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# Reading French toponymic inscriptions in Beirut

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**Reading French toponymic inscriptions in Beirut**

**Abstract:** In capital cities, seen as "organised forms of remembrance", toponyms are markers of the state's "ruling socio-political order and its particular 'theory of the world'" and a "story without villains" of the official version of the national narrative. We assess toponyms related to France and the French in Beirut, the Lebanese capital.

French toponyms dating back to the Mandate (1918/1920–1943) are still present in the Lebanese capital seventy-two years after the Independence: for example, Général H. Gouraud, the Mandate establisher, and other Mandate army officers (De Gaulle included) are still commemorated by means of street names. The religious aspect is firmly present, too: four French saints are commemorated in Beirut, two of them military and patron saints of the French Nation (Joan of Arc and King Louis IX). Other religious figures include numerous members of the Society of Jesus, founders of the Université Saint-Joseph.

In conclusion, French toponyms in Beirut reflect not only the Mandate as a founding point of Lebanon, but also France's role as a traditional "protector" of religious minorities and *Fille aînée de l'Église*, still central to the relations between France and the Levant.

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We find that France, as mandatory power, did not only write toponyms in Beirut, but it also set up "toponymic traditions" that are still used by the Lebanese Republic today. The result can be generalised: the study of toponymic rupture/continuity combined with that of invented toponymic traditions can inform more about postcolonial bodies' policies and their changes.

**Keywords:** Lebanon, Beirut, French Mandate, place names, postcolonial, politics, urban planning.

**Une lecture dans les toponymes français à Beyrouth**

**Résumé :** Dans les villes capitales, elles-mêmes des « mémoires organisées », les toponymes sont des marqueurs idéologiques de l'ordre sociopolitique souverain sur le lieu et sa *weltanschauung*, et une « narration sans vilains » de la version officielle de l'histoire nationale. Nous étudions les toponymes ayant un rapport avec la France et les Français à Beyrouth, capitale du Liban.

Soixante-douze ans après la fin du Mandat français sur le Levant (1918/1920–1943), des toponymes de l'époque mandataire sont toujours présents dans la capitale libanaise : par exemple le général Gouraud, instaurateur du Mandat, ainsi que d'autres officiers (de Gaulle inclus) sont commémorés. L'aspect religieux est lui aussi solidement affirmé sur la carte : quatre saints français, dont deux militaires et patrons de la France (Louis IX et Jeanne d'Arc) sont présents dans la toponymie beyrouthine. D'autres personnalités religieuses françaises sont présentes et dont de nombreux jésuites de l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth.

En conclusion, les toponymes français reflètent non seulement l'époque mandataire comme l'événement fondateur du Liban, mais aussi les rôles de « protectrice des chrétiens d'Orient » et « Fille aînée de l'Église », importants dans les rapports entre la France et le Levant.

Nous trouvons que la France, en tant que puissance mandataire, a non seulement écrit des toponymes à Beyrouth, mais aussi elle a introduit des « traditions toponymiques » qui sont encore utilisées par la République libanaise aujourd'hui. Le cas libanais peut être généralisé : l'étude des ruptures/continuités toponymiques, conjuguée avec l'étude des traditions toponymiques inventées, peut nous informer sur les corps politiques post-coloniaux et leurs changements.

**Mots-clés :** Liban, Beyrouth, Mandat français, toponymes, Postcolonial, politique, urbanisme.

**Eine Lesung in den französischen Ortsnamen in Beirut**

**Zusammenfassung:** In Hauptstädten, die selbst organisierte Gedächtnisse (Memoiren) sind, sind Ortsnamen ideologische Merkmale der souveränen soziopolitischen Ordnung über dem Ort, seiner Weltanschauung und auch eine Erzählung der offiziellen Version nationaler Geschichte. Wir untersuchen die Ortsnamen mit Bezug zu Frankreich und den Französen in Beirut, die Libanesische Hauptstadt.

Zweiundsiebzig Jahre nach dem Ende des französischen Mandats für die Levante (1918/1920–1943) sind in der libanesischen Hauptstadt noch Toponyme der Mandatszeit vorhanden: zum Beispiel, Général Gouraud, der Begründer des Mandats, sowie andere Offiziere (de Gaulle mitinbegriffen) werden geehrt. Auch der

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religiöse Aspekt ist auf der Karte fest verankert, vier französische Heilige, darunter zwei Soldaten und Schutzpatrone Frankreichs (Ludwig IX und Jeanne d'Arc), sind in Beiruts Toponymie vertreten. Andere französische religiöse Persönlichkeiten sind anwesend, darunter viele Jesuiten der Universität Saint-Joseph von Beirut.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass die französischen Ortsnamen nicht nur die Mandatsära als Gründungsereignis des Libanon widerspiegeln, sondern auch die Rolle des Beschützers der Orientchristen und der „Ältesten Tochter der Kirche", die für die Beziehungen zwischen Frankreich und der Levante wichtig sind.

