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Our Representative On This Island: Local Belonging and Transnational Citizenship Among Syrian and Lebanese Cubans, 1880-1980

John T. Ermer Jr
Florida International University, 2051883@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

OUR REPRESENTATIVE ON THIS ISLAND: LOCAL BELONGING AND
TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP AMONG SYRIAN AND LEBANESE CUBANS,

1880-1980

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

John Ermer

2021

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by John Ermer, and entitled Our Representative on This Island: Local Belonging and Transnational Citizenship Among Syrian and Lebanese Cubans, 1880-1980, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Sarah M.A. Gualtieri

Jorge Duany

Julio Capó Jr.

Michael Bustamante

Bianca Premo, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 16, 2021

The dissertation of John Ermer is approved.

Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of
International and Public Affairs

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and
Economic Development and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my grandparents, Manolo and Georgina Dergan

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All academic works and research projects are collaborative efforts, and this dissertation is no exception. First and foremost, I wish to thank Bianca Premo, whose faith in me and this project gave me the strength to see it through to completion during a pandemic. Her professionalism, patience, and scholarly example served as a guiding light for me as I navigated the ups and downs of graduate school. Thank you to my committee members. Michael Bustamante helped me begin my research in Cuba and offered important advice and suggestions throughout the research process. Jorge Duany, through his generosity of time and scholarly network, helped me grow as a scholar. Julio Capó, Jr. and Sarah M.A. Gualtieri offered important insight over the course of in-person and virtual meetings. All five of my committee members contributed to this dissertation's success, its limitations are, of course, my own. I also wish to thank the faculty at Florida International University who made all the difference during my time there: Alexandra Cornelius, Kenneth Lipartito, Terrence Peterson, Micah Oelze, Judith Mansilla, Saad Abi-Hamad, Hilary Jones, Kirsten Wood, and Okezi Otovo. All of whom offered their gracious assistance and advice at various stages of my graduate school experience.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

OUR REPRESENTATIVE ON THIS ISLAND: LOCAL BELONGING AND
TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP AMONG SYRIAN AND LEBANESE CUBANS,
1880-1980

by

John Ermer

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Bianca Premo, Major Professor

Émigrés from Ottoman Syria and Mount Lebanon, beginning in the late-nineteenth century, traveled not unidirectionally, from one region or polity to another, but between and within multiethnic, polycentric empires. Tracing their history opens a route to better understandings of citizenship as law and practice across space and time. Weaving government records from Cuba, France, and the United States with associational records and oral history interviews, this dissertation reveals how vernacular understandings of citizenship in Cuba and the Levant were based on locally derived conceptions of belonging. However, over time these community-centered notions of citizenship contended with liberalizing legal reforms meant to redefine citizenship as a primarily state-focused status. As a mobile population caught between empires, states, and rival understandings of citizenship, Lebanese and Syrian migrants and their descendants in Cuba cultivated transnational networks and conceptions of citizenship defined by fluid and diasporic understandings of belonging. This study adds to the growing scholarship on

the mahjar, or the place to which migrants emigrate and reveals how Cuba played a pivotal role in an Atlantic world shaped by movement and shifting sovereignties. These migrants embodied what scholar of the mahjar Camila Pastor has called a “floating world of elsewhere.” In a world of shifting imperial systems and nationalist movements, mahjaris in Cuba both made claims to “Cubanidad” and leveraged their transnational networks to advocate on their own behalf in Cuba and to exercise political influence in the Levant. And, when state-focused regimes of belonging finally prevailed on the island, particularly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, many descendants of the original migrants who came to Cuba from the Levant (though certainly not all) again turned to their networks of travel and communication to find new homes. In the end, understanding the regimes of citizenship with which mahjaris contended and established belonging broadens the scope of global legal history and citizenship to include vernacular understandings of belonging within transnational contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

I first traveled to Cuba on a preliminary research trip in June 2017. While in Havana that summer, I met a librarian at the Unión Árabe de Cuba (UAC) who took an interest in my project and spoke to a family she knew, the matriarch of which had recently turned 91. When I returned to Miami, my librarian friend provided me with René Dour Chediak Chediak's name and her daughter's email address. From across the Florida Straits, I arranged a return trip and a meeting for March 2019. As planned, on the morning of 9 March 2019, I set out for Havana's bustling colonial district to meet the Chediak Family. The Chediaks lived in La Habana Vieja, or Old Havana, near the capitol building, in what had been the smaller of two neighborhoods that once represented the center of *mahjari* life in Cuba.¹ Clutching a piece of notepaper on which I had written Chediak's address, I set out, down Calle Empedrado, from the Plaza Catedral. I passed the famous Bodeguita del Medio restaurant, ducking tourists who wore fluorescent pink cruise ship tour group stickers affixed to their Hawaiian shirts as they crowded outside the famous eatery, smartphones aloft, trying to snap a photo of where Ernest Hemingway, Salvador Allende, and Pablo Neruda once dined. Two blocks later, I reached the tree-shaded Parque Cervantes and turned down Aguiar to find the address. I arrived at a dilapidated apartment building, the door open to the street, and a sign declaring that members of the neighborhood Comité de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR), or Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, kept this building under surveillance. As I crossed the threshold, I entered a darkened corridor and climbed the stairs to the second-floor landing, where the

¹ The term *mahjar* comes from the Arabic word for land of emigration, and "*mahjari*" denotes one who lives in the *mahjar* or something that comes from or exists in it.

Chediaks' open door shed light on the otherwise dimly lit checkered marble floor. At ninety-three years old, Chediak recalled her immigrant parents' lives in Cuba. "They became Cuban, they believed in Cuba," she said.² Ultimately, however, she admitted "they felt more Lebanese."³

It did not have to be that way. At various junctures in the history of the Cuban *mahjar*, people like Chediak's parents could feel belonging without choosing. On a dresser in her living room, Chediak's mementos attest to this history. There, she kept a picture of a Lebanese hermit monk, Saint Charbel, alongside pictures more familiar to her Cuban neighbors, those of Saint Lazarus and the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, or Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: René Dour Chediak Chediak's Memorabilia Cabinet, Photograph. On the alter-like dresser, Chediak displayed images of her favorite Catholic saints. From left to right: San Lazaro (St. Lazarus), La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre (Our Lady of Charity), and the Lebanese-Maronite Saint Charbel. Next to Saint Charbel, a prayer of blessing for the Chediak home. On the wall, Chediak displayed images of Cuba's revolutionary Pantheon, including, clockwise, "The Apostle" José Martí, Camilo Cienfuegos, Che Guevara, and Fidel Castro. On the left, a yellow, scroll-like award of recognition to René Dour Chediak Chediak from the UAC. Photographed by the author.

² René Dour Chediak Chediak, interviewed by the author, Havana, Cuba; March 9, 2019.

³ René Dour Chediak Chediak, interviewed by the author, Havana, Cuba; March 9, 2019.

This longer history of belonging among Lebanese and Syrian Cubans, which includes and extends beyond modern liberal notions of “citizenship,” and Chediak’s ultimate sense that there existed an essential tension that could never be resolved, both connects to and defies what we know from current scholarship on Cuba, citizenship, and this often-invisible community. Cuban historian Euridice Charón has referred to the Arabic-speaking migrants who settled in Cuba as “the most assimilatable” of the island’s immigrant groups.⁴ Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, and through the middle of the twentieth century, Arabic-speaking émigrés, primarily from the Levant, migrated to, within, and through Cuba. Histories of migration in, and immigration to, Cuba have mostly focused on European, Chinese, African, and Afro-Caribbean labor migration to the island. As Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh has noted, Arab migrants in Cuba represent a forgotten, or “footnoted,” population not included in the official narratives of *Cubanidad* or counted among the island’s ethnic influences.⁵ Over the years of investigating this topic, Cubans often expressed shock or bewilderment at the thought of “*cubanos árabes*,” never having heard that the island received a substantial influx of migrants from the Levant. To be sure, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh’s arguments, which build off of Charón’s work, center on the “erasure” of Muslims, while acknowledging the works “which have characterized the official celebration of ‘Arab migrants’ as ‘the most assimilatable’ of all immigrant groups,” though these scholarly accounts remain few and far between.⁶ This is

⁴ Euridice Charón, “El asentamiento de emigrantes árabes en Monte (La Habana, Cuba), 1890-1930,” *AWRAQ: Estudios sobre el mundo árabe islámico contemporáneo*, 13 (1992), 56.

⁵ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Embracing Transculturalism and Footnoting Islam in Accounts of Arab Migration to Cuba,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2015), 1-24.

⁶ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 22; Leslie C. Sotomayor, “Migration, Race and Identity: Arab Migration and its Impact on Cuban Society through History and the Visual Arts,” Pennsylvania State University, accessed 4/29/21 <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/322549289.pdf>; Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, *Los árabes en*

especially true among scholars outside of Cuba. On the island, Cuban scholars, including Charón and Menéndez, seeking to understand the cultural legacies of Arab and Islamic populations, dating back to the arrival of Columbus, have taken some steps to elucidate the contributions of Lebanese and Syrian migrants and their descendants in Cuba. Yet, even as these scholars and Cuba's *mahjari* (Levantine migrant) community attempted, and still attempt, to memorialize the contributions they and their ancestors have made to the island and its society, the very existence of this population tends to surprise many Cubans even today.

The above term, “*mahjari*” comes from the Arabic word *mahjar*, which refers to a émigré's space or land of emigration. I use *mahjari* in reference to those people of Levantine origins or descent living outside their ancestral homelands. Likewise, I use the term *muhajir* to signify a sense of mobility in reference to hypermobile subjects or émigrés who migrated to the Cuban *mahjar*. I also borrow the word “hypermobile” from the work of Devi Mays, who used the term to describe the ways in which some *muhajir* used, built, and maintained existing and new transregional and transnational networks to sustain patterns of mobility through which people, goods, and ideas moved between populations and across borders.⁷ Among the ideas that traveled through these networks of hypermobility, trends broadly associated with liberalism permeated nineteenth and

Cuba (Havana: Ediciones Boloña, 2007). In Cuba, Euridice Charón and Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes have written on Arab migration to Cuba. Menéndez's publications provide a general overview of the presence of Arabs and Arabic cultures on the island from the arrival of Spaniards to the present. Sotomayor has built upon this work through her work as an art historian and utilized the Unión Árabe's library and other archives and art collections to better understand *mahjaris'* imagined selves and cultural contributions to Cuba.

⁷ Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 5.

twentieth-century discourses in nationalism, republicanism, immigration, and race. In this study, “liberalism” refers to state-centered ideologies and policies often wrapped in the rhetoric of “modernity,” “progress,” and “scientific” processes. In many cases, nineteenth-century liberal reforms sought to centralize formerly polycentric legal regimes into more “modern” state-centered and centralized legal systems. Here, “polycentric” will mean legal regimes, such as like those in the Spanish and Ottoman empires, under which different ethnic and corporate groups could choose from sometimes overlapping or competing legal jurisdictions when seeking justice and in which community norms of belonging often prevailed over state policies. While these contemporary terms may not have been the terms that historical actors employed, and while their breadth risks concealing dynamic changes in the attitudes of both immigrants and native-born Cubans toward citizenship, they are nonetheless useful in showing the overall similarities between the Ottoman and Spanish imperial citizenship regimes until the late-nineteenth century, and the subsequent struggle of the modern state in Cuba to enact citizenship policies that place its own determination of belonging above that of the more flexible, community-based understandings that preceded the rise of the liberal state. Even if these terms may be anachronistic in places, they help to streamline the discussion of citizenship across the hundred years this dissertation covers and keep in line with scholarly arguments. My analysis builds upon the work of scholars like Nara Milanich, whose work elucidates the limits of liberal state power in nineteenth-century Chile, particularly as it relates to the private sphere and social practice. Her ideals on legal “legibility” informed my own as I wrote this dissertation.

While building on the scholarship on migrations from the Levant and to Cuba, this dissertation seeks to understand the history of this community in a different way, as part of a global legal history. Rather than structures imposed from without or by states alone, legal and cultural regimes of citizenship and belonging are negotiated by everyday people in everyday ways. During the century between 1880-1980, dynamic legal regimes in Cuba, the Levant, and the Atlantic world influenced the ways this community understood their place in Cuba, established belonging, and forged distinct, and sometimes multiple, identities.⁸ “Our Representative on This Island” argues that *muhajir* and their *mahjari* descendants understood and established locally derived regimes of belonging while also forging transnational networks that allowed for the formation of fluid identities and a diasporic, or spatially diffuse sense of community and belonging. I frame what otherwise might be a cultural history or immigration history within legal studies to better understand how Cuba and the Levant experienced sometimes parallel shifts in citizenship regimes. These overlapping understandings of belonging deeply affected how Syrian and Lebanese migrants in Cuba understood their place in a tumultuous world order shaped by imperial legal systems and emerging and evolving nationalisms. Indeed, their experiences in negotiation belonging—which took place both before state officials’ watchful eyes and in more obscure places such as atop Chediak’s curio-strewn cabinet—are instructive for our understanding of citizenship practices in many times and across geographies.

Syrians exploited and built upon late-nineteenth century networks for travel and established new transnational connections and identities, belonging to what Camila

⁸ I chose this periodization because 1880 represented a point of increased Levantine migration to Cuba. Likewise, 1980 represented the end of a period defined by *mahjaris*’ robust and varied associational life.

Pastor called, in the case of *mahjaris* in Mexico, a “floating world of elsewhere,” made possible only when “they had shaken their moorings in village and Ottoman belonging...fragmented by the legalities of national and imperial constructions.”⁹ Untangling these “fragmented legalities” is a central aim of this dissertation.

In colonial Cuba, Syrian émigrés found regimes of belonging based upon polycentric legal regimes and privileges similar to those in the Ottoman Levant. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, imperial reforms, increasing Euro-Western suzerainty, and, eventually, the creation of the independent states of Cuba, Lebanon, and Syria further complicated, unmoored, and shifted the ways *mahjaris* navigated complex webs of local and transnational connections. The result was that they established a layered sense of belonging that was at once local and transnational. As political and legal systems changed, so too did migratory patterns and relationships between those in the Cuban *mahjar* and the politics of the Mashriq.¹⁰ Constantly shifting nationalist movements and imaginaries in Cuba and the Levant pushed migrants and their

⁹ Mays, 5; Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 3. Mays describes migrants from the eastern Mediterranean as “hypermobile,” a term that signifies a sustained movement of peoples, knowledge, and goods that connected peoples of similar origins “who were now spread across oceans and continents,” 5. Similarly, in an expanded version of the above quotation, Pastor argues that “the Mahjar was a multifaceted transregional formation that migrants inhabited as the floating world of elsewhere once they had shaken their moorings in village and Ottoman belonging,” and that the “global Mahjar of the migrant imagination was...fragmented by the legalities of national and imperial constructions” as communities in different American locations, with their distinct regional and national politics “intersected first with Ottoman and later with French imperial practice,” 3-4.

¹⁰ The term “*mahjar*” refers to the place of emigration, whereas Mashriq, which refers to the east or the direction of the sunrise, is an Arabic term that signifies the Arabic-speaking lands between the Mediterranean Sea and Iran, and sometimes the Nile River valley. Sometimes, it is used to mean only the lands within the Ottoman province of Syria, but for the purposes of this dissertation, it will refer *mahjaris*’ homelands.

descendants to deploy often fluid, complex, and differentiated modes of establishing belonging.

A critical intervention that this dissertation makes is to periodize and offer a categorization of three major citizenship regimes that determined the complicated terrain of Chediak's cabinet: vernacular, republican, and liberal (state-centered) citizenship. The first was a traditional imperial regime in which belonging was locally determined. Scholars such as Antonio Feros have focused on regimes of "purity of blood" and early modern beliefs in climate theory to argue for more top-down, exclusionary conceptions of Spanish belonging.¹¹ Yet this dissertation builds upon scholarship arguing that in Spanish Cuba and the Ottoman Levant, belonging, and eventually citizenship, had long stemmed from the bottom up via local reputation within polycentric legal regimes.¹² In this regime, local mediators affirmed one's belonging to the local community, and thus the empire as a whole. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, liberal reforms pushed Madrid and Istanbul to enact reforms to "modernize" their respective imperial apparatuses. In part, these reforms moved to restructure imperial legal systems to center the state and create a more top-down administrative understanding of justice and citizenship. Thus, a quasi-liberal citizenship regime emerged, but its implementation and hegemony as the dominant way to define citizenship faced resistance as Cubans struggled with Spain over the island's autonomy. Cuban scholar Julio César Guanche has outlined

¹¹ Antonio Feros, *Speaking of Spain: The Evolution of Race and the Nation in the Hispanic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

¹² Polycentric legal regimes included those like the Spanish and Ottoman imperial systems that included centralized royal courts, emanating from the sovereign and/or metropole, within a more diffuse system that also included jurisdictionally overlapping ethnic, religious, and/or corporate legal infrastructures with unique understandings and routes toward concepts of justice.

Cuban constitutionalism, beginning in the independence era, and the various regimes of citizenship that appeared in the island's foundational documents.¹³ As struggles for autonomy transitioned into a rebellions and wars of independence, Cubans folded Spanish ideas of vernacular belonging, or *vecindad*, into their republican vision for the island's future. This merger of older Spanish concepts of belonging with independence-era exigencies created a second major citizenship regime—republican citizenship focused on positive civic behavior and patriotic participation. After independence from Spain, but under U.S. suzerainty, liberal citizenship emerged as a powerful force for establishing who belonged and determining who counted as Cuban. This state-centered citizenship focused on belonging as determined principally by the state, and as a legible, fixed status.

It would not be accurate to imagine each regime as occurring in isolation or sequence: in many ways, these regimes overlapped over time, each ebbing and flowing as political environments shifted. Successive governments, dating back to the colonial era, attempted to liberalize Cuban belonging by focusing on state-centered, legible forms of citizenship. Legible citizenship represented a state-centered, officially-sanctioned belonging rooted in Enlightenment-era Liberalism. Even as this liberal citizenship took hold in twentieth-century Cuba (and, ironically achieved perhaps its greatest expression after the Cuban Revolution's socialist turn) mobility, transnational networks, and vernacular, local-level visions of belonging often provided countervailing forces and endured until the present.

¹³ Julio César Guanche, "Informe sobre la ciudadanía," *Country Report* (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute, 2017).

Chronological Overview

A brief overview of the major events of Cuban history will help to illustrate what led to the major turning points in these regimes and focus our understanding of Cuban citizenship regimes and draw parallels between the three citizenship regimes in Cuba and regimes of belonging in the Levant. A comparison with the Levant also shows a certain syncopation in these global events, underscoring that the national trajectory of Cuban history was not the only driver of the distinct ways that Lebanese and Syrian Cubans negotiated their belonging on the island and vis a vis the Levant. By the mid-nineteenth century demographic and economic changes strained Cuba's ties to the Iberian peninsula, as rumblings of rebellion and calls for independence spurred imperial reforms and colonial appointments meant to tighten Spain's grip on its prized possession. Beginning in 1868, Cubans fought three wars of independence over a thirty-year period: The Ten Years' War (1868-1878), the Little War (1879-1880), and the Cuban War of Independence, or Cuban-Spanish-American War (1895-1898). While colonial officials in Cuba hoped quasi-liberal reforms would quell calls for increased autonomy or independence, Cubans on the island and in exile abroad continued to foment revolutionary and nationalist discord.

In 1895, Cuba's final war for independence began. Exiles in New York, Florida, and elsewhere in the Americas returned to the island, and the island's colonial authorities responded with brutal repression, including forced relocation of rural Cubans into concentration camps. Cuba's Liberation Army and Republic-at-Arms responded with agendas and rhetoric defined by republican ideals and racial equality, taking territory via hard-fought victories won by a multiracial fighting force. By 1898, Cuban independence

seemed within reach, but the United States, which had increased its presence and influence on the island through the nineteenth century, intervened on the side of *Cuba Libre* and quickly defeated Spanish forces in the Caribbean and Pacific, extending U.S. control over formerly Spanish territories.

In 1902, after four years of U.S. military occupation, Cuban officials took control of the island under a new constitution. Yet, U.S. officials included in the new constitution an amendment written by Orville Platt, a U.S. Senator from Connecticut, that limited Cubans' governing agency, named the United States as guarantor of the island's "sovereignty," and ceded to the U.S. Navy a base on Guantanamo Bay in eastern Cuba. The Platt Amendment resulted in an incomplete independence that spurred future U.S. military occupations and interventions (1906-1909, 1912, 1917-1922). As a result of U.S. suzerainty over the island, racial inequality, and political corruption, many Cubans harbored a distrust of Havana's governing elites, which only intensified during the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado (1925-1933). In 1933, a popular revolution ended the period of Machado's rule, known as the Machadato, and abrogated the Platt Amendment. A series of reforms followed the revolution, culminating in 1940 with the ratification of a new, startlingly progressive constitution. In spite of the promises of 1940, a series of kleptocratic governments in the 1940s further eroded Cubans' trust in established party politics and their governing elites sparking a coup and revolutionary movements. Since 1959, a "revolutionary" government, eventually controlled by the Cuban Communist Party, has charted the island's legal and political course.

Likewise, the eastern Mediterranean experienced similar trajectories of colonial control giving way to incomplete independence and social, political, and economic

instability. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Western European powers and Russia increasingly engaged with Ottoman minority populations in the eastern Mediterranean. Western merchants and diplomats increasingly developed patron-client relationships with non-Turkish ethnic groups that unsettled Ottoman authority and social structures in the Levant. Russia intervened on behalf of the region's Orthodox Christians, Britain developed ties to Palestine and the Druze, while France established strong commercial and cultural ties to the Maronite Catholics of Mount Lebanon. In what would eventually become the territory of Greater Lebanon, Protestant missionaries would establish a university in the port city of Beirut which bolstered an already dynamic cosmopolitan economic center with ties to the West driven by an educated, Christian merchant class, often at the expense of many of their Sunni counterparts. Likewise, the Jesuit College in Ghazir, a village in the Lebanese mountains, would further solidify the socio-cultural linkages between France and its Maronite clients, acting as a center for Jesuit missionary activity in the region and an incubator for an emerging Catholic elite of landowners, merchants, and professionals. Europeans enjoyed legal extraterritoriality in Ottoman port cities, and as Western influence increased in Ottoman territories, the Sublime Porte feared it may lose territorial integrity and sovereignty. Ottoman authority eroded further as a result of inconsistent political administration, economic instability, and disasters of natural and human origins.

Through the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, through the *Tanzimat* reforms, Ottoman officials attempted to liberalize the imperial system and centralize Istanbul's authority and control. Ultimately, these centralizing reforms failed, and, after a disastrous experience in the First World War, the empire fell. In place of the former

Ottoman province of Syria, the newly established League of Nations granted France a mandate over Lebanon and Syria, while Britain gained mandatory suzerainty over Palestine. The League of Nations conceived of these mandates as temporary arrangements within which mandatory powers, through their tutelage, could prepare peoples of the Levant for sovereignty and self-determination. In Lebanon and Syria, the French established what Elizabeth Thompson has called a “colonial civic order” that attempted to reshape the terms of citizenship as defined by the Ottomans to conform with French imperial prerogatives and the League of Nations’ vision of “modern” liberal nation-states.¹⁴

Law, Belonging, and Citizenship

Belonging and citizenship cannot be understood at the national level alone. Neither can the Cuban context be understood only in terms of U.S. influence, though, as Louis A. Pérez, Jr. has argued, the United States has played an important role in Cuba’s twentieth-century development and Cubans’ understandings and constructions of *Cubanidad*.¹⁵ In his work, historian Fredrick Cooper tracks the ways in which conceptions of belonging have evolved over centuries, the relation of citizenship to “nations” and “empires,” and how citizens exercise and claim rights within systems defined by inequities and cultural diversity. Political theorists like Iseult Honohan have also addressed these tensions within ideas of citizenship, especially as liberal and

¹⁴ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University, 2000), 3.

¹⁵ Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

republican systems defined rights and citizenship as negative or positive freedoms. Put differently, the struggle has been whether citizenship should be a state-controlled status or a more locally derived belonging.

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the field of global legal history, and particularly legal belonging, or citizenship. Recent work on the legal history of citizenship has reconsidered the legible, state-focused conceptions of citizenship as produced by the state and evidenced through state-issued documentation. More grounded understandings of law as vernacular practice, and of belonging as locally derived, place greater importance on mobile actors' reputations in and participation in the civic life of local communities. These vernacular systems fit within complex, polycentric legal regimes that represented alternative modernities to the more liberal, state-centered models commonly regarded as uniquely "modern."

The following chapters build upon Lauren Benton's work, which traces the emergence of such liberal regimes from early-modern legal traditions within global contexts, especially among diffuse, polycentric legal regimes such as those that bound multiethnic polities to their metropolises as was the case in the Spanish and Ottoman empires.¹⁶ Tamar Herzog's work on vernacular understandings of belonging—constructions built into Medieval Spanish legal concepts of *vencindad* and *naturaleza*—argues that early citizenship in Spanish America stemmed from assumptions about high

¹⁶ Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

levels of mobility, good local reputation and civic participation.¹⁷ Within these complex, polycentric legal regimes, mobile actors forged new loyalties, belongings, and identities.

Additionally, this work engages scholarly discussions of Cuban identity, or *Cubanidad*. In 1940, the same year that Cuba promulgated a new, more nationalist and liberal constitution, written in egalitarian and progressive language, Fernando Ortiz's foundational study *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* pushed the idea that *Cubanidad* should be understood, essentially, as a story of black and white, African and European, or "Sugar" and "Tobacco," respectively.¹⁸ In the mid-twentieth century, even as Ortiz left room for ethnic and cultural diversity through his metaphoric depiction of the Cuban stew—*ajiaco*—Cubans increasingly focused on this dichotomous, black-white construction of *Cubanidad*, which overshadowed more nuanced visions of an ethnically diverse polity. In the last half of the twentieth century, the post-1959 revolutionary government also folded the influences of Cuba's indigenous origins and Chinese immigrants into the official state narratives of still compartmentalized understanding of *Cubanidad*. More contemporary studies on immigration to the island expand on these rigid categories by focusing on immigrants from European, Afro-Caribbean, Latin American, and Jewish populations, but Middle Eastern migrants largely get brushed aside within the scholarly discourses on *Cubanidad*.¹⁹ This elision becomes all the more

¹⁷ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* [1940] (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Robert M. Levine, *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993); Jordi Maluquer de Motes, *Nación e inmigración: los españoles en Cuba (ss. XIX y XX)* (Colombres, Asturias: Ediciones Jucar, 1994); Ruth Behar, *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Sharon Milagro Marshall,

striking given the prevalence of Arabic-speaking migrants who found their way to Cuba. By the 1920s, Cuba boasted the sixth-largest Lebanese population in the Western Hemisphere.²⁰

This study also draws from the field of *Mahjar* Studies. In Arabic, the term “*mahjar*” refers to the place of emigration, and *mahjari* to people and things of the *mahjar*. The *mahjar* stood in contrast to the Mashriq, a term that refers to the Arab Levant, or *bilad al-sham*, the Ottoman province of greater Syria, which included Palestine. Additionally, the term “*muhajir*” will be applied to those Arabic-speaking émigrés who leave the Levant for lives in the *mahjar*.

Some of the earliest work on Syrian migration to the Americas has centered on the United States and North America. With her work on the U.S. *Mahjar*, Alixa Naff blazed the trail of *Mahjar* Studies by compiling an impressive collection of oral histories of the Arabic-speaking immigrant populations in the United States, and her work inspired subsequent, and important, studies of gender in the Arab United States by Evelyn Shakir and Akram Khater.²¹ Studies more international in scope also emerged in the 1990s in a

Tell My Mother I Gone to Cuba: Stories of Early Twentieth-Century Migration From Barbados (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2016); Jason M. Yaremko, *Indigenous Passages to Cuba, 1515-1900* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016).

²⁰ Kohei Hashimoto, “Lebanese Population Movement 1920-1939: Towards a Study,” in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1992), 105. According to Hashimoto’s data, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and Mexico hosted larger Lebanese populations than did Cuba. Yet, Cuba boasted a larger number than did Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti (among others).

²¹ Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

collection of essays edited by Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi.²² As the field evolved in the new millennium, scholars such as Sarah M.A. Gualtieri and Hani Bawardi placed Arab-Americans into wider discourses of race and ethnicity in the United States and Latin America, especially within legal contexts.²³ More recently, scholars have increasingly taken a more transnational approach, attempting to place the *mahjar* back into nation-bound scholarship on Syria and Lebanon, highlighting the importance of transnational networks and politics of hypermobile migrants from Syria, Lebanon, and the eastern Mediterranean as they formed varied and multiple identities.²⁴ Finally, Gualtieri's latest work on ethnicity, race, and multi-stage migratory patterns among Syrians in California introduces a concept of Arab *Latinidad*, or a dual ethnicity that emerged among Syrians who emigrated to California via Mexico.²⁵ This last concept relates well to the example of Arab-Cubans, many of whom developed a sense of *Cubanidad* on the island and later found themselves exiled in the United States following the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

²² Albert H. Hourani and Nadim Shehadi, eds, *The Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1993).

²³ Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).

²⁴ Steven Hyland, *More Argentine Than You: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants in Argentina* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017); Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs Under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017); Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: the First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Lily Pearl Balloffet, *Argentina in the Global Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020); Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migratino and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

²⁵ Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

Methods

Because footnoted populations have elliptical archives, this project required the stitching together of diverse sources. This is especially true because this study attempts to explore the spaces where state policy and experience meet. Prior to 1959, archival collections of associational records included only glimpses of community building through organizational charters and state investigations when members made claims of malfeasance or illegalities. However, in the years after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, state surveillance of ethnic associations and mutual aid societies increased and provided a much richer archival collection of associational records.

In developing a transnational analysis of migrants from Ottoman Levant, French Mandate, and the republics of Lebanon and Syria to Cuba, and their descendants, “Our Representative on This Island” pays particular attention to sources generated by the *mahjari* community in Cuba and, at times, in exile in the United States. Associational records, ethnic press, *mahjari* business guides, correspondence, and oral histories elucidate the ways in which the community conceived of collective identities and belongings. *Mahjaris* in Cuba participated in Cuba’s robust associational life and enjoyed access to a number of ethnic associations and mutual aid societies located in most of the island’s urban centers, especially Havana. Associational charters and official investigations under Cuba’s Law of Associations provide a portrait of the members’ priorities and collective self-image in the first half of the twentieth century. The Cuban capital also boasted a number of ethnic periodicals, but many of these have been lost to time. Still, fragments from 1940s can be pieced together to provide a crucial account of

transnational political activism and community image-making in the Cuban *Mahjar*. Beginning in 1959, the archival record contained meeting minutes for some of Havana's largest *mahjari* associations, including the *Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana* and the Havana-chapter for the transnational *Libaneses en el Mundo*. Most of the Cuban archival research for this project took place at Havana's Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), Cuba's national archive. The ANC's Register of Associations provided a valuable account of the community's identity and activities on the island, but limitations in available documentation and resources sometimes produced more questions than they answered. Oral histories not only proved useful in answering these questions by providing first and second-person accounts of lived experiences; they also shed light on the pre-revolutionary *mahjari* community and how it changed since 1959. The Register of Associations provided invaluable perspectives to this project, through associational charter documents that outlined their mission, scope, and collective priorities, as well as meeting minutes documenting communities' actions and the debates that shaped identities and sketched the transnational pathways that connected them to their counterparts across the world. Additionally, documentary sources at the ANC, such as interdepartmental government memoranda, diplomatic communiques, and naturalization records proved invaluable in understanding the legal regimes under which *mahjaris* formed identities and established belonging.

Cuban constitutions, official correspondence between Cuban government departments, diplomatic correspondence between Cuban officials and their counterparts from France and the United States, and laws and policies related to citizenship and immigration elucidate the environment in which *mahjaris* built lives and communities on

the island. The ANC's documentary collections related to the pre-revolutionary Secretaría de la Presidencia and Secretaría de Estado provided important perspectives on the ways Cuban law and elites viewed immigrants, immigration, and naturalization of citizens. Additionally, Cuban periodicals like the colonial-era *Gaceta de la Habana*, the conservative *Diario de la Marina*, and ephemeral pamphlets outline Cuban elites' attitudes toward immigrants in general, including those from the Levant. Editorials over several decades of Cuban history illustrated Cubans' ideas on race and immigration, as well as painting a picture of the changing contours of *Cubanidad*. Conversely, family archives and memoirs show the ways Cuba's Syrian and Lebanese émigrés and their descendants interacted with Cubans and their governments.

The first chapter outlines the reasons for emigration from the Levant to Cuba and the ways in which émigrés found their way to Cuba. This chapter describes the roots of Cuba's *mahjari* community, their reception on the island, and the ways they built new lives on the island through peddling and transnational networks of trade and communication. This chapter also elucidates the similar legal constructions of citizenship that emerged in the early-modern Spanish and Ottoman empires, and how *muhajir* exploited these similarities and jurisdictional complexities to establish themselves in Cuba. Yet, as reformers in both empires sought to remake their respective legal systems along liberal lines, identities and senses of belonging faced mounting pressures that spurred social unrest and, in the case of Cuba, republican rebellions.

Chapter two turns to the changing imperial politics at play in the Mediterranean and Caribbean as European powers increasingly interfered in Ottoman politics, as instability in the Sublime Porte opened the door to further change and liberalization, and

as the United States replaced Spain as the hegemonic power under which Cubans established a nominally independent, but practically subordinate, Cuban republic. As a result of U.S. occupations and suzerainty, “scientific” reforms to Cuban immigration policy pathologized immigrants from non-Western areas of the world within an increasingly exclusionary immigration and public health apparatus. U.S. law, in some cases, superseded Cuban law and imposed racialized ideologies from the United States. These reforms attempted to change the way Cubans viewed themselves and others and forced *muhajir* and *mahjaris* to use their transnational connections in order to gain access to Cuba and, by proxy, the United States. While U.S. policies influenced the structure and official ethos of Cuban immigration and citizenship law, older, vernacular understandings of belonging predicated on assumptions of mobility persisted, calling back to the colonial and republican discourses of the nineteenth century.

Chapter three examines how Cuban law encouraged the creation of robust associational life and allowed mutual aid societies, recreational clubs, and ethnic fraternities to proliferate in early-twentieth-century Cuba. Increasing immigration from the Levant in the first three decades following Cuban independence, coupled with Havana’s vibrant associational life, resulted in the creation of several *mahjari* ethnic clubs and mutual aid societies. At first, these clubs served the community as sponsors for newly arrived *muhajir*, advocates for the community’s poor, and a meeting space where *mahjari* community members could coordinate responses to issues of concern for the community and pool collective resources. These associations proved critical to establishment of transnational networks and the effective manipulation of post-war French patronage. As new immigration decreased in the years following the 1933

Revolution, both because of economic depression and new exclusionary laws in Cuba, these clubs shifted their focus toward the maintenance of *muhjari* networks and ethnic identities and served as forums for establishment of a collective sense of belonging within Cuba and outward facing identity within Cuban society. While mutual aid remained a central mission, the focus shifted away from advocacy and sponsorship for arriving immigrants and toward maintenance of collective ethnic identities and support for the domestic community and the political future of the Levantine homelands.

Finally, chapter four looks to the changing dynamics of Cuban, Lebanese, and Syrian citizenship as Cuba transitioned from the 1940 constitutional experiment to the revolutionary governing ethos of the post-1959 era, and the Levant saw the establishment of two independent republics in Lebanon and Syria following the hardships of the Second World War. This chapter develops a narrative centered on the way *mahjaris* in Cuba navigated changing conditions in Cuba and the Levant by tapping into the fluidity of their transnational identities to reevaluate their relationships to Cuba and the Levant. In the end, some who believed in the revolutionary project chose to stay in Cuba, while others who stayed for more personal reasons sometimes experienced feelings of abandonment and lost identities. Still others chose exile elsewhere in the Americas, joined family in other *mahjari* communities across the Atlantic, or returned to Lebanon.

In the conclusion, we will return to Chediak's home and explore her memorabilia again, viewing her private monuments alongside public attempts to memorialize the contributions of Cuba's *mahjari* society. To appreciate the curio-archive of her family's layered citizenship, it must be viewed within a century-long history of how she and her

forebears lived and produced various citizenship regimes that transcended the national experience, even if their lives remained rooted in the island.

CHAPTER ONE

“Vecinos de esta feligresía:” Parallel Imperial Regimes of Belonging and Reform in Ottoman Syria and Spanish Cuba and the Rise of Republican Citizenship

“Citizenship a century ago was not necessarily rigid and not necessarily national.”

~Fredrick Cooper, historian²⁶

On 23 February 1885, Fr. Jorge Basabe, pastor at Havana’s San Nicolás de Bari Catholic Church baptized María Pichara, “legitimate daughter of Don Gabriel Pichara and Paula Francoise, *naturales* of Lebanon, in Syria, and *vecinos* of this parish [feligresía].”²⁷ Later that day, Fr. Basabe baptized Marta Socar, daughter of Miguel Socar and Ana Gabriel Solemon, whom the register also listed as natives of “Lebanon, in Syria” and affirmed as parishioners of San Nicolás. Founded in 1854, the *Parroquia de San Nicolás de Bari* (later rededicated as San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari) stood elegantly domed in a small nook near, but not on, a main thoroughfare.²⁸ (Figure 2) The Pichara and Socar families probably lived near the similarly named Calle San Nicolás, which hooked from its genesis just off the waterfront near Castillo de San Domingo de Atarés

²⁶ Fredrick Cooper, *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference: Historical Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 90.

²⁷ *Libro 7 de Bautismos de Blancos, 1881-1885*, Bautismos y Matrimonios, Parroquia de San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari, Havana, Cuba, 629. The words “*natural*” and “*vecino*” denoted Spanish socio-legal concepts of citizenship and belonging. The words “*natural*” or “*naturales*” referred to “natives” of a certain community or place. While this term usually referred to one’s place of birth, as this chapter will show, one could earn status as a “*natural*” of a community. Similarly, the term “*vecino*” denoted one’s status as a local or neighbor within a community and constituted an earned distinction based on one’s reputation and engagement within the community.

²⁸ Miriam Santamaría, *San Judas y San Nicolás 1854-2004* (Miami: Rodes Printing, 2007). This book, printed by former parishioners in the United States and Spain, was donated to the University of Miami’s Cuban Heritage Collection, but at the time of viewing, was not yet catalogued.

and crossed Havana's extramural thoroughfare, Calzada del Monte, before swinging around the northeast side of the small parish building. (Figure 3) A traveler strolling on Monte would have to deliberately peek down the narrow Calle San Nicolás to see the parish building, and even then, the glimpse might seem fleeting. Yet, if the wanderer were to turn north onto the path, the parish would appear as a monument placed at the center of a plaza. Much like the Syro-Lebanese community that called the parish its spiritual home, the small church building only revealed its true prominence upon close inspection. From the corner of San Nicolás and Monte, the street seemed to dead end at the doors of the church, and this intersection formed the epicenter of what would become Havana's unofficial *Barrio Árabe* (Arabtown).



Figure 2: Parroquia San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari, Photograph. Church building from *Calle San Nicolás* before it turns around the parish building near *Calzada del Monte*. Photograph by author.



Figure 3: Colonial Havana with Calzada del Monte and Calle San Nicolás, Map. 1984 Map of Havana edited by the author to show Calzada del Monte (red and running southwest from Havana's Capitol district) and Calle San Nicolás (blue connecting the Malecon in the north to Havana Harbor's Ensenada de Atarés in the south) and the location of Parish of San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari. Map: courtesy of the University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, Cuban Map Collection, Series III: La Habana Province, Sub-Series: City of Havana Nineteen Century, Tray 38, Folder 18, Item 70.2, CHC0468000089, <https://merrick.library.miami.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/chc0468/id/78/rec/154> (accessed: 7/22/2020).

The Calzada del Monte, officially renamed after the nineteenth-century hero of independence, General Máximo Gómez, attracted some of Havana's first *muhajir*. Still known colloquially as "Calle Monte," in the seventeenth century, this road connected Havana's walled city to the first sugar *ingenios* in the capital's hinterlands.²⁹ By the turn of the twentieth century, the intersection of Monte and San Nicolás marked the epicenter of a burgeoning Lebanese and Syrian community that abutted Havana's *Barrio Chino*, or

²⁹ Euridice Charón, "El asentamiento de emigrantes árabes en Monte (La Habana, Cuba), 1890-1930, *Awraq: Estudios Sobre El Mundo Árabe e Islámico Contemporáneo*, Vol. XIII (1992), 47.

Chinatown.³⁰ That Havana's *mahjari* community lived in close proximity to the city's Chinatown may signal that they, too, lived on the margins of Cuba's Euro-Creole population. Spanish colonial law classified peoples from eastern and western Asia as "white," this would have included Chinese and Syrian migrants living on the outskirts of Havana. While legal whiteness afforded these groups certain privileges, that they lived in ethnic communities apart from the city's white Creole community betrayed the social limits of legal whiteness. Lebanese and Syrian immigrants to the city sought to stake their claims to local belonging and settled along an important commercial corridor.

Evidence suggests that as early as 1870, an Ottoman subject called José Yabor lived on the corner of Monte and Figuras in Havana.³¹ Syrians who arrived in Havana sometimes left for work on large plantations or as rural itinerant peddlers, but many stayed in the city and found work as artisans or started their own businesses as tailors, carpenters, or jewelers.³² As this chapter argues, Syrian and Lebanese migrants in urban centers and those who ventured into the Cuban countryside worked together to establish a negotiated belonging. In Ottoman Syria and Spanish Cuba, legal and jurisdictional complexities elevated the role of local actors, authorities, and customs within diffuse imperial administrations, which allowed for the development of collective identities that favored the development of local, sometimes sectarian or ethnic, regimes of hyperlocal

³⁰ Charón, 50-51; Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, *Los Árabes en Cuba* (Havana: Ediciones Boloña, 2007), 39.

³¹ Menéndez, 38.

³² Menéndez, 70; Ahmad Hassan Matter, *Guia Social de las Comunidades de Habla Arabe en Antigua, Cuba, Costa Rica, Isla Dominica, Guadalupe, Giuana Francesa, Giuana Holandesa, Giuana Ingleza, Haiti, Honduras, Honduras Britanica, Jamaica, Martinique, Nicaragua, Panama, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts, San Salvador, Trinidad* (New York: A. H. Matter, 1947), 10-15.

belonging. Migrants from littoral Syria skillfully navigated polycentric Ottoman and Spanish imperial legal structures and benefited from shared concepts of belonging predicated on local reputation.

To show this, this chapter analyzes how legal regimes of citizenship in the Spanish and Ottoman empires structured the identities of Lebanese and Syrian migrants to Cuba and, at times, dictated how they established belonging. In response to territorial expansion, officials in Istanbul and Madrid governed vast, multiethnic empires utilizing decentralized legal systems in which competition, rather than centralization, was key. While local legal forums differed across space, polycentric legal frameworks promoted a pattern of jurisdictional complexity across regions. Such complexity, global legal historians hold, was a defining feature of international order prior to the nineteenth century.³³ A traveler from the Atlantic world may not have recognized the substance of Ottoman law, but they certainly would have recognized the complex legal landscape of overlapping jurisdictions and corporate privileges.³⁴ Early-modern empires often recognized multiple sources of law.

Spanish and Ottoman administrators erected complex legal structures that afforded local and corporate entities legal latitude and autonomy and also contributed to

³³ Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 253.

³⁴ Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 114. Benton notes that “legal complexities that were built into the system of administration carried over and were enhanced by the conditions of frontier expansion...Islamic empires adapted legal devices to deal with the existence of large populations of non-Muslims...Jewish, Armenian, and Christian traders found institutional continuity across Islamic and Western regions, negotiating for and adopting strategies to enhance this resemblance,” 114. In the Spanish and Ottoman empires, corporate groups comprised of individuals and communities with similar interests and identities, sometimes based on sectarian affiliation in the Levant, or on military service or ethnicity in the Spanish Empire.

the regimes of knowledge creation and epochal epistemologies that scholars have argued undergird concepts of modernity.³⁵ Diffuse multiethnic imperial systems thus developed alternative modernities different from the liberal model that arose in the industrializing societies of Western Europe. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, administrators in Istanbul and Madrid attempted to “modernize” their polycentric and flexible legal systems through quasi-liberal reforms meant to centralize imperial legal power at the state-level. These reforms undermined local, vernacular understandings of belonging through an emphasis on civil registries and legal codes that rendered subjecthood or citizenship a status designated by and legible to the state. Yet, many vernacular practices survived as established and emerging corporate groups frustrated imperial administrators and erected barriers to some reform initiatives. Reform-minded Spanish and Ottoman policymakers drew from ideas of modernity produced outside the bounds of their

³⁵ Gurminder K. Bhambra, “Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique,” *American Historical Review*, 116, no. 3 (2011), 653-663; Arndt Brendecke, *The Empirical Empire: Spanish Colonial Rule and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016); Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Everyday Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Sarah Radcliffe, “Geographies of Modernity in Latin America: Uneven and Contested Development,” in *When Was Latin America Modern?* eds. Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16-22; E. Natalie Rothman, “Who counts? Ottomans, Early Modernity, and Trans-Imperial Subjecthood,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 7, no.1 (2020), 58-60; Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Disciplinary Conquest: U.S. Scholars in South America, 1900-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Max Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of the Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 31. While scholars now recognize these imperial orders as representatives of alternative modernities rooted in concepts of justice that stemmed from communitarian, local, and diffuse administrative structures and legal privileges, Teleological narratives that equated “modernity” with Western liberalism proliferated in industrialized Western powers like Britain, France, and eventually the United States and other Northern European societies like Germany. These industrializing powers regarded previously formidable empires like the Spanish, Portuguese, and Ottomans as pre-modern and antiquated. According to this worldview, societies like those in Spanish America seemed hampered in Catholic superstition, sociability, and overly centralized administrations compared with the Anglo-American model built on liberalism and Protestant individualism.

jurisdictions, ideas that often conflicted with and, at times, reshaped local understandings of belonging and identity.

In light of changing regimes of identity and justice in the Ottoman Empire, the Pichara and Socar families likely regarded opportunities for social and economic mobility in Cuba as a way to mitigate the loss of corporate legal privileges and ethnic tensions in their homeland. As legal systems in the Ottoman and Spanish empires liberalized, these reforms represented the loss of legal privileges and affronts to justice to many corporate groups in Syria and Cuba. Ethnic minorities, among other groups, saw privileges, rather than “equality” or “freedom,” as the hallmark of justice. Centralizing, homogenizing reforms detached them from their homelands, spurring out-migrations and formations of new, ethnic diasporas and national identities. The sections below will show that the Ottoman and Spanish empires developed similarly complex and diffuse legal systems. In Syrian and Cuba, these systems established regimes of justice, identity, and belonging rooted in local and corporate contexts. Beginning in the eighteenth century, imperial officials in Istanbul and Madrid enacted series of reforms that sought to centralize these systems of justice, but these reforms destabilized the local administrative structures and legal jurisdictions upon which communities’ concepts of identity and justice rested.

When he arrived in Cuba, Gabriel Pichara likely recognized that vernacular practice in Cuba structured belonging and citizenship as a local designation generally available to newly arrived residents based on good reputation and civic participation. This paradigm arose in Spanish and Ottoman contexts as armies expanded imperial administration into new territories, and as people moved inside imperial boundaries. In both cases, expansion of imperial territories brought demographic shifts. Mobilities

within imperial boundaries caused local communities to develop understandings of belonging that allowed for the inclusion of those deemed “foreign.” For the Pichara and Socar families, registering life events such as the baptism of their children, at the local parish represented attempts by these emigres to establish themselves as members of the local community and claim belonging in Cuba. The following section will investigate how law and mobility influenced identity formation and belonging in Ottoman *Bilad al-Sham* (roughly translated as Greater Syria) and Spanish Cuba. As Syrians and Cubans encountered liberal modernity, mainly through reforms emanating from Istanbul and Madrid, they renegotiated their identities within contexts of increased mobility, shifting demographics, and international interventions. This chapter will argue that *muhajir* arrived in Cuba at a time when traditional Spanish concepts of belonging, such as *vecindad* and *naturaleza*, guided emergent republican notions of citizenship based on reputation and civic virtue, and, as Ottoman subjects, recognized these practices as familiar and shared similar understandings of belonging.³⁶

Kanun & Qadis: Legal Complexity, Mobility, and Belonging in the Late-Ottoman Empire

At the turn of the twentieth century, Botros Maalouf walked the streets of Zahlé, a village framed by the Lebanese mountains, wearing a cape and cementing his reputation as one of the town’s resident intellectuals. Zahlé sat nestled in the arid, northern foothills

³⁶ The term “*mahjar*” refers to the land of emigration while, “*mahjari*” refers to those who live or were born abroad, “*muhajir*” pertains to those Syrians who emigrate.

of Mount Lebanon's Beqaa Valley, and snow-capped mountains created a jagged horizon that seemed to circumscribe the village's, and villagers', prospects for growth. To Maalouf, Zahlé seemed too provincial, and he considered moving to the bustling port city of Beirut or beyond. Maalouf worked as a professor and school master and he at once exhibited the many identities found among the villagers in Zahlé—a Christian, Ottoman subject who spoke Arabic, French, and English. The Maaloufs of Zahlé confessed multiple Christianities (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant), and Botros communicated with family members in Egypt, the United States, and Cuba. When visiting his kin in these places, the young professor's name changed from Botros, in Lebanon, to Peter in the United States, and, perhaps, to Pedro in Cuba.³⁷ (Figure 4) The multiple identities through which Botros and his family registered their subjecthood and citizenship reveals the layered and locally-derived regimes of Ottoman belonging that sprung from the mosaic of imperial ethnic communities.³⁸

³⁷ "Peter Maluf," New York Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Grande and Ellis Island), 1980-1957, list 7, August 18, 1904 (accessed via ancestry.com 6/19/2020); Amin Maalouf, *Origins: A Memoir*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

³⁸ Rothman, 60.

law. Peasants in the Ottoman provinces, like their counterparts in Iberia or Spanish America, understood law through a collection of normative practices and social events that integrated law into the social fabric.⁴⁰ Local communities determined who belonged and local legal jurisdictions resolved conflicts according to customary and religious laws. Local ethnic and communitarian leaders adjudicated disputes and mediated with the Sublime Porte on behalf of their clients.⁴¹ Yet, by the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ottoman administrations sought to reform imperial structures in response to external pressures from rising European powers, including Britain and France, and eroding territorial control in the Balkans and North Africa. Reform-minded officials questioned whether complex notions of belonging weakened imperial integrity and sought to construct a more centralized conception of Ottoman citizenship.⁴² Ideals of Ottoman subjecthood, long understood through regimes of knowledge production and subjectivity distinct from contemporary European systems, shifted as liberal reformers diminished privileges among minority groups and external actors—particularly the French in littoral Syria. They established new patron-client relationships and epistemologies of identity formation that provided “modern” alternatives to the vernacular, locally-derived understandings of self, community, and “country.”⁴³ As

⁴⁰ Ezequiel Abásolo, “V́ctor Tau Anzoátegui and the Legal Historiography of the Indies,” in *New Horizons in Spanish Colonial Law: Contributions to Transnational Early Modern Legal History*, eds. Thomas Duve and Heikki Pihlajamäki (Frankfurt am Main: Max Planck Institute for European Legal History, 2015), 154; Tau, *El poder de la costumbre*.

⁴¹ The term “Sublime Porte” refers to the government of the Ottoman Empire. The term is a French translation of the Turkish “Bâbiâli,” meaning “High Gate,” or “Gate of the Eminent,” which was the proper name of the gate that accessed the block of buildings in Istanbul that housed the main departments of Ottoman administration.

⁴² Cooper, 21.

⁴³ Ali Yaycioglu, “Guarding Traditions and Laws—Disciplining Bodies and Souls: Tradition, science, and religion in the age of Ottoman reform,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 52, no. 5 (2018), 1543.

liberal reformers moved to centralize Ottoman legal and administrative structures, they unmoored subjects' sense of belonging and prompted non-Turk subjects to seek new patrons.

