

Title	<Special Feature "Nakba after Sixty Years: Memories and Histories in Palestine and East Asia"> Palestinians from the "Seven Villages": Their Legal Status and Social Condition
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Citation	イスラーム世界研究 : Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies (2009), 3(1): 220-231
Issue Date	2009-07
URL	http://dx.doi.org/10.14989/87457
Right	
Type	Departmental Bulletin Paper
Textversion	publisher

Palestinians from the “Seven Villages”: Their Legal Status and Social Condition

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The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-political condition of the people who were originally from the “Seven Villages,” and analyze their sense of affiliation. The Seven Villages are located at the southern border zone between Palestine and Lebanon, and their legal possession is still under dispute with Israel. Most of the villagers now reside in Lebanon; however, they were originally Shiites from Palestine, and thus, their background is rather complicated. In this paper, I shall briefly review their history, illustrate the political condition that they face in Lebanon, and draw on some case studies based on my research this August in Sur district. The study examines their sense of affiliation as well as the influence exerted by their legal status and present living conditions. Some of the results show the title of the paper —Palestinians from the Seven Villages— does not convey their sense of affiliation, which swings between being Lebanese and being Palestinian. However, this study is designed as an account of the Palestinians who took nationality in Lebanon, and hence, the title is named after them.

1. General Background of the Palestinians in Lebanon

According to the study by BADIL and Uri Davis, there are several periods in which the Palestinians moved to Lebanon [Boqai & Rampel eds. 2004; Davis 1997]. The first major move occurred in the wake of the 1948 war, and most of the refugees came from the northern part of Palestine, especially from Safad, Akka, Tiberias, Beisan and Nazareth districts. Table 1 shows the percentage of refugees in each region along with their place of origin. It says 72% of the refugees in Lebanon came from the Galilee region, that is, the aforementioned districts. This region, located outside of the West Bank, is now under the control of Israel. Therefore, it would be rather difficult for these refugees to return to their original land, even if Israel were to acknowledge the rights of some of them to go back to the State of Palestine in the conceivable future. Because in any case, if this were to happen, the country will most probably be permitted establishment only within the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas.

The second and third moves were minor, and induced by the wars of 1956 and 1970, respectively. In the former case, the Lebanese government registered the people as refugees,

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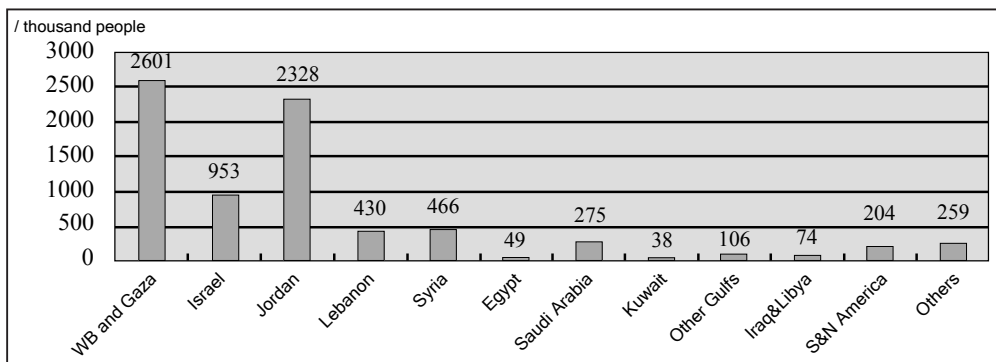
provided white ID cards from the General Security Bureau, and issued laissez-passers when needed. In the latter case, however, the government did not acknowledge their refugees status or provide any social relief. This is because these refugees had fled to Lebanon after Black September, the political turmoil in Jordan, and there must have been hesitation to provide formal support for the politically active refugees. Around 5,000 refugees are estimated to have fled to Lebanon with each move.

