CHAPTER 1

World War I: Famine, Memory, and a Shattered Social Order

The woes of World War I fell upon the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire like a nightmare. Communities, families, and even personal identities were transformed, sometimes beyond recognition. Neighbors and loved ones disappeared by the thousands in the famine or on distant battlefronts. Deprivation among survivors snapped the sinews of power and trust that had once bound family members and communities together. As suffering struck the population unevenly, it cut wide cleavages between rich and poor, Muslim and Christian. The general struggle for food fueled a mad and cut-throat competition between citizen and state, peasant and landlord, consumer and merchant, even parent and child. Gender norms of honor and protection between men and women were also violated. Memories of this world seemingly turned upside down would haunt the postwar era. For many, it would take years to piece together their shattered lives. For all, the subversion of order and authority at home and in the community produced a pervasive crisis of paternity.

It all began with hunger, which crept stealthily upon the land through a series of misfortunes. Anis Furayha, a boy of 12 when the war began, saw a second disaster strike his Mount Lebanon village after the poor harvest of 1915:

> Swarms of locusts attacked us. When people say that the swarms blocked out the sun they speak truly, with no exaggeration. At ten in the morning the locusts flew and covered the sun. And when the swarms descended upon the fields, they stripped them of everything green. Oh Lord, both famine and locusts? The people fell silent and prayed.[1]

In the following winter of 1915–16, a heavy snow blocked travel to Mount Lebanon. To survive, Furayha made contact with Druze smugglers from the grain-growing region of Hawran, in southern Syria. But it took them 12 days

to reach his home of Ras Metn; wheeled vehicles had been requisitioned by the army, as had the train. Few people had the seed or strength to plant new crops that spring. In those harsh months of early 1916, an estimated 50–80,000 people died on Mount Lebanon.[2]

Beirut was hit next. In early 1915, everyone with financial means had hopped aboard the last Italian steamers before the port of Beirut was closed. The city's population fell from 180,000 to 75,000 by mid-1916. The horror that befell those who stayed behind was immeasurable. The 1916 harvest was no better than that of 1915 and supply lines to all of Lebanon were cut. Witnesses experienced famine's morbidity by the individual case, as did Halide Edib, the famous Turkish feminist who ran orphanages in Lebanon in 1916:

> The first time I heard the cry it echoed and echoed through my brain and heart. It was after a concert in the American College, where I had gone with some teachers, and I had given myself up to the bliss of music. I was driving home through the streets of Beirut back to Der-Nassira, when I heard it: "Dju-an" [I'm hungry]. It was a solitary cry piercing and insistent and cutting the air like a knife. I have heard that "Djuan" so often since.[3]

The American consul described Beirut's streets in July 1916 as "filled with starving women and children. . . . In my early evening walks I frequently see people lying dead in the gutter."[4] People suffered acute shortages not only of foodstuffs, but of imported manufactured goods and fuel: most spent the war in cold and darkness.[5]

Hunger and mortal disease, particularly typhus and malaria, reached far beyond worst-hit Lebanon and far beyond the 1918 armistice. By December 1916, reports reached Cairo that people in Syria's inland cities were dying by the thousands. A protestant pastor from Minneapolis who visited Syria that winter reported people dying in every street of Damascus. The police chief told him that he received 70 dead per day, while the mayor claimed that one-quarter of the city's population had disappeared since the start of the war.[6] "Starvation and famine [are] everywhere; the men either in military service or in hiding, and the women and children reduced to beggary," reported the American consul in Damascus in April 1917.[7] The cost of food rose so high that people routinely stole bread right out of the hands of customers leaving bakeries and ate orange peels from the street. Stories circulated of women and children going to the door of the city's most sacred Umayyad mosque to die. By October 1917, hunger had reached as far south as Jerusalem. The death toll

continued to climb in 1918 and the harvest of 1919 was again a poor one: Bread riots flared in Hama in March 1920, and as late as October 1920 many middle- and lower-class families in Aleppo were still going without an evening meal.[8]

Contemporary attempts to quantify the destruction of human life varied widely, from 150,000 to 300,000 dead in Lebanon alone and from 300,000 to 450,000 dead in both Syria and Lebanon. A Dr. Joseph Ziadeh claimed one-third of Mount Lebanon's population had disappeared from towns like Batrun, where only 2,000 residents remained from a prewar population of 50,000.[9] In 1938, George Antonius, the first historian of the Arab revolt and Arab nationalism, estimated that up to 350,000 had died of hunger and disease in Greater Syria (including Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan) by 1918.[10] A recent study drawing on German records supports the higher estimates of about 500,000 dead from hunger and disease.[11]

Antonius, like most Arabs of the time, blamed mainly the Ottomans, and also war profiteers who traded foodstuffs on the black market at high prices. They claimed that the Ottomans' monopoly on transport and rationing system deliberately funneled food to troops and starved the people. Rumors flew of troops hoarding grain from Mount Lebanon's Christian majority as retribution for their sympathies with France. Indeed, by late 1916, French soldiers stationed on the island of Arwad claimed that Jemal Pasha, commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army at Damascus, had met with German and Austrian officials the previous year when "the extermination of the Lebanese was decided."[12]