In the Ottoman Levant, belonging derived from local communities largely allowed by Istanbul to establish and maintain systems of justice and administrative structures. Over centuries of empire-building, in an effort to integrate culturally and religiously different groups into an expanding imperial framework, Ottoman administrators created a complex system of justice built upon overlapping, often local, jurisdictions.⁴⁴ Generally, Islamic systems of justice allowed for various conceptions and appeals to justice, and typically remain open to reform.⁴⁵ As a result of Ottoman expansion, the empire's *qadis* (judges) outside Anatolia inherited a legal system that developed over centuries, under multiple governments that controlled vast territories populated by a plurality of cultures. As the Ottoman Turks constructed their empire, they expanded into territories previously controlled by Egypt's Mamluk Sultanate and absorbed the remainder of Mamluk North Africa with the conquest of Cairo in 1517. After the Mamluk defeat, the Ottomans recognized "the need for hard labor to establish a revised legal regime that would accommodate the newly-annexed panoply of identities

⁴⁴ Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 106; Timothy J. Fitzgerald, "Murder in Aleppo: Ottoman Conquest and the Struggle for Justice in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 27, no. 2 (2016), 176-215; Premo, 65. I chose to use "casuism" because it more closely resembles the Spanish "*casuismo*." In *The Enlightenment on Trial*, Bianca Premo explains "casuism," and her use of terminology, as "Magistrates should parcel out justice to each party, choosing which laws spoke to the particularity of the situation and interpreting them in a way that would give each side its rightful due, in a method known as 'casuism' (or more derogatorily, as 'casuistry')."

⁴⁵ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "The Right to Personal Safety (*Haqq al-Amn*) and the Principle of Legality in Islamic Sharī'a, in *Criminal Justice in Islam: Judicial Procedure in the Shari'a*, eds. Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Adel Omar Sherif, and Kate Daniels (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 57-58.

and tangible interests.”⁴⁶ The Ottoman Turks understood they ruled as a minority in a multiethnic polity and over territories that formerly fell under multiple and unique socio-legal regimes; each operated under distinct legal, customary, and social rules. With the convergence of Ottoman state law (*kanun*), imperial decrees (*fermans*), an amalgamation of Islamic law (*ser’*), and customary law (*örf*), policymakers and legal professionals cultivated a legal order that supported a “pliable discourse of justice” through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.⁴⁷

Ottoman *qadis* often ruled according to local customs. Qadis carried the responsibility for overseeing the “justice of the sultan,” which was generally understood as maintenance of the safety and well-being of imperial subjects.⁴⁸ Qadis ruled on cases within a certain local jurisdiction. As legal historian Ibrahim Surty notes, if “the accused lived within a distance from where he could attend the law court by starting on foot in early morning, and then get home after the trial by the end of the day, then he would be considered a resident of the town. If not, he would be considered beyond the jurisdiction of the court.”⁴⁹ Ottoman officials utilized a system of rotating *qadis* to prevent them from becoming too entrenched in local affairs, but often, this system operated to empower the local *na’ibs* (assistants) and *katibs* (scribes) with influence over the administration of

⁴⁶ Fitzgerald, 215.

⁴⁷ Selma Zecevic, “Translating Ottoman Justice: Ragusan Dragomans as Interpreters of Ottoman Law,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 21, no. 4 (2014); Fitzgerald, 194.

⁴⁸ Bogaç A. Ergene, *Local Court, Provincial Society, and Justice in the Ottoman Empire: Legal Practice and Disputed Resolution in Çankiri and Kastamonu (1652-1744)* (Boston: Brill Publishing, 2003), 104.

⁴⁹ Muhammad Ibrahim H.I. Surty, “The Ethical Code and Organised Procedure of Early Islamic Law Courts, with Reference to al-Khassāf’s *Abad al-Qādi*,” in *Criminal Justice in Islam: Judicial Procedure in the Shari’a*, eds. Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Adel Omar Sherif, Kate Daniels (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 160.

justice through control over local litigation and adjudication of disputes.⁵⁰ Legal professionals within the *quadi* court system judged cases according to local customs, thus elevating local customary law to the status of imperial law.

As the Sublime Porte claimed more territories under its authority, they constantly reconfigured in a process that varied across time and space.⁵¹ While they left intact the Mamluk's legal pluralism, Ottoman agents adroitly "anchored the prevailing discourse of Ottoman justice, which linked the dynasty and the sultan to his lowliest and most far-flung subjects" even if they failed in creating a state-centered legal system.⁵² Local jurisdictional control ensured the consideration and centrality of local customary laws in the adjudication of justice. Ottoman justice meant different things across localities, as the *ummah* (community of Muslim believers) and locally based legal agents elevated local custom to the level of Islamic law, unless it violated Quranic prescriptions.⁵³ Ethnic minorities came to understand their place within the empire, and their relationship to the sultan and state, through a hyper-local lens, magnified through local customary law and confessional hierarchies. Among non-Muslim groups, *millet* privileges shaped ethnic identities and offered multiple avenues, within the state apparatus and confessional legal forums, through which to seek justice.⁵⁴ Ottoman legal and ethnic heterodoxy, as well as

⁵⁰ Ergene, 25-27.

⁵¹ Fitzgerald, 211.

⁵² Fitzgerald, 179.

⁵³ Ergene, 204.

⁵⁴The term *millet* referred to legally-designated autonomous religious communities. Under the *millet* system, religious minorities groups controlled local affairs through a system of self-governance. Each *millet* community, through councils called *meclisimilli*, assumed responsibility for administrative and social functions not reserved by the imperial state. Local religious leaders bore responsibility for fulfillment of *millet* duties, such as internal conflict resolution and payment of imperial taxes. *Millets* established

the mobility necessary for and facilitated by rapidly expanding territorial conquest, produced hyper-local understandings of belonging that allowed newcomers become members of local communities as well as the empire.

Ottoman subjects navigating the Ottoman legal system thus used jurisdictional autonomy to shield local customs and identities from Istanbul's centralizing and assimilationist impulses. Within the *millet* system's flexible application of law and jurisdiction *dhimmi* turned to state *seriat* courts, *sharia* courts, or religious courts pertaining to their *millet* communities, and argue their case based on local custom, state and Islamic law, and the religious law of their own confessional groups.⁵⁵ Even within Muslim communities, Ottoman *qadis* applied Islamic law alongside highly institutionalized *kanun* state law in a system of legal pluralism that offered "a menu of legal systems" and that afforded Muslim and non-Muslim populations with options to use state law, Islamic law, or the laws of their particular confessional group.⁵⁶ Eighteenth-century changes allowed non-Muslim Ottomans to buy access to Western European law and "partake in its benefits," mostly as they related to economic interests.⁵⁷ By the nineteenth century, French diplomatic and commercial agents elevated "Beirut Maronites to a bourgeois class with the granting of European citizenship," and utilized

jurisdictional autonomy within the Ottoman legal apparatus, but corporate members could chose to present legal cases in courts outside their *millet*, like the state *qadi* courts.

⁵⁵ Ahmad Amara, "Civilizational Exceptions: Ottoman Law and Governance in Late Ottoman Palestine," *Law and History Review*, 36, no. 4 (2018), 923.

⁵⁶ Ido Shahrar, "Legal Pluralism and the Study of Shari'a Courts," *Islamic Law and Society*, 15 (2008), 116; Cihan Artunc, "Legal Pluralism, Contracts, and Trade in the Ottoman Empire," *Association for analytic Learning about Islam and Muslim Societies* (November 15, 2013) https://aalims.org/uploads/Artunc_aalims.pdf (accessed 7/3/2020) 31.

⁵⁷ Artunc, 2

Maronite Catholics as *dragomans*, and later as agents and intermediaries for European commercial interests.⁵⁸

In response to increased Western influence on and interference in Ottoman populations and affairs, beginning in the late-eighteenth century, the Sublime Porte inaugurated a series of reforms aimed at breaking what many inside and outside the empire perceived to be cycles of slow decline. The term “*Tanzimat*” translates to “ordering” or “reorganization.” This process lasted almost 40 years, between 1839 and 1876, and resulted in a program of policy changes that fundamentally altered the empire’s “main principles, laws, and contours,” especially subjects’ relationship to the state and jurisdictional competition.⁵⁹ Yet, reform-minded officials eventually realized the fluid and diverse nature of the empire and its subjects defied the rigid epistemological compartmentalization and inflexibility of liberal modernity and concepts of legal equality. As Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese-born French journalist and member of the Académie Française, noted after reading through the hundreds of letters in his family archive, “In the minds of my grandparents, each of [the] various allegiances had its own ‘compartment’: their state was Turkey, their language Arabic, their province Syria, and their homeland the Lebanon Mountains...there was a degree of fluidity about both names and frontiers...my grandfather Botros liked to think of himself as an Ottoman citizen.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Artunc, 2; Edward Allaire Falk, “Arabs into Frenchmen: Education and Identity in Late Ottoman Syria” (doctoral dissertation, University of California at San Diego, 2017), 37.

⁵⁹ Amara, 920, 935; Charles Issawi, “The Historical Background of Lebanese Emigration, 1880-1914,” in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi eds. (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1992), 19. The meaning and purpose of *Tanzimat* was “reorganization.” Between 1839-1871, these reforms shifted administrative boundaries, abolished traditional privileges and structures of power, and produced instability that caused social, economic, and political unrest throughout the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁰ Maalouf, 211.

Following their father's death, Mahmud's sons—the sultans Abdulmejid I (r. 1839-1861) and Abdulaziz (r. 1861-1876)—continued to press for reform that “catalyzed a number of sociological changes.”⁶¹ Reformers crafted policies that attempted to redefine the relationship that linked the center to the provinces, and individuals to the sultan, by creating a more centralized administrative structure at the expense of the intermediary local and regional leaders that had supported the more flexible and diffuse status quo.

As reformers codified legal authority and centralized the empire's diffuse legal system, they did so at the expense of local customary law.⁶² While *Tanzimat* reformers hoped to centralize imperial administration and broaden the reach and authority of Istanbul's institutions, the Ottoman judicial system remained remarkably flexible, with “porous jurisdictional divides between the *seriat* and the *nizâmiye* courts, alongside community jurisdictions in towns and villages,” that continued to foster traditional concepts of belonging and justice predicated on diversity and local custom.⁶³ As Ottoman officials pursued centralizing reforms, they wrought changes that destabilized the flexible but fragile web of interconnectedness that sustained imperial stability and connected Ottoman subjects to their sovereign.

⁶¹ Amara, 919-921.

⁶² Samy Ayoub, “The *Mecelle*, Sharia, and the Ottoman States: Fashioning and Refashioning of Islamic Law in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, Volume 3, Suraiya N. Faroqui ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 129; Ruth A. Miller, “Apostates and Bandits: Religious and Secular Interactions in the Administration of Ottoman Criminal Law,” *Studia Islamica*, 2003, no. 97 (2003), 157; Wajih Kawtharani, “The Ottoman Tanzimat and the Constitution,” *Tabayyun*, 3 (Winter 2013), 1.

⁶³ Amara, 938. *Nizâmiye* courts constituted a system of secular courts introduced during the *Tanzimat* era. The *nizâmiye* contributed to the increasingly complexity and jurisdictional overlap within the Ottoman Empire's legal system. The *nizâmiye* courts offered a secular alternative to the *seriat* courts that ruled according to Islamic sharia.

The reforms of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries eroded the traditional privileges the Sublime Porte extended to religious minorities—including Christians and Jews. As historian Fredrick Cooper notes, “belonging within the Ottoman Empire did not entail mere physical presence or even tolerance.”⁶⁴ Instead, “belonging bound people to the state as members of a mosaic of collectivities.”⁶⁵ The *Tanzimat* brought the end of *millet* privileges and the loss of exemptions to military conscription and service for many across *Bilad al-Sham*. The loss of privileges exacerbated social stresses that ultimately increased the likelihood for class and sectarian conflict. Nineteenth-century inter-confessional conflicts did not stem long-standing rivalries that existed since time immemorial but resulted from the upheaval of traditional economic and political norms as part of a modernizing project that redistributed wealth, centralized Ottoman authority, and established equality under the law through the abolition of privileges.⁶⁶

By 1860, political and economic reforms, shifting social hierarchies, and Istanbul’s attempts to reassert its authority in the region resulted in tensions that erupted in violence in Mount Lebanon and Damascus.⁶⁷ What started as a class uprising against quasi-feudal privileges divided Mount Lebanon along sectarian lines and resulted in

⁶⁴ Cooper, 81.

⁶⁵ Cooper, 81.

⁶⁶ Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 25. In the nineteenth century, China, Japan, Italy, and other European populations experienced similar disruptions as their governments undertook modernizing projects and programs of unification and centralization. These disruptions likewise produced patterns of selective emigration strategies that resembled those practiced by Lebanese and Syrian émigrés.

⁶⁷ Issawi, 14.

cycles of religiously motivated retaliations.⁶⁸ Reformers in the Ottoman government contributed to the tumult as they “compromised the old ways of governing, giving citizens new ways to pose demands without necessarily providing the government with the means to satisfy them.”⁶⁹ Traditionally, Ottoman subjects understood their place within the empire through claims for justice, protection, and the privileges afforded them by the sultan.⁷⁰ In order to further their goal of reasserting centralized imperial control over the region, Ottoman authorities tacitly encouraged inter-confessional conflict as a means of weakening the largely autonomous Maronite and Druze communities of Mount Lebanon.⁷¹ Rather than tightening Istanbul’s control over Mount Lebanon, the strife of 1860 severed crucial links between the Sublime Porte and its people in the region and encouraged local communities to seek justice elsewhere. Outside forces contributed to the escalation in violence as France and Austria backed the Maronites, Russia promised to protect what it saw as its Orthodox Christian brethren, and the British promoted Druze interests.⁷²

⁶⁸ While the word “feudal” cannot accurately describe the structure of *Bilad al-Sham*’s society and is something of a misnomer, it nonetheless can be useful in describing to Westerners the conditions in Mount Lebanon in the seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. By 1860, Druze overlords, who had enjoyed a privileged and landed status that allowed for systems of control over a mostly Christian peasantry devoted to share-cropping, they increasingly felt threatened by an emergent Maronite bourgeoisie and land-owning class that enjoyed the patronage of French and other Western governments and agents. The “civil war” amounted to a series of violent conflicts between mostly Maronite Christian peasants, led by landed families and “revolutionaries,” and militias led by Druze lords.

⁶⁹ Cooper, 84.

⁷⁰ Aviv Derri, “Imperial Creditors, ‘Doubtful’ Nationalities and Financial Obligations in Late Ottoman Syria: Rethinking Ottoman Subjecthood and Consular Protection,” *The International History Review* (2020), 5 (accessed 9/26/2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1774796>).

⁷¹ Maalouf, 39-41; Issawi, 19.

⁷² Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 13; Issawi, 18. The violence of 1859-1860, resulted in the establishment of an autonomous *mutasarrifate* called Mount Lebanon, an autonomous Christian governorate within the

French influence in littoral Syria, and their patronage of Maronites, shaped the development of “a new syncretistic national religious allegiance—Lebanese, French, and Catholic.”⁷³ The French first arrived as missionaries, allowed by the Sublime Porte to minister to their coreligionists in the Levant. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jesuit missionary schools in Mount Lebanon increasingly fell under French control and collaborated with the French government to create a “Franco-Lebanese Catholic patriotism” built upon a “hybrid religious patriotism” and the conception of a “Christian *patrie*.”⁷⁴ This evolving sense of identity, and the prior fraying of Syrian society along sectarian lines recast long-standing class divisions and administrative failures. Failures and fissures were submerged into new historical narratives and mythologies that distinguished Lebanese Christians as Phoenicians rather than Arabs, Mediterranean rather than Asian.⁷⁵

In Cuba, *mahjaris* reproduced narratives of a Phoenician Lebanon that stretched “to the cradle of civilization” and sprung from “the first Lebanese, the Canaanites and

Ottoman Empire. The *règlement* for the establishment of a *mutasarrifiyya* in Mount Lebanon, written by representatives of several European powers, called for the sultan to appoint a Christian governor (*mutasarrif*) who would govern with the help of a council comprised of representatives from each of the main religious groups in Mount Lebanon. The official establishment of autonomous rule in Mount Lebanon abolished Ottoman tax farming regimes and facilitated the entry of European economic interests, which in turn encouraged an increase in sericulture and benefited the mostly Christian and Jewish silk merchants whom the Europeans viewed as natural trading partners.

⁷³ Falk, 67.

⁷⁴ Falk, 69.

⁷⁵ Falk, 95; Lily Pearl Balloffett, *Argentina in the Global Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 25. In Latin America, governments (including those of Cuba and Argentina) often classified Lebanese and Syrian émigrés as “Asian.” Lebanese and Syrian migrants deftly utilized new, Franco-Lebanese notions of Christian Lebanism to construct Western-friendly myths about their history and trace their descendancy from the classical Phoenician civilization.

Aramites, whose ethnic fusion came the Phoenicians.”⁷⁶ *Mahjaris* spun these narratives to equate Maronite culture to the Phoenicians by noting “the language [Phoenicians] spoke was Canaanite, a brother of Aramaic” the same language Maronites use for religious rituals.⁷⁷ Through the Phoenician myth, Lebanese and Syrian Christians attempted to build continuities between the ancient past and the mobility of eighteenth-century *muhajir*.⁷⁸ In the Classical era, Phoenicians travelled the seas and colonized points along the Mediterranean coasts of North Africa and Europe, and nineteenth-century Lebanese linked themselves to these ancient seafarers to contextualize their more recent proclivity toward mobility. Most Syrians carried Ottoman-issued *mürûr tezkeresi*, a travel document that served as an internal passport and allowed imperial subjects to travel within the empire and used them to travel and settle in Cairo and other urban centers. By the mid-eighteenth century, a colony of elite Syrian Christians emerged in Cairo, Egypt, where they worked as merchants and professionals. While Cairo effectively functioned as the *mahjar*’s mother colony and remained the center of *mahjari* political culture, its demographic composition differed greatly from the larger labor migration of mostly peasant origins that comprised the nineteenth and twentieth century American *mahjar*.⁷⁹ The Cairene colony encouraged the development of sericulture that enriched

⁷⁶ W. Nimeh, “Gran Líbano,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year II, No. 18 (June 1944), 21.

⁷⁷ W. Nimeh, “Gran Líbano,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year II, No. 18 (June 1944), 21.

⁷⁸ Pastor, 24-25.

⁷⁹ Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 14-19.

their Christian kin in Syria and also facilitated the out-migration of Syrian and Lebanese peasants from their homelands.

Within a context of increased outmigration from Bilad al-Sham, spurred in part from changes to economic and politics particular to the late-Ottoman experience, *muhajir* constructed a migration myth that facilitated the formation of a collective identity abroad and integration in the *mahjar*. Immigrants across time and space often create narratives within their collective memories based on exaggerated, embellished, or fabricated evidence, to build sympathy and a sense of belonging within their host societies.⁸⁰ Scholars have uncovered the ways *muhajir* and their descendants in the *mahjar* crafted the “*mahjar* myth” as a hegemonic narrative that invoked images of a Phoenician past that, as collective memory suggested, predisposed them to migration.⁸¹ Much of this narrative hinged on confessional sympathies in the *mahjar*, as it portrayed émigrés as Christian refugees of an oppressive and persecutory Muslim society.⁸² In this telling, persecution had been ongoing since Muslim armies took Syria from the Byzantines, or had ramped up with the centralizing and Turkification initiatives of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Yet, historians of the Middle East have noted Christians’ peaceful coexistence with their Muslim neighbors through centuries under Ottoman rule.⁸³ Those who promulgate the persecution narrative point to the Mount Lebanon civil

⁸⁰ Pastor, 24-25; Michael J. Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 14-16, 141-148; Samuel Hawkins, “From ‘undesireable alien’ to proud British Jewry: The Jewish immigrant experience in memory and history, 1881 to the present,” Ph.D. diss., (University of Southampton, 2017).

⁸¹ Pastor, 24.

⁸² Pastor, 24.

⁸³ Pastor, 24.

war of 1860 as the genesis for migration, but scholars also note that widespread migration did not begin until the 1880s, two decades after hostilities ceased and a time when Mount Lebanon enjoyed a privileged status as an autonomous governorate within the Ottoman Empire that fell under the paternalistic patronage of European powers.⁸⁴ Lebanese and Syrian *muhajir* constructed narratives at home and abroad that emphasized, when applicable, their Christianity, Mediterranean origins, and connection to Biblical stories and personages to build associative connections with natives of their host countries in the *mahjar*.

In Cuba, the Lebanese community emphasized the geographic and civilizational links to ancient Phoenicia, the persecution narrative, and long history of French tutelage to assert their Mediterranean, cultural whiteness. Commercially successful, Lebanese-Cuban elites throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries claimed a “Franco-Lebanese friendship [that] goes back a long way,” to the era of Napoleon III.⁸⁵ In this narrative, the French arrived as protectors in the Levant “as a consequence of the massacres organized by the Turks,” and the region’s peoples of “Christian origin” and “because of their affection for France...enthusiasm among the Lebanese was delirious” as they considered themselves “true French.”⁸⁶ Émigrés and their descendants regularly deployed tropes of Mediterranean origins, Christian unity, Phoenician civilization, and

⁸⁴ Pastor, 24-25.

⁸⁵ Leon Guerdan, “El problema del Líbano,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 14 (February 1944), 12.

⁸⁶ Leon Guerdan, “El problema del Líbano,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 14 (February 1944), 12.

“French prestige” to establish cultural links to Cubans and lay claims to cultural whiteness.

Economic changes, political reorganization, social instability, and natural disasters also contributed to increased labor migration out of Mount Lebanon and greater Syria, but improved access to transportation and the labor needs of post-emancipation societies in the Americas is what drove *mashriqis* to become *mahjaris* across the Atlantic. Shipping companies owned by members of the Cairene Syrian mother colony facilitated migrants’ trans-Atlantic voyages along with stores of Egyptian cotton, Syrian silk, and other goods from the eastern Mediterranean.⁸⁷ This import-export trade and proximity to silk and cotton facilitated the establishment of *mahjari* networks for trade and employment. Migrants from the Levant usually arrived in the Americas through well-worn nodes of entry at harbors in New York City, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro, though many also managed direct voyages to ports in Veracruz, Port Au Prince, or Havana.⁸⁸ As *mashriqis* set sail in search of labor, nineteenth-century colonial administrators and planters sought workers to alleviate the Spanish colony’s labor shortages, and as *muhajir* found their way to Latin America—and Spanish Cuba in particular—they found a complex legal landscape with which they were “quite familiar...even if the substance of the law was different.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Fahrenthold, 16.

⁸⁸ Fahrenthold, 6; Pastor, 23.

⁸⁹ Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 108.

Legal Complexity, Reputation, and Belonging in Spain and Spanish America

As in the Ottoman case, many early-modern colonial states built their administrative structures upon the politics of legal ordering.⁹⁰ As a result of territorial expansion, Spanish administrators created a diffuse and varied system of justice to facilitate integration of disparate Iberian kingdoms into a unified, though still composite, Spanish polity. Polycentric legal and administrative systems spurred within the Spanish Empire, and particularly in racially diverse Spanish America, the development of a modernity defined by systems of complexity, epochal awareness, and knowledge creation.⁹¹ Spanish law developed through a variety of influences and through a centuries-long period of Iberian reconquest and imperial expansion across Europe and the Americas into a polycentric, casuistic, and flexible legal system defined by overlapping jurisdictions and local customs. In Spain and Spanish America, the terms of belonging, and eventually citizenship, derived from fluid, locally derived criteria based on reputation and good civic behavior. While eighteenth and nineteenth-century reformers sought to centralize imperial administration and disempower intermediary officials, legal complexity and locally derived conceptions of belonging persisted across Spanish territories. *Mahjaris* in Cuba encountered structures for identity formation similar to those in their homelands, that empowered religious leadership and local officials with accepting outsiders as members of the local community and as imperial subjects.

Iberian legal systems developed within an interconnected web of regional institutions and competing customs. In post-classical Iberia, the Visigoths established the

⁹⁰ Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 253.

⁹¹ Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures*, 253.

Fuero Juzgo, built on Roman prototypes, which served as the foundation of future Spanish legal codes. After Muslim armies conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula, Islamic jurisprudence mixed with Germanic, Roman, and canon law. Remaining Iberian Christian sovereignties established or observed their own laws and customs by establishing regionally distinct *fueros*, which proliferated through the era of Spanish unification and reconquest. The survival of *fueros* and customary law allowed Spanish subjects from different regions and traditions to enjoy protections and liberties within a decentralized power structure. This was not the anti-modern version of a highly centralized Spanish administration propagated by Spain's French and British adversaries.⁹²

Iberian reconquest meant the convergence of myriad legal forms and jurisdictions from Christian and Muslim traditions within a casuist context; however, the expansion of Spanish law to the Americas established colonies as legally different to the metropole and “paralleled a more diffuse and fluid project of characterizing multiple and repeating zones of legal variation.”⁹³ The Spanish conquest of the Americas intensified the need to create *fueros* and added layers of legal complexity. As Spanish rule spread to the

⁹² Phillip D. Fox, “The Advantage of Legal Diversity for State Formation: Bourbon Reforms and Aragonese Law in Eighteenth-Century Spain,” *European History Quarterly*, 48, no. 2 (2018), 205; Brian Hamnett, “The Medieval Roots of Spanish Constitutionalism,” in *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: The Impact of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812*, eds. Scott Eastman and Natalia Sobrevilla Perea (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 21.

⁹³ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 29; Marcel A. Boisard, “On the Probable Influence of Islam on Western Public and International Law,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 4 (1980): 429-450. Historians suggest there may be elements of both Quranic and Christian influence in the *Siete Partidas*, one of the first attempts to compile and streamline Spanish law, congruent with the legal ethics of *al-jihad al-akbar* (lesser jihad) or *jihad bil Saif* (warfare) and Augustin of Hippo's meditations on Christian principals of just war.

Americas, customary law became “highly influential in the ways royal Spanish law was implemented through relatively autonomous and flexible colonial institutions to fit local circumstances.”⁹⁴ *Derecho indiano* comprised those laws applicable to Spanish colonial possessions and “was constructed out of *cédulas*, provisions, instructions, letters, ordinances, decrees, and the like issued by or in the name of the crown.”⁹⁵ Effectively, Spanish America had two legal systems: the *república de indios*, or the Republic of Indians that pertained to indigenous peoples, and the *república de españoles*, for everyone else.⁹⁶

Spanish colonial administrators considered indigenous peoples to be subjects of the Spanish Crown, though in a subordinate status similar to those of Christians and Jews under Moorish rule, though not completely analogous.⁹⁷ Spanish officials created vast new systems and laws to aid with the incorporation of *indios* into the kingdom conquest of the New World permitted considerable spatial and “social mobility” in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁸ The *Recopilación de Leyes de Indias*, the late-seventeenth-century Spanish legal compendium, represents what historian Bianca Premo called “a casuist masterpiece.”⁹⁹ It drew upon Spanish understandings of Native American customs

⁹⁴ M.C. Mirrow, *Latin American Law: A History of Private Law and Institutions in Spanish America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 51.

⁹⁵ Mirrow, 45.

⁹⁶ Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *Political Culture in Spanish America, 1500-1830* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 126.

⁹⁷ Rodríguez O., 126.

⁹⁸ Rodríguez O., 126.

⁹⁹ Premo, 68.

and unique legal questions that stemmed from Spanish experience and administration in the New World.

Through the Middle Ages, Spanish administrative decentralization developed concurrently with understandings of belonging and *naturaleza* (nativeness) and the privileges inherent in local *vecindad* (neighborliness or local citizenship). Prior to modern ideas of Spanish citizenship, *vecindad* denoted the rights of subjects, or “citizens,” whereas *naturaleza* captured the relationship people had with the community of the kingdom. These hinged on positive civic behavior and reputation and identified people as both members of the community and “civilized.”¹⁰⁰ As legal historian Tamar Herzog has noted, “Spanish American practices simply recognized the power of citizenship by reputation.”¹⁰¹ Identifying as a *vecino* allowed for the essentialization of citizenship and created an indirect and mediated relationship between individuals and the state. In this way, “citizenship passed through communities, through degrees of belonging, and through hierarchies of difference,” through which foreigners residing in Spanish territory could claim a paperless *vecindad* by identifying as “citizens of local communities for at least ten years” and maintaining a good reputation.¹⁰² While Spanish jurists unified a great variety of local practices into a common regime, and this regime rejected all non-Spanish elements, imperial practices made the wide range of fiscal, economic, political,

¹⁰⁰ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 6-8.

¹⁰¹ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 7-8, 63.

¹⁰² Cooper, 45.

social, and symbolic benefits of *vecindad* available to foreigners, especially if those foreigners confessed Catholicism and achieved *naturaleza*, or native status.

To nineteenth-century Creoles in Cuba, ideas of *naturaleza*, *vecindad*, and citizenship were interconnected notions rooted in local reputation and tradition as much as law. Laws applying to the entire kingdom failed to mention “citizenship,” still, Spaniards generally applied the Castilian concept of *naturaleza* to the entire community of “natives of the kingdoms of Spain.”¹⁰³ *Naturaleza* denoted a sense of belonging rooted in loyalty but contained a fluidity that could apply to indigenous, mestizo, mulatto, and non-Spanish European *vecinos*.¹⁰⁴ Newcomers who maintained loyalty to the community and established permanent ties with local *vecinos* could naturalize and be considered *naturales*. The *Siete Partidas* mentioned *naturaleza* as “one of the greatest obligations people can have with one another.”¹⁰⁵

The *Partidas* outlined various paths toward obtaining *naturaleza*, including, “birth in the territory to a family that descended from the jurisdiction...vassalage, nurture (*crianza*), knighthood, marriage, inheritance, rescue from captivity, death or dishonor, emancipation, conversion to Christianity, or ten years’ residence.”¹⁰⁶ The *Recopilación de Indias* reaffirmed that those born in Spanish territories to foreign parents had status as *naturales*.¹⁰⁷ Spanish experimentation with republican forms of government and

¹⁰³ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 8, 110.

¹⁰⁴ David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 24; Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 69.

¹⁰⁶ Cuarta Partida, title 24, law 2; Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 69.

¹⁰⁷ *Recopilación de Indias*, Tomo III, Title XXVII, Law XXVIII.

ideologies expanded during the Napoleonic wars that left Madrid without a Bourbon monarch, and these experiments met excited receptions in Spanish America, influencing autonomous rhetoric and independence movements across the Americas. As peninsular and creole intellectuals adopted eighteenth-century concepts of republicanism, traditional and vernacular ideals of loyalty and obligation remained prominent currents in understandings of belonging and a fledgling vision of *Cubanidad* and a *Cuba Libre*, or Free Cuba.

La Siempre Fiel Isla: Immigration, Rebellion, and Republicanism in the Construction of Cubanidad

Cuba entered the nineteenth century as a relative colonial backwater, a military and logistical center that supported the mainland viceroalties, with a majority white population that rendered it an exception among Spanish American colonies. Demographic shifts loomed on the horizon as Saint Domingue's sugar industry collapsed, a result of the Haitian Revolution, and spurred Cuba's "second slavery." This was comprised of and importation of huge amounts of enslaved Africans as Cuba positioned itself to meet global demand for sugar. By the 1890s, Cuba represented one of Spain's last colonial possessions that, over the century, had experienced even further demographic shifts with the arrival of large waves Chinese coolies, and other foreign-born migrants—including Syrians. Nineteenth-century Cubans experienced myriad social and legal pressures that stemmed from the increase in sugar production, and the importation of the enslaved or semi-enslaved laborers that supported it, all while metropolitan policies aimed at maintaining Cuba's status as a loyal Spanish colony.

Increasingly, these dynamics produced an unsustainable situation in which Cubans felt increasingly isolated from the metropole, and support for independence steadily increased through the late nineteenth century.

As Cubans fought for independence from Spain, republican ideology contributed to the construction of a *Cubanidad* taking shape within discourses on modernity, justice, and Cuban sovereignty.¹⁰⁸ Three nineteenth-century wars for independence from Spain, taking place over thirty years, prompted Cubans to actively reconsider their place within the Spanish Empire, reimagine *Cubanidad*, and construct rival nationalisms inspired by divergent visions of modernity and imaginings of a future *Cuba Libre*.¹⁰⁹ Late-nineteenth-century Cuban Creoles developed “modern” identities and visions of republican egalitarianism rooted in concepts of *vecindad* and vernacular Spanish regimes of belonging that, along with the exigencies of war, provided a counterbalance for other ideas associated with liberal modernity.¹¹⁰ As belonging morphed to citizenship, Cubans debated multiple, clashing conceptions of *Cubanidad* and *Cuba Libre* that persisted through the post-independence period.

¹⁰⁸ “*Cubanidad*” denotes “cubanness” or a sense of collective Cuban identity and culture.

¹⁰⁹ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Toward a Pan-American Atlantic,” in *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2006), 215-233; Reinhart Koselleck, “The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 154-169. Cañizares-Esguerra has argued that temporal thinking shapes the present and allows actors to work toward change in the future and indicate a modern perspective or identity.

¹¹⁰ Elite Cubans, many educated in the United States, espoused a liberal vision of *Cuba Libre* defined by epistemologies of exclusion congruent with the teleological progress of Western modernity linked to nineteenth-century racial theories. These formulations linked whiteness with progress and created regimes of exclusion and control linked scientific racism, the rhetoric of sanitation and public health, and discriminatory administrative structures discussed more completely in this dissertation’s second chapter.

Early versions of *Cubanidad* developed among white creoles and built upon Spanish normative structures of belonging. Spanish American societies predicated concepts of citizenship on reputation, which implied a regime of acceptance of *extranjeros* (foreigners) and *forasteros* (outsiders or visitors) that carried a social significance rather than an explicitly legal status.¹¹¹ In the absence of formal legal recognition, foreigners in Spanish America could gain “naturalized” status in the community and could become “*naturales*” through marriage to local spouses or property ownership.¹¹² In many ways, Spanish American citizenship depended on one’s ability to show a desire to acquire citizenship in a given community by behaving as a citizen, particularly through property ownership. In the nineteenth century, as increasing numbers of Lebanese and Syrian émigrés arrived in Cuba, they developed a reputation as itinerate “*turco*” (Turkish) peddlers who did not immediately fit ideals of *Cubanidad*.¹¹³

Ottoman Syrians who arrived in Spanish Cuba regularly fell outside the confines of *vecindad*. Across nineteenth-century Latin America, including Spanish Cuba, stereotypes of the itinerant pack peddler featured prominently in critiques leveled against Ottoman Syrians, and offered a scapegoat for those who promoted exclusionary immigrant policies or visions of *Cubanidad* built upon Euro-creole solidarity.¹¹⁴ Living an itinerant lifestyle, pack peddlers rarely owned property or lived within a community

¹¹¹ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 62.

¹¹² Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 56.

¹¹³ *La Gaceta de La Habana*, the official organ of Spain’s colonial government in Cuba, regularly featured court summons for “*turcos*” often portrayed as thieves and in terms that painted them as ethnically, and even racially, “other.”

¹¹⁴ Balloffet, 26-27.

securely enough within a community to claim *vecindad*. Through the 1880s and 1890s, court officials filled the pages of *La Gaceta de la Habana*, the official organ of the Spanish colonial apparatus in Cuba, with summons for *turcos* who perpetrated or became involved in crimes. In 1896, Abraham Herene accused Ricardo or Riched Aon “a *turco* and silversmith by trade” of swindling (*estafa*).¹¹⁵ Likewise, almost a decade earlier in 1887, the court summoned the *turco* Domingo Miguel Francis, accused of mugging and injuring Antonio González Martínez.¹¹⁶ Some of the cases involving *turcos* involved serious crimes, including murder, but most involved petty theft like the case of a *turco* known only as Antonio, accused of stealing eggs.¹¹⁷ The realities and stereotypes of itineracy and peddling among Syrian and Lebanese migrants in Cuba established rhetorical spaces within which Creoles imagined shiftless *turcos*, or racial and subversive others. Through the 1880s and 1890s, even as negative stereotypes persisted, *La Gaceta de la Habana* provided a remarkable record of how *turcos* increasingly settled in local communities and claimed *vecindad*.

Yet, although stereotypes of subversive, criminal, and itinerate *turcos* proliferated in the press, many migrants simply sought a settled living so they could open businesses, buy real estate, and build the types of civic reputations that afforded non-Spaniards status as *vecinos*. Oral histories have created an exaggerated “peddlers to proprietors” narrative,

¹¹⁵ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año LVIII, Num. 103-129, Mayo de 1896, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC Periodicals, Collection CHC 9998, object ID chc99980008200062001, 53/869.

¹¹⁶ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año XL, Num. 132-158, Diciembre de 1887, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC Periodicals, Collection CHC 9998, object ID chc99980007190167001, 167/1259.

¹¹⁷ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año LVII, Num. 79-101, April de 1895, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC Periodicals, Collection CHC 9998, object ID chc99980008070168001, 208/1024.

but peddling constituted “big business” for many Syrian migrants who often left wives, daughters, and cousins behind engaged in wage labor in Levantine industries to fund *mahjaris*’ ventures to seek fortune in the Americas.¹¹⁸ As peddlers created connections within certain communities, business and profits increased in ways that allowed itinerate peddlers to establish bases of operations, participate in civic life, and continue sending remittances to the Levant. Colonial officials identified many of the “*turcos*” mentioned in court summonses as *vecinos* of cities and towns ranging from Havana, Bejucal, Güines, Matanzas, and other Cuban municipalities.

However, Cubans explicitly set certain *mahjaris* apart as not enjoying *vecindad*, instead labeling them as mere residents or as possessing no domicile or residence. Miguel Noe Coras stands as one example. *La Gaceta* listed him as a “*natural* of Mount Lebanon in Turkey, and resides in this city [Güines] on Calle de la Reina.”¹¹⁹ Coras made a living as an itinerate peddler selling hardware and apparently he had not yet built much of a local reputation in the town’s white, creole society. He bore witness to a petty theft committed by “*el moreno* [dark-complexioned] Hilario Carmona.”¹²⁰ Still, other peddlers did not keep permanent residences, as was the case of Juan Lazaro, who court papers listed as a “*natural de Turquía*...without domicile.”¹²¹ These examples from *La Gaceta* elucidate the ways Spaniards and Euro-Creole elites in Cuba viewed migrants from the

¹¹⁸ Fahrenthold, 40, 173-174.

¹¹⁹ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año LVI, Num. 27-50, Febrero de 1894, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC Periodicals, CHC 9998, object ID 99980007930149001, 149/357.

¹²⁰ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año LVI, Num. 27-50, Febrero de 1894, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC Periodicals, CHC 9998, object ID 99980007930149001, 157/365.

¹²¹ *Gaceta de la Habana*, Año LIV, Num. 132-158, Diciembre de 1891, University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection, CHC 9998, object ID chc99980007540178001, 126/1210.

Levant as racially other and, perhaps, undesirable additions to the island's cultural and racial character despite the actual lived integration of many immigrants into their communities.

Syrian émigrés often arrived in Havana as part of multi-legged migrations, and the Cuban capital was not necessarily migrants' final destination.¹²² Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, a Cuban historian and director of Havana's *Museo Casa de los Árabes*, used port entry records from Havana to estimate about 800 arrivals from Lebanon and Syria between 1870 and 1900.¹²³ Baptismal records from Havana's parish of San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari show evidence of a small community of Lebanese families residing there by the 1880s.¹²⁴ The commercial interests of these early migrants created transnational networks between other communities in Lebanon and elsewhere with business directories and international advertising campaigns between New York, Havana, and other locations in the Americas.¹²⁵ (Figure 5) As the Cuban *mahjar* grew, so did the transnational connections facilitated by business and religious institutions, which became apparent at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Maronite patriarchate in Lebanon sent a priest

¹²² Fahrenthold, 38; Pastor, 23; Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 7-10.

¹²³ Menéndez, 38.

¹²⁴ *Libro 7 de Bautismos de Blancos, 1881-1885*, Bautismos y Matrimonios, Parroquia de San Judas y San Nicolás de Bari, Havana, Cuba, 629-630.

¹²⁵ The Syrian-American Trade Association, *The Syrian Business Directory, First Edition 1908-1909* (New York: Mokarzel & Otash, 1908), 20. The directory contained an advertisement for Isidoro Gelbtrunk. The business card-like listing stands out as one of the only such advertisements in Spanish (the directory promotes its use of English and Arabic languages) and boasts of satellite branches in Havana and San Juan, Puerto Rico, in addition to the main office at 54-56 Worth Street in New York City. The full text reads: "Cable 'Gelbtrunk New York' Telefono 4399 Worth/ Codigo A. B. C.-4 Edicion/ISIDORO GELBTRUNK, Exportador de todas clases de articulos de Algodon y Punto y Sombreros/54-56 Worth Street New York. Habana, Cuba. San Juan, P.R."

to minister to Havana's Lebanese and Syrian Catholics.¹²⁶ This diverse community included pharmacists, store clerks, and jewelers, including Felipe Estefan of Btater, Lebanon and owner of the Havana jewelry store *Correor de Joyas*.¹²⁷ Though many of these migrants were artisans, tradesmen, and businessowners, they consistently fought against stereotypes of huckster *turcos* and shifty *moros*.¹²⁸

NEW YORK CITY

20

مدينة نيويورك

C. Klett & Co.	35 Broadway	التاجر	تاجر كارتون وشركاه
Geo. Kamm & Co.	81 Washington	التاجر	تاجر كارتون وشركاه
H. & J. Bower	100 Washington	حلب	حبيب يوسف حبيب
Habib Babouch	100 Washington	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Habib Oudeh	33 Broadway	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Habib Yama	33 Broadway	صفا	حبيب يوسف
Haddad Bros.	100 Washington	التجارة	حبيب يوسف
Haddad Bros.	81 Washington	حلب	حبيب يوسف
Haddad & Haddad	81 Washington	حلب	حبيب يوسف
Haddad Bros.	33 Broadway	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Harris & Jaksch	33 Broadway	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Jaksch & Arbel	33 Broadway	زيت	حبيب يوسف
John Haddad & Co.	33 Broadway	التجارة	حبيب يوسف
Joseph Abo-Arbel	81 Washington	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Jon. Gabriel	81 Washington	زيت	حبيب يوسف
Jon. K. Berya	100 Washington	حلب	حبيب يوسف
K. F. Dikra	81 Washington	زيت	حبيب يوسف

Table - Gelbtrunk New York

Yehuda 2200 North

Codigo A. B. C. - 4 Edition.

ISIDORO GELBTRUNK,

Exportador de todas clases de artículos de Algodón y Puntos y Similares.

64-66 NORTH STREET. NEW YORK.

Havana, Cuba.

San Juan, P. R.

Figure 5: Advertisement for Syrian Business in Havana, 1908. Isidoro Gelbtrunk maintained offices in New York, Havana, and San Juan. The Syrian-American Trade Association, *The Syrian Business Directory, First Edition 1908-1909* (New York: Mokarzel & Otash, 1908).

¹²⁶ *Expediente del Don Martinus Delebtani (Rito Maronita)*, 1899-1907, Sección de Clérigos y Religiosos, Legajo 42, no. 16, Archivo del Arzobispado de La Habana (AAH), Havana, Cuba.

¹²⁷ Matter, 13.

¹²⁸ Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, "Del Medio Oriente a la mayor isla del Caribe: los árabes en Cuba," in *Contribuciones Árabes a las identidades iberoamericanas*, eds. Daniel Gil and Karim Hauser (Madrid: Casa Árabe, 2008), 23.

While in port cities like Buenos Aires or Veracruz, Syrians also found themselves in close proximity to other immigrant groups, including Cuban exiles in New York City. In the 1890s, Gebrayel Maluf Maluf, like many other young men from Mount Lebanon, “simply boarded a ship leaving for America.”¹²⁹ “America” could mean many things, and Gebrayel happened to land in New York, but many of those who set sail for “America” found it did not always mean the United States as they disembarked in Port au Prince, Havana, Veracruz, or Buenos Aires. Once in New York, Maluf socialized with Cuban exiles involved in Cuba’s three-decades-long struggle for independence. He was taken with their republican visions of *Cuba Libre*, and he listened as they proselytized for a Cuba that would be a nation of all races and ethnicities, including an uneducated Lebanese peasant. Maluf came to believe in his Cuban friends’ visions of *Cuba Libre* and he would eventually travel to Cuba with them as they returned at the end of the war.¹³⁰

Mahjaris found familiar themes in Cuban discourses on republicanism, as many had been educated in, or knew somebody who had attended, French Jesuit schools housed in buildings topped with the French tricolor.¹³¹ In 1895, around the time Maluf called the New York area home, José Martí left the North American metropolis to participate in Cubans’ struggle to create an egalitarian and sovereign republic. A prolific writer and leading promoter of *Cuba Libre*, Martí articulated his republican vision via myriad mediums, including newspaper editorials, speeches, poems, and essays. In “My Race,” Martí emphasizes Cubans’ transcendental brotherhood, one defined by a *Cubanidad* (and

¹²⁹ Maalouf, 55.

¹³⁰ Maalouf, 67.

¹³¹ Falk, 54.

even a Panamerican *Latinidad*) through civic participation and enjoyment of positive freedoms.¹³² Martí elucidated a republican freedom, like de Tocqueville's description of Anglo-American agrarian democracy or the ideals of the French Revolution, predicated on conceptions of freedom through non-domination, an intersubjective quality based on an individual's ability to "look others in the eye."¹³³ Martí's republican ideal is communitarian and egalitarian, and this modern republicanism, reflecting the universal qualities espoused by other republican revolutions that, as political philosopher Philip Pettit described, held "*liberté* on the one hand and *égalité* and *fraternité* on the other."¹³⁴ Martí's vision of *Cubanidad* hinged on heroism, sacrifice, moral goodness, and the vanishing of borders between private and public interests in order to create a national family.¹³⁵ After independence, Cubans held Martí as a martyr and apostle of Cuban nationalism and *Cubanidad*, but this writings featured a more universalist view of humanity in general, and Latin American society in particular, that emphasized hybridity as well as a degree of cultural integration. Exile shaped Martí's vision of *Cubanidad* and what Cuba would and could be, and as part of an exiled Cuban diaspora, Martí

¹³² José Martí, "Document #14: 'My Race,' José Martí (1893)," *Modern Latin America Web Supplement for 8th Edition*, Brown University Library, accessed March 3, 2018, <https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-4-cuba/primary-documents-w-accompanying-discussion-questions/document-9-my-race-from-patria-1893-jose-marti/>.

¹³³ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 273.

¹³⁴ Pettit, 51, 111.

¹³⁵ José Martí, *Nuestra América* (Havana: Imprenta y papelería de Rambla y Bouza, 1909); Agnes I. Lugo-Ortiz, "En un rincón de la Florida: Exile and Nationality in José Martí's Biographical Chronicles in *Patria*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, 63 (1995).

considered the integration of immigrants and their cultures as integral to bolstering Cuba's position as a rising and prosperous republic.¹³⁶

Exile in the United States casted long shadows over the *Cuba Libre* project. New York City became de facto capital of a Cuban republic in exile. The Cuban exile population in the United States steadily increased through the late-nineteenth century.¹³⁷ Many separatists who remained on the island eventually turned to the Autonomist party, which favored working within the colonial apparatus to achieve home rule.¹³⁸ If remaining on the island encouraged a disavowal of independence in favor of cooperation with the metropole, exile in New York fostered a steadfast commitment to revolution. In 1879, Calixto García founded the Cuban Revolutionary Committee in New York.¹³⁹ By 1892, José Martí founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC according to its Spanish acronym) in New York and worked toward a break from Madrid. Over the course of a fifteen-year exile, Martí (like other Cuban exiles in the United States) sought to learn lessons from the failures of the Ten Years' War and Little War, while promoting revolutionary ideals and renewed struggle toward Cuban independence.¹⁴⁰ For different

¹³⁶ Britton W. Newman, "Hybridity as Political Strategy in the Southern Chronicles of José Martí," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 33, no. 3 (Primavera 2009), 545-563.

¹³⁷ Jorge Duany, "Cuban communities in the United States: Migration Waves, Settlement Patterns and Socioeconomic Diversity" *Pouvoirs dans la Caraïbe*, Vol. 11 (1999), 69-103 (Accessed electronically: <https://doi.org/10.4000/plc.464>). Duany's research shows a steady increase of Cubans migrating to the United States as 3,090 left in the 1860s, 8,221 in the 1870s, 21, 528 in the 1880s, and 25,553 in the 1890s.

¹³⁸ Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 5th ed. [1988] (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 110-112.

¹³⁹ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 83-86.

¹⁴⁰ Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early -Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1. Pérez, *Cuba*, 113.

sectors of the Cuban independence movement, life in the United States inspired an embrace or rejection of the liberal republicanism championed by Washington.

Martí's time in exile influenced his ideas on Cuban identity, republicanism, and citizenship in a multiracial society. In 1895, Martí returned to Cuba at the onset of a new war for independence. Martí died in battle that May, in what represented a symbolic blow to independence. Yet, in his prolific writings from exile, Martí outlined a popular and inclusive conception of citizenship. In "My Race" ("*Mi Raza*"), Martí wrote, "Man has no special rights because he belongs to one race or another: call yourself a man, and all rights are already said...Everything that divides men, everything that specifies, separates or corners is a sin against humanity."¹⁴¹ To Martí, racism posed a danger to Cuba because it damaged Cuba's national well-being.¹⁴² Martí went on to discuss the importance of "character" to the status of citizen and national unity,

Affinity of character is more powerful than the affinity of color...Ostentatious men who are governed by self-interest will combine, whether white or black, and the generous and selfless will similarly unite. True men...will treat one another with loyalty and tenderness, out of a sense of merit and the pride of everyone who honors the land in which we were born...everyone will be free in the sanctity of his home. Merit, the manifest and continuous evidence of culture, and inexorable trade will eventually unite all men.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ José Martí, "Mi Raza," in *Obras* (Ediciones la Biblioteca Digital, 2012). Accessed: <http://www.digitalpublishing.com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/visorepub/26253>.

¹⁴² Louis A. Pérez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 91.

¹⁴³ Martí, "Mi Raza," *Obras*. Accessed: <http://www.digitalpublishing.com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/visorepub/26253>

In “Our America” (“*Nuestra America*”), Martí again eschews the idea of race-based citizenship and outlines a raceless and hemispheric vision of belonging and identity based on republican virtue and pursuit of justice. “If a republic refuses to open its arms to all, and move ahead with all” Martí insisted, “it dies.”¹⁴⁴ For Martí, republican government meant the establishment of strong institutions intended to promote justice through the promotion of positive freedom, encouragement of virtuous civic behaviors, and the protection of what the Spanish traditionally called *bien común* (common good).

In 1895, at the onset of Cuba’s last War of Independence, but shortly after Martí’s death, Cuban revolutionaries convened to write the first of two revolutionary constitutions—the Constitution of Jimaguayú. While not physically present at the constitutional assembly, Martí loomed large over the proceedings. Many of those who signed the constitution, including Martí’s childhood friend Fermin Valdés Domínguez, knew Martí and held similar ideas on positive freedoms, civic duty, and the responsibility of government to maintain the civic order at the expense of foreign interests. The framers bestowed upon the Governing Council the authority to “dictate all of the provisions related to the civil and political life of the revolution,” including obliging “all Cubans...to serve the Revolution with their person and interests, according to their abilities.”¹⁴⁵ The ideas enshrined at Jimaguayú represented only a rough outline of Martí’s vision of republican virtue that would eventually find more articulation in the last of the constitutions for Cuba’s Republic-at-Arms—the 1897 Constitution of La Yaya.

¹⁴⁴ José Martí, “Nuestra América,” in *Obras* (Ediciones la Biblioteca Digital, 2012). Accessed: <http://www.digitalpublishing.com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/visorepub/26253>.