Table 1. Place of Origin of the Palestinian Refugees from the 1948 War [Boqai & Rampel eds. 2004: 50]

District of Origin	Jordan	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Lebanon	Syria	Total (all fields)
Jerusalem	20.0	33.0	0.2	0.5	0.7	13.5
Gaza	17.0	7.0	66.0	0.1	0.4	22.5
Lydda	40.0	30.0	33.0	8.5	7.3	30.0
Samaria	4.0	12.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.5
Haifa	10.0	16.0	0.5	18.8	22.0	11.0
Galilee	9.0	2.0	0.1	72.0	69.5	18.5

Source: UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 2000. The six regions of the British Mandate period included: Jerusalem: Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem; Gaza: Gaza, Khan Younis, Majdal, Isdud, Beersheba; Lydda: Jaffa, Ramle, Lod, Rechovot; Samaria: Tulkarem, Nablus, Jenin, Natanya; Haifa: Haifa, Hadera, Shafa'amr; Galilee: Nazareth, Beisan, Tiberias, Acre, Safad

Graph 1. Palestinian Diaspora: Comparison across Countries



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005 *Statistical Abstract*. Chart 3.2.6 “Estimated Number of Palestinians in the World, Mid Year 2004”

Sixty years after the 1948 war, called Nakba by the Palestinians, around 400,000 Palestinians are estimated to live in Lebanon. This figure is not as high as the number of Palestinians in Jordan or Palestine, as seen in Graph 1, nevertheless, it puts political pressure on the Lebanese government. Lebanon adapted the political system called *tā'ifīya* which means political confessionalism in Arabic. It is defined in Article 95 of the constitution,

and the phrase *ṣūra 'ādila*—just representatives—means the distribution of political posts according to the population rate of religious factions. Palestinians, who are mostly Sunni Muslims, may impact the country's ratio of religions and change their political power balance. Therefore, most Palestinians are not permitted to have Lebanese nationality; they are registered as Palestinian refugees by the government and expected to not stay on permanently in Lebanon.

Only limited numbers of Palestinians were given Lebanese nationality, and there were roughly three ways and periods through which they could obtain it. One of these opportunities arose in the 1950s and 1960s, when refugees could file law-suitse in courts. According to the study by Simon Haddad and the one by the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO), approximately 30,000 to 50,000 people obtained nationality in this manner [Haddad 2004; PHRO 2007]. Many studies point out that most of them were Christians, who were granted nationality with the support of the Christian factions in the Lebanese political sphere. The second means was not specific in date but by way of marriage with a Lebanese citizen. Regulation No. 15, issued in 1925 under the French High Commissioner, states that a person married to a Lebanese citizen will be granted Lebanese nationality after a certain period of time. This was an easier way for people to obtain citizenship, and thus mixed marriages became common among the Palestinians and Lebanese. Haddad indicates that almost one quarter of the third generation of Palestinians now have a Lebanese parent [Haddad 2004: 480].

The refugees' third opportunity was rather exceptional, and is the focus of this study. They took nationality by a special Decree issued in 1994 together with the others who had stayed in Lebanon decades without nationality. They acquired nationality as residents of the Seven Villages that were much earlier part of Lebanon. Therefore, this acquisition was sometimes explained as a "regainment" or "restitution" of nationality. To elucidate, the next section will discuss the historical background of the Seven Villages in more detail.

2. Historical Background of the "Seven Villages"

The Seven Villages are located at the border zone between Lebanon and Palestine, and is now occupied by Israel. The national affiliation of the residents in this area changed frequently in the 1920s based on the decisions taken by Britain and France. These changes resulted in the present complex situation with respect to the sense of people from the Seven Villages. Therefore, as a background to this paper, I shall begin with a brief introduction of the history of this region.

In 1920, the establishment of Greater Lebanon was declared (in Decree No. 318) by the French High Commissioner Henry Gouraud. The southern border line was not clearly

settled yet, and therefore, negotiations over this area began between Britain and France. The negotiations were led by a joint committee under Paulet and Newcombe. For some time, France acknowledged the nationality of Greater Lebanon toward inhabitants of the 24 villages, including the Seven Villages, in this border area. The Treaty of Lausanne was then ratified in 1923. The treaty determined the principle of national affiliation for the residents of the former Ottoman Empire. Former Turkish subjects were declared to be nationals of the State to which the land was ceded, and they lost their Turkish citizenship. In the same year, Britain and France reached an agreement about the borders of their mandatory zones. The 24 villages of southern Greater Lebanon came under the British mandate, and thus, the area of the Seven Villages became part of Palestine.

