Troubled Geography

Imagining Lebanon in 1960s Tourist Promotion

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At the turn of 1969, a peculiar advertisement appeared in *The Economist* issue of 27 Dec.–2 Jan. (Fig. 7.1). The ad featured two attractive young women posing fashionably in a prototypical Mediterranean beach setting on a perfectly sunny day. Their shimmering golden bikinis further intensify the sunshine while evoking the futuristic glamour of the day. Here's an image that would get anyone in the northern hemisphere dreaming of escape – at least from the December freeze. The country advertised is one where you can enjoy the much-desired sun, beach and associated fun, in utmost modernity.

This is Lebanon as represented in the 1960s and early 1970s by the Lebanese Council for Tourism, a then newly established state agency. Shortly after the appearance of the ad in *The Economist*, a Mr and Mrs Robertson wrote a letter of complaint in the English periodical the *New Statesman* questioning: 'Why is a colour ad for the Lebanon running in last week's *Economist* posed against the Fraglioni of Capri?'[1] Their public inquisition illustrates how this ad might have stirred some confusion in the tourism imaginary of a Euro-American public to whom it was addressed, assertively expressed here at least by the distrusting couple.

The Economist ad and ensuing response provoke a series of questions concerning Lebanon's tourism publicity at the time. To begin with, why would the Lebanese state, by way of its Tourism Council and its agents – graphic designers included – choose to promote the country as a modern European-styled Mediterranean tourist destination? And second, what does this image mean in a context of conflicting politics of nationhood and belonging to the Arab world?

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Notes for this section begin on page 139.

Figure 7.1 Advertisement for Lebanon in *The Economist*, 27 Dec.–2 Jan. 1969–1970. Designed by Mona Bassili Sehnaoui for The National Council of Tourism in Lebanon.

To answer these questions and untangle the politics that lay in the production and circulation of this ad, I shall take a close look at the promotional prints issued by the National Council for Tourism in 1960s–1970s Lebanon. My study unpacks the discursive and aesthetic implications of graphic design by examining the tourism prints through two intersecting frameworks, that of global modernity and that of postcolonial nation building. My analysis relates the tourism prints first to the modernizing agenda of the state and its desire to position Lebanon on the global map of emerging mass tourism, particularly the one flourishing on the European side of the Mediterranean basin from the French Riviera all the way to the Greek islands. Moreover, the Lebanese state in the 1960s was keen on developing its tourism sector as it grew to become one of the main national industries. As I will discuss, the Tourism Council sought to substitute an older imaginary of Lebanon as a regional mountain summer resort with images of modernity on the Mediterranean coast. At the outset, this approach could be situated within a modernizing framework of the Lebanese state that looked towards the 'developed' West for a tourism model to emulate. However, the lens of global modernity becomes complicated once Lebanon's colonial history, its creation as a nation state and ensuing national identity politics are brought to the fore. Accordingly, I move to critically interrogate the

politics of a Mediterranean geography of belonging, especially in light of its antagonistic relation to contemporary politics of Arab nationalism. My study links the purported Mediterranean geography back to a dominant imaginary of Lebanon expressed in the discourses of the country's most influential nationalists. I argue that Lebanon's 1960s–1970s tourism prints, as mass-mediated modern artefacts of visual culture, contributed to the discursive formation of a Lebanese subjectivity premised on separatism from the Arab context, endorsing as such a Westernized cosmopolitan character of the nation and its people.

Lebanon as a Summer Resort for the Arab East

Summer vacationing became a common practice in the newly formed state of Lebanon during French colonial rule (1920–1943). Referred to as *estivage*, from the French root *été* (summer) or *villégiature (village)*, this designated the geography of Mount Lebanon as a summer resort. The touristic practice, very much inscribed within the era's European travels to the colonies, encouraged foreigners living in the region to flee the heat of the summer on the coast or in the Arabian hinterland and retreat to the freshness of the Lebanese mountains (Kfoury 1959: 276). Lebanon as a summer resort was encouraged by local authorities in coordination with the French Haut Commissariat (al-Hassan 1973: 31–32; Kassir 2003: 363–369) and promoted as such by related travel enterprises. Mount Lebanon had its share of idyllic representations in guides such as the 1925 and 1928 editions of *Guide de Villégiature du Mont Liban* as well as in the famed colonial travel posters of the period as part of the campaign 'Liban et Syrie, Pays de Villégiature' (Kassir 2003: 364–365; cf. Ghozzi 1997).