¹⁴⁵ *Constitución de Jimaguayú*, arts. III and XIX (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 14, 16.

La Yaya represented the last in a long line of constitutional projects that started in 1869 with the *Constitución de Guáimaro*.¹⁴⁶ The constituent assembly at Guáimaro, inspired by the example of United States, adopted many of the liberal principals of the North American republic but also incorporated more democratic-republican ideals of active citizen participation imbued with discourses in raceless citizenship. At Guáimaro, a small town between Las Tunas and Camagüey, Cuban separatists created a republican form of government, centered around the separation of powers, and sought to define Cubans' liberties and duties. Article 24 declared "all inhabitants of the Republic completely free," while Article 25 required all "citizens of the Republic" to fight for the cause of *Cuba Libre* and "considered [citizens] to be soldiers of the Liberation Army."¹⁴⁷ Participation in the Liberation Army stood as a central pillar for claims by foreigners to Cuban citizenship, most famously for Dominican-born General Maximo Gómez, as with the few known Lebanese or Syrian *mambises*.¹⁴⁸

Some of these earliest Syrian arrivals served in the Cuba Liberation Army. The documentary record preserved the names of Benito Elías, Nasim Faray, and Juan Manzur, who fought as "*mambises libaneses*" alongside others from Syria, including Alejandro Haabad, Aurelio Elías, and Esteban Hadad.¹⁴⁹ José Salame, a Lebanese rancher living in

¹⁴⁶ *Constitución de Guáimaro* (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Constitución de Guáimaro* arts. XXIV and XXV (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 9.

¹⁴⁸ The term "*mambi*" referred to a Cuban independence fighter. Generally, depictions of *mambises* show men in wide-brimmed hats, guayabera shirts, and wielding machetes, the favorite instrument of sugar plantation laborers.

¹⁴⁹ Uva de Aragón, "Los árabes en Cuba," *Diario Las Americas* (Nov. 6, 2009) <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.cuba/2009-11/msg00190.html> (accessed 7/24/2019).

the eastern Cuban town of Manzanillo, responded to a call for listings in a *Guia Social* of *mahjaris* in the circum-Caribbean and self-identified as a “comandante” in the Cuban War of Independence.¹⁵⁰ Other Lebanese and Syrian migrants no doubt contributed to the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain and national sovereignty. In 2019, a bulletin board at the Unión Árabe de Cuba’s Havana headquarters proudly displayed a photograph of Comandante Felipe Elía Thuma, who it described as a “distinguished *mambí*” of Lebanese origins. (Figure 6) This pride from Cuba’s present-day Arab community shows how deeply-held this commitment to Cuba is and was among those who emigrated to the community and evidences the type of reputation-based belonging they established through good civic behavior.



Figure 6: Lebanese *mambí*, Felipe Elía Thuma, Photograph. A display case, curated by the board of the Unión Árabe de Cuba. Photograph by author.

¹⁵⁰ Matter, 8; Menéndez, 44.

The leaders of Cuba's Republic-at-Arms attempted to prioritize ideals of justice and civic participation, even when they fell short of those ideals. Ignacio Agramonte y Loynaz, who helped craft the constitution, commented on the need for a strong state to establish and protect order while insisting that the "many wheels of the social machine" must actively participate in the system to prevent abuse of powers and maintain the state.¹⁵¹ The framers of the Guáimaro constitution also abolished the privileges associated with Spanish colonial social hierarchies, ban citizens' acceptance of foreign titles or honors, and protected freedom of religion, press, peaceful assembly, education, right to petition, and "any inalienable right of the people."¹⁵² Despite its patrician composition, the eastern creoles' constituent assembly struck a remarkably egalitarian tone that won the support of many freed Cubans of color and the enslaved who welcomed the constitution's seemingly raceless definition of citizenship; however, to win planter support in western Cuba, de Céspedes vowed to protect sugar estates and slave property, attacks on which carried penalty of death.¹⁵³ Compromises and contradictions ultimately denied eastern creoles' attempts to woo western planters and undermined their initial successes in the east, particularly among eastern Cubans of color. In 1878, the Ten Years' War ended with tenuous peace when the belligerents signed the Treaty of Zanjón. Other

¹⁵¹ Santiago Bahamonde Rodríguez and Fabricio Mulet Martínez, "Jimaguayú: Apuntes de Historia Constitucional Cubana," *Revista de la Historia del Derecho*, 54 (Dec. 2017) 1-10. Retrieved February 20, 2020, from http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1853-17842017000200001&lng=en&tlng=en.

¹⁵² *Constitución de Guáimaro* arts. XXVI, XXVII, and XXVIII (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 9-10.

¹⁵³ Ferrer, 9; Pérez, *Cuba*, 94.

minor struggles for independence continued until the return to full-scale war in 1895. The “Little War” of 1879-80 produced the *Constitución de Baraguá*, which served more as an addendum to *Guáimaro*, and focused more on the exigencies of war than would more wholistic republican documents like *La Yaya*. With the *Constitución of La Yaya*, separatists offered the most complete vision of inclusion and republican citizenship since de Céspedes first attempted to create a multi-racial, egalitarian Republic-at-Arms.

La Yaya represented the most complete vision of a Cuban democratic republican citizenship. Article 1 defines Cuba’s territorial boundaries, while the constitution’s second article defines Cuban citizenship within the Republic-at-Arms. “Cubans are” the article stated, “those persons born in Cuban territory, children born outside Cuba to a Cuban father or mother, [and] those persons of any nationality who serve the Revolution.”¹⁵⁴ Article III proposed a republican vision of civic obligations by requiring “all Cubans...to serve the fatherland with their person and property in accordance with the laws and according to their ability” before mandating compulsory military service.¹⁵⁵ The framers went on to outline the rights of individuals in Title II, which included protections against warrantless imprisonment, the right to private correspondence, the right to free education, the right to petition and to timely resolution of petition requests, universal suffrage, and freedom of religion and the free exercise thereof “as long as they do not oppose public morality.”¹⁵⁶ Other rights included the right to privacy within one’s home and the right to remain in one’s home, as well as freedom of expression, assembly,

¹⁵⁴ *Constitución de La Yaya*, art. II (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 20.

¹⁵⁵ *Constitución de La Yaya*, art. II (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 20.

¹⁵⁶ *Constitución de La Yaya*, art. II (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 20-21.

and association, though these last rights were subject to temporary suspension by the Governing Council during wartime, further evidence that the republican *bien común* superseded protections of negative liberties.¹⁵⁷ By obligating service and promoting the common good, La Yaya enshrined a strong republican ethos by promoting ideals of good civic behavior and a government focused on justice rather than the absolute protection of private property and negative liberties.

The Cuban Constitution of La Yaya framed rights and liberties as contingent on the “passage of laws” or “resolutions of the Governing Council,” under the assumption that the laws and resolutions reflected just government and the will of the people. Cubans, over thirty years of struggle and out of necessity to cultivate support for independence across a wide cross-section of Cuban society, aspired to create an egalitarian, raceless, and just republic. Many Cubans who served and sacrificed in the wars for independence developed visions of republicanism that placed paramount importance on positive freedom and citizens’ active participation in democratic processes.¹⁵⁸ To turn-of-the-century Cubans, civic participation and reputation stood as evidence and a constituent part of an individual’s citizenship and place in the community. Members of Cuba’s Republic-at-Arms, through combat and service to the cause of *Cuba Libre*, exemplified these philosophies of republicanism and positive freedom. Like the Republic-at-Arms, democratic republics can be considered free societies because they are self-determined. Cuban republicanism had built upon the locally derived, reputation-based colonial-era belonging defined by *vecindad*, by placing good civic-behavior and

¹⁵⁷ *Constitución de La Yaya*, art. II (Barcelona: Linkgua S.L., 2011), 21.

¹⁵⁸ Alexander Kaufman, “Reason, Self-Legislation and Legitimacy: Conceptions of Freedom in the Political Thought of Rousseau and Kant,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol 59, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), 25-52.

participation in the national project above registration or state recognition. Still, as independence neared, Cuban elites pursued exclusionary policies veiled in the language of liberal equality.

Conclusion

As a new century dawned, Natalio Chediak Seban and María Chediak Keran left Ghazir, a bustling mountain town in Mount Lebanon. With its Jesuit College, Ghazir served as a center of Jesuit missionary activity and French influence through the nineteenth century, but by the early twentieth century the town experienced a decline in prestige and population. These changes came as a result of Ottoman legal reforms and the increased involvement of European entities in littoral Syria. Framed by two mountain peaks, Ghazir began to fade in the minds of the young Chediak couple as they marched closer to Beirut, where they hoped to board the first ship on a multi-legged journey to their new home—Cuba. The Chediaks would never again see the Lebanese mountains, as they made a new home in Placetas, a town just east of Santa Clara.¹⁵⁹

Over centuries, the Spanish and Ottoman empires had developed concurrently with similarly complex, polycentric legal systems. The diffusion of legal authority and competing jurisdictions allowed for subjects, and eventual citizens, to appeal to a multitude of legal forums to seek judgments and conflict resolutions that lent the appearance of imperial justice. This high level of complexity exemplified a legal regime that provided these two imperial legal regimes a sense of modern, legal citizenship that

¹⁵⁹ Rosa Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, Havana, Cuba; September 8, 2019.

differed from the centralized, liberal, Northern European modernity of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These alternative modernities also became manifest through flexible understandings of belonging within which multiple identities could coexist within these two multiethnic empires.

In 2019, from her home in *La Habana Vieja*, Renéé Dour Chediak, daughter of Natalio and Maria Chediak, described how her father came to attempt sericulture in Cuba.¹⁶⁰ In Cuba, she explained, “he sold fabric and clothes. He was an itinerant peddler...with a little sack full of clothing and cloth and he sold it from place to place. Then, he brought silkworms.”¹⁶¹ After importing the silkworms through a connection who regularly traveled back to Lebanon, he “fixed them up in the house and then brought the mulberry trees...dad put the worms in the trees, no mess, everything was very well organized.”¹⁶² Ultimately, the experiment failed, as Cuba was “not the country...not the climate,” for silkworms, and Chediak Seban ostensibly made the first and last attempt at starting a Cuban silk industry.¹⁶³

Unlike Chediak Seban’s silkworms, *muhajir* adapted well to life in Cuba. *Muhajir* around the turn of the twentieth century increasingly came to see Cuba as a place to seek economic opportunity with a familiar sense of belonging based on local reputations and good civic behavior. Because of shifting civic orders in the late Ottoman Empire, *muhajir*

¹⁶⁰ Renéé Dour Chediak Chediak, interviewed by the author, Havana, Cuba; March 9, 2019.

¹⁶¹ Chediak, 3/9/19.

¹⁶² Chediak, 3/9/19.

¹⁶³ Chediak, 3/9/19.

knew how to situate themselves in relation within different states and systems.¹⁶⁴ Records show increasing out migration from Syria beginning in the 1880s, as José Salame reported having arrived on the island in 1882. Four years later, Antonio Farah arrived, the first recorded “Lebanese” arrival in Cuba, where he settled in Pinar del Rio.¹⁶⁵ Chediak’s parents, like so many of the *mahjari* who arrived at the turn of the century, “became Cuban, they believed in Cuba” they were “Lebanese,” but considered themselves to be “Cuban citizens.”¹⁶⁶ Immigrants from Lebanon and Syria settled widely across the island and interacted with a cross-section of Cuban society at a time when Cuban concepts of belonging placed high value on civic virtue and reputation.

In the Spanish Empire, belonging stemmed from concepts of *naturaleza* and *vecindad*. These statuses provided privileges and rights, or *derechos*, to those who held them and could be held by foreigners. Migrants in the kingdoms of Spain could integrate themselves into local communities and achieve *vecindad* through cultivating reputations for good civic conduct, exhibiting good behaviors, and contributing to the *bien común*, or common good. In other words, behaving like a *vecino* contributed to one’s ability to claim *vecindad*. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century reformers in the Ottoman and Spanish empires attempted to centralize and modernize the legal and political systems along more liberal European norms, which included attempts to legislate and enforce new regimes of

¹⁶⁴ Cooper, 83.

¹⁶⁵ Aragón, 1; Menéndez, 39, 44. The names of Lebanese and Syrian *mambises*, Alejandro Hadad, Benito Elías, Nasim Farah, Juan Manzur, José Salame, Felipe Elías Tumas, Aurelio Elías, Esteban Hadad, Juan Hada.

¹⁶⁶ Chediak, 3/9/19.

belonging and citizenship, yet old ways of identifying members of the community persisted.

Syrian and Lebanese migrants knew how to navigate complex, polycentric legal systems to benefit their interests. They highlighted those Mediterranean cultural traits that drew on commonalities between them and their hosts, including non-Protestant Christianity, and often successfully met both communal and legal requirements of belonging and citizenship. By selling needed goods to marginal and rural communities they created reputations as members of the greater-Cuban community. Their commitment to good civic behavior and the obligations of *vecindad*, including participation in the wars of independence, created a sense of belonging within the fledgling Cuban nation and contributed to a sense of a multiethnic, multiracial *Cubanidad*. Purchase of real estate and business ownership also helped the Syrian-Cuban community to meet the legal requirements of *naturaleza* and *vecindad*, according to the letter of the law, while also creating a foothold that would turn into a vibrant ethnic neighborhood along *Calzada del Monte* in Havana. As Cuba entered the twentieth century, it did so under a U.S. occupation government that brought its version of exclusionary immigration policies and liberal ideology rooted in quasi-scientific racial discourses. Like the Chediak Chediak family, Syrians in Cuba, in many cases and myriad ways, showed their creole neighbors that they wished to be seen as Cubans, even if some Cubans still viewed their “*turco*” neighbors as something else, something other than fully Cuban.

Lebanese and Syrian migrants, from their experiences as Ottoman subjects, understood belonging as determined by local, customary law; they recognized Spanish Cuba’s ideas of *vecindad* and worked within the system by building relationships with

Creole neighbors based on reputation, civic participation, and many times, religious similarities. Sometime in the mid-2010s, around the time Renée Dour Chediak Chediak celebrated her 90th birthday, a friend came to visit. This friend carried a picture of Saint Charbel, an ascetic Maronite monk and hermit. As Renée explained, “she said, ‘look what they were giving out at church. One of *your* saints.’ Lebanese, that is.”¹⁶⁷ More than a hundred years after arriving in Cuba, some Cubans still saw the Chediak Chediak family and others like them as something outside their definition of *Cubanidad*. While the family considered themselves Cuban, members of the family also held to an ethnic identity and longing for the shade of a Lebanese cedar tree as a respite from Cuba’s tropical sun.

¹⁶⁷ Chediak, 3/9/19; Felipe Yaber, interviewed by the author, Miami, FL; August 31, 2020.

CHAPTER TWO

Vecino de esta ciudad: Liberal Modernity, Law, and Belonging in the Cuban Mahjar

“In North America, immigration has never been about immigration.”

~ Jay Timothy Dolmage¹⁶⁸

As the turbulent blue waters of the Atlantic dimmed to the hushed gray of Havana Harbor, Abraham Naser stood on the bow of the steamship that had just carried him across the ocean and looked to his left. Naser could barely make out the silhouette of the famed lighthouse and Spanish-era fortifications that guarded the bay’s entrance. With eyelids swollen, Naser’s bloodshot eyes oozed puss like tears. On his journey from Syria, his home province in the Ottoman Empire to which he returned the year before in search of a wife, Naser contracted Trachoma. Not uncommon among transoceanic travelers, the bacteria now affecting Naser’s eyes probably came by way of an infected handkerchief. As Naser and his newlywed wife disembarked at Tricornia, Havana’s immigration processing center, Cuban officials quickly separated the young couple and placed Abraham in quarantine. Cuban immigration officials diagnosed Naser with Trachoma, denied him entry, and resolved to reembark him on a ship destined for an Ottoman port. (Figure 7)

¹⁶⁸ Jay Timothy Dolmage, *Disabled Upon Arrival: Eugenics, Immigration, and the Construction of Race and Disability* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2018), 1.



Figure 7: Tricornia Immigration Center, Photograph, Havana, 2019. Tricornia (bottom), El Cristo de La Habana, and Casablanca as seen from Old Havana. Photo courtesy of Yeandri Guevara Vega via Instagram (@yeandriguevaravega and @hiphavana)

Naser first came to Cuba from Syria with his brother, Antonio Naser, in August of 1904. After arriving in Cuba, the brothers Naser worked as itinerate peddlers.¹⁶⁹ Syrian immigrants in the Americas often sold dry goods and cloth to rural communities and agricultural estates in the capital's hinterlands or further in the island's central and eastern provinces. Antonio, now a Havana-based merchant, quickly mobilized his resources toward his brother's release from Tricornia. On June 5, 1907, attorney-at-law Juan F. Latapier, wrote a letter to the U.S.-appointed provisional Governor of Cuba,

¹⁶⁹ E. H. Crowder, *Memorandum for the Provisional Governor: Petition of Abraham Nased ó Naser ó Alejandro de Jesus for authority to land in Cuba*, 12 June 1907, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 76, Archivo Nacional de la Republica de Cuba (ANC), Havana, Cuba.

Charles Edward Magoon.¹⁷⁰ In his letter, Latapier sought the release of Abraham, also known to his Cuban neighbors as Alejandro de Jesús. The following day, June 6, Cuban Acting Secretary of Treasury Gabriel García Echarte offered his recommendation: deportation. Justo García Vélez, Cuba's Acting Secretary of State, agreed. Naser's case file then matriculated to the desk of U.S. Army Colonel E. H. Crowder, who drafted a final report and recommendation for Gov. Magoon. The legal arguments outlined by Latapier, Cuban officials, and Crowder showcased competing understandings of law and belonging that shaped Cuban discourse on immigration, the role migrants played in shaping young republic, and nascent ideas of *Cubanidad*.

In the decades following independence, U.S. and Cuban officials modernized the Cuban immigration system and created regimes of exclusion that did not always match vernacular practices and realities on the island. In turn-of-the-century Cuba, the social and political elite viewed liberalism and modernity as synonymous concepts and associated them with images of progress and wealth. Thinkers of the time defined liberalism in terms of market economies, the rule of law, and protection of negative freedoms or civil liberties. Through the nineteenth century, liberal governments established regimes of negative liberties that prohibited state institutions from infringing on the rights of individuals, including freedoms of speech, press, and assembly.¹⁷¹ Modern immigration systems, rigid rules for registration of citizenship, and the language

¹⁷⁰ Juan F. Latapier, *Petition from Juan F. Latapier to Provisional Governor Charles E. Magoon*, 5 June 1907, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 76, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

¹⁷¹ Perhaps the best example of these regimes of negative liberty can be seen in the bundled amendments ratified concomitantly with the U.S. Constitution, today known as the "Bill of Rights," which barred the federal government from legislating restrictions on state-level powers and personal freedoms, like speech, assembly, and religion.

of liberal equality became tools for exclusion. Cuban social and political elites espoused rigid ideas surrounding modernity and liberalism and attempted to uproot immigration and citizenship law from more inclusive colonial traditions and vernacular practices in hope of placing Cuba among the Western nations regarded as modern and civilized.¹⁷²

The ways U.S. officials, elites, and media framed immigration directly influenced Cuban discourses on immigration and immigrant desirability. Cuban and U.S. policymakers saw the island's immigration system as an important avenue for modernizing changes. As historians such as Tiffany Sippial have noted, Cubans understood modernity and sovereignty via the contours of a "national conversation...shaped by the protracted process and profound outcome of abolition, mass national and international migration, U.S. social and political tutelage, and struggles over issues included the meaning of modern republican statehood."¹⁷³ Over the first few decades of the twentieth century, Cuban ports recorded growing streams of migrants who

¹⁷² Nara B. Milanich, *Children of Fate: Childhood, Class, and the State in Chile, 1850-1930* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). Milanich notes that the Chilean upper classes readily absorbed immigrants and others made wealthy through new economic opportunities" but remained a "remarkably cohesive group," 10. Upper classes in other Latin American countries that accepted proportionally substantial immigrant populations, like Mexico, Argentina, and Cuba, likewise accepted immigrants who achieved economic success and exhibited Western normative behaviors associated with whiteness. For the purposes of this chapter, the phrase "Cuban elite" refers to social and political elites mostly concentrated in Havana and provincial cities. These "elites" comprised the island's wealthy white high society, policy-making apparatus, chambers of commerce boards, and professional class. In the early republic, many elites received their educations while in exile in the United States or Europe. These Western pedagogies often enforced colonial narratives that justified Western or Euro-American imperialism as a benevolent and civilizing force, and equated modernity with the liberal ideologies and racialized hierarchies generated in the Euro-American Atlantic North.

¹⁷³ Tiffany A. Sippial, *Prostitution, Modernity, and the Making of the Cuban Republic, 1840-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 17. Sippial positions her analysis within larger conversations, which include the work of historians like Charles E. Rosenberg, Janet Golden, and Diego Armus, on the ways medicine, disease, and bodies relate to national formation in Cuba and elsewhere. Tricornia, like Havana's red light district, became a controlled space where migrants perceived as racially inferior or anti-modern could be segregated until officials deemed their suitability release into the general population or deported. Consuelo Naranjo Orovio and Ann Stoler have also studied this dynamic of racialization and segregation of populations considered threats to processes of progress and modernity.

arrived under increasingly rigid immigration policies. In 1904, the year Naser arrived, Cuba received 28,467 immigrants at its ports.¹⁷⁴ Beginning in 1901, migrants mostly arrived through Tricornia, a thoroughly “modern” space that functioned with assembly-line-like efficiency.¹⁷⁵ As Tricornia’s chief officer and Havana’s long-time Immigration Commissioner, Dr. Francisco “Frank” E. Menocal, enjoyed broad latitude on influencing the island’s immigration laws, implementing policy, and overseeing the Cuban immigration system. With Menocal’s input, U.S. and Cuban policymakers erected modern infrastructures of immigration and sanitation that allowed “desirable” immigrants to enter while systematically excluding those immigrants deemed racially, ethnically, or otherwise biologically “undesirable” in the interest of public health. While citizenship laws attempted to define the Cuban citizenship as an official status legible to the state, Cuban immigration law sought to protect visions of a white, Western, and modern Cuba, even if labor shortages and ineffective policy enforcement allowed entry to many who would otherwise have been excluded.

The liberal turn in immigration policy, which sought to codify and racialize immigration policies, espoused a vision of Cuba as a “modern” nation that worked in tandem with efforts to centralize Cuban citizenship as a state-issued, legally legible status and anchor *Cubanidad* within more Western contexts. Newly independent Cuban elites moved to break with the legal and institutional legacies of Spanish colonialism and

¹⁷⁴ Secretaría de Hacienda, *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados á los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905*, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), Secretaría de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, No. 99.

¹⁷⁵ Secretaría de Hacienda, *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados á los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905*, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), Secretaría de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, No. 99.

attempted to create a regime of legible citizenship that would allow the political class to construct a white, European, and “modern” nation. Beginning with the Constitution of 1901, officials legally endorsed registry of citizens and buttressed the legibility of Cuban citizenship. By establishing rigid legal requirements for the establishment and maintenance of Cuban citizenship, Cuba’s social and political elite meant to buoy the fledgling Cuban state and its institutions. Yet, similar to other Latin American contexts, as officials legislated the creation of a state-centered citizenship apparatus, the persistence of vernacular conceptions of belonging laid bare the limits of liberal state power.¹⁷⁶

Likewise, in the first decade after Cuban independence, official immigration policy and elites’ rhetoric constructed a biopolitical regime of exclusion. Immigration officers in the Atlantic world often regarded migrants from the Ottoman Empire, like Naser, as carriers of pathogens, stereotyping émigrés as uncivilized, anti-modern, and unsanitary. Cuba’s liberalizing project remained incomplete, to be sure. Practical realities and legal exceptions caused by labor shortages revealed a more open and accepting Cuban society in which mobility shaped identity and belonging. While migrants like Abraham Naser found themselves ensnared in Cuba’s modern immigration apparatus, many more immigrants found ways to legally or illegally enter Cuba and establish networks between the island and their homelands to facilitate and encourage emigration. This transnational approach exploited the incongruity of Cuban state prerogatives and

¹⁷⁶ Milanich, 8.

U.S. hegemony exacerbated by the limits placed on Cuban sovereignty and Cuba's incomplete independence.

Muhajir hailed from provinces within a multiethnic empire and, through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, developed national and transnational identities that balanced the local with the diasporic. Likewise, Cubans achieved independence at the turn of the century and developed ideals of national identity in exile, within a multiracial and transatlantic colonial system, and eventually under the shadow of the United States, an emerging global power. In the Levant and Cuba, changes to the legal regimes of citizenship and infrastructures of mobility revolved around fluid and fluctuating conceptions of racial, ethnic, and national identities. In both cases, central governments attempted to increase state control over mobility and citizenship, primarily through codification of regimes of state-level legibility in the form of passports, immigration processing, and civil registration of citizens. *Muhajir* navigated these complex systems and adapted to changes in legal frameworks by working within fledgling transnational networks to establish locally derived belonging in Cuba.

In 1899, Gebrayel Maluf Maluf sailed from New York to Havana, and when he arrived, he saw the “Stars and Stripes” of the U.S. flag flying over the eighteenth-century Spanish forts flanking the entrance to Havana's harbor. In 1895, the same year the *Grito de Baire* restarted Cubans' struggle for independence, Maluf arrived in the United States from Le Havre, France aboard the steamship *Marsala*.¹⁷⁷ Two years later, in New York, Maluf applied for and received U.S. citizenship, claiming to have resided in Pottsville,

¹⁷⁷ “Customs List of Passengers,” New York, US Arriving Passenger and Crew List, December 2, 1895 (accessed via ancestry.com, 11/25/2020).

Pennsylvania and New York City since 1891, despite not leaving the Ottoman Empire until 1894.¹⁷⁸ In Cuba, Maluf deployed his status as a U.S. citizen and connections within transnational networks to achieve the economic and social success he sought when he left Mount Lebanon. Within contexts of U.S. regional hegemony and Cuba's incomplete independence, *muhajir* like Maluf navigated transnational, racialized, and legal landscapes to varying degrees of success.

Independence Interrupted: U.S. Occupation and Liberalism in a Quasi-Sovereign Cuba

Cuba's sovereignty, or lack thereof, affected the ways Cubans thought about their national identity, and took central importance in debates over citizenship and immigration law. Cuba's thirty-years-long struggle for independence ended in 1898 with an incomplete independence that resulted in a neo-colonial relationship in which the United States enjoyed wide-ranging suzerainty on the island and Cubans eventually assumed only nominal independence. Like Maluf, many *muhajir* arrived in Cuba in the years surrounding the end of Spanish colonial rule, at a time when Cubans debated the very meanings of and relationships between *Cubanidad*, Cuban sovereignty, and Cuba's place in Atlantic and global contexts. Many white elites betrayed the republican ideals of egalitarianism, fraternal nationalism through service to the cause of *Cuba Libre* in favor

¹⁷⁸ James L. Rodgers, "Certificate of Registration of American Citizen Gabriel M. Maluf," U.S. Consul General in Havana, U.S. Consular Registration Certificates 1907-1918 (October 1906); "Gabriel Maluf Passport Application," U.S. Consul, Passport Applications Issued Abroad, 1877-1907, USM 1834 20-1379 (accessed via ancestry.com 11/25/2020); James R. Deegan, "Application for Registration—Naturalized Citizens," U.S. Consul General in Havana, U.S. Consular Registration Applications, 1916-1925 (accessed via ancestry.com, 11/25/2020).

of a North American-style liberalism they believed could usher Cuba into the community of “modern,” Western nations. While U.S. officials sought to liberalize Cuba as part of their modernizing and civilizing mission, they also preferred stability over other ideals, and Cuban politicians, in fact, often pushed the most radical reforms.

In 1898, the United States had declared war on Spain, and the Congress did so by using the ostensive pretext of supporting Cuban independence. Tabloids in the United States built a case for war by highlighting Spanish brutality by focusing on their use of concentration camps and fueled public and congressional support for intervention on behalf of *Cuba Libre*. Still, some of the intervention’s most hawkish supporters disagreed about the war’s ultimate goal. In his request for Congressional authorization of war, U.S. President William McKinley outlined his plans to “take measures to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between the Government of Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations.”¹⁷⁹ While insisting on Washington’s “neutral” intentions, McKinley did not mention U.S. support for Cuban independence or eschew prospects for U.S. territorial expansion through the annexation of the island just ninety miles south of Florida.¹⁸⁰ By this time, the “*Cuba Libre*” project enjoyed broad support in the U.S. Congress. Alongside its war authorization, Congress passed the Teller Amendment to “disclaim any disposition of intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island except for pacification thereof, and

¹⁷⁹ Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 141.

¹⁸⁰ Pérez, *Cuba*, 141.

asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people.”¹⁸¹ The Teller Amendment notwithstanding, with Congressional authorization in hand, McKinley turned the Cuban war for liberation into a U.S. war of conquest.

In fewer than four months, U.S. involvement in the war ended with a decisive victory over Spanish forces, and the United States took possession of Spanish territories in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. After thirty years of struggle, Cubans found themselves excluded from treaty negotiations. On July 26, 1898, M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador to the United States and acting representative for Spain in Washington, delivered to President McKinley a message indicating Spain’s intent to sue for peace.¹⁸² The United States and Spain held bilateral peace negotiations that resulted in the 1898 Treaty of Paris, which required Spain to relinquish claims to sovereignty over the island of Cuba.

Thus, Cuban independence from Spain came, not through Cuban military victory or even with Cuban participation in treaty talks, but through foreign intervention. This fact, compounded with U.S. occupation after the war, denied Cubans their hard-fought sovereignty as the United States assumed the role of benefactor and tutor.¹⁸³ According to historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr., representations of 1898 in the United States “insinuate

¹⁸¹ Pérez, *Cuba*, 142.

¹⁸² William A. Johnston, *History up to Date: A Concise Account of the War of 1898 between the United States and Spain, Its Causes, and the Treaty of Paris* (London: Harry R. Allenson, 1899), 233.

¹⁸³ Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 178; Pérez, *Cuba*, 139. Historians of Cuba argue that even prior to U.S. intervention, Cuban victory over Spain seemed imminent. That U.S. forces hastened Spanish defeat is undeniable, but the narrative that Cuban forces could not have won without it are increasingly discredited by the historical record.

gratitude as a source of binding reciprocity” that creates a sense of “moral entitlement and means of social control” that imposed on Cuba a moral hierarchy whereby Cuban beneficiaries “incurred a debt to the Americans (benefactors), by which Cubans were subsequently duty-bound to the United States.”¹⁸⁴ Pérez, citing Immanuel Kant and Frantz Fanon, argued that displays of paternalistic beneficence that elicit obligations of gratitude were “central to systems of colonial domination.”¹⁸⁵ To extend hegemony over Cuba, U.S. officials cultivated a savior narrative based on “the proposition that influence over Cuba was properly derived and exercised as a function of a service rendered.”¹⁸⁶ While the Teller Amendment necessitated Cuba’s nominal independence, the United States moved to solidify its paternal influence over Cuba through military governance of the island until U.S. officials deemed Cubans sufficiently prepared for independence.

In 1899, the Cuban officials within the island’s U.S. occupation government introduced a controversial proposal to render marriage a secular, state-focused status by denying the Catholic Church its traditional powers as mediators between individual couples and the state. In the debates surrounding a proposed 1899 Marriage Law, Cuban social and political elites occupied the vanguard of liberal reformism as they attempted to break with institutions they saw as remnants of Spain’s colonial apparatus and bolster Cuba’s claims to white, Western, and modern civilizational progress. Cuban elites hoped U.S. intervention would accelerate the island’s ascent to modern nation status, but U.S.

¹⁸⁴ Louis A. Pérez, Jr., “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba,” *The American Historical Review*. 104 (2), 359.

¹⁸⁵ Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” 361-62.

¹⁸⁶ Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” 162.

officials preferred stability as opposed to radical reform. “Dramatic interruptions, reorientations, truncations, and inertia” defined the U.S. occupation and early Republic, and Cuban elites looked to U.S. policy and influence to “make and test claims about the island’s incipient modernity.”¹⁸⁷

Cuban elites’ claims to modernity took center stage in debates about the nature of a postcolonial *cubanidad*.¹⁸⁸ They saw the end of Spanish colonial rule as an opportunity to position Cuba as a modern nation and often pushed for liberalizing reforms beyond, and sometimes at odds with, the policies U.S. officials promoted, exemplified in debates over the Marriage Law of 1899.¹⁸⁹ José Antonio González Lanuza, the Cuban Minister of Justice and Public Instruction under U.S. occupation, wrote Order 66, which sought to establish marriage as a fundamentally civil contract, meaning only marriages performed by secular civil authorities could be recognized by the state and religious marriages would not hold legal validity.¹⁹⁰ Cuban elites largely approved of delegitimizing sacramental marriage and striking a blow to what they viewed as an anti-nationalist Catholic Church led by European bishops that allied themselves with the Spanish crown during the nineteenth-century struggles for independence.¹⁹¹ To those debating Cuban

¹⁸⁷ Steven Palmer, José Antonio Piqueras, Amparo Sánchez Cobos, “Introduction: Revisiting Cuba’s First Republic,” in *State of Ambiguity: Civic Life and Culture in Cuba’s First Republic*, eds. Steven Palmer, José Antonio Piqueras, and Amparo Sánchez Cobos (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 6; John A. Gutiérrez, “An earnest pledge to fight tuberculosis: Tuberculosis, Nation, and Modernity in Cuba, 1899-1908,” *Cuban Studies* 45 (2017), 281.

¹⁸⁸ Gutiérrez, 281.

¹⁸⁹ Enid Lynette Logan, “The 1899 Cuban Marriage Law Controversy: Church, State, and Empire in the Crucible of Nation,” *Journal of Social History*, 42, no. 2 (Winter 2008), 483.

¹⁹⁰ Logan, 469.

¹⁹¹ Logan, 470-471.

national identity and sovereignty, the Catholic Church embodied Spanish colonialism, and Cuban elites saw continuation of its privileges as an obstacle to modernity.¹⁹² Catholic officials protested the changes and U.S. administrators ultimately acquiesced, replacing Order 66 with Military Order 307, which conformed with the archbishop of Havana's demands.¹⁹³ While the church used liberal arguments to bolster its position, the debate highlighted the sometimes contrasting threads of Cuban nationalism as elites moved away from the egalitarian and populist ideals of the Republic-at-Arms and debated issues of modernity, democracy, and progress as defined by a deep anti-traditionalist liberalism that rejected the relics of Cuba's colonial past.

Though they often pursued competing goals and interests, U.S. officials and Cuban elites together moved to liberalize the Cuban state and modernize its legal frameworks and ideals. Whereas positive liberties associated with war-era republicanism required the presence of something, like self-determination or control through "just" democratic activity, the negative liberties, or rights, of modern liberalism could be enjoyed because there exists an absence of obstacles or constraints on those rights. Constitutions and separations of powers are mechanisms by which republican governments protect individuals' negative freedoms. Liberal republics boasted regimes of constraints on government action against individual rights, like the U.S. Bill of Rights, rendering citizens free to enjoy those freedoms. For liberals, freedom is pre-political and protected by laws that limit the state's and others' uses of power, while republicanism

¹⁹² Logan, 475-480.

¹⁹³ Logan, 485.

defines freedom as politically realized, and rights politically constituted.¹⁹⁴ Through the nineteenth century, liberalism superseded republicanism as liberals defended the freedom of individuals against social and political power through protection of individual rights and limits on government.¹⁹⁵ Yet, while Cuban elites sought to place Cuba among the sovereign and modern nations of the world, the United States sought a neo-colonial relationship that contributed to its hemispheric hegemony.

For Maluf, U.S. citizenship offered privileged opportunities for social and economic success in Cuba. It was under these conditions of incomplete sovereignty that Cubans forged conceptions of citizenship and national identity. Limited by U.S. hegemony, Cubans often reverted to loopholes, unofficial channels, and official corruption that frustrated attempts to create the liberal, Western, and “modern” Cuba so many social and political elites claimed to want.

Because of the gap between ideas and execution, immigrants often found access under regimes designed to exclude them. Through rigid citizenship requirements, policymakers in Cuba promoted the creation of a centralized regime of legal legibility, wherein the Cuban state registered and controlled legal belonging. Despite these efforts, everyday Cubans continued to regard migrants who exhibited good civic behavior and maintained positive reputations within local communities as “*vecinos*,” or members of the

¹⁹⁴ Iseult Honohan, “Liberal and Republican Conceptions of Citizenship” in *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship*, Ayelet Shachar, Rainer Bauböck, Irene Bloemraad, and Maarten Vink eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89.

¹⁹⁵ Honohan, 86. For more on negative and positive liberty: Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Four Essays on Liberty*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969; 2002); Theodore L. Putterman, “Berlin’s Two Concepts of Liberty: A Reassessment and Revision,” *Polity*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2006), 416-446; John Christman, “Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom,” *Ethics*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (January, 1991): 343-359; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

community. Cuban politicians and bureaucrats worked to liberalize Cuban institutions, even beyond the efforts of their U.S. counterparts, yet vernacular understandings of belonging, bolstered by U.S. support of some traditional institutions, also contended with U.S. and Cuban attempts to reinforce liberal frameworks of citizenship and exclusionary immigration policies.

“Diseased Alien:” U.S. Modernity, Liberalism, and Immigration in the Early Cuban Republic

Maluf and Naser had two very different experiences as émigrés attempting to enter Havana. When Maluf arrived in 1899, U.S. forces had just established themselves in the city and had only begun to “modernize” Cuba’s immigration system. By the time Naser arrived for the first time, in 1904, Havana’s immigration processing apparatus ranked among the world’s most sophisticated. Maluf’s U.S. citizenship afforded him privileged status among arriving passengers and likely granted him immediate access to the city and freedom of movement. Naser’s passage from the Levant increased his chances of being detained and required him to submit to invasive medical examinations and registration procedures. Cuban policymakers considered immigration policy as integral to understandings of Cuban identity and encouraged immigration of white, European immigrants while simultaneously coopting the language of civilization, modernity, and public health to exclude immigrants the racialized rhetoric of the time deemed undesirable.

When the Cuban-Spanish-American War ended, and U.S. forces stayed to occupy the island, U.S. and Cuban officials attempted to modernize immigration policies along liberal lines defined by rigid categorization, scientific management, a vast bureaucratic apparatus, and policies of exclusion. The immigration center at Triscornia stood as the crown jewel of Cuba's network of ports and processing stations. As Havana's Immigration Commissioner, Dr. Menocal, embodied the Cuban liberal project. Yet, as U.S. and Cuban officials advanced successive policy changes and succeeded in "modernizing" Cuba's immigration laws and infrastructure; in practice, migrants evaded legal barriers to entry through deft use of transnational networks and emphasis of cultural similarities and makers of "civilization."

Two days before Christmas in 1899, U.S. General Leonard Wood assumed the role of Governor-General of Cuba under U.S. occupation. An army officer, prominent GOP politician, and physician by training, Wood quickly moved to improve sanitation and promote liberal trade policies. In his earliest days as governor-general, Wood focused on establishing sanitation protocols and control over customs and immigration at Cuba's ports—particularly, the Port of Havana. By 1899, the *Protector*, a state-of-the-art disinfecting barge used for quarantining passengers with infectious diseases, docked in Havana as a temporary measure.¹⁹⁶ That same year, surgeon Henry Rose Carter celebrated the *Protector* as "the most complete and convenient disinfecting plant I have ever seen, and I have seen every one between New York and Galveston."¹⁹⁷ The

¹⁹⁶ Ahmed Correa Alvarez, "Triscornia and the Reinvention of Migratory Control in Cuba under the U.S. Military Occupation," *New Directions in Cuban Studies Conference*, University of Miami, October 18, 2019, 2.

¹⁹⁷ USMHS Health Report. May 1, 1899.

occupation government, with the help of the United States Marine Hospital Service (USMHS) and Revenue Cutter Service (RCS), also constructed a railroad that portended plans for a modern immigration processing, quarantine, and detention center at Tricornia.¹⁹⁸ The site occupied a prominent position on the east side of the harbor, overlooking the bay and the colonial city center that sat across it.¹⁹⁹ A year later, an immigration processing and detention center opened at Tricornia.²⁰⁰ In 1900, Havana's was one of only two such state-of-the-art immigration centers, along with Ellis Island which, following a devastating fire in 1897, reopened in New York Harbor the same year Tricornia did in Casablanca.²⁰¹ Similar stations at Galveston Island, Texas and Angel Island, California would not open until 1906 and 1910, respectively. In 1900, Ellis Island and Tricornia stood as testaments to U.S. modernity and the biopolitics inherent to U.S. immigration and imperialism.

Tricornia gleamed as a monument to modernity built upon “an arid and rocky place” and sat just across the bay from Havana's ancient colonial buildings.²⁰² Ships that entered Havana Harbor did so through a narrow inlet that led into a wide bay that fingers out into three smaller harbors, Marimelena, Guanabacoa, and Artarés. The lighthouse and

¹⁹⁸ United States Senate Committee on Relations with Cuba, *Statement of the Secretary of War Itemized statement of Expenditures Made By E.G. Rathbone, Director-General of Posts in the Island of Cuba From January 1, 1899, to April 30, 1900*, Vol. 2, Washington, D.C.: GPO, November 30, 1900, 20.

¹⁹⁹ Correa, 1-2.

²⁰⁰ USMHS Health Report, September 21, 1900, 2344.

²⁰¹ National Park Service, “Immigration,” https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/historyculture/places_immigration.htm (accessed 5/27/2020).

²⁰² Frank E. Menocal, *Department of Immigration of the Island of Cuba Report of Operations: From July 1st to December 31st, 1901*, 7 (accessed 6/17/2020: <https://books.google.com/books?id=VnhYAAAAMAAJ>).

eighteenth-century fortifications of El Morro and La Cabaña flank the east side of the inlet, while Old Havana sat to the west, with its own sixteenth-century fortifications. Once the ship entered the bay and pulled into a slip at Havana's port, Naser probably rode in a crowded cattle car to the U.S. American-built station at Tricornia. There, immigration officials requested the passenger list and disembarked the immigrants onboard. As Naser and his shipmates descended the gangway, they entered a small pavilion "where the immigrants [were] registered."²⁰³ Officials recorded immigrants' "names, ages, social condition, occupation, nationality, if ever in Cuba before, where and how long, [and] date of entrance."²⁰⁴ For decades, Menocal oversaw Tricornia as Havana's Immigration Commissioner and steered Cuban immigration policy through two U.S. occupations and several republican presidential administrations.

The nephew of Cuba's third president, Menocal played a pivotal role in the modernization of Cuba's port and immigration infrastructure and enjoyed the confidence of elites in Washington and Havana. He knew the language of U.S. liberal modernity and proselytized on its behalf. U.S. Army General John J. Pershing probably meant Menocal when he referred to an "Americanized Cuban" doctor who traveled with his battalion in 1898.²⁰⁵ Under Menocal's watch, Tricornia operated as a barrier to many immigrants

²⁰³ Menocal, *Report of Operations*, 7.

²⁰⁴ Menocal, *Report of Operations*, 7.

²⁰⁵ John J. Pershing, Greenwood, John T. ed. *My Life Before the World War, 1860-1917: A Memoir* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 115. I chose to use the term Cuban-Spanish-American War, because the term "Spanish-American War" found in Pershing's memoir and U.S. history textbooks ignores the three years of continuous fighting, and three decades of struggle, between Cubans and Spain prior to U.S. entry into the conflict.

seeking admittance to Cuba and served as an example of modern, scientific, and race-based immigrant exclusion policies.

Cursory medical inspections most strongly characterized the experience of migrants arriving in early-twentieth-century immigration stations like Tricornia.²⁰⁶ As Abraham Naser gave his answers to the immigration questionnaire, officials kept a close watch over the ways he moved, surveyed his facial features, and took notice if he squinted to read the various stamps, badges, and forms that regularly shuffled between officials' hands and his own.²⁰⁷ Officials likely noticed Naser's trachoma during this initial registration process and shuttled him directly to the quarantine building. Meanwhile, Naser's wife, and others who did not immediately exhibit evidence of illness or disability, received "a spoon, a cup, a towel and two ounces of soap," and waited in cells for a more thorough examination.²⁰⁸ Aside from inspecting the health of arriving immigrants, "inspectors [found] out whether they have been in Cuba before, where and how long, determining whether they are or not probably immune [to yellow fever]: if they have, or not, relatives in this country or if they bring letters of recommendation, or money, and if already engaged in the kind of trade they wish to adopt, and many more particulars."²⁰⁹ During the registration process, migrants' fates hinged on their examiners' discretion and prejudices within a political rhetoric of immigration focused on public health threats and exclusion of people deemed inferior or undesirable.

²⁰⁶ Dolmage, 14.

²⁰⁷ Dolmage, 15.

²⁰⁸ Menocal, *Report of Operations*, 7.

²⁰⁹ Menocal, *Report of Operations*, 8.

Under U.S. occupation, Cuba's immigration apparatus came to resemble that of its northern neighbor. Even as turn-of-the-century nativist movements in the United States featured prominently in the nation's discourses on immigration and policies, migrants often viewed "America" as a place of opportunity and a nation of immigrants, if not always welcoming. North American liberalism claimed universality and inclusion, but political scientist Uday Singh Mehta notes the history of liberalism "is unmistakably marked by the systematic and sustained political exclusion of various groups and 'types' of people."²¹⁰ The United States excluded immigration from China in 1882 and later took steps to stop immigration from East Asia altogether. The immigration law of 1891 excluded "All idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, [and] persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease," among others.²¹¹ In 1902, before arguing for the health dangers posed by immigrants, U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration T. V. Powderly noted how the "alien stream" of past generations "had its source...in lands to which [native-born Americans] looked with pride when tracing their own genealogy" and how the "immigration of that day distributed itself over the entire country" rather than in the ethnic neighborhoods of industrializing coastal cities.²¹² Powderly's essay on the health risks posed by turn-of-the-century immigrants betrayed the exclusionary agenda at the heart of U.S. immigration

²¹⁰ Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion" in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 59.

²¹¹ Immigration Act of 1891.

²¹² T. V. Powderly, "Immigration's Menace to the National Health," *The North American Review*, Vol. 175 (54) University of Northern Iowa Press (Jul 1902), 53-54 Accessed 2-21-20: <http://www.jstore.org/stable/25119272>.

policy. “Cursory medical inspections most strongly characterized the experience” for immigrants arriving at stations like Ellis Island and Tricornia.²¹³ In the United States and Cuba, officials often couched efforts to exclude certain categories of immigrants in the language of health, sanitation, and the disease threat posed by immigrant bodies entering the population.²¹⁴ Health screenings and quarantine in facilities like Tricornia were meant to pose a deterrent to undesirable “alien streams.”

U.S. efforts to modernize Cuba’s immigration system emerged from desires to keep would-be immigrants from using Cuba as a backdoor of sorts to the United States and as a way to maintain a competitive advantage for U.S. labor and industry.²¹⁵ Even after the military occupation ended on 20 May 1902, U.S. officials continued to worry about immigrants deemed undesirable. To prevent rejected migrants’ attempting to enter the United States through Cuba, U.S. policy dictated that Cuba deny them entry. On 15 December 1903, as the U.S. Senate debated a reciprocal trade treaty with the newly independent Republic of Cuba, the deliberations turned to the topic of immigration as senators Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts and Thomas M. Patterson of Colorado engaged in a hotly contested back and forth exchange.²¹⁶ However, U.S. attempts to

²¹³ Dolmage, 14.

²¹⁴ Daniel A. Rodríguez, *The Right to Live in Health: Medical Politics in Postindependence Havana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 9.

²¹⁵ Senator Henry Teller, speaking on Cuban Reciprocity Treaty HB 1921, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume XXXVIII (Washington: GPO, 1904), 38. Senator Thomas M. Patterson, speaking on Cuban Reciprocity Treaty HB 1921, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume XXXVIII (Washington: GPO, 1904), 248; Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 144-146; Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 103.

²¹⁶ Senators Henry Cabot Lodge and Thomas M. Patterson, speaking on Cuban Reciprocity Treaty HB 1921, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume XXXVIII (Washington: GPO, 1904), 239.

extend Chinese exclusion to Cuba proved ineffective.²¹⁷ As with *Cubanidad* and *vecindad*, top-down attempts, during and after the First U.S. Occupation, by elites and policymakers to control immigration through regimes of written, laws meant to codify state legibility failed to change the realities in practice.²¹⁸ Senator Lodge assured his Senate colleagues, “Our law was adopted [in Cuba]. The only information I was able to get...was from the Cuban minister, who informed me that the law of Cuba to-day is exactly the same as our law about the exclusion of the Chinese: that it had not been changed in any way.”²¹⁹ Senator Patterson seemed to understand the gap that existed between the written law and realities in Cuba, regardless of assurances from government officials in the United States and Cuba. “There is nothing in the make-up of the population of Cuba, Mr. President, to exclude Chinese labor,” Patterson declared from the Senate floor.²²⁰ In 1909, Menocal wrote to the Cuban Treasury Secretary and argued in favor of Chinese Exclusion for “economic or social, ethnic or racial, sanitary, and diplomatic reasons.”²²¹ U.S. and Cuban officials’ attempts to construct an exclusionary apparatus under racialized assumptions of public health and sanitation met with mixed results, with lapses in efficacy resulting from clandestine networks of mobility,

²¹⁷ López, 146.

²¹⁸ “*Vecindad*,” denotes a traditional Spanish concept of vernacular belonging predicated on local, good reputation and positive civic behavior.

²¹⁹ Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, speaking on Cuban Reciprocity Treaty HB 1921, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume XXXVIII (Washington: GPO, 1904), 249.

²²⁰ Senator Thomas M. Patterson, speaking on Cuban Reciprocity Treaty HB 1921, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, Volume XXXVIII (Washington: GPO, 1904), 248

²²¹ F. E. Moncal, *Letter to the Treasury Secretary*, September 1, 1909, ANC, 121, 83.

corruption, and administrative failures, but also epitomized the cutting edge of scientific management.

When Abraham Naser arrived at Tricornia in 1907, he knew inspectors would screen him for trachoma. Migrants in the Atlantic world understood the racialized language of health and immigration and deftly navigated immigration systems across the America's.²²² Trachoma's ease of transmission inspired fear, as U.S. officials understood it to be extremely contagious through touch and direct contact and suspected immigrants from hot countries with non-Western hygienic practices as potential carriers.²²³ In 1897, Walter S. Wyman, supervising surgeon general of the USMHS, suggested "recent immigrants from the eastern end of the Mediterranean," increased chances of trachoma outbreaks in the United States.²²⁴ Wyman established a policy of returning people with trachoma to their ports of origin, and by 1905, all immigrants seeking entry into the United States met with mandatory trachoma exams.²²⁵ Dr. Victor Safford, chief inspector of the Boston Quarantine Station and trachoma expert, often traveled to other East Coast stations to provide second opinions on trachoma cases and noted many of those he saw represented "as miserable and filthy a crowd as can be collected from Eastern Europe and Western Asia."²²⁶ Fear of trachoma and growing nativist sentiments contributed to the

²²² Dolmage, 45, 96-97; Mays, 124, 212-13, 232, 239.

²²³ Howard Markel, "The Eyes Have It: Trachoma, the Perception of Disease, the United States Public Health Service, and the American Jewish Immigration Experience, 1897-1924," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol 74, No. 3 (Fall 2000), 529.

²²⁴ Markel, 533.

²²⁵ Markel, 534.