The Republic of Lebanon was established in 1926, and the villages were legally transferred to the British mandate. Residents of the villages lost their Lebanese nationality, and were granted new Palestinian one. However, in 1948, the war broke out with Jewish militia—later became Israeli army. This area was occupied by Israel, and the residents were compelled to flee from their villages. Most of them fled to Lebanon, came to be considered as Palestinian refugees, and still cannot return to their original villages.

Table 2 presents the names of the villages at the border zone. There are minor differences in the names found in different sources; however, these are not necessarily mistakes. In fact, this can be considered as a reflection of the unclear perception about the borders in the area between Britain and France during that period. Besides, the names of the Seven Villages are very similar, including: *Ṣalhā, Qadas, Hūnīn, Mālkīya, Ṭarbīḥā, Ibil al-Qamiḥ, al-Nabī Yūsha’*. Another famous example of the border zone is “Sheba farm,” located close to the villages. However, the Sheba farm came under dispute much later in the 1960s, and this time, in addition to Israel, Syria, too, joined the battle.

Table2.

Hūnīn, Ṭarbīkhā, al-Nabī Rūbīn, Surūḥ, Ṣalhā, Iqrit, al-Nabī Yūsha’, Qadas, al-Mālkīya, Ibil al-Qamiḥ, al-Duwāra, al-Khaṣṣāṣ, al-Zūq al-Taḥtānī, al-Lazāza, al-Khālṣa, al-Nā’ima, al-Ṣālḥīya, al-Maṭalla, al-Zabra, Dafana (or instead Ḥānūtā), al-Laqaīṭa (or instead al-Qaiṭīya), al-Sainārīya, Jardīya, Kiyām ‘Īsā, ‘Arab al-Naḥīwān, ‘Arab al-Zahrān [‘Alawīya 2006: 85–92]

Another noteworthy characteristic is that most people from the Seven Villages are considered to be Shiite Muslims. This is consistent with the fact that most people from south Lebanon are Shiites. A majority of the residents from the villages as well as the big cities like Sūr, Nabaṭīya, and Bint Jubail, are Shiites. Needless to say, not all the people in the south

are Shiites; some do belong to other religious sects as well. Şūr has many Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings of mainly Sunnis. They had fled from Palestine in 1948 and took up temporary residence near the border of their homeland.

3. Nationalization under Decree No. 5247

People from the Seven Villages stayed in Lebanon without Lebanese nationality for over 50 years. They were considered to be Palestinians because they were originally from Palestine under the British mandate. Some of them registered themselves as refugees at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and received support from the agency.

One of the people I interviewed, whom I shall call *Aḥmad*, still lives in the Shatila refugee camp. He collects garbage and sell the metal material that he finds there for a living. His income is not sufficient to raise children, which is why he emphasise the advantages of being Palestinian in Lebanon. “After registration at the UNRWA, school fees and medical bills are paid for. The Lebanese, on the other hand, are expected to pay for everything!”¹ However as his job indicates, Palestinians seem to be considered as foreigners in Lebanon, and it is hard for them to find better jobs. Work permits are required for formal jobs, but only limited number of them are issued. As Palestinians, they can take advantage of the assistance, but at the same time, they pay a high price for living in Lebanon.

After the Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1989, the situation changed. Political factions of Shiite Muslims gained power through the Civil War, and this brought about change in their legal status. At the Lausanne conference in 1984, Amal remarked that “They [Shiite Palestinians] had been Lebanese in the 1920s and should be given Lebanese nationality.” As a part of history, Hizbullah began recording Israeli aggression in south Lebanon, which included their occupation of the Seven Villages.

