1860, after thousands of Christians were massacred by the Druzes, European powers arbitrated to control the sectarian tensions. Mount Lebanon was designated a semi-autonomous district in Greater Syria with a new political and economic order, under an international guarantee. The tax-farming rule was replaced by a special type of administration called ‘*mutasarrifiya*’. Feudal privileges were abolished and power was transferred to a Christian non-Maronite ruler—subject of the Ottoman Empire. The Christians would since then identify with the French as their protectors. With the transition from Ottoman to French rule, the French-sponsored *Mutasarrifiya* eventually shaped the constitution of the Lebanese nation that was made up of Mount Lebanon, Beirut, the other coastal cities, and the Bekaa Valley.

⁸ Yahya, Maha. *Unnamed Modernisms: National Ideologies and Historical Imaginaries in Beirut’s Urban Architecture*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology: PhD Dissertation, 2005, p. 102. See also Makdisi, Ussama. *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, for an in-depth account of the sectarian tensions and violence in Mount Lebanon. See also Akarlı, Engin D. *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Fawaz, Leila T. *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

⁹ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 415.

Although Beirut was not administratively part of the *Mutasarrifiya*; however, through its Commercial Tribunal, it controlled commercial activity in the mountain. The new commercial setup between France and the Ottoman Empire differed now from earlier forms of exchange. The Levantine merchant and the Ottoman concessionaire maintained their role as socioeconomic intermediaries; however, it was not merchandise or raw material that was shifted, like silk, but capital and knowhow. The concession business demanded greater liquidity and international banking credibility, which eventually put the Beirut municipality that was developed by the Ottoman state in 1868 in debt to French banking houses. The French-owned port company would hold a monopoly over all means of commercial access to the sea, and the French municipal member Edmond de Perthuis—the most powerful resident in Beirut—monopolized transport and travel facilities between the coast and Damascus.¹⁰

Contrary to the judgment of many scholars, I propose a framework of urban analysis that looks at Beirut not as a seat of local politics that entitled the city the administrative and political capital of Greater Syria,¹¹ but as a diplomatic center of international politics, which eventually defined the future of Greater Syria in the post-World War I era. The ascension of Beirut to a preeminent position materialized solely through infrastructural and organizational advances that catered to the needs of French businessmen allying with Beirut merchants.¹² ‘New Beirut’ was consequently shaped as a function of infrastructural and monetary networks, which created it.

Chapter 3 - Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

The Ottomans withdrew from the Levant, following the end of the First World War. French troops landed in Beirut in October 1918, occupying the port and dissolving the Arab

¹⁰ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., pp. 87-92.

¹¹ I am using Greater Syria in my text to signify the Ottoman territory known as ‘*Bilad al-Sham*’ in Arabic.

¹² Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp. *The Making and Unmaking of an Ottoman Port-City: Nineteenth Century Beirut, its Hinterland, and the World Economy*. State University of New York at Binghamton: PhD Dissertation, 1990, p. 65.

government that had formed under the leadership of the municipality president Omar Daouk. Becoming the headquarters of French rule in the Levant, Beirut would be proclaimed capital of the new state of Greater Lebanon in 1920.

The French eventually took control of the urban and regional administration. Conducting an urban survey, the French army produced, in 1922, at the *Bureau Topographique de l'Armée Française du Levant*, the second comprehensive map of the city after the cartographic 'Löytved Map' of 1876. This latter was drawn for Sultan Abdel Hamid II under the command of Julius Löytved, a dragoman at the German Embassy in Istanbul.¹³ The 1922 French map now assisted in the preparation of new plans for the city.

French administrators transformed the center of Beirut, tearing down the remains of the marketplaces and building the Place de l'Étoile. Completed in the 1930s, the Place de l'Étoile was the culmination of the French reformation plan for the marketplaces of Beirut.

As the étoile form gained popularity with Haussmann's reorganization of Paris, it became a symbol of modernization thereafter. Particularly as applied by European planners in colonial cities, it signified power relations between colonizer and colonized. Most historians presented the creation of the Étoile in Beirut as an example of military planning that stamped a French 'Haussmannian' model onto the city's urban fabric, mainly underlining the symbolism of the star shape and its resonance with the Place de l'Étoile in Paris under Haussmann. The third chapter provides a more complicated story of the making of the square that discusses French planning in Beirut as a business of 'circulation'.¹⁴ I argue that there is a longer trajectory to the influences on the Place de l'Étoile in Beirut that predated Haussmann, as well as contemporary influences propagated by the *Société Française des Urbanistes* of which the French planners of the Étoile—the Danger brothers—were members. The main parallel in Beirut to the Haussmannian remodeling of the Parisian Étoile was the way of accommodating circulation in the design of the square.

¹³ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 172.

¹⁴ For views on militaristic colonial planning, see Çelik, Zeynep. *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914*. University of Washington Press, 2008; AlSayyad, Nezar, ed. *Forms of Dominance on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*. Avebury, 1992.

Chapter 1 - Historiography of a Levantine City

Beirut evolved from an Ottoman maritime town of about 10,000 inhabitants in the early nineteenth century into a thriving Levantine city that accommodated a population of over 100,000 individuals in the early twentieth century. With its population boom, the city now specialized in transit trade due to its newly constructed port (1887–1890) that was sponsored through French money, boasted a new commercial center that provided a new entryway for the import of European, mostly French, goods and their re-export into the region. Engaging a comparative analysis of various histories of Beirut, particularly ones that have been written most recently, and examining their assessment of the making of the Levantine city, this chapter argues that a significant number of scholarly works has divided the city's history into two historical narratives tied to the two governing regimes: Ottoman (1840¹–1918) and French (1920–1943). Even accounts that looked at the comprehensive history of the city from the nineteenth century through today meant to produce an all-inclusive urban and political account yet separated the Ottoman and French modernization projects as distinct and unintegrated.

Divergent Trends in Recent Histories of Beirut

The chapter focuses mostly on four books: *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*² (2011) by Philip Mansel, *Beirut*³ (2010) by Samir Kassir, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*⁴ (2005) by Jens Hanssen, and *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (1983) by Leila Fawaz.⁵ Hanssen and Fawaz recount the nineteenth-century developments through World War I. Mansel and Kassir report the entire urban history up until the present, motivated by the conviction that Beirut's spatial past resonates with the city's postwar present.

An Ottomanist whose text ends with the beginning of French rule, Jens Hanssen argues

¹ In 1888, Beirut was made by the Sultan capital of an Ottoman *vilayet* (governorate) in Greater Syria; it included the *sanjaks* (prefectures) Latakia, Tripoli, Beirut, Acre and Bekaa. Beirut served as an Ottoman provincial capital between until the end of the First World War in 1918.

² Mansel, Philip. *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

³ Kassir, Samir. *Beirut*. University of California Press, 2010.

⁴ Hanssen, Jens. *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁵ Fawaz, Leila T. *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

that Beirut's reformation was chiefly a product of an imperial agenda to refashion a provincial capital into a modern city that befits its new role. *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* is predominantly an account of the ascension of Beirut to the rank of a provincial capital. Rather than presenting European colonialism—considering that colonial pressure was mounting on Beirut at the time—as the primary lens of historical analysis, Hanssen chooses instead to prioritize the agency of the Beirutis. His main archival sources were local newspapers through which he conveyed the locals' voices. Prior to his highly perceptive monograph, Hanssen wrote an article titled “Your Beirut is on my Desk: Ottomanizing Beirut under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909),”⁶ in which he argues, like in his book, that “the city of Beirut was at once the product, the object, and the project of imperial politics.”⁷ To that he adds that the protracted struggle for power among the locals to upgrade their city to a provincial capital exemplified a bourgeois urban revolution in which the city's cultural and urban fabric was overhauled. This was brought about by the emergence of a dominant class of merchants and intelligentsia that eventually shaped Beirut's processes of urban development, particularly via its involvement in the municipal council.⁸ Hanssen contended that the Ottoman provincial mission shared many of the features of a French *mission civilisatrice* with which it competed over control of the Levant.⁹ As he asserted, “conceived as a means to catapult the empire into an age of modernity, the *mission civilisatrice* of the *tanzimat* man was carried forward into the Hamidian era.”¹⁰

The *tanzimat* were a series of administrative changes initiated by the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul in 1839 and exported to other Ottoman towns thereafter. They took place on domestic and provincial fronts.¹¹ The changes were designed to modernize, through bureaucratic centralization, as well as construct a sense of Ottoman citizenship. Government administrations

⁶ See Chapter 3: “Your Beirut is on my Desk: Ottomanizing Beirut under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909)” in Rowe, Peter G, and Hashim Sarkis. *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich: Prestel, 1998.

⁷ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 294-260.

⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 23-54; and Owen, Roger. *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*. London: Methuen, 1981, pp. 154-167.

were reorganized and new judiciary and executive councils were formed in provincial centers, creating a stronger rapprochement between Ottoman cities and the state.¹² Building codes, property laws, civil records, health, and education were all part of what Deringil dubbed as the administrative “fine-tuning” of the Empire.¹³ The *tanzimat* reforms were first introduced in Beirut in 1856. A municipality was established in 1868, with Aḥmad Pasha Abāza as president.¹⁴

While Hanssen emphasized the role of the *tanzimat*, Samir Kassir underscored the intervention of French businessmen in the urbanization of Beirut. Kassir, a Lebanese scholar of modern and contemporary history, a journalist, and latterly a politician before his tragic assassination in June 2005, wrote one comprehensive book on the urban history of Beirut, entitled *Beirut*. According to him, Western ways of living and architectural styles infiltrated the urban culture in the late Ottoman period.¹⁵ By the time the French took over—occupying now the higher echelons of government—and the foreign population grew from 5 to 15 percent of the whole, the old city and the coastline were radically transformed through a systematic colonial attempt to cast the new civic order in modern architectural form.¹⁶ Acknowledging that a dire budgetary limit dampened hopes of comprehensive planning in Beirut, he, nevertheless, underlined a French ‘Hausmannian’ tendency to planning that dictated the process of modernization.¹⁷

Writing before the other two authors, Leila Fawaz, a social historian of Lebanese origin who specializes in the Eastern Mediterranean region, initiated a history of Beirut in 1983,

¹² The 1864 Provincial Law called for the application of Istanbul’s municipal model in the provincial cities and towns of the empire: “each village shall have a municipality.” While this law was more a declaration of intent, the 1867 law fine-tuned the workings of the municipality in a detailed fashion. The stipulations were reviewed and amended in 1877. They were translated into Arabic by Nawfal Efendi Na’matallah Nawfal, and published in full length in Beirut’s press. The 1877 Municipal Law excluded foreigners from membership of the council. It was applied empire-wide to every city (*jehir*) and small town (*kasaba*). Cities with a population over 40,000 were to establish two municipal councils, as was attempted briefly in Beirut in 1909. See Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., pp. 115-137.

¹³ See Deringil, Selim. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1998.

¹⁴ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁵ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., pp. 163-251.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 251-347.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 139, 280-281, 286-287, 295, 300.

claiming that, before her contribution, “the spectacular growth of [the city] in the nineteenth century was never been dealt with in a satisfactory manner.”¹⁸ Fawaz mainly argued that in the urban crucible of Beirut, people of broadly disparate origins did not melt into an integrated society, debunking the idea that urbanization was the driving force behind an inevitable process in the course of which traditional allegiances and bonds progressively dwindled and eventually disappeared.¹⁹ She made the point that “cities are not necessarily melting pots; they can just as easily perpetuate, reinforce, and reshape traditional ties.”²⁰

Using private documents and public archival material in Mount Lebanon, Egypt, Britain, and France, Fawaz demonstrated how Beirut’s diversity gave it an edge over its competitors. The city flourished in trade and in education and culture. Political migration was an important factor that changed the religious composition of the urban population.²¹ The first wave of migrants came in the wake of violent incidents in the mixed Christian-Druze communities in Mount Lebanon in 1840, the second from Aleppo in 1850, and, finally, the largest after the civil war in the mountains and subsequent anti-Christian riots in Damascus in 1859-60.²² Fawaz stressed the fact that while around 1830 the Christian and Muslim populations were more or less equal in size, the Christian proportion rose to two-thirds of the total in the following decades. She highlighted the prominence of the mountain and its Christian population that eventually took part in the development of Beirut.²³

Fawaz suggested that Beirut accumulated wealth as it controlled the trade of Mount Lebanon, and hand in hand with this wealth “westernization of the way of life” was cultivated.²⁴ Christians adapted more quickly than Muslims, she added, and the consequence was soon apparent in the “juxtaposition of two ways of life.”²⁵ Fawaz’s theory held that, in contrast to other Levantine cities—like Alexandria and Smyrna—not foreigners but natives were the

¹⁸ Fawaz, *Leila*, op. cit., p. vii.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-61.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-61.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-103.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

backbone of the economic and cultural development in Beirut.²⁶ Three decades later, Philip Mansel, espoused Fawaz's theory, particularly when he analogously stated:²⁷ "Beirut was distinguished from neighboring ports, not—like Smyrna—by the prominence of foreign merchants, nor—like Alexandria—by a modernizing pasha, but by the number and power of its Christians."²⁸ The Christians in Beirut were local. Mansel duly asserted that "the big money that modernized Beirut was local."²⁹ A huge number of the Beirut Christians had migrated in the mid-nineteenth century from Mount Lebanon which eventually became a semi-autonomous administrative district in the Ottoman Empire under an international guarantee (*Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon). They had close ties with France which intervened to protect them after conflicts had arisen between them and the Druzes. In Mansel's work, however, there was a larger theorization about Beirut and the Levant.

Of the four books, Mansel's came last. It was published in 2011. As his book focused more on theorizing, through a comparative method, the rise and decline of three Levantine cities—Alexandria, Beirut, and Smyrna (Izmir)—than on presenting new historical findings, Mansel relied mostly on secondary sources. Mansel continuously referenced Hanssen and Kassir, especially in his depiction of historical events and urban and architectural developments. This chapter argues that, while Beirut's modernization was to Kassir a western project undertaken by French businessmen in alliance with local merchants and cultural elites and to Hanssen an Ottoman "*mission civilisatrice*" whereby "Hamidian bureaucrats" carried out their "imperial mission to civilize distant provincial peripheries,"³⁰ modernity in the Levant, according to Mansel, was a philosophical and physical encounter between France and the Ottoman Empire. The Levant was at once Mediterranean and Middle Eastern, Ottoman and European, nationalist and international. In many ways, Beirut was an archetypal Mediterranean city in the Braudelian sense. The Beirutis found themselves "of the West" but "not in it."³¹ In order to demonstrate his theory, Mansel created a political and historico-geographical framework tied to the notion of 'the

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 121-124.

²⁷ However, Mansel seldom referenced Fawaz in his endnotes.

²⁸ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁰ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 14.

³¹ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., pp. 1-4.

Levant’ with which he replaced the dominant interpretation which has generally been structured historiographically by either Beirut’s “encounter with the West”—illustrated by Kassir, or the centrality of the Ottoman *tanzimat*—characterized by Hanssen, or the territorial integration and institutional particularity of Mount Lebanon—epitomized by Fawaz.

Theorization of Colonial Power

The two positions that accounts on Beirut have followed—one emphasizing a ‘Westernization’ bent of modernization and a second advocating an Ottoman imperial one, respectively exemplified by Kassir and Hanssen—are evident in the two authors’ characterization of a public clocktower built in Beirut in late-Ottoman days. In a letter dispatched from Beirut on September 25, 1897 to Sultan Abdülhamid II in Istanbul, the governor general Rashid Bey requested imperial authorization for the construction of a public clock showing Muslim prayer times.³² He argued that several foreign institutions had established clocktowers in the city, alluding to one built near the College Hall of the Syrian Protestant College in 1871 and another built for the Jesuit *Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth* in 1875.³³ Conspicuously absent was a clock for the Muslim inhabitants of the city, who “urgently needed a public clock to align them within the same timeframe as the rest of the Empire.”³⁴ The municipality, the letter adds, found the “proper place to represent the Sultan.”³⁵ Designed by the municipal architect Yusuf Aftimos, the clocktower was eventually built in 1899 on a hill overlooking the city. It joined an existing complex that included the *kushlak* (military barracks),³⁶ built in 1853, and a military hospital, built in 1861. The inauguration of the new project took place on the 25th anniversary of the sultan’s coronation.³⁷ Heralded in the newspapers as ‘The Arab Clock Tower’, the new timepiece, with façades featuring an eclectic mix of classical and Oriental motifs, displayed four

³² Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 244.

³³ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 100.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

³⁶ The Ottoman barracks was named the Grand Sérail during the French Mandate period (1919-1943). It became the headquarters of the Mandate authorities, while the military hospital building was used for the Ministry of Justice.

