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The Shadows of Beiteddin Palace: Politics of hospitality and struggles for sovereignty between presidential and regional powers in Lebanon

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Abstract

This article interrogates the notion that the state in Lebanon is a constantly weakened super structure whose political actions are hampered by a generalised sectarian system. Building on the recent literature that challenges the rhetoric of ‘the failed state’ in Lebanon, this article focuses on the notion of sovereignty and its symbolic expressions. Moving away from discussions of violence to analyze the relationship between the state and Lebanese regional powers, the article considers how hospitality plays a significant part in acting out different expressions of sovereignty. The author observes the competition between the Lebanese Head of State (President Emile Lahoud) and a regional Lord (Walid Jumblat) in their attempt to perform ‘being at home’ in the Lebanese Mountain. In this regard, the region of the Shuf becomes emblematic as a space that links sovereignty to hosting in a particular symbolic place: the Emirs’ Palace of Beiteddin. The author argues that by accepting multiple and sometimes conflicting sources of power, the Lebanese political system follows a model of ‘piling-up’ layers of sovereignty.

Key-words – Lebanon, anthropology of the state, Druzes, Lebanese political history, Jumblat, Beiteddin, hospitality as politics

On September 8, 2002, Malik came back home from his work at the petrol station for a lunch that his wife and her sister had prepared for the family. The old kettle was already on the stove for another round of *matte* (a herbal drink) to be consumed by the family guests sat on the balcony. Malik took a seat right next to mine and opened the day's issue of the Lebanese newspaper to show us the four-page article covering the wedding of President Lahoud's son. 'Look at the pictures,' he told me, 'do you see how Walid Beik is so nicely dressed up for the wedding in his neat suit and tie!' The picture showed the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) leader, and President Lahoud's fiercest opponent, standing next to his wife Nora and second son Aslan. 'And have you noticed? The evening banquet was served in Beiteddin,' he added, pointing his finger ahead towards the bottom of the slope, where Beiteddin castle stood, two miles from his house in Marj Baaqline. Malik hadn't finished his words when his wife Bassima continued with a cunning smile:

A neighbour told me a couple of days ago that someone from her husband's family had been visiting with her daughter, called Myrna. For the whole day, the visitor talked about her daughter, 'Myrna this, Myrna that.' Fed up, my neighbour's son interrupted with 'mir-na, mir-na, stop it would you! Here we go by 'beik-na, beik-na'.

The joke was followed by sheer laughter from those in attendance. My hosts knew that by now I could decipher the innuendos in the story. During the summer of 2002, I had been doing research on Walid Jumblat's leadership in the Shuf area, attending his traditional *diwan* every Saturday. My hosts and I frequently shared our understandings of communal politics. By pointing at the article in the newspaper, Malik was emphasising to me that 'big national politics' were one thing to understand, but that one could learn more by going beyond official and political statements. This was a time when the prominent Druze leader, who was also Prime Minister Hariri's strong ally, was supposedly at odds with President Lahoud. Nevertheless, he still attended Lahoud's son's wedding with his family, a wedding that was taking place in the disputed palace of Beiteddin. Walid 'Beik' was known for his casual attire, especially when he was 'at home' in his Shuf stronghold. On this occasion, however, he was 'all dressed up'. Bassima's joke played on how my hosts felt about Jumblat. Myrna which sounds like (*a*)*mir-na* (our Emir) referred to the factional divide within the Druze community between Talal Arslan who was referred to as 'Al-Amir', a political ally of Lahoud, and Walid Jumblat who was known as the 'Beik'. Her aim was to reaffirm that 'here', my hosts abided by the sovereignty of Jumblat, no matter how obviously President Lahoud tried to reclaim the sovereignty of the state. This he had been trying to accomplish by claiming Beiteddin as 'his own' in every possible way.

At some level, the story seems to raise the well-explored themes of Lebanese sectarianism and patronage that constantly challenge the authority of the state. Indeed, discussions of the state in Lebanon are often reduced to tensions between two major trends. On the one hand, the Lebanese express a strong aspiration for 'real' citizenship that guarantees 'the institution of a public individuality with democratic rights and liberties equal to that of any other member of the national community' (Beydoun, 2008: 15). On the other, they have to deal with the weight of communitarianism, which distinguishes between the Lebanese by subjecting them to different communal orders. According to Ahmad Beydoun, 'the state has de facto renounced its right to equip itself with non-community legislation similar to that it granted communities' and, since independence, it has 'behaved as if it had abdicated responsibility' (*ibid.*: 17). Critical scholarship on communitarianism as a generalized sectarian

system embodied in partisan societies and headed by individuals who are more or less heirs of established leadership (families and lineages in which power is passed down from father to son) has shed light on the obstacles that hamper state decisions constitutionally, legislatively and executively. In this trend, the state is described as perpetually unstable, one actor among others in a political game driven by the ceaseless reconstruction of alliances between partisan groups. This conception corresponds perfectly with Khaldunian theories of Arab states, as (always urbanized) spaces of conquest founded on personal connections. Moreover, as noted by George Corm, who has widely developed this pessimistic view of Arab states in general and the Lebanese state in particular, the etymology of the Arabic terms that designate the state is marked by the idea of instability: whether it is *dawla* which connotes a revolving situation and revolutions of power, *mulk*, the kingdom, or *jumhuriyya*, built on the idea of multitude, the notion of *res publica* has no real expression in the Arab world. This explains 'this feeling of the nation's fragility, its relativity' (Corm, 2001: 192-193; 136).