In 1994 the Lebanese government issued Decree No. 5247, which declared the grant of Lebanese nationality to several categories of people. These included many Syrians, others from different nationalities who had stayed in Lebanon with residence permits, and the former inhabitants of the Seven Villages and their descendants. There were also people who obtained nationality for unclear reasons, —*min jinsīya qaid al-dars*—which means “under consideration” and *maktūmī al-qaid*, —which means “stateless.” The accurate percentage of the categories is difficult to affirm; however, I attempted a rough calculation on the basis

¹ Interviewed by the author on February 26, 2008, at the PHRO office in the Mar Elias refugee camp. Originally from *Qadas* village, he was born in 1957 in Burj Hammud in Lebanon, and got Lebanese nationality in 1996 by the decree. He has both Palestinian and Lebanese ID cards, which he showed the author. He has six daughters studying in school.

of the number of pages listing the names of people qualified for application.² As a result, the people from the Seven Villages who are granted nationality consists approximately 15% of the people qualified. This figure is not as impressive as the proportion of Syrians who qualified, that consists 50% of all. However, considering the intent of the decree, it is still significant.

4. Political position of the Seven Villages in Lebanon

With respect to the political position given to the residents and descendants of the Seven Villages, the study by Asher Kaufman is rather stimulating. He examines this through three prisms: that of the villagers themselves, of the Palestinians, and of the Lebanese. As being the Lebanese, their history is used to claim their right to regain the southern border land from Israel. Hasan Nasrallah justified the continued armed struggle against Israel citing this reason, in his election campaign for parliament in 2005. This was also used as a means to achieve domestic political gains for the Shiites. Nabih Berri, the Chairman of the Amal movement, also used this point in the rivalry with Hizbullah. Even the Maronite politician Michel ‘Aoun presented himself as being connected to the village of *Hūnīn*, one of the Seven Villages, by familial ties, in order to appeal to the Shiite population [Kaufman 2006: 699].

As being the Palestinians, they were considered to be one of the refugees who lost their hometown in the 1948 Nakba. The Seven Villages were mentioned among the other 400 villages destroyed by the Israelis, without referring to their religious affiliation. There are currently many projects to record memories of the Nakba.³ Several tours to the villages (including some of the Seven Villages) are also organized to “return to the roots.”⁴ Map 1 is an example of the projects, which shows the Seven Villages appeared on the map together with all the other Palestinian villages destroyed in the Nakba.

However, even though they are included as a part of the history, many Palestinians are unaware of the fact that some Palestinian Shiites do exist. According to Kaufman, this is because “the Palestinian national movement was founded on the ethos of Sunnis Arab homogeneity.” Shiites are looked down upon together with other minorities like the Druze, Samaritans, and Armenians, in

² Decree No. 5247 itself consists mostly of the names of candidates, and as a result, is a very thick volume of papers, now bound as an official gazette—*al-Jarīda al-Rasmīya*. Because of its thickness, one of the applicants referred to it as “a book” in the interview.

³ For those which can be easily accessed through the Internet, refer to: the project by Rosemary Sayigh on <http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/>, Deir Yassin Remembered on <http://www.deiryassin.org/>, Nakba Archive on <http://www.nakba-archive.org/index.htm>, and Palestine_Family.net on <http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php?nav=1>.

⁴ Efrat Ben-Ze'ev and Issam Aburaiya, “Middle Ground’ Politics and the Repalestinization of Places in Israel,” in *the International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 36 (November 2004), pp.639–655, as given by Kaufman. In addition, a documentary film “Al-Sabbar” (directed by Patrick Burge, 97 minutes, 2000) shows a similar example of such tours to the Latroun village, which was destroyed by Israel in the 1967 war.

order to avoid further breakdown into sub-groups [Kaufman 2006: 702].