The Ottomans, denying any plan to starve the Lebanese, blamed the famine on the Entente's blockade. This position is supported by German archives, which document extensive Ottoman efforts to provide food to the Lebanese with emergency shipments, rationing, and soup kitchens. These same sources, according to Linda Schilcher, show that some Ottoman policies did aggravate the crisis, but mainly due to accident and ineptitude. Tight fiscal regulations, for example, reduced remittances from overseas relatives that Lebanese families desperately needed to pay rising food costs. And the use of devalued paper currency and forced grain seizures promoted peasant flight and black-marketeering. In effect, the government was simply too weak to control private speculators. As one Ottoman official noted in July 1918, "the economic struggle inside the country led by the rich against the poor was causing more casualties than the war itself."[13]

There is also evidence that the British and French knowingly used the famine as a weapon of war. The Entente's blockade shut down all ports, cutting off a primary supply route to Lebanon, which, with its dense population and mountains, depended heavily on imports of grain even in peacetime. According to

documents in the French archives, in May 1916 Maronite Archbishop Joseph Darien protested the use of famine for political ends, urging the French consul in Cairo to demand an immediate Entente invasion to save lives. Although the French had by then received reports of up to 80,000 deaths, Foreign Minister Aristide Briand spurned the consul's pleas to invade, arguing that it would only provoke a general massacre. The consul then urged that France break the blockade and ship food to Lebanon. A June 2 British memo to the foreign ministry, however, flatly rejected the proposal to feed starving civilians:

> His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs expresses his earnest hope that the French Government will not encourage any such scheme .... the Entente Allies are simply being blackmailed to remedy the shortage of supplies which it is the very intention of the blockade to produce.

The British "consider the famine as an agent that will lead the Arabs to revolt," noted a June 4 internal French foreign ministry memo. The writer dissented from this view, arguing that distributing food would win greater Arab sympathy for the Entente.[14]

The British view prevailed, and the blockade lasted until the end of the war. In August 1917, just when the Syrian interior was hit full force by famine, an Istanbul newspaper reported that a French patrol boat had attacked three Ottoman ships carrying grain to Beirut.[15] Meanwhile, the British recruited Arab tribes south of Lebanon to join Sharif Husayn's revolt against the Ottomans, offering them food as an enticement. The revolt further aggravated shortages in Lebanon and Syria by forcing the Ottomans to divert food to its defending army in the south.[16]

The famine, in all its misery, was not the sole cause of loss of life. The Ottoman military machine was brutal. By late 1916 the Ottomans were conscripting men aged 17 to 55, both Muslims and Christians (except those in Mount Lebanon), in an army that recruited 2.85 million troops. About three-fourths of all adult men were mobilized. Casualties neared one million. Figures on battlefield deaths vary between 325,000 and 600,000 men. In addition, about 240,000 soldiers died of disease, and 250,000 others were listed as missing or as enemy prisoners by war's end.[17] Suggesting how military conscription and suffering came to be linked in people's minds, the Ottoman term for conscription, seferberlik (safar barlik in Arabic), became synonymous with famine in local usage. Conditions were so bad that a total of 1.5 million troops deserted the Ottoman army. Arab desertions increased to 50 percent in 1916–17, when the Ottomans abolished draft-exemption fees and the Arab Revolt began.[18]

Military and civilian casualties among Syrians and Lebanese far exceeded European rates. Antonius estimated that 150,000 Arab soldiers from Greater Syria—about one in six adult males living in 1914—never returned from the battlefront:

> Taking into account losses due to military service, [Greater] Syria's contribution to the holocaust of the War must have been not far short of half a million lives out of a total population of considerably under four million—a higher percentage, probably, than that of any other belligerent.[19]

Antonius's estimate that 12.5 percent of the population disappeared in battle and famine may be in fact be low. The higher estimate of 500,000 famine-dead alone in addition to the 150,000 military dead, and the generally accepted prewar population of 3.5 million, would place the death rate closer to 18 percent, or nearly one in six people living in 1914. Both the low and high estimates compare morbidly to the countries considered hardest hit in World War I: France and Germany lost less than 5 percent of their prewar populations.[20]

Opportunities to rebel against such dire conditions were slim. First of all, there were few able-bodied men left in the region to organize a substantial revolt. Syrian and Lebanese soldiers were transferred from local bases to battlefronts in Europe, Iraq, and Suez purposely to forestall such an event. Second, Jemal Pasha imposed draconian martial law. Known as the "butcher" (al-saffah), Jemal Pasha was almost universally feared and hated by war's end. In 1915–16, 33 Syrian and Lebanese well-respected notables were executed for treasonous contacts with Entente powers concerning secession from the empire. To discourage future efforts, Jemal Pasha ordered their public hanging in the main squares of Beirut and Damascus. At the same time, he exiled more than 200 families from Beirut and Damascus to Anatolia, also on suspicion of collaboration with the French. Exile became a routine method of punishment for political opponents and army deserters alike.[21] Ahmad al-Jundi tells of how his father, a court employee in northern Syria, was banished to a small town in Anatolia in late 1916. The entire family made the trip by cart, carriage, and train in winter weather.[22] Arab nationalism gained ground as worsening war conditions withered loyalty to the Ottomans. By the last year of the war many Syrians engaged in smuggling and sabotage, in collaboration with the approaching army of Sharif Husayn, led by his son, Prince Faysal. Meanwhile, many Christian Lebanese began to proclaim their hopes for French occupation.