Wir stellen fest, dass Frankreich als Vertretungsmacht nicht nur Ortsnamen in Beirut geschrieben hat, sondern auch „toponymische Traditionen" eingeführt hat, die von der Libanesischen Republik noch heute verwendet werden. Der libanesische Fall lässt sich verallgemeinern: die Studien der Brüche und Kontinuitäten, kombiniert mit der Analyse erfundener toponymischer Traditionen, kann uns über postkoloniale politische Körper und deren Veränderungen informieren.

**Schlüsselbegriffe:** Libanon, Beirut, Französiches Mandat, Ortsnamen, Postkolonialismus, Politik, Urbanismus.

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# Reading French toponymic inscriptions in Beirut

JACK KEILO

This paper aims at studying French place names in Beirut, centre of the Lebanese body politic since 1920 and the Lebanese Republic since 1926. We present a list of current French toponyms in Beirut as they appear on its official maps and, based on it, we reflect on France in its relations to Lebanon.

We will be working with toponymic inscriptions, that is, toponyms with an official character, written down on official maps, themselves a document emanating from state sovereignty and a high expression of power-in-space. In our article we treat toponyms as "images/icons" of their prototypes, in following the distinction made by Theodore the Studite and Paul Evdokimov in the matter: the image is always dissimilar to the prototype "in the essence" but always similar to it "in the hypostasis" and "in its name" (Evdokimov 1997: 52). Thus when, in our research, we write that Joan of Arc "has her street" in Beirut, the street name is to the physical person what an icon is to its prototype.

## 1. Toponymy as an insertion of ideology into ordinary settings of everyday life

Toponyms are markers of the set of value of the power controlling the map. In capital cities, themselves "organised remembrance" (Arendt & Canovan 1998: 198), toponyms are markers of the state's "ruling socio-political order and its particular 'theory of the world'" and a "narration without villains" of the official version of national narrative (Azaryahu 1996: 326). They are the insertion of ideology into ordinary settings of everyday life (Azaryahu 1996: 312):

> "Historical" street names are distinctive "lieux de memoire" (Nora, 1986) of modernity. From the perspective of those in charge of molding the symbolic infrastructure of society, the main merit of commemorative street names is that they introduce an authorized version of history into ordinary settings of everyday life. Commemorative street names, together with commemorative monuments and heritage museums, not only evince a particular version of history but are also participants in the ongoing cultural production of a shared past […]. In their capacity both as historical references and as spatial designations they provide for the conflation of history and geography. Potentially contested and eventually challenged, commemorative street names

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> concretize hegemonic structures of power and authority. […]
> The interfusion of narratives guarantees the operation of the authorized version of history as a semiotic constituent of social life in its most intimate level: that of everyday life.

In capital cities, place names are an integral part of "the performative, preservative functions" of a nation (Daum & Mauch 2005: 18–19):

> *Performative functions*: the ability to stage events that put the political mission of a state and the idea of national identity on display. […]. A distinct cultural task of the capitals also lies in their *preservative functions*. Capitals serve as nation-states' repositories of memory. There are prominent, though rarely the only, *lieux de mémoire* within nation-states. Capitals thus serve as "hinges". they mediate between the nation-state's past, present, and envisaged future.

Thus, toponyms "perform" in the capital city, they transform the official authorised version of national history into the everyday ordinary set of things. What is more banal than a postal address or a name on a map?

## 2. Methodology, sources, and conditions of our study

The paper is based on the findings of a doctoral thesis defended at the Sorbonne Université of Paris in May 2018, *Le Centre et le Nom, lectures dans la toponymie de Beyrouth* [The Centre and the Name, Readings in Beirut's toponymy] (Keilo 2018) and which presents a qualitative reading of different aspects of Beiruti toponymy, being the centre of the Lebanese body politic and the showcase of Lebanon and its ideology.

**Sources of the studied maps.** French toponyms are listed as they appear on official maps. In Beirut, there is often a difference between toponyms written on the maps and those vernacular and used by inhabitants. This paper considers only the official ones inscribed on the map (hence "toponymic inscriptions" in this paper.) The maps that were consulted are the following:

1. A series of 78 maps of the different quarters of Beirut, drawn by the Municipality of the city, as of 2011.
2. A topographical map by the Topography Service of the Lebanese Army, of 1999.
3. Three city maps of 1920, 1922, 1936, drawn by the Topography Service of the French Army of the Levant. The maps of 1920 and 1922 are available in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The 1936's is available in the archives of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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4. For all the newly-added toponyms, the study depends on the author's research *in situ* up to May 2017.

**French toponyms in Beirut**. The following toponyms are listed as "French":

1. Commemorative toponyms of French nationals, for example *avenue*[1] *général de Gaulle*.
2. Toponyms related to history, geography and values of France, for example *avenue de Paris* and *rue de la Marseillaise*.
3. Toponyms of entities and institutions owned or run by the French state or other public French entities, for example *quartier Hôtel Dieu* and *Lycée franco-libanais*.

Commemorative toponyms of Lebanese nationals later naturalised French are not included.

