In *Architecture, Power and Religion in Lebanon*, Ward Vloeberghs explores Rafiq Hariri's patronage and his posthumous legacy to demonstrate how religious architecture becomes a site for power struggles in contemporary Beirut. By tracing the 150 year-long history of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque – Lebanon's principal Sunni mosque – and the subsequent development of the site as a commemoration venue, this account offers a unique illustration of how architecture, religion and power become discursively and visually entangled. Set in a multi-confessional society marked by social inequalities and political fragmentation, this interdisciplinary study analyses how architectural practice and urban reconfigurations reveal a nascent personality cult, communal mourning, and the consolidation of political territory in relation to constantly shifting circumstances.

WARD VLOEBERGHS studied Arab & Islamic Studies and Politics. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the Erasmus University College in Rotterdam and focuses on political sociology in the Arab world.

ISBN: 978-90-04-30582-3
9 789004 305823

ISSN: 1385-3376
brill.com/seps

SEPS 114

Architecture, Power and Religion in Lebanon

Ward Vloeberghs

BRILL

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STUDIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA

Architecture, Power and Religion in Lebanon

Rafiq Hariri and the Politics of Sacred Space in Beirut

Ward Vloeberghs

BRILL

Cover illustration: The Muhammad al-Amin Mosque, as seen from its south-eastern corner on 5 March 2005.

Vloeberghs, Ward, author.
Architecture, power and religion in Lebanon : Rafiq Hariri and the politics of sacred space in Beirut / By Ward Vloeberghs.
pages cm. -- (Social, economic and political studies of the Middle East and Asia ; volume 114)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-90-04-30582-3 (hardback : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-30705-6 (e-book) 1. Jami' Muhammad al-Amin (Beirut, Lebanon) 2. Architecture--Lebanon--Beirut--History--20th century. 3. Islamic architecture--Lebanon--Beirut. 4. Mosques--Lebanon--Beirut. 5. Beirut (Lebanon)--Buildings, structures, etc. 6. Hariri, Rafiq Baha', 1944-2005. I. Title.
BP187.65.L4B4526 2015
297.3'556925--dc23
2015034547

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities.
For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1385-3376
ISBN 978-90-04-30582-3 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-30705-6 (e-book)

Printed by Printforce, the Netherlands

Contents

Acknowledgements

The publication of this book marks a provisional end to a journey started in Rennes while on a visit to a dear Lebanese friend. During this trip, my initial curiosity about the mosque's construction site which I had witnessed as a student in Beirut (2002–2004), was transformed into an embryonic research project at the Centre interdisciplinaire d'études de l'Islam contemporain (CISMOC) within the Université catholique de Louvain (UCL). I would hereby like to thank all those who, over this past period, have contributed – deliberately or not- towards the completion of that project and its mutation into this manuscript. Along this fascinating trajectory, I have made numerous stimulating encounters and I am grateful for every single one of them. Special thanks are overdue to my supervisor, Amine Ait-Chaalal, for his patient confidence, his far-sighted academic guidance and his lively humour. Furthermore, I thank Baudouin Dupret for sharing some of his scientific excellence and for his perspicacity. My gratitude also extends to Nabil Beyhum, Han den Heijer, Felice Dassetto and Claude Roosens for precious and thoughtful advice and to Theodoros Koutroubas for his relentless, stylish encouragements.

Besides, I thank my inspiring colleagues and peers, from Leuven, via Cairo and Beirut to Louvain-la-Neuve and, then, from Rabat via The Hague to Rotterdam. They are too numerous to be named here but I do want to mention Nikolaos Raptopoulos, Thomas Pierret, Gaétan du Roy and Farid El Asri as fellow "cismographs" and Airo Hino and Joan P. Plaza as partners-in-crime with remarkable lust for adventurous plotting. I also thank Sylvia Bergh and Joop de Wit for welcoming me at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Moreover, I wish to thank my students with their stimulating questions for teaching me the (all-too-often elusive) virtue of clarity.

In Beirut, I felt privileged to exchange with architects, scholars, journalists and friends. In addition to the interviewees mentioned in the book, I would like to explicitly thank Hani Hatab, Karim El-Mufti, Antonios Abou Kasm, Naya Khairallah, Rania Safar, Jihad Nammour, Nada Moumtaz, Zouhair Ghazzal, Simon Jackson, Isabelle Dellerba, Samer Ghamroun, Barbara Drieskens, Hannes Baumann, Hicham Cheaib and, of course, Mireille Tabet and Sebastian Abdallah for sharing their help and knowledge. I also enjoyed highly instructive encounters with Azmi Fakhouri, Abdel Wahab El Wakil, Angus Gavin and Mohammed Noqqari. I pay homage to the late Assem Salam who kindly received me at his Ottoman residence in Batrakieh.