³⁷ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

faces: two inscribed with Arabic numerals and two with Latin numerals.³⁸

The construction of clocktowers in the Ottoman Empire was not new. Since the seventeenth century, various clock towers had adorned the landscapes of numerous towns in Anatolia and the Balkans. In the Arab provinces, however, they were a much rarer breed that began in 1865 with the construction of the Amasya minaret clocktower. Their proliferation in 1900 and 1901 in the Syrian provinces signaled, according to Jens Hanssen, a new Ottoman symbol of urban modernity and imperial homogeneity.³⁹ The installation of the clock in Beirut, Hanssen suggested, “demonstrates an acute awareness that ‘Islamic time’ was particular—or should be so—in order to unify the space of the [Ottoman] imperial state.”⁴⁰ The compression of time and space in the late-Ottoman city was a formative aspect of imagining oneself as a modern Ottoman citizen.⁴¹ “Streamlining imperial time informed and enforced the Ottoman project of modernization.”⁴² Samir Kassir, who, in fact, footnoted Hanssen in reference to the clocktower, proposed a rather different interpretation, underscoring Beirut’s fascination with the European project of modernity that it now wanted to acquire as part of its own visual culture and announcing the prospective death of the Ottoman Empire. It was “a piece of supreme sophistication, [in which] time was given in both the French and the Turkish manner, as though to acknowledge the city’s hesitation between the time of the world, dominated by European expansion, and that of an empire that refused to die,” Kassir claimed.⁴³

Real Time Narratives

The dichotomy characterized in the historical narratives of the two authors did not exist in a vacuum. Although a great deal of the history of the city, written in retrospect—post-independence—was modeled to either downplay or emphasize the Western influence on Beirut’s urbanism, it was only a reflection and the natural product of a duality of political views that existed among the Beirutis in real time, in response to the transition from Ottoman to French

³⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁰ Hanssen, Jens, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 244.

⁴² Ibid., p. 244.

⁴³ Kassir, Samir, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

rule, following the end of the First World War. These views were candidly historicized by Mansel and Kassir, as well as by other scholars.⁴⁴ In what follows, I will recount a historical event that took place a few months after the outbreak of the First World War illustrating the various political views and national sentiments of Beirut residents towards the Ottoman imperial and French colonial rules. This is in order to highlight the pro-French-colonial sentiments that arose among some Beirutis and residents of Mount Lebanon, particularly the Christians, which justifies the decision the French and the British made as they divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire between French and British protectorates in the Sykes–Picot Agreement (May 1916) that was signed in the inter-World-War-I period.

Alert to the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, various social groups in Beirut ascribed to their city—and ultimately to the newly established State of Greater Lebanon after the French took over—multiple social identities and expressed multiple nationalistic sentiments that did not quite overlap. In November 1914, in response to the Turkish fleet’s bombardment of Sevastopol and Odessa, the Allied states of France, Britain, and Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. They abandoned, as a result, their consular posts that were based in Beirut and that had, for centuries, exercised considerable influence. The French consul Francois Georges-Picot withdrew, leaving behind a packet of letters implicating local notables in a conspiracy to detach Greater Syria from the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵

The Sultan’s subjects who conspired with the French consul were hoping to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire. However, their conceptions of what constituted the nation and its frontiers varied. Some advocated for a Lebanese nation made up of Mount Lebanon and, possibly, the coastal cities and the Bekaa Valley. Others were Syrian nationalists, whose patrimony was *Bilad al Sham*—Greater Syria, which meant the entire territory south of

⁴⁴ For instance, Carla Eddé, a historian and professor at the *Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth*, discussed these views in a book titled *Beyrouth: Naissance d’une Capitale (1918-1924)*. See Eddé, Carla. *Beyrouth: Naissance d’une Capitale (1918-1924)*. Paris: Sindbad, 2009.

⁴⁵ Georges-Picot had lodged his papers at the American consulate. The dragoman there turned the evidence over to Jamal Pasha, the new Turkish military governor. Jamal tried the 25 Christian and Muslim plotters for treason. Some were hanged in Damascus and the rest in Beirut, on the site of what came to be known Martyrs’ Square, in their honor. See Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 296-310.

Antioch as far as the Red Sea, including the future states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan. Most of the rest were Pan-Arabists. They sought the unity and independence of Arabic-speaking peoples from Morocco to Iraq. Between 1914 and 1918, all nationalists united against the Ottomans, in opposition to the majority of their fellow subjects, who were either loyal to the Ottoman Empire or apathetic to the plea of nationalism.⁴⁶

Importantly, Georges-Picot, after his return to the Quai d'Orsay, conferred another document to the Levant. He, on behalf of France, and Sir Mark Sykes, on behalf of Great Britain, signed an accord in 1916 that would parcel out the Ottomans' Arab dominions into European 'mandates', so-called by the League of Nations.⁴⁷ These eventually became states.⁴⁸ The newly sketched borders divided the region without resolving the incongruities among competing nationalisms. Beirut fell under French rule. After being an Ottoman province for three decades (1888–1918), it became now the capital of the newly founded *Grand Liban*—Greater Lebanon (1920–1943) under French Mandate.

The 'French City'

With the inception of French rule in 1918, both scholarly trends tend to shift narratives, staging European colonialism as the main framework of historical inquiry. Labeling Beirut as “the French City,”⁴⁹ they depict it as the product of the French civic order—‘*mission civilisatrice*’—that was supposedly meant to refashion its urban and social landscape. Few scholars have challenged this interpretation.⁵⁰ Elizabeth Thompson, in a book titled *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*, suggested: “French planners, in cooperation with local elites, destroyed the old city and inscribed

⁴⁶ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 296-310.

⁴⁷ French rule in Lebanon and Syria was a mandate that slightly differed from colonial rule. The distribution of responsibilities between the European colonialists and the natives followed a strategy that guarded the interests of the latter who were appointed municipal positions and took part in decision-making.

⁴⁸ The Sykes-Picot Agreement desecrated commitments by both the French and the British that those who took up arms against the Turks would be recompensed with independence from Ottoman rule. See Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 296-310.

⁴⁹ See ‘The French City’ in Kassir, Samir, op. cit., pp. 279-301.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

their sectarian view of Lebanese society into quarters segregated by religion.”⁵¹ Thompson’s focus is antithetical to Hanssen’s endeavors to downplay the pro-colonial sentiments among the native Beirut elites. Some scholars, on the other hand, attempted to generate a balanced chronicle that makes sense of both ends. Maha Yahya, depicting a ‘local’—or a ‘national’—and a modernist ‘foreign’ in the urban landscape of the early twentieth century, suggested, for instance, that “the attempt to index a nation, whose contours were as much a product of colonial power itself as they were of the endeavors of various local groups, meant that the clear lines of modernist architecture had to be anchored in place, in a history which would act as its public reference, as its trace in this place. Through a selective use of history, modernist architecture became the means through which the incorporation and pacification of various locals takes place.”⁵²

Unlike Yahya, however, Hanssen asserted that prior to the early twentieth-century, national sentiments did not exist. Hanssen suggested “neither the concept of Westernization nor national fulfillment were the driving forces of Beirut’s late Ottoman history.”⁵³ He, instead, argued for the notion of “urban patriotism”—or “*chauvinisme des villes*,” as coined by Antoine Abdel Nour in *Introduction à l’Histoire Urbaine de la Syrie Ottomane (XVIIe-XVIIIe Siècle)*.⁵⁴ Rivalry between urban centers intensified in the nineteenth century, as the stakes increased and towns and cities in Greater Syria underwent a dual integration, commercially with the world-economy and politically with the Ottoman Empire. After the sectarian tensions of 1860, a passionate battle of petitions to the imperial court for an administrative promotion of their cities erupted between Damascene and Beirut notables, driven by the general awareness that prosperity proved elusive.⁵⁵

As Hanssen’s monograph focuses predominantly on the ascension of Beirut to the rank of a provincial capital, his biggest scholarly contribution was the uncovering of the flood of

⁵¹ Thompson, Elizabeth. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 65.

⁵² Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 265.

⁵³ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 26; Abdel, Nour A. *Introduction à l’Histoire Urbaine de la Syrie Ottomane (XVIIe-XVIIIe Siècle)*. Beyrouth: Université libanaise, 1982, pp. 265-266.

⁵⁵ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., pp. 25-54.

petitions the rising bourgeois class in Beirut dispatched to the Sultan's court in Istanbul; the last was sent in May 1865. Requesting that their city be elevated to a provincial capital, they defeated the Damascenes who were after promoting their own city.⁵⁶ The petitioners in Beirut reasoned that their city required political weight through administrative upgrading in order to jump start economic life and political stability after the sociocide of 1860 that took place in Mount Lebanon.⁵⁷ While Hanssen argued for a 'Beirut chauvinism', Fawaz, contrarily, suggested that most people from Beirut would have been astonished if someone called them 'Beirutis.'⁵⁸ Fawaz contended that Beirut's new bourgeois class were people who came from various areas in Mount Lebanon and "even if it had been their grandparents or great-grandparents who had first settled in the city, people still regarded themselves as belonging to the ancestral village, however long ago they might have left it."⁵⁹

As Hanssen argues that Beirut benefited enormously from being a provincial capital in the final period of Ottoman rule—the Hamidian and Young Turk eras—in terms of urban renewal, Kassir and Mansel challenge his views by highlighting the French sponsorship of major public works in the city. The French, planning to make use of Beirut's harbor as an entryway for trade with the Eastern Mediterranean, had an interest in making Beirut a capital city and enhancing its commercial assets. With the expansion of the port that connected Beirut with Europe and the extension of the city's infrastructure linking it to inland Syria, the French, in alliance with the local Beirut merchants—subjects of the Ottoman Empire still—eventually transformed Beirut into a Levantine city.

The Levantinization of Beirut

French consular representation was established in Beirut in 1821, in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) and the revival of Mediterranean trade. Steamships seafaring from Europe began to anchor in Beirut's port during the Egyptian rule (1832–1840), when the first port jetty was constructed. Beirut's port accommodated the first French steamship in 1836.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 25-54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁸ Fawaz, Leila, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

At the time, Beirut was a minor maritime town, depicted in travelogues and consular reports as an old market town with narrow winding streets, introverted stone houses with low windows, tiny cafes packed with men drinking coffee and smoking hookah, male-dominated *hammams*, khans, and few intramural religious edifices (both mosques and churches). Contemporary authors have based their knowledge about the medieval city on nineteenth-century travel literature generated by European voyageurs traveling to the Levant and recording their observations.⁶⁰ A French merchant Édouard Blondel mentioned the public works planned by the Egyptian government in the 1830s.⁶¹ The poet Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855)⁶² noted the first signs of prosperity, referring to the port’s busy traffic and the affluence of the bazaar—in reality not nearly as large as he claimed—as well as to the street “devoted to French commerce.”⁶³

Things, however, changed more drastically in the following decades. The first author to observe and report on that shift was Henri Guys, the first French vice-consul in Beirut appointed in 1824. Guys, in an addendum to the text he had written while he had resided in Beirut in the 1820s and 1830s, described a major transformation that was beginning to take shape—he was transferred to Aleppo in 1838, when Beirut was under the Egyptian rule: Beirut, “the city that has only recently become commercial [...] is now in the running to position itself after Smyrna and Alexandria.”⁶⁴ It is now equipped with “consulates from almost every nation, commercial establishments, hotels, well-stocked stores, a European pharmacy, and finally a casino—a luxury that only ports of the first rank can permit themselves.”⁶⁵

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when prospects of colonization of the city arose with French troops having had landed in Beirut in August 1860,⁶⁶ the possibility of

⁶⁰ Also Michaud, J F, and Baptistin Poujoulat. *Correspondance d'Orient, 1830-1831*. Paris: Ducollet, 1833.

⁶¹ Blondel, Édouard. *Deux Ans en Syrie et en Palestine (1838-1839)*. Paris: P. Dufart, 1840, pp. 96-97.

⁶² De Nerval, Gérard, and Henri Clouard. *Voyage en Orient*. Paris: Charpentier, 1869.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁶⁴ Guys, Henri. *Beyrouth et le Liban: Relation d'un Séjour de Plusieurs Années dans ce Pays*. Volume 1. Paris: Comon, 1850, p. 11.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Kassir, Samir, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Beirut's complete transformation was noted by European travelers.⁶⁷ In a guidebook to the city edited by Karl Baedeker, the bazaar is thought of as “unattractive to visitors, as European influence has deprived it of many Oriental characteristics.”⁶⁸ The bazaar now ambiguously characterized neither fully the East nor the West. The new city type has been dubbed by local journalists and merchants as “a gateway between the West and the East.”⁶⁹ “But why Beirut should have prospered, and not one of the other ports of the Levant?,” inquired Kassir.⁷⁰

The establishment of a semi-autonomous administrative district in Mount Lebanon in 1861—known as *Mutasarifiyyat Jabal Luban*—was one response to Kassir's question developed in all four accounts. To control the religious and sectarian tensions between the Maronites and the Druzes as a result of which two rounds of massacres had erupted in 1860, and previously in 1840—when the Ottomans had reestablished their control over Beirut, defeating Ibrahim Pasha (1789–1848), a settlement was made designating Mount Lebanon a special semi-autonomous district in Greater Syria with a new political and economic order under an international guarantee.⁷¹ Upon the issuance in June 1861 of a constitutional document titled *Règlement et Protocole Relatifs à la Réorganisation du Mont Liban* (Regulations and Protocols Related to the Reorganization of Mount Lebanon), and its amendment in 1864, the tax-farming rule, whereby local princes (known as *emirs*) had in the previous centuries served as feudal lords collecting taxes and passing them to the Sultan, was abolished. Power was transferred to a Christian ruler, known as *mutasarrif*. The new ruler was a non-Maronite Christian subject of the Ottoman Empire. Mount Lebanon was thus opened up to foreign commercial interests and to the pursuit of private profit, benefiting namely European bankers and local Beirut merchants. Although Beirut was not administratively part of the *Mutasarrifiya*, it, through a Commercial Tribunal that was

⁶⁷ See Isambert, É, Adolphe L. Joanne, and Adolphe Chauvet. *Itinéraire Descriptif, Historique et Archéologique de L'Orient*. Paris: Hachette et cie, 1873; Socin, A, I Benzinger, and John P. Peters. *Palestine and Syria with the Chief Routes through Mesopotamia and Babylonia: Handbook for Travellers*. Leipzig: K. Baedeker, 1906. Other guidebooks by local journalists and businessmen included Khuṛī, Amīn. *Al-Jame'a Aw Dalīl Bayrūt*. Bayrūt: Al-Maṭba'a al-Adabiya, 1888-1889; Unsī, 'Abd al-Bāsīṭ. *Dalīl Bayrūt*. Bayrūt: Maṭba'at Jarīdat al-Iqbāl, 1908.

⁶⁸ Socin, A, I Benzinger, and John P. Peters, op. cit., p. 288.

⁶⁹ Al-Barq (January 2, 1909).

⁷⁰ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 86.

⁷¹ Owen, Roger, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

established in 1850 with its jurisdiction extended to the mountain in the early 1860s by British and French members, controlled commercial activity in Mount Lebanon.⁷² Materializing midway between the era of financial investment and colonial rule, the *Mutasarrifiya* enabled France to enter formally into Syro-Lebanese politics.

The new class of merchants that emerged out of this new development ultimately shaped Beirut's municipal council, which was established as part of the Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms. Hanssen celebrated the *tanzimat* as the major force that hurled Beirut—and the empire—into an age of modernity.⁷³ However, Ussama Makdisi, an advocate of a historiographical trend that is structured by the territorial integration and institutional particularity of Mount Lebanon, argues that the *tanzimat* in Beirut were of an “ambiguous” nature, granting France and the Christian-ruled *Mutasarrifiya* a powerful function in the urbanization of the city, as opposed to other Ottoman towns.⁷⁴ Kassir, Fawaz, and Mansel, as well as many other scholars who have written about Beirut's urbanization, built their hypotheses based on Makdisi's theorization in his book *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (2000).⁷⁵

Within the *tanzimat* system, and in order to regulate Ottoman debt, European companies were granted concessions for the development of public projects. Consequently, French engineers began the construction of a modern harbor in 1887⁷⁶ and a rail link across Lebanon to Damascus and Aleppo in 1895.⁷⁷ French concessionaires, with the extraterritorial rights and tax

⁷² Ibid., pp. 59-61. Also check Albert Hourani's discussion of the agro-city in the Ottoman age: “The basic unity of Near Eastern society was the “agro-city,” the urban conglomeration together with the rural hinterland from which it drew its food and to which it sold part at least of its manufacturers.” It was a two-way relationship whereby the government needed the city surplus and the city yearned for state protection. See Hourani, Albert, and S M. Stern. *The Islamic City: A Colloquium [held at All Souls College, June 28-July 2, 1965] Published Under the Auspices of the Near Eastern History Group, Oxford, and the Near East Centre, University of Pennsylvania*. Oxford: Cassirer, 1970, p. 16.

⁷³ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷⁴ Makdisi, Ussama, op. cit. See also Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 102.