## 2.1. French names on the map of Beirut, a brief history

In October 1918 French troops took over Beirut and its administration in a full military occupation (Davie 2001: 71–72)[2]. Later, in 1920, the French Army of the Levant occupied the whole of today's Lebanon and Syria. New place names were imposed on the city by the Mandatory Authorities (Cheikho 1920: 1025–1031; Davie 2001: 73). The first official map of the city (1/10000) was drawn in June 1920, three months before the proclamation of the State of Greater Lebanon, by the Bureau topographique of the French Army of the Levant [3] and with the newly imposed names. The contemporaneous French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau (until January 1920), and the High Commissioner of the French government and commander of the Army of the Levant, General Henri Gouraud, have streets named after them on this map, and some other army officers of their time:

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[1] We retain *rue*, *avenue*, and *place* in French (and non-capitalised), as they are officially used by the Beirut Municipality.

[2] The relations between France and Lebanon dates back to the Sixteenth Century, when Francis I signed the *Capitulations* with the Ottoman Sultan and that considered the Kingdom of France as the "protector" of Christians in the Ottoman Empire and of the Holy Places (Pélissié du Rausas 1902: 1–129) (For more information cf. what a French Senate committee states on the matter in 2018, see Retailleau et al. 2018: https://www.senat.fr/ga/ga147/ga147.html).
After the civil war of 1860 in Mount Lebanon, the Second French Empire of Napoleon III provided substantial troops to protect the Christians of Mount Lebanon (The *Règlement organique* of the creation of a semi-autonomous Mutassarifate in Mount Lebanon and for protection of Christians is available at this URL: http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/lb1861.htm). France has a "special relation" with the Maronites, the main Eastern Christian community in Lebanon (CMDR 2013: 13–14).

[3] The map of Beirut 1920 is in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and is available at this URL: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53066704k/

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Marshals Pétain and Foch, colonel Niéger, and the British field Marshal Allenby. Some French and other European cities, Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, Algiers (then part of France), and London had streets named after them. Some street names were drawn from that "imaginative geography" and its representations of "orientalizing the Oriental[4]" (Said 2003: 29, 49): a *rue Mille et une Nuits* ('Arabian Nights Street') is present. Place names were not printed but written with a pen on this map.

The second map from 1922, also a 1/10000, is more detailed[5]. Place names are printed, and some central parts of Old Beirut are left blank, where the *place de l'Étoile* would later be constructed (the project was in process since the last years of Ottoman rule, see Davie 2003 and Ghorayeb 2014). Few streets were renamed. For example, the *rue Mille et une Nuits* was renamed *rue Mahmoud Mahmassani*, after one Beiruti notable, hanged by the Ottomans in 1915 and later considered martyr by French Mandatory Authorities and the successor Lebanese Republic.

The third map dates from 1936[6]. Some new names were added, like *rue Justinien*. Mandatory Authorities judged the name of the Roman Emperor so important that they renamed the main part of the *rue de la République* after him, *rue Justinien*. The name of Joan of Arc, secondary patron saint of France (Pius XI 1927: 20–25), appears on this map.

Later and after the independence in 1943 the map did not undergo a toponymic purge. But there was a gradual and slow change. Many French names subsist on the map, and some new ones, we shall see *infra*, were added.

## 2.2. Beiruti place names

Two different official levels interact in the production of Beiruti toponyms: one is local, the Beirut Municipality, and the second is national, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. According to the description of the procedure (Haddad 2012; Nasereddine 2015), families and local associations suggest persons to be commemorated to the Street Name Committee. In order to be approved, the new suggested name has to be related to Beirut or to represent the general interest of Lebanon, and has to be "acceptable" by inhabitants. Upon the approval of the committee, the name is presented to the Municipal Council, and if it is approved, the demand is sent to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (who has a discretionary power

[4] Orientalism "is a discourse of knowledge about the Orient produced by colonial and Western powers from the 19th century onwards" (Castree et al. 2013: 356).

[5] The map of Beirut 1922 is in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and is available on this URL: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53064571p/

[6] The map of Beirut 1936 is available online, on the site of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/lebanon/beirut/maps/tfl_1936_beirut.html

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over the city toponymy.) The Ministry does field survey as to test the name "acceptability" among the inhabitants of the named or renamed street. If no objection is made by the Ministry, the new name is sent to the governor of Beirut, who is in charge of informing the Post, the Lebanon Electricity Company and the Lebanon Water Company of the decision. The name is added to the maps.

## 3. A list of present French toponymic inscriptions in Beirut

Of the current 1200 toponyms of Beirut, these are the French toponyms[7]:

Table 1: French toponyms in Beirut

| **Toponymic inscription** | **Namesake** |
|---|---|
| *Bordeaux* (*rue/Dunant*) | The city of Bordeaux |
| *Bounoure* (*rue Gabriel*) | Gabriel Bounoure |
| *Catroux* (*rue Georges*) | Georges Catroux |
| *Chanteur* (*rue*) | Father Claudius Chanteur S.J. |
| *Chateaubriand* (*rue*) | François-René de Chateaubriand |
| *Chirac* (*rue Jacques*) | President Jacques Chirac |
| *Cimetière militaire français* | Military French cemetery |
| *Clemenceau* (*rue*) | Georges Clemenceau, French premier |
| *Curie* (*rue Madame*) | Marie Curie |
| *Cyr* (*rue Georges*) | Georges Cyr, Franco-Lebanese painter |
| *De Gaulle* (*avenue du général*) | President and general Charles de Gaulle |
| *Ducruet* (*rue Jean*) | Father Jean Ducruet S.J. |
| *Duraffourd* (*rue*) | Camille Duraffourd |
| *Étoile* (*Place de l'*) | Place Étoile of Paris |
| *Étoile* (*secteur de l'*) | Place Étoile of Paris |
| *Foch* (*rue du maréchal*) | Marshal Ferdinand Foch |
| *Français* (*avenue des*) | The French People |
| *France* (*rue de*) | The French Republic |
| *Gelas* (*rue Mère*) | Mother Gelas |
| *Gouraud* (*rue du géneral*) | Général Henri Gouraud |
| *Hôtel-Dieu* (*rue de l'*) | Hôtel-Dieu de France |
| *Hôtel-Dieu* (*secteur de l'*) | Hôtel-Dieu de France |
| *Hugo* (*rue Victor*) | Victor Hugo |
| *Huvelin* (*rue*) | Paul Huvelin |
| *Jeanne d'Arc* (*rue*) | Joan of Arc |
| *Lamartine* (*rue*) | Alphonse de Lamartine |
| *Lammens* (*rue Henri*) | Father Henri Lammens |
| *Lazaristes* (*rue des*) | Congregation of the Mission |
| *Libérateurs* (*rue des*) | The French Army of the Levant |

[7] Some streets are shown with their second name. Many Beiruti streets have a double toponym. The street is renamed without omitting the first name: the second is added to the first and they are used interchangeably on official maps.

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Lycée* (*rue du*) | The Franco-Lebanese Lycée |
| *Mar Mansour*[a)] (*rue de*) | Saint Vincent de Paul |
| *Marguerite-Marie* (*rue de*) | Saint Marguerite-Marie Alacoque |
| *Marseillaise* (*rue de la*) | The French National Anthem |
| *Massignon* (*rue de Louis*) | Louis Massignon |
| *Monnot* (*rue*) | Ambroise Monnot S.J. |
| *Paris* (*avenue de*) | The *de facto* Capital City of France |
| *Pasteur* (*rue*) | Louis Pasteur |
| *Père Lebret* (*rue de*) | Father Lebret O.P. |
| *Saint Louis* (*rue de*) | Saint King Louis IX of France |
| *Sarloutte* (*rue Père*) | Father Ernest Sarloutte |
| *Trabaud* (*rue/Wadih Naïm*) | Albert Trabaud (1872–1935) |
| *Verdun* (*rue/Rachid Karami*) | A Battle in World War I |
| *Weygand* (*rue*) | General Maxime Weygand |

a) In standard Arabic and in the Levantine dialect Saint Vincent de Paul is known as Mar Mansour. *Mar* or *Mor* is a title of veneration in Syriac, meaning « My Lord », today used by Middle Eastern Christians as a title of respect for saints. *Mansour* is an old name in Syriac and Arabic and means « conqueror » or « victorious », sometimes used as a literal translation for Vincent.

As shown in the map below, there is a concentration of these inscriptions in the heart of Beirut, around the Parliament, and diagonally from the Mediterranean Sea, along the "Green Line" separating the two parts of Beirut during the Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990 (Davie 1992: 45–48), to the south east.

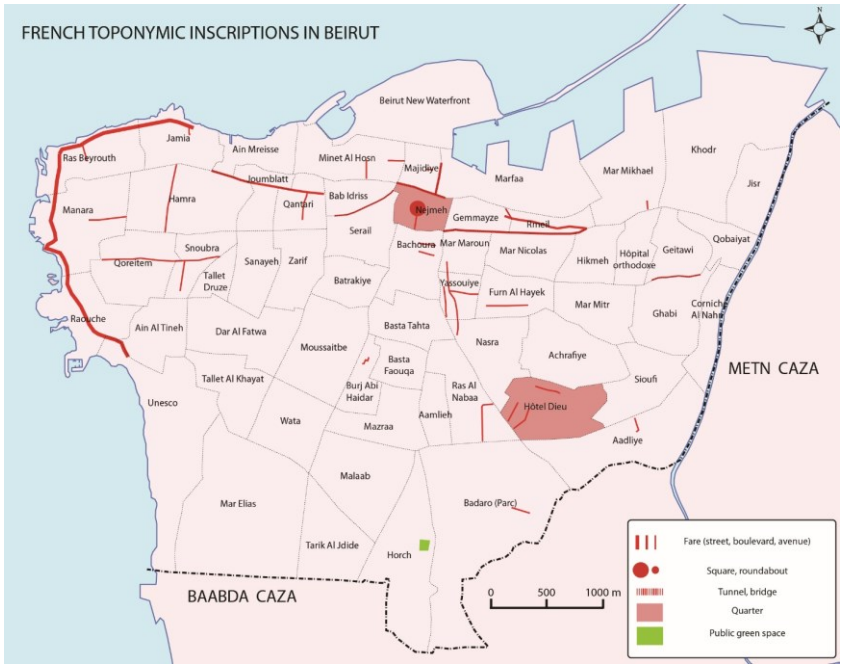


Figure 1: French toponymic inscriptions in Beirut (© Jack Keilo 2017)

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## 4. The different narrations of France in Beiruti toponymic inscriptions

We classify the names on the list into three main categories: toponyms related to the French Mandate and the representation of France as a sovereign nation; toponyms related to the religious presence of France; and toponyms related to France's intellectual dimension. We portray each of these categories, based on the toponyms of the list. Then we present a general discussion.