Collective Memory and the Political Repercussions of Trauma

The trauma of war and famine ran deep. While the personal experience of most Syrians and Lebanese remains shrouded, we can begin to understand how their suffering was reconstructed in collective memory through the stories preserved in diplomatic archives, newspapers and magazines, and personal interviews. These sources can provide some clues to prevailing mentalities, particularly in how memories differentiated the experiences of men and women, Muslim and Christian, and rich and poor.

On February 2, 1921, the Beirut daily *Lisan al-hal* printed on its front page a poem found in the diary of a dead soldier. Entitled "The Smile of Victory," the poem was dedicated to "the spirit of a mother who had died of hunger" during the Great War. The poet, Da'ud Musa, envisioned two women tending the bodies of men on a battlefield. One came to a wounded soldier and hugged him, saying, "This is my son." The other put a wreath of flowers on his head and said, "This is my beloved." The soldier cried out:

> Oh bride of life, rescue me! . . . O ye, who inspires love of the fatherland, end my pain! I am the only son of my mother, and I am far from her . . . I raced with the beginning of the storm to rescue her, but death came to me before I could reach her.

The poem ended with smiles of victory on faces of fallen sons of the fatherland. The soldier cried again: "Though I die, my country lives!"

Striking in the poem is the interrelationship of family, gender and patriotism. Martyrdom for the country was bound with sacrifice for the family. The soldier wished to save his mother, but he found in the death that prevented him from doing so a victory for his country. Both mother and son die for the fatherland; however, the poet charted differing paths to martyrdom for men and women. While men die fighting for their country, women achieve martyrdom indirectly, by way of their relationship to men, either by inspiring male patriotism and caring for their slain bodies, or by dying themselves because they have been deprived of male protection.

The poem also expressed men's sorrow and guilt for not protecting their women; the poet-soldier appears to seek forgiveness in confessing that he had tried to rescue his starving mother, but was overcome by death first. For decades after the war, stories circulated of abandoned families expiring silently in lonely villages and in the doorways of mosques and churches. Stories also

emphasized women's fear, not just of hunger, but of Ottoman soldiers. Most soldiers stationed in Syria and Lebanon were foreign Turks who routinely knocked on the doors of homes where women were left alone, demanding bread, supplies, and sometimes more. There were even stories of soldiers cutting off women's hands to steal jewelry.[23]

Male guilt was sometimes projected back onto female victims, in horror stories of what women supposedly did when left alone. They typically described girls who traded their virtue for food from soldiers and mothers driven mad by the loss of children and spouses. In October 1918 a theatrical troupe staged a play called "The Fall of a Young Girl," about the heroine's "surrender to desire and appetite, her torment of shame and degradation, and her repentance."[24] A Beirut man later recalled a story he heard about his grandmother, who went "crazy" after losing first seven children and then her husband, and began walking the streets, naked.[25] A late 1930s popular history magazine, *Tarikh al-harb al-'uzma* (History of The Great War), featured images of emaciated women and children in its issue on the famine. One portrayed a haggard woman on her knees, clothing torn and revealing a breast, calling, "Oh sons of Syria, bread, bread, bread . . ." (fig. 1). Inside, articles told how mothers had emptied their homes of all they could sell to pay for food, and then fled their villages with their children to the cities, in search of food, eating weeds and even dogmeat. In extremity, some mothers were said to have devoured their dead children.[26]

These war and famine memories evoke a wrenching, nightmarish experience of a world gone awry, of families not simply abandoned and split apart, but actually turned against each other. Men who had prided themselves on protecting their families could no longer do so. Mothers and wives, soldiers' inspiration for life and love of country, were selling themselves to strangers and devouring their children. Women habituated to social norms of seclusion howled in the streets, naked, or were attacked in their homes by strange men. All social and familial norms seemed suspended.

Anxiety about proper gender roles was expressed in these war and famine memories. Such anxiety is suggested in the disjunction between public and private memory. In public and official memory, men tend to be remembered as martyrs who militarily defended the nation, while women are portrayed as martyrs primarily for defending their children. Published photographs of the war routinely portrayed men as soldiers in uniform, and women as helpless victims. Central squares in both Beirut and Damascus were renamed Martyrs' Square for male nationalists executed there, and annual memorial ceremonies for them are still observed. Few accounts of, and no monuments to, women's heroic deeds are to be found.

Personal and private accounts belie this public—and political—rendition, evoking a broader range of experiences that men and women shared in common. Women have individually often recalled their acts of bravery and hard labor during the war, not just their shame and victimhood. In the villages of inland Syria, women and children replaced men absent at the battlefront in farm work. In 1917, Jemal Pasha organized women's brigades, sent to harvest grain needed by the military in the fertile regions of Adana, the Jordan valley, and elsewhere. Urban women filled in for absent artisans, selling supplies in markets and working in the textile weaving shops that managed to remain open.[27] "During the war my family never went hungry because they were in the wool business. . . . When the men were away, that was one of the best ways for women to make money," recalled 'Aziza al-Jaza'iri, who lived in Damascus. "Straw merchants used to sell rushes to the women who would make little rush-bottomed stools and sell them. . . . There was practically nothing that women didn't sell at that time when they took all our men and left us no one."[28] Elite women of both Beirut and Damascus recalled their labors in organizing relief for the hungry, ill, and homeless during the war. They and lower-class women both took daily risks to feed their families by trading in the forbidden black market. They also staged risky demonstrations against the Ottoman government to demand bread. At least one woman is known to have been hanged for political reasons.[29]