⁷⁵ Books on the same topic that came out before Makdisi include: Akarlı, Engin D. *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; Fawaz, Leila T. *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

⁷⁶ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., pp. 87-96.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 10, 39, 87, 95-96, 258.

exemptions they were granted by the Ottoman state, owned the largest investments in public projects among other European merchants.⁷⁸

The Rise of Beirut: An Ottoman-French Coalition

Of the four authors, Philip Mansel has formulated the most inclusive and nuanced argument about the combined Ottoman-French effort in the urbanization of the city and the subsequent rise of Beirut in the nineteenth century. According to him, Beirut was “born from one of the most successful alliances between France and the Ottoman Empire,”⁷⁹ sealing with this statement—at least until this day—the history of Beirut’s development. Historically contextualizing this alliance, Mansel explained: “At the beginning, an alliance between the French and the Ottomans seemed impossible. Jihad had been one of the bases of the Ottoman Empire and a reason for its rise from Anatolian principality to world power, stretching from Hungary to Yemen, Algeria to Azerbaijan.”⁸⁰ The Empire, aside from the ports of the Levant, included North Africa, the Balkans, and most of the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire’s power, many of its Muslim subjects held, showed that God wanted it to be the last empire, as Muhammad was the last Prophet.⁸¹ Mansel further explicated that while Islam was one of the foundations of the Empire, and Jihad its long-established tradition, no country had a stronger crusading culture than France.⁸² However, and as he suggested in a rather idealistic style, “in both France and the Ottoman Empire, however, realism outweighed religious zeal.”⁸³ The Levant, after all, was “a mentality” that “put deals over ideals,”⁸⁴ and “Beirut was a republic of merchants who have their own strength and their own laws.”⁸⁵ Formed by a line of military sultans out of forty conquered kingdoms and sultanates, the Ottoman Empire constantly allied with Christian powers since its forces first crossed into Europe in the 1350s as allies of Genoa.

⁷⁸ Yahya, Maha, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁷⁹ Mansel, Philip, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Mansel traces a lineage of French ambassadors in the Levant starting with Jean de la Forest who arrived in Constantinople in 1535. The Franco-Ottoman alliance helped provide the Levant with a framework that was based on concessions (or capitulations).⁸⁶ Capitulations established freedom of commerce between the two states; “extraordinarily for French subjects—who, for all crimes except murder, could be judged by their own laws in their consuls’ courts, rather than in Ottoman courts—freedom of dress and worship; and freedom from forced labor, from Ottoman taxation, from collective responsibility for individual nationals’ crimes, and to reclaim prisoners held on Ottoman ships.”⁸⁷

But why was Beirut selected for infrastructural development, reverting back to Kassir’s question? Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), according to Mansel, “favored the mainly Christian city of Beirut.”⁸⁸ His motive was to break and decrease foreign influence in a Levantine port that had become home to French schools and companies. “As it became more modern, Beirut was re-Ottomanized: the Empire built back.”⁸⁹ The Sultan also meant to keep Syrian patriotism split between Beirut and Damascus.⁹⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how histories of Beirut, including but not limited to the four accounts by Mansel, Hanssen, Kassir, and Fawaz, have been shaped by one of two intellectual trends. The first—characterized by Kassir—and influenced by an Orientalist scholarly leaning that highlights the weakness of the Ottoman Empire in its latter days before its downfall, presents French colonization as the main framework of historical inquiry, highlighting the emergence of Europeans as powerful contestants in the financial field.⁹¹ The urbanization of the city is

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁸⁸ Spagnolo, John, and Albert Hourani. *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*. Oxford: The Middle East Centre, St Antony’s College, 1996, pp. 12-13, 14, 21, 24, quoted in Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 151.

⁸⁹ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 151. This argument is analogous with Hanssen’s as related to Sultan’s Abdülhamid II’s favoritism for Beirut.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 151.

⁹¹ The European contribution to other fields—like health and education—was also highlighted. These aspects were not part of this study, however.

portrayed not only as a financial debt due to European investment in the public infrastructural reformation of the city, but also as an ideological liability owed to France and its alleged ‘civilizing’ mission. The second—illustrated by Hanssen—stresses an imperial agenda of modernization based on the establishment of an Ottoman system that reformed the bureaucratic control of concessions. This argument underscores the centrality of the state, emphasizing the point that the city of Beirut was a product of imperial politics embodied in the *tanzimat*.

In Mansel’s work, modernity is most fairly conceived as primarily an urban phenomenon that materialized through the political and social encounter between France and the Ottoman Empire.⁹² Beirut, according to Mansel, is “the last [Levantine] city where neither Christianity nor Islam—[neither the West nor the East]—dominates.”⁹³ While literature on Beirut has generally divided the two areas of study between ‘Ottoman’ and ‘French’ history as if the two never intersected; nor were they assimilated into one another, Mansel, who specializes in the history of France and the Ottoman Empire, has made possible an area of study that ties the two political histories. However, his urban analysis of Ottoman and French Beirut remains split.

However, even with Mansel’s model that explicates the political ties between the French state and the Ottoman Empire, it remains difficult to bypass Orientalist history. As the classic concept of the Muslim city—as suggested by the leading urban historian of the Middle East André Raymond—is “a French affair,”⁹⁴ so is the Levant. Etymologically the ‘Levant’ relates to the ‘Orient’. Both these terms are Western names for an Eastern area.⁹⁵ Just as the word ‘Orient’ derives from the Latin word *oriens* meaning ‘rising’, ‘Levant’ comes from the French word for rising—*levant*. For Western Europeans, *le Levant*, the Levant, *il Levante* became synonymous with “the lands where the sun rises”⁹⁶—the lands on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean that eventually became a colonial territory. Kassir’s fixation on the preeminence of the ‘Western’—an approach that Hanssen efforts to avoid—is in Mansel’s manuscript a preoccupation with the ‘Christian’ side of the story, which in many ways, is a revival of Fawaz’s enthusiasm for the

⁹² Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹³ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 3.

⁹⁴ Raymond, Andre. “Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views.” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 21.1 (1994): 3-18.

⁹⁵ Mansel, Philip, op. cit., p. 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

“influx of the Christians.”⁹⁷ We do not know if this was true, but Mansel, in the fashion of a nostalgic Orientalist, suggested: “Many Muslims attended Christian schools, since they were considered the best. Few Christians attended Muslim schools.”⁹⁸

In the following chapter, which looks at the urbanization of Beirut in the nineteenth century, tracing the roots of French imperial interests in the city and more widely in the Levant, I opt to depart from an analysis that would only see French imperialism as a tool that instrumentalizes the role of the Beirutis to further the interests of capital. Instead, I demonstrate how, while Beirut’s nineteenth-century urbanization was part and parcel of a regional and global tendency to extend transportation and communication networks,⁹⁹ its restructuring, however, was not merely externally imposed by European colonialism on an oblivious local population. Whereas European states had their own imperial agenda, Beirut notable and businessmen were equally eager to reform the city’s infrastructural system to connect the city with the port and with its hinterland for better trade.

⁹⁷ Fawaz, Leila, op. cit., p. 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 150.

⁹⁹ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp. *The Making and Unmaking of an Ottoman Port-City: Nineteenth Century Beirut, its Hinterland, and the World Economy*. State University of New York at Binghamton: PhD Dissertation, 1990, p. 177.

Chapter 2 - The Birth of 'New Beirut': French Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire

This chapter focuses on urban development in the nineteenth century leading up to the French rule, while Chapter 3 assesses post-WWI French planning. Modernization of the city under Ottoman rule has often been discussed as a product of the *tanzimat*, which were introduced by the Ottoman State in Beirut in 1856 with a second set of reforms put later against the backdrop of sectarian bloodshed in Mount Lebanon in 1860. Contrary to the scholars who see the nineteenth-century urbanization of Beirut as a product of the centralized Ottoman reformation system, I argue that a distinct version of the *tanzimat* was operative in Beirut, yielding European countries—France in particular—a dominant role in the urbanization of the city.¹ This was unique to Beirut, of all cities of the Ottoman Empire, due to its connection with the Christian *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon—discussed in detail in the previous chapter—which formalized French interference in the organizational affairs of the city and its hinterland.

I argue that the nineteenth century transformation of Beirut manifested a French imperial policy that was at play a century before the French Mandate. France sought to extend infrastructural networks in Beirut in order to create a gateway through which it would regain commercial access in the Levant. At the turn of the nineteenth century, French economic dominance had declined in the Levant as a result of the abrogation of the *Échelles du Levant* system by Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzar (r. 1775–1804). With the development of Beirut's port in the latter part of the century, French power rose again, in a new political colonial form.

The physical structure of 'New Beirut', as the city was dubbed in local newspapers, was a product of the new infrastructural system that was established, prioritizing regional and international trade networks.² This chapter is structured in three parts. First, I will examine the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century periods, when French commercial privileges in the Levant were revoked in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815). Second, I will discuss the later post-1860 *Mutasarrifiya* period, which marked a new beginning of French dominance through concessions granted to French financiers for the construction of major infrastructural

¹ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 102. The French, exempt from local prosecution, local taxation, and local conscription, operated according to 'capitulation' laws contracted between the Ottomans and their homeland.

² See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "City/State," *Zone*, 1986, no. 1/2, pp. 195-196; Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 3.

projects. Third, I will address Beirut's infrastructural reformation in light of the *tanzimat* and French intervention.

Before embarking on the study, however, it is necessary to examine the Egyptian period (1832–1840), which interrupted the Ottoman rule of Beirut in the early nineteenth century. According to many historians, it marked the beginning of urban renewal. As most scholars have somewhat hastily linked the early modernization of Beirut under the Egyptians only to the forceful rule of a potent sovereign with modernizing aspirations, I choose to examine the economic and political forces at work that tied the Egyptian period with the longer nineteenth century—with the pre- and post-Egyptian period. My argument is that the development of Beirut was manifested through a continuous process of urbanization and engagement with the international economic system in which several governments were involved: Ottoman, Egyptian (for a decade that has in fact influenced the subsequent part of the century), and French. **The**

First Port: The Egyptian Rule and the Beginning of Urbanization

As stated, the beginning of urbanization in Beirut is often duly tied to the Egyptian rule (1832–1840), when the first port expansion project took place under Ibrahim Pasha, who, sent from Egypt by his father Muhammad 'Ali (1769–1849), conquered Syria and then took over Beirut. The return of peace in Europe following the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) revitalized international commerce to the advantage of the Syrian coast. Ibrahim Pasha (1801–1853), with his modernizing aspirations, assisted Beirut in acquiring a share of this trade, thus stimulating further expansion.³ Pasha reestablished Damascus as the region's political center between Gaza (Palestine) in the south and Adana (Turkey) in the north. While public security was restored in Mount Lebanon and coastal trade was revived, Beirut eventually became the uncontested port of Damascus. Ottoman Beirut was subjugated without resistance on April 2, 1832 by the Egyptian army. The post of the *mutasallim* was given to *Emir* (Prince) Melhem Shihab, a close relative of *Emir* Bashir II (1767–1850) of Mount Lebanon. Although the city's population did not sum up to 20,000, a *majlis* (council) of twelve members was appointed under Ibrahim Pasha's order on January 25, 1834, endorsing the principle of sectarian representation. The councilors were

³ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 101.

conscripted from the merchant class, barring *al-ashraf* (the religious notables).⁴ The harbor front was developed as a result, new administrative divisions were created, and a number of extramural streets were paved.⁵

Scholars highlighted the role of the new Egyptian government which instated new laws that eventually set in motion a process of participatory, though strongly hierarchized, rule in Beirut, thus transforming it from a tax farm of regional overlords to a port-city that served the expanding Mediterranean economy.⁶ While this is true, I further argue that the Egyptian government’s decision to promote Beirut as the port of Damascus initiated a process through which Greater Syria was eventually disengaged from the economic domain of the Ottoman Empire. The process was completed in the latter part of the century with the construction of the Beirut-Damascus railroad and the port. Greater Syria, during the Egyptian rule, began to establish an autonomous economic viability without recourse to trade routes passing through the Sultan’s territory.⁷ Yet before the installation of the Egyptian government, the Levant and Beirut had come to the attention of imperial powers.

Before ‘New Beirut’: Declining French Trade in the Levant

Before the nineteenth century, Beirut was a minor maritime town. Of all the Levantine cities, it was the city with least imperial authority within its walls. Ottoman governors resided elsewhere and military barracks were nonexistent. With the transition from regulated trade that was distinguished by the predominant role of merchant-consular networks to free trade, especially after the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Treaty of 1838, a gradual shift of importance from the classical caravan city Aleppo to the port city Beirut began.⁸

⁴ The *majlis* (council) of Beirut would also at times resolve commercial disputes, which was a function that went beyond its main responsibility. See Kassir, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

⁵ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 214.

⁶ Hanssen suggested: “Ottoman reform and provincial centralization [then] set in motion a process of strongly hierarchized, but also participatory rule in *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria),” propagating a scientific discourse in which public health, social hygiene, and urban pathology were elusive measures of modernity. The “logic of the straight line” was embraced by authorities and foreign experts alike, according to which the urban infrastructure was overhauled. See Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., pp. 215, 264–265.

⁷ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 85.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Beirut was never part of the *échelles* system. However, the abrogation of the system in the early nineteenth century triggered its growth. After France lost its commercial privileges in the *échelles* system, Beirut became the port through which it regained access to the Levant.

The Levant operated under a unique system of trade between France and the Ottoman Empire. The latter, in the sixteenth century, opting to counter the shift of trade routes from the Mediterranean to the ocean forged an alliance with France. From this emerged a system that came to be known as *Échelles du Levant*, based on which Levantine ports domiciled a French contingent consisting of merchants and consular representatives. The *échelles* system secured a domain of commercial and diplomatic activity that was free from the interference of both Ottoman and French governments.⁹ French merchants were protected because they formed solid partnerships with their native affiliates. A stratum of Levantines grew out of this partnership. The *échelles* system was placed under the authority of the Chamber of Commerce in Marseille, the major French port on the Mediterranean that hugely benefitted from the exclusive commercial privileges. The ports of Alexandretta, Latakia, Tripoli, Saida, Acre, Jaffa, and Rames, and the city of Aleppo were placed under the *échelles* system.¹⁰

Following the Napoleonic Expedition into Egypt and Syria (1798–1801), French factors were expelled from the Syrian ports, where they had a stronghold for centuries. Napoleon's march into Syria after the occupation of Egypt prompted Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzar (r. 1775–1804) to retaliate by revoking the concessions granted to French merchants. Al-Jazzar was one local potentate, among many others, who had fixed a local fiefdom for himself by arrogating state power delegated to him in the late eighteenth century, when the Ottoman state conceded much of

⁹ Ibid., pp. 21-22, 65-66.

¹⁰ "With the French Revolution (1789) arose a debate around the abrogation of the *Échelles* system in favor of free trade. The privileged position of Marseille was diminished in 1791, but the city remained the leading French port in control of Levantine trade. The merchant-consul remained the leading agent of the day, and the venality of consular ports lingered well into the nineteenth century. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, while the Chamber of Commerce of Marseille appointed French consuls, the British Levant Company adhered to the same practice. The fact that consuls appointed according to financial calculus exercised self-interest that at times contradicted that of their states forced European powers to create a parallel network of diplomats with seemingly no commercial interests. Professionalization of diplomatic representation eventually undid the traditional merchant-consuls system. The Levant Company was dissolved in 1825. At about the same time, the French Chamber of Commerce experienced the same fate brought about by pressure from advocates of free trade." See Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 68.

its regional prerogatives to such power brokers. Emerging as the prime local authority, he succeeded in extending his control over Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, and Acre, thereby unifying coastal Syria, to the detriment of the *emirs* (princes) of Mount Lebanon.

Napoleon’s failure to capture Acre in 1799 and his retreat to France thru Egypt brought the brief French occupation to an end. As Napoleon withdrew, the French influence in the region dropped to an unprecedentedly low level.¹¹ With this heavy blow, France had to locate new ways to regain its commercial privileges in the Levant. Beirut was the mechanism through which it accomplished its aims. The Ottoman state policies that ensued, particularly with the establishment of *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon, furnished invaluable aid to France, which, after the First World War, monopolized its share of the colonial market through economic dependency.

French Power Rises after Decline: The *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon

With the institution of the *Mutasarrifiya* in 1861,¹² Mount Lebanon was opened to foreign commercial interests and to the pursuit of private profit, benefiting namely European bankers and local Beirut merchants. Although Beirut was not administratively part of the *Mutasarrifiya*, it controlled through a Commercial Tribunal established in 1850 commercial activity in the mountain. The growing influence exerted by the *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon, where the incessant and lawful intervention of foreign consuls dominated, overturned the traditional power equilibrium in the region.

As French Expeditionary Corps landed in Beirut in 1860 to control the sociocide that took place in Mount Lebanon between the Maronites and the Druzes—although they arrived after hostilities had ended—they, rather than engaging in military tasks, conducted topographical surveys of the area. Those were eventually used as base plans for the infrastructural projects put by French engineers for Beirut in the following decades.¹³ With the establishment of the *Mutasarrifiya*, a unique form of the *tanzimat* would ensue in Beirut, securing it and French financiers a leading role in the region’s political economy, and ultimately in the urban

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹² See “Summary” and “Chapter 1: Historiography of a Levantine City,” in this thesis.

¹³ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 92.

reformation of Beirut.