The practice of summer vacationing in the Lebanese mountains was also taken up by an affluent Arab community, namely from Egypt, Palestine and Iraq, who took seasonal summer residence in Mount Lebanon. Facilitated by the new transportation networks, the trend gained currency in the 1930s and 1940s, rendering Mount Lebanon a summer destination for the wider Arab East including a domestic influx of wealthier Lebanese incoming from the coastal cities (Kfoury 1959: 276–278; al-Hassan 1973: 31). Thus *estivage* met its Arabic equivalent of *istiyaf,* from the root of the word *sayf*, meaning summer.

The post-independence Lebanese state, recognizing the importance of this growing economic sector, began to consolidate its efforts to develop, regulate and promote Lebanon's tourism. *Al-mufawwadhiya al-'amma lil'siyaha wal'istiyaf* (The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing), founded in late 1948 as part of the Ministry of Economy, was the first serious government initiative of the sort. Promotional prints published by the General Office further entertained the tourist imagination of Lebanon as a mountain summer resort. One such poster, which can be dated to the early 1950s, is a case in point. The image

Figure 7.2 Poster 'Lebanon, the summer resort of Arab countries'. C. early 1950s. Designer anonymous. The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing. Size: 70×100 cm lithography. Collection A. Bou Jaoudeh.

is a painted scene that captures an idyllic moment of a cool afternoon in the quietude of the Lebanese mountains. An inviting table of fresh fruits, coffee and an earthenware water pitcher are set in the context of an outdoor porch of vernacular Lebanese mountain architecture and complemented by the cool shades of a vine tree. The composition is aesthetically akin to the practice of landscape painting in modern art in Lebanon at the time, which was culturally intertwined with nation building (Scheid 2005: chapter 3). In an intricate interplay of text and image – and here I am borrowing Roland Barthes' analysis of 'Italianicity' in the Panzani ad (1977: 34) – the title anchors the symbolic connotations of 'Lebaneseness' in the painted vista (ibid: 37–41). Set in Arabic calligraphy it reads: 'Lebanon, the summer resort of Arab countries'.

L'Estivage se meurt, vive le tourisme

On 12 September 1955, an article with the headline 'L'estivage se meurt, vive le tourisme' (summer vacationing is dying, long live tourism) appeared in the

Francophone magazine *La Revue du Liban*. The author, Jean-Prosper Gay-Para, a renowned figure behind many of the flourishing tourism services and business establishments in Lebanon at the time, declared the end of an era of mountain summer vacationing. In this article, and in more that followed, Gay-Para appeals to a public of Lebanese readership to press for a paradigm shift in the local tourism economy from a 'monotonous traditional' practice to a modern one in tune with a burgeoning international tourism industry (Gay-Para 1962: 49–50).

Gay-Para presents four important reasons why this shift ought to occur. The first, he claims, is new means of transportation. Affluent Arab visitors travelled by land to spend their summers in the Lebanese mountains. Now, with commercial air travel they could go anywhere in Europe, which presented serious competition that threatened Lebanon's main tourism clients. However, air travel, Gay-Para encourages his readers, should motivate Lebanon to reach out to new tourists beyond the Arab region. The second reason concerns the appeal of the beach as a new summer resort, gaining in popularity compared with the mountains. Beach holidays offered modern and trendy leisure activities such as sunbathing, swimming and other water sports. The third pertains to the development of hotels and the growth of the hospitality services, particularly in the coastal capital city Beirut, serving emerging business related travel to Lebanon. Finally, Gay-Para concludes that the emergence of a modern youth culture in the coastal cities, less conformist than in the mountain villages, promises 'adventures'. Gay-Para's prescient advice begins to explain the modern girls on a beach scene in *The Economist* ad. The 'Lebaneseness' of the mountain resort and its appeal to an Arab public, as we saw in an earlier poster, was replaced with the modernity of the beach and the 'adventures' that it promises to an international public. This wider public is summoned by the mere act of placing an ad in a periodical like *The Economist*.