Men's memories only rarely, privately, or long after the war revealed that they too starved desperately for food. The safar barlik was something only whispered about for years. In a 1960s interview, a Lebanese journalist recalled meeting a man in a Lebanese village elated to find his father had died, because he could now eat that day's loaf of bread himself. The journalist also recalled seeing men starve in prison, where he had been thrown for writing newspaper articles critical of the Ottoman state.[30] Exceptional was a 1935 article written by a Damascene about having nothing to eat while he rode a military train heading to the front at Gallipoli. He and his friends were saved by two poor women selling food at a station in Eskishehir.[31] The story of another soldier, Fahmi Tergeman, husband of 'Aziza al-Jaza'iri quoted above, was published only decades later by his daughter. He recounted how an entire army starved in Gaza until the British took him and his comrades prisoner. Before their final defeat, the Ottoman soldiers had foraged among the dead bodies of British soldiers lying on the battlefield, looking for tins of meat.[32]

Despite this convergence in private recollections, public memories that stressed men's and women's differing experiences would have a profound

political impact in the postwar period. The imagery of mothers and sons as different sorts of patriots took on a life of its own, and would be ideologically deployed after the war. Men would parlay their battlefield valor during the Great War into political claims, for self-rule and for status as protectors of their women from French men and the French state. Women, too, would recount their often neglected acts of wartime patriotism to make their claims for social and political rights after the war. But the image of women as motherly inspiration for their son-patriots, rather than patriots in their own right, dominated political discourse and colored debates on women's rights to full citizenship. Images of wild women would also resurface, in criticisms of deviant women who ventured out from behind the protection of men into public and politics.[33]

Collective memories of wartime trauma also differentiated the experiences of Muslims and Christians. Most letters sent covertly to the French during the war, for example, expressed Christians' views that Muslims and Turks deliberately caused their plight. While these letters were neither necessarily accurate nor representative of all opinion, they likely reflect a variety of stories and rumors being told by common people in the afflicted regions. Similar opinions were given years later in interviews with survivors.[34]

A number of letters ascribed Christian suffering to a general Muslim hatred of them. Some, for example, tied the famine to the massacres of Christians in Mount Lebanon and Damascus in 1860. Antoine Eddé, a French informant, reported from Mount Lebanon in the spring of 1916: "The persecutions have begun, and they are only a prelude to a general massacre like that of the Armenians." Another agent reported that priests and nuns were being arrested in Damascus, where 300 to 400 Armenian girls were said to have been sold as slaves to Muslims: "Those who sold them said: 'Rejoice, oh believers, in the shame of Christians.' " He also reported that no Muslims in Jubayl [north of Beirut] had died of hunger, because they received government rations of flour that were denied to Christians.[35] A French Lazarist priest in Syria wrote in May 1917: "Apostasies are the order of the day in the cities. How many have given themselves to Muslims, or have given up their honor for a morsel of bread. . . . all of the Turkish officers, Jemal Pasha at their head, can't have enough Christian girls to sacrifice to their perversions."[36] Other letters saw Christian persecution as a direct result of their ties to France. The secretary of the Maronite patriarch wrote in 1916: "Poor Lebanon, poor Lebanese, sacrificed by vengeance, to punish them for their loyalty to a generous and compassionate mother. But where is this generosity and pity of France?"[37]

However, there were alternate discourses in letters that emphasized communal suffering of Muslims and Christians alike, and the Turks as their common enemy. A Mgr. Phares urged the French to support "a holy union" against Turkish tyrants, "uniting Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox, Druze, Ansariehs, and Mutawallis."[38] Mustafa Bey, an informant from a prominent Muslim Damascene family, wrote in 1916: "Discontent in Syria is general and shared by all classes and creeds. The exactions of the government have vexed the peasantry, the educated class is in general disturbed by the tyrannical methods of the Turkish authorities and the better class of ulama [Muslim clergy] are entirely with them."[39]

The uncertainties of blame and the political machinations of the Entente powers would perpetuate religious tensions and suspicions after the Ottomans withdrew. The war had undermined trust in a mixed-sect community at its most profound level. If a community would not share food equitably amongst all of its members, was it a community? In 1861, Mount Lebanon had been created as a Christian enclave separate from the surrounding region because of such sectarian mistrust. The famine reinforced Christian sentiments for secession. The fact that Muslims in inland Syria grew the wheat that Christian Lebanese depended upon, and that some Syrian Muslims had hoarded grain meant to be shipped to Lebanon, compounded religious with geographic tensions, and directly contributed to the creation of Lebanon as a separate state in 1920. Alternate memories, of how Muslims had also died, how Christians had also profited from black-markets in grain, and of how states, not neighbors, had disrupted supply lines, were suppressed in the process. There would be, significantly, virtually no public discussion of France's own role in causing starvation. This was likely due not only to French press censorship, but to a willingness of Arab nationalists to believe the worst about their former Ottoman rulers.