French Capitalism in Beirut: Port Construction and Infrastructural Reformation

In 1819, the French consul in Saida had noted that Beirut was overshadowing Saida and St. Jean d'Acre (Acre) as the port where Damascene merchants fancied to conduct their trade with the French. It would therefore be judicious to appoint a consul in Beirut, he reasoned.¹⁴ "The undue taxes and monopolistic practices imposed on business had forced the richer merchants to concentrate their dealings in Beirut where such restrictions did not apply. Moreover, he concluded that the city which hosted the richest merchants, namely Beirut, would be most appropriate for the encouragement of French trade, and therefore, a consular post would facilitate and foster such dealings beneficial to France."¹⁵

French consular representation was established in Beirut in 1821.¹⁶ Henri Guys was sent to the city three years later (1824) to act as vice-consul. Guy would, four years later, become "consul of France at Saint-Jean-d'Acre and dependencies, residing at Beirut"¹⁷ and then consul of the first grade in 1833. In 1837, the French consulate at Acre was officially transferred to Beirut. The consulate of Beirut absorbed that of Tripoli as well in the following year.

Guys lived in the city for fourteen years. In a two-volume manuscript he wrote, titled *Beyrout et le Liban: Relation d'un Séjour de Plusieurs Années dans ce Pays*,¹⁸ published in 1850 in France, and translated into Arabic in 1949 by Maroun Aboud, the renowned Lebanese author,¹⁹ Guys lists the pros of turning Beirut into a transit city for French trade. As Beirut and Damascus are both debated in his text as potential commercial centers, the former is ultimately presented as a more favorable model, owing to the presence of the port and the apposite relations

¹⁴ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 81. Saida competed then with Beirut for the trade of the same hinterland, before the port of Beirut was expanded.

¹⁶ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 107.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁸ Guys, Henri. *Beyrout et le Liban: Relation d'un Séjour de Plusieurs Années dans ce Pays*. Paris: Comon, 1850.

¹⁹ The Arabic translated book: Guys, Henri, and Mārūn 'Abbūd. *Bayrūt Wa-Lubnān Mundhu Qarn Wa-Niṣf Al-Qarn*. Bayrūt: Manshūrāt Wazārat al-Tarbiyah al-Waṭaniyah wa-al-Funūn al-Jamīlah, 1949.

between the French and Beirut merchants.²⁰ Guys, in the manuscript, described the future urban works that would eventually be executed in the city: “I don’t care except about two things: expanding trade and the close connection with Damascus,” he wrote.²¹ A decade following his report, a French company built the Beirut-Damascus carriageway (1865), and design schemes were put for expanding the port (1860). Guys took part in the conceptualization of the new port and the ensemble of buildings that would be erected in Beirut’s new waterfront area two decades later, when the city had resolved a plan to finance the projects. Both these projects will be discussed later in the chapter.²²

The most significant public urban developments implemented in Beirut in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were the expansion of the port and the construction of the Beirut-Damascus carriageway and railroad. Both these projects were executed by French agents. Other interventions included the leveling of the old marketplace in the interwar period and the construction of a few public buildings and religious monuments between 1840 and 1918 by Ottoman authorities. These were highlighted on a map of the city made in 1876 by the Vice-Consul of Denmark, Julius Loytved, and dedicated to Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909). [fig. 1] The map marked all the major public edifices: the *sérail*, Imperial Ottoman Bank, customs offices, Bureau of the Ottoman Telegraph and Posts, military hospital, military barracks, quarantine, and the lighthouse. In addition, the city had numerous mosques and churches, various schools, public baths, and at least six major hotels of reputation. The same map situated French, British, German, American, Austrian, Italian, Russian, Greek, Spanish, Persian, Belgian, Dutch, Swedish & Norwegian, and Danish consulates. Beirut had, since the 1830s, become the indisputable seat of foreign diplomatic missions.²³

Conceived in 1863 by a French naval engineer, following the arrival of the French Expeditionary Corps, and designed by Stoeklin, Napoleon Bonaparte’s chief engineer of the Suez Canal development which had started in 1858, Beirut’s new port was constructed two

²⁰ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²¹ Guys, Henri, and Mārūn ‘Abbuḍ, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

²² Davie, May. *Beyrouth 1825-1975: Un Siècle et Demi d’Urbanisme*. S.l.: Publications de l’Ordre des Ingénieurs et Architectes de Beyrouth, 2001, p. 35.

²³ “Long before assuming any politico-administrative role, the city had consolidated itself as the diplomatic capital of Greater Syria.” See Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

decades later (1887–1890) by a Marseilles-based company owned by a French national Edmond de Perthuis, the most powerful foreign resident and municipal member in Beirut who occupied a position in the council from its inception in 1868 until the 1877 Municipal Law excluded foreigners from membership.²⁴

The enlargement of the port became de Perthuis's main objective after the *Messageries Maritimes* steamship *Jourdain* that belonged to his shipping company in Marseilles had capsized in anchorage at Beirut's harbor in February 1863. Perthuis intended to create a straight link between both his shipping and road enterprises, the latter of which had recently connected Beirut and Damascus (1857–1863). He desired a monopoly over all modern transport and travel facilities between the coast and Damascus.²⁵ From its inception, however, the project proposal was a controversial municipal topic, granted that financial obstacles remained insurmountable.

The project became a reality only after de Perthuis traveled to Paris and Istanbul (1883) lobbying for financial sponsorship. A number of large banking houses committed. The Beirut port company was eventually founded in Paris in 1886 with the financial backing of *Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas*, *Comptoir d'Escompte*, *Messageries Maritimes*, and the Ottoman Imperial Bank.²⁶ The minister of public works granted the port concession to Joseph Efendi Mutran, an Ottoman subject and a local Beirut resident who was born in Baalbeck. However, once natives had bought the concession, they were free to sell it to foreign bidders, and Mutran quickly sold his concession to de Perthuis's investment company for 600,000 French francs at some substantial margin of profit.²⁷

Work on the harbor front started in the first month of 1890. French construction companies dug out the basin, creating a landfill for the quays. A French engineer Henri Garreta, who specialized in roads and bridges, supervised the site. The old lighthouse, the twin towers, and the remains of the Crusader castle were all leveled to adjust the surface.

²⁴ The second foreign municipal member was of Austrian origin named George Laurella.

²⁵ It was dropped by provincial authorities in Damascus, the capital then of the Province of Syria under whose jurisdiction Beirut belonged. Under the forceful governorship of Midhat Pasha (r. 1878–1880), the issue was raised again. Local inhabitants were disinclined to pay new consumption taxes to sponsor the project.

²⁶ The Ottoman Imperial Bank was itself financed by French capital.

²⁷ Under these conditions, the concession business soon developed into an emerging market for Ottoman merchants with relatives in powerful governmental positions.

The port company's finance capital was set at 5 million French francs and divided into 10,000 shares at 500 each. Those were tended and some local capitalists participated as shareholders. The Sursuqs invested 25,000 liras and the Ayyas 20,000 liras in port company shares. The French-owned port company held a monopoly over all means of commercial access to the sea, which eventually generated a bitter conflict with the British water company that had been based, since 1896, on the northern border of the district of Beirut.²⁸ In 1923, following the beginning of colonial rule, calls would be made by French administrators to make Beirut a duty free zone.²⁹

Granting the concession of the port to a private company was one of the most tactical efforts of the Ottoman imperial government in the capitalization of Beirut and the growth of its new real estate market.³⁰ The Ottoman government eventually set a plan for appropriating the center. The old shops were expropriated and later torn down in the interwar period (1915) for the construction of new shops and warehouses.

The system of concessions granted foreign trading companies commercial and juridical privileges in the Ottoman Empire that ultimately became impossible to undo. Among those, French investments were the largest, controlling most construction projects. French money put in the port project and in the railways amounted to about 168.3 million French francs.³¹ The Ottoman Empire had gone bankrupt in 1875. A Public Debt Administration (PDA) was formed by seven European nations to monitor Ottoman fiscal policy, countering an impending financial crisis. The concessions the Ottoman government sold to European companies were the only possible resolution for the urbanization of Beirut, with the limited funds available in the city.

The economic and demographic development of Beirut all but encouraged the improvement of transportational infrastructure which itself became a lucrative source of investment. Before the port, a carriageway was constructed between Beirut and Damascus

²⁸ The status of de Perthuis's company turned the port into extra-territorial property over which the city authorities had no say. The company started to operate in June 1883. See Hanssen, Jens, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-92.

²⁹ In the 1930s, with the growth of the port of Haifa, such calls resurfaced, however made by the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce this time. See Yahya, Maha, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

³⁰ Yahya, Maha, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

(1857–1863), also by a French company owned by Edmond de Perthuis.³² This was one of the first and most profitable French enterprises in the Ottoman Empire and yielded high dividends for shareowners. As soon as it was inaugurated, the carriageway affirmed the preeminence of Beirut over its potential rival cities such as Tripoli, Saida, and Haifa. The company was finally absorbed by the *Société de la Voie ferre de Beyrouth-Damas* which undertook the construction of a railroad along the same line in 1892. The construction of the railroad signified a renewed competition over the commerce of the interior, which had undeniably persisted in the hands of the merchants of Beirut throughout the nineteenth century.³³

With the construction of the port, a new commercial center started taking shape, replacing the medieval marketplace.³⁴ In the *Itinéraire de L'Orient, Syrie, Palestine*, published in 1882, AD Chauvet and Emile Isambert, in a hopeful but insightful Orientalist colonialist fashion, remarked: "Beirut will certainly play one day an important role in the regeneration of the Orient. The number of Europeans who live there, the richness of the commercial establishment, the prosperity of its port and the vigilant protection by diplomatic agents of European maritime powers, assure us of a considerable influence in the future destiny of Syria."³⁵

Municipal Politics: Countering French Imperialism

The political authority of the European residents, however, should not be highlighted as exceeding the power of the indigenous merchants. An economic imbalance existed between the two, nonetheless. If the latter increased their lot significantly, this was in the first place a result of their close bonds with the Europeans. Beirut merchants benefitted largely from their indispensability to their European allies due to their proficiency in language and linkages in the hinterland. They actively sought European protection. The opportunities offered by the concessions ensured for them a legal status that they advantageously used to further their realm of operation independent of politico-administrative intervention.³⁶

Following the legislation of the Ottoman Provincial Law (1864) that called for the

³² Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit., p. 176.

³³ Ibid., pp. 176-177.

³⁴ Davie, May, op. cit., pp. 62, 75.

³⁵ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 139.

³⁶ Özveren, Yaşar Eyüp, op. cit. p. 157.

official application of Istanbul's municipal model to the provincial cities and towns of the empire, a Beirut municipality was established in 1868. Shaped by Beirut merchants and educated professionals, it was founded on a mercantile logic. The diverse religious factions that constituted nineteenth-century Beirut's urban society found it expedient to bridge their differences. Therefore, they assembled an organization that could capitalize for itself a regulative function between the Ottoman administration and the local population.³⁷ The municipality indeed provided an urban platform where power was exercised through consensus. It remained for about half a century the place where a rising mercantile class expressed its views and engaged in the administration of urban space in ways that best served its economic interests.³⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the ascent of Beirut materialized, and was ultimately safeguarded, through infrastructural and organizational advances, which eventually put Beirut in an advantageous position vis-à-vis its rival cities. Beirut's preeminence, however, was manifested in relational, and not in formal, terms. There were no huge efforts at deliberate planning. No comprehensive master plan was proposed for the city. Instead, piecemeal designs were engineered for restructuring the port facilities and connecting the new harbor with the old city.³⁹ Planning and modernization in Beirut were limited to commercial and fiscal interests of its foreign and native residents. It emphasized the extension of circulation networks.

The birth of 'New Beirut' was a reflection of a network of international politics, which allowed communication between various political milieus. Beirut was consequently shaped as a function of infrastructural and monetary circuits—both physically and administratively—which created it and which it created. Everything important in terms of Beirut's urbanization in fact happened—or was planned—before and after the 1888–1908 period, when Beirut was an Ottoman provincial capital. Unlike political events, economic processes are not amenable to

³⁷ To give the reader one sample of the constitution of the municipal council, in 1872-73, Beirut's municipality was headed by a Muslim and consisted of four Muslims, four Christians, one Austrian (George Laurella), and one Frenchman (Edmond de Perthuis). There was one architect, one surveyor, one city physician and one surgeon, one clerk in the service of the municipality. See *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

periodization according to precise starting and ending points. By their very nature, such processes do not begin at a certain moment in history, but rather mature over time, nor do they end abruptly, but rather tend to wane out gradually. Since the purpose of this chapter has been to chart the main urban processes that took place in the center of Beirut before the First World War, I tried to define a time frame that could accommodate within its loose boundaries the main political and economic developments.

The maturation of Beirut into a commercial city with due to its expanded port facilities came in the third quarter of the nineteenth century when it displayed a sharp difference from the cities of the interior.⁴⁰ Given the absence of specialized guilds that were characteristic of inland towns like Damascus, the markets were wiped out and a new center was modeled. The following chapter will discuss French planning in the Mandate period and the development of square that replaced the old central marketplaces.

While Beirut's nineteenth-century urbanization was part and parcel of a regional and international tendency to extend transportation and communication networks,⁴¹ the restructuring of the city, however, is to be differentiated from the more domineering European intervention in other colonial towns. While France had its own economic objectives, the Beirut merchant class was equally aware of its own interests. The needs of both parties were met thanks to a late Ottoman political economy based on the new concession business, whereby the Levantine merchant and the Ottoman concessionaire maintained their role as socioeconomic intermediaries. However, not merchandise or raw material was shifted, like silk, but capital, as well as knowhow. The concession business demanded greater liquidity and international banking credibility. With the new commercial setup, Beirut accrued huge debts owed to French companies, which paved the way in the early part of the twentieth century for French colonial rule.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 177.

⁴² Hanssen, Jens, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-92.

Chapter 3 - Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

This last chapter focuses on assessing post-World-War-I French urban planning, supplementing Chapter 2 which examined urban development under Ottoman rule. While the second chapter tackles economic and infrastructural concerns involved in the development of Beirut into a major port city serving the import of French merchandise and its re-export into the region, this chapter concentrates on the formal aspects of planning.

Beirut served as a provincial capital under the Ottoman Empire between 1888 and 1918. Following the end of the First World War, it became capital of *Grand Liban*, the new State of Greater Lebanon founded in 1920 by General Henri Joseph Eugène Gouraud (1867–1946), representative of the French Government in the Middle East and commander of the French Army of the Levant. With the French, Beirut transformed into a modern business center highlighted by the French-designed Place de l'Étoile, which was completed in the 1930s. [fig. 1]

The execution of the Place de l'Étoile terminated the French reformation of the marketplaces in Beirut. In most literature on French planning, the Étoile is presented as a militaristic model through which French administrators and engineers exercised territorial control judging by the resonance of the star-shaped plan with the Place de l'Étoile in Paris under Haussmann. This chapter proposes a more nuanced story about the making of the square in Beirut that challenges existing interpretations that tend to see the radial plan and the 'étoile' as the unequivocal imprint of French militaristic planning in Beirut.

Interpretations of the Étoile

In the published literature on Beirut, there is hardly any analysis of urban forms. And when historians do account for urban issues, they present a somewhat limited reading. Assessing French colonial urbanization, scholars present the creation of the Place de l'Étoile in Beirut as an example of militaristic planning that stamped a French 'Haussmannian' model onto the city's urban fabric, mainly underlining the symbolism of the star shape that evokes a mechanism of territorial control and its resonance with the Place de l'Étoile in Paris restructured by Haussmann in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹ For instance, in Samir Kassir's quite lengthy and

¹ Hall, Thomas. *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development*. London: E & FN Spon, 1997, pp. 71-72; Dennis, Michael. *Temples & Towns: A Study of the Form, Elements, and Principles of Planned Towns*, v. 3.0, (unpublished yet), 2014, p. 152.

valuable monograph on the social and political history of the city, the name 'Haussmann' appears at least seven times in the chapters on planning between the two world wars.² Kassir suggested: "Following the contemporary example of Baron Haussmann in Paris, and that of the urban improvements already carried out elsewhere in Europe in the eighteenth century in the name of Enlightenment ideals, deep cuts into the tissue of Beirut had to be made in order to bring about progress, as it was then considered to be, substituting straight lines and right angles for the untidiness of an obsolete network of streets and roads."³ Highlighting other traditional interpretations of the square, Maha Yahya, in a doctoral dissertation at MIT titled "Unnamed Modernisms: National Ideologies and Historical Imaginaries in Beirut's Urban Architecture," describes the Place de l'Étoile, as "star of the nation,"⁴ evoking the Étoile in Paris and the intentional superimposition of Haussmannian form onto Beirut's late-Ottoman urban fabric. She suggested: "Torn from its context, metropolitan Paris, and superimposed in a triumphant gesture over the remnants of an Ottoman, now read as 'Mediterranean' city, the Place de l'Étoile begins to function as a double metaphor for both the birth and the still-birth of the new nation state."⁵

Other literature, in its attempt to approach the topic from the side of the colonized—as opposed to the colonizing entity—has emphasized social and political aspects tied to the resistance of local communities and their adaptation of the original plan. May Davie, a Lebanese historian who has extensively written on nineteenth- and twentieth-century urbanization in Beirut, introduces new interpretations. In an article titled "Beirut and the Étoile Area: An Exclusively French Project?," Davie recounted the voices of the Beirutis who resisted the Étoile plan and imposed their own modification of the original scheme, based on narratives retrieved from local newspapers.⁶ The proposed French plan was partially implemented. Only half a star was built in order to preserve religious monuments that existed on the east side of the old marketplaces. However, Davie incongruously concluded with yet another statement on the militaristic metaphor of the star shape: "Quite French in its approach with its historical policy of

² Kassir, Samir. *Beirut*. University of California Press, 2010, pp. 139, 280-281, 286-287, 295, 300.

³ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 139.

⁴ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 260.

⁵ Ibid., p. 263.

⁶ Davie, May. "Beirut and the Étoile Area: An Exclusively French Project?" In *Urbanism: Imported or Exported?* Ed. Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait. Chichester, England: Wiley-Academy, 2003, 206-229.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

tabula rasa, the star-shaped wide gallery-lined avenues, and its military undertones, the project aimed at making Beirut a showcase of French action in the Levant.”⁷

An important argument of this chapter is that colonization in Beirut did not entail military planning, neither were the methods applied comprehensive. As the étoile form gained popularity with Haussmann's reorganization of Paris, it became an indication of modernization thereafter. Particularly as applied by European planners in colonial cities like Beirut, it signified power relations between colonizer and colonized. The superimposition of the étoile scheme by French planners onto Beirut's pre-colonial urban fabric entices scholars to describe the approach as a top-down one, often signified in literature as 'Haussmannian planning' or 'military planning'. Carrying the “style of the conqueror,” the étoile is believed to have “carve[d] the image of France” onto the conquered land.⁸ This study proposes that Beirut escaped the urban colonialism that partitioned other Ottoman cities, namely North African ones,⁹ owing to the provincial scale of the economy and municipal resistance based on popular legitimacy. The devolution of power in Beirut allowed the local bourgeoisie a significant measure of agency that guided urban renewal.

After having examined the tradition of radial planning in Europe, particularly in France, as well as the planners' background and the way of integrating the star shape in the urban context of Beirut, I argue that planning techniques implemented by the French Danger planning office (*Société des Plans Régulateurs des Frères Danger*) overlapped more with Pierre Patte and Marc-Antoine Laugier's ideas of urban embellishment that guided piecemeal interventions in eighteenth-century Paris than with Haussmann's larger and more comprehensive, sweeping procedures. As historians have presented a rather limiting 'Haussmannian' argument, this study contends that there is a longer trajectory to the influences on the Place de l'Étoile in Beirut that predated Haussmann, as well as contemporary influences propagated by the *Société Française des Urbanistes* (French Society of Urban Planners, formed in 1911) of which the Danger

⁷ Davie, May, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

⁸ For views on the historiography of colonial planning, see Celik, Zeynep. “Colonialism, Orientalism, and the Canon.” *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 2 (June 1996): 202-205.

⁹ On colonization in North Africa, check essays in AlSayyad, Nezar, ed. *Forms of Dominance on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*. Avebury, 1992. On Morocco, see Wright, Gwendolyn. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

brothers were members. The main parallel in Beirut to the Haussmannian remodeling of the Parisian Étoile was the way of accommodating circulation in the design of the square. And in spite of the lineage of French planning traditions that are reflected in the design of the square in Beirut, I, nonetheless, emphasize that this does not imply monolithic, one-sided colonial domination.

Before investigating the planning methods involved in the creation of the Place de l'Étoile in Beirut and relating those to French urban planning traditions, it is necessary to engage a rather protracted, discursive investigation of the history of the site under the Ottomans before the French took over. French authorities in fact resumed the first phase of infrastructural renewal instigated by the Ottomans before and during the First World War, which was never complete due to budgetary restrictions. The postwar French plan for the restructuring of the marketplaces was hardly new.

History of the Étoile Site

As discussed in the previous chapter, infrastructural modernization in Beirut began in the 1830s with the first port-extension project initiated by the Egyptian government under Ibrahim Pasha, who occupied Beirut for almost a decade, beginning in 1832.¹⁰ Beirut, in the following decades, would eventually transform from a rather latent maritime town into a port city, especially after the construction of the Beirut-Damascus road, completed in 1858, which shifted Mediterranean trade from Damascus to Beirut.¹¹

The Ottoman Empire had initiated in 1839 a series of *tanzimat*—discussed in the two previous chapters—that were applied in Beirut in 1856, with a second set of reforms put in the 1860s after the establishment of the *Mutsarrifiya*. A municipality was established in Beirut in 1868, with Aḥmad Pasha Abāza as president.¹² The first municipal council was the offspring of the *majlis* (board) established in the Egyptian period whereby many of the sons and nephews now grappled with similar issues of urban development.¹³

¹⁰ Hanssen, Jens. *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 264-270.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hanssen, Jens, op. cit., p. 144.

¹³ Ibid., p. 31.

The site of the Étoile was one of the places in the city that were situated on the municipal agenda for refurbishment. It became a priority after the construction of the Beirut-Damascus carriageway in 1863 and the realization of the need to connect the center with the port and with the hinterland. The Étoile site was part of the upper town outspreading to the city walls. It amassed local marketplaces and the city's main administrative and public facilities. The municipality designated in 1878 a project for urban renewal of the "old and filthy souks."¹⁴ The project aimed at connecting the center with the harbor. Two north-south and one west-east arteries were planned across the old town linking the port to Damascus and Sidon Roads. One thoroughfare started at the port and terminated at one of the city gates *Bab al-Dirka*, passing through *Souk al-Haddadin* (ironmongery market). The second joined the port with Hamidiya Square. This one followed *Souk al-Tujjar* (shopkeepers market) and passed through *Souk al-Fashkha*. The east-west road connected *Bab al-Saraya* with *Bab Idriss*.¹⁵ Construction of the project started in 1900. The east-west al-Jadid road was built, to be later named *Bab Idriss* and then *Weygand Street* during French rule. The remaining part of the project was halted however by the *waqf* (religious institutions conceding endowments for urban developments), and by lack of funding, until in 1915, when, under the newly appointed military governor Jamal Pasha, money was sent by expats living in the United States. Demolition of the markets began in April that year. The two north-south thoroughfares were opened and remained unpaved.¹⁶ [fig. 2].

Following the end of the First World War (November 11, 1918), the Ottomans withdrew from the Levant.¹⁷ French troops had landed in Damascus on October 1 the same year. A week later, they took over Beirut, occupying the port and dissolving the Arab government, which had formed under the leadership of the municipality president Omar Daouk. Becoming the headquarters of French rule in the Levant, Beirut would be proclaimed capital of the new state of Greater Lebanon in 1921.¹⁸ The French eventually took control of the urban and regional administration. They produced, in 1922, at the *Bureau Topographique de l'Armée Française du*

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁵ Saliba, Robert, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ṭarabulsī, Fawwāz, op. cit., pp. 75-88.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 88-109.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

Levant,¹⁹ [fig. 3] a comprehensive map of Beirut which assisted them in the preparation of new plans for the city. [fig. 4]

The French urban project in Beirut began by naming streets. The first two streets, formerly opened by Ottoman authorities, took their labels from General Allenby and Marshal Foch in 1919.²⁰ *Shari' al-Jadid* (New Road or *Rue Nouvelle*), whose improvement had been completed under High Commissioner of Syria Maxime Weygand's proconsulate (1924), was renamed in his honor.²¹ Foch and Allenby were cleared in 1921, along with the area behind the Petit Sérail, making room for the construction of the Beirut Fair, which, held the same year, was an exhibition to promote French products in the Beirut. The French military city governor Commander Doizelet and the administrative counselor of the *vilayat* (the administrative divisions of the Ottoman Empire) Commander Fumey were in charge, assisted by the Lebanese municipality president Omar Daouq and a committee of municipal engineers and French technicians who had come to Lebanon from Egypt and North Africa.²²

Under the director of the land registry, Camille Duraffourd, the counselor to the muhafiz Poupon, and the technical counselor to the municipality Oudinot, an urban renewal scheme was born in 1928. It was approved by the Council of Ministers and named *Beyrouth en Cinq Ans* (Beirut in Five Years). Drawn by an army engineer and titled *Plan Établi en 1931 par la Régie des Travaux du Cadastre d'Amélioration Foncière des Etats de Syrie, du Liban et des Alaouites à l'aide des Plans Cadastraux Dressés en 1928-1930* (translated as "Plan established in 1931 by the Board of Cadastral Works for Land Improvement of the States of Syria, Lebanon and the Alawites, with the help of the Cadastral Plans Drawn in 1928-1930), the map showed a network of freehand-sketched streets overlaid on top of the cadastral map produced by the French army in 1922. [fig. 5]

A year after Duraffourd's plan was laid out, the Parisian office of *Société des Plans Régulateurs des Frères Danger* was commissioned, in May 1931, to design a plan for Beirut.

¹⁹ Haut Commissariat de la République Française en Syrie et au Liban. *Rapport Général sur les Études Foncières Effectives en Syrie et au Liban*, Beyrouth: Services Fonciers, 1922.

²⁰ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 280.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Saliba, Robert, op. cit. p. 69.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

The two brothers, René and Raymond Danger, had first visited the city in 1929.²³ The mandatory administration was busy then securing its domination, boosting agricultural development, and ameliorating the road network, based on Duraffourd's plan. The Danger brothers offered their services to the municipality after High Commissioner Henri Ponot had raised an interest in urban planning of the region. They were the first French town planners to operate in the Middle East, signing agreements with the municipalities of Aleppo in 1931, Beirut, Alexandretta, and Antioch in 1932, and Damascus and Bloudan in 1935.²⁴ The Danger planning firm drew a "plan for the embellishment and extension of Beirut, 1931–1932," as they titled their drawing. The 83,000-franc master plan for Beirut was never fully implemented.²⁵ [fig. 6] On the plan by the Dangers, over the Place de l'Étoile lot, was written "*lotissement municipal en cours*" (municipal lot underway). [fig. 7] It seems that this section of the plan, formerly drafted by Duraffourd and already in operation, was not formally altered by the Dangers. It was rather aesthetically accentuated by refining the street lines and defining the boundaries and configuration of the square, thus transforming an engineer's draft into a specialized work of urban planning. The Dangers apparently used Duraffourd's road maps as a base for their proposed master plans for Beirut. In their published work, there is proof that they at least used one other map by Duraffourd drawn for the city of Aleppo.²⁶

Evolution of Radial Planning and the Parisian Place de l'Étoile

As I previously outlined, because the Étoile Square had a star shape, some scholars have misconceived its form as a military radial scheme. For them, it has evoked the French Place de l'Étoile and the aggressive planning techniques carried out by Haussmann in Paris and ostensibly transported by French planners to other cities, particularly colonial ones.²⁷ In what follows, these

²³ Hastaoglou-Martinidis, Vilma. "Urban Aesthetics and National Identity: The Refashioning of Eastern Mediterranean Cities between 1900 and 1940." *Planning Perspectives* 26.2 (2011), p. 174.

²⁴ Friès, Franck. "Les Plans d'Alep et de Damas, un Banc d'Essai pour l'Urbanisme des Frères Danger (1931-1937)." *Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 73.1 (1994): 311-325, p. 311; Hastaoglou-Martinidis, Vilma, op. cit., p. 176.

²⁵ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 325.

²⁶ Danger, René. *Cours d'Urbanisme: Technique des Plans d'Amenagement de Villes*. Leon Eyrolles, 1933, p. 284.

²⁷ Kassir, as cited at the beginning of this chapter, suggests: "Following the contemporary example

views will be challenged by examining radial planning beginning in the Renaissance and its evolution up until the nineteenth century, particularly as implemented by Haussmann in Paris, in order to argue that there was a long arm to planning traditions based on radial form that predated Haussmann's work.

Ideal town plans of the Renaissance, such as Palmanova, had a radial scheme that stressed a panoptical viewpoint. As "perspective training is nothing else but taming,"²⁸ the center of the star-shaped plan, from which straight arteries projected outward, signified the "owner-controller-ruler's" place where control of the landscape would be exercised.²⁹ Until the seventeenth century, however, such schemes were seldom applied. The popularity of the radial plan reached a climax in the second half of the nineteenth century in Haussmann's reorganization of Paris. In cities of the Ottoman Empire, radial schemes were initially installed in the capital—Istanbul, almost contemporaneous with Haussmann's interventions in Paris. In Ottoman territories, a radial plan was first used in the design of Şişhane Square in 1865 in Pera (Beyoğlu), where a large number of Europeans lived.³⁰ Later on, radial plans were constructed within the city walls of the ancient peninsula, the medieval center of Istanbul.³¹ The radial scheme eventually punctuated the landscapes of other Ottoman cities, remarkably after WWI in the Levant, when it was used by French planners operating under the French Mandate as in Beirut. The star form eventually became a model of urban modernization in non-Western colonial cities, like Algiers.³² Its foreign form is often highlighted as a symbol of French power and control over the indigenous landscape.

In the Renaissance, Antonio di Pietro Averlino (1400-1469)—known as Filarete—drew

of Baron Haussmann in Paris, [...], deep cuts into the tissue of Beirut had to be made in order to bring about progress, as it was then considered to be, substituting straight lines and right angles for the untidiness of an obsolete network of streets and roads." See Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 139.

²⁸ See the introductory chapter in Florenski, Pavel A, and Françoise Lhoest. *La Perspective Inversée: L'iconostase et Autres Écrits sur L'art*. Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992.

²⁹ Vidler, Anthony, "The Scenes of the Street: Transformation in Ideal and Reality, 1750-1871." In *On Streets*. Ed. Stanford Anderson. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986, p. 29-106.

³⁰ Dinckal, Noyan. "Arenas of Experimentation: Modernizing Istanbul in the Late Ottoman Empire." *Urban Machinery. Inside Modern European Cities, Cambridge* (2008): 49-69.

³¹ Ardaman, Emel. "Perspective and Istanbul, the Capital of the Ottoman Empire." *Journal of Design History* 20.2 (2007): 109-130.

³² On the symbolism of the star-shaped plan in Europe, see Delfante, Charles. *Grande Histoire de la Ville: De la Mésopotamie aux Etats Unis*. Paris: A. Colin, 1997.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

plans for a centralized city, Sforzinda, which was never built. [fig. 8] In Filarete's scheme, each of the outer points of the radial form had towers. The inner angle had gates, which were outlets of radial avenues that passed through market squares. All the avenues ultimately converged in a large central square. The design of Sforzinda responded to the problem of congestion in medieval cities whose organic and uncontrolled growth demanded a new planning strategy to help navigate, observe, and control them.³³

Later in the seventeenth century, military engineers like Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707) adopted the concept of the centralized city plan in the construction of fortifications. Vauban, the foremost military engineer of his age and Louis XIV's chief advisor on how to consolidate France's borders and make them more defensible, designed around forty such schemes. Built in 1668, the Citadel of Lille—also known as 'Queen of Citadels'—is one example. [fig. 9] It was a matrix of 28 fortified cities, established on the border of Flanders, forming part of a double-line of fortified towns between Gravelines, Dunkirk and Maubeuge, Rocroi. From Lille, Vauban supervised the construction of many citadels and canals of the North, which controlled the border between France and Belgium. The citadel was built in such a way that any edge approached by the enemy would be controlled from a neighboring wall. The citadel delineated the eminent square field or '*pré carré*' conceived by Vauban.³⁴

The epitome of military engineering in the Renaissance was seen in Vauban's fortified cities. Engineering was regarded as a branch of architecture. With the establishment of the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* and the *Ponts et Chaussées* corps of engineers in Paris in 1747, guided by Enlightenment principles, the two professions ultimately divorced.³⁵ Before then, there had

³³ Lang, S. "Sforzinda, Filarete and Filelfo." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* / Ed. E. H. Gombrich [u.a.]. (1972): 391-397; Günther, Hubertus. "Society in Filarete's 'libro Architetonico' between Realism, Ideal, Science Fiction and Utopia." *Arte Lombarda / Isal, Istituto Per La Storia Dell'arte Lombarda*. (2009): 56-80.

³⁴ Vauban, Sébastien L. P, and Abel Swall. *The New Method of Fortification, as Practiced by Monsieur de Vauban, Engineer General of France: With an Explication of all Terms Appertaining to that Art*. London: Printed for Abel Swall, 1691; Vauban, Sébastien L. P. *A Manual of Siegecraft and Fortification*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968. See also Pepper, Simon, and Nicholas Adams. *Firearms & Fortifications: Military Architecture and Siege Warfare in Sixteenth-Century Siena*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

³⁵ Picon, Antoine. *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 99.

been only one organized engineering corps in France of which Vauban was a member.³⁶

Engineering eventually became a distinct profession, distancing itself from its military roots and espousing a more pacific social role that underscored the engineer's capacity to change the world through scientific applications. Under the influence of new political ideals, state engineers began to define themselves as providers of public utility and promoters of progress.³⁷ The engineers of the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* gave birth to the concept of landscape and crafted a definition of roads policy.³⁸ These ideas would be adopted in the nineteenth century in Paris.