²²⁶ Markel, 536. It is important to note that most of the immigrants mentioned in this quote were systematically barred entry to the United States at this time, still Safford's words illustrate the common contemporary associations made between racialized immigrant bodies and disease.

exclusionary motives of immigrant health screenings. Dr. John McMullen, in his 1913 article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, described a wave of “diseased alien[s]” arriving “in a constant stream” and advocated for strict controls on immigration from Eastern Europe and Asia.²²⁷ Although immigrant neighborhoods in cities like New York and Boston rankled nativists who derided them as dens of disease, these communities also allowed for the development of aid societies and incubators of rhetorical strategies immigrant groups employed to weave their arguments into the discursive environment.²²⁸ Most of those who lived in immigrant neighborhoods underwent trachoma screening when they entered the country and knew someone who had been detained and deported, and news of the exams and deportations deterred many in their homelands from immigrating to the Americas.²²⁹

Syrians like Naser counted among those considered a public health threat and discouraged from immigrating to the United States, and subsequently, Cuba.²³⁰ Governor Wood, as a physician, understood the contemporary bio-politics of immigration, and Tricornia served as a vehicle through which the United States could exert control over Cuban development. In a liberalized and “modern” Cuba, U.S. Americans could count on

²²⁷ John McMullen, “Trachoma, It’s Prevalence and Control Among Immigrants,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 61, No. 13 (Sept. 1913), 1111-1112.

²²⁸ Markel, 558-559.

²²⁹ Markel, 525-526.

²³⁰ Markel, 527; Euridice Charón, “El asentamiento de emigrantes árabes en Monte (La Habana, Cuba), 1890-1930, *Awraq: Estudios Sobre El Mundo Árabe e Islámico Contemporáneo*, Vol. XIII (1992), 37. The policies of Western imperial powers, including those used by the United States in places like Cuba and the Philippines, operated under assumptions of modernity and civilization that elevated liberal, Euro-American, and capitalist practices and policies above the traditional customs and politics of non-European regions. In practice, the rhetoric of Western imperialism pushed narratives of benevolent, Christian powers teaching others how to achieve the benefits of liberal, modern civilization.

Cuba's relative cleanliness and reliability of travel between the island and the mainland, and immigration policy stood at the center of Wood's sanitizing project. Wood understood his charge as Governor General of Cuba to be a civilizing mission and subscribed to a discourse of "progress" understood through a U.S.-led modernization project characterized by hygiene, in contrast to the "filthiness" and "backwardness" of the colonial order.²³¹ Political cartoons depicted General Wood surrounded by boxes of soap and vigorously scrubbing "Cuba," depicted as a crying child of African descent.²³² North American military officials brought to Cuba a vision of modernity steeped in discourses of teleological progress and positivism and carried a version of "scientific racism" that diminished the status of "Latin races."²³³ U.S. immigration policy reflected a wider program meant to elevate the status of sympathetic white Cubans, expand U.S. influence, and entrench North American ideas of modernity in Cuban society and institutions. General Wood worked toward these goals until his final days in office, when just days before relinquishing control of the island to the newly elected Cuban government, he tied Cuban immigration law to U.S. immigration law with Military Order 155 of 1902. While Cuban governments sometimes made exceptions to Order 155 in times of labor shortages, Cuban and U.S. immigration policies remained linked via Order 155 until the 1940s.

²³¹ Marial Iglesias Utset, *A Cultural History of Cuba during the U.S. Occupation, 1898-1902*, trans. Russ Davidson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 24.

²³² Utset, 24.

²³³ Utset, 70.

While in office, Leonard Wood moved to decisively shape Cuban immigration law in the mold of the U.S. policy. Even prior to Wood's arrival, the U.S. military government on the island promulgated new *Immigration Regulations for the Island of Cuba*.²³⁴ The 1899 regulations illustrate the U.S. liberal preference for status legible to the state by requiring ship manifests to record nineteen separate details about passengers arriving in Cuba ports, including: full name, age, sex, marital status, nationality, final destination in Cuba, beliefs on polygamy, and overall health.²³⁵ Wood's issuance of Order 155 cemented these policies on immigration that U.S. officials began introducing at the conclusion of the war in 1889. In 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act to limit the flow of Chinese laborers to the Pacific coast.²³⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, Congress added other restrictions on Japanese and others deemed undesirable, including "imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics" and those who would "become public charges."²³⁷ After the Spanish-American War, the United States applied these immigration restrictions to its newly acquired territories, and territories under its control, including Cuba. Immigration restrictions came to Cuba in 1902, via Governor Wood's issuance of Order No. 155 which applied all U.S. immigration laws to Cuba.²³⁸ As the newly elected Cuban government took control of the island, it began the work of establishing Cuban citizenship and immigration laws.

²³⁴ War Department, *Immigration Regulations for the Island of Cuba* (Washington: GPO, 1899).

²³⁵ War Department, *Immigration Regulations*, 8.

²³⁶ López, 64.

²³⁷ McMullen, 1111; Powderly, 54. The rhetoric of immigrants becoming a "public charge" appears several times in U.S. immigration policies and those of other American countries. The term remains rhetorically relevant to U.S. political discourses and debates on immigration to the United States.

²³⁸ López, 146.

“Transcription of Documents:” Liberalism, Whiteness, and Cuban Citizenship in the Early Republic

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries represented a time when Cubans attempted to understand how race, religion, and immigration fit within the still bending borders of *Cubanidad*. The last Cuban War for Independence from Spain began in 1895 and ended in 1898. Many Cubans lived in exile in the United States before and during the war, and only returned once Spain relinquished power. Many Cubans received their educations in the United States, made connections with other ethnic groups, and formed social ties within North American society. In late-nineteenth-century New York City, Cubans and Syrians shared the experience of migration, sense of separation from one’s homeland, and in some cases, exile within anti-imperial and anti-colonial contexts.

As Naser’s case elucidated tensions between competing visions of Cuban citizenship, Maluf exemplified the ideal of virtuous republican citizen without legibly registering as a legal Cuban citizen. Maluf’s U.S. citizenship opened doors that remained shut for migrants like Naser. Yet, evidence suggests that, as seen with Maluf’s claims of U.S. residency prior to submitting his citizenship application, *muhajir* exhibited collective and cooperative resourcefulness and ease through the use, and sometimes strategic misuse, of legal documents related to citizenship and mobility.²³⁹ Ottoman migrants who appear in archival records across the Americas often forged documents or

²³⁹ Fahrenthold, 18, 29, 112-35.

provided inaccurate information as a means of evading the most exclusionary immigration policies.²⁴⁰

Transnational networks of communication and chain migration provided the channels by which *muhajir* spread and shared tips and strategies for successful emigration. Just as others had before him, Maluf traveled with family, in this case, his cousin Gerji.²⁴¹ Gerji appeared on the *Marsala*'s passenger list as "Georges," the French spelling of his Arabic name.²⁴² Maluf not only traveled with his cousin, he frequently wrote to family in the Lebanese mountains asking that they join him across the Atlantic.²⁴³ Arriving in New York, Maluf enjoyed the benefits of *mahjari* transnational networks as he encountered "many cousins [who] already lived there, and," who, according to his grand-nephew, "were kind of helpful to newcomers."²⁴⁴ Even after attaining U.S. citizenship, Maluf continued to move. Maluf established myriad social and business connections between New York and Pennsylvania.²⁴⁵ In New York, Maluf socialized with Cuban exiles and believed Cuba could afford him the social and economic mobility he sought when he left Mount Lebanon. When his Cuban associates

²⁴⁰ Mays, 231-232, 244-245.

²⁴¹ Amin Maalouf, *Origins: A Memoir*, trans. Catherine Temerson. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 57.

²⁴² "Customs List of Passengers," New York, US Arriving Passenger and Crew List, December 2, 1895 (accessed via ancestry.com, 11/25/2020); Maalouf, 57.

²⁴³ Maalouf, 76, 91, 116, 176-8; "Peter Maluf," New York Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Grande and Ellis Island), 1980-1957, list 7, August 18, 1904 (accessed via ancestry.com 6/19/2020).

²⁴⁴ Maalouf, 67.

²⁴⁵ James R. Deegan, "Application for Registration—Naturalized Citizens," U.S. Consul General in Havana, U.S. Consular Registration Applications, 1916-1925 (accessed via ancestry.com, 11/25/2020).

returned to Cuba, Maluf joined them.²⁴⁶ In 1899, Maluf arrived in Havana. As a hypermobile migrant with experience moving across and within the borders of several “modern” or modernizing states, Maluf understood liberal immigration infrastructures and the benefits of his newly acquired U.S. passport.²⁴⁷ Through his interactions with Cuban exiles in New York, and like many other hypermobile *muhajir*, he also likely understood debates surrounding Cuban citizenship and how to stake a claim to it without losing his legal status in the United States. In many ways, Maluf personified, and exploited, the link between Cuba and the United States enshrined in the new Cuban republic’s liberal constitution.

Following independence from Spain, the competing visions of *Cubanidad* that simmered under the surface of the Republic-at-Arms boiled over as Cubans debated a new constitution. In 1901, delegates to the Cuban constitutional convention drafted a document that departed from wartime republican ideals. Cuban historian Julio César Guanche has argued that rival conceptions of citizens’ rights and the role of government in protecting and promoting the liberties attached to citizenship emerged as the Republic-at-Arms transitioned into the early republic under the watchful eye of U.S. occupation forces.²⁴⁸ Guanche’s framework highlights the tensions between visions of citizenship rooted in the democratic-republican ideals of civic duties and positive freedoms that defined the Republic-at-Arms, and those stemming from the liberal concept of negative

²⁴⁶ Maalouf, 66-67.

²⁴⁷ Mays, 5.

²⁴⁸ Julio César Guanche, “Informe sobre la ciudadanía” (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute, 2017).

freedoms enshrined in the 1901 Cuban Constitution.²⁴⁹ Negative freedoms are those protected by explicit prohibitions on government action on individuals' rights, like freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. This foundational document represented the liberal, modernizing impulses of Cuban elites and the U.S. officials who governed Cuba during the military occupation that lasted from 1899 to 1902. Yet, while they "modernized" Cuban institutions within a liberal, North American mold, U.S. administrators also buoyed traditional power structures and institutions as bulwarks of stability and potential partners in a new neo-colonial order. That partnership of traditional institutions irked white Cuban elites, many educated in the U.S. and who sought to assert sovereignty by eschewing the legacies of Spanish colonialism. They supported a clean break with anything that seemed too Iberian in an effort to assert Cuban sovereignty.

As evidenced by the constitution, white Cuban elites adopted a more individualist and liberal conception of republicanism, while Afro-Cubans, like Abraham Naser's lawyer, Dr. Latapier still operated under assumptions of citizenship based in democratic-republican ideals that developed out of older Iberian traditions and learned experiences within the Republic-at-Arms. According to Guanche, the democratic-republican "conception of citizenship questions the liberal reduction of citizenship to the status, adjusted to the individualistic conception of rights."²⁵⁰ In contrast to a democratic-republican citizenship "inserted into a more demanding conception of democracy," or a status of rights as active political practice, liberal Cubans sought to enforced a system of limited suffrage that placed democracy and citizenship in a politically defined sphere

²⁴⁹ Guanche, 2.

²⁵⁰ Guanche, "Informe sobre la ciudadania, 1.

separate from civil society and the economy.²⁵¹ U.S. authorities and their Cuban allies conceived of citizenship, particularly voting rights, as a privilege to be accessed through education and income, or those who belonged to “the better classes,” or what U.S. Governor-General of Cuba Leonard Wood called “real Cubans.”²⁵² Promoters of liberal government prioritized legible, exclusive, and legal citizenship that emphasized passive enjoyment of negative liberties. Wood’s administration established a regime of rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, access to justice, and private property.²⁵³ U.S. influence over the formation of the nascent Cuban Republic contributed to a liberal shift in Cuban governance led by U.S. occupation authorities and Cuban elites who identified with U.S. liberalism and conceived of *Cuba Libre* while in exile in New York or Florida.

The rhetoric and policies of U.S. officials and Cuban elites cast long shadows that helped color perceptions of Cuban independence and the meanings of Cuban citizenship. In debates on Cuba and its future, U.S. administrators casted doubt on Cubans’ ability for self-government.²⁵⁴ As historian Rebecca Scott has noted, U.S. officials “had little or no sympathy for the wartime vision of Cuban citizenship...in which service in the *Ejército Libertador* entitled one to political voice and access to resources...[and] were strongly disinclined to recommence an experiment in interracial democracy on the island they viewed as temperamentally and constitutionally unsuited for self-rule in the first

²⁵¹ Guanche, “Informe sobre la ciudadanía,” 1-2.

²⁵² Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 51.

²⁵³ Guanche, “Informe sobre la ciudadanía,” 7.

²⁵⁴ Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” 142-143.

place.”²⁵⁵ Leonard Wood reported on the progress of establishing the “stable government” McKinley promised, “We are going ahead as fast as we can, but we are dealing with a race that has steadily been going down for a hundred years and into which we have to infuse new life, new principles and new methods of doing things.”²⁵⁶ Ahead of the 1901 municipal elections, Wood decried the slate of *independista* candidates, and insisted the “only fear in Cuba today is not that we shall stay, but that we shall leave too soon,” while also suggesting the U.S. maintain an active role in steering Cuban politics as “the class to whom we must look for the stable government in Cuba are not as yet sufficiently well represented to give us that security and confidence which we desire.”²⁵⁷ Secretary of War Elihu Root, in a 1901 letter to Leonard Wood, agreed that the United States had sacrificed too much to afford Cuba full independence and now assumed the responsibility to “become the guarantors of Cuban independence and...stable and orderly government protecting life and property in the Island.”²⁵⁸ In this way, U.S. officials charted the logics of occupation and hegemony in Cuba following a war they ostensibly waged to secure Cuban independence.

Secretary Root’s guarantees on Cuban stability and protection of life and property exemplified the liberalizing mission of U.S. imperialism. In 1902, as a Law Officer with

²⁵⁵ Rebecca Scott, “Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Cuba: A View from the Sugar District of Cienfuegos, 1886-1909,” in *State of Ambiguity: Civic Life and Culture in Cuba’s First Republic*, eds. Steven Palmer, José Antonio Piqueras, and Amparo Sánchez Cobos (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 102-103.

²⁵⁶ Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 23.

²⁵⁷ Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” 345.

²⁵⁸ Elihu Root to Leonard Wood, February 14, 1901, Correspondence between General Leonard Wood and Secretary of War, 1899-1902, Bureau of Insular Affairs/RG 350; Pérez, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude,” 373-375.

the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs, Charles Magoon delivered a report to Congress, known as the Magoon Report.²⁵⁹ In his analysis, Magoon articulated the history of U.S. territorial acquisition dating to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the application of U.S. law to newly acquired territories, and made recommendations for effective U.S. administration in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. In it, Magoon explained the liberal republican position on citizenship and the necessity for the allegiance of those in the territories. Specifically, he stated that,

All powers of all governments rest upon the allegiance of the people over whom the government is instituted. Without allegiance there can be no government. Allegiance must not be confounded with citizenship. Allegiance lies back of citizenship. The theory of our form of government is, that allegiance is created by the consent of the individual; while citizenship is created by the consent of the sovereignty. That is to say, allegiance originates with man, citizenship with the government.²⁶⁰

Magoon again defended citizenship as a procedural and legible status by citing the recently liberalized Spanish legal code, in force only since 1888, that “declare the willingness of that Government to confer citizenship on certain classes of individuals, provided such individuals follow a certain procedure whereby would be evidenced the desire of such individuals to accept such citizenship.”²⁶¹ Throughout his report, Magoon delineates a nuanced, remarkably even-handed, perspective on U.S. imperialism, but one

²⁵⁹ Bureau of Insular Affairs, *Reports on the Law of Civil Government in Territory Subject to Military Occupation by the Military Forces of the United States*, by Charles E. Magoon, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1902.

²⁶⁰ *Reports on the Law of Civil Government*, 114.

²⁶¹ *Report on the Laws of Civil Government*, 174

rooted in liberal ideology that placed central importance on the preservation of “the peace and order.”²⁶²

Immigrants and migrants also considered “peace and order” when considering leaving their homes, attempting to live in Cuba, and opportunities for the social and economic mobility they pursued. Maluf certainly considered the situation in Cuba, and his family worried for his safety. In April 1899, Maluf received a letter from his brother, Botros, who lamented Maluf’s decision to establish himself in Cuba, “My dear Gebrayel...I was upset to learn that you wouldn’t be returning home for a long time, and that you would be settling in Cuba, where I know the war has created an unstable situation.”²⁶³ To be sure, instability in Cuba produced obstacles for Maluf’s business, having to reassure his associates, he wrote to his brother, “please let my suppliers know they have no reason to worry!”²⁶⁴ Yet, despite the island’s turmoil, Maluf saw Cuba as a safer bet than his home village, explaining “here you obtain infinitely more than what our dear mother country can give you, especially in its present state...[Cuba], where we were given our lucky opportunity, is progressing, and one day it will become one of the most important places on earth, materially, politically, and morally.”²⁶⁵ Maluf also benefited from his status as a naturalized U.S. citizen, even if he preferred to live amongst Cubans,

²⁶² *Report on the Laws of Civil Government*, 14.

²⁶³ Maalouf, 66-67.

²⁶⁴ Maalouf, 15.

²⁶⁵ Maalouf, 140-141.

and certainly understood the role the United States played in Cuba's future and continued stability.²⁶⁶

As the U.S. occupation came to a close, Cuban elites created liberal legal structures that built upon the legacies of nineteenth-century Spanish liberalism and colonial policies of control used by Spanish imperial and U.S. occupation governments. As exemplified by the Law of Civil Registry of 1870, late-colonial administrators attempted to liberalize vernacular concepts of Spanish belonging by shifting the emphasis away from local authority and belonging and empowering imperial officials. The law required that entries in the civil registry, by those entering Cuba, list dates of entry, names and surnames, descriptions of interested parties and witnesses, and the “transcription of documents.”²⁶⁷ Spanish law mandated that when “Spanish nationality is acquired, recovered, or lost, the birth certificate of the interested party should be presented, also his marriage certificate...and those of his wife and children.”²⁶⁸ Other information required by law included full name, last place of residence, and the names, birthplace, and professions of children, spouses, parents, and in-law relatives. This increasing reliance on the state-level legal legibility of citizens' lives reflected the liberalizing impulses of late colonial administration in Cuba.

Cuba's 1901 Constitution enshrined this emphasis on a centralized regime of legal legibility. The “better classes” charged with drafting the constitution defined “Cuban

²⁶⁶ Maalouf, 60.

²⁶⁷ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba, the official acceptance of the Platt Amendment, and the Electoral Law* (Washington: GPO, 1901), 45.

²⁶⁸ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 46.

citizens” as “native born or naturalized.”²⁶⁹ Title II, Article 4 represents the constitution’s first reference to foreign-born Cuban citizens, but Article 6 enumerates the process by which “*extranjeros*,” or foreigners, can achieve status as citizens. Foreigners who served in the Liberation Army were afforded the opportunity to “claim Cuban nationality” within six months of the constitution’s ratification. Article 6, Section 2 allowed for foreigners “established in Cuba prior to January 1st, 1899” and retained residence thereafter to claim citizenship “provided they claim Cuban nationality within the six months next following the promulgation of this Constitution, or, if minors, within a like period after they shall have attained their majority.”²⁷⁰ The framers of this constitution made clear the priority placed upon legible citizenship, over the positive liberties of traditional Spanish or republican ideals that elevated civic virtue over officially recorded citizenship. Likewise, section 3 of the same article stipulates that foreigners who, “after five years’ of residence in the territory of the Republic and not less than two years from the time that they declared their intention of acquiring Cuban citizenship, may obtain their letters of naturalization in conformity with the laws.”²⁷¹ Conversely, article 4 awarded citizenship to “Spaniards residing in the territory of Cuba on the 11th day of April 1899, who may not have been registered as such in the proper registers prior to the same month and day of 1900.”²⁷² Yet, even as the constitution defined citizenship

²⁶⁹ *Constitución de la República de Cuba adoptada por la Convencion Constituyente y adicionada con la Enmienda Platt y el Tratado de Paz celebrado en Paris*, 6th Edition (Havana: Lib. E Imp. La Moderna Poesia, 1913), 4. Title II of the 1901 Cuban constitution addresses the conditions by which one can consider oneself a Cuban citizen, and Article Four of Title II represented the constitution’s first referenced to foreign-born Cuban citizens. Henceforth: “*Constitución de la República de Cuba*.”

²⁷⁰ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁷¹ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁷² War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

through negative liberties and state-level legibility, in practical terms, positive liberties continued to comprised the benefits of citizenship, as the constitution protected non-citizen immigrants' "enjoyment of guaranteed rights" and the "protection of their persons and property" calling them "equal to Cubans."²⁷³ Even as policymakers attempted to explicitly liberalize Cuba's political economy, they implicitly betrayed many of the republican ideals that promoted civic participation and protected Cuban sovereignty.

In the Ottoman Empire, colonial Cuba, and in ethnic neighborhoods throughout the *mahjar*, Lebanese and Syrian migrants came to understand belonging, and even wider concepts of citizenship, through local reputation-building. Maluf and his family members who joined him in Cuba behaved in ways consistent with vernacular understandings of Ottoman belonging, Spanish traditions of *vecindad*, and emergent republican ideas of Cuban citizenship: Maluf owned a business, belonged to civic institutions, and he and his family promoted and fought on Cuba's behalf. During the U.S. occupation, "Gabriel" M. Maluf used the Spanish spelling of his name and tapped the connections he made at U.S. corporations to establish his wholesale business—La Verdad.²⁷⁴ Maluf, writing to his brother in hopes that he would join him in Cuba, described his enthusiasm for his adopted home, "This island, where we were given our lucky opportunity, is progressing and one day it will become one of the most important places on earth, materially, politically, and morally."²⁷⁵ With every passing year, Maluf's letters indicated a more binding attachment to Cuban identity and a waning of a sense of Ottomanness or Syrianness, as he wrote,

²⁷³ *Constitución de la República de Cuba*, Title III, Art. 10.

²⁷⁴ Maalouf, 142.

²⁷⁵ Maalouf, 141.

“What would be the point of my buying plots of land at home when I am here and will remain here...I can’t.”²⁷⁶ Maluf’s grand-nephew described his uncle’s attachment to Cuba, recounting how “Gebrayel left for New York at eighteen. There he met Cuban exiles with whom he became friends, so much so that he adopted their language and their struggle, followed them to Havana, and settled among them for good.”²⁷⁷ Yet, Gabriel did not stand as the exception in his family, his nephew Nayef Maluf, whom the elder Maluf brought across the Atlantic to help at La Verdad, participated in the Liberal uprising against President Mario Menocal and lost his life for his idea of Cuba.²⁷⁸ The elder Maluf benefited from his U.S. citizenship and registered with the U.S. consul in Havana, and while he actively participated in Cuban civil society and maintained a sterling reputation, his legal status in the United States afforded him the luxury of enjoying most of the rights of Cuban citizenship without the burdensome requirements associated with legal status on the island.

While the constitution established a regime for the acquisition of citizenship as a legible status for the enjoyment of negative liberties, the conditions under which Cubans could lose citizenship also reflected the positive liberties of republican citizenship. Under Article 7 of the 1901 Constitution, Cubans could forfeit their citizenship by acquiring foreign citizenship, a prohibition on dual citizenship that survived until Revolutionary Cuba’s adoption of a new constitution in 2019.²⁷⁹ Cubans could also lose their status as

²⁷⁶ Maalouf, 147.

²⁷⁷ Maalouf, 160.

²⁷⁸ Maalouf, 176.

²⁷⁹ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4; Miguel Ángel García Alzugaray, “Citizenship: The effective link with the country,” *Granma* (Havana, Cuba), Sept. 27, 2018,

citizens by working for, receiving honors from, or enlisting in the military of a foreign government.²⁸⁰ Further, the constitution requires all Cubans to “bear arms in defense of his country” and “contribute to the payment of public expenses in such a manner and proportion as the laws may prescribe.”²⁸¹ Title III guarantees to “foreigners residing within the territory of the Republic” the same rights and obligations as those enjoyed by and expected of Cubans.²⁸² The six sections of Title III’s sole article enumerate those rights and obligations as protection of person and property, enjoyment of civil rights, respecting and obeying the “laws in force in the Republic,” submission to Cuban judicial jurisdiction, and all rights contained in Title IV of the constitution except those specifically reserved for Cuban citizens.²⁸³ Legibility scaffolded a concept of Cuban citizenship defined by the state and protection of negative liberties.

The 1901 Constitution established the rights and protections of a politically defined community based the formation of a modern, liberal nation-state. Scholars have called Cuba’s 1901 Constitution quintessentially or “typically liberal.”²⁸⁴ As the sociologist Lorena Soler and anthropologist Lucia Celia noted, this emphasis on liberal

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2018-09-27/citizenship-the-effective-link-with-a-country>. This article in *Granma*, an organ of the Cuban state, explains that the new constitution (draft constitution at the time) did not explicitly allow for dual citizenship but did allow for citizens to acquire foreign citizenship without losing Cuban citizenship. This “effective” definition of citizenship, as articulated by the author, means Cubans retain Cuban citizenship while residing elsewhere and still fall under Cuban law and jurisdiction while in Cuba’s sovereign territory.

²⁸⁰ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁸¹ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁸² War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁸³ War Department, *Proposed Constitution for Cuba*, 4.

²⁸⁴ Lucía Celia and Lorena Soler, “La constitución pensada y la ciudadanía posible en la Cuba de 1901,” *Sociohistórica*, 7 (2000), 272.

negative freedoms came at the expense of justice and the perception of justice as rooted in *vecindad* and its privileges.²⁸⁵ At the foreground of liberal citizenship stood protection of negative liberties, and “understanding *vecindad* as a synonym for citizenship implies understanding the liberal principles that constitute it: universality, equality, and individuality.”²⁸⁶ In this case, equal treatment based in legible, liberal citizenship ignored the inability of some to fully participate in the positive rights of citizenship, and “if civil, political and social rights are the constitutive elements of citizenship, it is not possible to speak strictly of citizenship in the absence of one or another.”²⁸⁷

On November 7, 1902, the administration of Cuba’s first President, Tomás Estrada Palma, published in *La Gaceta Oficial* a “nationality,” or citizenship, law meant to further define Cuban citizenship as a legible status—the 1902 *Ley sobre la Nacionalidad Cubana en la República de Cuba*. The law’s first article codified the central importance of legibility by requiring “registration in the citizenship section of the State’s Civil Registry,” of all “the acts by virtue of which the Cuban nationality is acquired, lost or regained.”²⁸⁸ The law further stipulates procedures for state functionaries making marginal notes on changes to citizenship status for those with births registered in the Civil Registry. The gave instructions for payment of fines for not following procedures that were payable in “*moneda Americana*” (American money), and those

²⁸⁵ Celia and Soler, 273.

²⁸⁶ Celia and Soler, 273.

²⁸⁷ Celia and Soler, 274.

²⁸⁸ “Article 1,” *Ley sobre la nacionalidad cubana en la República de Cuba*, University of Florida Digital Collections, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00021845/00001> (accessed 8/1/2019).

wishing “to be registered, as Cuban citizens...[who] must justify their domicile before a person in charge of the Civil Registry...by means of authentic documents.”²⁸⁹ While allowances were made for “witness information practiced in the manner established in...the Constitution,” the law made clear the administration’s emphasis on legibility and liberal statecraft.

Beyond the *Ley sobre la nacionalidad*, in 1902, the Estrada Palma administration promulgated a number of laws and decrees to further liberalize Cuban immigration and citizenship policies and to mold Cuban belonging as a legible status. On July 2, 1902, Secretary of Treasury José M. García Montes announced a policy that would charge ship owners, captains, or caretakers with a crime if unauthorized immigrants disembarked their sailing vessel or steamship.²⁹⁰ The next day, published on the front page of *La Gaceta Oficial*, the Secretaría de Estado y Justicia, enumerated the policies and regulations for notary records and maintenance of the Civil Registry.²⁹¹ In November 1902, State Department Decree 166 represented one in a litany of decrees, orders, and circulars from 1902 and 1903 that outlined various rules and regulations for the maintenance of *Registros* by Cuban officials on the island and diplomatic and consular agents abroad.²⁹² The next month, Decree 183 established the process by which Cuban

²⁸⁹ *Ley sobre la nacionalidad cubana en la República de Cuba*, 1902, University of Florida Digital Collections, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00021845/00001> (accessed 8/1/2019).

²⁹⁰ “Inmigración,” *La Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba* (Havana, Cuba) July 3, 1902, 1.

²⁹¹ “Sección de los Registros y del Notariado,” *La Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba* (Havana, Cuba), July 7, 1902, 1.

²⁹² *Colección Legislativa, Vol 2, May 20, 1902-June 30 1905* (Havana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla y Bouza, 1906), 26-27. In addition to this decree, the circular of December 30, 1902, communications with consular agents in the United States, Mexico, Spain, and Great Britain, and directives to consular agents throughout 1902 and 1903 continued to add layers of bureaucracy and documentation to processes for procuring and proving Cuban citizenship. State Department documents, circulars, and communiques

citizens born on the island would be granted “an accredited certificate of their nationality,” naturalized citizens who are registered “in the corresponding Civil Registry” could request “a letter of Cuban naturalization signed by the President of the Republic.”²⁹³ The same decree also required notarial records for oaths of citizenship and that possession of the aforementioned certificates or letters served as “sufficient to prove the nationality of the persons to whose favor they were granted.”²⁹⁴ Policies like these codified the emphasis on legible citizenship through the first decade following formal independence.

Whereas the 1901 constitution afforded “the rights of Cubans” to foreigners on Cuba soil, exclusionary laws drew hard lines around the definitions of citizenship in Cuba’s First Republic. Article 28 of the *Ley Orgánica del Servicio Diplomático y Consular de la República de Cuba* imposed a tariff of two pesos on “certificates of nationality issued at the time of inscription in the Civil Registry,” these certificates expired every year, and each family member cost an additional fifty cents.²⁹⁵ When a Cuban official based in Madrid asked for guidance on whether the law permitted fee waivers for Cuban citizens who met definitions of poverty, the State Department stated that the law did not allow for waivers and advised officials not to offer waivers.²⁹⁶ If

frequently reference the Civil Registry and the importance of meticulous recording of citizenship and nationality.

²⁹³ *Colección Legislativa, Vol 2, May 20, 1902-June 30 1905* (Havana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla y Bouza, 1906), 27-28.

²⁹⁴ *Colección Legislativa, Vol. 2, 27-28.*

²⁹⁵ *Colección Legislativa, Vol 1, May 20, 1902-June 30 1905* (Havana: Imprenta y Papelería de Rambla y Bouza, 1906), 198.

²⁹⁶ *Colección Legislativa, Vol. 2., 124.*

presumably designed to maintain a balanced budget and efficient public services, the imposition of fees associated with registration as Cuban citizens likely resulted in the disenfranchisement of working-class Cubans who escaped the war in exile and rendered homeless those families who could not afford the levied amount. While Martí and those who publicly imagined *Cuba Libre* heralded the ideals of an egalitarian and raceless republic, the realities of the Estrada Palma administration made clear that the “better classes” created ever-smaller boxes into which “real Cubans” fit.²⁹⁷

Cuba’s 1903 Electoral Law barred naturalized Cubans from holding certain elected positions. For senatorial electors, the law required candidates to be “Cuban-born” and thirty-five years old.²⁹⁸ Likewise, candidates for vice-president of the Republic could run for the office only if “Cuban-born,” or naturalized Cubans who “served Cuba in arms for a minimum of ten years during the wars of independence.”²⁹⁹ These conditions represented the exclusionary practices of citizenship, whereas the constitution promised the rights of citizenship to non-citizens, legislative laws and presidential decrees created tiered levels of citizenship that privileged elite, white, and elder men who embodied the official liberal-republican *Cubanidad*. The 1901 Constitution promised to protect the negative liberties of all those on the island legally, but even as it espoused liberal ideals of equality, it privileged Cuba’s “better classes.”

²⁹⁷ De la Fuente, 51.

²⁹⁸ *Ley Electoral de 25 de diciembre de 1903* (Habana: Imprenta de Rambla y Bouza, 1904), 4. Henceforth referred to as “*Ley Electoral*.”

²⁹⁹ *Ley Electoral*, 5.

While the elite Estrada Palma promoted U.S.-friendly liberal policies, his administration gained a reputation for corruption and patronage that undermined the rule of law and other liberalizing projects. Estrada Palma's 1905 reelection campaign rode to victory, "guaranteed through the appointment of political followers to the expanding public sector."³⁰⁰ Estrada Palma's clear corruption spawned a political revolt in August of 1906. Unrest swept across the island, which triggered a response by the United States. By September, the United States invoked the Platt Amendment and staged an intervention in Cuba. President Theodor Roosevelt named William Taft as temporary governor of Cuba until a full-time governor could be named. In his proclamation to "the People of Cuba," Taft cited the "failure of Congress to act on the irrevocable resignation of the President of the Republic of Cuba, or to elect a successor," which left "this country without a government at a time when great disorder prevails."³⁰¹ Taft quickly appointed a commission to review Cuban law and urged them not to simply "adopt Anglo-Saxon laws," but to make "use of Spain eliminating [some laws] while adding what practice and experience has shown to be suitable to the Cuban people."³⁰² Taft postponed the promised December elections and concluded the occupation would last at least until the summer of 1908. By year's end, Taft returned to Washington, D.C. and left one of his top legal advisors as Cuba's new head of government.

³⁰⁰ De la Fuente, 129.

³⁰¹ William H. Taft, "Proclamation," *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba: Edición Extraordinaria* (Havana, Cuba), Sept. 29, 1906.

³⁰² "Say Mr. Taft Broke Faith: Insurgent Generals Reiterate That He Promised Cuban Elections in Decemeber," *The Herald Democrat* (Leadville, CO), April 10, 1907.

In 1907, as Abraham Naser attempted to reenter Cuba, Charles Magoon shaped Cuban policy as governor of the Republic of Cuba “under the provisional administration of the United States.”³⁰³ As provisional governor of Cuba, Magoon put many of his 1902 report’s recommendations into place. He quickly moved to bring Cuba’s laws and economic interests closer to those of the United States. In his three years as governor, Magoon—with the help of his U.S. educated Cuban counterparts—transformed Cuban law, and the island’s legal system, into one that more closely resembled that of the United States. Naser was swept up in the transition.

Latapier, a Cuban educated lawyer of African descent, argued on Naser’s behalf and used the language of legible citizenship—words like “domicile” and “residency”—common to Cuban republican law to communicate much older arguments rooted in Spanish law. Latapier proffered as evidence entry and exit slips for Naser’s time in Cuba and argued that the two years during which he lived on the island, along with a business receipt from Havana’s *ayuntamiento*, should prove his status as *vecino*, or resident, of that city.³⁰⁴ Latapier argued a concept of belonging based on *vecindad* that seemed antiquated and inferior to more “modern” twentieth-century legal regimes. Even if officials may not have been moved, Latapier suggested he could call on a number of locals for recommendations on Naser’s character and to confirm Naser’s *vecindad* and membership in the community.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ *Memorandum from R. H. Crowder to Charles E. Magoon*, June 12, 1907, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 76, Archivo Nacional de la Republica de Cuba (ANC), Havana, Cuba.

³⁰⁴ *Letter from Juan F. Latapier; Crowder Report*, 7.

³⁰⁵ *Letter from Juan F. Latapier*.

Latapier's arguments revealed the tensions between exclusionary immigration policies and Cubans' vernacular understandings of belonging and mobility, as the Magoon administration moved to liberalize Cuban law. The provisional governor himself often betrayed more republican ideals in his official reports. On December 1, 1907, Magoon wrote his annual report to Secretary of War William H. Taft.³⁰⁶ Expressing openness to a proposed plan for Cuba, Magoon wrote,

to impose the obligations of citizenship upon resident aliens who, by five years' residence and a knowledge of the Spanish language, have become sufficiently informed as to local and national affairs and public thought and feeling to be of substantial service in the proper exercise of political powers.³⁰⁷

The proposal sought to effectively codify and liberalize Spanish notions of belonging. Yet, the proposal's supporters also seemed intent on enshrining republican positive liberties to promote good civic behavior and participation. Magoon continued by discussing how this plan featured prominently in the debates surrounding drafts of the 1903 electoral law, but "the proposition...met with objection" by Cubans and Spaniard immigrants, of whom "few...were willing to surrender their citizenship."³⁰⁸ Most of the immigrants to Cuba came from Spain and the Canary Islands, and Magoon suggested that Cuban elites feared enfranchising Spaniards and that immigrants from Spain preferred to stay out of the island's partisan politics.³⁰⁹ U.S. officials often struck a balance between

³⁰⁶ Charles E. Magoon, *Annual Report of Charles E. Magoon Provisional Governor of Cuba to the Secretary of War, 1907* (Washington: GPO, 1908).

³⁰⁷ Magoon, *Annual Report*, 29.

³⁰⁸ Magoon, *Annual Report*, 28-29.

³⁰⁹ Magoon, *Annual Report*, 29.

liberalizing Cuban institutions and supporting traditional customs for the sake of stability, or in some cases, because they believed Cubans to be unprepared for full integration into Western modernity. Ultimately, elites defeated the proposal and did not include it in the bill's final draft; however, the debates over its inclusion elucidate the enduring appeal of *vecindad* and vernacular constructions of belonging.

Similar to Magoon's analysis a decade before, Colonel Crowder's report on the Naser case exhibited U.S. officials' deference, if not support, toward republican ideals of citizenship. While Cuban officials, in their correspondence with their U.S. counterparts in the provisional government, brandished their liberal ideals and focused exclusively on Naser's lack of legible citizenship, Crowder devoted considerable space to rebutting Latapier's arguments for Naser's claim to *vecindad* before denying him the status based on two Spanish colonial laws—Havana's 1878 Municipal Law and a 1870 royal decree referred to as the "law of aliens."³¹⁰ Even if some Cuban and U.S. officials saw merits in republican positive liberties and traditional Iberian understandings of belonging, the clear trajectory of Cuban law seemed bent toward liberalism and legibility.

Cuban liberals and U.S. officials sought increased legal legibility through a number of laws and decrees that refined the transcription of documents and lives in official ledgers like the Civil Registry. Provisional Governor Magoon often traveled to the United States on personal and official business and, when Magoon left Havana in the summer of 1908, he invested Major General Thomas H. Barry—commander of the Army of Cuban Occupation and Pacification—with the powers of the provisional governor. On

³¹⁰ Crowder Report, 5.

August 26, 1908, Barry modified the Cuban citizenship law of 1902 through Decree 859 of 1908 which hoped would “facilitate the inscription in the Civil Registry of persons who meet the conditions required by the Constitution for Cuban citizenship, by birth or naturalization, so that they have proof of the enjoyment of said citizenship.”³¹¹ Across administrations, Cuban officials and elites in the early republic emphasized the inscription in the Civil Registry to bolster citizenship as a legible status they could use as a tool for exclusion.

Following the withdrawal of U.S troops, José Miguel Gómez took office on January 28, 1909 as Cuba’s second president and governed during a formative time for Cuban national identity and race relations. Cubans often associate his presidency with the racial tension and unrest surrounding passage of the Morúa Law. In 1911, the Cuban Congress passed legislation, commonly known as the Morúa Law, that prohibited the creation of political parties along racial lines.³¹² Conservative Cuban elites dressed such exclusionary efforts in the liberal language of equality and argued that a “raceless” society like Cuba did not need racially defined parties, such as the *Partido Independiente de Color* (Independent Party of Color). In 1912, the *Partido Independiente de Color* turned to armed rebellion as a result of elites’ failures “to include an important segment of the population into republican structures.”³¹³ Conservative publications, including the

³¹¹ Thomas H. Barry, “Decreto Numero 859,” *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba* (Havana, Cuba), Aug. 29, 1908, 408.

³¹² Pérez, *Cuba*, 174. For more information on the Morúa Law, see Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

³¹³ Pérez, *Cuba*, 174.

Havana daily *Diario de la Marina*, stirred fears that the rebellion would spark another U.S. intervention, while also denouncing U.S. influence and Afro-Cuban political organization, respectively, as counterproductive and racist.³¹⁴ The paper regularly stirred racial anxiety against Afro-Cubans and immigrants as the editors painted pictures of “families of the white race full of indignation and fright,” and called Afro-Cubans “enemies” and described a landscape dominated by burning sugar cane fields.³¹⁵ Conservatives also fomented narratives of anti-Catholic socialist conspiracies across the world, in order to define a more exclusively white, Catholic vision of Cuban citizenship.³¹⁶ While the Morúa Law best exemplified the racial and ethnic dimensions of Cuban liberal citizenship, discussions of *Cubanidad* and who belonged in the republic also turned to immigration.

The Naser deportation case existed at the nexus of Cuban citizenship and immigration law. Traditional and liberal conceptions of clashed within an immigration and sanitation framework established along the cutting edge of modern liberal systems of exclusion. Yet, as Cuban law attempted to establish citizenship as a legible legal status embodied by the Civil Registry, older conceptions of belonging remained in practical application. Good civic behavior, public reputation, business or property ownership, and outward expressions of Catholic identity persisted as holdovers of paperless Spanish legal practices pertaining to citizenship, or *vecindad*. Latapier’s legal arguments, Crowder’s report, the willingness of neighbors to vouch for Naser, and the latter’s use of the

³¹⁴ “Actualidades,” *Diario de la Marina* (Havana, Cuba), June, 1, 1912, Afternoon Edition, 1; “Punto Esencial,” *Diario de la Marina* (Havana, Cuba), July 20, 1912, Morning Edition, 3.

³¹⁵ “Actualidades,” *Diario de la Marina* (Havana, Cuba), June, 5, 1912, Afternoon Edition, 1.

³¹⁶ “Gaceta Internacional,” *Diario de la Marina* (Havana, Cuba), June, 5, 1912, Afternoon Edition, 1.

Hispanicized name “Alejandro de Jesús” suggest *vecindad* still held sway in many Cubans’ notions of citizenship.

Nationalism, and Identity Formation in the Cuban *Mahjar* amidst Ottoman Decline

While U.S. officials like Governor Magoon and Colonel Crowder shaped Cuban understandings of legal citizenship, they also strengthened Washington’s role in Cuban immigration by working with Menocal to tighten the strictures on immigrants attempting to enter Cuba. By linking Cuban immigration law to U.S. immigration policies, Order 155 informed Cuban immigration policy well after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the island. Even as late as the 1920s, a memo to President Gerardo Machado, dated November 5, 1925, referred to ongoing efforts to “modify Section I of Military Order #155 of 1902.”³¹⁷ The memo asked the president to support these changes, not to allow for more flexibility under the law, but to further restrict immigration to the island. Officials’ efforts to modify Order 155 came after the United States passed its own exclusionary immigration law, the National Origins Act of 1924, which placed low admissions quotas for immigrants from places deemed undesirable by the Anglo-American, Protestant majority. The memo stated, the “Immigration Commissioner says that it would be advisable to ask the Government of the United States not to authorize the shipment to Cuba of individuals from other countries and whose entry into American territory has been denied due to the full quota accorded their respective nations.”³¹⁸ While

³¹⁷ *Memorándum para el Honorable Señor Presidente de la Republica*, 5 November 1925, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, no. 106, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³¹⁸ *Memorándum para el Honorable Señor Presidente de la Republica*, 5 November 1925, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, no. 106, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

Cubans' arguments in favor of exclusionary, liberal immigration policy often featured racist and xenophobic themes, this memo argued that these immigrants posed a threat to Cuba because they would not positively contribute to Cuba's republican civic environment, and instead sought entry into Cuba "only for the purpose of circumventing surveillance and clandestinely entering the United States."³¹⁹ By painting immigrants as devoid of republican positive liberties, who did not wish to contribute to Cuban society, officials appropriated old-standing republican rhetoric in support of their liberalizing policy agendas.

Since the colonial era, white Cuban creoles sought to attract white immigrants from Iberia and the Canary Islands to maintain cultural hegemony, increase ties to Europe, and lay claim to modernity, and these efforts continued after independence. As Cuban periodicals showed, conservative elites in Cuba saw the United States, as standard bearers of liberal modernity, and sought European immigration to bolster Cuba's claim to modernity and the liberal teleology of civilizational progress.³²⁰ In 1904, a man described in interdepartmental correspondence as "the citizen Fulgencio Menéndez y Díaz" sought and received a presidential audience to propose a plan "to undertake and establish a stream of six or seven thousand immigrants per year, coming from Spain and the Canary Islands...these immigrants should be workers and families."³²¹ The numbers seem

³¹⁹ *Memorándum para el Honorable Señor Presidente de la Republica*, 5 November 1925, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, no. 106, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³²⁰ "Evolución Anexionista," *Diario de la Marina*, Edición Mañana 26 Feb 1902, 2; "La América Latina," *Diario de la Marina*, Edición Mañana, Feb 1 1902, 2.

³²¹ *Memorándum: Solicitud de Fulgencio Menéndez y Díaz de una audiencia con el Presidente de la Republica*, 13 October 1904, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 30, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

modest, compared with overall flows of immigration, the month prior to Menéndez's request, October 1904, 4,493 immigrants entered Cuba.³²² To be sure, Menéndez represented the vanguard of a vocal group of elite Cubans who advocated for government sponsorship of propaganda and recruitment offices for deployment across "the Spanish provinces."³²³ Canary Islanders and Spaniards in Cuba created mutual aid associations to lobby for and assist with immigration of *colonos*, while planters and mining operations made formal requests for government assistance in attracting immigrant labor.³²⁴ In 1905, *El Economista*, a Havana-based business weekly, outlined over the course of several issues a "Proposed Law of Immigration and National Development."³²⁵ The editors opened their appeal with an urgent call to action, "None of the problems...in this country exceeds, or even equals in importance that of white immigration, which we need to develop the rural population, whose density is extremely low in almost all the provinces of the Republic."³²⁶ The editors insisted these white immigrants would prove "useful for their strong work ethic and morality."³²⁷ The following year, Cuban lawmakers passed the Immigration Law of 1906.

³²² José María García Montes, *Memorándum de Secretaría de Hacienda al Presidente de la Republica*, 22 November 1904, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 6, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³²³ *Memorándum: Solicitud de Fulgencio Menéndez y Díaz de una audiencia con el Presidente de la Republica*, 13 October 1904, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 121, no. 30, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³²⁴ Rafael Rodríguez Acosta, *Despacho de la Secretaría de Agricultura y Comercio*, 25 October 1905, Secretaria de la Presidencia, Legajo 115, no. 98, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³²⁵ "Proyecto de Ley de Inmigración y el Fomento Nacional," *El Economista: Revista Financiera y Comercial*, Vol. 5, No. 6, Issue 100 (Havana, Cuba: 1905), Feb. 11, 1.

³²⁶ "Proyecto de Ley de Inmigración y el Fomento Nacional," *El Economista: Revista Financiera y Comercial*, Vol. 5, No. 6, Issue 100 (Havana, Cuba: 1905), Feb. 11, 1.

³²⁷ "Proyecto de Ley de Inmigración y el Fomento Nacional," *El Economista: Revista Financiera y Comercial*, Vol. 5, No. 6, Issue 100 (Havana, Cuba: 1905), Feb. 11, 1; "Proyecto de Ley de Inmigración y

On the eve of the Second American Occupation, the Immigration Law of 1906 enshrined Cuban attempts to whiten the population through European immigration to the island. The law's first article established a fund of one million pesos for the "encouragement of immigration and colonization."³²⁸ Article Two mandated that officials spend eighty percent of those funds on recruitment of families from Spain and the Canary Islands. The rest of the funds were to attract immigrants from Northern Italy, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—in short, those Northern European populations contemporary anthropologists and eugenicists deemed more highly evolved.³²⁹ With this law, officials also aimed to modernize Cuba's immigration infrastructure outside Havana, with funds appropriated for three new immigration stations (in Tricornia's mold) at Santiago de Cuba, Nuevitas, and Cienfuegos.³³⁰ The law explicitly carved an exception to Order 155, allowing entry for individuals and families sponsored by other individuals or companies, or those otherwise approved by Cuban officials.³³¹ These exceptions allowed for U.S. companies and other industrial or agricultural interests to import laborers from the West Indies and other places from where immigrants would usually be denied entry. Article 9, more than the law's other articles, constituted perhaps the most republican in sentiment, by offering incentives for the enjoyment of positive freedoms and a pathway to citizenship. According to the law, those "immigrants who prove that they have dedicated

el Fomento Nacional," *El Economista: Revista Financiera y Comercial*, Vol. 5, No. 7, Issue 101 (Havana, Cuba: 1905), Feb. 18, 2.

³²⁸ "Ley de Inmigración de 1906," *Gaceta Oficial* (Havana, Cuba: 1906), July 11, 221-223.

³²⁹ Article 12, "Ley de Inmigración de 1906," *Gaceta Oficial* (Havana, Cuba: 1906), July 11, 222.

³³⁰ "Ley de Inmigración de 1906," *Gaceta Oficial* (Havana, Cuba: 1906), July 11, 221.

³³¹ Article 16, "Ley de Inmigración de 1906," *Gaceta Oficial* (Havana, Cuba: 1906), July 11, 223.

themselves to agricultural work in Cuba for a year and have justified their good behavior, may request the transfer of their family, in which case the State will pay for their fare...preference will be given to those immigrants who, in addition, have declared their intention to acquire Cuban citizenship.”³³² While the Immigration Law represented Cubans’ first attempt to control who immigrated to Cuba, debates continued to swirl around issues of race, labor, and immigration.

As Provisional Governor of Cuba, Charles Magoon and his administration worked to tighten U.S. control over Cuban immigration policy and bring the island closer—economically and politically—to the United States. Less than a month after Magoon took office in September 1906, Acting Secretary of Treasury Gabriel García Echarte dispatched to the provisional governor’s office a report of immigration statistics for 1902-1905.³³³ In the report, Echarte’s department categorized immigrants by country of origin, or “*naturaleza*.”³³⁴ The numbers show the success of early Cuban recruitment efforts through large, year-over-year increases in immigration from Spain with recorded arrivals almost doubling every year.³³⁵ With 84.7% of immigration totals between 1902 and 1905, Spaniards represented the largest percentage of immigrants entering Cuba during that time, and “North Americans” occupied the second largest category at 5.1% of total

³³² Article 9, “Ley de Inmigración de 1906,” *Gaceta Oficial* (Havana, Cuba: 1906), July 11, 221.

³³³ Secretaría de Hacienda, *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905*, Legajo 115, no. 99, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³³⁴ *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902-1905*.

³³⁵ *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902, 1903, 1904, y 1905*. The report shows 8,878 Spaniard arrivals in 1902, 14,692 in 1903, 23,752 in 1904, and 47,902 in 1905 for a total of 95,224 arrivals.

immigration.³³⁶ Meanwhile, Cuban immigration officers recorded Ottoman subjects, or *turcos*, as the third largest group of immigrants.³³⁷ Interestingly, “*turcos*” appeared in a separate box, apart from all other nationalities and were the only group of immigrants divided into subcategories, with “*sirios*” comprising 63.7% of *turcos* arriving in Cuban ports and another 16.5% of *turcos* appeared as “*árabes*.”³³⁸ Magoon understood the importance of immigration to policymakers in Washington, who feared Cuba could become a “backdoor” to immigrants seeking entry to the United States. In his 1907 report to the War Department, Magoon assured his superiors that “the immigration camp at Tricornia, near Habana [sic], has been maintained in perfect sanitary condition and its accommodations increased.”³³⁹ Magoon reported that the “immigration law of Cuba is an adaptation of the immigration law of the United States,” but that Cuba’s Department of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce worked toward “the encouragement of immigration and colonization of immigrants.”³⁴⁰ Magoon, building upon Leonard Wood’s legacy, expanded Tricornia and supported elites’ whitening agenda, but also loosened legal barriers to immigration to the benefit of corporations based in Europe and the United States.

³³⁶ *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902-1905.*

³³⁷ *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902-1905.* “*Turcos*” is the only category the report divides into subsets, which included “*Árabes*,” “*Armenios*,” “*Sirios*,” and “*Turcos*” (in English, Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, and Turks).

³³⁸ *Estado comparativo de inmigrantes llegados a los Puertos de la República, en los años civiles 1902-1905.*

³³⁹ Charles E. Magoon, *Annual Report of Charles E. Magoon Provisional Governor of Cuba to the Secretary of War 1907* (Washington: GPO, 1908), 85.