Academic discourse on the Lebanese state as a failed state has been challenged recently by various scholars who have interrogated the prevailing Weberian conception of the state, as monopole of legitimate violence and as an entity that opposes society. This recent analytical stance has resulted in numerous ethnographies of Lebanon that reconsider the theoretical problem of the state through grounded exploration of its multifaceted expressions, its local practices, and the way people ambivalently refer to its authority (Obeid, 2010; Kosmatopoulos, 2011; Hermez, 2015; Mouawad & Bauman, 2017). This article aims to contribute to this renewed political anthropology through an exploration of sovereignty as a site of tension between different scales of power, between the sovereignty of regions and that of the state. Clifford Geertz once depicted Bali as 'a theater-state', pointing out the very ethos of an un-bureaucratic, not-control-oriented state (Geertz, 1980). I suggest that this approach can inspire new paradigms when it comes to analyzing the Lebanese state. A substantial part of Lebanese political life is theatrical (Jamous, 2004). These theatrics play out in the politics of place in which 'being at home' becomes a means to battle over sovereignty, be it over place, region or people who inhabit a space.

If there is one place in Lebanon where this complexity has been drawn out historically, it is Beiteddin Palace. The remarkable group of palace buildings erected at the instigation of Emir Bashir Shihab II between the late 18th and the early 19th century marks both the peak of the Emir Period, which had brought certain autonomy to the Lebanese Mountain under Ottoman administration, and the end of this period. The palace has never completely lost its regal aura as the historic seat of the Mountain's political power. Both Druze and Christian communities that inhabit the Shuf have ceaselessly claimed this symbol. At the end of the civil war (1975-1990), the palace became the object of a trial of strength between the regional power of Walid Jumlat, who had made it the seat of his administration between 1983 and 1990, and that of the president who demanded state authority be restored there, first in 1992ⁱ and second in 1999. Described below from a mostly Baaqlini Druze point of view, this conflict of governance and symbols expresses the desire for autonomy and self-sovereignty just as much as it recognizes the need for the state (even if the state is conceived as 'Maronite'ⁱⁱ) without which relative autonomy would become meaningless.

In the following, I challenge the idea of 'sovereignty' as a monolithic concept that is closely linked to a Weberian model of the state. I investigate how the Lebanese contribute to the reproduction of contradictory sovereignties and argue that by accepting and contesting diverse sources of sovereignty at the same time, they 'pile up' different layers of political legitimacy. Scholarship on Lebanon has generally focused on the pervasive violence that

structures both patron-client and state-local power relations (Gilsenan, 1992, 1996). What I call the politics of hospitality, however, has scarcely been considered as a significant arena to deal with sovereignty issues. Hospitality, whether offered or granted, is a crucial aspect of everyday life in the Levant and visiting is a highly scrutinized activity that reveals the ever-shifting balance of power between members of a family, neighbours, houses, and between political leaders and their followers. Hospitality certainly shapes the valence of social and political encounters in Lebanon, particularly when it comes to challenging one's access to a spatial arena, for hospitality is set up around an implicit relation: the benevolence of a host and the deference of the hosted (Kanafani, 2017).

After setting up the historical background of the palace of Beiteddin and its symbolic value in the first part, I trace Walid Jumblat's endeavours to turn the Shuf into a mini-state (a process referred to as cantonization) with Beiteddin, the summer residence of Lebanon's presidents, as its capital. I will then move to the twenty years of dispute between the state and Jumblat, as the state, through the figure of the president, attempted to reinstate its sovereignty over the palace. My aim is to show how this everlasting trial of strength has played a lot more on the politics of hospitality than blunt opposition.

The Emirs' Capital: Power and Symbolic Continuity for the Lebanese State

The palace of Bashir II Shihab in Beiteddin nestles at the bottom of the Shuf valley, which forms a triangle with Baaqline and Dayr al-Qamar. Beiteddin has been known as the 'Emirs' Mountain' and the 'cradle of Lebanon', perhaps because modern Lebanon is considered to have been born in this region in 1590, with the appointment of Fakhr al-Din II al-Ma'ni as General Tax Collector (*Multazim*) in the Shuf and his promotion to the title of Emir *Liwa'* by the Ottoman authorities (Chevallier 1971: 10; Corm, 2003: 51-52; Makdissi, 2000: 37-38; Traboulsi, 2007: 6-8;). While Emirs tended to settle in Baaqline, Fakhr al-Din II decided to move because of the city's chronic lack of a water supply (Choueiri, 1999: 154) and settled instead on the opposite hillside, in Dayr al-Qamar. The palace of Emir Fakhr al-Din II remained the seat of Emirs' power for more than 150 years. However, in 1754, one of his successors, Emir Haydar Shihab, established a winter residence in Beirut where he finally settled. The holders of power in this region of the Empire soon developed the use of multiple residences, a practice that was revived in post-war Lebanon.

Before looking at the reign of the most imposing Lebanese Emir, Bashir II Shihab, we must introduce into this account the rise of the Jumblat lineage (first known as Janbulad) and point to another symbolic place in the political cartography of the Shuf, their residence at Mukhtara. Of Kurdish origin, Ali and Husayn Jumblat seized power in Aleppo in 1624 but were forced to flee the following year in the face of the Ottoman reprisals. They found refuge in the Mountain where they were protected by Emir Fakhr al-Din (Touma, 1986; Dib: 27). The Jumblats acquired the rank of Tax Collector (*Multazim*) after the battle of Ayn Dara in 1711.ⁱⁱⁱ The defection of many high-ranking families obliged the Emir to reorganize the feudal system (*muqata`ji*) and the Jumblats, who had pledged their allegiance to him, found themselves awarded the title of Shaykhs and were given control over part of the Shuf and nearby districts (Iqlim al-Tuffah, Iqlim al-Kharrub, Iqlim Jezzin and Jabal Rayhan). Their stronghold of Mukhtara, a small village nestled in the heart of the Shuf, continued to gain importance to such an extent that Bashir Jumblat became one of the main rivals of Bashir II Shihab who was appointed as Emir at the age of 21 in 1788.