With eighteenth-century theorists Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769) and Pierre Patte (1723-1814), the town as a harmonized entity became a major preoccupation, when formerly only few texts had mentioned the city in its universal aspect.³⁹ Patte penned a treatise titled *Monuments Érigés en France à la Gloire de Louis XV* (1765) on the occasion of a competition held in Paris for the design of a royal square to be built for the placement of a statue of Louis XV. [fig. 10] In his manuscript, he published a map of Paris in which he highlighted nineteen entries, out of a total of ninety submitted.⁴⁰ A number of proposals engaged a circular plan. Those were conceived as urban spaces in the traditional sense. According to Patte, tree planted avenues and star-shaped places were important elements in the making of a town. This required some spatial sacrifice due to axial penetration of the streets, but the closure that was lost was compensated for by the quality of spatial sequence that was attained.⁴¹

The lines of argument advanced by Patte in the context of the statue of Louis XV competition, and earlier by Laugier in his *Essai sur l'Architecture* (1755), called for unimpeded circulation. This vision was shared by many enlightened elites of the period, as in the economic

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Picon, Antoine. "Engineers and Engineering History: Problems and Perspectives." *History and Technology* 20.4 (2004): 421-436; Picon, Antoine. "French Engineers and Social Thought, 18–20th Centuries: An Archeology of Technocratic Ideals." *History and Technology* 23.3 (2007): 197-208.

³⁸ Picon, Antoine (1992), p. 100.

³⁹ Patte, Pierre. *Monuments Érigés en France à la Gloire de Louis XV*. Desaint et Saillant, 1765; and Patte, Pierre. *Essai sur l'Architecture Théâtrale, ou de l'Ordonnance la plus Avantageuse à une Salle de Spectacles, Relativement aux Principes de l'Optique et de l'Acoustique*. 1782; and Laugier, Marc-Antoine. *Essai sur l'Architecture*. No. 31. Chez Duchesne, 1755.

⁴⁰ Dennis, Michael. *Court & Garden: From the French Hôtel to the City of Modern Architecture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 200-209.

⁴¹ Hall, Thomas, op. cit., p. 59.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

doctrine of *laissez-faire*.⁴² Patte and Laugier questioned the disorder and incoherence of the medieval town, which represented “a pile of houses heaped up pell-mell, without any system, economy or plan.”⁴³ A century later, some of these ideas of the “rational town” would guide Haussmann in his transformation of Paris.⁴⁴ As argued by Thomas Hall, “the shaping of nineteenth-century Paris begins in the 1780s.”⁴⁵ Haussmann, however, took the Enlightenment ideals to a comprehensive level, prioritizing access over embellishment. An unlimited budget allowed him to do that.

The Place de l'Étoile in Paris, with a diameter almost twice the size of that of the Étoile in Beirut did not originate in the nineteenth century. Formerly known as Butte Chaillot, it was a point of convergence of hunting trails constructed by the Marquis de Marigny in 1777, leading to his plantations established along the *Champs Élysées*. The roads were shaped in the form of a star with four branches built along the *Axe Historique*. The latter had been inaugurated with the creation of the *Champs Élysées*, designed in the seventeenth century to open a vista to the west and extending the central axis of the Tuileries Gardens to the Royal Palace of the Tuileries.⁴⁶ Under Haussmann in the mid-nineteenth century, eight arteries were added. Projecting from the square, they radially cut through the urban fabric. The junction, as transformed by Haussmann, became known as the Place de l'Étoile.⁴⁷ [fig. 11]

Radial plans deployed during the nineteenth-century reformation of Paris functioned as roundabouts, multiplied, scattered, and superimposed on an irregular network of streets with winding branches. The squares presented in the competition fall somewhere between the closed squares of the seventeenth century and the places ‘*percées*’ of the nineteenth century under Haussmann.

Of the seventeenth century squares in Paris, the first to be executed in radial form was the *Places des Victoires*, designed and built in the 1680s under the direction of J.H. Mansart and by order of the Marshal de la Feuillade. [fig. 12] The architecture was of uniform design. The center

⁴² Picon, Antoine (1992), p. 188.

⁴³ Laugier, Marc-Antoine. *Essai sur l'Architecture*. No. 31. Chez Duchesne, 1755, p. 209.

⁴⁴ Picon, Antoine (1992), pp. 186-210; Hall, Thomas, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁵ Sutcliffe, Anthony. *Paris: An Architectural History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 66. Also quoted in Hall, Thomas, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴⁶ Sutcliffe, Anthony, op. cit., pp. 83-105.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

was occupied by a statue of Louis XIV. The square was incorporated into an existing architectural structure—a process that indeed involved some demolition. However, the implemented plan was modified by practical adaptations to the existing conditions. “In view of the modest form—the diameter is 39 m—and the few streets leading into the square, it is perhaps more appropriate to describe it as a ‘circus’ rather than an étoile.”⁴⁸ The property owners could build their houses as they wanted but they had to follow the uniform façade design.⁴⁹

Urban Planning Post-Haussmann: The Place de l'Étoile of Beirut

The Étoile in Beirut, significantly amended for the conservation of existing structures, had a configuration similar to the square proposed by M. Polard for the Place Louis XV. With its wider arteries, however, the former square falls somewhere between the eighteenth-century Parisian squares and those executed by Haussmann in the following century. [fig. 13] Fronting resistance from religious waqfs, souk owners, and urban notables—the latter siding with the heads of religious communities—the Étoile plan of Beirut was only partially realized. A Greek Orthodox church, a Greek Catholic church, a Maronite church, and a mosque, which were the last survivors of a compound network of religious buildings, stood in the way of the star's east branches.⁵⁰ Owners of the *Sursock*, *Hani & Raad*, and *Abi Nasr* souks, built in the late nineteenth century and located on eastern side as well, resisted the project because of their unwillingness to renounce their properties. French authorities, on the other hand, did not want to oppose the religious factions and the prosperous merchants whose cooperation was deeply needed for governing the population.⁵¹

As several options were presented and negotiated, and after reflecting on the profitable potentials of the project like traffic organization, access to the port area, increase in land, and opportunities for new commercial endeavors, property owners finally softened their defiance, permitting a partial implementation of the plan.⁵² The Étoile in Beirut, as executed, was only half a star with no branches on the east side. It was blocked from the south, along *Maarad Street* by

⁴⁸ Hall, Thomas, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁵⁰ Davie, May, op. cit.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 219-224.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

the Grand Theater, which, owned by the Tabets family, who were close friends of the French High Commissioner, was not to be forfeited. With only one northern axis opening uninterruptedly to the sea, and five branches encircled by a loop of roads, the Étoile did not connect the square with the rest of the city. [fig. 14]

The mode of planning deployed in Beirut coincided more with Patte and Laugier's ideas of piecemeal refurbishment and embellishment than with Haussmann's larger and more comprehensive methods. A shift in the practice of urban planning from surgical operations mastered by Haussmann to aesthetic modes had marked the turn of the twentieth century. With urban theorists like Camillo Sitte emerged a stream of thought about urban planning that emphasized the aesthetic and the cultural gratification afforded by historical urban spaces.⁵³ Urbanization in the following decades became increasingly entwined with preservation of urban heritage, especially as the impulse of nationalism surfaced in the wake of the First World War.

The Danger brothers, whose plan guided some of the interventions in Beirut, were advocates of planning methods discussed by Sitte. Sitte's work is cited in *Cours d'Urbanisme*, a manuscript on planning published by René Danger in 1933. In the book, prefaced by the President of the Musée Social Georges Risler as a "complete town-planning manual," René Danger developed his ideas for why the old traditional town should be protected as a valuable monument.⁵⁴ He discussed town planning as a business of 'sanitation', 'circulation', and 'embellishment'. Designing cities is an artistic project, which is the '*métier*' of the planner and the artist. Denouncing any attempt at standardizing the layout of cities, Danger suggested: "The various urban forms [...] correspond to physically, ethnographically, socially and historically different milieus. They all have their own physiognomy and personality. It would be imprudent for a town planner to look for a series of typified layouts and shape them all in the same cast."⁵⁵ This approach overlapped with Sitte's repugnance for the "mechanically produced project, conceived to fit any situation," like "a manufactured product [...] the trademark of modernity."⁵⁶

The Danger brothers were 'géometres' (survey engineers). They established a practice in

⁵³ Sitte, Camillo. *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*. New York: Random House, 1965.

⁵⁴ Danger, René, op. cit.

⁵⁵ Friès, Franck, op. cit., p. 315.

⁵⁶ Collins, George R, and Christiane C. Collins. *Camillo Sitte and the Birth of Modern City Planning*. New York: Random House, 1965, pp. 75-76.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

Paris in 1919, under the firm name the *Société des Plans Régulateurs des Frères Danger*. They were members of the *Société Française des Urbanistes*, together with Ernest Hébrard (1875–1933) and Henri Prost (1874–1959). Unlike Haussmann, their interventions were rather moderate, mediated by a conservative attitude vis-à-vis the existing town. Their background as surveyors heightened their sensitivity for the urban landscape. They endeavored to integrate nature into the urban project, engaging aquatic and vegetal forms in order to achieve pleasing visual effects, echoing Patte and Laugier's principles. In their preliminary study of Beirut—*Rapport d'Enquête sur la Ville* (Urban Analytical Report)—they communicated their pragmatic approach towards town planning which engaged a systematic investigation and assessment of the urban environment, based on which necessary “sacrifices” dictated by planning would be justified.⁵⁷

When the French arrived in Beirut, the morphology of the city had not been completely addressed and was like mid-nineteenth-century Paris, pre-Haussmannization. Beirut had maintained its medieval fabric together with a few multinational structures. [fig. 15] The few significant urban interventions implemented in Beirut before the creation of the Étoile were the remodeling of the port quarter by two straight thoroughfares in 1919, the leveling of the old marketplace by Ottoman authorities in the interwar period and by French officials in the early 1920s, and the construction of a few public buildings and religious monuments between 1840 and 1918.⁵⁸

The plan produced by the Dangers used urban aesthetics, in the form of neoclassical designs, as a vehicle to modernize the inherited city, as well as a means to achieve a novel and nationally pertinent urban form. Competitions were held for the design of buildings along the newly created arteries. A facade competition was launched for Foch Street in 1920. It was meant to set the standard for future constructions. There was a vigorous effort to create a sense of order, uniformity, and harmony in the streetscape.⁵⁹ The municipality would construct the ground floors

⁵⁷ R. Danger and R. Danger, *Ville de Beyrouth, Dossier du Plan d'Aménagement, Embellissement et Extension. Rapport d'Enquête et Justificatif* (1932); and R. Danger and others, *Rapport Justificatif* (1936), both found in SIAF/Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe Siècle, Fonds Danger Frères et Fils.

⁵⁸ Hanssen, Jens, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Yahya, Maha, op. cit., p. 238.

of buildings and sell air rights above the newly built stores.⁶⁰

By the time planning in Beirut was underway, planners had essentially been freed by advances in military technology from the constraints that had long enclosed cities within walls. Therefore, street designers responded now to the imperatives of circulation rather than to military surveillance.⁶¹ While Haussmann, who did not in fact produce a master plan apart from the emperor's outline, comprehensively redesigned a major city—including streets, parks, sewers, and water supply—thanks to a new system of finance that was developed to accomplish the unprecedented transformation,⁶² the budgetary restrictions imposed by Raymond Poincaré's government in 1922 in Beirut dampened hopes of such comprehensive planning.⁶³

The main correspondence between Haussmann's Étoile in Paris and the work in Beirut was the way of planning geared towards road enhancement for vehicular access, which was suggested in the title of Duraffourd's map—"land improvement." Whereas before the First World War there had been only a half dozen cars, and the government itself owned only five cars in 1920, there were no fewer than 376 motor vehicles the following year. In 1928 there were 5,000, and in 1932 around 10,000.⁶⁴

As the growth of automobile traffic called for superfluous enhancements of the road network, the city redrew property lines, generating an enterprise recognized by the League of Nations as unequalled elsewhere in the region. Streets were widened, and then paved with stones, macadamized, or asphalted. Rue Allenby was paved with asphalt in 1927, followed shortly thereafter by major thoroughfares, especially in the center of the city. Road paving comprised however a long and lingering business that was not finished before the outbreak of the Second World War. Some 450,000 square meters (around 5 million square feet) of roads and sidewalks were paved between 1939 and 1943.⁶⁵

René Danger, in his analysis of circulation—"la circulation routière"⁶⁶—first turned to

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 232.

⁶¹ See *Sonne, Wolfgang. Representing the State: Capital City Planning in the Early Twentieth Century.* Munich: Prestel, 2003.

⁶² Hall, Thomas, op. cit., p. 66.

⁶³ Kassir, Samir, op. cit., p. 261.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 303.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 286.

⁶⁶ Danger, René, op. cit., p. 152.

the possibilities furnished by the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* in the eighteenth century before he discussed nineteenth-century, as well as contemporary, planning methods.⁶⁷ He investigated the history of pre-industrial urbanism. His bibliography, aside from twentieth-century texts, listed one outstanding source: *Histoire de l'Urbanisme*, written by Pierre Lavedan in 1926. Danger examined the 'étoile' principle pre- and post-Haussmann. In his analysis of historic urban forms, he looked at the radial plan of the Renaissance. He particularly studied the fortified city of Palmanova,⁶⁸ built at the end of the sixteenth century by the Venetian Republic. It is one of the few cities built in the Renaissance—not later—following utopian ideals. Danger saw in the radial plan a “*conception architecturale régulière*” (“regular architectural design”) that uses ordered geometry. In the context of the post-industrial city, the regularized circular geometry assisted in organizing traffic.⁶⁹ For road junctions, he suggested that “the circular form is the most simple type,”⁷⁰ which allows drivers uninterrupted vision upon arriving at a meeting point or roundabout. Danger wrote about the functionality of the Place de l'Étoile in this respect. He examined its size in relationship to the amount of traffic and the type of vehicles it accommodates.⁷¹ While the pre-industrial city used the radial form as a strategy for fortification, the post-industrial city is freed of such concerns.⁷² The avenues radiating from the center now become an opportunity for perspectives with “aesthetic effects.”⁷³ Vegetation could be used for embellishment, which resonates with Patte's ideas for the tree planted avenues. The *Champs Élysées* is characteristic in this regard.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Grafting an 'étoile' onto Beirut's late-Ottoman urban fabric under French colonial power does not mean the project was a militaristic one. As I have argued, the Beiruti Étoile, as a new

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 152-159.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 159.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 159.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 124, 221.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 124. Danger states: “La perspective permet la visibilité sur toute la longueur de la voie et donne sensation d'aspect complet.”

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

urban form that drew upon the fabric of the medieval city was only possible under a regime with extensive control over the environment, especially compared with the authority the state exercised over the physical form of the marketplace. The military, being the ultimate expression of state power, implies, in a metaphorical way, that the Étoile is the state. However, the square was certainly not built as a collection of military roads.

While most historians who have written on French colonial urbanization have looked to a 'Haussmannian' model for underlining the symbolism of the star form and its resonance with the nineteenth century reformation of the Place de l'Étoile in Paris, this study has provided a more nuanced and complicated story of the making of the square, challenging existing interpretations that tend to see the radial plan and the 'étoile' as the unequivocal imprint of French military planning in Beirut. The French governed Lebanon and Syria according to a mandate formula that was different than colonial rule. The distribution of responsibilities between the Europeans and the local inhabitants followed a strategy that guarded the interests of the natives who were appointed municipal positions.⁷⁵ While in colonies like Morocco and Algiers, more severe policies of submission and assimilation were imposed, the process of modernization in Beirut involved constant negotiation between French officials and Beirut notables.⁷⁶ The latter's attitude towards the city's urbanization was a significant factor throughout the process of development. Owing to local economic and political power, Beirut never underwent full realization of a comprehensive plan.

The eastern shore of the Mediterranean in the early twentieth century became the site of rather more sophisticated European interventions than in the past.⁷⁷ The League of Nations had entrusted a "civilizing mission" to France among the Arabs of the Levant—'*mission civilisatrice*'—in which France, with a strong faith in its scientific and technological supremacy, understood its role in the world to be a call to 'civilize' the indigenous people.⁷⁸ In contrast to North African colonies, in the Levant, there was a shift in French policy from assimilation to

⁷⁵ Acquiring new colonies after World War I was no longer fashionable or appropriate, Davie suggests. Colonization was shaped according to a different formula; it was also given a different name—mandate. See Davie, May, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ Davie, May, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ Kassir, Samir, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

⁷⁸ Pyenson, Lewis. *Civilizing Mission: Exact Sciences and French Overseas Expansion, 1830-1940*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

CHAPTER 3 Stars of Two Nations: The Place de l'Étoile and French Colonial Planning in Beirut

association. As expressed by General Lyautey, the idea that “in the new [colonial] states, the ground belonged to no one” was not feasible in Lebanon.⁷⁹ This shift in policy overlapped with the rise of regionalism and organic nationalism within France itself. It subsequently impacted the French method towards the urban and architectural environment in the colonies.