³⁴⁰ Magoon, *Annual Report 1907*, 58, 91.

The discourse around the imposition of a head tax on immigrants entering the island offers key examples of how Cuban elites sought to limit “undesirable” immigration, while foreign owned business operations with interests in Cuba pushed for larger immigrant labor pool. In April of 1908, a “Junta de Navegación,” containing at least seven transoceanic shipping companies, petitioned the provisional government for clarification on rules regarding Cuba’s immigrant head tax.³⁴¹ The petition, spearheaded by a representative of the Spanish Transatlantic Line, referred to a April 9th circular, signed by the “Acting Secretary of Finance,” that ordered customs and immigration officers to collect a one dollar head tax on all arriving passengers who had not preregistered as immigrants with Cuban consular agents abroad.³⁴² The Junta argued that the 1906 Immigration Law lifted the head tax that Military Order 155 of 1902 imposed on migrants, and sought an “abrogation” of the tax, or at minimum, and exemption for those passengers already in transit at the time of the order’s publication.³⁴³ Gabriel García Echarte, as Acting Secretary of Treasury, signed the circular in questions and quoted Military Order 155, which ordered officials to “collect a fee of one peso for each of the passengers...from any foreign port bound for any port of Cuba, except for citizens of the United States and the *vecinos* and *naturales* of the Island of Cuba.”³⁴⁴ Echarte and Crowder reported that the head tax conformed with “G.O. 155” and, as Echarte’s circular read,

³⁴¹ *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³⁴² *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³⁴³ *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³⁴⁴ *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

the law of July 11, 1906 does not annul or limit the right or duty of the Government to exclude, in accordance with the provisions of Order 155, a certain class of persons whose entry into the island is prohibited; but exempts immigrants who meet certain conditions contained in Articles 4 and 5 of the Law of July 11, 1906.³⁴⁵

While Magoon's superiors in Washington and his interim government headed by elite Cubans likely supported such taxes as barriers to unwanted immigrants, Magoon ultimately sided with the business interests who promoted increased immigration. Magoon agreed that the tax seemed antithetical to the government's immigrant recruitment efforts but reinforced the bureaucratic cogs, like mandating submission of consular documents certifying one's intent to establish residence in Cuba, that could help exclude immigrants deemed undesirable.³⁴⁶ The realities of Cuba's labor shortages, the requests of U.S. corporations operating on the island for increased access to immigrant labor from Haiti and the British West Indies, and Magoon's desire bring the island into a tighter U.S. orbit, worked against the policies of exclusion and frustrated elites' whitening agendas.

To be sure, labor needs and the desires of Cuban elites and government officials to promote white immigration conflicted with one another dating back to the colonial era. For much of its colonial history, Cuban creoles prided themselves as bastions of white, Creole culture among Spanish American mainland colonies increasingly defined by *mestizaje*, captive African laborers, and indigenous cultures. The island served the metropole as a garrisoned island military and logistical hub, where peninsular officers

³⁴⁵ *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³⁴⁶ *Reports on Immigrant Head Tax*, Legajo 121, no. 81, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

welcomed positions in hopes of achieving financial gain through marriage to Cuban-born women they could confidently consider of acceptable European provenance.³⁴⁷ While Cuba largely escaped early development of a cash crop plantation economy, that changed with the early-nineteenth-century collapse of French San Domingue, which had been the world's leading producer of sugar. Seemingly overnight, the Cuba economy shifted to rapid development of a sugar industry to fill the void. Cubans continued to welcome troop reinforcements as a rapidly increasing enslaved population spurred fears of "another Haiti" and the potential for slave revolts on the island's ever-expanding cane fields.³⁴⁸

To mitigate these fears, Cubans sought avenues for increasing the island's labor pool and white population. The colonial government actively recruited immigration of *gallegos* and Canary Islanders as white *colonos*. In 1845, well before Cuba ended its slave trade or abolished the institution of slavery, the Real Junta de Fomento de Población Blanca sought to "invite promoters" to encourage "white colonization on this island."³⁴⁹ Yet, while officials preferred immigrants from Spain and the Canary Islands,

³⁴⁷ Sherry Johnson, *Social Transformations in Eighteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 15. For further reading on Cuba's racial demographics, the military, and loyalty to the crown, see: Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba 1753-1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); Gabriel B. Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759-1808* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

³⁴⁸ Johnson, 6. For further reading on Cuba's racial demographics, slavery, and white loyalty to the crown, see: Raúl Cepero Bonilla, *Azúcar y abolición* (Havana: Editorial Cenit, 1948); Jorge Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty: The Breakdown of the Spanish American Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Manuel Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio: complejo económico social Cubano del azúcar*. 3 vols. 2nd ed. (Havana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1978).

³⁴⁹ Gobierno Superior de la Isla de Cuba, "Expediente general sobre colonización blanca en Cuba," Archivo Histórico Nacional, Ultramar 91, Exp. 2, ES.28079.AHN/16/ULTRAMAR,91,Exp. 2.

these migrants alone could not meet Cuba's labor needs. Chinese indentured servants also filled voids in the Cuban agricultural labor pool, and imperial policy considered Chinese persons as legally white, the same as all other groups not of African descent. In a time of abolition and soaring sugar prices in Cuba, nineteenth-century Creoles increasingly turned to the promotion of white immigration as the solution to the island's labor needs.³⁵⁰

Cubans, through the 1906 Immigration Law, continued colonial-era whitening agendas and promoted immigration of white Europeans through liberal frameworks of sanitation and immigration infrastructures of exclusion. Aspiring immigrants often petitioned Cuban officials for "the benefits of the immigration law," that afforded monetary assistance with passage and documentation fees, Cuban elites—in the years leading to the racial unrest of 1912—continued their attacks on "undesirable" immigrants as they recruited white, European immigrants.³⁵¹ In 1912, racial tensions exploded into uprisings and the violent repression of the Partido Independiente de Color (PIC), later deemed a "slaughter," and the rhetoric surrounding the issue of immigration took on a more xenophobic and biopolitical tone.³⁵² On August 6, 1912, the conservative newspaper *Diario de la Marina*, published an editorial in favor of promoting white immigration in its afternoon edition.³⁵³ In this article, the editors praised the Association for the Promotion of Immigration and promoted the use of government funds to

³⁵⁰ *Poblacion de Cuba, 1784-1875*, Cuba-Poblacion, 1784-1875, page 120, Box 120, Florida International University Green Library, Levi Marrero Collection, Miami, Florida.

³⁵¹ Memorandum on petition for immigration benefits, 1/5/1910, Legajo 121, no. 2, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

³⁵² De la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, 87.

³⁵³ *Diario de la Marina*, 8/6/1912, Edicion Tarde, pg. 1.

encourage white immigration with the aim to “increase the productive, hard-working, and white population.”³⁵⁴ This article highlighted the tensions and connections between labor and immigration, as planters; and foreign-owned corporations’ efforts to maximize profits through use of cheap immigrant labor clashed with upper and middle class whites’ desires to create a whiter, more culturally Western, nation through immigration.

Amidst Cuban attempts to attract Spanish emigrants, Syrians took advantage of their Mediterranean provenance, their homeland’s biblical connections, and transnational networks to work within and around Cuban immigration policies.³⁵⁵ While the 1906 Immigration Law took effect and the Second U.S. Occupation came and ended, Gabriel Maluf’s business continued to grow, and like many *muhajir* in his position of success, he encouraged his family to join him in Cuba. Maluf wrote letters for over a decade, asking his brother, Botros, to join him. Botros did, in fact, join Gabriel for a short time, but quickly returned home via New York.³⁵⁶ Asking Botros to return, Gabriel wrote,

I am eager to clasp you in my arms on the gangway of the ship! I hope this will happen soon, and I can promise you that this time you won’t go into quarantine and you won’t have to deal with the Seguridad. And if I weren’t so completely taken up with my new shop, I would...set off with my whole family to meet you halfway.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ *Diario de la Marina*, 8/6/1912, Edicion Tarde, pg. 1.

³⁵⁵ Mentions of Lebanon, the “cedars of Lebanon,” or cedar wood appear at least seventy times across various books of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Through migration myths, Phoenicianist narratives, and ties to ancient Christian and Mediterranean civilization constructed identities consistent with upper-class Cubans’ visions of a white, Western, and Catholic—or at the very least Christian—national identity. It also helped that, through a series of U.S. court cases, Arabic-speakers from Syrian and other Ottoman territories successfully litigated their legal whiteness. For more on legal whiteness in the United States, see: Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

³⁵⁶ Maalouf, 91.

³⁵⁷ Maalouf, 76.

As Cuba inaugurated its second president in 1909, Gabriel Maluf moved to start a family on the heels of his business success. For most of his first decade on the island, Maluf lived in the attic above his shop, but reported eventually “thank God we now have a house where we will be able to live together like all respectable people instead of sleeping in the attic as we did before.”³⁵⁸ As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, Gabriel bought a house and planned on expanding his business and family. But rather than marry a Cuban woman (as many *muhajir* he knew had), he sent a letter back home to his Lebanese village and asked his uncle Khalil for permission to marry his daughter Alice.³⁵⁹

As the U.S. prepared to leave Cuba again, Mount Lebanon and Syria experienced a series of changes stemming from the 1908 revolution started by the Young Turks. The ethnically heterogenous and heterodox “Young Turks” called for the restoration of the 1876 Ottoman constitution and universal citizenship.³⁶⁰ Factions such as the Parisian branch of Young Turks, combined positivist ideas on scientific governance with the ideals of French republicanism to create a new line of liberal republicanism in Ottoman political thought.³⁶¹ As with the Cuban Liberation Army, the Young Turks valued republican ideals like liberty (*hürriyet*), equality (*müsavat*), justice (*adalet*), and fraternity (*uhuvvet*) over republican institutions. Similar to the republicanism of Cuba’s Republic-

³⁵⁸ Maalouf, 76.

³⁵⁹ Maalouf, 116; *Guia Social*.

³⁶⁰ Fahrenthold, 31.

³⁶¹ Banu Turnaoglu, “The Positivist Universalism and Republicanism of the Young Turks,” *Modern Intellectual History*, 14, 3 (2017), 777-805.

at-Arms, here, liberty, “understood in its classical republican sense, meant living freely in a free state,” this liberty allowed individuals to be one’s own master.³⁶² The Young Turks succeeded in taking power and initiating the Ottoman Empire’s second constitutional period (1908-1918), marked by single-party rule through periods of direct and indirect rule by the Young Turks movement’s institutional component—the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). In its decade in power, the CUP oversaw a regime of “Turkification,” here understood as a broad agenda of administrative integration, economic nationalism, and cultural assimilation that often alienated non-Turkish ethnic groups and sometimes resulted in ethnic violence against the empire’s ethnic minorities.³⁶³ This reversal of traditional imperial policies that supported local administration and jurisdictional complexity in favor of state centralization and social homogenization, fundamentally altered trajectories of identity formation and the relationship of provincial minority groups to the state.

The CUP’s universalist vision of citizenship promised a modernity based on negative liberties like freedom of expression, association, and the press and, as one official put it, a “country...ruled by her citizens.”³⁶⁴ In contrast to reorganizational changes that smacked of official Turkification, Ottoman officials proclaimed “The Turk,

³⁶² Turnaoglu, 786-787.

³⁶³ Erol Ülker, “Contextualizing ‘Turkification’: nation-building in the late Ottoman Empire, 1908-18,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 11, no. 4 (2005), 614; Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ crime against humanity: The Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Mahmoud Haddad, “The rise of Arab nationalism reconsidered,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 26, no. 2 (2002), 201-222.

³⁶⁴ Farenthold, 35. Mundji Bey, the contemporary Ottoman Charge d’Affaires in the United States, supported the revolution and reforms, often serving as an agent for propaganda in the *mahjar*. He played a vital role in the creation of *mahjari* transnational networks.

the Armenian, the Greek, the Syrian, the Jew, the Kurd, the Circassian...there will be no more Turkey, but a regenerated Ottoman Empire” and courted *muhajir* whom they believed rejuvenate the empire through remittances, already a major economic factor, and return migrations of “liberty-loving” Ottoman-Americans who would join “the younger generation in Turkey...reformers in their fight for the final establishment of Ottoman freedom.”³⁶⁵ The Young Turks sought to harness *muhajir*’ economic power by promoting a vision of Ottoman citizenship and belonging extended to all the empire’s ethnicities and across space.

Muhajir met the promulgation of the Ottoman constitution and declaration of a “Constitution Day” with excitement and mostly welcomed the duties of extraterritorial citizenship. Syrian communities organized Ottoman Constitution Day festivals in New York, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo.³⁶⁶ It remains unclear if Gabriel Maluf celebrated Constitution Day in Havana, but his brother, Botros, gave a speech in front of his town’s luminaries and citizens that extolled “the three essential concepts in the motto of our Ottoman Constitution, namely Liberty, Fraternity, Equality,” and “the true meaning of these words.”³⁶⁷ While Syrians like Botros may have exhibited enthusiasm for a renewed sense of solidarity and Ottomaness following 1908, it ebbed and flowed with the policies that followed, until it collapsed. Botros’s grandson described the complexities of identity formation in the Ottoman Levant, writing:

³⁶⁵ Fahrenthold, 34-35.

³⁶⁶ Fahrenthold, 41.

³⁶⁷ Maalouf, 124.

In the minds of my grandparents, each of these various allegiances had its own ‘compartment:’ their state was Turkey, their language Arabic, their province Syria, and their homeland the Lebanon Mountains...in addition, they had their diverse religious denominations, which probably weighed on their lives more than the rest. These allegiances did not coexist in harmony, proof being the many massacres...but there was a degree of fluidity about both names and frontiers, which vanished after the rise of nationalist movements. Barely a hundred years ago, Lebanese Christians readily proclaimed themselves Syrian, Syrians looked to Mecca for a king, Jews in the Holy Land called themselves Palestinian...and my grandfather Botros liked to think of himself as an Ottoman citizen.³⁶⁸

Yet, while universalist rhetoric appealed to many, the CUP’s post-1909 turn toward imperial unionism and away from Arab autonomy alienated Syrian liberals at home and in the *mahjar*.³⁶⁹ The CUP reimposed previously abolished censorship laws, targeted Arabist and Armenian activists, expanded conscription laws, and, perhaps most importantly for the Maluf brothers, enacted policies against the legal privileges of those living in the *mutasarrifate* of Mount Lebanon. Ottoman officials began to question how “these nations, diverse in religion, separated by language and yet lacking in patriotic sentiment can...reach harmony.”³⁷⁰ These policies discouraged Arabs from assuming identities as Ottoman citizens, and encouraged out migration as tickets across the Atlantic to “Amrika” represented a way out, and many leaving Ottoman ports found passage to Cuba.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Maalouf, 211.

³⁶⁹ Fahrenthold, 43.

³⁷⁰ Fahrenthold, 41.

³⁷¹ Fahrenthold, 41.

While Botros Maluf dreamed of a liberal Ottoman citizenship, his brother Gabriel, himself a naturalized U.S. citizen, built a civic reputation in Cuba that established in Havana a sense of belonging he had not felt in New York and unlike what Botros would have felt in his Lebanese homeland. In Cuba, Gabriel constructed a public reputation consistent with visions of *Cubanidad*, one that also emphasized cultural similarities, especially religious. In 1910, Maluf married his Protestant cousin, Alice. While Maluf's correspondence does not portray an especially devoted Catholic, certainly not to the level of his Protestant bride, he made sure hold successive wedding ceremonies, one in his neighborhood Catholic church, and another in the Presbyterian church.³⁷² A year later, the couple baptized their first child—Taufic Gabriel Maluf—at Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje Catholic Church, which along with San Nicolas, served as a center of Catholic *muhajir* spiritual life in Havana.³⁷³ Maluf's choice for young Taufic's godfather—Fernando Figueredo Socarrás and Carmela Cremate—reflect his social standing and integration into Havana's high society. A friend of José Martí, Socarrás served as secretary to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes during the Ten Years' War, worked as member of the PRC, and appeared in photographs alongside the Malufs over many years, exemplifying Gabriel's acceptance into the elite Cuban social and political circles. Like other *muhajir*, Maluf bestowing upon his son an Arabic name, coupled with his choice of Socarrás to be the boy's spiritual patron,

³⁷² Maalouf, 117.

³⁷³ Maalouf, 118; "Application for Registration—Naturalized Citizens," *U.S. Consul General in Havana, Cuba*, Consular Registration Applications, 1916-1925 (accessed via ancestry.com).

betrayed the complex, and sometimes competing, identities carried by hypermobile *muhajir*.

The Young Turks, understanding the importance and numerical power of *muhajir* in the Americas, created associational groups like the Syrian Ottoman Union Society of New York (SOUS) to court migrants, instill patriotism, and advocate for its citizens abroad.³⁷⁴ The SOUS, effectively the CUP's institutional wing in the United States, sought to build its network, founding satellite chapters across the Caribbean and Latin America.³⁷⁵ The official expansion of consular and mutual aid networks created the infrastructural framework that allowed the success of unofficial ethnic and nationalist associations in the *mahjar*. By 1914, Cuban *muhajir* founded the Lebanon League of Progress (*alkitab al-Lubnani*) and Arabists held the First Arab Congress in Paris the year prior.³⁷⁶ Maluf often expressed nostalgia for “the smell of the homeland” and “the bracing air of Lebanon” as took part in associational life, serving as founding president of Havana's Progreso Sirio (Syrian Progress) association, through which he hoped to represent the interests of “the sons of Arabs” and assist in Syria's and Lebanon's “progress” towards modernity by marshalling the resources of his *muhajir* compatriots in Cuba.³⁷⁷ No doubt, Progreso Sirio worked within the networks of official and unofficial Ottoman and *muhajir* associations, including its Cuban

³⁷⁴ Fahrenthold, 37-39.

³⁷⁵ Fahrenthold, 36-37.

³⁷⁶ Fahrenthold, 44-47.

³⁷⁷ Maalouf, 210-211.

contemporaries the Unión Siriana de Santiago, founded on February 8, 1909 in Santiago de Cuba, and Sagua la Grande's cultural association El Líbano.³⁷⁸ These early associations benefited from the foundational infrastructure constructed by the CUP's consular and propaganda networks and foreshadowed the explosive growth of these transnational networks in the decades following the First World War.

Social institutions like mutual aid societies, fraternal associations, and cafés proved formative and constructive roles in early-twentieth-century Syrian and *muhajir* politics and culture. Aside from official Ottoman attempts to create a sense of Ottomanness through the *mahjar*'s transnational networks, *muhajir* found fraternal freemason lodges to be important spaces of sociability across borders built upon cosmopolitan fraternalism that linked members to other urban areas with large Syrian communities and memberships.³⁷⁹ Freemasonry enjoyed wide popularity in the early-twentieth century *mahjar*, as shown when Maluf joined a Masonic lodge that shared a name—La Verdad—with Maluf's business, and prominent Lebanese-born shop-owner and rice planter, Jorge J. Hadad Yaber joined a fraternal lodge in Manzanillo.³⁸⁰ (Figure 8) Evidence suggests many *muhajir* joined fraternal lodges, or started their own masonic-inspired orders, in

³⁷⁸ *Directorio*, Registro de Asociaciones, Archivo Nacional de Cuba.

³⁷⁹ Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs, Jan C. Jensen, and Elizabeth Mancke, "The Fraternal Atlantic: An Introduction," *Atlantic Studies*, 16, no. 3, 283-293; Joachim Berger, "The Great Divide: Transatlantic Brothering and Masonic Internationalism, c. 1870-1930," *Atlantic Studies*, 16, no. 3, 405-422; Martin Summers, "Diasporic Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transnational Production of Black Middle-Class Masculinity," *Gender & History*, 15, No. 3 (Nov. 2003), 550-574.

³⁸⁰ Maalouf, 215; Jorge J. Hadad Yaber, "Masonic Membership Card," Manzanillo, Cuba, June 30, 1946, Hadad Family Archive, Manzanillo, Cuba.

order to grow their transnational reach and coordination, which even inspired the Maronite Patriarch to wage a campaign against threats from “Free Masons” and “Liberals.”³⁸¹

Of course, the Catholic Church, with its global institutional reach, also served as a connective network for Maronite and Melkite *muhajir* and their coreligionists and kin in the *mahjar* and the *Mashriq*.³⁸² In the *mahjar*, Latin Rite Catholic congregations often hosted itinerate Maronite or Melkite clerics, offered aid to Catholic migrants, provided a public space where *muhajir* congregated, and lent physical space for eastern-rite devotional practice.³⁸³ As early as 1899, with the end of Spanish, Latin Rite hegemony over Cuban religious life, records show the presence of Maronite clergy tending to *muhajir* on the island.³⁸⁴ Organs of Ottoman imperialism, institutional Christianity, and fraternal organizations served to construct circuits of travel, communication, and exchange for early-twentieth-century *muhajir* in Cuba, and the establishment of, and membership in, these and

³⁸¹ Akram Khater and Marjorie Stevens, “‘Like a wolf who fell upon sheep:’ Early Lebanese Immigrants and Religion in America,” *Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies*, February 6, 2019, 20 (accessed 12/16/2020 via: <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2019/02/06/like-a-wolf-who-fell-upon-sheep-early-lebanese-immigrants-and-religion-in-america/>); Stacy Fahrenthold, “Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in Al-Nadi Al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920-32,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 46 (2014), 259-283.

³⁸² Khater and Stevens, 1-20.

³⁸³ Khater and Stevens, 1-20. The Roman Catholic Church contains, within the Holy See, several rites. Each rite falls under the teaching authority of the Roman Pope, but, while the basic theology remains the same, each rite manifests its Catholic faith through distinct traditions, liturgical practices, and even calendars. The largest and most well-known rite is the Latin-rite, which traditionally celebrated Catholic Mass in Latin and remains the predominant rite in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Australia, India, and eastern Asia. The Maronite and Melkite rites, governed by patriarchates under papal authority, maintain ancient liturgical traditions that evolved in Lebanon and Syria separately from those of the European Latin Rite.

³⁸⁴ Delebtani Letter, Archivo del Arzobispado de la Habana, Clérigos y Religiosos, 42, Exp. 16, Havana, Cuba.

new organizations and associations increased as the wealth and status of the community grew and evolved.



Figure 8: Freemason membership receipt, Jorge Hadad Yaber, 1946. Courtesy of David Hadad, Manzanillo, Cuba.

The success of *muhajir* businesses, in addition to the robust civic life in *muhajir* neighborhoods, contributed to *muhajir*'s sense of belonging within a rapidly changing Cuba. Jorge Hadad found initial success when he opened “Casa Hadad” in Manzanillo. (Figure 9) Casa Hadad advertised silk, jewelry, perfume, and “*artículos de fantasía*.”³⁸⁵ (Figure 10) His relative, Abrabam Hadad Chediak also owned a successful store in Manzanillo, Bazar de Todo, that offered a wide selection of goods and services, which according to its advertisements, included jewelry, tools, perfume, spare parts, as well as pawn and watch repair services.³⁸⁶ Both Hadad's operated their businesses on Calle Martí, known for housing many

³⁸⁵ “Casa Hadad,” business card, Hadad Family Archive, Manzanillo, Cuba.

³⁸⁶ “Bazar de Todo de Abraham Hadad Chediak,” blank receipt, Hadad Family Archive; Manzanillo, Cuba.

muhajir homes and businesses.³⁸⁷ In 1912, Gabriel Maluf wrote to his brother Botros about his recent purchase of a building that he claimed once served as independence-era icon General Maximo Gómez's home.³⁸⁸ For a few years, Gabriel made his residence on Monte, close to his business on No. 5 and 7 Egido and among his *muhajir* compatriots who over the decades turned the area into an unofficial Little Lebanon close to Havana's Chinatown. Eventually, however, Maluf moved his family to an elegant, hilltop residence in Víbora, a posh neighborhood outside Havana's urban core.³⁸⁹ According to his grandnephew,

it wasn't his affluence that Gebrayel displayed on these walls, but his original culture, his identity. He felt the need to proudly proclaim his allegiance to Andalusian civilization, symbol of his family's influence...for a Levantine émigré in a Spanish-speaking country, this was also a symbol of his ancestors' contribution to the Iberian Peninsula.³⁹⁰

While this view may not conform with historical realities, it emphasizes the sort of "double allegiance" Maluf developed in Cuba, and on which future *muhajir* and first-generation Syrian-Cubans would build in the decades that followed.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Mattar, *Guia Social*, 7.

³⁸⁸ Maalouf, 216, 222.

³⁸⁹ Maalouf, 256; "Application for Registration—Naturalized Citizens," *U.S. Consul General in Havana, Cuba*, Consular Registration Applications, 1916-1925 (accessed via ancestry.com).

³⁹⁰ Maalouf, 255.

³⁹¹ Maalouf, 255.



Figure 9: Casa Hadad, Photographs, Manzanillo, Cuba. The first photo appears to have been from the first quarter of the twentieth century. The second photograph appears to show the storefront after a renovation in the 1940s or 1950s. Courtesy of David Hadad, Manzanillo, Cuba.



Figure 10: Casa Hadad, Business Card. Courtesy of David Hadad, Manzanillo, Cuba.

More complex than just a “double allegiance,” *muhajir*’ identities pulled on multiple threads, in multiple directions. Maluf never registered as a Cuban citizen, as he preferred to keep his U.S. citizenship, many other *muhajir* did choose legible Cuban citizenship even as they cultivated complex, transnational, and, sometimes, competing identities. In Manzanillo, Jorge Hadad registered as a Cuban citizen, at a time when he could, for the first time in his life self-identify,

not as Cuban or Ottoman, but as a Lebanese.³⁹² (Figure 11) Five years after Hadad acquired his official citizenship, the Ministerio de Gobernacion issued a driver's license to "Jorge J. Hadad Yaber, son of José and Tomasa, *natural de Siria*" and listed his "nationality" as "Lebanese."³⁹³ Since Hadad arrived in Cuba around the turn of the twentieth century, his hometown of Gahzir, Mount Lebanon had fallen under three governments, but his island neighbors likely had two other names for him—*turco* and *moro*.



Figure 11: Jorge Hadad Yaber, Citizenship Certificate. Courtesy of David Hadad, Manzanillo, Cuba.

³⁹² "Jorge José Hadad y Yaber, "Certificado de Ciudadanía," El Ministro de Estado de la Republica de Cuba, October 13, 1945, Hadad Family Archive; Manzanillo, Cuba.

³⁹³ Jorge J. Hadad Yaber, "Driver's License No. 33779," 1951, Ministerio de Gobernacion, Dirección General de la Cartera Dactilar del Chofer, Hadad Family Archives; Manzanillo, Cuba.

Muhajir navigated racialized social hierarchies linked to class, capitalism, and nationalisms based on myths of ethnic homogeneity.³⁹⁴ Scholars have noted that the term *turco* carried economically desirable connotations, but also brought undesirable social subtexts.³⁹⁵ At times, Lebanese business owners showcased their otherness with business names that highlighted their “exotic” Levantine—and sometimes biblical—connections, like Jorge Dergan’s Havana store, El Líbano, or Mereb, Lebanon native Salomon Hajje’s Estrella de Oriente (Eastern Star) in Bayamo.³⁹⁶ Yet, some *muhajir* took a different tack, aspiring to an invisibility, as one scholar noted, “walking down the street as a stranger but not a foreigner, that indicated belonging. But success was never guaranteed, and full belonging remained tantalizingly elusive for many individuals.”³⁹⁷ Business names like La Victoria, La Fortuna, Los Bobos, and Maluf’s La Verdad, illustrate the desire for invisibility, and wealthy *muhajir* often leveraged their monetary capital to gain access to social capital.³⁹⁸

In 1912, when Maluf moved La Verdad into what he called “the Maximo Gómez House,” Havana’s *El Figaro* magazine, a favorite of the city’s high

³⁹⁴ Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Balloffett., 31.

³⁹⁵ Mays, 9.

³⁹⁶ Mattar, *Guia Social*, 1; Menéndez, *Los Árabes en Cuba*; Mays, 9.

³⁹⁷ Mays, 8.

³⁹⁸ Mattar, *Guia Social*, 1-17.

society, referred to the buildings conversion as a transformation “from temple of liberty to temple of commerce.”³⁹⁹ The magazine featured a full-page article on Maluf, titled “Los Triunfos del Trabajo: La Casa de Maluf,” that highlighted his success and referred to the store’s design and inventory as “total luxury,” but that did not mention his immigrant origins.⁴⁰⁰ (Figure 12) *Muhajir* regularly walked a tight rope between this sort of invisibility, and their efforts to shape and rehabilitate Cubans’ images of “*turcos*,” and a shift to the term “*moro*” may have been a step toward establishing “familiarity” while not altogether sheading their otherness and the pall of suspicion.⁴⁰¹



Figure 12: “El Trinfo del Trabajo,” Periodical. Clipping of article from *El Figaro*, highlighting Gabriel Maluf and La Verdad. Courtesy of Rigoberto Menéndez and the Library at Museo Casa de los Árabes, Havana, Cuba.

³⁹⁹ *El Figaro* [clipping], “Triunfo del Trabajo,” Biblioteca del Museo Casa de los Árabes, Personal Papers of Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁰⁰ *El Figaro*, “Triunfo del Trabajo.”

⁴⁰¹ Felipe Yaber and John Ermer, Miami, FL; August 31, 2020.

Following the Second U.S. Occupation, Cuban immigration policies and social elites' attitudes toward non-European immigration continued to pose significant barriers to *muhajir* entry and belonging. In 1909, Frank Menocal sent memos to Cuba's President and Secretary of Treasury arguing against the Chinese ambassador's recent petition to Congress asking for the repeal of Military Order 155.⁴⁰² The reasons he gave for barring Chinese immigration were "economic and social reasons, ethnic or racial, sanitary, and diplomatic."⁴⁰³ Menocal argued against Asian immigration and insisted they posed a threat to Cuban society through their "diversity of language, religion, customs, which prevent the assimilation of the element to the social environment of Cuba," and that immigrants from non-European civilizations would form "colonies where they live a semi-wild life, indulging in all kinds of vices, and creating sources of infection."⁴⁰⁴ Menocal then doubled-down on the racial pseudoscience of the day, arguing that miscegenation of Chinese with Cuba's black or white population produced "weak, stunted offspring, mostly predisposed to tuberculosis...whose vitality is poor."⁴⁰⁵ Menocal wrote at length about what he regarded as immigrants' poor hygiene and equated non-European immigrants

⁴⁰² Frank E. Menocal, "Memorandum Secretaría de Sanidad y Beneficencia-Departamento de Inmigración a Sr. Secretario de Hacienda," ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 83.

⁴⁰³ Menocal to Sec. of Hacienda, 1909, ANC, 121, 83, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁰⁴ Menocal to Sec. of Hacienda, 1909.

⁴⁰⁵ Menocal to Sec. de Hacienda, 1909.

with vectors of disease, and insisted on the importance of keeping Cuban law “as homogenous as possible with American laws.”⁴⁰⁶ Menocal closed his memo with a description of how Cuba failed to enforce Order 155, “today, the United States permit the disembarking of Chinese tourists, students, and merchants, without accepting laborers, who, without doubt, disguised as merchants or students come to Cuba in great numbers.”⁴⁰⁷ Two years later, in a memo to the president, Menocal admitted that Cuban officials had “violated” Sections VII and VIII of Order 155 of 1902 “for eleven years” by allowing excluded categories of people to enter Cuba via loopholes in the law.⁴⁰⁸ Menocal argued that Decree 603 of 1913, Decree 384 of 1911, and Decree 237 of 1904 represented attempts by the Cuban government, not to exclude Chinese from Cuba, but to make it easier Chinese migrants with “special status,” like students and merchants with business in Cuba, to enter the island through the establishment of scientific processes of registration.⁴⁰⁹ In his correspondence, Menocal hedged by suggesting Order 155 may have been “unconstitutional” and “may or may not be mortifying or offensive to the Chinese,” but that Order 155 remained “in force” and the disputed decrees simply constituted regulatory provisions meant to enforce the law.⁴¹⁰ While officials focused debates on immigrant exclusion on Chinese migrants, these debates highlighted the many ways in which

⁴⁰⁶ Menocal to Sec. de Hacienda, 1909.

⁴⁰⁷ Menocal to Sec. de Hacienda, 1909.

⁴⁰⁸ Menocal to President, 1913, ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 83, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁰⁹ Menocal to President, 1913.

⁴¹⁰ Menocal to President, 1913.

policymakers and bureaucrats sought to exclude immigrants deemed racially and cultural undesirable, a category in which many Cubans placed itinerate “*turco*” peddlers and their countrymen, even as others activated older methods of ensconcing themselves into Cuban society and positioning themselves as citizens in practice as well as law.

Conclusion

As cases like those of Abraham Naser show, following independence from Spain, Cuban and U.S. policymakers embarked on a process of modernization through liberalization. Immigration and citizenship laws became more “scientific” and rigid over the first decade and a half of Cuban self-government, and with support from two U.S. occupation governments, Cubans built a modern infrastructure for excluding potential immigrants deemed “undesirable” and codified citizenship into a legible, state-centered status. Still, as with Gabriel Maluf, many *muhajir* found success and a sense of place in Cuba, as vernacular forms of belonging persisted. Maluf’s success in achieving access to the upper echelons of Cuban society extolled the benefits of reputation building, active participation in civil society, and good civic behavior. Yet, wealth and cultural similarities worked on Maluf’s side, and many of his *muhajir* compatriots

Tricornia stood as a monument to scientific and racialized immigrant exclusion policies. As Cuba’s immigration commissioner in Havana, Frank Menocal exercised control over the island’s immigration apparatus, with wide

latitude to largely shape the laws to his will. Tricornia's assembly-line-like regime of registration and processing of immigrants, overseen by Menocal, rivaled U.S. operations at Ellis Island and served as an example of Cuban liberal modernity.

Still, as Menocal himself admitted in official correspondence, enforcement of exclusionary policies proved difficult, or as a representative from Cuba's Chinese community called them, "impossible to enforce."⁴¹¹ Levantine migrants often shared information about immigration restrictions, forged passports, and leveraged the powers of governments in countries of provenance and passage to overcome certain barriers to migration. In short, Lebanese and Syrian migrants frequently evaded the most heavy-handed policies and procedures with the help of transnational networks and citizenships.

Whereas colonial Creoles in Cuba understood citizenship as a locally derived sense of belonging, partly based on expectations of mobility, post-independence Cubans increasingly moved to create a centralized regime of legible citizenship through which the state could exert more authority over people and their movement. Migrants from the Ottoman Empire often used their status as French protégés to skirt some of Cuba's most onerous policies, while others—like Maluf—acquired U.S. or European citizenships and used the power of their passports to gain access. While some *muhajir* used legitimate passports, others used travel documents belonging to family members or forged passports acquired

⁴¹¹ Wong Chuw Sen to President of the Republic, 1913, ANC, 121, 83, Havana, Cuba.

through their networks abroad.⁴¹² Whatever their legible citizenship status, *muhajir* and *mahjaris* employed a wide-ranging toolset, including reputation, civic participation, good civic behavior, and commercial success to forge identities as Cuba. And yet, once on the island, many *mahjaris* also clung to cultural practices and forms that perpetuated a sense of exotic otherness that they strategically deployed within Cuban contexts.

⁴¹² Mays, 10, 37, 126.

CHAPTER THREE

“*Sirio, Natural de Libano, Ciudadano de Cuba:*” Loyalty, Belonging, and Nationalism in the Interwar Years

“When it came time to placing new workers, foreigners were preferred. But at the time of firing, Cubans were the first.”

~Alberto Arredondo, 1936 ⁴¹³

On 20 June 1918, *Diario de la Marina*, Havana’s conservative daily, reported that Gabriel M. Maluf died alongside his driver in a car accident. The car crashed on the road from Havana to La Víbora, where Maluf likely planned to join his wife for lunch in his hilltop home.⁴¹⁴ The man the Havana daily *El Mundo* once called “the very well-known Sr. Gabriel Maluf,” died at just forty-one years old at the peak of his success.⁴¹⁵ After nineteen years of living in Cuba, Maluf founded a Syrian mutual aid society, built an extremely successful wholesale and retail business, and rubbed elbows with his compatriots, prominent members of other immigrant communities, and some of Havana’s social elite⁴¹⁶. As his grand-nephew explained, “the network of political, financial, and social connections Gebrayel had built up over the years was crucially important in enabling him to face up to his competitors, the envious, and the nit-picking civil servants.”⁴¹⁷ Indeed, mourners with common Cubans surnames, such as Fernández,

⁴¹³ Mario Alfonso y Caballero, *La Nacionalización del Trabajo en Cuba: Cuatro Artículos Sobre la Ley Provisional de Nacionalización del Trabajo* (Havana, 1936), 6.

⁴¹⁴ Amin Maalouf, *Origins: A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 227-228.

⁴¹⁵ Maalouf, 234.

⁴¹⁶ *El Figaro* [clipping], “Triunfo del Trabajo,” Biblioteca del Museo Casa de los Árabes, Personal Papers of Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, Havana, Cuba.

⁴¹⁷ Maalouf, 291.

Figueredo, and Argüelles mingled with others whose names may not have seemed as familiar, including Berkowitz, Salaun, and Felaifel.⁴¹⁸ Maluf's employees at La Verdad pooled resources to post their condolences in the pages of *Diario de la Marina*, and that paper featured several other announcements over multiple days. Maluf had cemented himself in Havana's social fabric, and at his death, others held him up as an example of Cuban virtue and promise.

Maluf's death came at a crossroads for Cuba's *mahjari* community, as World War I marked a turning point in the politics of the Levant, and Cubans also experienced changes in their political landscape through economic booms and busts, the Machado dictatorship, and a nationalist and nativist revolution in 1933. Mutual aid societies in Cuba lobbied on behalf of the island's Arabic-speaking populations and promoted the communities' cultural, political, and religious similarities with Cubans. These strategies seemed to work. In the June 22 issue of *Diario de la Marina*, coverage of Maluf's funeral highlighted that the deceased "belonged to a distinguished Syrian family," and noted "One of his brothers, living in Mount Lebanon, is a high Church dignitary. May he rest in peace, for he was a good husband, a good father, and a useful member of society."⁴¹⁹ Through the first half of the twentieth century, an emphasis on Christian—mostly Maronite-turned-Latin Rite Catholic—practice, civilizational bone fides, and connections to European powers like France seemed to elevate *muhajir*' place in Cuban society.

⁴¹⁸ "E.P.D. El Señor Gabriel M. Maluf Ha Fallecido," *Diario de la Marina*, Havana, Cuba, 21 June 1918, 4.

⁴¹⁹ Maalouf, 251.

Amin Maalouf visited his great-uncle Gabriel's La Víbora-area residence at the end of the twentieth century. The building, which sat on the highest hill in Havana, functioned as home to a state-run cultural organization. Maalouf marveled as he recalled that "to say a man has succeeded, [in our village] we exclaim, 'His house is way at the top of the village!' It isn't surprising that this son of the Mountains wished to make a point of his social success by making his home high up at the summit."⁴²⁰ Maalouf went on to describe the Moorish architectural features and "Oriental" decorative touches and noted, "It wasn't his affluence that [Gabriel] displayed on these walls, but his original culture, his identity...let me add that for a Levantine émigré in a Spanish-speaking country, this was also a symbol of his ancestors' contribution to the Iberian Peninsula."⁴²¹ In many ways, Maluf developed what his grandnephew saw as a sort of "double allegiance," noting the emigrant's love for Cuba and sense of belonging, but deep yearning for the familiar smells, views, and spaces of his native land. To Maalouf, what was most remarkable about Gabriel's "Cuban residence [was] not how it breaks with our origins, but how it recalls them. The Andalusian room, first, and on the roof, the huge paved terrace. The name of my family's original village, Machrah, probably means 'open area,'" like the one in Víbora that overlooked the city, and beyond it, the sea, but "Not the sea he would one day be sailing away on, but the sea by which he had arrived."⁴²²

⁴²⁰ Maalouf, 253.

⁴²¹ Maalouf, 255.

⁴²² Maalouf, 256-257.

This chapter explores Syrian migrants' "double allegiances," within contexts of the rapidly changing politics of the interwar period.⁴²³ Here, the term "double allegiance" refers to a sense of dual identity defined by a loyalty and commitment to the local community, from which belonging came, and the Levantine homeland and the family it represents. Following World War I, Cuba experienced boom and bust economic cycles, resulting from vagaries of sugar prices through the 1920s, that lead to the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. Likewise, the Levant underwent radical political change as the Ottoman Empire's postwar collapse gave way to French suzerainty over the League of Nations Mandate for Lebanon and Syria. Through the First World War, 1920s, and 1930s, various political entities, identities, private organizations, and ideologies vied for the attention and adherence of populations in the *mahjar*, who navigated and debated the complex transnational landscapes through which they stayed connected to the eastern Mediterranean, created livelihoods, and established belongings in the *mahjar*.

Scholars have described Cuba's Middle Eastern community and their cultural contributions as "forgotten."⁴²⁴ Indeed, the archival record in Cuba offers only glimpses of this once vibrant and influential community. This chapter attempts to pull from a motley collection of sources, mostly from the Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), to analyze a pivotal era in Cuban history and how events in Cuban and the Levant changed the way *mahjaris*, and their associations interacted with elite Cubans and viewed the politics of Lebanon and Syria. Citizenship applications from the late 1920s and 1930s shed light on the ways political unrest in Cuba changed the calculus of the island's

⁴²³ Maalouf, 255.

⁴²⁴ Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh, "Embracing Transculturalism and Footnoting Islam," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 18, 1 (Jan 2015), 12.

mahjari community, as resurgent nationalisms and nativism encouraged some to seek legible and legal status via registration as Cuban citizens. The choices to register as Cuban citizens came at different times, with different motivations, and under unique circumstances for each individual. It is likely that the transfer of the Levant from Ottoman to French control, the Machado dictatorship, and the Cuban Revolution of 1933 each weighed on those who chose to become official, legible Cuban citizens. Yet, crucially, *mahjaris* in Cuba continued to actively engage with their homelands through the sending of remittances and involvement in Middle Eastern politics. For much of the community's early years on the island, migrants resisted registering as Cuban citizens, preferring a nimble, if nebulous, model of plural citizenship. Levantine migrants in Cuba utilized civic associations, and the relative economic independence afforded them through transnational networks, to carve out a place for themselves based on commonalities between Ottoman and Spanish regimes of belonging. As explained in previous chapters, these "vernacular citizenships" functioned under assumptions of mobility and emphasized reputation and good civic behavior, for a more substantive vision of citizenship than afforded by more liberal models based on legibility via state-issued documentation. This vernacular model of a fluid, plural citizenship was destabilized in the face of fissures caused by hardening borders on both sides of the Atlantic, by resurgent French imperialism, increasingly isolationist policies in the United States, and the nativism and protectionism of 1930s Cuba. As these factors changed the way people in the *mahjar* viewed themselves in relation to Cuba and the Levant, ethnic civic associations evolved to meet the challenges of rapidly changing and unstable political environments.

Cuban law allowed the creation of robust associational life and allowed mutual aid societies, recreational clubs, and ethnic fraternities to proliferate in early-twentieth-century Cuba. Syrians living in Cuba created mutual aid societies that facilitated entry for their compatriots. Increasing immigration from the Levant in the first three decades following Cuban independence, coupled with Havana's associational life, resulted in the creation of several *mahjari* ethnic clubs and mutual aid societies. At first, these clubs served the community as sponsors for newly arrived émigrés, advocates for the community's poor, and a meeting space where *mahjaris* could coordinate responses to issues of concern for the community and pool collective resources. These associations proved critical to establishment of transnational networks and the effective manipulation of post-war French patronage. As this chapter will show, new immigration decreased in the years following Cuba's 1933 Revolution, both because of economic depression and new exclusionary laws in Cuba. These clubs then shifted their focus toward the maintenance of diasporic networks and ethnic identities and served as forums for establishment of a collective sense of belonging within Cuba and outward facing identity within Cuban society.

While mutual aid remained central to associational missions, the focus shifted away from advocacy and sponsorship for arriving immigrants and toward maintenance of collective ethnic identities and support for the domestic community and the political future of the Levantine homelands. Yet, as Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian leaders worked to cultivate a distinct ethnic character, political changes in the Levant and the Americas further complicated identities in the homeland and the Americas. Following the First World War, France assumed control of Lebanon and Syria under a League of Nations

mandate and created a “colonial civic order” that included a diplomatic courtship of communities in the *mahjar*.⁴²⁵ Still, at times, French actions worked against the interests of those communities in the *mahjar* when they did not align with French priorities in the Levant. France, which embraced a resurgent imperialist posture following the war, engaged with Latin America governments on behalf of Lebanese and Syrians living across the Western Hemisphere, at a time when the United States retreated into the isolationism of the 1920s and the less interventionist Good Neighbor Policy of the 1930s—most notably in Cuba, through the abrogation of the Platt Amendment following the Revolution of 1933.⁴²⁶ The rapidly changing world of the interwar period forced Lebanese and Syrian migrants to reevaluate strategies of belonging and official citizenship status as they navigated a complex web of allegiances and identities. As conditions changed in the Levant and Cuba, particularly a nationalist backlash against immigrants on the island, *mahjaris* recalibrated their calculus on belonging in ways that reflected Cubans’ renewed emphasis on legibility and citizenship.

Local Social: Early Associational Life and Belonging in the Cuban *Mahjar*

Lebanese and Syrian migrants in Cuba carved a niche within the island’s public sphere, within which a number of mutual aid societies and ethnic associations provided

⁴²⁵ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 6.

⁴²⁶ While Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy generally advocated for a less interventionist policy toward Latin America, the United States did not fully disengage in the region or in Cuba. The United States played spoiler for Batista’s overthrow of the revolutionary Government of the 100 Days and subsequent suppression of political opponents. As this dissertation will explain, this suppression produced a political climate based on opportunism and led to the Auténtico Party’s corruption of the 1940s.

assistance and a sense of community to the Arabic-speaking residents. Associational leaders deployed carefully cultivated ethnic identities to establish belonging in Cuba, by highlighting cultural similarities, and to remain connected to kin and contacts in the Levant. An emphasis on maintaining the Arabic language and continued exercise of political power in the eastern Mediterranean attracted attention from Ottoman, French, and Cuban governments, who often used associational life as a mechanism of surveillance of the *mahjari* community or as sites for promoting patriotism or a preferred political character. Postures of surveillance and official correspondence revealed the way officials from different governments thought about their relationship with, and degree to which they were responsible for, Lebanese and Syrian community in Cuba.

Following the Pact of Zanjón, Spanish policymakers, through the *Leyes de Reuniones y de Asociaciones*, created a quasi-liberal, officially-sanctioned public sphere within colonial society that allowed members to make claims to citizenship and legally associate. The Zanjón peace agreement ended the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), an event during which many Creoles in Cuba developed identities as *ciudadanos cubanos* (Cuban citizens) within the context of the Republic-at-Arms.⁴²⁷ In the war's wake, Spanish officials perceived a rampant proliferation of disloyalty, and the post-Zanjón associational laws created avenues for surveillance via censorship boards and monitoring by colonial authorities.⁴²⁸ These surveillance practices, not unique to the Spanish colonial experience, continued during two U.S. occupations and the republican period.

⁴²⁷ Sartorius, 95.

⁴²⁸ Sartorius, 73, 137.

In the first six decades following independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba built upon the public sphere of the colonial era to foster a robust network of mutual aid societies, recreational clubs, and cultural or ethnic associations. Article 28 of the 1901 Cuban Constitution guaranteed to “All the inhabitants of the Republic...the right to peaceful assembly, without arms, and to associate for all lawful purposes.”⁴²⁹ This same article opened the 1903 republication of the colonial era Law of Reunions and of Associations “annotated with the Constitution of the Republic, the decrees of the military government, and the precepts of the penal code as they pertain to rights of assembly and association.”⁴³⁰ These colonial statutes and appendixes, eventually renamed the Law of Associations of 1903, remained in force through much of the twentieth century and governed the rules under which Cubans created a robust republican associational life.

Through their associational laws, the Spanish colonial apparatus, U.S. military governments, and Cuban state created a system of surveillance built upon mandatory reporting of meeting locations and times, province-level investigative powers, and free access to meetings by state representatives. The 1903 Law of Associations required associations to inform the state of general operations, register their statutes and regulations with state authorities, and submit and maintain accurate and up-to-date member rolls in the Register of Associations.⁴³¹ Associational “founders, directors, and

⁴²⁹ *Leyes de Reuniones y de Asociaciones anotadas con la constitución de la república, ordines del gobierno military y preceptos del codigo penal referentes a los derechos de reunion y asociacion*, Biblioteca Juridica de la Republica de Cuba (Havana: Imprenta de Rambla y Bouza, 1903), 3. Henceforth, *Ley de Asociaciones*.

⁴³⁰ *Ley de Asociaciones*, 3.

⁴³¹ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 162; David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 80.

presidents” operated under threat of “correctional imprisonment” if they did not inform “local Authorities” of their respective association’s “purpose and statutes” prior to holding inaugural meetings.⁴³² Associational officers could run afoul of the law for a number of actions the state regarded as corrupt or seditious including, not reporting changes to meeting locations at least twenty-four hours prior to its start time, barred government officials from attending meetings, failed to comply with formal state requests to adjourn meetings, or promoted an environment “contrary to public morality.”⁴³³ As in the colonial era, the state utilized its surveillance powers over associational life to ensure members’ loyalty, foster patriotic sentiment, and protect the state’s claims to sovereignty. The law required clubs to keep their records in Spanish, in addition to any other languages of members’ choosing, but that was not always the case.⁴³⁴ As a provincial inspector investigating allegations of fraud against the board of the Unión Libanes-Sirio de Bejucal (ULSB) found the “Book for the entry of resolutions adopted in the General Meetings and Board of Directors...is written in Arabic language.”⁴³⁵ The investigation into the USLB elucidated the regulatory and surveillance apparatus under which Cuba’s private associations and societies, especially those representing immigrant communities and their interests, existed.

⁴³² *Ley de Asociaciones*, 12-13.

⁴³³ *Ley de Asociaciones*, 12-13.

⁴³⁴ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴³⁵ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 18 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

The Cuban state regularly used its surveillance powers and investigated several clubs that pertained to the island's Levantine community. Through these surveillance actions, Cuban officials often gauged and promoted assimilation among members of immigrant-heavy ethnic associations. Rogelio Caramel, the inspector who investigated the ULSB, complained several times about the club's leadership and betrayed some of the state's biases. At four o'clock on a rainy Friday afternoon, Caramel arrived at the ULSB's meeting space located at Calle Cespedes No. 80, in the town of Bejucal, on the outskirts of Havana. According to Caramel, he arrived that afternoon "in order to investigate whether said association functions in accordance with the provisions of the Associations Law and keeps the Books that the law determines so that an Institution of this nature can consider its Legal presence integrated, in accordance with other legal provisions in force in the Republic."⁴³⁶ The ULSB's meetings took place in a private home belonging to Jacobo Seba, a native of Lebanon and member of the club.⁴³⁷ Seba answered the front door of his home and welcomed the inspector. Caramel, removing his hat and raincoat as he entered the residence, asked to see the club president. According to Caramel, Seba "when asked about the [club] President, stated that he was not in the *Local Social*, but as soon as the rain, that was intense at that time, let up, he would go to the president's home."⁴³⁸ About fifteen minutes after Caramel arrived, the rain subsided into a light drizzle, at which point, Seba left to fetch the president, only to return to inform

⁴³⁶ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴³⁷ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴³⁸ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

Caramel “that the president had to leave for Havana to resolve an urgent matter.”⁴³⁹ As Seba attempted to excuse the president’s absence, the club’s secretary, Jorge Daly, arrived and apologized for not meeting the inspector at the train station.⁴⁴⁰ The day before, Daly had received a telegram from the provincial governor’s office that informed him of the inspector’s imminent arrival, but as he explained, the heavy rain prevented him from doing so. Daly assured Caramel that “as the rains stopped, he decided to come to the *Local Social*, being in his capacity as Secretary at the disposal of the [investigator] to facilitate the work that is going to be carried out in compliance with” the Law of Associations.⁴⁴¹ Notably frustrated by the president’s absence, whose presence Caramel deemed “necessary to start action,” the investigator resolved that the investigation would continue the following day and ordered Seba and Daly, the club treasurer and secretary respectively, not to leave the town limits “so as not to obstruct the work to be done.”⁴⁴²

At four o’clock, Saturday afternoon, Caramel returned “in order to investigate individuals related to the operation of said Association.”⁴⁴³ Daly, in his capacity as secretary, “stated he has no problem in displaying for the purposes of this investigation the Books or Documents that he has in his custody,” but as Caramel opened the club’s

⁴³⁹ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴⁰ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴¹ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴² Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 17 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴³ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 18 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

books, he expressed shock and frustration that the “Book that is the one intended for the [legally required] purpose [of recording the entry of resolutions adopted at General Meetings]...is written in Arabic language for which reason...seeing the impossibility of the undersigned to read” and ordered Daly and Elias Caran, a former club president, to translate the minutes from the meeting held on 7 June of that year.⁴⁴⁴ The record they translated showed unorthodox board elections and questionable treasury practices, including the former treasurer refusing to pay down the club’s debts with the funds “he had under his belt, [because] of an accident suffered he was unable to go to look for them.”⁴⁴⁵ Caramel, again, left dismayed that the club’s president, Dr. Moises Jacob y Felipe, again missed the inspector’s visit.