The General Office of Tourism and Summer Vacationing is generally credited with having paved the way for Lebanon's tourism sector, through the institution of new policies and the planning of major projects in the 1950s. It established tourism information offices, a tourism police, a school of hotel management, and refurbished archaeological sites, building the first ski resort in Lebanon and a landmark casino, among other modern European-modelled leisure activities. These projects already indicate a desire to share in the rising global tourist economy of the mid-1950s. Lebanon joined the International Federation of Tourism, and the Chairman of the Lebanese Tourism Office, Michel Touma, presided over the International Federation from 1955 to 1956. Studies suggest that the tourism industry grew to become one of the pillars of Lebanon's national economy (Kfoury 1959: 278–282). While the Office of Tourism played an important transitional role in transforming the Lebanese tourism economy, it was, however, the National Council of Tourism in Lebanon (NCTL), a governmental organization borne out of administrative

restructuring in the early 1960s, which strove to locate Lebanon on the global map of mass tourism, as I shall discuss below.

Mobilizing Graphic Design: Communication Strategy and Aesthetics

The NCTL was founded in 1962 with the aim of developing and modernizing the tourism sector in Lebanon, with the following stated objectives: to establish new tourism facilities and activities including tourism targeted at youth markets; to promote tourism and to research and study the tourism market (al–Hassan 1973: 47). A significant budget was allocated to the promotion of tourism abroad, which was performed through offices opened by the NCTL in major tourist markets mostly in European cities, in addition to one in New York and another in Cairo. Writing in 1973, Hassan al-Hassan, director of what was to become later the Ministry of Tourism, reproaches the NCTL for having largely neglected the Arab market (al–Hassan 1973: 52). His criticism can be corroborated by the abundance of promotional communication in foreign languages (Italian, German, English and French) and the complete dearth of Arabic. Breaking with its predecessor's Arabic slogan 'Lebanon: the summer resort of Arab countries', the NCTL rearticulated Lebanon's tourism image and discourse to a largely European public.

Initially the NCTL outsourced the creation and production of most of its important publicity material. The Council commissioned professional photographers, including renowned international ones such as the travel photographer Fulvio Roiter, to document what it outlined as the main attractions of Lebanon. Roiter's photographs were first published in a 1967 book, *Liban: Lumiere des siècles* (Lebanon: the Light of Centuries), complemented by the text of Max-Pol Fouchet – another acclaimed travel writer – and produced in Switzerland. The photographs were also used in a poster series for Lebanon, which was produced by Draeger printers in Paris, yet another famed European establishment.

In the late 1960s, however, the NCTL set up an in-house graphic design department to handle all its promotional publications. The Council chose Mona Bassili Sehnaoui to spearhead this new venture. Sehnaoui had just returned from the USA, where she earned a Bachelor Degree in Communication Arts from the University of Arizona. She was the first academically trained graphic designer to set up a practice in Lebanon. Throughout her four-year tenure at the NCTL from 1969 to 1972, Sehnaoui furnished the youthful image and modern aesthetic that Gay-Para advocated and that the Council sought to achieve in positioning Lebanon on the international circuit of tourism. Like anyone trained in the USA or Europe at the time, she knew the formal guidelines of graphic modernism.