Furthermore, I am indebted to Saad Khaled, Saleh Lamei, Stefan Weber, Yon Janssen and Julien Ricour for their willingness to share photographs. Above all,

I acknowledge the expert help of professional photographer Lisa Valcke in upgrading many of the images I provided. Similarly, architect Pieter Walraet selflessly contributed time and magical tricks that justify my deep appreciation. At Brill, I would like to thank the editorial team, especially Nienke Brienen-Moolenaar, for professional assistance throughout the whole process. Moreover, two anonymous reviews improved this book considerably with constructive comments. Evidently, I bear sole responsibility for occurring mistakes.

Finally, a major stretch of the journey sent me into solitary confinement in Torgny. There, I thank the cats Prosper & Sidonie and their human servants for their legendary hospitality. Last but not least, I thank my mother (for everything!, including help with the index;-) and hereby send a warm hug to my superwoman Siska and our son Viggo for being such inspiring company and for the cheering smiles over the past few years.

The book as a whole is dedicated, with much affection, to the city of Beirut and its ingenious citizens.

List of Figures

Figures

List of Abbreviations

ANM	Arab Nationalist Movement
AUB	American University Beirut
BCD	Beirut Central District
BIEL	Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure centre
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CIAH	Centre for Conservation and Preservation of Islamic heritage
DGA	Directorate General of Antiquities
DGIA	Directorate General of Islamic Awqaf
DPLG	Diplomé par le gouvernement
FPM	Free Patriotic Movement
ISIS	Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (aka IS, *dā'ish*)
ISF	Internal Security Forces
LBP	Lebanese Lira (national currency)
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MP	Member of Parliament
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
SOLIDERE	Société libanaise de développement et de reconstruction
STL	Special Tribunal for Lebanon
UNIIIC	United Nations International Independent Inquiry Commission

Introduction

When Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and Mufti Qabbani laid the first stone for the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque on the first of Ramadan 1423 (6 November 2002), Hariri declared that the construction of this mosque "cherished by the Muslims of Lebanon in general and Beirut in particular" had been awaited "during the past five decades".[1] He praised Allah for having "shaped the suitable circumstances for the start, today, of the setting up of this sublime religious edifice (*aṣ-ṣarḥ ad-dīnī al-jalīl*)". Everyone knew that Hariri himself had contributed a good deal in bringing about the suitable circumstances and none of the attendees failed to notice the subtle choice of vocabulary.[2] Next to thanking Allah for his favours, Hariri went on to say how fortunate it was to be able to erect the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque "on this particular site in the heart of the capital, where religions embrace each other in order to form a national corner welcoming faith as a shared area for national harmony that confirms the message of Lebanon".[3]

Taken at face value, these words are no more than humble reflections of the solemn scenes that come with such circumstances, replete with authentic inclusiveness towards all fellow citizens. In this light, one assumes, Hariri's speech was a paragon of religious tolerance and epitomised his spirit of national, trans-confessional cohesiveness. Rafiq Hariri's statement can, indeed, most profitably be understood as an anticipated self-fulfilling prophecy; i.e. as the message that Hariri wished for "his" favoured mosque to transmit. In such a reading, one assumes that Hariri intended the mosque to stand next to several cathedrals in a show of national unity, deliberately inclusive of other religions, especially Christianity. Certain arrangements on the premises of the mosque – such as the tree "of national understanding" planted between the mosque and the gravesite – hint at such an image. Without taking aim at Hariri's sincerity, I want to suggest here that, in addition to this first layer of

1 *al-Liwa*, 17 November 2008. Hariri's speech was also featured in a documentary film produced by Abdel Aziz Issa, text by Munir al-Hafi (s.d., perhaps 2005?).

2 While *ṣarḥ* can be translated as "lofty edifice" or "imposing structure", its first meaning, according to Hans Wehr, is "castle" or "palace". The adjective *jalīl* expresses a number of meanings, ranging from "great" or "significant" to "glorious", "weighty" or "exalted".