Two days later, Daly met Caramel at the door and told him “the president was not presently in town because he practices his profession as a doctor...and is...highly sought after by his numerous clients in the countryside, he cannot have a fixed time to be in the social premises.”⁴⁴⁶ Caramel’s frustrations leaked into his reports, bemoaning the members’ reluctance to assimilate to Cuban culture and abide by the Law of Associations.⁴⁴⁷ In one of his reports, the inspector wrote,

The Minutes books, the Associate Register and other documents of the Company are written in Arabic and not in Spanish, which is the official

⁴⁴⁴ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 18 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴⁵ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 18 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴⁶ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 22 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴⁷ Rogelio Caramel, “Acta de Investigación,” 22 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

language of the Republic of Cuba...[these documents] cannot be understood by the country's officials when necessary. Additionally, the Regulation requires that the Society's governance be carried in Spanish, being able to carry it in Arabic for internal order, but always carrying everything that the Law of Associations requires in Spanish. For the benefit of the Society's development and for the common good, [the secretary] considered it appropriate to address the Governor of the Province, who is the competent authority, in order to order an inspection into the Society...and to open new books that, being carried in the language of the country, would at all times be a demonstration that the members of the Society identified with the Cuban homeland and its institutions.⁴⁴⁸

Caramel reported what he thought were "irregularities that could bring damage to the" ULNB.⁴⁴⁹ Finally, Dr. Jacobs met with Caramel. In his final report, dated a full month after the investigation began, Caramel noted, "Dr. Moises Jacob, a person who enjoys respectability and prestige among the people and against whom there is no prejudice...told me the different times that I spoke with him during my investigations that he is willing to open new books and that they be brought in Spanish and in the manner provided by the Law of Associations."⁴⁵⁰ To be sure, a number of influential, Cuban-born members of Bejucal's Syro-Lebanese community sat on the club's directorate, including, Jacob, the club president, who was born in Bejucal and elected the town's mayor in 1940.⁴⁵¹ Caramel, who spent at least three weeks investigating the club

⁴⁴⁸ Rogelio Caramel, "Acta de Investigación," 22 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁴⁹ Rogelio Caramel, "Acta de Investigación," 22 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁵⁰ Rogelio Caramel, "Acta de Investigación," 12 August 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁵¹ Menéndez, 143.

and its members, wrote with an increasingly deferential tone as he got to know the community members, but his actions and dictates demonstrated the layers of surveillance and coercive power the state exercised over Cuba's cultural, recreational, and charitable societies.

Throughout the Atlantic world, associational life offered a space for the promotion and cultivation of good civic behaviors and citizenship.⁴⁵² Through the first decades following independence, Cuban political life lurched from crisis to crisis, including two U.S. occupations, the racial unrest of 1912, and a 1917 U.S. intervention that coincided with Washington and Havana entering the First World War. Cuba's political elite regularly fretted about the purposes and designs of racially or ethnically defined clubs and organizations. Cuban authorities monitored a variety of associations, especially race-based or ethnic societies they considered subversive or potentially under foreign influence, as part of a systematic program of political surveillance.⁴⁵³ Caramel's preoccupation with the ULSB's use of Arabic betrayed the officials' concerns about foreign interference and subversive politics. Language represented a key marker of identity that shaped individuals' senses of belonging and self.⁴⁵⁴ Arabic language use, especially the *nahda* literary renaissance, contributed to the emergence of Arab

⁴⁵² Katherine A. Lynch, "Social Provisions and the Life of Civil Society in Europe: Rethinking Public and Private," *Journal of Urban History*, 18, 61 (Sept 2009), 491-515; Helen McCarthy, "Service Clubs, Citizenship, and Equality: Gender Relations and Middle-Class Associations in Britain Between the Wars," *Historical Research*, 81, 213 (Aug 2008), 531-552; J. Cherie Strachan and Chris T. Owens, "Learning Civic Identity Outside of the Classroom: Diversity and Campus Associational Life," *Journal of Political Science Education*, 7 (2011), 464-482.

⁴⁵³ Lillian Guerra, *The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 173, 210.

⁴⁵⁴ Deanna Ferree Womack, "Lubnani, Libanais, Lebanese: Missionary Education, Language Policy and Identity Formation in Modern Lebanon," *Studies in World Christianity*, 18, 1 (2012), 6.

nationalism and the creation of new national identities within Ottoman territory.⁴⁵⁵ Use of Arabic language not only concerned Cuban officials, as Ottoman officials promoted Turkish-language classes as a “safeguard for...political loyalty,” lest they become “subjects in name only.”⁴⁵⁶ Ottoman officials understood the status-producing powers of language, culture, and civic institutions, often using clubs in the *mahjar* to surveil subjects, promote patriotism, and form identities.

“Without Getting Mixed Up in Politics:” Surveillance, Loyalty, and Engagement among Cuba’s “Forgotten” Syrians

Despite the strict, and potentially restrictive, regulations governing Cuban associational life, natural-born Cubans and immigrants on the island created a veritable kaleidoscope of recreational clubs, special interest groups, mutual aid societies, and ethnic organization that shifted, changed, and evolved over time. Syrian émigrés who built wealth and rubbed elbows with Cuban high society, like Gabriel Maluf, represented the vanguard of what grew into a prosperous, transnational, and influential *mahjari* community on the island. Maluf blazed a unique trail that included the acquisition of U.S. citizenship, despite Ottoman policies that forbade subjects from taking on foreign citizenship, and the leveraging of connections with U.S. wholesalers and producers of

⁴⁵⁵ Womack, 15; Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 135. The term “*nahda*” refers to the revival of Arabic literature and culture that emerged in the late-nineteenth century.

⁴⁵⁶ Womack, 10-11.

luxury goods that allowed for his meteoric rise in business and Cuban high society.⁴⁵⁷

Even as he built a life in Cuba, Maluf founded a Syrian ethnic organization, wrote to his family in Mount Lebanon, sponsored trips for family members to join him in Havana, and continued to register with, and travelled to, the United States to keep his U.S. citizenship.⁴⁵⁸ Maluf's transnational networks included the Catholic Church, within which he recorded his life's most important milestones; freemasonry, which connected him with a multiethnic, secular, and transnational brotherhood; and ethnic organizations and mutual aid societies which connected him to a far-flung diaspora of Syrian Ottomans. Through his founding of one of Cuba's oldest Syrian organizations, Maluf helped lay the groundwork for a mutual aid and public relations network that facilitated the establishment and relative success of the island's Levantine community.

Lebanese and Syrian ethnic associations cultivated images of Cuba's Arabic-speaking communities that combated negative stereotypes, promoted club leadership as model immigrants, and nurtured ethnic identities among their membership.⁴⁵⁹ Scholars of the *mahjar* generally regard these efforts, and those of similar associations across the

⁴⁵⁷ Gabriel M. Maluf, US Consular Registration Applications 1916-1925, 15 June 1917 (accessed via ancestry.com 32734_520306900_0281-01270). It is important to note that Syrians regularly applied for and received (with relative ease) U.S. citizenship around the turn of the twentieth century. Over time, however, this process became more difficult for Syrians as twentieth century U.S. policies on immigration and citizenship hardened and became more exclusionary, even if Syrians won legal recognition as "white" in the Costa and Dow cases of the early-twentieth century. For further reading on the topic of legal whiteness among Syrians in the United States, see: Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

⁴⁵⁸ "Gabriel M. Maluf," *List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States, S.S. Miami sailing from Havana, Cuba*, 26 July 1916, Florida, U.S., Arriving and Departing Passenger and Crew Lists 1898-1963 T940_34-1024, accessed via ancestry.com.

⁴⁵⁹ Stacy Fahrenthold, "Making Nations, in the Mahjar: Syrian and Lebanese Long-Distance Nationalisms in New York City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires, 1913-1929," Ph.D. Diss. (Northeastern University, 2014), 249.

Americas, as successful, evidenced by the relatively “invisibility” of immigrant communities from late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Ottoman homelands.⁴⁶⁰ Cuban historian Euridice Charón has called Arab immigrants to Cuba “the most assimilatable,” and numerous studies of immigration to Cuba have generally excluded mention of Arabs.⁴⁶¹ In his 1919 book *Cultura Cubana*, the Italian-Mexican historian Adolfo Dollero, who lived and worked for a time in Cuba, devoted only a few lines of his text to Arabs in Cuba, writing that Arabs “[in] my view are a thousand times more preferable than the Turkish mohametans,” because “whilst being Ottoman subjects, [Arabs] also have a greater tendency to Europeanize themselves, they don’t practice polygamy and they adopt with great ease to” Cuban customs.⁴⁶² Interestingly, Dollero would have disapproved of the popularity of freemasonry among Syrian migrants in the Americas, as he asked that “no secret societies should be permitted” in immigrant communities.⁴⁶³ Nevertheless, the perception that Syrian immigrants “assimilated” to Cuban society, perpetuated an erasure of their presence on the island, while ignoring that Syrian and Lebanese emigres in Cuba experienced prejudice and an “othering” at the hands of their Cuban neighbors.⁴⁶⁴ Émigrés understood the ways associational life could

⁴⁶⁰ Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 4; Mays, 9.

⁴⁶¹ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, “Embracing Transculturalism and Footnoting Islam,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 18, 1 (Jan 2015), 12; Euridice Charón, “El asentamiento de emigrantes árabes en Monte (La Habana, Cuba), 1890-1930, *Awraq: Estudios Sobre El Mundo Árabe e Islámico Contemporáneo*, XIII (1992), 58; Rigoberto Menéndez Paredes, *Los Arabes en Cuba* (Havana: Ediciones Boloña, 2007), 100.

⁴⁶² Adolfo Dollero, *Cultura Cubana* (Havana: 1919), 412.

⁴⁶³ Dollero, 412.

⁴⁶⁴ Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 12.

ensure that they remained connected to their homelands, and assist with the creation of collective identities. These dynamics dated to the Ottoman period, as Istanbul attempted to shape expressions of Ottomanness and identity in the *mahjar* through state-sponsored associational networks. For their part, the leaders of Lebanese and Syrian organizations, in addition to promoting their members as model immigrants, continued to play an integral part in the politics and economy of their homelands, and émigrés in Cuba regularly sent monetary remittances to family members in the Levant.⁴⁶⁵ *Mahjaris* in Cuba occupied a sort of liminal space on the Cuban racial spectrum, white, but ethnic, foreign, but predominantly Christian, and diasporic, while national. Within this liminal space, *mahjari* associations nurtured identities through which to enjoy many of the benefits of whiteness, in relation to other ethnic groups in Cuba, while positioning themselves as a unique ethnicity and transnational community.

As Ottoman subjects, *muhajir* existed in the Ottoman imagination as useful tools for the empire's regeneration to great power status, and Ottoman officials cultivated these communities through the creation of Ottoman patriotic societies. As scholars have noted, Ottoman diplomats established these clubs as means to "foster a culture of civic Ottomanism among Syrians and institutionalize a space for soft diplomacy."⁴⁶⁶ Ottoman administrators regarded loyal Syrian diasporas in the Americas as integral to the empire's future. By 1910, remittances from the *mahjar* amounted to a major pillar of the imperial

⁴⁶⁵ Edward Allaire Falk, "Arabs into Frenchmen: Education and Identity in Late Ottoman Syria," PhD diss., (University of California, San Diego 2017); Graham Auman Pitts, "The Ecology of Migration: Remittances in World War I Mount Lebanon," *Arab Studies Journal*, 26, 2 (Fall 2018), 102-129; Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Stacy Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 34.

economy with an estimated annual 800,000 British pounds channeled through tiny Mount Lebanon alone.⁴⁶⁷ The Young Turks, under the official party name of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), restored constitutional civil liberties previously suspended under Sultan Abdel Hamid II, including the right to free expression and assembly.⁴⁶⁸ Early CUP policies promoted a substantive and inclusive vision of citizenship that afforded *muhajir* the rights to travel, seek official redress, and diplomatic representation abroad. Ottoman-sponsored Syrian patriotic associations created a space through which imperial subjects abroad could be Ottomanized and lured back to Istanbul's jurisdiction. CUP diplomats saw *muhajir* and *mahjaris* as agents of Ottoman sovereignty abroad and those who returned from the *mahjar* with American educations as beneficiaries of Western tutelage capable of elevating the empire to a status equal to that of other European powers.⁴⁶⁹ To be sure, early CUP initiatives to address non-Turkish Ottoman subjects bore fruit in the *mahjar* and the *Mashriq* as Syrian communities in New York, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Havana held Ottoman Constitution Day celebrations, and subjects in Ottoman Syria, like Botros Maluf, bolstered their patriotic bona fides through public speeches and displays of loyalty.⁴⁷⁰ In the 1910s, Botros wrote about his efforts to establish a "national school" in Mount Lebanon, "for the education of the new generations in the spirit of brotherhood and equality among the different communities, and the exclusion of anything that goes against the interests of our holy fatherland...All

⁴⁶⁷ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 32.

⁴⁶⁸ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 31-32.

⁴⁶⁹ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 35-37.

⁴⁷⁰ Maalouf, 196-197, 211; Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 32.

those who have observed our undertaking over the last two years have noted that we have accomplished our task successfully and with complete loyalty to the Ottoman fatherland.”⁴⁷¹ To coordinate these efforts and ensure émigré loyalties, the CUP established in New York the Syrian Ottoman Union Society (SOUS) as its institutional wing in the Americas. Inaugurated in 1908, the SOUS represented one of the earliest Ottoman attempts to coordinate activities in the *mahjar* and focused on building its network, establishing chapters in the Caribbean and across Latin America, including Cuba.⁴⁷² Yet, despite the CUP’s best efforts to harness *mahjaris’* power, many Syrian subjects at home and abroad harbored a distrust of the Ottoman state and sought more unofficial networks through which to build communities and identities.

Through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, freemasonry rose in popularity among Lebanese and Syrian men in the *Mashriq* and *mahjar*. Founders of Cuba’s *mahjari* associations often oriented their clubs along the same secular, confraternal, and transnational lines as the Masonic lodges to which they also belonged.⁴⁷³ Two prominent founders of ethnic fraternal societies in the Cuban *mahjar*, Gabriel Maluf and Jorge Hadad Yaber, both belonged to Masonic lodges.⁴⁷⁴ Gabriel Maluf belonged to the masonic lodge La Verdad, the same name that he chose for his business.⁴⁷⁵ Maluf advertised his business as dealing in “*distintivos masónicos*,” or

⁴⁷¹ Maalouf, 197.

⁴⁷² Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente*, 36-37.

⁴⁷³ Maalouf, 210-215; Sartorius, 62-64.

⁴⁷⁴ Jorge J. Hadad Yaber, “Grade 32 Certificate,” *SOB: Consistorio “Lisandro Muñoz Sañudo”* No. 6, 30 June 1946, Hadad Family Archive, Manzanillo, Cuba; Maalouf, 215.

⁴⁷⁵ Maalouf, 280.

masonic insignia, and through his membership in the lodge, he likely met many of the prominent Cubans with whom he became friends, including future president, Alfredo Zayas and, veteran of the wars for independence and republican public servant, Fernando Figueredo Socarrás.⁴⁷⁶ As seen elsewhere in the Americas, *mahjari* freemasons also founded and participated in some of the earliest *mahjari* ethnic associations, regularly imbuing the latter with the transnationalism, interfaith politics, and fraternal principles of collective self-improvement inherent in masonic cultures.⁴⁷⁷ Freemasonry connected the brothers Maluf across the Atlantic, in Mount Lebanon and Cuba, and provided frameworks within which they compartmentalized their multiple identities and belongings. These frameworks later became the building blocks for secular Syrian ethnic associations, like Gabriel Maluf's Havana-based Progreso Sirio.

Mahjaris, and the Lebanese and Syrian organizations they founded under Cuban law, built collective reputations for good civic behavior and cosmopolitan sensibilities that native Cubans found desirable, familiar, and civilized, if not modern. For his part, Gebrial Maluf served as the founding president of Progreso Sirio, or Syrian Progress.⁴⁷⁸ While the association's archival records no longer exist, the Archivo Nacional de Cuba's records suggest Maluf founded the association sometime in the 1910s.⁴⁷⁹ According to the archival record, only one other *mahjari* association, the Unión Siriana de Santiago,

⁴⁷⁶ Maalouf, 215-216.

⁴⁷⁷ Stacy Fahrenthold, "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in Al-Nadi Al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920-32," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 46 (2014), 259-283.

⁴⁷⁸ Maalouf, 210-211.

⁴⁷⁹ *Directorio del Registro de Asociaciones*, Archivo Nacional de Cuba.

existed prior to Maluf's Progreso Sirio. The Unión Siriana, Progreso Sirio, and Sagua la Grande's El Líbano, represent the Cuban-*mahjar*'s earliest attempts, in the 1910s, to organize and pool collective resources.

Scholars of associational life in the Latin American *mahjar* have suggested the organizations attempted to combine and repackage Syrian cultural, social, and political traditions with the goal of remittance to the homeland and ending Syrians' "colonized despair."⁴⁸⁰ To be sure, remittances from the *mahjar* benefited the local economy in the Levant, and migrants proved centrally important to the region's development even as collective efforts focused on bettering life for migrants in Cuba.

Many of the organizations founded by *mahjari* in Cuba professed ostensibly secular, charitable, and ethnic-Arab interests. Al-Etehad, a transliterated version of an Arabic phrase that translates into "the union," explained its chartered purpose as an "Association of instruction, recreation, and development of physical culture and the general defense of the Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian Arab colonies in Cuba."⁴⁸¹

While some organizations, like Al-Etehad, the Club Sirio-Libano-Palestino, and Sociedad Palestina y Arabe de Cuba represented attempts at a regional focus, they usually included only those considered "Arab."⁴⁸² The emphasis placed on presenting a united Arab front pointed to the secular and inclusive nature of *mahjari* organizations, but also seemed to exclude Palestinian Jews when it chose to compound "Palestinian" and "Arab."⁴⁸³ This

⁴⁸⁰ Fahrenthold, "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies," 266.

⁴⁸¹ *Reglamento Centro Al-Etehad*, Article 3.

⁴⁸² Directorio del Registro de Asociaciones, ANC, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁸³ *Reglamento Centro Al-Etehad*, Article 3.

early Arab unity did not last, as eventually, organizations began to splinter into more “national” clubs, especially in the first few decades following the First World War. Associational records from across the spectrum of Cuba’s *mahjari* organizations show memberships that included Christians and Muslims, but little to no evidence of Jewish members which may reflect members’ beliefs in the incompatibility between their stated goals and Zionism.⁴⁸⁴ While there may not have been much membership overlap, social interactions and collaboration existed between *mahjaris* and Cuba’s Jewish community as they often made use of the same or parallel transnational networks in the Americas and Eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁸⁵ Mostly conceived as mutual aid societies, *mahjari* organizations in Cuba focused on providing aid to compatriots traveling to or on the island and sending remittances to communities in the Levant.

The majority of early *mahjari* organizations in Cuba aspired to provide a variety of services to Levantine residents of, and recent arrivals to, the island. In its 1930 charter, the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, explained its primary “purpose...to represent all Lebanese in general and particularly members, to defend their rights, spread progress among them and socially enhance their name in Cuba.”⁴⁸⁶ As one of its expressed goals, the Unión Libanés-Sirio de Bejucal promised to, for their first three months on the island,

⁴⁸⁴ Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 51. The author visited the Unión Árabe de Cuba (UAC) in 2019 and listened to a speech, given by the club president of Palestinian descent, in which he outlined a decidedly anti-colonial framework for the club’s politics. This anti-colonial stance included an anti-Zionist sentiment within the Arab-Cuban community that seemed to predate the 1979 creation of the UAC and the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

⁴⁸⁵ Mays, 9, 42.

⁴⁸⁶ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, Article 2, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

lend financial support to “all Lebanese and Syrians,” and “especially members,” as well as to provide assistant finding employment “in relation to their merits and ability.”⁴⁸⁷ Like other mutual aid societies for similar and other ethnicities in Cuba, and across the Americas, the club’s mission prioritized providing protection and aid to the sons [of Mount Lebanon and Syria] residing in this [Cuban] Republic,” but, specifically “to avoid as far as [members’] resources extend, that children of Mount Lebanon and Syria [in Cuba] suffer misery or public burden, paying special attention to women and those disabled by age or vice.”⁴⁸⁸ Like other organizations, the ULSB sought to “maintain between Lebanese and Syrian residents in Cuba, friendly relations, solidarity, protection, and confraternity among themselves and with Cuban society,” and served as a social space for sharing news or memories from the *Mashriq*.⁴⁸⁹ The Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia focused almost exclusively on aid and community-building. The club’s founders stated the “purposes of this society will be the moral and material improvement of its associates and charitable works.”⁴⁹⁰

Even as Levantine migrants achieved recognition as white, they remained othered by officials in the Americas who saw them as decidedly non-Western and a danger to progress. Members of both the Santa Amalia club and Havana’s Sociedad Libanesa

⁴⁸⁷ Reglamento del Union Libanes-Sirio de Bejucal, Article 3, Subsection 3, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁸⁸ Reglamento del Union Libanes-Sirio de Bejucal, ANC, Article 3, Subsections 1 and 3, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba; Mays, 75.

⁴⁸⁹ Reglamento del Union Libanes-Sirio de Bejucal, Article 3, Subsection 2, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹⁰ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 1, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba.

resolved to start a school to teach Arabic, as well as to offer Spanish-language (*castellano*) classes at night for recently arrived *muhajir*.⁴⁹¹ The club also sought to establish a health clinic and church to serve the community.⁴⁹² The Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, in their founding *reglamento*, devoted three articles to establishing a reciprocity agreement with a local clinic for the care of the community's poor and recently arrived immigrants, while also committing to the creation of their own clinic and "Sanitation Committee."⁴⁹³ This committee also appointed a delegate at the Tricornia Immigration Station, where Syrian immigrants like Abraham Naser often fell victim to public health or race-based exclusion policies, to assist arriving migrants and advocate on their behalf.⁴⁹⁴ Still, while many of these clubs committed to assisting the recently arrived and poor within the Lebanese and Syrian community, *mahjari* organizations also prioritized outreach to improve their relative position and overall reputation within Cuban society.

Mahjari organizations in Cuba attempted to cultivate a positive public image and contribute to the overall health of Cuba's civic life, which meant explicitly non-political postures. The charter documents for the El Líbano society allowed access to and use of

⁴⁹¹ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 43, Subsection 1, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba; Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, Articles 31, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹² Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 43, Subsection 2, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹³ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, Articles 28-30, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹⁴ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, Articles 29, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

the hall for, at the president's discretion, "as long as it is not for political meetings."⁴⁹⁵ Members of the Santa Amalia club committed to "without getting mixed up in politics...it will be [this club's] tendency to seek greater prestige to the reputations of the Syrians and Lebanese, giving [the community] more power in this country and defending its internal and external interests."⁴⁹⁶ Despite its December 1929 founding, the Santa Amalia club's charter established its anniversary as October 10, remembered as the day Cubans began their independence struggle in 1868, and also stipulated that the club pass acts of celebration to commemorate May 20th as the day Cuba officially gained official independence.⁴⁹⁷ Other *mahjari* associations also held 20 de Mayo celebrations with wreath laying ceremonies, religious services, and recitations of José Martí's writings.⁴⁹⁸ These were no doubt carefully considered events meant to reassure Cuban neighbors of the Syrian community's commitment to Cuba and its interests.

Early twentieth-century mutual aid societies made charity, via remittances to the Levant, assistance to recently arrived migrants, or to Cuban society more generally, a central part of their mission in Cuba. *Mahjari* organizations contributed to Cuban charities to demonstrate good civic behavior and contribute to the wider community, and both the Unión Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia and the Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana

⁴⁹⁵ Reglamento de la Sociedad de Instrucción y Recreo 'El Líbano,' Chapter 11, Article 9, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 311, 9010, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹⁶ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 2, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹⁷ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 43, Subsections 12 & 16, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba.

⁴⁹⁸ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 16 September 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

stipulated that, in the event of their dissolution, that funds be transferred to the Cuban Red Cross though, the Santa Amalia club divided funds between it and the “Red Cross Society of the Republic of Mount Lebanon.”⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, the Colonia Libanesa de Manzanillo, in the event of the club’s dissolution, directed its funds to be “donated in equal parts between Cuban and Lebanese charitable entities.”⁵⁰⁰ This commitment to positive civic participation and Cuban patriotism stemmed from long-held understandings of citizenship as locally derived and based on reputation, rather than the legal legibility of inscription in the Civil Registry and the accompanying certificate.⁵⁰¹ Through charitable contributions and displays of loyalty, Lebanese and Syrian migrants living in Cuba laid foundations for belongings but also retained links to their homelands and the greater diaspora.

Even as Lebanese and Syrian clubs in Cuba, like the one in Santa Amalia, officially declared themselves politically neutral, displays of patriotism, both toward their respective homelands and Cuba, exposed the complex web of loyalties and identities that obfuscated attempts at neutrality. For a time, official statements by and records for the Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana appeared on colorful letterhead emblazoned with the flags of Cuba and Lebanon. In its official charter, the Sociedad Libanesa also stipulated that its meeting place would be adorned with the flags and iconography of the “Cuban

⁴⁹⁹ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 44, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba; Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, Articles 33, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁰⁰ *Reglamento de la Sociedad “Colonia Libanesa” de Manzanillo*, 15 June 1928, Article 40, Haddad Family Papers, Manzanillo, Cuba.

⁵⁰¹ Francisco Llaca y Argudín, *Legislacion sobre el Registro del Estado Civil en Cuba*, 3rd Edition [1913] (Havana: Imprenta y Papeleria de Rambla, Bouza y Ca., 1930), 349-351.

and Lebanese nations.”⁵⁰² The club’s founding documents described its official flag as having “three horizontal stripes, one with and two red; the white one...between the two red ones, and...twice as wide...showing a Cedar in its center,” and the official escutcheon described as having an “oval shape, with the same colors and Cedar of the Flag, but in a diagonal direction, from left to right.”⁵⁰³

While clubs celebrated significant days in Cuban history, celebrations of the ethnic community and the homelands remained the peak of clubs’ social calendars. For the Sociedad Libanesa, the celebrations of Lebanese independence dominated the meeting minutes in the months prior to the festivities but included both Lebanese and Cuban symbolism. At what may have been the club’s peak in 1959, the planners of the November 22nd celebration of Lebanese independence meticulously scheduled the day’s events, which would begin with a 10:00 A.M. wreath-laying at the statue of José Martí in Havana’s Central Park.⁵⁰⁴ After paying homage to Cuba’s “Apostle” of Independence, the group would then proceed to the parish of San Nicolás de Bari, where they would attend an 11:00 A.M. Catholic Mass celebrated “in memory of the fallen heroes of Lebanese Independence,” celebrated by one of their own, the Rev. Father Boutros Abi’ Caram.”⁵⁰⁵ Members also planned to remit congratulatory telegrams to the Lebanese

⁵⁰² Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, 19 April 1930, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁰³ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, 19 April 1930, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁰⁴ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 20 November 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁰⁵ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 20 November 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

Ambassador in Washington, D.C. and “to Mr. President of Lebanon, Major General Fuad Ghejab and the Lebanese people,” before capping the day’s festivities with a community event dubbed “Un día en el Líbano.”⁵⁰⁶ Associational records suggest “Un día en el Líbano” became a major event, held annually, with local venues lobbying the club to reserve space with them, including Havana’s Coca-Cola bottling facility, which sent its petition to the Sociedad Libanesa a full six months prior to the event’s expected date.⁵⁰⁷ Eventually, the planning committee settled on the gardens of the Cervecería Modelo as the location to host their “traditional festival.”⁵⁰⁸ The traditional festivals, which had taken place in Havana for years prior to this one, rung into the night air with the heavy thuds of the *tablah* hand drum and the rhythmic clank tambourine-like *daf*. The earthy aromas of sumac and za’atar wafted through the air, and kebobs of beef, chicken, and lamb sizzled over open flames. Cuban-born children danced carefully choreographed Lebanese dances, as nervous dance instructors smiled and clapped on *tablah* players’ down-beats. While public displays of loyalty, patriotism, and charity often betrayed hybrid identities, all of these clubs placed importance on defining Cuba’s *mahjari* community as a diasporic and unique ethnic group within the tapestry of *Cubanidad*. One descendent of a Syrian father recounted how these festivals and club-sponsored social spaces “was like joining him by an invisible cord to his Aleppo.”⁵⁰⁹ These festivals acted

⁵⁰⁶ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 20 November 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁰⁷ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 19 June 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913.

⁵⁰⁸ Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana Meeting Minutes, 10 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913.

⁵⁰⁹ Menéndez, 144.

as a space for maintaining cultural connections to the Levant, but also as a point of connection to a far-flung community of *muhajir* across the Americas and the Atlantic.

While clubs generally avoided vocal involvement in Cuban politics, Lebanese and Syrian ethnic organizations sought to establish links to the homelands and their diasporas in an effort to simultaneously construct diasporic and national identities in the *mahjar* and the Mashriq. The Colonia Libanesa de Manzanillo expressed its mission as “no other objective than to serve as a reunion space...solidify friendly relations between its members, [and] offering all of its public acts for the grandeur and prestige of our Lebanese Republic, offering at the same time moral and material support.”⁵¹⁰ This moral and material support took the form of remittances and monetary charitable aid the club sent to Lebanon. In efforts to maintain close ties between Cuba, diasporic nodes across the Americas, and the homeland, clubs placed a great deal of importance in not only teaching the Arabic language in club-sponsored schools, but also in linguistic requirements for associational leadership. The Unión Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia maintained that “All members of the directorate should know how to speak Arabic,” and also allowed for the club’s dissolution once Arabic-speaking members numbered fewer than six, which indicated a particular commitment to cultivation of and maintenance of an ethnic identity within Cuban society.⁵¹¹ Clubs often kept records in both Spanish and Arabic, electing one official secretary to take notes and minutes in Spanish and another in

⁵¹⁰ Reglamento de la Sociedad “Colonia Libanesa” de Manzanillo, 15 June 1928, Article 40, Haddad Family Papers, Manzanillo, Cuba.

⁵¹¹ Reglamento de la Sociedad Libano-Siria de Santa Amalia, Article 22, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 308, 8931, Havana, Cuba.

Arabic, or one fluent in both languages.⁵¹² Association members' commitment to teach and use Arabic spoke to the importance community leaders placed on maintaining linguistic connections to the Mashriq and diaspora, at least through the first half of the twentieth century.⁵¹³ As the political landscape of the eastern Mediterranean shifted, morphed, and evolved through the early-to-mid twentieth century, Levantine associations in Cuba, and their members, took increasingly active roles in shaping political developments in their homelands.

Changes in identities and concepts of belonging and citizenship had shifted, morphed, and evolved through the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, but the First World War accelerated some of these changes while fostering emerging concepts of nationalism and pan-Arabism. During the war, *mahjaris* and their associations in the *mahjar* picked sides, mostly in favor of the Allies, shaped sentiments in the *mahjar* and accounts from Mashriq.⁵¹⁴ Across the Americas, Syrian émigré recruiters worked within mostly clandestine, transnational networks to mobilize their compatriots from colonies in Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba.⁵¹⁵ Producing new, sometimes forged, travel documents that often featured new nationalities, *mahjaris* assisted these would be Syrian soldiers navigate the complex legal landscapes traversed by Ottoman subjects who sought to fight

⁵¹² Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana (1930), Article 19, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba. Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana (1951), Articles 3, Subsection F, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba; Reglamento Unión Libanes-Sirio de Bejucal, Article 4, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁵¹³ Acta de Investigación, Gobierno Provincial de la Habana, 22 July 1931, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 441, 14738, Havana, Cuba.

⁵¹⁴ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 57-84.

⁵¹⁵ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 58.

for the Allied side of the war.⁵¹⁶ In many cases, and especially among Maronites, historical connections to France persuaded *mahjaris* in Cuba, including Jorge Hadad of Manzanillo, to support the French war effort by enlisting in the French Légion d’Orient or supporting the Société Française de Secours aux Blessés Militaires of the French Red Cross.⁵¹⁷ (Figure 13) These recruiters operated in an opaque legal space that the Allies informally allowed to exist, but did not supervise.⁵¹⁸ Many of these recruiters and soldiers worked for the Allied war effort under the assumption that they concurrently fought for Syrian liberation from Ottoman rule and Arab self-determination.⁵¹⁹ Yet, even as many *mahjaris* supported the Allies, others showed skepticism of Allied intentions and suspicion of entities like the French Légion d’Orient as potential tools, as historians like Stacy Fahrenthold have noted, for a “French colonial policy aimed at exacerbating new and painful divisions between Syrian Christians and Muslims.”⁵²⁰ While the war opened new avenues of organization, spurred formation of new identities, and redefined political relationships, it also raised questions about legal citizenship for the former Ottoman subjects in the Mediterranean and the Americas.

⁵¹⁶ Devi Mays, *Forging Ties, Forging Passports: Migration and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 125; Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 58.

⁵¹⁷ “Monsieur Jorge J. Hadad,” *Société Française de Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, 20 Jan. 1918, Hadad Family Archive, Manzanillo, Cuba; Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 59-66.

⁵¹⁸ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 58.

⁵¹⁹ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69, 153; Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 58-66.

⁵²⁰ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 62.



Figure 13: Jorge Hadad, French Red Cross Card. Card addressed to “Monsieur Jorge J. Hadad” of Manzanillo, Cuba for his support of the French Red Cross during the First World War. Courtesy of David Hadad, Manzanillo, Cuba.

“Floating World of Elsewhere:” The French Mandate in Lebanon and Syria and the Unmooring of Identities in the *Mahjar*

References made in associational charters to a Lebanese or Syrian “Republic” typically referred to the territories of Greater Lebanon and Syria that, under a postwar League of Nations mandate, fell, for almost a quarter century, under French tutelage. Following the armistice that ended the Great War, Levantine migrants living in Cuba considered and debated the myriad potential identities and political projects that emerged from the chaos. Pan-Arabists made rhetorical appeals to a broad fraternity of Arabs, while many Christians and Muslims grew suspicious to Turkish and Hashemite claims over the Levant. Members of Mount Lebanon’s Administrative Council, from Christian and Muslim communities, demanded immediate independence from France, which caused French officials to deport their members and dissolve the council.⁵²¹ Beyond those

⁵²¹ Thompson, 41.

deported from French Lebanon, the uncertainty and incomplete independence in the postwar Levant further unsettled identities and conceptions of belonging in among *muhajir* and unmoored diasporic networks on what one scholar called a transnational “floating world of elsewhere” in the American *mahjar*.⁵²²

The Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the World War I precipitated the disintegration of the Sublime Porte’s sovereignty over Greater Syria. Initially, Emir Faysal established a Hashemite Kingdom in Syria; however, by 1920, France had defeated Faysal’s forces and established suzerainty over Syria.⁵²³ Under a League of Nations Mandate, the victorious Allied Powers “entrusted to” and “charged [France] with the duty of rendering administrative advice and assistance to the population” of Syria and Lebanon.⁵²⁴ The League of Nations meant for the Mandate to ostensibly prepare Syria and Lebanon, via French tutelage and protection, for independence, but ultimately created, what historian Elizabeth Thompson called, a “colonial civic order.”⁵²⁵ When drawing the new borders, European authorities expanded the old Ottoman *mutasarrifate*, or autonomous province, of Mount Lebanon to include the fertile Bekaa Valley and bustling Mediterranean port cities of Tripoli, Saida, or Tyre. That the mapmakers included these regions, which included large Muslim populations, betrayed an economic determinism rather than concern for political self-determination.⁵²⁶ France, which had long considered itself as

⁵²² Pastor, 3.

⁵²³ Thompson, 15-16.

⁵²⁴ “French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon,” *The American Journal of International Law*, 17, 3, Supplement: Official Documents (July 1923), 177.

⁵²⁵ Thompson, 3.

⁵²⁶ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 138.

protector of Middle Eastern Christians (and particularly, Catholics) established two Republics: Syria and Greater Lebanon.⁵²⁷ French leaders hoped Greater Lebanon could serve as a confessional republic and haven for the region's Christians.⁵²⁸ As Thompson argues, experiences through war, economic dislocation, and rapid change in urban social life changed the terms of citizenship and the strategies through which elite political actors mediated French patronage. Lebanese and Syrian citizenship did not gain meaning only from French policy and action, but also through the daily contact citizens had with the mandatory state and its agents, in streets, schools, medical facilities, and post offices.⁵²⁹ The political repercussions of World War I upset colonial, Ottoman-era identities and recast formulations about individual, confessional, and communal identities within republican and nationalist contexts that reverberated to, and were influenced by, the *mahjar*.

Historian Devi Mays described the complex matrix of jurisdictions, sovereignties, and networks of surveillance through which *muhajir* navigated in their attempts to find a place within a rapidly changing world,

The German ambassador to Washington, D.C. transmitted a report to the Ottoman government in 1916 alerting it to the disloyal behavior of some subjects of Syrian origin living in Cuba. After Syrians in Havana had allegedly killed three Cuban butchers, prompting an outbreak of anti-Syrian sentiment in the Cuban press, the editor of the local biweekly Arabic newspaper *Al Ettehad* wrote a response in the name of the *colonie syrienne* that it was 'under the protection of France.' And to make matters worse, in direct contrast to the Ottoman Empires promotion of a shared Ottoman identity, when asked if the president was doing anything to help

⁵²⁷ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 137.

⁵²⁸ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 138.

⁵²⁹ Thompson, 3.

the large number of indigent Ottomans in Cuba, he responded that his society ‘was only occupied with Syrian interests’ and he refused to have anything to do with Turks.⁵³⁰

As evidenced in the above passage, the Syrian community in Cuban *mahjar* contended with myriad political challenges and crises of identity that strained and fractured communities in the Levant and the *mahjar*. As communities in the *mahjar* debated about how to approach formation of collective identities and the best ways to deploy political influence in their homelands, they reenforced the transnational networks that connected them to the Levant.

As evidenced by Jorge Hadad’s wartime support of the French Red Cross, Syrians in the *mahjar* often picked sides in the political fights of their homeland but did not always agree on the which side to support.⁵³¹ Many Syrians abroad feared the French Mandate would result in denationalization and permanent exile. Yet, Maronites in the Lebanese Mountains generally endorsed the French Mandate, as the Maronite church and community leveraged French patronage as a means to maintain social and economic privilege, and disagreements abounded over the partition of Lebanon and Syria.⁵³² Other Christian communities in Lebanon and Syria generally opposed the French Mandate and supported more indigenous self-determination in the form of Ghanim’s vision of “Greater

⁵³⁰ Mays, 77.

⁵³¹ “Monsieur Jorge J. Hadad,” *Société Française de Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, 20 Jan. 1918, Hadad Family Archive, Manzanillo, Cuba.

⁵³² Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 88-99.

Syria” or Hashemite Arab nationalism.⁵³³ Some *mahjaris* in the Americas even advocated for a U.S. Mandate, holding up recent examples of U.S. expansionism as examples of a sort of successful imperialization, and ignoring the likely warnings of their compatriots in Cuba, emphasizing narratives of U.S. American experiences with “racial amalgamation” and “benevolent” intervention.⁵³⁴ In the *mahjar*, the ethnic press, associations, and religious authorities shared in the making and remaking of new Lebanese and Syrian identities that often coexisted, conflicted, and shifted within transnational contexts.

As their homelands underwent a time of radical change, from provinces of the Ottoman Empire, to territories under a French Mandate, to, ultimately, independent republics, Lebanese and Syrians in the *mahjar* in the constantly defined and redefined their relationships to France, the homeland, and their host countries, caught between multiple sovereignties and new imperial citizenship cultures. *Mahjari* organizations advocated on behalf of Cuba’s Arab community in Cuba, France, and the Levant, and offered a forum for collective expression and cultivation of ethnic identities and the establishment of belonging in Cuba. These identities included sometimes competing cultural, religious, and transnational identities that worked to incorporate the community into the broader Cuban nation, but also to maintain ties to the *Mashriq* and shape emerging national identities during the mandatory periods in the French Levant. Within these processes, *mahjaris* in Cuba founded mutual aid societies, established an ethnic

⁵³³ Kais M. Firro, “Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40, 5 (Sept. 2004), 1-27; Stacy Fahrenthold, “Transnational Modes and Media: The Syrian Press in the *Mahjar* and Emigrant Activism during World War I,” *Mashriq & Mahjar*, 1, 1 (2013), 30-54.

⁵³⁴ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 88, 91. These were terms used by émigré intellectuals, like Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, who wrote in the ethnic press in favor of U.S. intervention in Syria.

press, and cultivated images of loyalty and pride in Cuba, while also participating and shaping the politics and nation-building projects in the Mashriq. Competing nationalisms provoked myriad responses to events in Cuba and the Mashriq and shaped the varied diasporic networks and imaginaries around which intellectual and associational life in the *mahjar* revolved.

“Obligated to Remind You:” Resurgent French Empire, Nationalism, and Loyalty in the Cuban *Mahjar*

On 31 August 1931, in the central Cuban city of Ciego de Ávila, Camagüey Province, Vicente Sahig y Sahig died intestate.⁵³⁵ Sahig and his family came to Cuba from Lebanon, where authorities knew him as Salum Gorgura Sayeg.⁵³⁶ Five days later, on 5 September, a judge in Ciego de Ávila awarded Sahig’s widow, Juana Sainz Chalala, and his three children possession of the deceased’s estate.⁵³⁷ The judge made his decision under the Civil Code inherited from Spain, based on the assumption that Sahig possessed Cuban citizenship.⁵³⁸ Later, in Lebanon, the deceased’s father, Gorgura Georges Sayeg, appealed the Cuban decision on inheritance in the Court of Peace in his native Jounieh, Lebanon.⁵³⁹ The elder Sayeg wished to apply Lebanese laws of inheritance that favored

⁵³⁵ Justice Department Memorandum: Subsecretary of Justice Pedro López Dorticós to Secretary of State Cosme de la Torriente, 19 July 1934, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba. Henceforth, “Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.”

⁵³⁶ Edouard Carteron to Cosme de la Torriente, 25 May 1934, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba. Henceforth, Carteron to de la Torriente, 25 May 1934.

⁵³⁷ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

⁵³⁸ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

⁵³⁹ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

his claim to a sizable share of his son's estate. The Lebanese court ruled in favor of the elder Sayeg, who then filed an appeal in the Cuban justice system. While Sayeg did not travel to Cuba to argue his case, he enlisted the help of France's diplomatic corps on the island. As the appeal worked its way through the Cuban courts, Jean Paul Brillouin, the French consul in Santiago de Cuba, produced a certificate testifying to the deceased's Lebanese citizenship, declaring his status as a French protégé, and argued for the application of Lebanese law.⁵⁴⁰ The Audiencia of Camagüey, while not explicitly denying the Lebanese citizenship of Sahig, his wife, and his children, rejected the usefulness of the citizenship certificate and affirmed the application of Cuban law in the case.⁵⁴¹ The case shed light on ideas of citizenship in Cuba and Mandatory Lebanon and illustrated how *mahjaris* in Cuba leveraged French patronage and navigated diplomatic and diasporic networks to exploit jurisdictional competitions.

In 1934, Cuba, still reeling from the effects of the 1933 Revolution, experienced a wave of nationalist fervor. As seen in Cuban interdepartmental memoranda related to the Sahig case, the patronizing tone of letters from French diplomats irked their Cuban counterparts.⁵⁴² After Edouard Carteron, the French Extraordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary in Cuba, demanded that the Cuban Supreme Court hear the case on appeal, and stopped just short of ordering that the Cuban Secretary of Justice intervene on

⁵⁴⁰ Carteron to de la Torriente, 26 May 1934; Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

⁵⁴¹ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934. Unfortunately, the archival record provided only a handful of documents related to this case. Some questions left unanswered include, when Sahig emigrated to Cuba and his citizenship status at the time of arrival. In the decade and a half prior to Sahig's death, Lebanon went from territory of the Ottoman Empire to a French Mandatory territory, and in between it existed in a nebulous and ambiguous entity.

⁵⁴² Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

behalf of the deceased's father in Lebanon, Cuban officials argued for the virtue of judicial independence and the principles of Cuban sovereignty won through the recent revolution.⁵⁴³ In his letter to Cuban Secretary of State Cosme de la Torriente, Carteron, after noting that the Audiencia refused to "accept the nationality certifications in question and contest their validity, claiming...nothing at all confers the right to French officials to keep registration records," asserted "it is my duty to vigorously protest against this simplistic way of discarding one of the immutable prerogatives of foreign official representatives."⁵⁴⁴ Carteron continued by demeaning de la Torriente, saying "Excuse me for having to be obliged to remind Your Excellency that you are an eminence in international law and to the High Authority to which I appeal," and again argued for the rightness and correctness of his position that "representatives of the French Government abroad are entitled...to keep official records in their Chancellery....for all French nationals and protected persons who depend on her Authority."⁵⁴⁵ In his writings, Carteron betrayed French assumptions of Cubans, and their Latin American counterparts in general, as sovereign but subaltern entities within the global community of nations.⁵⁴⁶ Carteron concluded by urging de la Torriente to intervene by informing "your Justice Colleague of this matter, so that instructions are urgently given to the Audiencia de Santiago de Cuba, and that of Camagüey, inviting them to recognize, without challenge,

⁵⁴³ Carteron to de la Torriente, 25 May 1934. The 1933 Revolution represented a nationalist revival among Cubans who opposed the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado and U.S. suzerainty in Cuba. Abolition of the Platt Amendment, which granted the United States certain powers over Cuban foreign relations as a guarantor of Cuban sovereignty, featured prominently among revolutionary objectives.

⁵⁴⁴ Carteron to de la Torriente, 25 May 1934.

⁵⁴⁵ Carteron to de la Torriente, 25 May 1934

⁵⁴⁶ Pastor, 81.

the validity of the Certificates” showing Lebanese citizenship and to find cause in the elder Sayeg’s case.⁵⁴⁷ Carteron’s letters dripped with condescension toward de la Torriente and betrayed the paternalistic nature of French relations with its Mandatory territories and nation-states French officials saw as culturally and politically inferior. French officials, and sometimes their Levantine protégés, often deployed positivist narratives of modernity and civilizational progress, that at times may have swayed officials across Latin America, but likely backfired during this revolutionary period during which Cubans fiercely guarded their sovereignty.⁵⁴⁸

Carteron’s demands and passive-aggressive insults only enflamed Cuban officials’ nationalist sensibilities. Cuba’s Supreme Court prosecutor, in his administrative correspondence contended, “Nothing abnormal has been noted by the Prosecutor’s Office...when answering the note of the Minister of France...make clear to him that given the independence that our [Cuban] courts enjoy, the [Cuban] Government cannot give them instructions in any sense.”⁵⁴⁹ Cuban officials showed clear frustration that the Lebanese Court of Peace in Jounieh ruled on the case “in accordance with the laws of that remote country.”⁵⁵⁰ Eventually, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case and agreed with the lower court ruling that awarded the estate to Sahig’s widow and their three children, Antonio Dionisio, Juana María, and Vicente. As this case matriculated through

⁵⁴⁷ Carteron to de la Torriente, 25 May 1934.

⁵⁴⁸ De la Fuente, 189-194; Mays, 131; Pastor, 81.

⁵⁴⁹ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

⁵⁵⁰ Dorticós to de la Torriente, 19 July 1934.

Cuban courts and government offices, Carteron found himself making similar arguments in other Cuban legal cases.

Legal categories of citizenship, nationality, and travel in the Levant and Cuba changed dramatically during the 1920s and 30s. For Syrians in the early 1920s, French authorities issued *sauf conduit* (safe conduct) passports that allowed travelers to cross borders under temporary French diplomatic protection.⁵⁵¹ By 1925, the French transitioned to issuing Lebanese passports under a new nationality law. *Mahjaris* could obtain French passports by appealing to the French legation through Syrian and Lebanese organizations on the island, which could be of use not just for returning to the Levant but also as a means of easing emigration in the Americas.⁵⁵² French travel documents gained increased importance as governments throughout the Americas raised new barriers to legal immigration through the interwar period.

Cuban immigration law underwent substantial changes during and after the First World War. When Cuba entered World War I on the side of the Allies, President Mario Garcia Menocal (1913-1921) passed down Presidential Decree 1707, which “contracted with the Governments of the other allied Nations...the solemn commitment to cooperate with them, to the extent that [our] forces allow, and especially, in supplying them with sugar, the product that constitutes the greatest source of our industrial wealth.”⁵⁵³ The day after Decree 1707 appeared in Cuba’s *Gaceta Oficial*, Menocal signed into law the *Ley*

⁵⁵¹ Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottoman and the Entente*, 88-99.

⁵⁵² Mays, 125-126.

⁵⁵³ “Decreto Presidencial Numero 1707,” *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, 2 November 1917, Havana, Cuba.

de Inmigracion de 1917, that “authorized until two years after the war’s conclusion,” entry of agricultural contract laborers regardless of race.⁵⁵⁴ The needs of Cuban’s sugar industry necessitated the loosening of immigration restrictions imposed by Order 155 of 1902, and wartime prerogatives encouraged Washington to look the other way. However, beginning in 1918, the United States, again fearing that Cuba would serve as a stepping-stone to North America, reapplied pressure on Cuba to reimpose strict restrictions on non-white immigration.⁵⁵⁵ As Order 155 continued to serve as the basis for Cuban immigration law, effectively tying it to U.S. policies, until the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924.⁵⁵⁶ While immigration from Asia decreased, laborers from Haiti and the West Indies continued to enter under sponsorship of sugar producers.

In the years just before, during, and immediately after Cuba’s entry into the war, immigration featured prominently as a topic of political debate. On 16 December 1914, in a testament to the back-and-forth of Cuba’s immigration debate, Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor Emiliano Núñez Rodríguez wrote to the secretary of the presidency, “I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your attentive communication dated 9th of this month regarding the repeal of the Decree of November 14, 1913 on Asian immigration.”⁵⁵⁷ A year later, the European-based newspaper, *Cuba en Europa*, republished an article from *Diario de la Marina* entitled “El fomento de la inmigración

⁵⁵⁴ “Ley de Inmigración de 1917,” Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, 4 November 1917, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁵⁵ Kathleen López, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 157.

⁵⁵⁶ López, 146.