Bashir II Shihab is the architect of Beiteddin Palace. A year before his appointment as Emir, he married lady Chams, his rich cousin whose fortune enabled him to envisage the building of a real palace complex. The site on which the palace would be erected was a hamlet of Druze peasants, surrounding the *khalwa*^{iv} of one Shaykh Ali Bteddini – in fact Beiteddin means ‘house of religion’. The construction began soon after the land was bought from one of the village shaykhs,^v and was completed in 1818 (Taqieddin *et al.*, 1999: 49). The deployment of Christian and Muslim craftsmen from Aleppo to work on the Emir’s castle led to the gradual withdrawal of the Druze inhabitants to Baaqline; Beiteddin eventually became a Christian village. It is in this period that conflict between Emir Bashir II Shihab and Shaykh Bashir Jumblat began to escalate in their attempt to gain the upper hand on the region. In 1824 the conflict resulted in the victory of the Emir over the Shaykh, who was imprisoned and killed. It should be noted that during these events the Jumblats’ residences at Mukhtara and Ba’daran were destroyed and their stones were taken to Beiteddin to build the palaces the Emir wished to erect for his three sons and second wife (Yahya, 2001).

The Emir’s later alliance with Mehemet Ali against the Porte led to his deposition in 1840. His family was exiled to Malta and the palace became an Ottoman possession. In 1842 the government of the southern part of the Mountain moved back to Dayr al-Qamar, after the adoption of the treaty of Metternich^{vi}, which introduced the system of *qa’imaqamiyya*.^{vii} By 1860, the newly introduced system of *mutasarrifiyya*^{viii} changed the geopolitical balances. It established the principle of parliamentary representation under the authority of a governor from outside the province. From then on Beirut was separated from the Mountain – the autonomy of which was thus guaranteed – and directly joined to the Porte. This introduced an administrative rivalry. The first *mutasarrif* appointed to lead the Mountain decided that Dayr al-Qamar did not have the capacity to host the Mountain’s governorate and started to move into the seraglio of Baabda which was closer to Beirut. He decided however to keep Beiteddin Palace as his summer residence.

The Palace would regain its significance under successive rules. When the French took control of Lebanon, they installed the provincial government of the Shuf in its first ‘capital’ Baaqline. They set up office in a seraglio built in 1897 as a prison, courthouse and police station. In 1934, the mandatory authorities moved from the seraglio leaving Baaqline altogether for Beiteddin, where they would remain until the independence of Lebanon (Taqieddin *et al.*, 1999: 38). In 1943, the president of the young Lebanese Republic decided to revive *mutasarrif* customs by installing the presidential offices at Baabda, keeping Beiteddin Palace as the presidency’s summer residence. Symbolically, the ashes of Emir Bashir II were brought back in 1947 and reburied within the palace walls.

Peaceful and green as it might first appear to the traveller, the valley dividing the now Druze Baaqline and Maronite Dayr al-Qamar – where the Palace of Beiteddin was erected – has never ceased to be a hotspot for successive rulers in the Mountain. Both towns have boasted the aura of Emirs and claimed the title of ‘historical cradle’ of the Lebanese state. However, the struggle over sovereignty between the Emirate and the modern Lebanese state is still engraved in Beiteddin.

On National and Regional Statuses: Heritage as a Site of Rivalry

The above brief historical outline is necessary to gauge the symbolic significance of this site, which has been a bone of contention since the declaration of Lebanese Independence in 1943. Interpretations of this history are of course conflicting. Christian historians, above all Maronites, see in Bashir II Shihab the champion of Fakhr al-Din's legacy as the builder of modern Lebanon and the man who gave it its economic roots by developing the silk industry in the mountains and making foreign trade easier via the port of Beirut. The Druzes, by contrast, believe he destroyed the idea of Lebanon as embodied by Emir Fakhr al-Din II. Indeed, Kamal Jumblat, the Druze ruler of Mukhtara, founder of the Progressive Socialist Party in 1947 and almost uninterruptedly member of the Lebanese Parliament and occasional Minister, continuously combated the 'Christian' view of this history, arguing that Mount Lebanon's 'real traditions' identified with Fakhr al-Din's Arabism as opposed to the Beirut orientated commercial wheeling and dealing favoured by Bashir II Shihab. In his first speech in front of the Lebanese Parliament on 21 September 1943, he drew a parallel between the Lebanon of Fakhr al-Din and the newly independent Lebanon (Timoveev: 63). According to Kamal Jumblat, it was the era of the Druze Emir that gave birth to the 'real' idea of Lebanon, now endangered by a sectarian conception of the homeland. For the Druzes, it was Emir Bashir who was responsible for the sectarian turning point in Lebanese history (Hazran, 2009). Kamal Jumblat regularly developed this theme laying the foundations of nostalgia for the Ma`nid Emirate and 'Lebanese unity' (*al-wahda al-lubnaniyya al-'asila*) (Schenk, 2001), which the Druzes would later express.

In order to unite Druzes and Christians around the memory of Fakhr al-Din, the Lebanese state began to build two statues of the Emir in 1972, one in Baaqline to be embedded in the courtyard of the old seraglio, the other in Dayr al-Qamar. When President Suleyman Franjeh went to inaugurate them in 1975, Kamal Jumblat ostensibly boycotted the ceremony claiming that the times were no longer anything like the spirit of Fakhr al-Din's Emirate. In that same year Kamal Jumblat gave the name of 'Fakhr al-Din's army' to the Druze fighters who had formed a militia in the Shuf at the beginning of the civil war (1975-1990). In 1986, Walid Jumblat, Kamal's son and successor, had this statue taken down as it 'represented the Christian falsification of Fakhr al-Din's historic legacy'.^x For the Druzes, only the portrait of the Emir hanging in Mukhtara Palace represented the genuine memory of the Ma`nid Emirs (Hazran, 2009), of which the Jumblats claim to be guardians.