3 *fī hādhā l-mawqiʿ bi dh-dhāt min qalbi l-ʿāṣimati haithu tataʿānaqa al-adyānu jamīʿan li tashkīl ruknan waṭanīyan fī riḥāb al-īmān, wa musāḥatan mushtarikan lil-wifāq al-waṭanī tuʾakkidu risālati lubnān*. The quotation is taken from OGER LIBAN, *Jāmi Muḥammad al-Amīn. al-Ḥarīrī yuḥaqqiq ḥulm Bayrūt* [*Muhammad al-Amin Mosque. Hariri realises Beirut's dream*], Beirut: Oger Liban, November 2008, p. 3.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004307056_002

meaning, there is another way to read Hariri's statement. Namely to take these utterances as expressions of Hariri's power. Such an alternative view would conceive of Hariri's speech in itself, just as much as his construction of a monumental mosque, as a skilful manifestation of his authority.

Years ago, Gilsenan has documented a number of practices of power, i.e. dynamics and processes used in Lebanese contexts to express authority and command respect. Among them he counts the display of boasting (*fashr*), mockery (*bahdala*) or news (*akhbār*) but also joking (*mazaḥ*), nobility (*karāma*) and social standing (*markaz*).[4] One could argue that Hariri's speech about the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque illustrated more than one of these techniques, to various degrees. In this view, Hariri's inaugural statement becomes part of what Gilsenan calls the "operations of power".[5] We can then understand his speech as being part of those practices of public power which require "many processes less immediate to sight".[6] In other words, Hariri's speech is marked by such suggestive formulas, that it can be understood as a moderate and genuinely inclusive discourse but at the same time can come across as a forceful expression of communal leadership. This is not only true for his speech, it applies to the building itself as well. Exactly that communal identity and the leadership shown by Hariri through the construction of this major mosque is the object of my investigation in this book. More precisely, I want to examine how such communal leadership can be expressed architecturally.

In monographic format, I analyse how the Lebanese political actor Rafiq Hariri conducted one of his most significant political projects, namely his patronage of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque in central Beirut. Tellingly, Hariri did so on top of the ruins of the civil war – literally and symbolically. He installed a congregational mosque in the middle of a sector reconstructed at his impetus – and often perceived as an exponent of capitalist power.[7] By the 2010's, however, guidebooks on Beirut bore the mosque's silhouette on their

4 See: Michael Gilsenan, "*Niẓām mā fī*: Discourses of Order, Disorder and History in a Lebanese Context" in John Spagnolo (ed.), *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective. Essays in Hounour of Albert Hourani*, Reading: Ithaca, 1992, pp. 79–104. For a more recent analysis of language politics, see: Diane Riskedahl, "A Sign of War: The Strategic use of violent imagery in contemporary Lebanese political rhetoric" in *Language & Communication*, Vol. 27 (2007), pp. 307–319.

5 Gilsenan, *Niẓām mā fī*, p. 95.

6 Gilsenan, *Michael Gilsenan, Lords of the Lebanese Marches. Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society*, London: IB Tauris, 1996 p. xii.

7 See e.g.: Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: remembering and forgetting the past*, London: Routledge, 2012.

cover as the edifice had become the new image of the Lebanese capital (see Fig. 3.10). Nevertheless, the trajectory of this long-awaited prayer hall and its relationship to one of Lebanon's best-known politicians often remains either ignored or distorted.

The history of Lebanon's principal Sunni mosque – which spans more than a century and a half – and the subsequent development of the site as the main venue for the commemoration of Rafiq Hariri, represent unique illustrations of how architecture, religion and power can become intimately and visually entangled. This striking case of ongoing urban reconfigurations and the political contestation over sacred space serves as the backbone of this book. Set in the multi-confessional context of a Lebanese society marked by deep social inequalities and by protracted political turmoil at local as well as regional level, this is a truly multi-disciplinary study that combines insights from various social sciences to gain a better understanding of the political dimensions of religious architecture in the contemporary Middle East.

While the focus is on clarifying the connection between this particular politician and this specific mosque, the underlying aim of this book is to offer a fresh assessment of the construction process of this building, its historic significance and its actual relevance to both Hariri and the larger Lebanese public. This allows us to understand how a religious monument interacts with its physical and its human environment, and how the struggle over the posthumous legacy of a slain politician associated to that monument participates in this process while being, at the same time, a microcosm informative about contemporary Middle Eastern politics. Because the emergence of a new house of worship on such a strategic location inevitably triggers questions as to how religious architecture becomes a tool to shape new political realities, this study deals, in short, with the politics of sacred space.

