

A BITTER ENCOUNTER: THE SHIA COMMUNITY UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION IN SOUTH LEBANON

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"ISRAEL & LEBANON: COMPARISONS, RELATIONS, AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY"

MESA 2017 ANNUAL MEETING (WASHINGTON DC, 18-21 NOVEMBER 2017)



INTRODUCTION

- Many accounts → Hezbollah = Iranian creation geared at the unwarranted destruction of Israel
- Post-colonial approaches → Study of complex dynamics of power and resistance usually overlooked as inherently and unjustifiably violent
- Core argument: Hezbollah's enduring success can be better understood through the bitter encounter with the Israelis in a context characterized by earlier colonization processes

INTRODUCTION

- **Caution: early stage / work in progress... much remains to be done**
- **Outline:**
 - I. Post-colonial avenues**
 - II. Shia's colonial experiences under the French and the Lebanese**
 - III. Shia's encounter with the Israeli occupiers**
 - IV. Future lines of inquiry**

I. POST-COLONIAL AVENUES

- A wide variety of approaches common questioning of the Western-based international order and regimes of knowledge and justification that support it
- Motive:
 - Break Western monopoly over the production of «truth »
 - « participate in the creation of ‘truths’ based on distinct modes of signification and forms of knowledge (or manners of representations) that advance justice, peace and political pluralism » (Grovgoui, 2010)

II. SHIA'S COLONIAL EXPERIENCES: THE FRENCH AND THE LEBANESE

- WWI: from Ottoman to French hands
- 1920: forceful annexation to « Greater Lebanon » and violent suppression of resistance with the help of Christian partisans
- During both mandate and independence periods, the state forced upon the Shia functioned as a colonial tool
- Multifaceted disenfranchisement:
 - Economic and social deprivation
 - Political marginalisation (before Musa al Sadr)
 - Primary collateral victims of Fedayin / Israel war in Lebanon

III. SHIA'S ENCOUNTER WITH ISRAELI OCCUPIERS

- 1st episode: March – June 1978 → the cost of the invasion + the abusive behavior of the South Lebanese Army, a Christian militia created « with Israeli assistance and urging » (CIA source) and left in charge after withdrawal
- 2nd episode : 1982-2000 → various forms of direct and indirect violence on the civilian population of south Lebanon (mostly Shia) that increased as resistance to abuse rose

All these subjugation techniques + delegitimization of resistance typical of colonial enterprises

IV. FUTURE LINES OF INQUIRY

- Avenues to investigate in order to better understand success of Hezbollah among the Shia
 - 3 colonial experiences → production of resistance to the overall international material & normative system that backs the oppressors
 - Hezbollah offered the Shia unprecedented political agency and positive self-image
 - Experiences of subjugation + empowering resistance = interesting keys to understand why Shia unmoved by international accusations
 - Hezbollah = « A state in the state »
 - Yet the Lebanese state means little
 - Hezbollah = terrorist entity
 - Yet Shia experienced internationally legitimized violence