After the death of Kamal Jumblat who became a martyr himself following his assassination on the road to Baaqline in 1977, his son Walid entirely took over his father's policies entirely. In 1983, the violent episode known as the War of the Mountain, between Christian Lebanese Forces militias and Druze Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) fighters, led to the exile of the great majority of Shuf Christians.^x However Jumblat had taken care to ensure the protection of the city of Dayr al-Qamar, the stronghold of his father's sworn enemy, President Camille Chamoun (1952-1958), as well as that of the bishop's palace situated behind Emir Amin's palace, the summer residence of the Archbishop of Saida. It was a strong message: the Shuf could not exist without its Christian element. It was in the courtyard of Beiteddin Palace, draped in the red of PSP flags and swarming with its militiamen, that Walid Jumblat chose to give his victory speech in 1983. In it, he evoked the memory of Bashir Jumblat, finally taking 'just revenge' on 'the usurper and murderer of Bashir Shihab', promising to restore the

meaning of history in the region and to accomplish once more the 'idea of Lebanon' (*al-fikra al-lubnaniyya*) dear to his father (de Clerck, 2015: 634). All the inscriptions of Bashir II Shihab were taken down, destroyed and replaced by poems dedicated to Bashir Jumblat. The following year, on 2 September 1984, the 'victory of Bashir Jumblat' was commemorated by the inauguration of the martyrs' 'eternal flame,' set in a vast monument in the centre of the esplanade (ibid). The palace's historical orientation had changed.

After his victory, Walid Jumblat became the sole power in this region, albeit a warlord who had to deal with the shortages generated by the Christian exodus. Relying on his partisan apparatus based on the PSP structure – and on its federation of popular committees, the National Union for the Development of the Shuf (*al-tajamu' al-watani al-'inma'i fi al-Shuf*), formed at the beginning of the war – he decreed the creation of an administrative body entitled the Civil Administration of the Mountain (CAM) (*al-'idara al-madaniyya fi al-jabal*) on 1st October 1983 (Rivoal, 2001). However, to guarantee the legality of this creation, he called on the *qa'imaqam* to exercise his powers to enforce the decrees enacted by the new regional authorities (Ghoussayni, 1988: 93). The Civil Administration of the Mountain was established in Beiteddin, where its presence made possible the legal continuity of the decisions taken during this period and up until the Ta'if Agreement, which put an end to the civil war in 1990. The regionalization of state services was complete in June 1986 when a tax office was set up, as well as a public prosecutor's office with the appointment of three judges responsible for resolving conflicts.^{xi}

In parallel to this sovereign ascendancy over the Shuf and Iqlim districts which were controlled by his militia, Walid Jumblat embarked upon an ambitious heritage and cultural programme, the implementation of which was entrusted to the CAM's Culture and Public Works Committee. One of the most important in terms of its shares of subsidies, this committee undertook the restoration of Fakhr al-Din mosque and the silk seraglio of Dayr al-Qamar – located below the barracks of Fakhr al-Din's palace.^{xii} In Baaqline, Jumblat had the old seraglio renovated and turned it into a 'national library' which he endowed with books and an operating budget. The library was inaugurated on 13 March 1987, the day of the 10th commemoration of Kamal Jumblat's assassination. At the same time, he launched a publishing company, *Dar al-Taqadumiyya*, in charge of producing new school history textbooks. Later, by making an archive centre available in Mukhtara, he would encourage research on the history of the Mountain in the 18th and 19th centuries. He would also begin the construction of a museum at Baalbak (Harik, 1994).

Unsurprisingly, special attention was paid to Beiteddin Palace which had last been renovated in 1934, when the French had left Baaqline. The Palace was partially damaged during the civil war. Walid Jumblat began to restore the palace's lustre, while moving into it elements of cultural heritage taken from elsewhere. In particular, he had an impressive collection of 6th century Byzantine mosaics (from the ancient city of Porphyriion) transported from the southern Lebanese city of Jiyye on the grounds of ensuring their preservation. In addition to this, Jumblat aimed to turn Beiteddin into a political symbol and to bear the mark of its new administration. To do this, he first changed its name to 'the People's Palace' in accordance with the socialist line instituted by his father. A museum in memory of Kamal Jumblat was created in the rooms at the entrance to the palace and a statue of the latter erected in the middle of the central courtyard next to the martyrs' flame. Finally, in 1984, playing to

perfection his role of patron of cultural heritage and the arts, Walid Jumblat undertook the organization of an annual summer festival, modelled on the festival of Baalbak, in the palace. This project was put under the patronage of his wife Nora Jumblat.

The years of the Civil Administration of the Mountain, which saw the rise of a regional government under the control of Walid Jumblat's PSP, can be interpreted as a period of general mistrust toward the idea of the Lebanese state, a 'weak' state that found itself deprived of sovereign and legislative prerogatives in several parts of its territory. The Civil Administration stood for seven years as the closest structure to an efficient state administration, one that people never cease to desire. Yet, careful attention to the Druze discourse on the history of the Mountain and the Lebanese nation complicates this perspective. It was perhaps less a question of mistrusting the idea of the state than an act of defiance of – if not affront on – its highest public office held by a Maronite that led to Jumblat's creation of a state within a state (see also de Clerck, 2015). The fierce opposition of Kamal Jumblat to the Head of State was never as obvious as that towards President Camille Chamoun, whose family originated from Dayr al-Qamar. The tensions between the two leaders in the Shuf contributed to a brief outbreak of the civil war in 1958 which resulted in the elections of a new president, Fouad Chehab (Timofeev, 2000; Sorby, 2000).