Map1. Nakba map distributed by *Mu'tamar Haqq al-'Awda*, issued by *Hay'a Arq Filastin*, London



5. Results of Research in Sur

Main Findings

Kaufman's study touched upon the identity of the people from the Seven Villages, however, his research remains superficial and insufficient, lacking any concrete data. Therefore, in this study, I have tried to carry out further investigations through field research. I interviewed 14 people who claimed to be originally from the Seven Villages. Interviews were conducted in February and August 2008, with the support of the PHRO staff. Two of the interviews were conducted in Beirut and the others in Sur. In Beirut, interviews were usually held in the PHRO office inside the Mar Elias refugee camp, and in Sur I visited interviewees' houses, accompanied by a PHRO staff member. Each interview lasted 30–60 minutes depending on the interviewees' responses. Most interviews were recorded, with their consensus, using an IC recorder.

Main results of the interviews are listed as follows. Some of them contradict what I have earlier mentioned as an explanation of the Seven Villages, however, this reflects the perception of the villagers themselves. I shall try to explain the logic in the following section by citing the interviews as accurately as possible.

- 1) The Seven Villages do not refer to only seven villages of Shiites, but include other Sunni and Christian villages as well.
- 2) Many of the villagers live in *Šūr*; however, the rest are scattered all over Lebanon.
- 3) Most of the Shiite villagers now live outside of refugee camps, while the Sunnis continue to live inside.
- 4) There is a general recognition of the political tendency shared among villagers of each village.
- 5) There is not necessarily an evident improvement in their lives after acquiring Lebanese nationality.
- 6) Their sense of affiliation is rather complicated and differs with each case. Differentiation between the words, *tajannus*, *tawfīn* and *i‘āda* helps to understand them.

Who are the villagers of the Seven Villages?

What became clear in my research was the fact that the category of the Seven Villages is itself on dispute. The exact names of the villages included in the Seven Villages vary according to the interviewees and even the numbers show difference. This finding came through the process of my research. Initially I tried to find informants from the Seven Villages by the seven names of them, which include *Šalhā*, *Qadas*, *Hūnīn*, *Malkīya*, *Ṭarbīhā*, *Ibil al-Qamiḥ*, *al-Nabī Yūsha‘* as I have mentioned above. I was told that those people from the Seven Villages, who took nationality in 1994, live in the *Burj al-Shamālī* refugee camp. However, when the interviews began, it became clear that none of these people were actually from those seven villages. In fact, they were from the Sunni villages called *Na‘ma* and *Dhūq*, which are located in the same border zone between Lebanon and Palestine. Some of these refugees call the villages by another name *sahil al-ḥūrī*, which indicates different category from the Seven Villages—*qura al-sab‘a*, while others say that they are from the Seven Villages in spite of being Sunnis. There were also Christians from *Iqrit* who claimed to be from the Seven Villages. They live outside of the camp, since they were granted Lebanese nationality in 1994, and insisted to have been part of the Seven Villages.⁵

It became clear that not only people from *Šalhā*, *Qadas*, *Hūnīn*, *Malkīya*, *Ṭarbīhā*,

⁵ Interview conducted on August 17, 2008 in Sur city, Sur district. The informant was a Roman Catholic who obtained nationality by the 1994 decree. He was rather nervous about the research and only answered a few questions, refusing any record of the interview. His reason being, the decree was under investigation at the time, their citizenship could be revoked for any reason until the completion.

Ibil al-Qamiḥ, *al-Nabī Yūsha*’ but many people from other villages as well had obtained nationality by claiming to be residents of the Seven Villages. Most of the Shiite villagers does not live inside the camps anymore, and are scattered all over Lebanon. For example, a person from ṣalhā explained to me that now the people from the same village with him live in *Burj al-Shamālī*, *‘Adlūn*, *Shabrīḥa*, *Beir Ḥasan*, and *Burj Barājina*.⁶ In case of people from *Ṭarbīḥā*, they live in *Ma’shūq*, *Qāna*, *‘Adlūn*, *Ismā’īl*, *Ṣūr* and *Bazūrīya*.⁷ Some of the places mentioned here are located in *Ṣūr*, but the others are located outside of *Ṣūr*.