Class, like gender and religion, was also a distinguishing factor in collective memory. War and famine had set down a mortal line between rich and poor. Those who died, or who joined the Ottoman army never to return, were the poorest in society. They could not afford to flee on the last Italian steamliners or to pay fees for exemption from the military draft (bedel). The ranks of the poor grew, as inflation of food prices impoverished those who had not been poor before the war. Meanwhile several prominent families, particularly the Lebanese Sursuqs and Asfars, were generally known to have amassed fortunes through grain speculation that boosted prices far beyond what the poor could pay. Stories were told of peasants selling their homes and fields for a simple loaf of bread, and of speculators expropriating entire districts. As one magazine

recounted, "as for the inhabitants of Nahr el-Deb, they disappeared after having sold everything, even the clock of the church."[40]

Even though the French decreed a law to dispossess Lebanese war profiteers who had amassed vast amounts of land, the line between rich and poor remained vivid, in memory as well as reality. One enduring monument to the famine was the plumpness of survivors. As Schilcher put it, for decades afterward politicians "projected an image of success and prosperous generosity to their constituencies by means of quite unabashed personal obesity."[41] Schilcher sees paradoxically both the deepening of class consciousness and the reaffirmation of patron-client ties as a legacy of the famine, for patrons had been a more reliable source of security and nourishment than the state. The complexity of the famine's social impact has been preserved in the various versions still told of a story about a hungry village chief (agha) in North Lebanon who traded his olive grove to a lord (bey) for a single orange. Landless descendants of aghas told the story to anthropologist Michael Gilsenan to explain the general derangement of the social order, while the agha's own grandson, now the town's capitalist-minded mayor, retold it as a farce about the aghas' self-defeating sense of honor that undercut their material well-being. For peasants, whose ancestors had neither orange nor olive grove to trade, the story depicted the famine as both the epitome of beys' tyranny and a reminder of the hollow pretensions of aghas' descendants.[42]

The emergence of class-based labor unions and political parties would be a significant new trend in the years of the French mandate, but they were slow to emerge. In a 1922 newspaper article, Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbak described meeting a woman with her two starving children at the door of a church, who asked, "Why is there not equality on Earth as there is in Heaven?"[43] The encounter motivated him to organize the Lebanese Communist Party. A more typical response to inequality was a 1920 Damascus newspaper editorial that blamed the famine on hoarding and uncooperative attitudes among a population that lacked proper solidarity and patriotism. The editorial called for more charities and urged the wealthy to be more patriotic in almsgiving.[44] Rebellion against the rich remained an individual, not organized effort, as evidenced in the rising incidence of banditry and theft after the war.[45]

The preceding examples offer only a sketch of the preservation and construction of collective memory, one that deserves much more study than can be undertaken here. Indeed, scholars disagree profoundly on the relationships between individual and collective memory, and between memory, culture, and politics.[46] With this in mind, we might venture, tentatively, to make some observations about the political implications of war memories in Syria and

Lebanon. People generally remembered the war as a nightmare, a world gone awry, where the social norms governing gender, religious, and class relations were shattered. While individuals appear to have interpreted the nightmare in a variety of ways, it appears that official, public memory used the nightmare to reaffirm the values of the old social order. To affirm that women belong under the protection of men, stories were repeated about how women left alone went crazy. To affirm past practice of separating Muslims and Christians, famine stories emphasized Christian suffering and Muslim profiteering. To affirm that the interests of rich and poor coincide, profiteering elites were condemned as a criminal aberration. If this observation is correct, then many Syrians and Lebanese resembled other societies that rallied to appeals for a postwar return to "normalcy." It is perhaps this yearning for normalcy that contributed to the tendency to speak of the safar barlik only obliquely, in hushed tones, as an unmentionable shame. But it is also true that for others, like Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbak, the nightmare was a revelation that discredited the old order and inspired political action.

Shattered Households and the Crisis of Paternity

Material conditions, in addition to memory, shaped the political and social impact of the war for years afterward. The war marked the end of an age of auspicious economic expansion. The period between 1880 and 1914 had been one of exceptional stability and prosperity, wrought by Ottoman reforms and the adaptation of local producers and traders to the new conditions of the world economy. The centralized state improved rural security, encouraging farmers to extend cultivation into new lands. With the infusion of French capital, Mount Lebanon's silk industry boomed, employing more than one-third of its population. Rural wealth enabled urban artisans to cultivate local markets, offsetting the impact of competition from European imports in cities. Meanwhile, European investment in local transport—roads, railroads, and ports—increased trade and the wealth of merchants. A new urban landowning-bourgeoisie emerged that profited most from state largesse and European capitalism. While peasants and workers benefited less, they were apparently able to live healthier lives, evidenced by a population boom of at least 50 percent in those 34 years.[47]

The postwar period appeared far less auspicious to all but the wealthiest. On the one hand, population statistics suggest that people regained a basic level of well-being after the war's devastation. By the mid-1940s, Syria's

population had reached about 3.4 million while Lebanon's had reached about 1.1 million, representing growth of about 30 percent since 1914, despite the loss of up to a half-million lives during the war.[48] Many families clearly managed to raise many children, even though infant mortality remained high. However, agriculture, the basis of the region's wealth, did not experience so robust a recovery. Many fields lay fallow for a decade after the war. While yields of Syria's most important crops, wheat and barley, rebounded after 1928, peak harvests in the 1930s barely matched prewar peaks.[49] Trouble was further evidenced by large migrations of peasants to the cities, even though there was no new mechanization or intensification of agriculture to push them off the land. Cities grew by far more than the general population growth of 30 percent. Beirut's population nearly doubled from its postwar low of about 92,000 to more than 174,000 in 1944. Damascus, whose population dropped to 184,000 after the war, jumped by more than 50 percent in the next 20 years to 286,000. Aleppo grew fastest, partly due to the Armenian settlement, from 127,000 in 1914 to 320,000 in 1943.[50] These booming cities were no paradise for incoming peasants, however. The major industry, textiles, had been dealt a near-mortal blow by the war, and thousands of urban workers lost their jobs.