Almost two decades after this episode, the War of the Mountain in 1983 once again set the Christians against the Druzes. The fierce battle resulted in the exodus of thousands of Christians. In the aftermath of these events, it seemed important to the victorious Walid Jumblat that the state remained a symbolic authority in the region: the Druze leader was eager to play its subsidiary incarnation. I underlined earlier how he managed to do this by consolidating himself as the preserver and protector of cultural heritage. He not only painstakingly renovated the emblematic sites of regional history (including his own palace at Mukhtara), he also stood as the protector the national treasury by removing the mosaics of Jiyye to prevent war damage, and keeping in the safety of Beiteddin the National Archives of the National Museum of Beirut which the Director of the Department of Antiquities had handed to him in 1976 (and which Jumblat had later taken to Mukhtara).^{xiii} In addition to this, Jumblat took great care to ensure both the symbolic and legal continuity of the state. All the decisions enforced during these years were legally certified by the qa'imaqam who was representing the official authority of the Lebanese state at Beiteddin. At once a militia chief of a regional community and guardian of the Lebanese state in the region, Walid Jumblat symbolically separated the exercise of these two duties between Mukhtara and Beiteddin respectively. With the legal enforcement of the qa'imaqam, the administrative offices of the Head of State were established in Beiteddin. With its magnificent courtyard, the Palace was stamped with the ascendancy of the 'sons of the Mountain' represented by the martyr Kamal Jumblat.

Following the Ta'if Agreement in 1990, an end was put to the legality of the Civil Administration of the Mountain. The services of the Lebanese state gradually moved back into the Beiteddin administrative centre. Legal and administrative continuity had indeed been ensured. However, the palace, which was open to tourists and generated entrance fees, remained under Walid Jumblat's control. When it was a question of restoring state authority over this monument, it proved to be a tricky business. For Jumblat, it was not so much the state as a legal and administrative entity which needed to be re-established, but a state that

could embrace regional power. On this point, Bashir Jumblat's heir intended to assert his prerogatives.

The Palace's (Temporary) Return to the State: the First Trial of Strength

While the legal continuity of state services was smoothly re-instated in the administrative buildings of Beiteddin, the Palace and its symbolic aura were soon turned into a battleground for legal ownership and sovereignty claims. It all began in January 1992 when Ziad Shihab, Emir Bashir II Shihab's heir, requested the reopening of the legal proceedings instituted by his family against the Lebanese state in the 1970s in order to recover part of this cultural heritage to which the family considered itself heir. At the time, the court action concerned the harem quarters (*dar al-harim*) built for Chams, Emir Bashir's wife, which they considered was theirs by right. The case had been won on its first hearing before losing on appeal when the Lebanese state argued that Chams handed over the palace to the Ottoman government to which the Lebanese state was sole heir.^{xiv} This step by the direct descendant of the Shihabs was directed just as much at the Lebanese state as its *de facto* occupant, Walid Jumblat, forcing the government to reassert its full authority over the palace. But Walid Jumblat, to whom the Palace was a 'red line', refused to remove himself from the Beiteddin conundrum, not least after he had invested his efforts and money in becoming the 'true enlightened sponsor' of the Palace's rejuvenation.

This politically charged affair happened at a time when discussions began taking place around setting up a policy for internally displaced persons, including the return of displaced Christians to the Shuf. No public action had been taken until June 1992 when a national conference on displaced persons was held in the Shuf. Between 19 and 28 June, representatives of the recently formed government of Prime Minister Rachid Solh, political leaders, warlords and religious and academic authorities attempted to outline the bases of a return plan. Upon the recommendations of the national conference, a specific ministry supported by a well-endowed central fund for displaced persons was created on 7 July (Kanafani-Zahar, 2000). The trial of strength between Jumblat and 'the state' would unfold with two controversial issues. The first was the naming of Elias Hobeika – former leader of the Lebanese Forces who joined the pro-Syrian camp after the war and admitted responsibility for an assassination attempt against Walid Jumblat^{xv} – as Minister of State responsible for Displaced Persons. The second was the demonstration of state power through the deployment of the army. On 26 July 1992, at 4 o'clock in the morning, at the express request of President Elias Hraoui, the Lebanese army surrounded Beiteddin Palace, Emir Amin's palace and the National Library of Baaqline to show the authority of the state was back in the Shuf. Walid Jumblat's reaction was immediate: he mobilized his supporters around the Martyrs' Statue at the roundabout between Baaqline and Beiteddin (*Al-Duwwar*), blocking the road and braving the army roadblocks encircling the palace.^{xvi} There were skirmishes for several days and Jumblat protested. 'The government says it wants to [...] recover the state's possessions? As if I had stolen them!'^{xvii} At the same time, Walid Jumblat stated that he was willing to hand over Beiteddin Palace to the state,

... provided it remained a 'people's palace'. [For we must see] the other aspect of things, that is to say a presidential palace turned into a cultural palace which now has political symbolism. Beiteddin is no longer the palace of the Shihabs and the French High Commissioner. Today it represents the other facet of the Mountain, the part

excluded by political Maronitism and Bashir II. That is why there is the statue of Kamal Jumblat, the martyrs' flame, museums and rooms named after Adil Arslan, Rachid Karame, Halim Takiuddin, men with an Arab dimension.^{xviii} That is the real issue (...) Either the Lebanese state is ready to accept the new status of this cultural and political palace or we shall return to the mandate of the Lebanese state, which amounts to saying yes to the Franco-Maronite mandate and that of the mutasarrifiyya.^{xix}

Jumblat contested what he read as petty government tactics that aimed to prevent him from his entitled authority over the Mountain; depriving him of the Displaced file to the benefit of Hobeika was particularly provocative. In his statement, he revived his father's stance against the alleged Maronite bias of the Lebanese state. But this time round, he conveyed this message through using the Palace's status as the cultural and political symbol of the Arab ethos of Lebanon.