⁵⁵⁷ “Emiliano Nuñez Rodríguez Memorandum,” 16 December 1914, Secretaría de la Presidencia, ANC, 121, 18, Havana, Cuba.

en Cuba,” which noted “the powerful emigration movement to the Argentine Republic, which has contributed so much in that country to the extraordinary development of wealth,” and asked, “Why not Cuba?”⁵⁵⁸ The article advocated for Cuban government and industry to work in tandem to encourage and facilitate European immigration to Cuba. Immigration concerns and nationalistic prerogatives permeated Cuba’s political discourse. As debates intensified through the early twentieth century, Cubans regularly valorized European immigration at the expense of migrants from other places.

Syrians regularly fell victim to Cuba’s exclusionary immigration apparatus, and *mahjaris* often petitioned the Cuban government on their behalf. While considered legally white in the United States, and not explicitly excluded by Cuban or U.S. immigration law, Lebanese and Syrian migrants existed in a nebulous legal category within both countries’ immigration processing infrastructures. A letter from the law office of Carlos Alvarez Recio brought to light the type of confusion over how Cuban immigration law pertained to migrants from Syria.⁵⁵⁹ In his letter to the Cuban State Department, Alvarez explained how his client “a native of Lebanon, Syria, embarked for her country with her daughter...[and] when she tried to return, she was informed in her country, that there are certain restrictions for emigration from Syria to Cuba, in the Cuban Laws.”⁵⁶⁰ Alvarez attempted to establish his client’s belonging on the island by noting

⁵⁵⁸ “El foment de la inmigración en Cuba,” *Cuba en Europa: Revista Quincenal Ilustrada*, Barcelona, Spain, Year 6, No. 113, 15 February 1915.

⁵⁵⁹ “Carlos Alvarez Recio to Cuban State Department,” July 1932, Secretaria de Estado, 417, 8513, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁰ “Carlos Alvarez Recio to Cuban State Department,” July 1932, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 417, 8513, Havana, Cuba.

how she had previously resided in Cuba and owned businesses on the island.⁵⁶¹ As he sought clarification, Cuban officials transmitted Alvarez's letter between several Cuban government departments, and, ultimately, Alvarez received a communication from Subsecretary of State Eduardo Usabiaga, which offered no clarification and simply informed the lawyer that this issue did not fall under the State Department's jurisdiction.⁵⁶² That Usabiaga denied the chance to answer Alvarez's question betrayed the complex space Syrian migrants occupied in Cuba's immigration regime.

Aside from the latitude allowed via ambiguously exclusionary laws, immigration officers routinely deployed public health as a reason to deny Syrians' entry into Cuba, as exemplified through the story of Ramón Yedid. On 20 November 1930, aboard the Ward Line's S.S. *Orizaba*, Yedid arrived in Havana on "special card" tourist visa # 34941 "issued by the Delegate of Migration of Vera Cruz on November 13, 1930."⁵⁶³ Yedid left Havana on 12 January 1931, again aboard the *Orizaba*, and returned to Mexico, where Yedid owned a business.⁵⁶⁴ As Yedid attempted to reenter Mexico and return to his business in Mexico City, Mexican officials diagnosed him with trachoma.⁵⁶⁵ In March,

⁵⁶¹ "Carlos Alvarez Recio to Cuban State Department," July 1932, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 417, 8513, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶² Eduardo Usabiaga to Carlos Alvarez Recio, 28 July 1932, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 417, 8513, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶³ Undersecretary of State Eduardo Usabiaga to Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling, 28 April 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁴ Undersecretary of State Eduardo Usabiaga to Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling, 28 April 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba; Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁵ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

the Cuban ambassador to Mexico, Manuel Marquez Sterling, sent Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández an excerpt from the Veracruz daily, *Excelsior*, that described Yedid's ordeal after returning from Cuba.⁵⁶⁶ The *Excelsior* article explained how, "Aboard the steamer *Siboney*, the Syrian merchant [and] Italian national, Ramón Yedid, arrived this afternoon, making his third trip from Havana to Mexico, by virtue of the fact that both Mexican national authorities and the Cuban Migration authorities having prevented him from entering their respective territories."⁵⁶⁷

After Yedid's trachoma diagnosis, Mexican officials returned the Syrian merchant to Havana, at the Ward Line's expense, where Cuban authorities again returned him to Mexico, stating that his tourist visa had expired.⁵⁶⁸ Again at Veracruz a second time, the Ward Line returned Yedid to Havana and paid expenses for Yedid's trachoma treatment, boarding, and meals as he convalesced.⁵⁶⁹ The *Excelsior* article explained that Yedid had been "examined by several Cuban doctors who found him healthy [and] a Cuban specialist issued a certificate," verifying the Syrian's health.⁵⁷⁰ Then, after "several weeks, the Cuban authorities deported him again and he was brought back to Veracruz,

⁵⁶⁶ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁷ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁸ Immigration Commissioner Pedro J. Cartaya to Undersecretary of State Eduardo Usabiaga, 28 April 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba; Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁶⁹ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷⁰ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

where he has been rejected for a third time.”⁵⁷¹ According to the paper, as a result of this back and forth, Yedid “is said to have had to abandon his business...the [Ward Line] has also suffered heavy losses,” and “the Steamship Company will resort to diplomatic channels to get rid of the forced passenger.”⁵⁷² Ultimately, Mexico denied Yedid reentry, and the Ward Line transported the stranded passenger to New York and resolved to secure him passage to Italy.⁵⁷³ Yedid’s story illustrated continued state of insecurity Syrian migrants faced when migrating in the Americas at a time of tightening immigration restrictions.

Yedid’s travels between Mexico, Cuba, and the United States shed light on the interconnectedness of migration nodes in the Americas, Levantine migrants’ experiences with hypermobility, and trends toward increased exclusion and tightening. Yet, despite the passage of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, the effects of Cuba’s economic depression, and continued anti-immigrant sentiment on the island, official statistics show Lebanese and Syrian immigration to Cuba quadrupling between 1921 and 1925.⁵⁷⁴ Barriers still barred migration, even of Christian asylum-seekers from the former Ottoman Empire, as in the case of the priest of the Assyrian Church, Rev. Disho G. Nathaniel, who petitioned President Gerardo Machado for “assistance for several

⁵⁷¹ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷² Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Secretary of State Francisco María Fernández, 26 March 1931, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷³ Ambassador of Cuba in Mexico Manuel Marquez Sterling to Interim Secretary of State José Clemente Vivanco, 1931, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 418A, 8774, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷⁴ Estados Quinquenales de 1921 a 1925: Inmigrantes clasificados por nacionalidades,” 29 April 1926, ANC, Secretario de la Presidencia, 121, 18, Havana, Cuba.

Christian families that have been released from Turkey and to whom...could be given land to dedicate to agriculture and cattle ranching.”⁵⁷⁵ Less than two weeks later, Nathaniel received a reply from the Cuban government, “In relation to your letter...in which you requested assistance from the Government of Cuba for one hundred and fifty religious women, who could be given lots of land to dedicate to agriculture, cattle raising, etc...the Secretary of Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor...informs that, for the moment, he is obliged, much to his regret, not to comply your wishes.”⁵⁷⁶ Non-European migrants, even those with permission to enter Cuba, regularly filed complaints against Cuban immigration officers, as was the case of three Chinese naval officers who, in 1930, “experienced many unnecessary difficulties in the immigration office upon their arrival in Havana,” even though the “passports they carried unequivocally indicated that they were Chinese Officials, and the passports had been endorsed by the Cuban Embassy in Washington.”⁵⁷⁷ Officials also denied a request made by a Palestinian-born Cuban citizen to waive the requirement that his nephew bring on his person two hundred dollars when boarding a ship to immigrate to Cuba.⁵⁷⁸ In his reply, Immigration Commissioner Pedro

⁵⁷⁵ Memorandum to Secretary of the Presidency Ricardo Herrera, 9 April 1930, ANC, Secretaria de la Presidencia, 115, 98, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷⁶ Ricardo Herrera to Disho G. Nathaniel, 21 April 1930, ANC, Secretaria de la Presidencia, 115, 98, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷⁷ Ricardo Herrera, Interdepartmental Memorandum on Mistreatment of Chinese Officials, 25 April 1930, ANC, Secretaria de la Presidencia, 121, 54, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁷⁸ Pedro J. Cartaya to Cuban Secretary of State, 17 December 1932, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 417, 8523, Havana, Cuba.

J. Cartaya said only spouses and children could receive fee waivers.⁵⁷⁹ Many of Cuba's exclusionary immigration provisions bared resemblance to those of the United States.

Through the 1920s, the United States remained involved in Cuban immigration policies through the first third of the twentieth century. A year after the U.S. passed its comprehensive National Origins and Immigration Acts, the Cuba Treasury Department asked the President to propose a modification to Military Order 155, that would discourage the United States from returning to Cuba those migrants prevented from entering the United States.⁵⁸⁰ Migrants intercepted by the United States often returned to Cuba and existed in a sort of legal limbo until reembarked on ships headed for their ports of origin. On 26 December 1923, Secretary of the Treasury Miguel Iribarren del Portillo received a petition from a Syrian resident of Cuba, Najil Abimerbi, asking for the release of Syrians Kadi Aly, Alen Aly, Adres Kokos, and a Turk, Carmen Musa, and for the reversal of orders to deport them back to their ports of origin.⁵⁸¹ According to Iribarren, the migrants had only resided in Cuba for a few months prior to attempting to clandestinely enter the United States on a power boat.⁵⁸² He later noted that U.S. consular representatives in Havana "repeatedly called attention to," the migrants' use of Cuba as a backdoor to the United States, and that "it was in the interest of the Immigration

⁵⁷⁹ Pedro J. Cartaya to Cuban Secretary of State, 17 December 1932, ANC, Secretaría de Estado, 417, 8523, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁰ "Memorandum para el Honorable Señor Presidente de la República," 5 November 1925, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 1115, 106, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸¹ "Petition for reversal of deportation orders," 26 December 1923, ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 22, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸² "Iribarren Memorandum on Syrian Deportation," 9 January 1924, ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 22, Havana, Cuba.

Department to reject, when arriving in Cuba, all those Jews, Poles, Russians, Italians, Turks, and Armenians...since...their object was to fraudulently enter the United States.”⁵⁸³ Iribarren, noted that the French legation often advocated on behalf of its protégés, but ultimately recommended that the deportations move forward with the deportation because releasing the migrants “would set a disastrous precedent” and because Cuba had denied similar requests from foreign governments.⁵⁸⁴ In his justification for deportation, Iribarren betrayed a particular interest in not offending the French, since it had previously denied French requests regarding release of French citizens from Tricornia, and he did not wish to further offend them by releasing Syrians.

Citizenship and belonging remained central to the Sayeg and Giralá cases. Lebanese and Syrians at home and abroad, regardless of their political leanings and thoughts on French mandatory governance, often marshalled French patronage on their behalf. The French legation in Cuba regularly intervened in the affairs of its citizens and protégés on the island.⁵⁸⁵ Yet, as the Sayeg case highlighted, French diplomats also argued against the interests of Syrians in the *mahjar*, especially when they conflicted with the interests of protégés in the Levant. In fact, in many ways, the French resented having to protect Syrians in the *mahjar*, and French officials mostly did so because of League of Nations put pressure on them to take diplomatic authority over *mahjaris*. Similar to the

⁵⁸³ “Iribarren Memorandum on Syrian Deportation,” 9 January 1924, ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 22, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁴ “Iribarren Memorandum on Syrian Deportation,” 9 January 1924, ANC, Secretaría de la Presidencia, 121, 22, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁵ “Expediente del Caso de Eusebio Lebegue, Ciudadano Frances,” 2 March 1927, ANC, 304, 3378, Havana, Cuba.

Sayge case, the French legation fought court battles in the case of the estate of Adolfo Giralá.⁵⁸⁶ Adolfo Giralá, born in Lebanon as Latouf Khairallah, died intestate in Cuba.⁵⁸⁷ On 28 April 1933, near the Cuban town of Antilla, Giralá was found murdered and the five thousand pesos he reportedly had on his person disappeared.⁵⁸⁸ As in the Sayeg case, the French legation in Cuba spent at least five years arguing for the application of Lebanese law to the case of Giralá's inheritance.⁵⁸⁹ In this case, the Cuban courts again denied the validity of French documents, actions about which French diplomat Gaston Morawiecki expressed

surprise caused by this attitude of the Cuban judicial authorities, opposed to the most elementary principles of the law of nations and consistent in denying the authenticity of an official document issued by this legation under the futile pretext that the signature of the Charge d'Affaires, Mr. Bertrand, had not been legalized, which is equivalent to denying the diplomatic character of this official and the prerogatives that he has for the sole fact of having been recognized by the Government of Cuba.⁵⁹⁰

Unlike the Sayeg case, Giralá's widow, Laila Chebli, filed documentation showing that, prior to his murder, Giralá had renounced his Lebanese citizenship and applied for status

⁵⁸⁶ "Gaston Morawiecki to Miguel Angel Campa," 9 June 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3379, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁷ "Guillermo de Blanck to Carlos Saladrigas," 2 June 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba; "Gaston Morawiecki to Miguel Angel Campa," 9 June 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3379, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁸ "Edourad Carteron to Cosme de la Torriente," 28 May 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁸⁹ "Guillermo de Blanck to Carlos Saladrigas," 2 June 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba; "Gaston Morawiecki to Miguel Angel Campa," 9 June 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3379, Havana, Cuba; "Edourad Carteron to Cosme de la Torriente," 28 May 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹⁰ "Gaston Morawiecki to Miguel Angel Campa," 9 June 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3379, Havana, Cuba.

as a Cuban citizen on 3 August 1921.⁵⁹¹ Dr. Juan Roca Sánchez, the initial judge, did not assume Giralá's citizenship, he ruled in Chebli's favor after confirming that her husband had, in fact, registered as a Cuban citizen at "the Municipal Court of San Geronimo...on page 51 of the Citizenship Section of that Court's" civil registry.⁵⁹² In this case, the court did not rely on conceptions of belonging based on *vecindad*, or vernacular citizenship predicated on reputation, but on legible, liberal conceptions of citizenship in line with the postwar liberal order.

Economic recessions and political unrest further shifted Cuba's regimes of citizenship, straining the vernacular, reputation-based conceptions of belonging and reinforcing trends toward liberal, legible citizenship. In the Sayeg and Giralá cases, Cuban judges ruled in favor of émigrés residing in Cuba, based on, respectively, illiberal and liberal understandings of citizenship. Yet, even though Sayeg's case ended with the application of Cuban law for reasons that called back to *vecindad*, that Giralá registered as a Cuban citizen proved a powerful piece of evidence against claims of the opposite. If the Cuban archival records prove reliable indicators, citizenship applications by immigrant residents of Cuba increased in the 1930s and 40s.⁵⁹³ *Mahjaris* in Cuba continued, through most of the twentieth-century, to cultivate complex, transnational identities and, when beneficial and able, promoted their connections to Catholicism,

⁵⁹¹ Prosecutor of the Cuban Supreme Court to Carlos Saladrigas, 28 September 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹² Prosecutor of the Cuban Supreme Court to Carlos Saladrigas, 28 September 1934, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 231, 3385, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹³ The records at the National Archive of Cuba, in Havana, exist in various states of disrepair and disorganization. While archive staff work diligently to recover from years of neglect in a tropical climate, many records have been lost to time. As such, the archive provides only an inconsistent and incomplete record of twentieth-century citizenship applications.

France, and ancient civilization to build reputations for good civic behavior and a sense of belonging. However, the 1930s brought economic and political collapses that culminated in the Revolution of 1933, a time during which *mahjaris* increasingly felt pressured to apply for tangible, legible proof of their place in Cuba.

“*Natural de Siria, Vecino de La Maya*:” French Patronage, Cuban Nationalism, and Conceptions of Citizenship in the Revolution of 1933

In May of 1928, Miguel Diabrude y Sibly presented himself in court “in order to register in the Civil Registry his intention to opt for Cuban citizenship and his renunciation of foreign citizenship.”⁵⁹⁴ The court papers painted a picture of his background, “Mr. Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, *natural de* Syria, Asia Minor, thirty-two years of age, married, commercial profession, and *vecino* of La Maya.” Court documents indicated Diabrude had been born in a “*parroquia*...in the aforementioned Syria,” in 1896, “the legitimate son of Pedro Miguel Diabrude and Jadillej Sibly,” both of whom emigrated to Cuba with their son and settled in La Maya.⁵⁹⁵ Diabrude emigrated to Cuba in 1910, disembarking in Havana on 5 January of that year, and travelled directly from Havana to Santiago de Cuba. He likely worked as an itinerate peddler, alongside the senior Diabrude, selling fabric and other dry goods to eastern Cuba’s rural population.

⁵⁹⁴ Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, “Civil Registry Application Certificate,” 29 May 1928, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹⁵ Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, “Civil Registry Application Certificate,” 29 May 1928, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

For ten years, Diabrude lived in Santiago de Cuba before moving to La Maya “where he wish[ed] to continue living.” Diabrude married a local Cuban woman, Eduarda Gómez y Fonseca, who, as the documentation put it, spent her days “engaged in the tasks of her sex.” Miguel and Eduarda Diabrude had three children between one and six years of age, Miguel Angel, Melva Gloria, and Armando Ysmael.⁵⁹⁶ No less than three of Diabrude’s neighbors testified on his behalf and vouched for his status as a *vecino* of good reputation.⁵⁹⁷ Yet, for ten years, his application remained in various degrees of partial approval.

Diabrude undertook a decade-long process of securing Cuban citizenship, and his citizenship file contains multiple receipts for processing.⁵⁹⁸ In the years it took for Diabrude’s citizenship application to finalize, Eduarda had given birth to two more daughters, Felisa Esther and Gladys Marlene.⁵⁹⁹ One reason this process took so long included the court’s inability to determining Diabrude’s “morality.”⁶⁰⁰ Cuba’s Judicial Police Chief Alfonso Fors wrote, “I commissioned Deputy Inspector Mariano Torrens, who informs me: From his investigations, he has not succeeded in proving the morality of

⁵⁹⁶ Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, “Civil Registry Application Certificate,” 29 May 1928, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹⁷ Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, “Civil Registry Application Certificate,” 29 May 1928, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹⁸ Secretaria de Hacienda, “Receipt,” 21 August 1933, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba; Secretaria de Hacienda, “Receipt 2101,” 2 November 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁵⁹⁹ Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, “Civil Registry Application Certificate,” 21 October 1938, ANC, Secretaria de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁰⁰ Secretary of Justice, “Morality Cover Form,” 13 January 1932, ANC, Secretario de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

Miguel Diabrude y Sibli, of Syria...because he does not reside in the stated place.”⁶⁰¹

Diabrude also experienced trouble obtaining proof of the required length of residency, and four years after he submitted his initial application, Undersecretary of State Eduardo Usabiaga suggested he secure notarized statements from “two known witnesses, who swear to know the interested party and that he has resided in Cuba for five years or more, without interruption, in Cuba.”⁶⁰² Diabrude’s witnesses included “Sarafin Vidueira y Martínez, *natural de España*, Spanish citizen,” as well as “Guillermo Escobar y González, of our *naturaleza* and *vecindad*, Cuban citizen, of thirty-eight years of age, single property owner.”⁶⁰³ A total of five witnesses spoke to Diabrude’s belonging, as the notary public “attest[ed] that the declarants and witnesses” confirmed Diabrude’s residency and his “*vecindad*.”⁶⁰⁴ While government records painted Diabrude as a man without a home, or country, his Cuban and immigrant neighbors testified to his belonging and *Cubanidad*. Diabrude’s case illustrated many of the barriers to immigrant citizenship in 1920s and 1930s Cuba, but Diabrude shared, with many of his Levantine compatriots, a desire to secure a place on the island and within its society by applying for legible citizenship.

⁶⁰¹ Alfonso L. Fors to Justice Department, 11 January 1932, ANC, Secretario de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁰² Eduardo Usabiaga to Miguel Diabrude y Sibly, 4 February 1932, ANC, Secretario de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁰³ Acta de Declaración Jurada No. 84, 18 May 1932, ANC, Secretario de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁰⁴ Acta de Declaración Jurada No. 84, 18 May 1932, ANC, Secretario de Estado, 210, 2594, Havana, Cuba.

Diabruide's quest for citizenship transpired as Cuba entered into a period of political instability marked by nativism. In 1933, Cubans experienced a nationalist revolution that toppled the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado and embraced populist and nativist rhetoric. Scholars have argued that, between 1920 and 1940, Cuba transitioned from an oligarchy to a "nominal constitutional democracy," which included the revolutionary social movement that resulted in Machado's exile, and the subsequent coup led by Fulgencio Batista.⁶⁰⁵ The loose coalition of students, mutinous soldiers, activists, and middle-class intellectuals who wrestled political power from Machado's government established a Provisional Revolutionary Government from September 1933 to January 1934, this governing body attempted to secure national sovereignty and create a socially just system across all classes.⁶⁰⁶ The events of 1933 precipitated a series of reforms through the 1930s, including the Nationalization of Labor decree. The new labor law mandated that 50 percent of all employees in commercial, agricultural, or industrial spaces be of "Cuban nationality," while later laws raised the requirement to 80 percent.⁶⁰⁷ Lebanese and Syrian merchants, together with their Spanish and Jewish immigrant counterparts, owned and operated a sizable share of Cuba's import/export, wholesale, and retail businesses.⁶⁰⁸ Many of these immigrant owners from the Mediterranean pulled workers from their home countries, often family members, to work as laborers or

⁶⁰⁵ López, 200.

⁶⁰⁶ López, 200.

⁶⁰⁷ Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 5th Ed, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 210; López, 200.

⁶⁰⁸ López, 77-78, 84, 101-102, 201; Daniel A. Rodríguez, *The Right to Live in Health: Medical politics in Postindependence Havana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 86-90.

otherwise assist with operations.⁶⁰⁹ In some cases, the Cuban government forced the repatriation of foreign agricultural workers, mostly from other Caribbean islands, and later ordered the expulsion of unemployed foreign workers and “undesirables.”⁶¹⁰ While immigrant communities often enlisted the help of lawyers to circumvent and find loopholes in the laws’ provisions, labor restrictions based on citizenship status discouraged immigration to Cuba and, in some cases, spurred immigrant residents on the island to apply for citizenship.⁶¹¹

As a result of the Revolution of 1933 and the worldwide depression immigration from the Levant to Cuba slowed, and concerns over citizenship featured prominently among *mahjaris* and their organizational efforts. The Revolution marked the peak of a nativist backlash against immigration to Cuba and spurred a series of restrictive laws on immigration and citizenship. Nativist rhetoric discouraged immigration to the island, while some families, including Cuban-born children, returned to Lebanon and Syria.⁶¹² Fearing the nativist rhetoric and political violence that characterized the years leading up to and immediately following the end of the Machadato, the Holguin-based peddler Jorge Dergan sent his four Cuban-born children and pregnant Lebanese wife back to his hometown of Jounieh, in French Lebanon.⁶¹³ Furthermore, ethnic organizations focused on the development of a collective identity that mixed traditions and cultural elements

⁶⁰⁹ López, 5, 36, 44, 71, 101-102; Maalouf, 77, 176, 284; Mays, 30; Rodríguez, 91-99.

⁶¹⁰ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 195.

⁶¹¹ López, 201.

⁶¹² George Dargham, in discussion with the author, 12 March 2021.

⁶¹³ George Dargham, in discussion with the author, 12 March 2021.

from the Levant with those from Cuba to produce a dual patriotism, following the independence and creation of Lebanese and Syrian states in the Levant, and an Arab *Cubanidad*.

Anti-immigrant sentiment accompanied the nationalist politics of Cuba's post-1933 period. During the interwar period, nativist economic protectionism accompanied several economic downturns in Cuba. In 1935, *Problemas de la Nueva Cuba*, a report published by Foreign Policy Association Incorporated of New York, the authors mention how in "recent months a number of Chinese establishments have been victims of terrorist attacks or have received threats of being dynamited, probably by disgruntled competitors."⁶¹⁴ The following year, Cuban economist Alberto Arredondo, in his prologue to the edited volume *La Nacionalización del Trabajo*, summarized many Cubans' thoughts on the effects immigration had on the Cuban economy,

Cuba, then, is a land of promise for foreigners. Not only do the corporations, the trust, the companies that place the gold yoke of progress on us come, but also the caravans of immigrants from all countries. Haitians, Jamaicans, Barbadians, who come as 'cheap labor' for the sugar mills; but Spaniards, *Turcos*, Chinese, and Poles, but mainly Spaniards, who called by relatives, friends and large establishments, come to take jobs in commerce, in industry, in certain sectors of production. The Cuban thus begins to suffer a situation that becomes increasingly difficult...when it comes to placing new workers, foreigners get preference. But when its firing time, Cubans are the first.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁴ Comisión de Asuntos Cubanos, *Problemas de la Nueva Cuba* (New York: Foreign Policy Association Incorporated, 1935), 38.

⁶¹⁵ Mario Alfonso y Caballero, *La Nacionalización del Trabajo en Cuba: Cuatro Artículos Sobre la Ley Provisional de Nacionalización del Trabajo* (Havana, 1936), 5-6.

Ostensibly, Arredondo offered their xenophobic defense of nativist labor protections as anti-racist and nationalist. Nativists painted narratives of immigrants taking jobs that otherwise would have gone to Cubans of African descent and argued that new labor laws would create a “Cuba for Cubans.”⁶¹⁶

While nativist Cubans claimed to protect the rights of citizens, not all citizens counted equally. The anti-immigrant backlash of the 1930s extended to naturalized Cubans, especially those who maintained ethnic identities. Even as *mahjaris* increasingly sought Cuban citizenship status to secure their position on the island, naturalized immigrants continued to face discrimination and suspicion from their Cuban-born neighbors. In a 1936 essay, Cuban lawyer Mario Alfonso y Caballero outlined a position against the idea that naturalized citizens should be guaranteed the rights of citizens, and articulated a more reputation-based, substantive, and republican vision of citizenship through civic participation. As Alfonso explained,

Foreigners abound among us who have opted for Cuban citizenship to evade compliance with the laws of their country of origin, either on military service or on inheritance rights...remaining, however, intimately linked to their primitive nationality and satisfied and even proud of it. In this sense, it can be said that obtaining a letter of naturalization has no real meaning. On the other hand, the foreigner who, with a certain time of permanence in our country, has settled in creating a family, sustainable in production, deserves the same treatment as a native, since he has revealed with unquestionable acts his intention to merge in our national body and belong to it.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁶ Mario Alfonso y Caballero, *La Nacionalización del Trabajo en Cuba: Cuatro Artículos Sobre la Ley Provisional de Nacionalización del Trabajo* (Havana, 1936), 4-6.

⁶¹⁷ Mario Alfonso y Caballero, *La Nacionalización del Trabajo en Cuba: Cuatro Artículos Sobre la Ley Provisional de Nacionalización del Trabajo* (Havana, 1936), 26.

In other essays, Alfonso outlined a decidedly anti-immigration stance, but tucked within his attack on the status of naturalized citizens existed a window into the ways vernacular understandings of belonging based on older Spanish conceptions of *vecindad*, which, in contrast to Alfonso's conception of belonging, Medieval Spaniards predicated on expectations of population mobility and changing demographics.

By 1939, the Cuban government moved to strengthen the limits on immigration and immigrants in the name of labor protections for Cuban citizens. Decree 55 of 1939 reenforced a fee of five hundred pesos, according to "the provisions of the aforementioned nationalization of labor...that imposed universal limitations on immigration," and "have made it advisable to avoid the entry into Cuba of foreign workers who are prone not only to compete in a generally unfair manner with Cuban workers, but also to infringe upon our social laws."⁶¹⁸ Curiously, after a decade of exceptionally virulent nationalism that brought the abrogation of the Platt Amendment and preached the protection of Cuban sovereignty, Article I of Decree 55 begins, "In accordance with the provisions of Section 1 of Military Order No. 155 of 15 May 1902, those excluded from admission into Cuba all those who would become a public charge," and then stipulated the means of determining this as the responsibility of the Treasury Department in consultation with the Labor Department.⁶¹⁹ The nationalist fervor of the 1930s encouraged immigrants to naturalize and integrate as best as possible into the general Cuban population, but Lebanese and Syrian mutual aid societies attempted to create an ethnic identity congruent to the island's political climate.

⁶¹⁸ Decreto 55 de 1939, *Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba*, 16 January 1939, 1097.

⁶¹⁹ Decreto 55 de 1939, *Gaceta Oficial de la Republica de Cuba*, 16 January 1939, 1097.

Other clubs and organizations attempted to paint Lebanese immigrants as bearers of European, and more specifically French, culture and civilization. Among its main goals, the Asociación Cultural Líbano-Francesa promised to “carry out all the cultural, agricultural, intellectual, and propaganda work in order to make the Lebanese-French cultures known in this country and to that end, organize events, conferences, edit brochures and whatever be the case. To strengthen the bonds of fraternity currently existing between Cubans and Lebanese and French residents in Cuba.”⁶²⁰ The two officers who signed the group’s charter, Antonio Faber and Antonio Sacre, both belonged to other Lebanese and Syrian organizations and featured prominently among the island’s *mahjari* community.⁶²¹ Members included many distinguished members of Cuba’s Lebanese community, but conspicuously lacked obvious French representations among the organization’s “*vocales*” and officers.⁶²² By equating Lebanese culture with France, Lebanese immigrants in Cuba hoped to benefit from the way elites across Latin America equated French culture and education as marker of the social and economic elite, especially in Havana, sometimes called the “Paris of the Caribbean.”⁶²³ As the

⁶²⁰ Reglamento de la Asociación Cultural Líbano Francesa, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 268, 7405, Havana, Cuba.

⁶²¹ Reglamento de la Asociación Cultural Líbano Francesa, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 268, 7405, Havana, Cuba.

⁶²² Reglamento de la Asociación Cultural Líbano Francesa, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 268, 7405, Havana, Cuba. Among the members listed as “*vocales propietarios*, were Angel Zamar, Pedro Matar, Sesin Melhem, Chicri Baclini, Natalio Flaigel, Basilio Framgie, José Abu Caram, Julian Salup, Elías Basil, Alfredo Morad, Jose Simón y Antonio Jorge, Antonio Juelle, Nicolas Nigaime, Ignacio Sarraf, Elías Curí, Narciso Mocarzel y Jamil Gorayeb. Officers included Marcelop Salup, Joaquin Basil, José Name, Julian Rasi, and Emilio Faroy.

⁶²³ Mays, 131; Reuters Staff Writers, “Havana, the ‘Paris of the Caribbean,’ gets its own Eiffel Tower,” August 10, 2020, accessed <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-art/havana-the-paris-of-the-caribbean-gets-its-own-eiffel-tower-idUSKCN2561X4>

Asociación Cultural Líbano Francesa illustrated, the politics of patronage became central to migrant narratives, networking, and development of racial scripts in the *mahjar*.

Conclusion

In the post WWI period, Lebanese and Syrian migrants found themselves enmeshed in the evolving ambiguities of mandatory subjects, networks of French patronage, and immigrant belonging in Cuba. Various patron-client relationships, especially among Maronites in a majority-Catholic country like Cuba, French mandatory subjects abroad, and diasporic interlocutors, integrated *muhajir* and *mahjaris* into dynamic spaces of belonging. Lebanese and Syrians living in Cuba navigated regimes of identity that allowed them to simultaneously identify as loyal clients of elite, sometimes imperial, patrons and as anti-colonialist subalterns. While many in the Cuban *mahjar* resented French mandatory control of the Levant, they leveraged French official patronage and their status as French protégés as “markers of cosmopolitanism, prestige, and good taste.”⁶²⁴ Amidst a resurgent Cuban nationalism, immigrants faced mounting difficulties establishing themselves on the island, and even naturalized citizens faced backlash, as papers did not remove the mark of foreignness. As Cubans debated immigration and labor laws in the 1930s, they articulated views of citizenship consistent with endurance of vernacular, colonial-era understandings of belonging through *vecindad*.

⁶²⁴ Pastor, 81.

Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian communities faced the political changes of the post-World War I period through a variety of strategies. Some *mahjaris* with established lives in Cuba chose to solidify their ties to Cuba by naturalizing as Cuban citizens. Jorge Hadad's identification paperwork showed the complex and varied identities, belongings, and even citizenships held by members of the Cuban *mahjar* as his driver's license read, "*Natural de Siria*, Nationality: Lebanese," and yet years had passed since he became a naturalized Cuban citizen.⁶²⁵ (Figure 14) Others chose to strengthen ties to the emerging republics of Lebanon and Syria via circular migratory patterns or sending family back to native villages, as was the case of Jorge Dergan and others. As the rebellious 1930s gave way to the 1940s, and a new Cuban, Lebanese and Syrian elites in Cuba endeavored to strengthen their influence on the politics of the Levant and Cuba, while also coordinating with their compatriots across the Americas. As 1940 ushered in a new Cuban constitution that attempted to enshrine a decidedly state-centered citizenship regime, a revolution loomed on the horizon that promised to forever change Cubans' relationship to the state and the meanings of *Cubanidad* and belonging within the body politic.



Figure 14: Jorge Hadad, Driver's License. This credential belonging to Jorge Hadad of Manzanillo, Cuba. On this official document, officials refer to Hadad as "natural de Siria" and list his "nationality" as "Lebanese."

⁶²⁵ Jorge J. Hadad Yaber, "Dirección General de la Cartera Dactilar del Chofer," Ministerio de Gobernación, República de Cuba, David Hadad Personal Papers, Manzanillo, Cuba.

CHAPTER FOUR

“The Unanimous Determination of the Citizen Majority.” Revolution, Transnationalism, and Dislocation in the Cuban *Mahjar*

“Within the Revolution, everything. Against the Revolution, no rights at all.”

-Fidel Castro⁶²⁶

On 2 February 1959, the Federación Interamericana de Entidades Libaneses (FIEL), a transnational umbrella organization of Lebanese associations and mutual aid societies from around the Western Hemisphere, held the closing banquet of its inaugural meeting at the Havana Hilton.⁶²⁷ Just weeks before the FIEL proceedings, Fidel Castro had entered Havana and quickly converted the Havana Hilton into his revolutionary headquarters, residing for the next three months in room 2324, the hotel’s Continental Suite.⁶²⁸ As the FIEL delegates rushed into banquet halls and debated the final form of their new organization, and, in fact, its very existence, armed guards in thread-worn olive green fatigues patrolled the premises. *Barbudos*, the bearded rebels-turned-

⁶²⁶ Fidel Castro, “Words to Intellectuals,” (Havana: National Cultural Council, 1961), 32, accessed 5/1/21 <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1961/19610630.html>.

⁶²⁷ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 6 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶²⁸ Lilian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 69; Srinath Perur, “The Habana Libre hotel, pawn in Castro’s battle against the US- a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 34,” *The Guardian*, 12 May 2015 (accessed 3/23/21: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/12/havana-habana-libre-castro-cuba-us-history-cities-50-buildings-day-34>).

revolutionaries, lounged in the hotel's corridors, still recovering from a life of combat in Cuba's eastern mountains, as Lebanese delegates from Miami, Florida; Birmingham, Alabama; Kingston, Jamaica; and Santiago de Chile shuffled by, clutching copies of meeting minutes, draft budgets, and plans for the first FIEL Congress to be held the following year in Mexico City.⁶²⁹ The FIEL kicked off its meetings with an elegant reception and conference at Havana's Casa Continental de la Cultura, today's Casa de las Americas, on 31 January 1959, sponsored by the Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana.⁶³⁰ Natalio Chediak, who served as the Cuban-born consul of Lebanon in Cuba, promised to host a cocktail party for the delegates at his home, but only on the condition that they approve the FIEL's charter.⁶³¹ Chediak, along with Simón Bestani, the Argentine originator of the FIEL, and Victor Khoury, the one-time Lebanese ambassador to the United States and goodwill delegate assigned to Latin America, played an instrumental role in the FIEL's creation.

On 23 January, mere days prior to the start of the convention, Chediak made a flurry of proposals to the Sociedad Libanesa's board of directors, hoping to secure accommodations for the delegates and confirmation that the proceedings would continue

⁶²⁹ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 6 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶³⁰ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 6 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba; Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 20 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶³¹ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 23 January 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba; Gemma Nasar, in conversation with the author, 8 March 2021; Hamdan Ronald, Lebanese-Argentine journalist, in a Facebook message to the Unión Libanesa del Chaco, 9/1/2013 (accessed 3/23/21: <https://www.facebook.com/UnionLibanesaDelChaco/posts/559863970716525>).

as scheduled.⁶³² Fearing that if the conference were postponed, as it already had been once, Chediak, with Bestani at his side, asked approval to send cables to delegates seeking confirmation, and scrambled to book the delegates' accommodations at the Hotel Presidente, near the Casa Continental de la Cultura.⁶³³ At the conference itself, a faction attempted to change the name from "Federation" to "Confederation," but Cuban delegate José Abi Caram defended the importance of maintaining the acronym FIEL, which he noted, resembled the Spanish word for "faithful."⁶³⁴ To Abi Caram, and the delegates from Haiti, Ecuador, and Argentina who joined his defense, the importance of remaining "faithful" to the FIEL's founding "objective to defend the independence and integrity of the Lebanese Republic."⁶³⁵ As the Sociedad Libanesa closed the books on funds owed to the hotels Presidente and Havana Hilton, they passed a resolution to congratulate the Lebanese-Cuban Alfredo Yabor Maluf, who had recently returned from exile and assumed the position of Deputy Minister of Justice for the revolutionary government. Maluf would later serve as Minister of Justice from 1959 to 1972. Lastly, they read a letter from their affiliated organization in Holguín, announcing the imminent arrival of Antonio Dajud, the Palestinian-Colombian cavalry colonel who helped train

⁶³² Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 23 January 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶³³ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 23 January 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶³⁴ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 6 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁶³⁵ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 6 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

revolutionary forces in the Sierra Maestra mountains, and began planning a welcome buffet.⁶³⁶

These associational acts, especially the meeting of international representatives of a transnational, diasporic community of Lebanese migrants in the *mahjar*, and their descendants, served to elucidate the priorities, connectedness, and importance of Cuba's Lebanese community. The 1959 Revolution bookended a period of political experimentation and frustration that started with the Revolution of 1933 and peaked with the ratification of a startlingly progressive and popular constitution in 1940. Yet, even as the Revolution rhetorically broke with the past, it originally championed the 1940 constitution as the benchmark, and reenforced many of the liberal visions of state-focused citizenship espoused by previous revolutions and governments.

The New Cuba: Citizenship, *Cubanidad*, and the Constitution of 1940

The Constitution of 1940 offered an opportunity to secure the as yet unfulfilled promises of 1868, 1895, 1901, and 1933, as delegates from most parties at least paid lip-service to the ideal of racial equality. Representatives of nine parties, including the Communist Party and Grau San Martín's Partido Revolucionario Cubano-Auténtico (the Auténticos) the latter facing political repression through much of the 1930s, debated competing visions for the form the new Cuban state would take, the extent to which the state should promote civil rights, and continued efforts to limit immigration to the

⁶³⁶ Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, 20 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 604, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

island.⁶³⁷ While even the Communists, who had opposed such measures in the 1930s, joined the other parties in their support for restrictive immigration policies and the so-called “nationalization” of labor, their collaboration succeeded in framing discussions of labor in terms of racial discrimination and how it affected citizenship rights.⁶³⁸ To be sure, that the 1940 Constitution made explicit mention of “discrimination,” and this constituted a major victory for civil rights activists and the Afro-Cuban community.⁶³⁹

Pundits and scholars around the world regarded Cuba’s 1940 Constitution as one of the most progressive governing charters of its time, and the document shaped the discursive and psychological contours of *Cubanidad*. But the Constitution lacked the enforcement provisions necessary to enact its sweeping agenda and failed to radically alter the Cuban state’s liberal structure and substance.⁶⁴⁰ Ever-present rhetorically, the new constitution constituted what historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr. has called, a “dormant document” even as it occupied center-stage in Cubans’ political discourse, imaginations, and conceptions of *Cubanidad*.⁶⁴¹

As a document, the 1940 Constitution articulated the aspirations of the delegates, and Cuban people, from myriad political persuasions, and observers on and off the island

⁶³⁷ Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 211-213.

⁶³⁸ De la Fuente, 216.

⁶³⁹ *The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, 5 July 1940, Article 10, subsection a (Havana: Publicaciones Lewis, 1940). Henceforth: “1940 Constitution.”

⁶⁴⁰ Julio César Guanche, “Informe sobre la ciudadanía: Cuba,” European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, *Country Report* (November 2017), 17; Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 5th Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 220.

⁶⁴¹ Pérez, 220.

regarded it as a progressive shift toward social democracy.⁶⁴² While many involved in the creation of the new constitution indeed hoped to create an inclusive, viable social democracy, some scholars have revisited the document's "progressive" credentials and argued that the 1940 Constitution, in fact, represented a "populist" turn.⁶⁴³ Some of the new constitution's stipulations concerned areas of progressive-populist overlap that pushed the deployment of a "civil society" in favor of the 'substantialist' application of democracy defined through an 'expansionist' criterion of rights."⁶⁴⁴ The Constitution existed within the contexts of mid-century Latin American populist and social-democratic movements that positioned themselves as alternatives to, and bulwarks against, the rise of fascism and communism.⁶⁴⁵

Bearing in mind both the symbolic importance and practical limits of the 1940 Constitution, attention to its provisions on citizenship reveal that its version of citizenship maintained the liberal emphasis on citizenship legible to the state, even if the framers veiled this in the republican language of positive freedoms. The 1940 Constitution devoted an entire section to the conditions of Cuban citizenship. The constitution's second section, entitled "Nationality," and its first article, Article 8, simply states that "Citizenship involves duties and rights, the adequate exercise of which shall be regulated by law."⁶⁴⁶ Article 9 begins, "Every Cuban is obligated," and then lists the general, and

⁶⁴² De la Fuente 210-211; Pérez, 220.

⁶⁴³ Julio César Guanche, "La Constitución de 1940: Una reinterpretación," *Cuban Studies*, 45 (2017), 77.

⁶⁴⁴ Julio César Guanche, "La Constitución de 1940: Una reinterpretación," 73.

⁶⁴⁵ Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xx-xxi; Julio César Guanche, "La Constitución de 1940: Una reinterpretación," 82.

⁶⁴⁶ 1940 Constitution, Article 8.

often vague, obligations of citizenship, including: armed service to the republic, to contribute to public expenses, and to “conduct himself in a civic manner, inculcating this practice in his own children, and...instilling in them the purest national conscience.”⁶⁴⁷ The framers left most of these “obligations” open to interpretation and contingent on legislative action. In Article 10, the delegates to the constitutional convention made a remarkably bold pronouncement of inclusion and the state’s responsibility to promote anti-racism, as its first subsection entitled citizens “to reside in his country without being subjected to any discrimination or extortion of any kind, no matter what his race, class, political opinions or religious beliefs.”⁶⁴⁸ The delegates’ populist motives further encouraged them to inject the language of nativist labor priorities and universal suffrage.⁶⁴⁹ Later, in Section 4, Article 20, the constitution outlined the commitment to legal equality,

All Cubans are equal before the law. The Republic recognizes neither personal exemptions nor privileges. All discrimination by reason of sex, race, color, class, or any other that detracts from human dignity, is declared unlawful and punishable. The sanctions incurred by those who violate this precept shall be established by law.⁶⁵⁰

Aside from these general rules of citizenship, the document promoted the conditions of native and naturalized citizenship, particularly the promotion of legible citizenship that exempted citizenship “papers and certificates of Cuban nationality” from taxation and

⁶⁴⁷ 1940 Constitution, Article 9.

⁶⁴⁸ 1940 Constitution, Article 10, subsection a.

⁶⁴⁹ 1940 Constitution, Article 10, subsections b and c.

⁶⁵⁰ 1940 Constitution, Article 20, section 4.

forbidding dual citizenship.⁶⁵¹ As these last statutes show, despite the republican rhetoric of substantive citizenship in the constitution's initial articles, the document betrayed the political class's attempt to enshrine a state-centered definition of citizenship.

The Constitution took effect on 10 October 1940, at which time Fulgencio Batista, after years of running Cuba from behind the scenes through puppet administrations, assumed power as duly elected president, and he quickly moved to secure some of his policy initiatives from the previous decade. On 28 October 1940, eight days after the constitution's enactment, *La Gaceta Oficial* published a presidential decree meant to enshrine, and bring into compliance with the new constitution, a 1939 decree on citizenship and migration.⁶⁵² The law stated that certificates of nationality and citizenship cards constituted "unique and solemn documents."⁶⁵³ Through this law, Batista and his lieutenants hoped to elevate the importance of legible regimes of citizenship by writing multiple pages worth of instructions to bureaucrats and statutes that place immense importance on the production, acquisition, and maintenance of official citizenship documents.

As a testament to Batista's liberal priorities in the 1930s and 40s, the first twenty articles of the law spelled out the emphasis on legible citizenship with a list of duties reserved for the newly created Ministry of State's Citizenship and Migration Directorate.

⁶⁵¹ 1940 Constitution, Articles 14 and 15.

⁶⁵² "Decreto No. 3022," *La Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, 28 October 1940, Año 38, Vol. 15, no. 20 (28 October 1940), 21793-21803, University of Miami Richter Library, Microfilm Collection, Coral Gables, Florida. Henceforth, "Decreto 3022."

⁶⁵³ Decreto 3022, Article 5. The article began, "*El Certificado de Nacionalidad y la Carta de Ciudadanía son documentos únicos y solemnes...*"

The decree then reiterated the constitutional statutes on citizenship before devoting more than forty more articles to bureaucratic instructions, procedural statutes, and documentary regulations. In total, the decree filled eleven pages in the 28 October issue of *La Gaceta*. Yet, whereas previous citizenship laws levied fines and other barriers to citizenship, the 1940 Constitution represented a departure as it eliminated processing fees and taxes related to the issuing of citizenship documents.⁶⁵⁴ As Cuban policymakers resolved to further reenforce the state's prerogative in determining citizenship, it also ventured to expand the limits of state-centered, legible citizenship.

On its surface, the 1940 Constitution heralded the arrival of a “New Cuba,” one based on inclusion and equality, but the document also enshrined many of the “Old” Cuba's racial, religious, and social norms, cloaked in the rhetoric of social democracy.⁶⁵⁵ While statutory changes improved access to registration and acquisition of legible citizenship, the elite actors who attended the constitutional convention and took the helm of subsequent governments struck a delicate balance to protect their cultural and social interests by cloaking them in the republican and inclusive rhetoric of 1940.⁶⁵⁶ The 1940 Constitution established an ostensibly secular state, wherein “The Church shall be separate from the state, which cannot subsidize any sect [*culto*].”⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁴ 1940 Constitution, Article 14.

⁶⁵⁵ Pérez, *Cuba*, 217; Comision de Asuntos Cubanos, Raymond Leslie Buell et. al., *Problemas de la Nueva Cuba* (New York: Foreign Policy Association Incorporated, 1935).

⁶⁵⁶ Guanche, “La Constitución de 1940,” 81-82.

⁶⁵⁷ 1940 Constitution, Article 35.

While the constitution guaranteed that “profession of all religions, as well as the exercise of all sects, is unrestricted,” it qualified the “unrestricted” nature of free exercise “without other limitation than respect for Christian morality and public order.”⁶⁵⁸ This last exception allowed wide latitude for state and private actors to discriminate against religious practices, particularly those of African or Afro-Cuban origins, while waving the banner of religious freedom to “protect” Cuba’s image as a culturally-Western, Catholic nation.⁶⁵⁹ The constitution explicitly included mechanisms for the maintenance of elite interests in the face of the populist groundswell that sparked the 1933 revolution and called for the new governing charter; however, perhaps the strongest safety rail built into the constitution were the numerous provisions that tied grand pronouncements to future policies to “be established by law.”⁶⁶⁰ The constitution’s anti-discrimination clause represented perhaps the most prominent failure to enforce anti-discrimination law, leaving it to future congresses to determine the “sanctions incurred by those who violate this precept.”⁶⁶¹ As Cuban policymakers enshrined safeguards for their preferred vision of *Cubanidad*, conservative media outlets argued for restraint and for little or no changes to the pre-revolutionary social order.

In 1939 and 1940, *Diario de la Marina*, Havana’s conservative daily, published articles defending the interests of Cuban elites and what it considered traditional

⁶⁵⁸ 1940 Constitution, Article 35.

⁶⁵⁹ 1940 Constitution, Article 58; Guanche, “La Constitución de 1940,” 75. Article 58 of the 1940 Constitution read, “The Nation shall regulate by law the conservation of the cultural treasures of the Nation, its artistic and historic wealth, and shall especially protect national monuments and places notable for their natural beauty or their acknowledged artistic or historic value.”

⁶⁶⁰ 1940 Constitution, Article 20 and 22.

⁶⁶¹ 1940 Constitution, Article 20.

Cubanidad, couched in the language of antidiscrimination and liberal democracy. On 7 April 1940, the paper published an article, entitled “Against Racial Discrimination,” that made classic liberal arguments for legal equality, service to the nation, and antidiscrimination. In it, the editors wrote, “we are against racial discrimination. Nothing is more disastrous for a country in which two or more races coexist than the persecution or systematic ignoring of any of them. Even more in the case of Cuba.”⁶⁶² The article contained a litany of “patriots” of African descent from “our heroic past” and highlighted how such Cubans should be equal “without the differences in pigmentation intervening at all in the unanimous appreciation of their services to the country.”⁶⁶³

As previous chapters explained, equality under the law often allowed for elites to use their resources and connections to act as gatekeepers to who could make claims to *Cubanidad*, and this sometimes worked against or in favor of Levantine-Cubans. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, conservatives spoke of antidiscrimination in terms of equality under the law and remained silent on any attempts by constitutional delegates to ensure equity. Elites in liberal societies often used the rhetoric of equality under the law to obscure the systemic prejudices and privileges that benefited the traditional power bases. To this end, the editors argued, “Equality under the law for all Cubans...and equal rights for all workers and of the enjoyment of those benefits derived from state tutelary action” occupied a place of paramount importance and that the state had an obligation to protect all Cubans and their racial and class interests, including white elites.⁶⁶⁴ In many of

⁶⁶² “Contra la discriminación racial,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

⁶⁶³ “Contra la discriminación racial,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

⁶⁶⁴ “Contra la discriminación racial,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

these articles, the editors defended white, creole culture as the definition of *Cubanidad*. They subsumed of acceptable Afro-Cuban elements, as part of national belonging, like music or martyrs of independence, and eliminated others, like religious practices of African origins. On so many opinion pages, the editors defended their preferred version of *Cubanidad*, defined in terms of European cultural norms, by defending liberal regimes of legal equality while arguing against government action to promote positive freedoms for the construction of a more equitable society.

The delegates to the constitutional convention debated secular public education, establishing a public discourse in which many conservatives defined *Cubanidad* as a decidedly Christian, if not exclusively Catholic, status. Progressives, communists, and religious minorities supported the measure, but elites argued that the state should allow for Catholic education in schools, and again clothed their arguments in the language of liberalism. On the same page as “Against Racial Discrimination,” the editors of *Diario de la Marina* included an editorial plea to the constitutional convention. In “Cuban Catholicism and Religious Liberty,” the paper’s leaders argued for religious instruction in schools as a progressive and liberal choice.⁶⁶⁵ “Regarding education,” the editorial explained, “the Commission legislates secularism in official education. Catholics asked for something that is very rational and democratic. That children receive education and religious culture if their parents ask for it.”⁶⁶⁶ The editors warned of the backwardness of secularism, citing cases of “civilized” jurisdictions where “Today official secularism has

⁶⁶⁵ “El Catolicismo Cubano y la Libertad Religiosa,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

⁶⁶⁶ “El Catolicismo Cubano y la Libertad Religiosa,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

ceased,” like in “Brazil and Argentina, the two great Latin countries that [previously] supported [secularism] in America,” and held up examples of “several states of North America,” where religious education laws passed and “improved life.”⁶⁶⁷ Religious liberty, Cuban conservatives argued, included the promotion of a unifying religious national identity, warning “if secularism is approved in the official schools, we will be fifty years behind,” and promised to show “respect for the non-Catholic or for those who do not want that culture,” which according to them was the “highest” of cultures.⁶⁶⁸ Thus, while the Constitution included official separation of church and state, as well as guarantees to a free, secular, public education, conservatives managed to legislate exceptions to some of the document’s statutes, as the protection of “Christian morality” clause did for religious liberty.