There was also a general awareness of the political tendency shared among villagers of each village. For example, most of the people from *Ṣalhā*, who live in *Shabrīḥa*, are considered to be supporters of the Amal movement, while some people from *Hūnīn* strongly support Hizbullah.

What Nationality Means

Nationality is generally expected to improve their lives greatly in Lebanon. As Lebanese, they are qualified to hold any kind of job including governmental position. They can purchase land easily, and own cars with red number plates—*numra ḥamrā*’—for public use. They are given Lebanese ID cards instead of the Palestinian refugee certificates issued by the Lebanese government; this makes it easier to go abroad or travel. During the interviews, many informants mentioned these advantages and yet, after further questionings, it became clear that in reality, the Lebanese nationality did not always work in their favor.

Not one of the 14 interviewees or their relatives got employed in the government after being granted nationality. A villager from *Ṭarbīḥā*, whom I shall call Hussein, said the reason was “Free jobs (*shugul ḥurr*) offer more benefits than governmental jobs.” He also said that “Because the Lebanese economy itself is not doing well (*ta’bān*), there is not much difference between being Lebanese and Palestinian.”⁸ Another person, whom I shall call Hassan, was originally from *Na’ma*. He also could have obtained nationality. However, he did not apply, because he did not believe the decree was valid for Sunnis. Even after some other Sunnis have obtained nationality, Hassan insists he does not want it. He says that he knows many people whose lives have not improved after attaining citizenship.⁹ As mentioned earlier, Ahmad still lives in the Shatila refugee camp and earns his living collecting garbage. His life basically did not change; he still depends on the support from UNRWA.

⁶ Interview conducted on August 15, 2008 in *Shabrīḥa* in *Ṣūr* district.

⁷ Interview conducted on August 15, 2008 in *Shabrīḥa* in *Ṣūr* district.

⁸ Interview conducted on August 14, 2008 in *Ma’shūq* in *Ṣūr*. The informant was born in *Ṭarbīḥā* in 1937, and settled in *Ma’shūq* after his fourth or fifth move. He got Lebanese nationality by the 1994 decree. He is already retired and one of his sons now works in Germany.

⁹ Interview conducted on August 16, 2008 in the *Burj al-Shamālī* refugee camp in *Ṣūr*. The informant is originally from *na’ma*, born in 1962 and working for the Fatah movement.

With respect to their sense of affiliation, it is rather complicated and differs from case to case. A woman who lives in the *Burj al-Shamālī* refugee camp and is originally from Sunni *Dhūq* said she believes that she is a Palestinian. “I got nationality just to make things easier,” she said.¹⁰ In contrast, a man who lives in *Ṣūr* city and is originally from Shiite *Hūnīn* told me, he believes that they are definitely Lebanese. He said, “The Seven Villages were originally Lebanese and we are originally Lebanese.” He added that before 1994, when he had Palestinian ID card, he felt that it was not right—*mush mazbūt*—. ¹¹ As a third example, a man who lives in *Ṣūr* city and is originally from Christian *Iqrit* declined any identification. Even when asked about their preference or hope of affiliation, he answered that it must be decided by referendum. He criticized the decisions taken by Britain and France, for which no opinion of the residents were taken into consideration. He said “The most important thing is to go back to our land, and then we decide our affiliation by referendum.”¹²

At a glance, it seems that this difference of opinion can be explained by the difference of religious sects. However, there are also several other opinions even within the same sects. Instead, what seems to be more useful to understand their sense of affiliation can be found in their differentiation of the words; nationalization (*tajannus*), naturalization (*tawīn*), and re-nationalization (*i'ād*). At the time of the interview, an interviewee from *Ṣalhā*, who lives in Shiite *shabrīḥa*, started talking about differences between them. He said that nationalization (*tajannus*) and naturalization (*tawīn*) are completely different. Nationalization means just getting nationality as a Lebanese citizen and does not mean to quit being a Palestinian. However, Naturalization means to quit being a Palestinian, which is hardly acceptable.¹³ The other person from *Na'ma* also gave a similar explanation, saying that nationalization is temporal, but naturalization is permanent.¹⁴ This differentiation is sometimes used very pragmatically, so even an activist of PLO got Lebanese nationality for the sake of widening their children's possibility in the future.¹⁵

¹⁰ Interview conducted on August 15, 2008. The informant was born in the refugee camp in 1969, and now works as a teacher at a nursery school in the camp.