On 28 July, the Ministry of Tourism announced that it was preparing to reclaim the palace and to take charge of managing the site without making public the conditions laid down by the Druze leader.^{xx} The trial of strength became political with the resignation of Walid Jumblat and Marwan Hamade, his friend and faithful ally, from their ministerial posts as a sign of protest.^{xxi} The government then entered into negotiations with Jumblat and as a result passed on the 'Beiteddin file' from the Ministry of Tourism to the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education.

In the 1992 General Elections, when Rafiq Hariri became Prime Minister, Walid Jumblat was appointed as Minister of Displaced Persons. This put him in charge of the reconciliation project (mainly between Christians and Druze populations), an issue that once again altered the political balance. Although the state's ownership of Beiteddin Palace was clearly reasserted, in practice, the administration of the site was entrusted to a body sponsored by Walid Jumblat himself. As a result, the status quo would be prolonged for seven years.

As for the Baaqline seraglio, following the clashes of summer 1992, the Cabinet approved a decision by the Minister of Interior confirming its status as National Library. Walid Jumblat remained its director until the publication of a Cabinet resolution on 9 October 1996 that made it a governmental institution belonging to the Ministry of Culture, to which Walid Jumblat handed over the collections deposited in the Library. The resolution came into force in 1997. Yet, Jumblat's symbolic power continued through material signs and practices: there was never a question of removing the statue of Kamal Jumblat, which still decorated the entrance hall of the building. PSP flags still flew in the central courtyard of Beiteddin Palace and the PSP continued to hold its public political meetings there. These symbols attested to Jumblat's unquestionable claim on the place. The status quo regarding the control of the Palace symbolically anchored Jumblat's legitimacy both in Mukhtara and Beiteddin. Along his new position as Minister of Displaced Persons, it confirmed openly the sovereignty of the Druze leader over the Shuf.

Beiteddin as a Presidential Summer Residence (Once Again): the Second Trial of Strength

With the election to the presidency of General Emile Lahoud in 1998, the political balance changed for Walid Jumblat after years of good relations, if not alliance, with Rafiq Hariri.

Jumblat bore hostility towards Lahoud who was General of the Army when the Lebanese military entered Beiteddin in the summer of 1992. Although the occupation and actual management of the palace was politically settled, the tensions between Jumblat and the army continued. They crystallized in May 1993 when a rumour spread in the Shuf that Shaykh Abu Hasan Arif al-Halawi, the highest Druze spiritual dignitary, was humiliated by soldiers. The Druzes once again mobilized and gathered at roadblocks and roundabouts in anti-army protests. It took some time for the rumour to prove false and for the unrest to die down. Emile Lahoud believed this episode was orchestrated in order to discredit the army and hinder the restitution of the state (de Clerck, 2015: chap. 5). To avoid more clashes, the army would not be redeployed in the Shuf until 1994 when the return of displaced Christians required the presence of security forces. The Lebanese state's lack of full and real sovereignty over Beiteddin Palace, which had remained under the authority of a regional power since the end of the civil war, became a personal matter for the new president. On 4 December, barely 10 days after his investiture, president Lahoud had a government decree^{xxii} published, based on the 7 November 1933 law on remains, that stipulated the need to re-establish state control over the Palace. The Minister of Culture, Yusuf Beydun, accordingly met with Walid Jumblat who stated he was ready to give up the palace to the state, provided the premises remained a cultural centre and did not once again become the presidency's summer residence^{xxiii}: Jumblat was afraid Beiteddin Festival would cease to exist.

It was Nora Jumblat, patron of the annual Beiteddin Festival, who publicly announced that Walid Jumblat was ready to return Beiteddin Palace, as well as all the other Shuf palaces and museums to the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education. In January, a delegation from the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage went to the Shuf to make an inventory of the objects and possessions in these buildings, with a view to returning them to the state.^{xxiv} There they were received by lady Nora. For his part, Walid Jumblat, 'acting the grand gentleman,' repeated with reference to the events of 1992 '[that he had] proposed that [President] Elias Hraoui take back Beiteddin Palace provided it remained the people's palace, but [that the latter had] not taken it back'. A couple of days later, he became particularly irritated when 'restitution' was mentioned in a newspaper as he 'had never helped himself to this site and that it was only a matter of legalizing the situation'. He even invited journalists who brought this issue up to visit the Palace in order to measure the efforts he had made to restore and preserve it.^{xxv} On 22 February, the ministry officially took possession of the palace keys while police patrolled the Shuf to prevent any unrest. A few weeks later, in May, the ministry reclaimed the National Archives which Walid Jumblat had kept in Mukhtara since the war.

The return of Beiteddin Palace to the authority of the state was first marked by the raising of the national colours and the removal of any reference to the PSP in and around the castle. The statue of Kamal Jumblat that stood in the centre of the courtyard was initially moved into the museum's wing. It stayed there until June, when Emile Lahoud finally decided that the palace was indeed going to be used once more as the president's summer residence. On 30 June, the Department of Antiquities was tasked with the responsibility of transporting this statue to Mukhtara Palace. The museum dedicated to Kamal Jumblat with its 'Arabist and popular' view of the nation's history remained in place until 2004, when it was moved to Mukhtara, putting an end to two decades of symbolic occupation of Beiteddin by the 'lords' of Mukhtara. Every summer, from 1999 to 2005, President Emile Lahoud would stage his return to the

Mountain in June-July while the Beiteddin Festival was taking place beneath the windows of the presidential offices, in the northern wing of the entrance courtyard.^{xxvi} This was the last compromise possible between the presidency and Jumblat enabling each party to occupy the palace concomitantly and to make of it a place where both parties could 'play' at receiving all the Lebanese.