From this research programme also flows a set of research questions. How did the mosque arise at this particular location? Why did it emerge at this particular moment in time? Was this a popular initiative or the idea of an urban elite? Who sponsored its construction? Why was it built in this particular fashion? What does the architectural design tell us? How did Beirut's Muslim and non-Muslim communities react to this new edifice? What do architects and urban planners think of its construction? Why was the mosque constructed in a neighbourhood with so many other religious buildings? Does it cater to the needs of a particular community? These questions have been brought together into a number of overarching questions, three of which structure the main parts of this text: the first part concentrates on Hariri as a Lebanese decision-maker, the second one deals with the edifice and its main features while a third part then explores how sacred space is converted into political territory.

Architecture, Power and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Approach

In pointing to the political dimensions in the practice of religious architecture, I maintain that analysing the built environment as a depository of eminently political acts can be tremendously rich and beneficial for our understanding of ongoing societal dynamics. It is in their spatial expressions that power relations can be best visualised and few places are more eloquent in this respect than the Lebanese capital. To gain a proper understanding of how architectural exercise articulates political ambition in Beirut it is important to put this phenomenon in historical and thematic perspective; only then can we see how power is being accomplished on a constant basis, through decision-making and publishing decrees as much as through speech acts or by investing buildings with political meaning.

One way to start this examination of the interplay of architecture, power, and religion in Lebanon through Rafiq Hariri's commissioning the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque is to take stock of the wide variety of disciplines involved in such an endeavour: anthropology, archaeology, architecture, art history, economy, geography, history, political science, sociology and urban planning all offer valuable perspectives on how politics mix with religion in an urban context. To some extent, this work borrows from all of these fields in its attempt to understand the mosque as an architectural expression of power and situate it within a broader web of scholarship. Thus, quite naturally, social scientists privileging qualitative methodologies and concentrating on the urban to understand conflict in society[8] inform my approach. A host of social scientists inspired by the Chicago School (from Georg Simmel to Howard Becker) has developed crucial insights in this regard. In my case, the critical thinking of (French) scholars on notions like access to public space for all citizens (Henri Lefebvre, Isaac Joseph) proved helpful, as was the focus on the actual, ordinary practices of urban space by various categories of residents (from Michel de Certeau to Bruno Latour) to understand the workings of contemporary societies.

8 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Translated by Steven Rendall*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984 ; N.J. Habraken, *The Structure of the Ordinary. Form and Control in the Built Environment. Edited by Jonathan Teicher*, Cambridge MIT Press, 2000; Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville*, Paris: Anthropos, 1968; Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge MIT Press, 1960; Bruno Latour & Emilie Hermant, *Paris ville invisible*, Paris: La Découverte, 1998; Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton University Press, 2008.

In addition to this, writings on identity politics – especially those with regard to Islam-[9] and memory studies[10] also intersect with the wider frame of research that underpins this book, as do some studies in political geography or urban anthropology.[11] As for the analysis of urban space, the Middle East has long served as a cherished field of enquiry for an impressive chain of scholars (from orientalists like KAC Creswell or Jean Sauvaget, over Ira Lapidus and Janet Abu Lughod, to Seteney Shami and Diane Singerman, more recently) showing how urban design relates to political change.[12] These debates have spawned studies pointing at the implicit and explicit politics of urban planning or the political potential of monuments to convey messages with colonial, dynastic or nationalist content.[13] Such themes have then been further

9 Dale F. Eickelman & James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton University Press, 2005; Ernesto Laclau (ed.), *The Making of Political Identities*, London: Verso, 1994; Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics. Reimagining the Umma*, New York: Routledge, 2004; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject. Second edition*, Princeton University Press, 2011; Armando Salvatore & Marc LeVine (eds.), *Religion, Social Practice and Contested Hegemonies. Reconstructing the Public Sphere in Muslim Majority Societies*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

10 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory in the Present*, Stanford University Press, 2003 ; Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1992; Martin Hall, "Identity, Memory and Countermemory. The Archeology of an Urban Landscape" in *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 11, Nr. 1–2 (July 2006), pp. 189–209 Jocelyne Dakhlia, *Forgetting History: The Motifs and Contents of Collective Memory in Southern Tunisia*, Stanford University Press, 2002; Ussama Makdisi & Paul Silverstein, *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*, Indiana University Press, 2006.