While over the long term the region's economy would stabilize, in the 1920s it suffered severe trauma. Lingering effects of social dislocation deepened the gulf between rich and poor. While the urban bourgeoisie gradually resumed its business, often with capital that had been safely stored overseas, most families had lost the sources of support they once had. In an unstable economy that underwent multiple structural changes, they found it difficult to reestablish their lives as they had known them before the war. Under this pressure, gender roles within households changed, causing anxiety and contributing to the emergent crisis of paternity.

In the aftermath of war, family networks were shattered and female-headed households became common: "Many, too many families are completely disorganized," lamented a French journal in 1922.[51] Most of the more than 100,000 Armenian refugees who arrived in Syria and Lebanon after fleeing the 1915 massacres in Anatolia were women and children, unemployed and hungry. Settled in camps outside of major cities, Armenian women supported their families by working in the textile industry or running home-tailoring businesses.[52] While there are no records of how many Armenian refugee households were headed by women, French records of Assyrian refugees who settled in Syria in 1943 showed that 13 percent of "chefs de familles" were women.[53]

Numerous Syrian and Lebanese women waited anxiously for their husbands and fathers to return from war. In 1920 a Damascus newspaper published what it called a typical story. A couple named George and Mary had three children. In 1914, when George received a call from the military, he chose to pay the military exemption tax. But his exemption expired, and he was sent to Galicia. Mary received one letter from him, and then no word. Some time later, she received a death notice. Mary wept, and struggled to support her children. None of her relatives could afford to help, so she pulled her eldest son out of school and placed him in a job with a carpenter. When a wealthy widower proposed marriage, Mary was horrified at the thought. But her circumstances had deteriorated so much that, two months after the war ended, she accepted his proposal. Just before the ceremony, however, her husband George miraculously reappeared: He had been taken prisoner in Belgium and the Ottoman death notice had been an error, an error that hurt many during the war.[54]

Not all women were so lucky. In a 1926 court case, a Damascene woman was convicted and jailed three months for stealing 82 Turkish gold liras from a neighbor's house. The woman, Lutfiya bint Mahmud al-Qudsi, described herself as a poor widow without resources. She claimed the money had been left to her by her husband, and that she hid it in the courtyard of their house before she was forced, for reasons of economy, to vacate it. She returned to the house in May 1926, she claimed, to retrieve the money in order to buy a sewing machine and so earn a living.[55] Despite its possible untruths, Qudsi's story is likely representative of strategies many women used—either work as a seamstress or theft—to survive in the absence of male breadwinners.

The breakdown of family support systems is further evidenced by the number of children housed in orphanages. The total number of children orphaned during the war is not known, but the Near East Foundation alone cared for 13,000 orphans, mostly Armenian, through the mid-1930s.[56] In 1917, Halide Edib ran two orphanages with 1,500 children, while a third orphanage built that year in Beirut housed 2,000 children. Meanwhile, Shakib Arslan founded three orphanages in the Shuf region south of Beirut. He claimed the Turkish government was supporting thousands of orphaned children.[57] After the war, the new governments and private charities built even more orphanages, bringing the total to 20 in Syria and Lebanon.[58] Orphanages had been virtually unknown before the war, as Syrian and Lebanese orphans were usually taken in by relatives. Their appearance gave tragic testimony to the children's loss not only of their parents, but of grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

Even families with both parents had a difficult time. When fathers and

husbands finally returned, they were often penniless or handicapped, or both. Many families had had to relocate during the war, losing the local infrastructure that kept them afloat. A Druze family that evacuated Mount Lebanon during the famine lived on the edge of poverty in southern Syria, at Jabal Druze, where they bought a small parcel of land. For decades afterward, the father of the family migrated for part of the year to Lebanon to earn additional wages as a manual laborer.[59] Armenians were perhaps the most unsettled. Because of local hostility, the 50,000 refugees settled in Damascus in 1916 were later relocated to Beirut and Aleppo, where local residents also rejected them. Artisans complained about new Armenian competition in tailoring and shoemaking, while many others complained of too many makeshift peddlers on the streets. Resentment toward the Armenians bespoke the continuing hard times faced by the urban poor.[60]