The State as a (Non)Monopoly of Legitimate Hospitality

The engagement with the return of state authority in the Shuf has largely been shaped by Druzes' understanding and symbolisms of their history in the region. To them, the state is the product of the dual idea that the origin of statehood lies in the heart of their region and community, in Fakhr al-Din's Emirate, and that it was corrupted by the Christian merchants favoured by Emir Bashir II Shihab. This view of history causes ambivalence between the desire to gain state sovereignty within the regional space of the Shuf and the recognition of the need for a Lebanese national state, without which the very identity of the 'Mountain' would no longer have any reason to exist. The contestations discussed above have never been a matter of overthrowing the state, for, as we have seen, actors always take care to ensure its legal continuity. What is at stake is influencing *the definition of what the state should be and should stand for*, if necessary through a trial of strength. Put differently, Jumblat and his followers felt entitled to *a share* of sovereignty. In everyday politics, this often takes the shape of small challenges that keep the tension going. The Lebanese often use the term *shighel bikayid* (from *kaydiyya*), which denotes acts that deliberately, sometimes malevolently provoke, in order to describe those actions that challenge one's political adversaries or authorities and to shift boundaries. It often takes the form of stepping into someone else's space (or 'home') and challenging their hospitality.

In this sense, the classic Weberian conception of the state as a monopoly of legitimate violence does not make it possible to account for the reality of the Lebanese state, which, as this material demonstrates, often fails to impose this monopoly. The case I discuss gives us new perspectives on understanding the Lebanese state. I suggest it would be more heuristic to think along the lines of a monopoly of legitimate hospitality rather than force. This allows us to explain in more subtle ways the issues underlying many micro-conflicts between the policies embodying state sovereignty and those embodying local sovereignty.^{xxvii} To understand the conflict surrounding Beiteddin, we can ask some questions that point us towards the complexity of sovereignty: 'who is receiving', 'who is at home', and 'who is visiting'? Who is it that owns the palace? Emir Bashir's heirs? The Lebanese state as guardian of sovereignty inherited from the Ottoman Empire? Or is it the Druzes through Jumblat as the proclaimed heir of the Emirate of the Mountain and thus the regional authority? Do the stones of Mukhtara Palace embedded in the edifice of the palace grant Jumblat a claim? More importantly, who is at home in this region?

In another piece, I discuss the performative and relational constructions of Walid Jumblat's 'being at home' in the Mountain. This can be seen in the relaxed air of the leader walking around Dayr al-Qamar (the Christian town and home to his father's political rival Chamoun) with his jacket over his shoulder, driving his vehicle without bodyguards to insinuate that there is no risk. It is seen through his gifts of cement he bestows on his supporters as a gesture to finance their lineage houses (*bayt a'ila*). It is also seen through 'greeting' Shiite refugees in

the summer of 2006, during the Israeli war on Lebanon, with banners hung at all the entrances to the Shuf proclaiming 'Kamal Jumblat welcomes you' (Rivoal, 2014). It was precisely over performing 'being at home' that the second trial of strength with the Lebanese state developed. By deciding to revive the custom of the presidency's summer residence at Beiteddin, Emile Lahoud used the *shighel bikayid* to pose as the 'real' host in the Shuf. It is perhaps why Walid Jumblat denounced the president's decision to hang celebratory banners along the roads from Baabda to Beiteddin that praised the president's presence and the return of the Lebanese state to the Mountain. Like Jumblat, Lahoud performed 'being at home' in these places. The words of the journalist from *L'Orient-Le Jour* echo what I heard so many times from my interlocutors who praised Walid Jumblat for acting like a perfect gentleman by not threatening Lahoud in the Shuf.

With the utmost simplicity, [President Emile Lahoud] settled in Beiteddin, in the historic heart of Lebanon, in a region whose legality was for a long time absent. Without any fuss, and above all without any ostentatious security measures, the president (...) took up his summer quarters (...) and quite naturally moved into the premises belonging to the presidency of the Republic in a region long considered Jumblats' stronghold.^{xxviii}

President Lahoud often travelled around the towns and villages of the Shuf unescorted. Stories of these tours spread by word of mouth to such an extent that it was difficult to tell truth from legend. He was said to have been seen dining with two or three people in restaurants in Deir al-Qamar or Nabeh el-Safa. In Baaqline, a young man told a journalist how the Head of State turned up unexpectedly at the national club to swim a few lengths in the pool: 'He mixed with the clubs' regulars, said the young man, and refused to have the premises evacuated'.^{xxix} Lahoud did not want to be just 'president in his palace'. The real challenge was to move into the palace and to be 'at home' in the Shuf, without any escort or pomp. More importantly, he desired to be the absolute power in the region when he dwelled in Beiteddin as president, to receive Lebanese and international personalities without them feeling they were obliged to pay tribute to Jumblat in Mukhtara.

Despite Lahoud's attempt to be at home throughout Lebanon as Head of State, Lebanon remains a place of various 'homes' and not the unique 'home' of a president standing for every Lebanese. This also means that it is necessary to create a space for the state in the spaces otherwise polarized by regional political leaders. This place is proof of belonging to a larger whole, that of Lebanon, and to 'the idea of Lebanon,' an idea expressed by different groups of Lebanese in their own ways. Nonetheless, in order to claim a space, the state and those who represent it cannot completely overthrow local hierarchies. I suggest that by guaranteeing the continuity of Beiteddin Festival under the patronage of Nora Jumblat during his annual stay, President Lahoud provided proof of the complementarity of the two political legitimacies – his and Jumblat's – instead of directly challenging Walid Jumblat's authority by moving the event or by demanding it be placed under state patronage. One should note that the reconciliation process and the return of Christians to the Mountain were still in progress: the presence of a Maronite president at Beiteddin signaled to Christians that it was safe to return.