¹¹ Interview conducted on August 16, 2008 in *Ṣūr* city, *Ṣūr* district. The informant was born in *Hūnīn* in 1947 and moved to *Ṣūr* directly. His father and grandfather were martyrs of the 1948 war, and he was single-handedly brought up by his mother. He explained how their exodus happened “together with the move of the Palestinian people.” He keeps a copy of a certificate under the period of Greater Lebanon, which he showed to me in order to emphasize their Lebanese origin. He also showed me a book on the Seven Villages.

¹² The same interviewee as mentioned above.

¹³ Interview conducted on August 15, 2008. The informant has worked as a representative of the *Shabrīḥa* area since 1995. He was born in 1964 and got Lebanese nationality through a law suit in the 1960s. He said that some of the *Ṣalhā* villagers were granted nationality in the 1960s as re-nationalization, and the others in 1994.

¹⁴ Interview conducted on August 16, 2008 in the *Burj al-Shamālī* refugee camp in Sur. He is a special case as his nationalization was cancelled even after all the procedures because of double registration by another person with the same name.

¹⁵ Interview conducted on February 28, 2008 at the PHRO office in the Mar Elias refugee camp. He is originally from *Mālkīya* village, born in 1959 in south Lebanon and now lives in the Burji Barajne refugee camp

About *i'ād*—re-nationalization, it is the preferred reason for the people from the Seven Villages, compared to *tajannus*—nationalization, as an explanation why they applied for nationality. The difference is emphasized for the sake of the legitimacy to take nationality, as the 1994 decree is the subject of the quarrel that is at stake in the Lebanese political sphere. In 2003, the Lebanese Religious authority—the *Shūrā* Council—ordered the interior minister Elias Murr to investigate the validity of the nationality granted by Decree No.5247. This was just one month before the ninth anniversary of the decree [al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ 2004]. It takes ten years for people granted nationality to enjoy full citizenship, which means that the Council intended to have them revoked. As with the other cases in Lebanon, the 1994 decree is considered to have been issued for some special political intent, and hence, after all those years, the opponent began revoking it. In a way, the people from the Seven Villages, could still lose their nationality; this fact urges them to justify their reason for having been granted nationality.

I'ād—re-nationalization means that they got nationality not on the basis of new policies but because they had been Lebanese under the French mandate. This explanation functions as a justification and as the basis of their identification. So long as their legal status is vulnerable, it is difficult for others to judge if it is the former or the latter.

6. Conclusion

In this presentation, I reviewed the history of the Seven Villages, their political condition, and their evaluation from the Lebanese and Palestinian viewpoints. On the basis of this review, I have conducted research in the Sur governorate this year, and some of the interviews were used for analysis. Through this study, it became clear that the scope of the Seven Villages is sometimes vague in itself, and that they may include not only Shiite but Sunnis and Christians as well. They live mostly in the Sur governorate but are also scattered across other regions in Lebanon. They have several gatherings for each village. Acquisition of nationality is supposed to mean a lot for them in terms of a better life; however, this is not necessarily the case. Nevertheless, nationality is considered to bring more possibility to their lives, and therefore, people take advantage of it based on practical thinking. In that case nationalization (*tajannus*) is strictly differentiated from naturalization (*tawfīn*), and they prefer to use the word re-nationalization (*i'ād*) to justify its legitimacy. Their identity is a complex mixture of Lebanese and Palestinian affiliation and is strongly influenced by the surrounding political situation.

in Beirut. He got Lebanese nationality by the decree in 1994. He is a member of a popular committee, married to a Lebanese, and they have four children.

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