⁷⁹ Yahya, Maha, *op. cit.*, p. 176. See also Hourani, Albert. *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*. London: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Conclusion

Urbanization of the city, in the Ottoman and French days, emphasized the extension of infrastructural networks, where necessary trade routes were established. The French arrived in the Levant after a century of colonial experience in Algiers, and half a century in Tunisia.¹ Modernization in North Africa was heavily charged with political overtones and hopes of eventual territorial possession. Colonial aims, however, varied in the Levant. The French had lesser hopes of domination. They desired in the Levant, particularly via Beirut's port, a gateway that would facilitate commercial access to the region.² In 1923, calls would be made by French administrators to make Beirut a duty free zone.³

The urban transformation of Beirut reflected the emergence of an urban micropolitical system the economic objectives and historical trajectory of which are strongly analogous with and therefore reflective of the macro tendencies at work on an imperial scale. The system operated and survived in the interstices between the centralized Ottoman *tanzimat* and the European concessionary business, which, developing from an earlier form of regulated trade that was financially balanced between the two parties (the Ottoman state and the French merchant-consuls) now lost equilibrium, inflicting huge debts on the city, and privatizing and controlling access to it via its port.

As stated in my introduction, histories of pre-WWI Beirut—despite their rich and comprehensive nuances that endeavored to incorporate arguments contradictory to their own—emphasized one of two theoretical positions. Some attempted to avoid Orientalist and essentialist views that point to the weakness of the Ottoman Empire in its latter days before its demise and therefore confirmed the central role of the state in the urbanization of the city. Others underscored the economic relapse of the late Ottoman Empire and therefore portrayed the modern project as preoccupied with the employment of Western forms and norms.⁴

¹ See Çelik, Zeynep. *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

² See the two-volume manuscript written by Henri Guys, Guys, Henri. *Beyroul et le Liban: Relation d'un Séjour de Plusieurs Années dans ce Pays*. Volumes 1 & 2. Paris: Comon, 1850, pp. 200-241.

³ Yahya, Maha. *Unnamed Modernisms: National Ideologies and Historical Imaginaries in Beirut's Urban Architecture*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology: PhD Dissertation, 2005, p. 196.

⁴ Karl Marx, in an article he wrote for the *New York Daily* in 1853—on the Ottoman Empire and the 'Eastern Question'—stated: "Turkey [the Ottoman Empire] is the living sore of European legitimacy, monarchical government, ever since the first French Revolution, has resumed itself in the one axiom: Keep up the *status quo*. A *testimonium paupertatis*, an acknowledgement of the universal

Theories and histories about spatial production in Beirut, in their theorization of power, offered an analytical tool in which spatial organization was understood as a manifestation of social, economic, and political relations. Some narratives underplayed the colonizer's power and some overplayed it, which, like in any colonial history, obviously generated a rich and diverse array of literary narratives. To make a particular narrative dominant over another, historians carefully selected their archival sources, reaping information from one of three major sources: Ottoman, French, and local Arabic texts written by contemporary Beirutis. In their analyses, some scholars looked at the Ottoman *tanzimat* as a 'mission civilisatrice', which, in my view, Orientalizes the Ottoman project.⁵ It portrays the modernizing Ottoman Empire as operating closer to a colonial rather than an imperial rule. Ottoman elites in the nineteenth considered the imperial peripheries and especially the long-ignored Arab provinces that had lived "in a state of nomadism and savagery" as "colonies" that need to be modernized.⁶

With the onset of French rule in 1918, however, both trends tended to shift narratives, presenting European colonialism as the primary lens of historical analysis. The new city, with a foreign population that has exploded from 5 to 15 percent of the total, was depicted as the result of a systematic colonial attempt to cast the French civic order—'mission civilisatrice'—onto the urban landscape. Few scholars challenged this view.⁷

incompetence of the ruling powers, for any purpose or progress or civilization [...] Turkey goes on decaying, and will go on decaying as long as the present system of "balance of power" and maintenance of the "status quo" goes on..." See Marx, Karl, and Shlomo Avineri. *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization: His Despatches [sic] and Other Writings on China, India, Mexico, the Middle East and North Africa*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1968.

⁵ Such an espousal of modernity by an imperial state is not dissimilar to the French civilizing mission.

⁶ Some scholars have looked at Ottoman state archival documents that depict the provincial provinces as living in an underdeveloped state and ought to be 'modernized' and 'civilized'. See Çelik, Zeynep. *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008, p. 16. See also Deringil, Selim. "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 45.2 (2003): 311-342, p. 327; Hanssen, Jens, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber. *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Würzburg: Ergon in Kommission, 2002, pp. 6-10; Eldem, Edhem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce A. Masters. *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁷ See 'The French City' in Kassir, Samir. *Beirut*. University of California Press, 2010, pp. 279-301.

Contrary to many scholars that split the urban history of Beirut between Ottoman and French—that is analyzing each period only in relationship to the current governing system—my thesis proposed that the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century development of Beirut was a continuous process of modernization and engagement with the international economic system in which both the Ottomans and French were invested.

I further argued that the unofficial scramble for Beirut by the commercial classes was an imperial manifestation to be distinguished from the rather distinct and more direct intervention of European governments in other colonial towns. Beirut's urbanization ultimately resisted the '*nouvelle ville*' archetype, according to which scholars believed almost every colonial newly industrializing city was modeled, where, as suggested by Janet Abu-Lughod, "two quite different cities, physically juxtaposed but architecturally and socially distinct," were developed as opposed to "a single unified city."⁸

Owing to the provincial scale of the economy, budgetary restrictions, and municipal resistance founded on popular legitimacy, Beirut escaped a comprehensive urban renewal. The city, not so heavily planned with the rubrics of the straight line and the *angle droite* under both the Ottomans and French, was depicted by Jade Tabet as "*la ville imparfaite*" (the imperfect city).⁹ As suggested by Kassir, it, from the beginning of its rise, was never "the outcome of a deliberate governmental planning effort."¹⁰

⁸ Abu-Lughod, Janet. "Tale of Two Cities: the Origins of Modern Cairo." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 7.4 (1965): 429-457, p. 429.

⁹ "La Ville Imparfaite" by Jade Tabet in Beyhum, Nabil. *Reconstruire Beyrouth: Les Paris sur le Possible: Table Ronde Tenue à Lyon du 27 au 29 Novembre 1990*. Lyon: Maison de l'Orient, 1991.

¹⁰ Hanssen, Jens. *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*. Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 29.



Fig. 1 - Handdrawn map of medieval Beirut by Ibrahim & Dawud Kanaan [in Kan‘ān, Dāwūd K. *Bayrūt fī al-Tārikh*. Bayrūt: Maṭb. ‘Awn, 1963].



Fig. 7 - Beirut in 1841, the Ottoman city before it was developed.



Fig. 8 - Beirut in 1920, the city as it transitioned from Ottoman to French rule post-WWI.



Fig. 9 - Beirut in 1943, post-French planning.

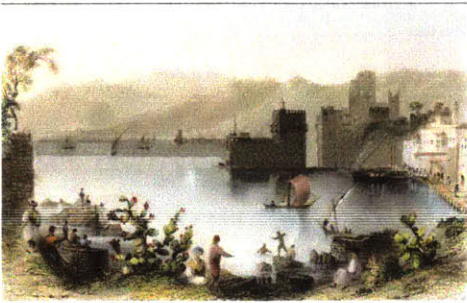


Fig. 2 – A painting of Beirut in 1800.



Fig. 3 – Beirut in the 1870s.



Fig. 4 – Beirut in 1890s.



Fig. 5 – Beirut in 1920s.



Fig. 6 – Beirut in the 1940s.

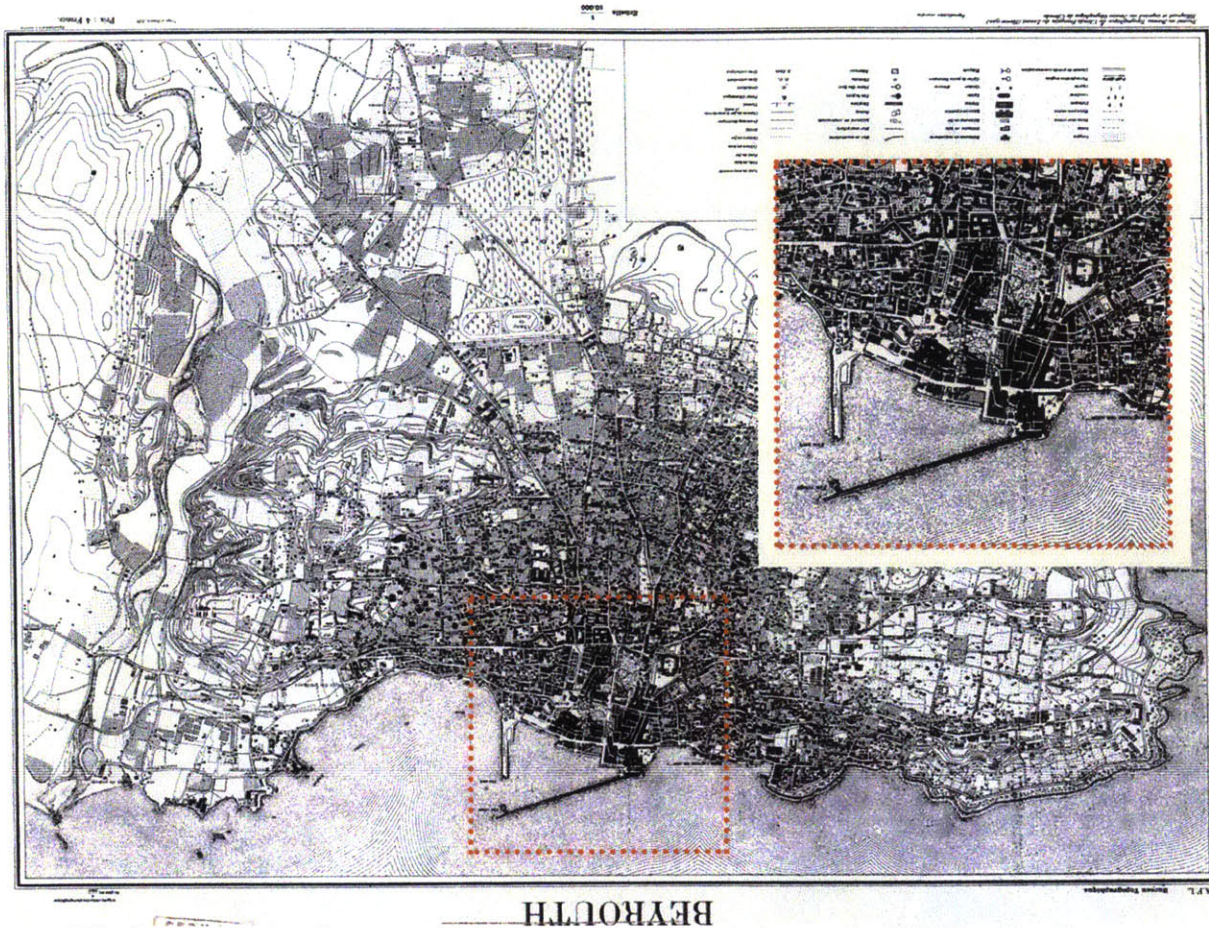


Fig 3 - The second comprehensive map of Beirut, drawn in 1922 by the *Bureau Topographique de l'Armée Française du Levant*.



Fig. 1 - The Place de l'Étoile in Beirut in the 1940s.

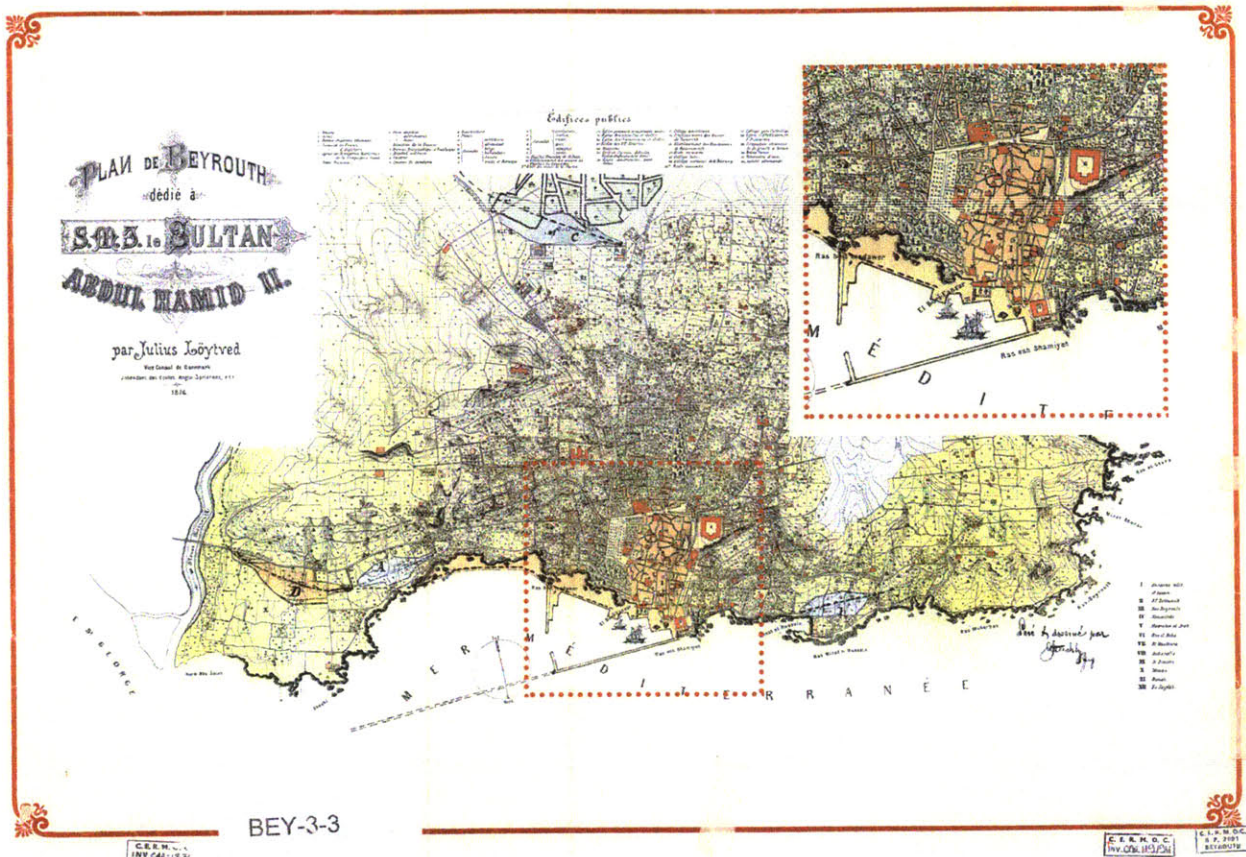


Fig. 4 - The first cartographic map of Beirut, drawn in 1876 for Sultan Abdul Hamid II under the command of Julius Löytved, a dragoman at the German Embassy in Istanbul.



Fig. 2 - Beirut in 1920, map showing the urban works implemented by the Ottomans in the late 19th century through WWI.

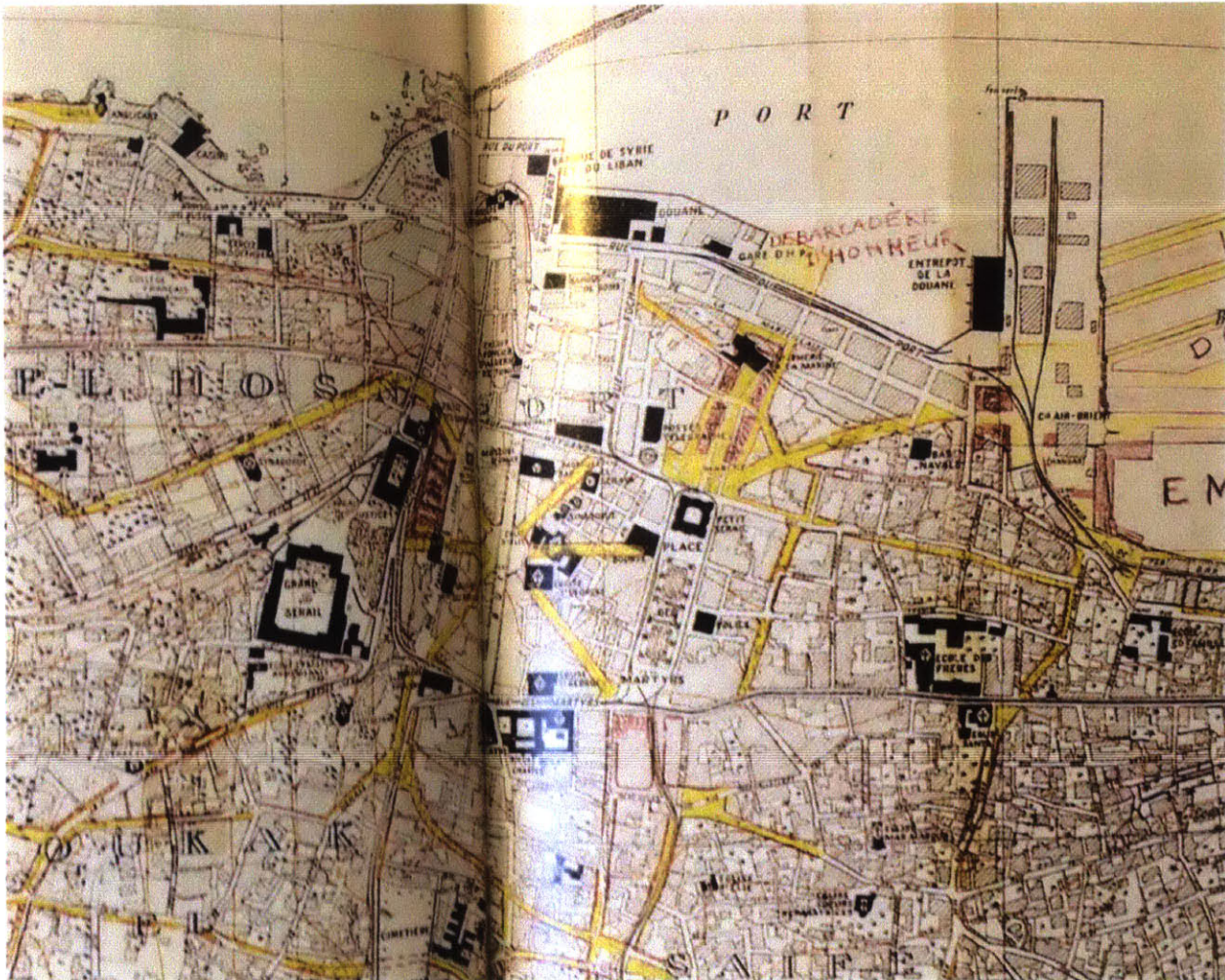


Fig. 5 – A detail of the the Étoile area in the sketch drawn by Camille Duraffourd (1928-1930).