The intellectual rhetoric of 'the degeneration of Lebanon', to use the title of an essay by Ahmad Beydoun, can lead the observer to see the rivalry between sovereignties as an obvious

expression of the weakness of the state. But is sovereignty necessarily a matter of all or nothing? I argue that we need to go beyond the opposition between a quasi-utopia of a state composed of citizens and built on a legality which is the same for all, and the reality of a legal space controlled by discriminatory communities that keep imposing themselves on individuals. Instead, scholars need to observe and understand how the Lebanese often 'pile up' layers of sovereignty without necessarily opposing them. Rather, they make their way from one level to another, from one body to another, according to each situation of daily life. Suad Joseph's proposal to go beyond the dual private space/public space and kinship/state opposition and to consider the governmental/non-governmental/domestic triptych does indeed open up a theoretical space for taking into account all political expressions of 'home affairs' (Joseph, 1997). From this point of view, the state, kinship and community can also be thought of in relation to each other, each sphere defining an aspect of the expression of the 'Lebanese people's' sovereignty. My hosts appreciated the complexities and tensions between legitimate sovereignties and the labour needed to constantly balance them. Malik acknowledged the skillful politics of Walid Jumblat who recognized the authority of his opponent, the president, and engaged in the theatrics of the contested Palace of Beiteddin. But no sooner did Bassima rebalance this position with her witty joke that sought to reaffirm the loyalty of her family to Walid Jumblat, the regional Lord.

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ⁱ This was in the context of the first restitution of state possessions throughout Lebanon.

ⁱⁱ This is because the Lebanese Constitution stipulates that the President should be Maronite, the Prime Minister Sunni and the Head of the Parliament Shi'i. Druze can only hope for a Ministry.

ⁱⁱⁱ The battle was between two factions: the Qaysi faction led by Emir Haydar defeated the Yamani faction headed by Alam al-Din. The Jumblats were prominent supporters of Emir Haydar and, as a result, were elevated to the rank of Beiks.

^{iv} A *khalwa* is both a hermitage and a private room in which Druze religious shaykhs gather their congregations for prayer.

^v Abu Jamal al-Din Najm ibn al shaykh Hassan (Taqieddin *et al.*, 1999: 49).

^{vi} This treaty established a political partition of the Lebanese mountains between the north under Christian administration headed by Emir Haidar Abillama and the south under Druze government with Emir Ahmad Arslan. The route linking Beirut to Damascus formed the boundary between the two regions. This political partition would not withstand the pressure exerted by the Christians in the south to be dependent on the northern *qa'imaqamiyya* administration, a position supported by the French against the English. In 1845, the Shuf Christians showed their hostility by marching on Mukhtara and setting fire to several villages along the way.

^{vii} The ruling system called *qa'imaqamiyya* was set in 1841 by the Ottomans after the violent conflicts between the declining Druze feudal order and the expanding Christian Maronites in the southern part of the Lebanese Mountain. The Ottomans attempted to create peace by dividing Mount Lebanon into a Christian district and a Druze district, ruled by two *qa'imaqams*. The attempt at separating communities rapidly failed, fueling the anger of both populations and paving the way for the infamous sectarian massacres of 1860.

^{viii} The *mutasarrifiyya* was established after the sectarian warfare of 1860 and the obvious failure of the political division between distinctive communal sovereignties. The Mountain was united and granted autonomy from the Ottoman administration. A regional parliament based on a balanced sectarian representation was nominated and installed in Dayr al-Qamar, while the *mutasarrif*, a statutory non-Arab Christian, was to be appointed by the Sublime Porte. The *mutasarrifiyya* lasted until the Mandate.

^{ix} Personal interview with the director of the Beiteddin Museum, 2002.

^x It is estimated that 240,000 Christians left the regions of the Shuf, the Upper Matn, Aley and Baabda due to the War of the Mountain (Dagher, 2000: 84).

^{xi} Cantonization, as a policy of states within a state, was not peculiar to the Druzes of Walid Jumblat. It merely mirrored a set up created by the Phalangists in the north during the civil war. See Harik (1994) and Rivoal (2001).

^{xii} Since 1993, this renovated seraglio has hosted the French Cultural Institute.

^{xiii} These archives concern the *qa'imaqamiyya* and the *mutasarrifiyya* period, *L'Orient-Le-Jour*, 25 June 1999.

^{xiv} *L'Orient-Le-Jour*, 1 February 1999.

^{xv} *L'Orient-Le-Jour*, 8 May 2105.

^{xvi} *Al-Nahar*, 27 July 1992.

^{xvii} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 1 February 1999.

^{xviii} Adil Arslan, a Lebanese Druze from the Jumblat opponent faction was a prominent Arab nationalist during the French Mandate. Rachid Karame, a Sunni leading figure and Prime Minister is remembered for his fierce opposition to Camille Chamoun during the 1958 civil war. Shaykh Halim Taqieddin was assassinated in his home in West Beirut on December 1st and is considered a Druze martyr of the War of the Mountain.

^{xix} *Ibid.*

^{xx} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 July 1992.

^{xxi} *Al-Nahar*, 31 July 1992.

^{xxii} Government decree n° 4, 4 December 1998.

^{xxiii} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 22 February 1999.

^{xxiv} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 12 January 1999.

^{xxv} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 13 January 1999.

^{xxvi} Nora Jumblat was given the assurance that the festival would continue in May 1999.

^{xxvii} On the politics of hospitality, see the illuminating analysis on the relationship between the King of Jordan and the tribes developed by Christine Jungen (Jungen, 2009).

^{xxviii} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 12 June 1999.

^{xxix} *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 12 June 1999.