11 Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, The University of Chicago Press, 2013; Setha Low & Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

12 From I. Serageldin, R.R. Herbert & S. El-Sadek (eds.), *The Arab City. Its Character and Islamic Cultural Heritage*, Riyadh: Arab Urban Development Institute, 1982 over Janet Abu Lughod, "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, Nr. 2 (May, 1987), pp. 155–176 to Diane Singerman & Paul Amar (eds.), *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, American University in Cairo Press, 2006 and from Nezar al-Sayyad, *Cities and Caliphs: On the Genesis of Arab Muslim Urbanism*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1991 or Mohamed Naciri & André Raymond (dirs.), *Sciences Sociales et Phénomènes Urbains dans le Monde Arabe*, Casablanca: Fondation du Roi Aziz Al Saoud pour les Etudes Islamiques, 1997 to Seteney Shami (ed.), *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*, Toronto University Press, 2001.

13 See respectively: Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, The University of Chicago Press, 1991; Nezar Al-Sayyad, (ed.), *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1992; Irene A. Bierman, *Writing Signs : the Fatimid Public Text*, Berkeley: University of California Press,

into a tourist attraction and political forum dedicated to Hariri's cause. Throughout this book, I maintain that the development of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque and the burial site attached to it helped Rafiq Hariri and his heirs to forge a political and religious legitimacy that went well beyond the boundaries of the Sunni community of Beirut. Moreover, several elements of this very evolution suggest that, far from being unintended, there has been a systematic exploitation and gradual elaboration of the gravesite towards the glorification of Rafiq Hariri, especially during the first decade after his death. Thus, I argue that the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque is a constitutive element in this operation, as I consider the funerary complex to be composed of both mosque and tomb. Moreover, in addition to portraying Hariri and tracking the construction history of the project, I will also discuss a number of reactions (both spatial and discursive) to the construction of the mosque and its immediate surroundings in the third part of this book.

Aims and Methods of this Book

Two objectives stand out at the start of this book: the first is to chart the background of Rafiq Hariri as a major political actor in postwar Lebanon, both during his lifetime and after his death. The second is to trace the historical trajectory of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque construction project. To each of these aims correspond the first and the second parts of this book, respectively. To each of both parts also corresponds a specific research method, political personality profiling and process tracing, respectively.[54] From these two initial aims follows a third objective for the book: to understand the interactions between sacred space and politics and to explore how, in Lebanon, architecture in general and religious architecture in particular can serve as tools to strengthen a politically charged geography. That final objective will be addressed in the third part of this book, by drawing upon methods that combine ethnography with content analysis.

As indicated, this is a study in political science writ large: the decision of an ambitious politician to sponsor the construction of a mosque in the centre of his country's capital can hardly be understood without analysing events, stakes, context and actors through a political prism. However, as became clear

54 For details, see: Jerrold M. Post, "Political Personality Profiling" in Audie Klotz & Deepa Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations. A Pluralist Guide*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 131–150 and Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Process Tracing" in Klotz & Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative methods in international relations*, pp. 114–127.

in the literature overview above, because of the particular blend of themes and topics dealt with in this monograph, I have often borrowed insights, techniques and concepts from ancillary disciplines. It should hardly surprise, therefore, that I will engage with what has recently been labelled "mixed methodology research". More precisely, I will rely upon a number of what Klotz & Prakash have called "boundary crossing techniques".[55] Besides, if "urban studies" are, as Ricca claims, "by definition a cross-border and complex discipline",[56] the interdisciplinary character of the literature and research methods used here is no more than the logical outcome of my investigation process.

In addition to being resolutely interdisciplinary, this study also espouses a pragmatic approach. That choice is more than only a matter of convenience or feasibility; it is also an informed decision based on a keen interest in exploring how grand gestures are often based on ordinary practices and pragmatic compromises. I will be paying particular attention to such non-formal interactions throughout my discussion on how the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque became what it is as a result of the exchanges between the protagonists. Furthermore, this pragmatic approach also allows taking into account contributions from the multiplicity of fields involved, regardless of their kind or form, as long as they contribute to the knowledge and comprehension of the political dimensions of religious architecture in contemporary Beirut. Pragmatism is thus being embraced on a philosophical as well as on a practical level, by allowing for both a methodological and an epistemological pluralism, as recommended by Checkel.