Hanna Mina describes the continuing misery of families on the margins of the postwar economy in his autobiographical novel *Fragments of Memory*. After the war, Mina's orphaned mother migrated to Mersin in Anatolia with her sister and brother to work as a maid. She had lost an older sister in the safar barlik, and soon lost her brother to pneumonia. She then married Mina's father, another Syrian refugee, and the family moved back across the border to Latakia, where they lived temporarily with relatives. The family traveled from town to village, back to town and again to village, in search of work. Mina's father worked as a self-styled shoemaker and at other odd jobs, and at one point hired himself and his family out to raise silkworms, in a sharecropping arrangement that resembled slavery. The family nurtured the worms to perfect maturity, only to find that they could not sell them in the glutted local market. Mina's parents then forced his sister to work as a maid in their master's house to pay off their debts. In the late 1920s they moved to another village, where they lived in an abandoned house in exchange for guarding its adjacent granary. That year's harvest had been bad, and food supplies were short. The book ends with the revolt of villagers at the granary, which went up in flames, leaving Mina's family again homeless.[61]

The bad luck of Mina's family in raising silkworms reflected the general collapse of the silk industry. During the war, most mulberry trees in Lebanon were chopped down for firewood. The silk industry would die finally in the 1930s due to competition from Asian imports and the new "synthetic silk," or rayon. While wealthy Lebanese landowners were able to replace mulberry trees with olive and citrus trees, poorer farmers could not afford such an investment. Workers on Lebanon's new citrus plantations were often peasants who had been bought out by the newly enriched urban bourgeoisie.[62]

Shortages of material supplies also hampered efforts of rural families to regain their livelihoods. Many families had sold all of their household goods for food. In addition, Jemal Pasha had ordered the confiscation of all wheeled vehicles, animals, wool, leather, nails, hardware items, and the like for military use. Families were stripped of the tools they needed to carry out basic farm tasks like planting and transporting crops and food processing.[63] It would take them years to acquire the capital needed to replace these essential items, one reason agricultural production slumped in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, in the cities, artisans lost their jobs in the textile industry. Foreign imports accelerated after the war, while rural markets remained depressed. This made it difficult for artisans returning from battlefronts to restart their businesses. Thousands of dyers and weavers in the textile industry were forced to take lower-paid and part-time wage jobs. By the mid-1930s, the number of urban workers doing informal and part-time work, about 400,000, was double the number with full-time industrial jobs. Wage levels dropped in the 1930s to half their 1913 buying power. In addition, an estimated 100,000 workers, about 30 percent of the urban industrial labor force, were unemployed.[64] The more fortunate men were able to find jobs in the expanding transport sector, as construction workers or truck and taxi drivers, and in the emergent civil service. For example, Fahmi Tergeman, the soldier mentioned above who starved in Gaza, had been a thread-spooler in Damascus's silk industry before the war. Afterward, he used telegraph skills gained in the Ottoman army to obtain a job in the post office.[65]

While men faced great difficulty in providing for their families, many women of the lower classes also saw sources of supplementary income that they had once contributed to their households disappear. Before the war, thousands of women did home work for the textile industry, representing one-third of textile workers in 1890 Damascus; by 1910, Damascene women were using 2,000 sewing machines at home to produce hosiery.[66] Meanwhile, more than 12,000 young women on Mount Lebanon had worked in silk mills, earning meager wages that often lifted their families above the line of destitution. Thousands more women, usually older and married, raised silkworms at home. As late as 1926, agents for French firms roamed the Lebanese countryside to buy their cocoons: "Many a housewife adds a small sum to the household income by her diligence in looking after her silkworm shed," noted a traveler.[67] But foreign imports, the collapse of the silk industry, and the construction of the region's first textile factories swept these women's jobs away. By 1930, only 3,000 to 3,500 women worked in silk mills (fig. 2).[68] Women throughout Syria and Lebanon who had once sold homemade jerseys and

hosiery were replaced in the early 1930s by a half-dozen knitting factories, which employed only 400 wage-earners.[69] By 1935, the Singer Sewing Company was repossessing the sewing machines that Damascene women rented, because they no longer earned enough income to make their payments.[70]

In the countryside, peasant women suffered alongside men from the postwar dislocation of agriculture and the demise of cottage industries. With no market for their home crafts, they turned to wage labor in other people's fields to supplement household income. A 1922 study calculated that 79,000 peasants, 17,000 of them women, engaged in part-time and seasonal wage work to supplement their income from the land. Like their urban cousins, these women generally earned half the wage-rate of men. An additional 22,000 peasants, likely all women, worked as domestic help in the homes of their wealthier neighbors.[71] Innumerable families, especially from the mountainous 'Alawi and Mount Lebanon regions where the silk industry had once thrived, sent their daughters to Damascus and Beirut to work as maids.[72]

The multiple and rapid shifts in men's and women's work opportunities after the war imposed stress on many families, who could no longer depend on old strategies for survival. The customary division of labor in rural families changed if both men and women were forced to work as fieldhands, if they had to send a son or daughter to a distant city to earn wages, or if the whole family relocated to the city. Daughters who worked as maids often became the mainstay of their families. But wives who relocated to the city often lost income once gained through kitchen gardens, chicken-raising, or cottage trades. Likewise, the division of labor in urban families changed as downsized artisans found they could no longer be the family's main breadwinner. But even as they depended more on the earnings of their wives and daughters, this source of income was jeopardized by imports. Certainly, the majority of men managed to secure employment, although likely at lower wages than they hoped for. The profound instability of the labor market caused increasing social unrest in cities, and as will be seen in Part Two, contributed to the growth of new social movements.