The advocates of the 'Swiss School', otherwise known as 'International Modernism', in the 1960s set out clear guidelines of what qualified as 'modern' and 'universal' graphic design (McCoy 1994). Sehnaoui used an underlying modular grid to lay out graphical elements especially in text-heavy multi-page publications, sets her texts in modern sans-serif 'neutral' typefaces like Helvetica and its derivatives, resorts to graphic shapes based on basic geometry, and finally ensures an abundance of white space in the composition to assert the desired minimalist modern aesthetic. Sehnaoui also began to create a graphic identity for the NCTL – another modernist design manoeuvre born out of the keen spirit of systemization particularly favoured by large corporations of the time. She designed a logo – still in use today with minor alteration – revising an older calligraphic expression of the word 'Lebanon' in Arabic previously used by the Council. And she created a set of graphical elements that were systematically applied across a wide range of printed matter, which the NCTL employed in its interface with the public.

Nonetheless, Sehnaoui's initial training in Fine Art drawing and painting[2] distinguished her work from the rational austerity of the 'Swiss School' and its standardizing effect (cf. Good and Good 2001). While modernists favoured the 'objectivity' of modern photography over hand-drawn illustration (Moholy-Nagy 1999), Sehnaoui relied heavily on her own drawing skills, using a variety of techniques to interpret and express her subject matter. Her more illustrative approach personalizes and humanizes the modernist machine aesthetic. Moreover, Sehanoui's work for the Council can also be qualified as up-to-the-minute in the fashionable sense of the term. Her flashy colours, graphic motifs

Figure 7.3 Series of leaflets containing touristic information using as a graphic system a newly designed calligraphic logo for Lebanon. Designed by Mona Bassili Sehnaoui for The National Council of Tourism in Lebanon. C. 1970. 18×10 cm (closed). Collection of the designer.

and some of her display typography are reminiscent of 1960s youth pop culture, namely the incorporation of psychedelic graphics into mainstream trends. The NCTL stationery she conceived in flashy fuchsia pink and orange catches the eyes like a huge psychedelic lollipop, as do a number of her tourism posters and brochure covers (Fig. 7.4). In that sense, her graphic design affinities are more akin to her New York contemporaries, the Push Pin studio and Milton Glaser who, inspired by the graphic upsurge of a youthful counter culture, began to challenge the Swiss legacy in mainstream graphic design practice in the USA (Aynsley 2004: 152–155).

Generally, Sehnaoui's design approach endows her tourism prints with an aesthetic that expresses a particularly modern, youthful and fashionable Lebanon; when once asked about her vibrant colour palette, she responded: 'these were the Mary Quant years' (Sehnaoui 2013). Thus, the British icon of 1960s fashion is recalled in Sehnaoui's discussion of her own graphic work. The intersection of style culture across design disciplines is particular to the late 1960s period (Jobling and Crowley 1996: 214) but also telling of a context in Beirut in which the 'Mary Quant years' resonated. This brings us back to *The Economist* ad in the way that it foregrounds a certain style of fashion photography, particularly how it stages two women striking active glamorous
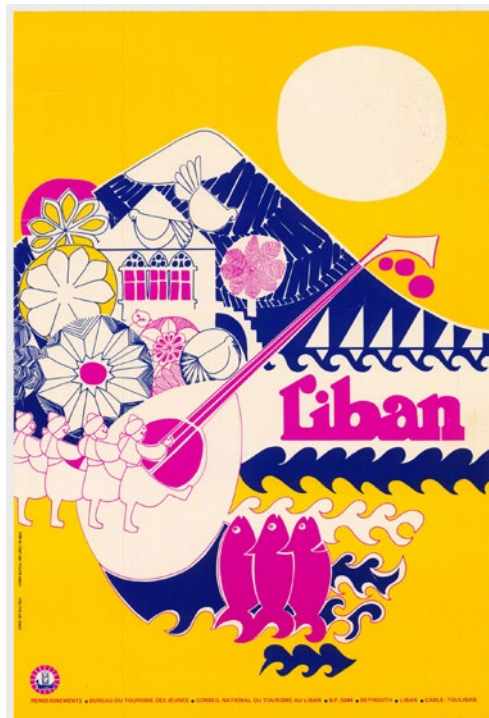