### 4.1. France as the Mandatory, military, and the sovereign power

The Lebanese parliament is located in the *place de l'Étoile*, which gives its name to the *quartier de l'Étoile*, itself named after the Étoile square of Paris. This square was planned and implemented in the heart of Beirut as a colonial [8] "showcase" of Mandatory France (Saliba 2004) by French mandatory authorities (Davie 2001, 2003; Ghorayeb 2014). In spite of it being made by the French, Étoile was considered as the "heart" of an "oriental city" (Davie 2003; Davie 2005). The Étoile quarter is surrounded by old central streets, bearing names of some French personalities:

The establisher of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon and its first High Commissioner, General Henri Joseph Eugène Gouraud (1867–1946), is still commemorated by the important *rue Gouraud* running from central Beirut to its east. Another military figure of the early Mandate, Albert Trabaud (1872–1935) is also commemorated by the small *rue Trabaud* in the eastern part of the city. Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), Prime Minister of France during the First World War and during the establishment of the French occupation in the Levant, is also commemorated by the beautiful *rue Clemenceau*. The French Army of the Levant, considered as "liberators" of the country, are commemorated by the small *rue des Libérateurs*, in the north-eastern part of the Lebanese capital. A French marshal and military leader of the First World War, Ferdinand Jean Marie Foch (1851–1929), has his very central *rue Foch*, to the north-east of the Parliament, in spite of the fact that his military career was not related to Lebanon. The famous battle of the World War I, Verdun, is commemorated by the *rue Verdun*.

General Maxime Weygand, another high commissioner and a controversial figure during the Vichy regime in France, still has his *rue Weygand* in the heart of Beirut and where the City Hall is situated. One of the last high commissioners, résistant and General Georges Catroux (1877–1969) has his small *rue Georges Catroux* in the south-east of Beirut. The French officer and statesman Charles de Gaulle, whose signature rendered Lebanon a

[8] In this study, the word colonialism is to be taken in its broader sense, as officially the Mandate was a supervision, not a full-scale colonial hegemony. Colonialism is "the control over one territory and its peoples by another" (Castree et al. 2013: 65).

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*de iure* sovereign nation, has his spacious *avenue de Gaulle* on the maritime façade of the city.

Besides the aforementioned de Gaulle, president of France from 1960 to 1968 and instaurator of the Cinquième République, two other French heads of state are commemorated in Beirut. Louis IX (1214–1270), king of France and Crusader, has his *rue Saint Louis* in the eastern part of the city. In the late 2000s *rue Maarad*, some hundred metres from the Lebanese Parliament, was renamed *rue Jacques Chirac*, after the president of France (born 1932, in office 1995–2007)[9].

Two other French Mandate officers are still on the map: the *rue Duraffourd*, a small street around the American University of Beirut, bears the name of Camille Duraffourd (†1941), civil servant and the chief of the land register (Cadaster) of the French Levant. And the second is *rue Colombani*, after François Colombani, director general of security of the Mandatory Levant. We can add the *French Military Cemetery*, on the map of Beirut since 1920.

French attributes of sovereignty are visible on the map of Beirut. The *rue des Français* is after the French Nation itself. Another *rue France* has replaced, since 1945, the *rue Pétain* and runs north to the seat of the Lebanese government, not far from the *rue de la Marseillaise* that honours the French national anthem. The *avenue de Paris* on the maritime façade of the city, constitutes, along with the avenue Charles de Gaulle, the "Corniche de Beyrouth". Another street bears the name of *rue Bordeaux*. Joan of Arc (1410–1431), a French war leader, has her *rue Jeanne d'Arc* in the western part of the city, around the lively neighbourhood of Hamra.

As a result, Mandatory France is written on the map in some of its grand details on the map of Beirut. The establishers of the Mandate are still present on the map. In 1951 the Municipal Council of Beirut decided to commemorate "the foreign generals" (*sic*) and replace them by other personalities (Lisan Al Hal 1951: 2):

> New names for Beiruti streets
> The Street name committee held some meetings […] It has been decided to decommemorate the names of the military and foreign names from the streets of the capital. The committee decided to rename rue Gouraud Tripoli, and rue Evacuation instead of rue Foch, and rue roi Faysal instead of rue Allenby, and rue Selim Takla instead of rue Maarad, and rue Ahmed Chaouqi instead of rue Clemenceau […].

[9] It is important to point out to the fact that the commemoration of president Chirac is not posthumous, a relatively rare fact in the world of commemorative street names.

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This decision was taken but was never implemented by the Ministry of Interior, which had and still has the discretionary power on the map of the Lebanese Capital. The Beiruti example can remind us of the toponymy of Budapest becoming a "locus of dispute" between the City Municipality and the Hungarian state (Palonen 2008).