> To capture (...) dynamic interactions, (...) scholars must be epistemologically plural – employing both positivist and post-positivist methodological lenses.[57]

In this pluralist perspective, the selected research tools and methods become mutually complementary tools. Thus, for example, the attempt throughout Part 1 to identify enduring aspects of Hariri's main personality characteristics, including his formative experiences, ideological background, key moments in

55 Audie Klotz & Deepa Prakash (eds.), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations. A Pluralist Guide*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. On Mixed Methods Research, see e.g. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice*, New York: Guilford, 2010 or Jennifer C. Greene, *Mixed methods in social inquiry*, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

56 Ricca, *Reinventing Jerusalem*, p. 8.

57 Checkel, *Process Tracing*, p. 114.

life, leadership style but also cognitive, affective, and interpersonal elements, in order to gain an idea of the protagonist's psycho-biography, as advocated by Post[58] will help us better understand Hariri's intervention in the project of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque. However, although I agree with Post that "previous life experience influence political behavior" and that the "pursuit of dreams of glory formed during adolescence can drive a leader throughout his lifetime, having special force at mid-life transition", I do not want to overstate a given leader's psychological background and reduce him to one single, pure type of personality, as Post sometimes seems prone to do.[59] I have therefore taken care to diversify the overview of Hariri by differentiating between distinct roles he assumed over time; Part 1 will thus cover Hariri as a businessman, as a politician and as a martyr to highlight various aspects of Hariri's personality. Similarly, the emphasis put in the process tracing literature on interactions between individuals in shaping of reality will be highly useful throughout Part 2. For one thing, process tracing acknowledges that what causes something to actually happen can be the result not only of chronology or intention but can also be the result of converging circumstances, socialisation or persuasion. In each case, it has to be determined on the basis of a wide array of factors, as emphasised by Checkel.

> Process tracing means to trace the operation of the causal mechanism(s) at work in a given situation. (...) The data for process tracing is overwhelmingly qualitative in nature, and may include historical memoirs, expert surveys, interviews, press accounts, and documents. (...) The greatest challenge is the significant amount of time and data that it requires. (...) Process tracing is compatible with (...) a range of other methods.[60]

Such insights are likely to become even more relevant (especially when combined with Hariri's background in Part 1) to further explore the interplay of religion, politics and architecture in Part 3 from a social science perspective, in particular through detailed analysis of a number of practices and dynamics in which description and interpretation strengthen each other mutually.

In addition to these specific research techniques, I have resorted to interviews, most often semi-formal ones in which a structured questionnaire (mostly in English, occasionally in French or Arabic) was presented to the interviewee in order to provide for a basis structure to the ensuing discussion. This body of

58 Post, *Political Personality Profiling*.

59 Both quotation are taken from Post, *Political Personality Profiling*, p. 147.

60 Checkel, *Process Tracing*, p. 116.

respondents (about fifty in total, conducted between late 2005 and mid 2013) willingly targeted a number of experts (especially urban planners) with relevance to this project–all of them practicing in Lebanon. In this selection, I have consciously omitted Lebanese politicians since many of them tended to stick – more so than other professional categories – to what the French euphemistically call *langue de bois* i.e. (ideological) rhetoric. As for the Hariri family, in spite of repeated requests, so far neither Bahia al-Hariri nor Saad al-Hariri have found the time or manifested the will to respond to my calls or the questionnaires delivered to their offices. I did talk to Nazih Hariri at Oger Liban, however, as well as to several close aides, like Redwan as-Sayyid or Marwan Iskandar. By concentrating on one particular professional category – architects, by orienting my questions on technical aspects in the history of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque and its actual construction and by sticking to practical matters (such as the obstacles encountered or the implications of certain choices in design), I was able to reconstruct the complex construction history of the mosque and of Rafiq Hariri's involvement in this project. Moreover, this approach also allowed to trace a number of interventions made throughout the physical construction phases, most notably the re-orientation of the mosque's main entrance. In other words, this pragmatic approach and specific target-group allowed me to document concrete instances where sacred space was actually being shaped. In this respect, I took advantage of the considerable Lebanese know-how in the field of architecture and urban design to observe how more or less improvised interactions produce what Lepetit has called the "traces of history".[61]