Fig. 7 – Detail of the Éttoile Square in the master plan by the Danger firm.

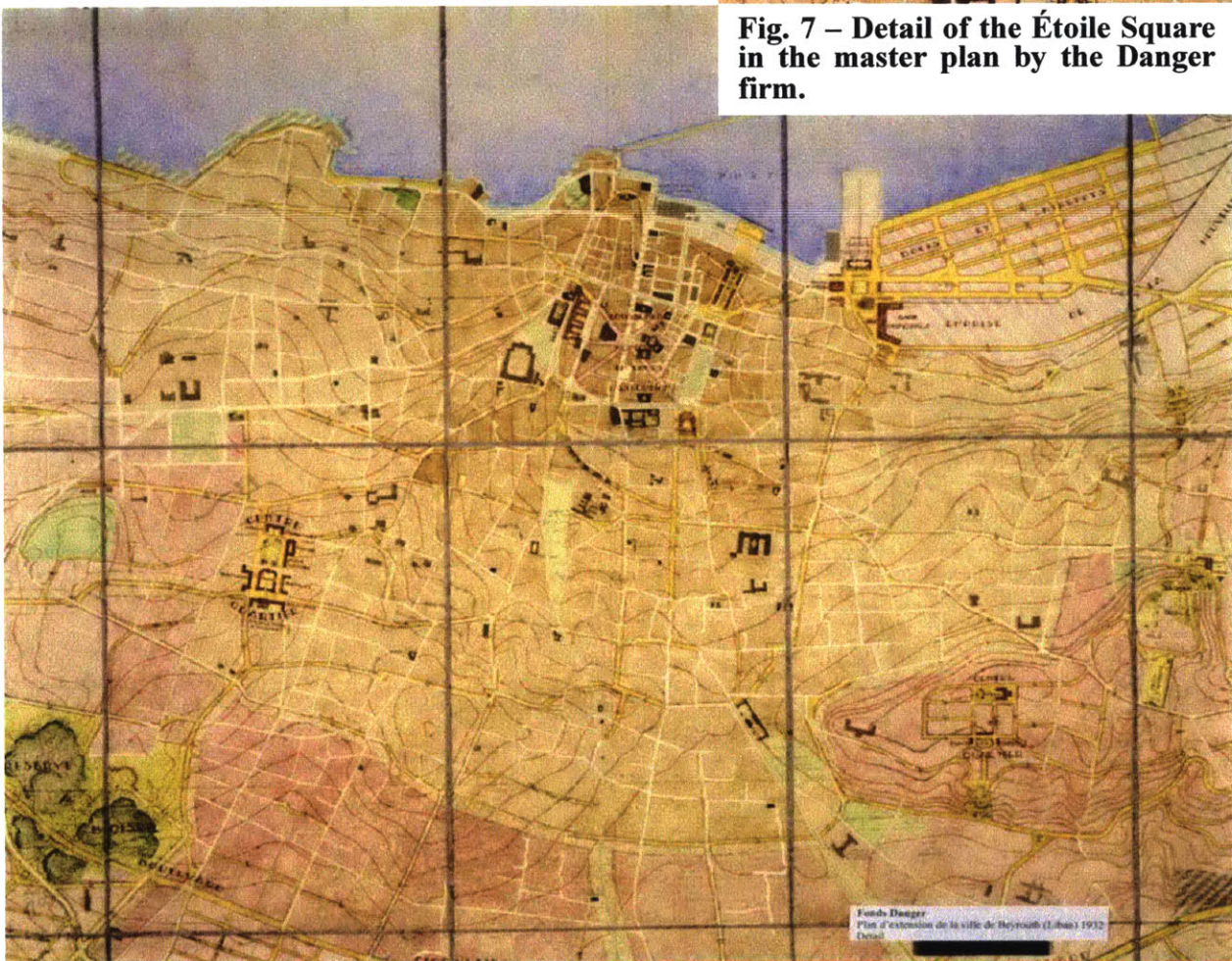


Fig. 6 – “Plan for the Embellishment and Extension of Beirut” (1931–1932) by *Société des Plans Régulateurs des Frères Danger*.



Fig. 9 - The Citadel of Lille by Vauban, also known as 'Queen of Citadels' (1668).

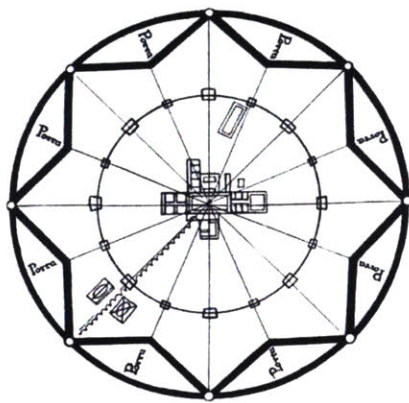


Fig. 8 – Plan of the first ideal city of the Renaissance —Sforzinda, by Filarete or Antonio di Pietro Averlino (1400-1469).

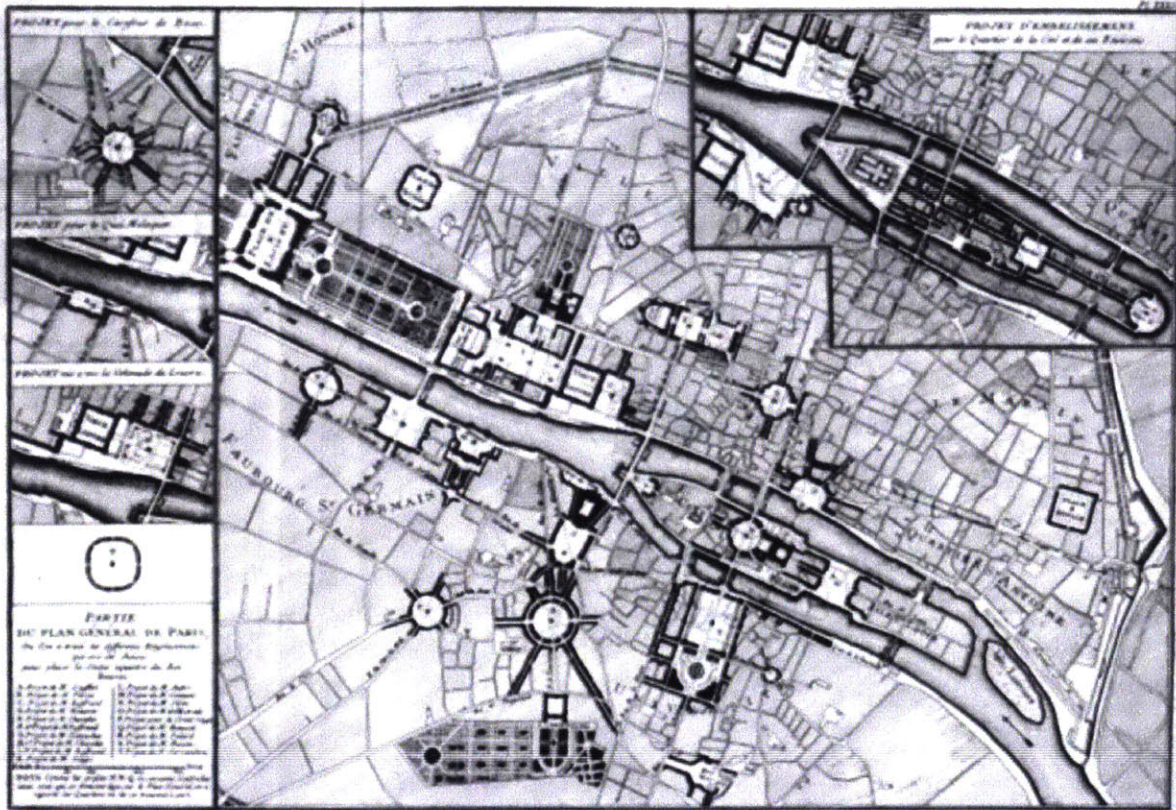


Fig. 10 - Plan of selected competition projects for the Place Louis XV, Pierre Patte, 1767.

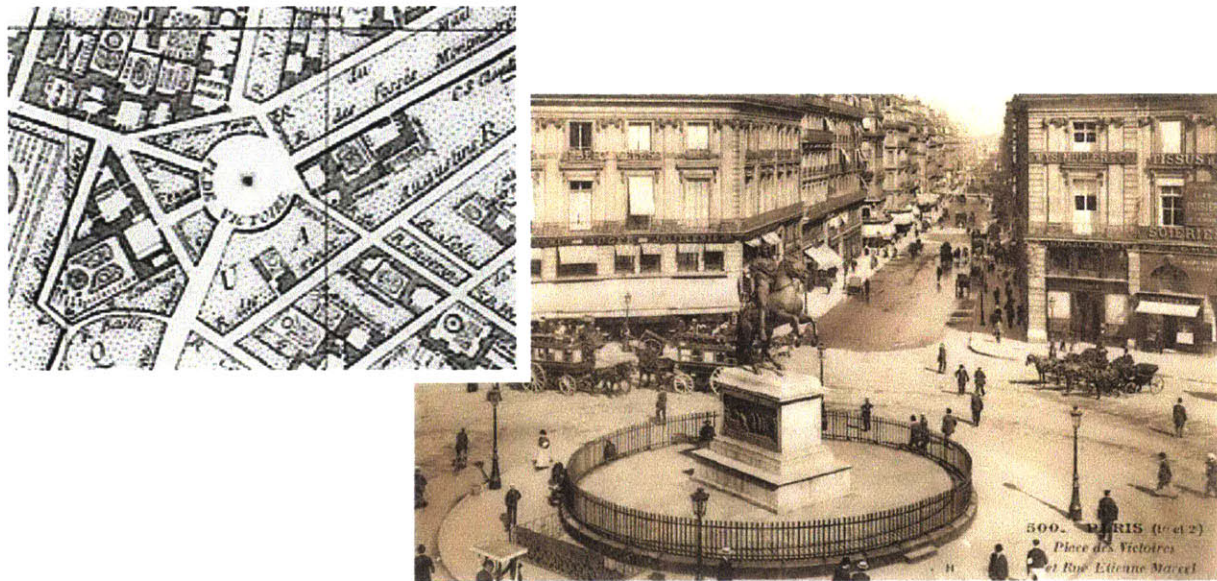
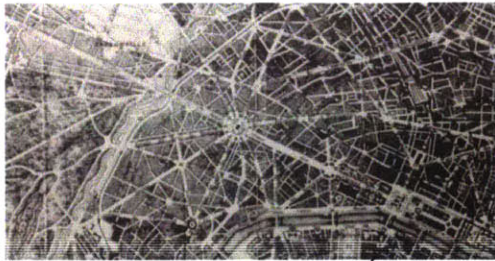


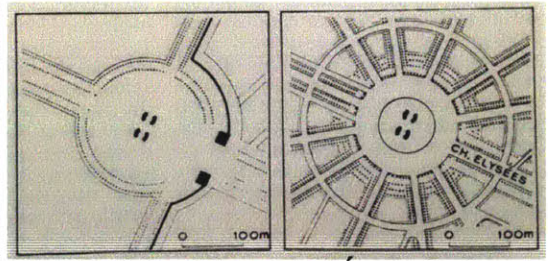
Fig. 12 - Places des Victoires in Paris, designed and built in the 1680s.



Place de l'Étoile in Paris, today known as Place Charles de Gaulle.



Detail of the Place de l'Étoile in Paris, 1876.



The Parisian Place de l'Étoile before and after Haussmann.



Map of Paris (1839) before Haussmann's infrastructural reformation of the city.



Map of Paris (1876) after Haussmann's infrastructural reformation of the city.

Fig. 11 – Transformation of the Place de l'Étoile in Paris under Haussmann.

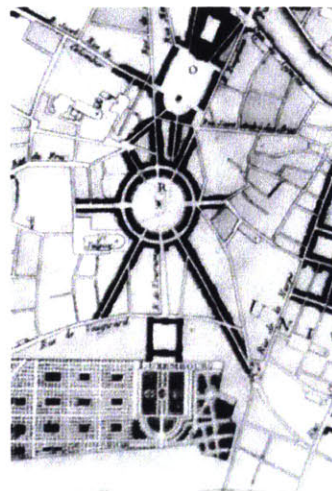


Fig. 13 - M. Polard's competition entry for the design of Place Louis XV, highlighted in Patte's plan, 1765.

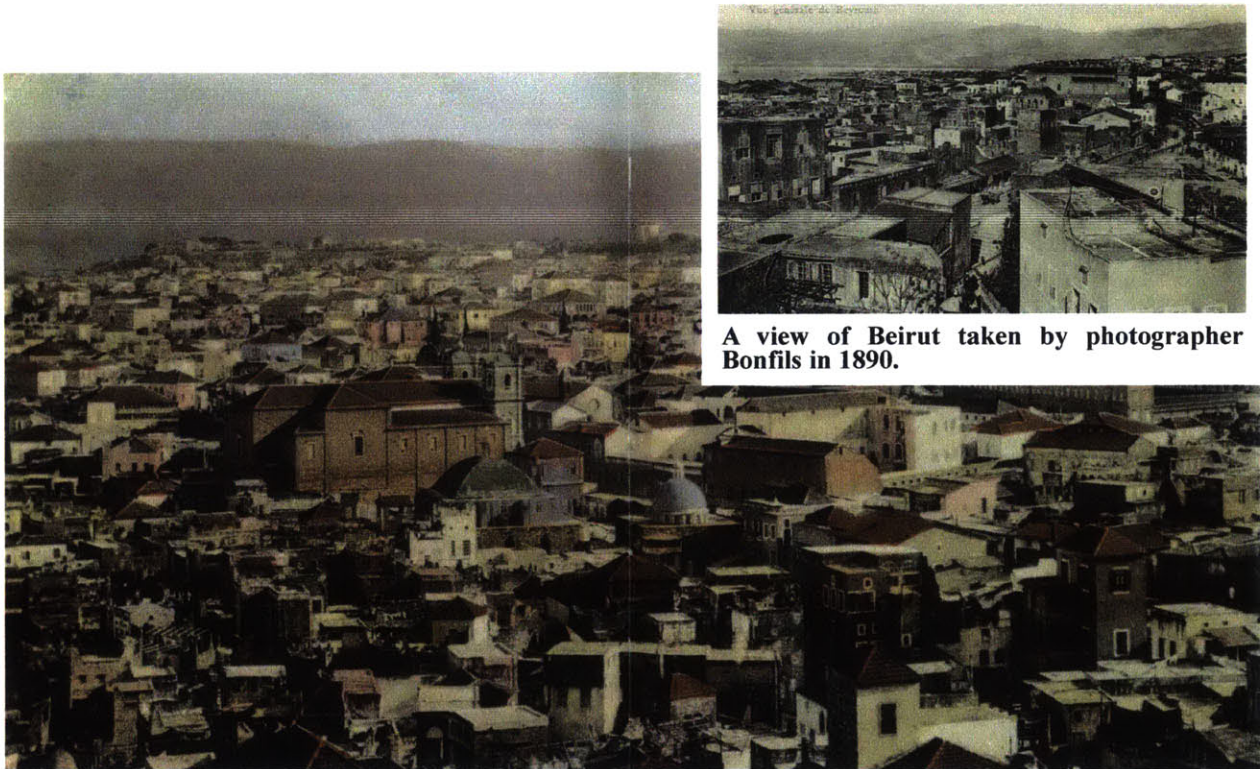


Fig. 15 - Panorama of the south of the old town taken from the clock tower of the Ottoman barracks at the beginning of the 20th century.



Fig 14 – Right: Aerial photo of Beirut in 1943. It shows the Place de l'Étoile as executed. Left: Aerial photo of Beirut in 1926 before the construction of the Étoile. Foch and Allenby streets were at an early stage of their development.

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