### 4.2. France as the Eldest Daughter of the Church

Out of the forty-four French toponyms in Beirut, sixteen are related to figures of the Catholic Church in France. Two of the patron saints of France are commemorated: as we have seen above, Louis IX, king of France and a leader of the Fifth and Eighth Crusades is commemorated by his *rue Saint Louis*; and Joan of Arc (1410–1431), a saint since 1920, has her *rue Jeanne d'Arc*. Two other French saints have their toponymic inscriptions in Beirut: Saint Vincent de Paul (1581–1660) has his *rue Mar Mansour* in the old part of Beirut, to the south of the seat of the government. The order founded by Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of the Mission, is honoured by a *rue des Lazaristes* [*Azariyé*]. The fourth French saint commemorated is Marguerite-Marie Alacoque (1647–1690), who has her *rue Marguerite Marie*, not far from the French embassy. The *rue des Chevaliers du Temple* runs near the rue Saladin in the extreme west of the City. This Crusader military and religious order was disbanded in 1312, but it still exists on the map of Beirut.

Some names are given after personalities of the Jesuit University of Beirut, founded by French members of the Society of Jesus. Paul-Louis Huvelin (1873–1924), French scholar and specialist of Roman law, was one of the founders of the "Justinian legitimacy" of Beirut [10], and is commemorated by the *rue Huvelin* running between the university buildings. The lively *rue Monnot* bears the name of Ambroise Monnot SJ (1831–1898), one of the founders of the university. Another *rue Lammens* commemorate Henri Lammens SJ, a Belgian Francophone priest, orientalist, and one of the pillars of the Saint-Joseph Jesuit University in Beirut. Lammens' theoretical work on the history of Syria and Lebanon as *montagne-refuge* drew the

[10] Berytus, Beirut of the Roman times, was a Roman colony in the province of Syria (later of Phœnicia) where the *ius italicum* applied. The Law School of Berytus was famous throughout the Roman Empire. In his enacting *Constitutio Omnem* of the Digest, on the 16th December AD 533, emperor Justinian honoured Beirut with the title *Nutrix Legum* and declared its Law School the only place in the Empire, *extra urbes regias*, where jurisprudence could be taught (the entire *Constitutio Omnem* is available at this URL: https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Corpus/omnem.htm).
In 1915, and in his inaugural lecture of the newly-founded Jesuit Faculty of Law in Beirut, Huvelin considered that the new faculty is but the continuation of the ancient Justinian one (Emereau 1915: 422–424). Today, the coat of arms of Beirut shows the Justinian motto *Berytus Nutrix Legum/Beyrouth Oumm el Shara'e* in Latin and in its Arabic translation.

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"homeland for minorities" hypothesis, foundational for the Lebanese Republic as a political entity separate from its surrounding (see Lammens 1921). The French Jesuit fathers Jean-Baptiste Belot SJ (1822–1904), author of a French-Arab dictionary, and Claudius Chanteur SJ (1865–1949), provincial superior, have their *rues Belot* and *Chanteur* around the University. The Jesuit still provide commemorative names for the map of Beirut: in 2011 the name *rue Ducruet* was added to the map of Beirut, in commemoration of the eponymous person (1922–2010), the rector of the Jesuit University during the Lebanese civil war. Ducruet was known for being a mediator between the "two Beiruts" (a Christian-dominated East and a Muslim-majority West), and his street stands perpendicular to the old Green Line of the city in witness to this role, according to the university itself (USJ 2011).

Other commemorations of French clergymen include the *rues Lebret*, *Sarloutte*, and *Mère Gélas*. We also point out to the small *rue Louis Massignon* in the western part of the city, in honour of Louis Fernand Jules Massignon (1883–1962), a famous French scholar on Islam, ordained as a Greek Catholic priest in spite of him being a Latin-Church Christian. Massignon was accused of constructing an erroneous image of Islam (Said 2003: 104, 209) and of "not understanding Islam" (Rocalve 1993: 123–136). Yet he is commemorated in a street name in Beirut.

The *rue Saint Louis* is on the Beiruti map since 1920. Its addition provoked some objections from locals who didn't want "foreign saints" to be on the map (Davie 2001: 73). In this regard France is still the *Fille aînée de l'Église* (Lacordaire 1841) who is represented by her saints, priests, and religious figures.

### 4.3. France as a knowledge power

Besides the aforementioned clergymen (among them many being authors and writers), some other French authors, writers and artists are commemorated by means of street names on the map of Beirut. The *rue Victor Hugo* honours the eponymous writer and novelist (1802–1885). The French romantic poet and voyager Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869) has his small *rue Lamartine*. His contemporaneous author and politician, François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848) also has his small *rue Chateaubriand*. Another French writer and friend of Louis Massignon, Gabriel Bounoure (1886–1969), is commemorated by a *rue Gabriel Bounoure*. Georges Cyr (1880–1964), a Franco-Lebanese painter and resident of Beirut, is commemorated by the beautiful *rue Georges Cyr*.

Two French renowned scientists, Marie Skłodowska Curie (1867–1934) and Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) are commemorated by *rue Madame Curie* and *rue Pasteur*.