Figure 7.4 Poster 'Lebanon'. Designed by Mona Bassili Sehnaoui for The National Council of Tourism in Lebanon. C. 1969. 34×50 cm. Collection of the designer.

poses. Samir Kassir writes of Beirut in the 1960s as the Arab capital for the assimilation of the latest European fashion, where young girls paraded in mini-skirts on the busy commercial streets of Beirut and in the universe of imported and local magazines that adorned the city's many bookshops (2003: 445–455). Here, the modern myth of Beirut as the 'Paris of the East' seems to find some degree of materiality at least in terms of fashion, an aspect that Sehnaoui and the NCTL seemed to be keen to project.

Global Tourism on the Mediterranean

The geographic turn from the mountain to the beach in Lebanon was con-comitant with a particular interest in the Mediterranean as a modern leisure site in emerging mass tourism. The seductive images of a languorous yet modern beach culture spread from St Tropez, Cannes and Nice to Capri. Nations on the margins of the French and Italian Riviera sought to carve a space on their shores to welcome the flourishing Mediterranean tourism economy. Lebanon was no exception. The history of tourism promotion in countries such as Greece and Spain indicates transformations in image rhetoric and tropes corresponding to those experienced in Lebanon at the time (Emmanouil 2012; Pelta 2011). These studies also concur that the new touristic image is inscribed within modernizing frameworks, mostly state-led, seeking to challenge percep-tions of Mediterranean societies as Europe's traditional 'other'. In his com-parative study of the development of mass tourism in Spain and Tunisia in the 1960s and 1970s, Waleed Hazbun observes how the rising popularity of 'sea, sun and fun' eventually led to the standardization of a generic form of Mediter-ranean tourism defined by northern European tastes (2009: 208).

The Lebanese case is perhaps no different than that of Spain, Greece and Tunisia in the standardization incurred from efforts to modernize the tourism sector and appeal to a northern European public. Yet, there seems to be more at stake in Lebanon's geo-touristic turn towards the Mediterranean, which is not only constrained by the global tourism economy. Unlike Spain and Greece, which form part of Europe, Tunisia and Lebanon's Westward-looking Mediterranean tourism complicates their cultural and political belong-ing to the Arab East. In Tunisia, beach tourism was seen as part of President Bourguiba's Western-oriented modernization and criticized as such by the more conservative and religious communities (ibid: 213). In Lebanon, the case differs slightly, due to the country's multi-sectarian political structure, ruling Christian elite and ensuing complicated identity politics, vis-à-vis its ties to the Arab and Muslim East since its formation. As I will discuss in the following section, the shift from mountain to coast bespeaks more than a story of global modernity when examined in light of a genealogy of discourses of Lebanese nationalism.

Lebanon: The Switzerland of the East

Lebanon, as a modern nation state, is the result of colonial partition of the Middle East in the aftermath of World War I. Historians of modern Lebanon agree that, at the time of partitioning, the Christians – predominantly Maronites of Mount Lebanon – were the only community that saw in Lebanon a sense of national identification, an extension of their initial Christian refuge into a viable modern homeland in the wider Muslim Arab East. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Muslims and a significant community of other non-Maronite Christians were voicing objections to the separation incurred by the newly formed state and expressed Syrian or Arab nationalist identification (Salibi 1993: 169; Traboulsi 2007: 80–85).