Next to interviews, I have also relied upon other research methods, such as content analysis, sequence analysis or observation. Compared to interviews, (participant) observation has the considerable advantage of allowing the researcher to observe behaviour, practices and interactions in live action, i.e. while they are being accomplished and without intermediaries.[62] I found this technique to be particularly useful during the inauguration ceremony of the Bahaa Eddin al-Hariri Mosque in Saida (March 2006) and during a guiding tour by the architect inside the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque in July 2006. More recently, I visited Hariri's gravesite whenever I could, in order to keep track of changes in display. In addition to interviews and observation sessions, I also made a sustained effort to obtain visual material to illustrate my research topic in multiple ways. Thus, I ended up with a set of collector's items ranging

61 Bernard Lepetit, « Une herméneutique urbaine est-elle possible ? », in Bernard Lepetit & Denise Pumain (dirs.), *Temporalités urbaines*, Paris: Anthropos, 1993, pp. 287–299.

62 Hugh Gusterson, "Ethnographic Research" in Klotz & Prakash, *Qualitative methods in international relations*, pp. 93–113.

from post stamps, maps and official documents to propaganda material (posters, badges, stickers, booklets, etc.), and from CD's and DVD's with songs and recitations dedicated to Hariri, to paraphernalia I encountered in flea-markets and informal bookshops. Instead of dismissing such objects as futile, I took these very seriously, investigating them as manifestations of an elaborate personality cult.

Furthermore, a large corpus of articles from the highly diversified local press has been examined too. From *al-Akhbar* currently close to Hizbullah to Hariri's *al-Mustaqbal*, from pan-Arab *as-Safir* to the cosmopolitan *Daily Star* and from francophile *L'Orient Le Jour* to Sunni *al-Liwa*, this Lebanese press lab proved more useful in some cases than in others, partly because Lebanese dailies tend to identify with one particular political cause.[63] Here again, I adopted a pragmatic approach: the archives at the headquarters of *an-Nahar* are well organised and include a valuable section on Lebanese heritage and archaeology. Consequently, they produced numerous useful entries. The *Liwa* newspaper for its part, is well-informed on issues regarding the Sunni community of Beirut and enjoys privileged connections to Dar al-Fatwa. Finally, *al-Akhbar* and *L'Orient Le Jour*, although markedly partisan, have both featured a number of interesting series and special issues since 2005 – each with their particular bias.

Scope, Relevance and Structure of this Book

The period under analysis in this book runs from the mid-19th century up until late 2014. This period covers the first documented mention of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque in 1853, when Beirut was still ruled from Acre as a part of the Ottoman province of Saida.[64] It runs up until the early twenty-first century and, in particular, the end of the first decade following Rafiq Hariri's assassination. Moreover, the year 2014 also marks the end of Shaykh Qabbani's tenure as Grand Mufti of Lebanon, a role which led him to closely interact with Hariri on the construction of the mosque. Arguably, as Mufti Qabbani retired, Rafiq Hariri's Lebanon came to its ineluctable end. This broad scope of the book enables a considerable historical perspective, even though some of the more recent developments are still unfolding. In short, the period under investigation allows to contextualise the mosque's trajectory amid a Sunni community in full political emancipation, from its resistance to Ottoman and, thereafter, French authorities up until the introduction of a new republican regime carved out in Ta'if in 1989 and mostly observed under Hariri's tenure.

63 On this issue, see e.g. Dany Badran, "Democracy and Rhetoric in the Arab World," in *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol 4, Nr. 1 (Apr. 2013), pp. 65–86. See also: Camille Aubret, *Sur les chemins du public. Travail journalistique et composition du commun au Liban*, PhD dissertation, Paris: EHESS, 2009.

64 On this issue, see: Jens Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, Oxford University Press, 2005; Carla Eddé, *Beyrouth, naissance d'une capitale (1918–1924)*, Arles: Sindbad, 2009; Stefan Weber (eds.), *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Beirut: Orient Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 2002 and Bruce Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918. A social and cultural history*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

While substantial attention is paid to the long journey of the mosque, the main emphasis is on postwar Lebanon: it details the upward mobility of Rafiq Hariri all the way until his brutal assassination in 2005. The deliberate choice to include the first ten years after his death also enables us to consider the political succession of Rafiq Hariri and the mosque's official inauguration by his son Saad in 2008. Besides, it also captures the main dynamics of the turbulent years that followed, from the excitement of the Cedar Revolution to the roller coaster-like tribulations of the Arab Spring and its confusing cycle of regional unrest that afflicted Lebanon ever since Hizbullah came to be pitted against Hariri's Future Movement – not only in Lebanon but also, indirectly, inside a deeply fragmented Syria partly controlled by the likes of Islamic State (*dā'ish*).