Two French-owned institutions have a toponymic presence in Beirut:

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the first is the Hôtel-Dieu de France, one of the largest hospitals in Lebanon, property of the French State but run by the Saint-Joseph Jesuit University. It gives its name to the *quartier Hôtel Dieu* and the *rue Hôtel Dieu*. The other is the Grand Lycée franco-libanais of the Mission laïque française (MLF), giving its name to the *rue du Lycée*.

It is important to point out to the fact that most of these literary names are related to the "Orient": Lamartine and Chateaubriand are thoroughly discussed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) and known for the journeys to this "Orient". Cyr, Bounoure, Massignon, Lammens, Huvelin, and Belot are all closely related to Beirut itself.

Figure 2: Place Étoile with the Lebanese Parliament. Rue Jeanne d'Arc. (© Jack Keilo 2012, 2017)

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## 5. General discussion: toponyms between the expression of ideology and invented tradition

The three different narrations can reflect different aspects of the French presence during the Mandate. But they can also provide an insight into a pattern, a procedure of selecting certain names deemed worthy to be written on the map. We may find a pattern, but also a « toponymic tradition » in these naming practices.

### 5.1. Toponyms of the founding of the Lebanon

The names of the founding persons of the Mandate, Clemenceau and Gouraud, commemorated on the Beiruti map in their life and while in office, are still on the map today. Can we find a parallel between this toponymic continuity and the constitutional one?

The Lebanese Constitution of 1926, written under the Mandatory Authorities, was never abrogated. It was modified and amended, but never repealed or replaced altogether. This Constitution "se préoccupe de l'établissement d'un Etat là où il n'y en a pas encore" [is preoccupied by founding a state where there was not] (Koch 2005: 5). The textual continuity is thus reflected by a toponymic one: no "toponymic purge" was ever accepted and applied to the city maps. As we have seen above: the trials to purge were blocked and never implemented: the centre politic of Lebanon, represented by the Ministry of Interior, found it necessary to keep the "names of the generals" and other French personalities.

We argue that, if toponymy is a "revelator" of "villains" of national narratives (no villain is commemorated), Lebanon still shows the names of the Mandate establishers in its capital city, the mandatory period is thus still honoured. Mandatory France created Lebanon as a modern political entity, its body politic, and its Constitution: deleting France's mandatory presence from urban toponymy would also symbolically be deleting the very founding of the Lebanese Republic.

Jesuit scholarship, most of them French or francophone, was also crucial at the founding of the Lebanese Republic. As mentioned before, the works of Huvelin consecrated Beirut as a *nutrix legum*, that is, mother of laws thanks to its Law School of Antiquity, important during codification of the Justinian Collection of Laws (Justinian n.d.; USJ CCS; Emereau 1915). The person of Justinian was later so important that in the 1936 map the Mandatory Power renamed *rue Justinien* the main part of the rue de la République. The ideological foundations of Lebanon being the *montagne-refuge* were best expressed in Henri Lammens' works. It can then be safe to say that keeping the Jesuit fathers' names on the map is also acknowledging the legitimacy of their work, *ergo* the ideological foundations of Lebanon.

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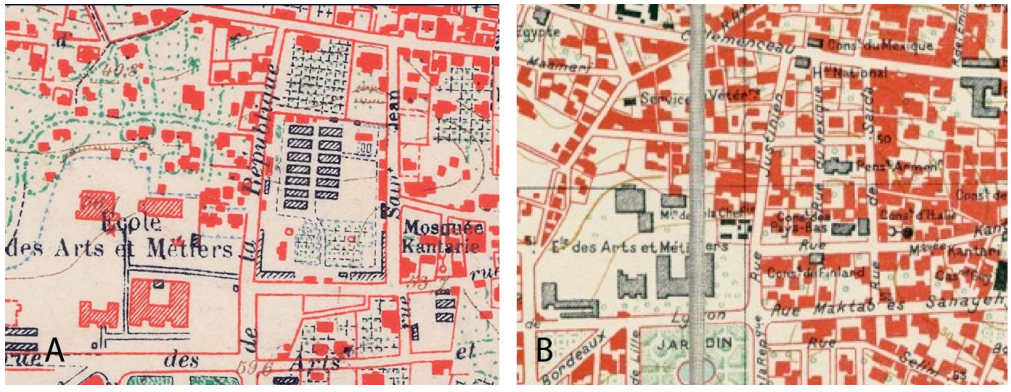


Figure 3: *Rue de la République* on the map of 1922, most of it renamed *rue Justinien* on the map of 1936. Source: The Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

## 5.2. The *Fille aînée de l'Église* in her "protection des chrétiens d'Orient"

"The protection of the *chrétiens d'Orient* is a French tradition", said the French Foreign Minister in 2015 (France ONU 2015). In 1919 Prime Minister Clemenceau, himself well-known in France for his pro-*laïcité* policies, promised an independent Lebanon to the Maronite patriarch Elias Hoyek (Rondot 1954: 83). It is what Henry Laurens calls the *filière catholique* of Lebanon (Laurens 1991: 25–26) and which is still expressed by an annual special mass for France, at the Maronite patriarchate and annually assisted by the French ambassador to Lebanon (Abou Dib 2007) In this regard keeping Louis IX and Joan of Arc on the map, both patron saints of France, can be read as a result of the *filière catholique*.