As such, ensuing Lebanese nationalist discourses, articulated particularly by an elite of Christian intellectuals, are premised on a tight correspondence between the modern Lebanese nation and its embryonic political geography – Mount Lebanon. Hence, the 'Lebaneseness' of the mountain summer resort in the tourism advertisement discussed earlier in this chapter projects more than a touristic vista. Here, tourism meets politics. 'Lebanon, a summer resort for the Arab countries', as the title promised, is not outside political inscriptions of the imagined nation. As a matter of fact, Lebanon's early nationalists envisioned Mount Lebanon's touristic promise as integral to nation building (Kassir 2003: 364; Traboulsi 2007: 92–93). In his 1924 book *Pour faire du Liban la Suisse du Levant* (Making Lebanon into the Switzerland of the Levant), Jacques Tabet presented the central arguments for developing Lebanon on the model of the Swiss Alps. He elaborates on the touristic potential as part of a triad of political and economic conditions common between the two countries. Like Switzerland, Lebanon – by way of its mountains – provides a climatic, aesthetic, therapeutic and leisurely escape for the Arab East. His views were shared by a like-minded group of nationalist intellectuals, of which he formed a part, united around the Beirut-based *La Revue Phénicienne.* The 'new Phoenicianists', as they were known, had been involved in developing tourism in Mount Lebanon through the Syro-Lebanese Touring Club, which they took part in founding in 1920 in close collaboration with the French mandate (cf. Khoury 2008). Tabet's treatise propelled and justified a wave of related political and economic policies, which would popularize the discourse of similarity under the myth of 'Lebanon, the Switzerland of the East' (Traboulsi 2007: 92). Appropriating the image of Switzerland in conceiving Lebanon's national identity was part of a political desire to evoke Lebanon's particularism in the Arab East in which the mountain geography played an important role. However, the same desire, I shall demonstrate below, has engendered another nationalist discourse linking Lebanon to ancient Phoenicia and mobilizing an altogether different geography: that of the Mediterranean.

Lebanon: The Cradle of Civilization

Similar to nation-building processes elsewhere in the world, modern national-ist discourses incorporate genealogical narratives of ancestry that justify the existence of the newly formed state. This is what Benedict Anderson describes as one of the three paradoxes of nationalism: 'The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nation-alists' (2006: 5). In the case of Lebanon, it was the resuscitation of glorious Phoenicia that played a foundational role in the articulation of a Lebanese nationalist discourse, which justified the expanded territory of the new nation and aimed to distinguish the Lebanese from the Arab context. In his study of the formation of a Lebanese identity in 1920s Lebanon, Kaufman traces the phenomenon of what he refers to as the 'Phoenician myth of origin' (2014). He observes how Lebanese intellectuals, informed by a nineteenth-century French orientalist interest in ancient Phoenicia as an extension of Western land on the Mediterranean, reclaimed Lebanon's Phoenician ancestry. In doing so, Kaufman argues, nationalists constructed a Lebanese genealogy linked to the West and severed ties to the Arabs. The foundational text of Youssef al-Saouda, one of the key intellectuals to which Kaufman refers, is important to cite in the context of our discussion. Al-Saouda reminds us in his 1919 book *Fi Sabil Lubnan* (For the Sake of Lebanon) that the Phoenicians were the forefathers of Western culture and civilization and its disseminators in the Mediterranean basin (Kaufman 2014: 61–62). In making his case for Phoenician ancestry and Western genealogy, al-Saouda offers an allegory of Lebanon as 'the cradle of civilization'. The latter image is of particular relevance to a discussion about the intersection between nation building and the geographic imaginary in tourism promotion, as I mentioned above. However, al-Saouda's discourse summons another Lebanese subjectivity, excavated by way of the country's Mediterranean geography and history as an addition to that of Mount Lebanon.

Lebanon as 'the cradle of civilization' is a recurrent trope across all the pro-motional prints issued by the NCTL in the 1960s. Al-Saouda's words are echoed almost verbatim in the introductory texts of Lebanon's tourism brochures and guides. One of them, for instance, opens with the following text: 'Lebanon, with its 200 Km of coast, stretches along one side of the Mediterranean shore and has always been a site where East meets West [. . .] The Phoenicians, consid-ered the ancestors of the Lebanese, lived by the coast [. . .] At the height of their civilization their alphabet spread across the Mediterranean basin'.[3] The back of the same brochure (Fig. 7.5), and that of several similar ones, features a carto-graphic map of Lebanon with a North-South locator that situates the country in a Mediterranean geography. The latter is graphically rendered like some generic ancient mythological map of the world. The reference to a Phoenician-Mediterranean heritage is hard to miss and is capitalized on as a touristic attrac-tion. The 'cradle of civilization in the world' is visually materialized through