Although we do not have many written records from these poorer classes, there is reason to believe that the instability of the labor market contributed to men's anxiety about their gender identity. Local culture placed great emphasis on a man's ability to support his family. Indeed, in the dominant Islamic religion, men were required to provide all of their wives' basic needs. The continued struggle to meet that expectation, following the trauma of having had to abandon their families during the war, likely compounded the crisis of paternal authority in the home.

In contrast, elite families experienced far more stability in these years, although they faced their own sorts of stress due to changing gender roles in the household. Most elites had not depleted their resources to buy food during the war; indeed, a good portion of them passed the war years in Cairo or other foreign cities. Among those who stayed behind, as we have seen, many profited from the inflated grain trade and from land sales by the poor. As a result, elites had the resources to adapt to postwar economic changes. They enlarged their landholdings and profited from the progressive commercialization of agriculture that displaced so many peasants. French support would further enrich landowners, as the next chapter will show. Merchants and bankers, especially in Beirut, used their still-intact capital reserves to profit from trade in the foreign imports that were so hazardous to artisans. Despite the instability of world markets and structural shifts in the local economy, the landowning bourgeoisie remained quite stable as a class: The family names of urban notables changed little between 1914 and 1945.

This is not to say that the war had no effect on these families. Most remarkable was a change in attitudes toward women's work and education, which had long been discouraged as unrespectable by elites and the middle class. But because World War I had left so many women without means of support, they adopted a more positive attitude, especially among non-Muslims. Formal schooling became for the first time a norm among the daughters of the elite and middle class. And many of them took jobs afterward, working as teachers, typists, telephone operators, salesgirls, shopkeepers and hotelkeepers. Women owned, for example, half the pensions and at least eight hotels in Beirut. In 1928, a Damascene teacher observed a surprising rise in employment among middle-class Jewish girls. Before the war, "a girl from a comfortable family did not work," she remarked. "Now, because the war ruined so many, there is a change. It is not rare, for example, to see girls of the best families hurry each morning to the government offices of the [French] delegation, or different services of the mandatory power, or to banks, or simply to shops, where they often act as managers."[73] While most women quit their jobs upon marriage, some embarked on professional careers. Female journalists and magazine editors appeared in the 1920s, and the first locally trained female doctors and lawyers began practicing in the 1930s.

Another new trend among the younger generation of the elite was to establish separate households from their parents and have fewer children.[74] The ideal of the extended household, realized mainly by wealthier families in the past, now faded as young couples in large cities like Beirut, Damascus, and Aleppo moved out of their parents' homes as soon as they could afford it. New quarters

of these cities featured apartment buildings with one-family flats, where different branches of the family might live as neighbors. The ideal of a large family also faded. The use of birth control and abortion reportedly increased among these elite urban classes in the interwar period, although the general population shunned it.[75] Whether this shift toward smaller, nuclear families was occasioned by the war is unclear. However, coupled with the later marriage age of young women who remained in school longer and often took jobs, it represented a significant change in expectations of gender roles within wealthier families.

The authority of the family's male patriarch was loosening among elites, or at least under siege. Magazine articles of the postwar period condemned arranged marriages, vaunting instead a model of companionate marriage in which the couple is introduced before their engagement and given a free choice in partner. Articles also regularly advised young brides on how to be a proper helpmate, rather than a mere servant or ornament for their husbands.[76] Young brides living in their own households certainly escaped the domination of mothers-in-law. And if they could afford servants, these wives of the new generation likely enjoyed far more autonomy and free time than their mothers had.

In sum, the war had a direct and indirect effect on upper- and middle-class households. While ideas about the need for women's education and the benefits of their employment and later marriage had floated before the war, the years of privation and trauma appear to have made these ideas more acceptable. Many women had gained experience of autonomy during the war, and were reluctant to relinquish it afterward. They had had to fend for themselves in the absence of men, and had left their seclusion to engage in charity work. Their fathers, husbands, and brothers were clearly more inclined in the postwar period to permit women to attend school, engage in philanthropic activities, and even to work. As subsequent chapters will also show, however, the growing expectation that respectable women might pursue a life outside of the home caused tremendous controversy in an era when male authority was so generally threatened.

Conclusion: Household Origins of a Crisis of Paternity

The postwar dislocations and hardships experienced by the vast majority of Syrian and Lebanese families strained a social order already shattered by the years of war and famine. Gender anxieties, religious suspicions, and class resentments that arose during the war continued through much of the 1920s.

While not everyone suffered, the extremely uneven fortunes of different groups produced a climate of profound uncertainty and social tension. These tensions converged into a general crisis of paternity. The war had shaken the definitions of family and community that people had known, and called into question the paternalistic bases of authority that they had respected. Men who during the war had lost their honor and lost control of their families struggled afterward to reconstitute their authority. The progressive effects of the commercialization of agriculture, and of the saturation of markets with foreign imports, disrupted their households and swept away usual sources of income. The inability of men to provide for their wives shook the basis of what one scholar has called the classic patriarchal bargain, in which women offered their obedience in exchange for security.[77] While the war undermined the material bases of security for most families, even among the stable elite it had altered expectations of gender roles. Memories of a world turned upside down would produce both a nostalgia for lost norms and a revolutionary spirit.

The war was not the only factor contributing to a crisis of paternity. As the remaining chapters of Part One will show, the advent of French rule magnified the uncertainties felt within families into a general crisis of authority and gender identity in the realm of politics.