In 1943 different Lebanese parties concluded a gentlemen's agreement, the National Pact, in which the Lebanese political doctrine of neutrality (*Non à l'Orient, Non à l'Occident*) is declared: Christians give up the French Mandate, and Muslims an eventual union with Syria. This agreement gave the way to the Lebanese sovereignty. The "Orient" and "Occident" were understood as "Islam" and "Christendom", points out Georges Naccache, a prominent Lebanese writer and politician (Naccache 1949). As the National Pact is unwritten but has had written consequences (Messarra & Rifaat 2016), the "Orient" and "Occident" are also visible on the Beiruti map: saints, military leaders, and religious figures of the history of Christianity and of Islam are present in Beiruti toponymy. The French ones are thus no exception in this regard. Yet and apart from Middle Eastern saints and religious figures, the French ones are the most represented on the city map: it is the "Eldest Daughter of the Church" in her *mission protectrice* in the Levant (Commission de publication des documents diplomatiques français 1921: XLVIII, 260–261; Said 2003: 220). We can safely think that this *mission* is also written on the map of Beirut, being crucial to the foundation of Lebanon as well.

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### 5.3. Toponymy as a marker of continuity and implementation of ideology

Toponymic purge is a "ritual of revolution" (Azaryahu 1996: 317, later used by Njoh 2016). By the same token it can also be read as a marker of continuity: the body politic constructed by the French Mandatory Authorities in 1920 is still functional. Its founding text of 1926, the Lebanese Constitution, was not changed after the independence in 1943 and is still in force today. The case of the "special relations" between the coloniser and the colonised (Kazan 2002) is different from those in the two surrounding countries: Syria has known numerous toponymic purges and the re-writing of its maps (Keilo 2015: 35–36). Israel has applied a strict toponymic purge since 1949 (Azaryahu 1992: 363–364; Azaryahu & Golan 2001: 192–193). The two neighbours of Lebanon did not hesitate to profoundly reshape their maps and change toponymy to fit it to their ideology. Lebanon, in leaving the map of its centre politic as is, follows the ideology of *Non à l'Orient, Non à l'Occident*.

In the Beiruti example the French mandatory Power has set not only toponymy, but also toponymic tradition. We intend to examine this fact in further studies.

### 5.4. Invention of tradition and toponymic tradition

Tradition, that handing down of customs and beliefs from generation to another, is a political construction (Arendt 2007: 17–25). We quote Hobsbawm & Ranger's book, *Invention of tradition*, as we find it perfect for the invention of toponymic tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992: 1):

> The term "invented tradition" is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both "traditions" actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity. […]
> "Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.

Commemorative toponymy fits into this invented tradition: we may call it toponymic tradition, that is, setting a tradition in commemorative toponymic practices. We will explore another example on the Beiruti map, the invention of the toponymic tradition of commemorating "national martyrs".

Before 1920 martyrdom was a religious notion in Beirut, for both Christians and Muslims, and especially for Christians whose patron saint in

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Beirut was and is George of Lydda (†303), himself a Roman officer and a Christian martyr.

In 1920 French mandatory authorities introduced the notion of national martyrs, people who had suffered for their homeland or their political beliefs. The notion was first applied to the Syro-Lebanese intellectuals executed by Ottoman authorities in 1915 and 1916 in Damascus and Beirut, for being accused of collaborating with the Allies. It is not clear how the notion was introduced into the politics in the French Levant, but the ideological setting found its way to the map very early, in both Beirut and Damascus. We find toponyms bearing their names since 1920, like *rue Rafik Rizk Salloum* and *rue Abdel-Wahab Inglizi*. We also find the important rue des Martyrs in the heart of the city. Later and in the 1936 map the main square of Beirut was renamed and still today bears the name of *place des Martyrs*, with a dozen of martyrs of 1915 and 1916 commemorated.

Later and after independence the Lebanese Republic added names of people considered national martyrs. The last commemoration of new martyrs is in the 2010s, when the names of Rafic Hariri, ex-Prime Minister and others of his political faction, assassinated in 2005 and 2006, were added to the map. The invented tradition by French mandatory authorities was appropriated by the Lebanese Republic and continues to shape the Beirut of the Lebanese Republic today.

The Syrian case is similar in keeping invented tradition of national martyrs introduced by the mandatory power: French toponymic inscriptions were wiped off the map after the independence, the martyrs of 1915 and 1916 are still celebrated and are still on the map in Damascus and elsewhere. After 1963 the Syrian State added the names of people considered martyrs by the Baath party and for the Syrian wars of 1967, 1973. In this "manipulated geography, apart from merely physical reality" (Said 2000: 180) not only the borders of Syria and Lebanon were decided by mandatory powers, but also aspects of their toponymic traditions, their dynamics, and "banal commemorations" (Azaryahu 2017: 310) today.

The Beiruti context can be generalised: study of toponymic purge or continuity can be extended to study toponymic tradition and where colonial and mandatory powers set such invented traditions, to be later integrated in national myths of post-colonial bodies politic.

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