Figure 7.5 Back cover of a tourism brochure with a map of Lebanon and a North–South locator framing the Mediterranean Sea. Designed by Mona Bassili Sehnaoui for The National Council of Tourism in Lebanon. C. 1970. 21×23 cm. Collection of the designer.

highlighting Roman and Phoenician archaeological sites at the expense of the relatively more recent Islamic or Arab cultural heritage of the country's major cities. The centrality of the Roman ruins of Ba'alback in touristic imagery of Lebanon constitutes a particular case in point. In his study of popular culture and nationalism in Lebanon, Christopher Stone examines how the Ba'alback International Festival established in the mid-1950s transformed the ancient Roman ruins into a symbolic representation that stands for modern Lebanon.

Stone draws on Partha Chatterjee's theory of the 'classicization of tradition' in postcolonial nation building (1993) to demonstrate how the festival founders, in close correlation with the Lebanese state and associated nationalist intellectuals, claimed cultural connection to the ancient site (Stone 2008). With highbrow international performances by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1959), the Royal Ballet (1961 and 1964), the Opéra de Paris (1962), and Miles Davis (1971), among others, staged in the majestic ruins of Ba'alback, the Maronite national elite was keen to project, in Stone's words, 'a westward looking nation that had reclaimed its original Phoenician role as a cultivator of culture and civilization' (Stone 2008: 32).

Ba'alback indeed gets the lion's share in promotion for Lebanon particularly since the foundation of the NCTL in 1962. Unlike preceding campaigns featuring inanimate majestic ruins, as was the case in French colonial travel posters, in the Council's posters the Ba'alback site is always actualized and animated by the festival. I would add to Stone's argument that this particular imaging of modern Lebanon, in and through the Ba'alback site, was inscribed within a larger discursive framework taking shape across all the tourism promotion by the NCTL in the 1960s and through the early 1970s. While Lebanon was being articulated as 'the cradle of civilization' in the mid-1950s in the modern re-appropriation of the Ba'alback site, it was similarly and, I argue, more widely articulated in the 1960s' touristic turn towards the Mediterranean coast. Here, we see that the beach site in *The Economist* ad tells us more than a tale of global modernity. After all, the Mediterranean basin was Phoenician territory par excellence. With this I turn to Michel Chiha, another member of the 'New Phoencianists', astute banker and key francophone nationalist intellectual whose linkage between the ancient Mediterranean Phoenician world and a purported modern 'Lebanese universalism', I shall argue, discursively informs Lebanon's tourism promotion in the 1960s.

Lebanon's Mediterranean Universalism

Geographic determinism provides the cultural and economic argument for Michel Chiha's modern Lebanon (Traboulsi 1999: chapter 2). He was influential in defining a liberal economic model for Lebanon that is organized, like that of old Phoenicia, around free trade and exchange across the Mediterranean basin. Chiha retains as such, in a post-independence framework, al-Saouda's discourse of unity between mountain and sea in the imagined geography of the nation (Trabousli 1999: 21) outlining accordingly the state's economy policies. However, Chiha diverges from al-Saouda and his colleagues in *La Revue Phénicienne* who identify Lebanon, by way of its ancestral mountain, as a Christian refuge and homeland. His 'Phoenicianism', Fawwaz Traboulsi asserts, foregrounds a distinctly cosmopolitan cultural discourse of multi-sectarian coexistence in the Mediterranean narrative maintained by the economic interest of a 'people of merchants' (ibid: 45–46). In his seminal 1951 public lecture 'Lebanon in the World', Chiha transposes al-Saouda's foundational concept of Lebanon as the 'cradle of civilization in the world' from its historical framework to a contemporary understanding of 'Lebanese universalism': 'Our mission in the historical world meets up with our mission in the geographical setting [. . .] Our Calling for Universalism begins with the Mediterranean, when the Mediterranean was the world' (Chiha 1994: 136).