Rafiq Hariri's role in this crucial period of Lebanese political history can hardly be overstated. Foes and friends alike agree that, for the better or for the worse, Hariri kick-started the postwar economy, gained unprecedented control over national politics and also masterminded the physical reconstruction of the country. The Muhammad al-Amin Mosque bears witness to that impressive record, standing as it does at the very heart of Hariri's capital. This holds true literally, as the mosque dominates the reconstructed city centre according to a design favoured by Hariri as well as in a figurative sense, since the mosque constitutes the apotheosis of his vision for a revamped Beirut as a regionally attractive hub. It also holds true, moreover, symbolically because this mosque, the country's largest and host to his own gravesite, represents the clearest bout of patronage bestowed by Hariri onto his fellow Sunni compatriots in his aspiration to be seen as its uncontested *za'īm* (traditional leader).

For all of these reasons, Hariri truly personified the increased influence of Lebanon's Sunni community during the first transformational decades following the end of the 1975–1990 civil war. Hariri's stature is such that even ten years after his death many Lebanese citizens continued to vote for Saad Hariri out of

respect for the late Rafiq Hariri. What is more, no single Sunni leader has been able to fill the void after his disappearance, much to the detriment of the community's bargaining power on the national and regional levels.[65] As if all this was not enough, Hariri also holds an important role as a resourceful innovator of the Lebanese political system, be it as the long-dominant player in its troika politics, be it as the preferred proxy of the Saudi monarchy or be it as the founder of the Mustaqbal Party (Future Movement) and the Hariri political dynasty.

In spite of the numerous critiques directed against his policies, Rafiq Hariri remains a massive figure in contemporary Lebanese politics.[66] Understanding the origins of Hariri's influence, understanding the circumstances of his involvement in the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque project and, especially, understanding his local power display on the urban territory are, therefore, key to our understanding of contemporary Lebanon. By doing so, we gain insight into how power is being accomplished in Beirut today. Indeed, Hariri's practices of power, the core of his political message and his use of religious architecture for political purposes continue to structure today's politics on a daily basis. Every time the members of the March 14 coalition or the Mustaqbal Party meet, a portrait of Rafiq Hariri is present; every time a political leader visits Saad Hariri, an image of his late father adorns the room. Tellingly, the first thing Saad Hariri did in August 2014 after he arrived back in Beirut after three years of self-imposed exile was to pay a visit to his father's tomb immediately next to the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque. The mosque itself, meanwhile, has rapidly become the focal centre of the entire Sunni community in Lebanon at every solemn occasion. These facts, taken together, should be sufficient evidence, then, of this book's relevance.

The structure of the books flows from its threefold ambition outlined above; each of the three parts has its corresponding method and aim. Thus, Part 1 presents Rafiq Hariri as a Lebanese actor in two separate chapters: Chapter 1 deals with Hariri's lifetime whereas Chapter 2 explores his posthumous legacy as an actor in Lebanese politics. Part 2 then engages in a similar close-up, not of a political actor but of a politically significant building. This is done, once

65 This fact is hard to overstate: Rafiq Hariri's assassination, the Doha Agreement of 2008 and the demise of Saad Hariri following the collapse of his government are all illustrations of how the Sunni emancipation has been stemmed by the corresponding rise of the Shia community's influence in Lebanese politics.

66 These critiques were renewed in the summer of 2015 as rubbish was piling up in the streets of Beirut and a vivid campaign of civil protest was launched to denounce the sclerosis fo the political establishment. The "YouStink" (*ṭal'at rīḥatkum*) demonstrators occupied central squares of the capital. Hariri's legacy was directly targeted as abusive slogans were sprayed upon his tomb.

again, in two separate chapters: Chapter 3 retraces the political history of the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque project by paying specific attention to Rafiq Hariri's involvement whereas Chapter 4 recounts the successive architectural interventions that resulted in the building's distinctive shape, by focusing on the contributions of the main architects involved. Part 3 then continues along this path in Chapter 5 to explore, through the lens of four leading architects, how the edifice acquired political significance. Finally, in Chapter 6, the focus shifts away from the mosque and the architects to evaluate, from a social science perspective, how the mosque is part of a much wider endeavour by Hariri and his heirs to reinforce urban space in Beirut as visibly and sustainably committed to his symbolic and political legacy.