It is through the words of Chiha that the map of the Mediterranean on the back of the tourism brochures reveals its subtext. In its geographic finitude and

reference to old-style aesthetics the map graphically represents a return in time to the Mediterranean as 'the world'. Affixed on the back of a modern promotional pamphlet, it acts as a seal of authenticity that claims historical anteriority to the promotion of Lebanon as a contemporary object. It implies visually '. . . since antiquity'. Like Ba'alback, the Mediterranean here is culturally reclaimed within Lebanon's national narrative and actualized as a modern site of cosmopolitan leisure.

Conclusion

The touristic shift from the quietude of the mountain resort catering for an Arab public to that of a globally tuned-in seascape is not simply the effect of modernity's standardization of the tourism industry on the Mediterranean. As I have demonstrated, the two images are modern constructions that are shaped by two distinct, yet linked, discursive moments in Lebanon's nation building process. Once viewed through this lens, the change in landscape reads from 'Lebanon, the Switzerland of the Levant' to 'Lebanon's Mediterranean Universalism'. Both statements articulate a Western oriented Lebanese subjectivity. However, the discourse of the latter lay at the crux of a modern cosmopolitan subjectivity centred on the coastal capital city Beirut, rather than the parochial nationalism of Mount Lebanon (Hourani 1976).

The distinction between the mountain and the city in the articulation of a modern Lebanese subjectivity brings us back to Gay-Para who had early on pleaded for the move to the coastal city as a space for new leisure practices open for adventures. Interestingly, towards the end of his article Gay-Para sums up his arguments in a symbolic premonition: 'After Ba'alback, Beirut should be the next Geneva of the East'. Gay-Para here endorses Stone's argument of Ba'alback constituting a symbolic representation of a modern cosmopolitan Lebanon. However, in Gay-Para's discourse Ba'alback, is already a thing of the past. Beirut, on the other hand, is the future. After all, the quintessential expression of Lebanese cosmopolitanism in the 1960s revolved around 'Beirut (not Lebanon), the Paris (not Switzerland and not Geneva) of the East'.

Consequently, this chapter reveals how graphic design is implicated in the discursive articulation of nationhood, in the way that a hegemonic conception of the nation is materialized in, and circulated through, chosen images, graphics and aesthetics. The case of Lebanon presents us with new understandings of how design for the tourism industry intersects with political processes of nation building, modernization and globalization in postcolonial contexts. It demands new questions and transcultural frameworks that complicate a putative binary between the West and non-West in design historiography. Rather than looking for the 'Lebanese' as a reified form of non-Western national identity in design, it is more pertinent to ask what the 'Paris of the East' looked like

in the aesthetic and cultural materialization of a particular discourse of nation-hood in Lebanon.

(PS. could someone please tell Mr and Mrs Robertson that it was not the Fraglioni of Capri that *The Economist* ad staged! With some imagination they should be able to see a chimera of Brigitte Bardot on the [Lebanese] Riviera. I am referring here to Bardot's sultry 1956 film debut in '. . . And God Created Woman' set in St-Tropez and to her domestically hailed visit to Lebanon ten years later.)

Notes

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1. The director of Touristic Promotions in Lebanon responded to this enquiry in the *New Statesman* on 23 January 1970, reassuring the couple and English readers that this is indeed a picture taken in Beirut, Lebanon.

2. During her residency in Alexandria, Mona Bassili Sehnaoui attended the Sylvio Bicchi Academy from 1957 to 1960 and trained in tempera technique in the studio of an Italian painter, based in Alexandria, named Sebasti. In 1962 she joined the Fine Arts programme at the American University of Beirut for two years before moving to complete her studies in Communication Arts at the University of Arizona, Tuscon in 1964.

3. Translated from French by the author.

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