Rather than accepting that Cuba’s political and social structures perpetuated regimes of racial and ethnic discrimination, they pointed to, what they called, communists and the constitution’s most progressive elements as discriminatory. Earlier in 1940, the editors at *Diario de la Marina* had argued that “communism” posed a threat to racial harmony in Cuba. Ignoring Cuba’s history of racial tension and unrest, the editors argued against communist and progressive rhetoric that targeted racial disparities and prejudice, insisting that “In our Republic until now we have been safe from the discord caused by the antagonism of races. The pigment of the skin has never divided Cubans if any attempt was registered...it had to be suffocated by the mutual agreement of the

⁶⁶⁷ “El Catolicismo Cubano y la Libertad Religiosa,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

⁶⁶⁸ “El Catolicismo Cubano y la Libertad Religiosa,” *Diario de la Marina*, 7 April 1940, 4.

citizens without distinction.”⁶⁶⁹ In May of 1940, the editors continued this mode of argumentation by describing the uniting influence of common religious identities and hegemonic cultures and how, in Cuba, “what separates men” was not race, but “what differentiates men around the world, social spheres, trade, economic position, and culture.”⁶⁷⁰ Because they opposed the wealthy class and stoked racial tensions, the editors insisted, it was Communists who practiced the worst kind of discrimination.⁶⁷¹ Scholars have argued that Cuban conservatives long used the image of Cuba as a “raceless” republic to argue against anti-racist policies or programs, thereby preserving elites’ status and power.⁶⁷² The language included in the 1940 Constitution outlined a remarkably progressive platform, but conservative and populist forces prevented much of the delegates’ lofty goals from taking effect.

As Cuban elites ensured that the new constitution maintained liberal protections of class interests and hegemonic elite control of national identity, the state continued to assert its role in determining who belonged within the Cuban nation. In his last year in office, Batista oversaw adoption of the 1944 Citizenship Law. In many ways, the law seems to extend citizenship rights to a wide range of people, including “the foreigner who marries a Cuban...when they have offspring from that union or have resided in the country for two years after the marriage, and as always have renounced their previous

⁶⁶⁹ “El comunismo, agente de discordia racista,” *Diario de la Marina*, 23 February 1940, 4.

⁶⁷⁰ “Discriminaciones,” *Diario de la Marina*, 4 May 1940, 4.

⁶⁷¹ “Discriminaciones,” *Diario de la Marina*, 4 May 1940, 4.

⁶⁷² De la Fuente, 7-8.

citizenship.”⁶⁷³ This may seem to stem from older, more vernacular understandings of belonging as *vecindad*, but two articles later, the law amends this understanding by detailing the steps by which one who met the above criteria “may request a citizenship letter.”⁶⁷⁴ The law again refined and streamlined the process by which state agents attempted to shape and control regimes of belonging. Through the late-1930s and early-1940s, changes in Cuba and around the Mediterranean shaped the ways Cubans of Levantine descent understood their collective identities and engaged with entities in Cuba, the Americas, and “the Old World.”

Progressive and Regressive Forces: Lebanese and Syrian Independence, Nationalism, and Transnational-Local Citizens

In early 1940, the Board of Directors of the Cuban Bar Association met in a colonial-era carriage house, or “garage,” near the intersection of Lamparilla and Cuba streets to conduct regular business and read a letter from the American Bar Association (ABA).⁶⁷⁵ The letter invited a Cuban delegation to attend the Eighth American Scientific Congress to take place in Washington, D.C. in May 1940, with the purpose of establishing an Interamerican Bar Association, or, as it became known in Spanish, the *Federación Interamericana de Abogados* (FIA). Natalio Chediak, a board member and Havana lawyer of Lebanese descent, enthusiastically endorsed the FIA and told the

⁶⁷³ 1940 Constitution, Article 8, subsection b.

⁶⁷⁴ 1940 Constitution, Article 10.

⁶⁷⁵ Natalio Chediak, “Introducción,” *Federación Interamericana de Abogados (FIA): Origen de su vida y actividades*, 2nd edition [1990] (Acapulco, Mexico: XXV Conferencia Interamericana de Abogados, 1985), i-iii.

association president, Manuel Fernández Supervielle, “I want to be a part of the delegation because I am going to found the FIA and bring to Havana the first Interamerican Bar Conference.”⁶⁷⁶ The following year, Chediak welcomed FIA delegates from around the Americas to Havana’s Capitolio Nacional, where they inaugurated the organization at its first conference.⁶⁷⁷ In his words, “the results obtained surpassed my best expectations,” as not only did he succeed in holding the founding conference in Havana, but also secured a new headquarters for the Cuban Bar Association.⁶⁷⁸ Chediak continued, “I thought that an event of this nature could not possibly take place in a garage...[and so I] obtain[ed] a building donated by the government to the Bar Association.”⁶⁷⁹ Chediak affirmed his faith in transnational networking and, over the years, amassed a reputation for initiating diplomatic and transnational lines of communication and cooperation. The rapidly shifting global politics of the 1930s and 40s fostered an environment within which diasporic “citizens” with competing identities and multiple loyalties, like Cubans of Lebanese and Syrian descent, often cultivated a greater sense of transnational belonging and benefited from fluid senses of self and community.

Chediak’s transnationalism stood apart from that of his peers and had deep roots in his Lebanese and Cuban pedigrees. Born in Santiago de Cuba in 1909, Chediak worked tirelessly to promote international and diplomatic cooperation and played a role

⁶⁷⁶ Chediak, *i-iii*.

⁶⁷⁷ Chediak, *i-iii*.

⁶⁷⁸ Chediak, *i-iii*.

⁶⁷⁹ Chediak, *i-iii*.

in establishing various networks of transnational communication and collaboration.⁶⁸⁰

Chediak attended law school at the University of Havana, where he served as assistant to Antonio Sánchez de Bustamante y Sirven.⁶⁸¹ Bustamante was an important mentor with broad international reach. He had earned a reputation as an internationally-minded jurist, he wrote the Code of International Private Law, known as the Bustamante Code and adopted by delegates at the 1928 Sixth International Conference of American States, held in Havana. Bustamante also served as one of the original eleven justices chosen for the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague, in 1929, and encouraged his students of international law to champion regional and international cooperation.

Under Bustamante's tutelage, Chediak learned the importance of international law and worked to create networks of communication and understanding between governments and between peoples. Chediak specialized in copyright law and represented Ramon Sadat's Panart Records, founded in 1943 as Cuba's first music record label, in its copyright claims against RCA Records.⁶⁸² His representation of Panart Records represented just one of many international legal cases in a truly transnational legal practice that saw Chediak rise to be Secretary General of the Inter-American Federation of Societies of Authors and Composers, another international organization he was instrumental in establishing.⁶⁸³ As a natural-born Cuban citizen, Chediak served as consul

⁶⁸⁰ Gemma Nassar, in Facebook message to the author, 6 April 2021.

⁶⁸¹ Natalio Chediak, "Introducción," *Federación Interamericana de Abogados (FIA): Origen de su vida y actividades*, 2nd edition [1990] (Acapulco, Mexico: XXV Conferencia Interamericana de Abogados, 1985), 47.

⁶⁸² Judy Cantor, "When Cuba Sang," *Miami New Times*, 26 December 1996.

⁶⁸³ Natalio Chediak, "First Congress," *Inter-American Federation of Societies of Authors and Composers, Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, 79 (1945), 399.

of Lebanon in Cuba, and his home in the Siboney neighborhood of Playa, in Havana, functioned as the headquarters for the Lebanese legation in Cuba, hosting receptions and meetings for out-of-town dignitaries and Cuban officials.⁶⁸⁴ By the early-1940s, Chediak played a leading role in founding the Interamerican Bar Association.⁶⁸⁵ He was the official agent of Bacardi Rum Company and Derby brand products.⁶⁸⁶ Chediak used his international reputation and leadership in Cuban Lebanese organizations to strengthen the hemispheric and transatlantic ties between *mahjari* communities and the Levant.

In many ways, Chediak exemplified the transnational scope of Cuba's *mahjari* community. The Cuban-born Chediak also served as honorary consul of Lebanon in Cuba, and his home served as the Lebanese consulate and embassy in Havana.⁶⁸⁷ In the quarter century between the start of the First World War and Chediak's FIA welcome event at Havana's capitol building, the identities of Lebanese and Syrians in Cuba underwent a series of changes caused by political shifts in Cuba and the Levant, and changes in migratory patterns on regional and global scales. These changes would continue for another quarter century, shaping the contours of identity and belonging in the Cuban *mahjar*.

⁶⁸⁴ Gemma Nassar, in Facebook message to the author, 6 April 2021.

⁶⁸⁵ Natalio Chediak, "Introducción," *Federación Interamericana de Abogados (FIA): Origen de su vida y actividades*, 2nd edition [1990] (Acapulco, Mexico: XXV Conferencia Interamericana de Abogados, 1985).

⁶⁸⁶ *Boletín oficial de la Secretaría de Agricultura, Industria y Comercio*, Ministerio de la Industria Básica (Havana: Impresa Rambla, Bouza y Compañía, 1956), 7, 18. Accessed 4/14/2021 via Google Books, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=PsKpO6V97HcC&hl=en&pg=GBS.RA3-PA7>.

⁶⁸⁷ Gemma Nassar, in conversation with the author, 8 March 2021; "Simon Bestani: FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams," *World Lebanese Cultural Union* accessed: 4/6/2021 <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>

By 1940, French Mandatory rule in Lebanon and Syria seemed tenuous.⁶⁸⁸ France declared war on Nazi Germany, and in June 1940, Paris came under German occupation. The French Mandate now answered to France's Vichy government. Almost immediately, a British blockade stopped the flow of oil from Iraq to refineries in Tripoli and closed markets in the region's British Mandate to Lebanese and Syrian products. As General Henri Dentz, the new Vichy-approved governor arrived in January of 1941, he inherited a devastated economy marked by gas shortages and rationing that undermined France's civilizing mission and its ability to provide for the basic welfare that lent legitimacy for the entire mandatory project.⁶⁸⁹ In this climate, Vichy's promise of order and sacrifice based on an ideology of family, work, and nation appealed to conservative groups in Lebanon and Syria.⁶⁹⁰

In the *mahjar*, some prominent Syro-Lebanese community members, while formally opposing Nazi aggression, shared or showed sympathy toward Nazi beliefs in ethno-nationalism, chauvinism, and eugenics.⁶⁹¹ Yet, many of the most prominent eugenicists and chauvinists among Cuba's Lebanese and Syrians supported transnational

⁶⁸⁸ Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 163.

⁶⁸⁹ Thompson, 230-231.

⁶⁹⁰ Thompson, 230-231.

⁶⁹¹ José Chelala, "El Mejoramiento de la Calidad de la Población como medida de acercamiento Inter-Americano," *Boletín del Colegio Médico de La Habana*, Year VI, No. 9 (September 1943), 11; "Nuestra Galería: Dr. José Chelala Aguilera," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, Vol. 4 (April 1943), 6; "La III Concentración Nacional de la Juventud Católica Cubana," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, Vol. 4 (April 1943), 14; "Monseñor Aramuni dice," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 4 (April 1943), 17; W. Nimeh, "Gran Líbano," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 18 (June 1944), 21-25; *Reglamento del Comité Pro Defensa de la Independencia del Líbano*, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

cooperation and internationalism.⁶⁹² Eventually, some of these conservatives soured on Vichy after they observed outright collaboration with the Nazi regime. When Dentz allowed the German Luftwaffe to use Syrian airfields, British and Free French forces invaded Lebanon and Syria, and by July 1941, Charles de Gaulle appointed General Georges Catroux as High Commissioner in the Levant.⁶⁹³ The Free French lacked the resources to provide services to mandatory citizens, and when Vichy officially joined the Axis war effort, many Lebanese and Syrians considered it tantamount to withdrawal from the League of Nations and an abrogation of responsibilities under the Mandate.⁶⁹⁴

In Havana, Lebanese and Syrian associations voiced their support for Free French forces, opposition to Axis war efforts, and loyalty to Cuba and the Allies. On 17 July 1941, immediately following Allied victory in the Levant, the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana sent a telegram to generals de Gaulle and Catroux congratulating them on their defeat of Vichy forces under Dentz's command.⁶⁹⁵ Cuba's *mahjari* press regularly used phrases like "the great friend of the Lebanese," to describe French figures like Catroux and de Gaulle, while making calls for Lebanese autonomy and independence.⁶⁹⁶ Like the Ottomans and peacetime French governments, the Free French understood the importance of building support in the *mahjar*. On 12 August, after reading letters of

⁶⁹² José Chelala, "Conciencia de guerra, pero tambien verdadera libertad (Mensaje a un desconocido)," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 7.

⁶⁹³ "Francia!," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 21 (September 1944), 18; Thompson, 231.

⁶⁹⁴ Thompson, 231.

⁶⁹⁵ "Junta General de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, 12 August 1941" 19 September 1941, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁹⁶ "Sufragio en el Libano," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, Vol. 4 (April 1943), 7.

thanks for a recent donation to San Nicolás Catholic Church, the association president Emilio Faroy read General de Gaulle's reply to the members present, "President of the Sociedad Libanesa Havana, very grateful for your message/I address you together with all the Lebanese from Beyrout [sic]," the telegram began, "my cordial greetings."⁶⁹⁷ Faroy followed this reading with another telegram from Cartroux's aide-de-camp, dated 1 August, "Emilio Faroy, President of the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana General de Gaulle and General Catroux highly appreciated your message...they charged me to thank and congratulate...all the Lebanese of Cuba."⁶⁹⁸ The Free French propaganda campaign for support in the *mahjar* included regular cables to the ethnic press and associations.⁶⁹⁹ Faroy's eagerness to share these messages illustrated the excitement felt among many in Havana's Lebanese community as well as the political importance they, together with their compatriots across the Americas, held in the *Mashriq*.

Free French efforts to court support from the *mahjar* generally succeeded, partly because general sentiments in the Western Hemisphere sided with the Allies.⁷⁰⁰ The Havana *mahjari* monthly, *Cercano Oriente*, published short articles entitled "Churchill's Prophecy" alongside poems by Kahlil Gibran.⁷⁰¹ José Juelle, a Lebanese-Cuban

⁶⁹⁷ "Junta General de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, 12 August 1941" 19 September 1941, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁹⁸ "Junta General de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana, 12 August 1941" 19 September 1941, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁶⁹⁹ "Cables," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 17; "Cables," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 14 (February 1944), 14; "Cables II," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 14 (February 1944), 15; "Cables," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 20 (August 1944), 11; "Mas Cables," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 20 (August 1944), 12.

⁷⁰⁰ "La última visita de Churchill," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 6; Jean Bastiat, "La Obra de la Francia Degaulista en el Levante," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 15 (March 1944), 19, 22.

⁷⁰¹ "Profecía de Churchill," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, Vol. 4 (April 1943), 7.

community leader, founded the Comité Pro-Ayuda a Francia Combatiente to pool the Cuban *mahjar*'s resources to assist Free French forces and the French Resistance.⁷⁰²

French officials regularly reached out to communities in the *mahjar*, often personally, as was the case with “Dr. Felipe Grousset,” the “Delegate of the French National Committee and Representative of the Lebanon-Syrians of Cuba” attending meetings of the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana in 1943, “taking his place next to the [club] president.”⁷⁰³ An account in *Cercano Oriente* offered a broad array of identity-forming motifs peppered throughout the speeches:

Mr. Azar continued his speech full of healthy love for Lebanon, as well as for Palestine, receiving a large salute of applause...Now it is the turn of the young doctor, and president of the Lebanese Youth, Dr. José Chelala Aguilera, who needless to say garnered applause and then performed the apologia of the *Moro* peddler, highlighting the vicissitudes and constant struggles with no weapons other than his work ethic thus forging their home in Cuba; and in this same way in all the Americas, to leave and perhaps open to the youth that we have today, and we can say without affectation, that we have everything we need in all aspects of life, and he ended up exhorting everyone to unite, because only union makes us strong and we will achieve everything we aspire to....Later, our spiritual leader, Mons. José Aramuni...who in heartfelt words in Arabic lamented that being, as we are, children of that land [Lebanon], we do not speak the language of our parents; moreover, he congratulated himself on seeing the overflowing enthusiasm of the Lebanese in his charge...Then Dr. Grousset used the word, which was not very extensive as other times but was very expressive and cordial...And, to finish, our young president stands up and makes a...promise to comply with the General's mandates, counting on the support of all the Lebanese in Havana. He was highly congratulated.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁰³ “Sociedad Libanesa,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 12.

⁷⁰⁴ “Sociedad Libanesa,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 12.

Chelala's apologia outlined a sense of dual cultural citizenship within a community that "[forged] their home in Cuba" but endured as "children of that land" even if they "do not speak the language of our parents."⁷⁰⁵ Even as they participated in Cuban society, contributed to the island's civic culture, and built positive reputations as productive members of the Cuban nation, they remained at least partially oriented toward the Levant and diasporic nodes across the Americas. This joint meeting of Havana's largest Lebanese and Palestinian associations also displayed the seeds of a South-South solidarity emerging among Havana's *mahjari* community that would blossom in the years after 1959, as Cuba's political orientation would shift toward exporting revolution and engage with the nonaligned world. Through these speeches, the audience encountered distinct, but congruous, nation-building themes rooted in Maronite-Lebanese nationalism defined by Catholicism, narratives of "*Moro*" or Phoenician exceptionalism, and a Mediterranean orientation that expressed through Francophilia.

While Free French forces generally found a receptive and supportive constituency in the Cuban *mahjar*, this did not mean it supported French control. The Lebanese and Syrian communities openly issued calls for full independence in Lebanon and Syria. In 1945, the Asociación Cultural Líbano Francesa and the Comité Pro-Ayuda a Francia Combatiente joined nine other Lebanese and Syrian clubs in Cuba and issued a joint statement decrying "the acts of force of which these...Lebanese and Syrian peoples have

⁷⁰⁵ "Sociedad Libanesa," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, No. 6 (June 1943), 12.

been victims, from whichever side they have arisen.”⁷⁰⁶ In this same statement, they also signaled their support for “the aspirations of these peoples to obtain their independence and freedom.”⁷⁰⁷ Yet, they also expressed a vote of confidence for French representatives like “Phillippe Grousset, who attends to the affairs of the Lebanese and Syrians in Cuba by appointment of said governments, for us has the highest consideration and respect, recognizing his capacity and diligence shown whenever the affairs of our nationals have been submitted to him.”⁷⁰⁸

The signatories reiterated how the “Lebanese and Syrian peoples have never failed to show their loyalty to France...they suffered with France the terrible moments of their surrender...contributing with the blood of their own children...This cooperation of the Lebanese and Syrians did not come from only those two peoples, but simultaneously, the entire Lebanese and Syrian Colony of America.”⁷⁰⁹ Still, they felt betrayed by French actions that “unfortunately led to a schism in Syrian-Lebanese relations with France,” citing the wartime “removal of the Lebanese government” and postwar repression of Lebanese and Syrian nationalists.⁷¹⁰ According to this statement, the Lebanese and Syrian colonies of Cuba sought the fulfillment of “promises of independence given to them” as

⁷⁰⁶ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁰⁷ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁰⁸ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁰⁹ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷¹⁰ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

“nothing less than the rights of small nations, conquered by the constant struggle between totalitarianism and democracy, among the eternal conflicts of the progressive and regressive forces of history.”⁷¹¹ Arguing for self-determination, the statement invoked the “Rights proclaimed by the French Revolution...and recognized in the Atlantic Charter and in the meetings in Tehran, Cairo, Moscow and Yalta...Rights consolidated at the San Francisco Conference after the defeat of Nazi-Fascism.”⁷¹² They end by placing “these small nations” within the “cradle of the Greco-Roman civilization, and...belong by their race, by their language, and by their vigor to the Great Arab Cultural World, to which civilization owes so much.”⁷¹³ Finally, the statement ends with a warning that for France it would be “dangerous to try to transform these realities [and promises] into wet paper or a siren song...[the] tricks of defeated imperialism...the attempt to re-emerge can cause danger as imminent as disastrous in the present times.”⁷¹⁴ In fits and starts, and with the help of political pressure from the *mahjar*, Lebanon and Syria achieved independence in the years following the war.

Independence did not come easily, as, by 1943, wartime policies produced a substantial expansion of the colonial welfare state in Lebanon and Syria. General Catroux considered abandoning indirect rule in favor of a more liberal regime of equal, individual

⁷¹¹ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷¹² “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷¹³ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷¹⁴ “La Colonia Libanesa-Siria de Cuba Ante Los Acontecimientos del Cercano Oriente,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

citizenship, something that would have undermined the position of paternalistic elites.⁷¹⁵

Yet, as historian Elizabeth Thompson has noted, the “combination of...three wartime phenomena—fear, social solidarity, and French weakness—produced a critical opening for change in the colonial civic order.”⁷¹⁶ Catroux held elections for a new Lebanese government in November 1943, but when the new government unilaterally abolished the mandate, they were arrested and imprisoned. On 22 November, considered Lebanese Independence Day, France released the prisoners. French and Allied forces would remain in the region until the end of the war, and in 1946 French troops withdrew from Syria and handed power over to the Syrian republican government put in place during the mandate. Syria and Lebanon both achieved independence in the immediate postwar period, but debates and questions persisted, in both the *mahjar* and Mashriq, about the role and composition of state institutions and the character of national identities.

Troubled Waters in the Cuban *Mahjar* and the *Mashriq*: Transnational Belonging in Response to Revolution, War, and Political Inertia

In Cuba, the 1940 Constitution and the newspapers announcing twists and turns in the Mandate did not constitute the only documents that encapsulated changes in national identity and citizenship for Cubans and the *mahjaris* who called it home. In 1940, Fernando Ortiz published his foundational text on meanings of *Cubanidad*, called *Cuban*

⁷¹⁵ Thompson, 226.

⁷¹⁶ Thompson, 226.

Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar.⁷¹⁷ A lawyer and anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz explored the “transcultured” nature of national identity by using the musical *contrapunteo* (a lyrical duel in Cuban folk music similar to dueling banjos in the United States) to juxtapose tobacco and sugar, or what the author believes are “the two most influential figures in the history of Cuba.”⁷¹⁸ Ortiz coined the neologism “transculturation” to replace or expand upon contemporary discourses of “acculturation.” Ortiz’s understanding of transculturation provided a more complex ethnographic framework within which to place the unpredictable features, or “highly varied phenomena,” of Cuban society.⁷¹⁹ In many respects, the 1940s and 1950s represented high-water mark for Cuba’s middle class as urban standards of living hovered well above those in other Latin American contexts. In these decades, Cubans rewrote conceptions of identity, culture, and citizenship. Yet, under the surface, economic conditions in Cuba also destabilized throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and many Cubans’ collective self-image recalibrated in line with precipitously declining political and economic prospects, many within the Cuban *mahjar* began to reorient their sights and aspirations toward the Levant.

In this climate of collective reinvention and attention to the multicultural influences on *Cubanidad*, Cuba’s *mahjari* community contemplated the meaning of freedom, sovereignty, and their statuses as citizens. The colonial civic order of the French

⁷¹⁷ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* [1940] (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

⁷¹⁸ Ortiz, 4.

⁷¹⁹ Ortiz, 85.

Mandate and the governments of post-Machadato Cuba created regimes of positive freedoms, whereby the state actively promoted and provided citizens with the opportunities to participate in constructive civic behavior and assistance to meet basic needs. Expressing these expectations of a robust state apparatus, Lebanese-Cuban physician José Chelala wrote in an editorial for *Cercano Oriente*. He asked his readers: “With this awakening of citizenship—slow but progressive—do you think that you could indefinitely continue repeating the same excuses of the ‘lack of credit,’ ...of the ‘abandonment of Public Works,’ and of other well-known ones?”⁷²⁰ This represented a clear articulation of Chelala’s beliefs in republican citizenship through positive freedom and civic participation. In his column, Chelala argued against “personalist” leadership and in favor of an active state presence in providing the conditions under which the citizenry can enjoy positive freedoms. He warned, “if current directors persist in injuring the country by maintaining improvisation as the norm in health functions, upcoming events will be in charge of prosecuting that conduct.”⁷²¹ In fact, a year later, *Cercano Oriente* published a piece in support of a civic space defined by “the unanimous determination of the citizen majority” via “use of mandatory prescribed suffrage.”⁷²² In Cuba, the Lebanese and Syrian communities established belonging via local reputation and understood freedom as the product of a responsible and active state that supported positive freedoms and civic participation.

⁷²⁰ José Chelala, “La Salubridad no admite improvisaciones,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, no. 4 (April 1943), 9.

⁷²¹ José Chelala, “La Salubridad no admite improvisaciones,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 1, no. 4 (April 1943), 9.

⁷²² “Colaboraciones,” *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, no. 19 (July 1944), 7.

From Cuba, the island's Lebanese and Syrian populations attempted to influence the development of the independent republics, citizenship cultures, and civic environment born from the French Mandate. While the pages of *Cercano Oriente* implicitly painted portraits of Lebanese citizenship shaped by Christian identities and moralities, they often explicitly argued for egalitarian, non-sectarian modes of citizenship, similar to what they supported within the Cuban context. In "Editorial Educacion Nacional," the editors "have outlined something on this most important point...the formation of Lebanese citizenship," by arguing for a secular, public education system that "leads us to a social purpose that we all yearn for, which is nothing other than love for country and the duty that we all have equally to serve and defend it."⁷²³ In this clear articulation of positive freedom and an active state presence in the shaping of citizens and citizenship, the editors continued to advocate for republican reforms rather than sectarian interests,

When we received the report of the triumphant candidates of our country [Lebanon], it caused us sadness instead of joy, since the fact that the chamber is made up of so many Maronites, as many Sunnis and other Druze, Shiites, Armenians, Hebrews, etc...gives us the feeling that the government platform is or will be the Bible, the Qur'an, the Gospels, etc...when it could be laws and social reforms in tune with the needs of the peoples, which is why elections are held, not to know the average that each religious branch will contribute.⁷²⁴

Officially, the editors of *Cercano Oriente* espoused an egalitarian, non-sectarian view of citizenship informed by their experiences in Cuba. The republican virtues through which much of their readership established belonging foregrounded this rhetoric of

⁷²³ "Editorial Educacion Nacional," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 18 (June 1944), 6.

⁷²⁴ "Editorial Educacion Nacional," *Cercano Oriente*, Year 2, No. 18 (June 1944), 6.

egalitarianism and positive freedoms. The Cuban political discourses of the 1930s and 1940s centered around responsive governments that fostered an environment of good civic behavior and active participation on the part of citizens. Yet, nationalist sentiments and the liberal policies of state-centered and paper-based citizenship remained crucial to establishing belonging. While many in the Cuban *mahjar* articulated these republican desires for Lebanon and Syria, sectarian loyalties proved remarkably stubborn, and prominent community members supported liberal initiatives that only inflamed divisions and led to exclusions of their Muslim compatriots in Cuba.

In 1942, the SLH wrote the rules that would govern use for their burial pantheon in Havana's famous cemetery, the Cementerio de Colón, and solidify the Christian character of the SLH leadership and the identity they wished to broadcast.⁷²⁵ The charter document's very first sentence began, "Our life, according to natural laws, must have an end according to the Lord's words 'You are from the earth and to the earth you will return,' and we Christians receive death with the hope of resurrection, and our religious doctrine and our holy traditions."⁷²⁶ Even though club members represented the breadth of Cuba's Lebanese society, including non-Catholics and Muslims, the rules governing use of the pantheon elevated Catholic language and imagery above others, referring to the veneration of "mortal remains, keeping them in a suitable place according to the rites and uses of our Church."⁷²⁷ The draft clarified the terms further, "This legacy is made in

⁷²⁵ Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, "Reglamento del Legado del Panteon de la Beneficencia Libanesa en el Cementerio de Colon de La Habana," ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷²⁶ Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, "Reglamento del Legado del Panteon de la Beneficencia Libanesa en el Cementerio de Colon de La Habana," ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷²⁷ Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, "Reglamento del Legado del Panteon de la Beneficencia Libanesa en el Cementerio de Colon de La Habana," ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

favor of all the Christian Lebanese members of the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana and in favor of those who have contributed to the purchase of the land and the construction of the Pantheon, subject, of course, to the following rules.”⁷²⁸ SLH leadership mandated that at the center of the pantheon there should appear “a bronze plaque in the shape of a triangle with the cedar and in the center the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the name of the Lebanese Charitable Society.”⁷²⁹ (Figure 15) Enshrining the club and community’s Christian—indeed Catholic—identity, especially with the use of the sacred heart, the charter stipulated that, in the event of the SLH’s dissolution, Christian Cubans would receive preference over non-Christian members, for use of the plot. Debates surrounding who possessed rights to the pantheon periodically reemerged over the next three decades, regardless of the leadership’s decision to elevate Maronite identity and prominent members above others.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁸ Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, “Reglamento del Legado del Panteon de la Beneficencia Libanesa en el Cementerio de Colon de La Habana,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷²⁹ Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, “Reglamento del Legado del Panteon de la Beneficencia Libanesa en el Cementerio de Colon de La Habana,” ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷³⁰ “Reglamento Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana,” 2 April 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1310, 27005, Havana, Cuba; Emilio Faroy, Letter to Provincial Governor, 17 May 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 20 February 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 23 October 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17342, Havana, Cuba.



Figure 15: Mausoleum SLH-UAC, Photograph, Havana, 2017. Photo of the front vaults of the pantheon, originally established in 1951 by the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana (SLH), now managed by the Union Árabe de Cuba. In a shaded portion of Havana's large Christopher Columbus Necropolis, many of the original plaques have since been replaced to reflect the newer affiliation and more inclusive use, but the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as originally stipulated in the original charter remains.

Debates surrounding the SLH pantheon exposed the ways some community elites advanced a vision of Lebanese nationalism that was Maronite and exclusionary to secure status and privileges in a culturally Catholic Cuba. In 1951, the SLH executive board adopted a new *reglamento*, or charter, for the club, replacing the original document from the club's founding in 1930.⁷³¹ In this new charter, the board included rules for use of the pantheon, reaffirming its exclusively Christian use, and solidifying the SLH control at the expense of the autonomous charitable society board.⁷³² While Maronites represented the majority among Cuba's *mahjari* community, Melkite Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and a small Muslim minority lived in the communities surrounding Monte and in Old Havana

⁷³¹ "Reglamento Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana," 2 April 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1310, 27005, Havana, Cuba.

⁷³² "Reglamento Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana," 2 April 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1310, 27005, Havana, Cuba.

and belonged to the SLH and other associations.⁷³³ Just over a month after the new charter's passing, former SLH president Emilio Faroy sent a letter to the provincial governor to complain about improprieties and illegalities in the way the board wrote and ratified the new rules, and the pantheon featured as a prominent issue in his complaints.⁷³⁴ Faroy argued for a more egalitarian approach to deciding who could be buried in the club pantheon and decried the "discrimination" and betrayal of the club's "progressives."⁷³⁵ In meeting minutes from the 1950s through the 1970s, club members regularly debated the pantheon and whether "one or two [burial vaults should] be separated to bury the deceased of Islamic origin."⁷³⁶ Not until 1972, did the club allow access to all members "no matter their origins (understood here as place of birth) or religious beliefs." Still the debates and disagreements surrounding the pantheon, spoke to community leaders' promotion of a Maronite-Christian vision of Lebanese nationalism, even as they and other community members advocated for more cooperation within Cuba's Levantine population, among the communities of the North and South American *mahjar*, and across the sectional and ideological divides in Lebanon and Syria.

Debates over national identities and belonging in the Levant and *mahjar* gained greater importance as the post-war climate of decolonization reached the French and British Mandates. Officially, the French relinquished mandatory control over Lebanon in

⁷³³ "Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 23 October 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17342, Havana, Cuba.

⁷³⁴ Emilio Faroy, Letter to Provincial Governor, 17 May 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷³⁵ Emilio Faroy, Letter to Provincial Governor, 17 May 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 634, 17276, Havana, Cuba.

⁷³⁶ "Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 23 October 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17342, Havana, Cuba.

November of 1943, while Syria had declared in dependence in 1941, it remained under French authority until 1945, and French troops did not evacuate until 1946. In Cuba, *mahjaris* celebrated Lebanese and Syrian independence, attempted to maintain political influence in the Levant, but also worked to entrench themselves in Cuba, as they shared many of their Cuban neighbor's impressions that Cuba seemed poised to enter a golden age of progress and international importance.

Yet, as the SLH board debated how best to promote its membership as integral and productive members of the Cuban nation, Cubans experienced a crisis of national identity. Following the euphoria of 1940, the new constitution's afterglow slowly faded as the island's politics unraveled in a series of kleptocratic and ineffective administrations that squandered the elusive promise of progress on which many Cubans hung their hopes. Cubans believed the 1940 constitution placed them among an elite group of "modern and advanced" liberal democracies.⁷³⁷ As rampant corruption of the highest degree eroded Cubans trust in the governing Auténtico party, Cubans continued to place hope in what contemporary journalist Ernesto Ardura called a "historic solution" that would "eliminate tyrants and develop the Republic by ways of progress."⁷³⁸ By 1947, Auténtico corruption caused a rupture within the ruling party as Senator Eduardo Chibás, a popular public figure with revolutionary credibility from his role in the events of 1933, formed a new party, the Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodoxo).⁷³⁹ Chibás and the Ortodoxo party seemed poised for a substantial electoral victory in the Election of 1952, however, in

⁷³⁷ Louis A. Pérez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 446.

⁷³⁸ Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 446.

⁷³⁹ Pérez, *Cuba*, 224.

1951, Chibás committed suicide and delivered a huge moral blow to the Cuban body politic.⁷⁴⁰ On 10 March 1952, Cubans woke up to find that Fulgencio Batista had staged a coup and, while they slept the night before, their dreams of a prosperous and free Cuban republic had evaporated.

Commenting on the coup, U.S. Ambassador to Cuba Arthur Gardner noted the ways it “wounded the pride of many Cubans.”⁷⁴¹ Historian Louis A. Pérez Jr. has written about the “tenor of public discourse was henceforth openly characterized by embarrassment and humiliation.”⁷⁴² To be sure, Batista’s coup called into question Cuba’s claim to civilization and its membership among the world’s “modern” nation-states. Pérez has also noted how the coup “reached deeply into the sources of self-representation and self-confidence, from whence the most widely shared and deeply held formulations of nationality and identity originated.”⁷⁴³ Batista wasted little time consolidating his power. On 4 April 1952, Batista invoked the spirit of 1933 and promulgated a new constitutional law and published it in the *Gaceta Oficial* the very same day.⁷⁴⁴ The new constitutional decree proclaimed itself “faithful to the spirit of the Revolution...gathering the deepest wishes of the Cuban people.”⁷⁴⁵ The 1952 law suspended the 1940 Constitution, that it argued “was practically annulled, in its double

⁷⁴⁰ Pérez, *Cuba*, 225.

⁷⁴¹ Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 447.

⁷⁴² Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 447.

⁷⁴³ Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 447.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ley Constitucional Para La República de Cuba: Aprobada por el consejo de ministros el 4 de Abril y publicada en edicion extraordinaria de la Gaceta Oficial del mismo dia* (Havana: Editora Continental, 1952).

⁷⁴⁵ *Ley Constitucional Para La República de Cuba*, “Declaracion Preliminar,” 3.

condition as a charter of political rights and as a body of norms called upon to lead the revolutionary process towards its final and culminating stage.”⁷⁴⁶ While some of the language resembled that of the 1940 Constitution, the 1952 decree shattered the checks and balances built into the republican apparatus by allowing the Council of Ministers to amend the constitution at will, stripped the legislature of all substantive powers, and bestowed upon Batista all executive and legislative authority.⁷⁴⁷ As Cubans lost faith in the viability of their republic and witnessed a marked increase in political repression, armed resistance became a central feature of civic life.

Furthermore, the structural weaknesses of the Cuban economy, which had been swept under the proverbial rug by artificial growth brought by World War II and the Korean War, began to shake fundamental assumptions about daily life, standards of living, and the island’s economic future.⁷⁴⁸ Again, as Pérez has argued, even before the coup,

Sugar was losing its capacity to sustain economic growth...Cubans had been living in the past, and only in the 1950s did they arrive at the realization that the future was uncertain indeed. The data were bleak and the consensus was chilling. Real income was increasing slowly and sometimes not at all. The purchasing power of exports between 1952 and 1956 remained at approximately the same levels as thirty years earlier. In other words, Cubans were worse off in the 1950s than they had been in the 1920s.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁶ *Ley Constitucional Para La República de Cuba*, “Declaracion Preliminar,” 3.

⁷⁴⁷ Rafael Cox Alomar, “Cuba’s Constitutional Moment,” *Texas Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy*, 23, 1 (2017), 14.

⁷⁴⁸ Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 448-449.

⁷⁴⁹ Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 450.

Meanwhile, the newly independent Lebanese and Syrian republics also experienced extreme highs related hopes for sovereignty, political progress, and unity dashed by unfortunate events and spirals of disillusionment. In 1948, Lebanon and Syria participated in the Arab League's unsuccessful war against Israel. Military defeat against a bordering nation and the influx of Palestinian refugees escaping Israel worked as destabilizing forces on the young Lebanese and Syrian nations but propelled across the *mahjar* a reorientation of identities within a wave of renewed political activism.⁷⁵⁰ In 1951, the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana passed a new associational charter that established a "Propaganda Section" of the association charged with maintaining a strong and active membership, functioning as liaisons between the association and outside entities, and organizing events and festivals.⁷⁵¹ Later, in 1958, the National Committee for the Defense of Lebanese Independence (Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Independencia del Líbano) met at the home of Jorge Dergan, at the corner of Calle San Nicolás and Monte, and spun off from the SLH in order to "defend the Independence and territorial integrity and politics of Lebanon and oppose in annexation or union with any state in the universe."⁷⁵² Through committees like these, Lebanese and Syrian leaders in the *mahjar* acted as intermediaries between representatives of the Levantine Arab states

⁷⁵⁰ Lily Pearl Balloffet, *Argentina in the Global Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 142-143; Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 58, 82, 103; Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 190.

⁷⁵¹ "Reglamento de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 2 April 1951, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1310, 27005, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁵² "Reglamento del Comité Nacional Pro Defensa de la Independencia del Líbano," 28 May 1958, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

and their host countries, often lobbying on behalf of Lebanese and Syrian interests, hosting diplomats, and affecting change in international relations across the Atlantic.

Through the 1950s, Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian communities strengthened ties with the Levant, but also played a central role in solidifying and institutionalizing diasporic, transnational solidarity with their compatriots in the Americas and across the global *mahjar*. In a "Brief Historical Overview," the World Lebanese Cultural Union traced its origins to 1959, when the Cuban-born "Dr. Natalio Chediak founded...FIEL in Havana, Cuba. It brought under its umbrella Lebanese entities from the Americas only."⁷⁵³ To be sure, the members of the FIEL, while focused on hemispherical unity, understood their community's transnational scope and interests and the importance to build links across borders. Through the 1940s and 50s, Chediak oversaw the founding and development of various transnational organizations. With the help of the Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana, Simón Bestani of Argentina, and the Lebanese legation in Washington, D.C., Chediak founded the FIEL as a nongovernmental organization that would eventually grow into a global body representing Lebanon and the Lebanese living in the *mahjar*.⁷⁵⁴ Bestani recounted the events that lead to the founding of the FIEL, beginning with his 1957 visit to Washington during his term as president of the Patriotic Lebanese Association of Buenos Aires.⁷⁵⁵ In Washington, Bestani met Victor Khoury,

[illegible]

⁷⁵⁴ World Lebanese Cultural Union, “Brief Historical overview of FIEL and WLCU,” *Constitution and Bylaws*, 4 September 2018, 62 (accessed 4/16/2021 via <https://wlcu.world/ng/identification-and-bylaws/٢-٩-نيسان-ابريل-%D9%A0١٨/>).

⁷⁵⁵ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

Lebanese ambassador to the United States, at the Sheraton Park Hotel, where they discussed, in his words, “the immigrants, about the institutions that gathered them in different countries on the continent and about the convenience of relating each other. In reference to the last item, the ambassador mentioned Mr. Natalio Chediak, a well-known lawyer (of La Habana, Cuba), who shared our views and had a related project.”⁷⁵⁶ Upon returning to Buenos Aires, Bestani wrote to Chediak and invited him to his association’s Lebanese Independence Day celebrations, at which Chediak delivered a speech outlining the “importance of an Interamerican Federation of Lebanese Entities.”⁷⁵⁷ Chediak’s efforts, particularly in the hemispheric scope of his travels, illustrated the interconnectedness and transnational networking inherent in the *mahjari* associations of the Americas, and pointed to the coordinated cooperation that would define a global Lebanese identity. As Argentine associational records reported,

Under the invitation of the presidency, Dr. Natalio Chediak, who delivered yesterday an interesting lecture on the importance of the Interamerican Federation of Lebanese Entities...He is asked to work on the project of a federation aimed at grouping Lebanese entities in America, to which he referred in the course of his lecture. Dr. Chediak explained the importance of the project and the way to follow to carry it out. Before leaving, Dr. Chediak thanked the board of directors for its warm welcome. After an exchange of ideas, the board of directors decides to: 1) Carry out the project suggested by Dr. Natalio Chediak on the foundation of an Interamerican Federation of Lebanese Entities. 2) Authorize the board of directors to do all the acts necessary to carry out the project in the country, making it known to all Lebanese entities and requiring their support to it. 3) Authorize the board of directors to address the Lebanese entities in Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Bolivia, also to inform them about the project and gain their support to it. 4) Ask Dr. Natalio Chediak to

⁷⁵⁶ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

⁷⁵⁷ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

coordinate all the Lebanese entities in America willing to become a part of the project.⁷⁵⁸

Bestani considered these events to be the birth of the FIEL, as on his way back to Cuba, Chediak visited Lebanese communities and associations in Brazil, Mexico, and the United States in an effort to increase awareness of the project and gain their support.⁷⁵⁹ It was during his stay in Brazil that Chediak met with Alfredo Busaid, who Bestani described as “a prominent law professor and later Minister of Justice” and “summoned a constitutive meeting to be carried out in La Habana, Cuba” scheduled for the second half of 1958.⁷⁶⁰ When Chediak returned to Cuba, he began work on a constitution for the new organization, but soon sent word to his contacts in the region that the 1958 meeting would have to be postponed due to the unrest of the ongoing revolutionary offensive. With little expectation of what the island would undergo in the coming weeks, months, and years, Chediak informed Bestani and his colleagues that he had rescheduled the meeting for January 1959. While the Cuban-born Chediak took the lead in establishing a hemispheric project, he did so within his official diplomatic capacity with Beirut’s blessing and interest.

⁷⁵⁸ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

⁷⁵⁹ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

⁷⁶⁰ Simón Bestani, “FIEL & later the WLCU: a Patriotic feeling in a spirit of effort, conviction & dreams,” 3 September 2008, accessed 4/16/2021: <http://wlcu.world/wp/?p=1965>.

Revolution of 1959, Memory, and Forgetting

In 1959, the rupture of revolution changed the ways many Cubans viewed themselves and one another. The revolution offered teleological narratives of struggle and redemption that paved the way for radical reforms and a new revolutionary *Cubanidad*. New immigration to the island almost stopped entirely, and a new wave of out-migration changed the island's demographics and upset the institutional and structural stability of Cuban government and society. For many Lebanese and Syrian Cubans, initial excitement for revolutionary change faded to disillusionment and exile as the revolutionary government nationalized the businesses that sustained the ethnic enclave along Avenida Monte in Havana, and those in other Cuban cities. As many in the Cuban *mahjar* gave up hope for Cuba's future, they reoriented their sights and energies to forming a more Mediterranean-facing, transnational identity.

Batista cemented his rule with a series of promises. As Louis A. Pérez, Jr. has noted, "To the business community, he promised order, stability, and labor tranquility. To the United States, he promised respect for foreign capital. To the political parties, he promised new elections in 1954."⁷⁶¹ The 1952 coup disoriented Cuba's political parties and rendered them incapable of mounting any real opposition to Batista's power, even if they attempted to mount efforts at mediation for several years. By 1956, as in 1933, Cubans increasingly believed their only recourse to be armed struggle. When he came to power, Batista shunted the 1940 constitution and cancelled the elections set to take place later in the year. On 26 July 1953, Fidel Castro Ruz, a young Ortodoxo who ran as a congressional campaign in the cancelled election, staged a military attack on the eastern

⁷⁶¹ Pérez, *Cuba*, 226.

city of Santiago de Cuba's army barracks at Moncada, the island's second largest military installation. As it has been described, "the attack failed, but the dimensions of the failure distinguished it from all others: the plan was as daring as its failure was spectacular," it lent legitimacy to the strategy of armed revolution and catapulted Castro into a leadership role within the diffuse and disparate anti-Batista movement.⁷⁶² Electoral opposition ceased to exist following the 1954 election, in which Batista ran unopposed and won with a majority of the forty percent of the electorate that participated. By 1956, Castro's 26th of July Movement organized another Santiago-area uprising, while other groups like the II Frente Nacional del Escambray and the clandestine, student-led Directorio Revolucionario mounted insurgent attacks further west and in Havana. The government failed to deliver on its promises to protect the peace and foreign capital as revolutionary attacks intensified, and, in 1957, the government resorted to "indiscriminate terror" and the establishment of vast military zones from which *batistiano* forces evacuated families and livestock. Finally, on 1 January 1959, just a few hours past midnight and amid New Year celebrations, Fulgencio Batista boarded a plane for the Dominican Republic, fleeing into exile.⁷⁶³

By most accounts, January 1 featured joyous street celebrations, as revolutionary forces promised a return to the 1940 Constitution and democracy. Castro entered Havana on January 8 and took residence in the Havana Hilton, where many of those who fought alongside him for years in the Cuba's mountainous Oriente Province found a place to

⁷⁶² Pérez, *Cuba*, 228.

⁷⁶³ Pérez, *Cuba*, 226-229.

rest. Historians such as Lillian Guerra have noted the ways in which Castro used the “summary trial and execution of hundreds of accused war criminals [that] mobilized citizens to dramatize this narrative of a unified past collectively endorse Fidel’s right to lead through the first organized mass rallies.”⁷⁶⁴ Journalists and editors, including Miguel de Quevedo, who ran Cuba’s influential *Bohemia* magazine, rallied to reconstruct the recent past, including the war and the messianic aura surrounding Fidel’s persona, which helped the 26th of July Movement’s establish public trust.⁷⁶⁵ Castro centralized power in himself, as many “Cubans projected their aspirations for social and economic change onto the one person they believed was endowed with unlimited power.”⁷⁶⁶ The January 3-February 4 meeting of the FIEL split its events between the Casa Continental and the Havana Hilton, where the delegates celebrated the establishment of their transnational, hemispheric organization mere floors below the place where Castro established the headquarters of his fledgling revolutionary government. That Cuban *mahjaris* took the lead in this transnational turn may betray a cautious approach to yet another nationalist revolution and the uncertainty about their future on the island.

In the early years of the revolution, many within Cuba’s Lebanese and Syrian community shared a general excitement and support for revolutionary change with other Cubans. The Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana formed a Pro-Agrarian Reform Commission to express “the broad adherence of the Lebanese to the Agrarian Reform Law,” and at its 19 June 1959 general meeting discussed intentions to donate “\$714...to

⁷⁶⁴ Guerra, 42.

⁷⁶⁵ Guerra, 42.

⁷⁶⁶ Pérez, *Cuba*, 251.

the Revolutionary Government.”⁷⁶⁷ The committee in support of agrarian reforms comprised a group of established leaders and up-and-coming members of the association, including commission president José Curí and board members Pablo Besil, José Musa, Ignacio Sarraf, Antonio Salup, Elías Dergan, Pablo Yabre, Humberto Chediak, and Delia Baracat de Curí.⁷⁶⁸ At that meeting, Salup proposed “that a check be made from the Society in the name of Fidel Castro...and delivered to the Minister of Justice Dr. Alfredo Yabur Maluff,” while other members supported the plan suggested that “the Press and Television be invited,” an amendment that elicited enthusiastic responses before the plan reached a unanimous vote of approval.⁷⁶⁹ At the same meeting, the SLH planned for 24 June 1959 a reception “offering a toast worthy of Dr. Yabur” on his appointment as Minister of Justice.⁷⁷⁰ Throughout 1959, the SLH passed countless resolutions in favor of the revolution and engaged in public displays of approval for revolutionary initiatives and of Castro.

The SLH recorded its most dramatic show of support for Castro and his revolutionary project in the minutes for 22 and 24 July 1959 “extraordinary” meetings of the directory. The SLH president called the extraordinary meeting to “express his thoughts regarding the resignation of the Prime Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary

⁷⁶⁷ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 19 June 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 24 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba; Menéndez, 181.

⁷⁶⁸ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 24 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba; Menéndez, 181.

⁷⁶⁹ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 19 June 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁷⁰ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 19 June 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

Government, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz and suggests that the Board agree to request from Dr. Fidel Castro...for the good of the Homeland to beg him to withdraw his resignation and rejoin his post as Prime Minister.”⁷⁷¹ Castro resigned as prime minister over what he claimed amounted to “moral differences” with President Manuel Urrutia, who also resigned shortly thereafter.⁷⁷² Describing Cuba as “a ship in a turbulent sea,” they reasserted their belief that “Dr. Castro is the captain, the only one able to take the ship to port.”⁷⁷³ Before the meeting, the board had secured a meeting with the new president, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, for 24 July in order to “offer our respects...and reiterate our support for the Revolutionary Government and the most determined support of its laws.”⁷⁷⁴ On 24 July 1959, at 10:30 A.M., the board of directors, which included J. José Curí, Elías Dargan, Julian Rassi, and Antonio Salup met at the SLH and began their walk to the Presidential Palace, where they “were received by the citizen President Dr. Osvaldo Dorticon Torrado, at eleven thirty in the morning, communicating with simple and sincere words...that the reason for this visit was to inform him of the agreements made by the Board of Directors in the sense of offering their respects...and adhering to the popular request that Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, withdraw his resignation from the post of Prime Minister...because Cuba needs him at this time when...the insidious campaigns

⁷⁷¹ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 22 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁷² Guerra, 68-69.

⁷⁷³ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 22 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁷⁴ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 22 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913.

against Cuba are unparalleled.”⁷⁷⁵ By announcing their patriotic bone fides and faith in the leadership, the SLH board hoped to solidify their standing within the revolutionary project and secure their place in, what they hoped would be, Cuba’s bright future.

Upon returning to the SLH, the board members held a meeting, during which they resolved to assist with “the peasant concentration of July 26 in support of Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, and supporting the Revolutionary Government,” by providing “accommodation to ten farmers” from among the “650,000 *guajiros* [expected] to attend.”⁷⁷⁶ The SLH joined thousands of Havana residents and businesses in hosting the *guajiros* expected to swarm Havana ahead of Cuba’s first ever celebration of Castro’s 26 July Movement. As with other Cubans, many of those within the island’s Lebanese and Syrian community celebrated and demonstrated enthusiastic support for revolutionary change through 1959, but signs of frustration and distrust also appeared in the associational records.

As early as January 1959, but increasingly through the early 1960s, SLH meeting minutes betray the frustration felt by some members stemming from confusion about rapidly changing laws and the inability to deposit funds into an account earmarked to cover the costs of construction for a new associational headquarters.⁷⁷⁷ Beginning in the summer of 1960, the revolutionary government nationalized foreign and locally owned

⁷⁷⁵ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 24 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁷⁶ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 24 July 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁷⁷ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 23 January 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

businesses, including stores, clinics, social clubs, ethnic societies, and schools.⁷⁷⁸ These nationalizations negatively impacted many members of Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian communities who owned small businesses, operated clinics, and thrived, in part, on the robust network of ethnic clubs and associations. Associational membership rolls began shrinking in the years following the revolution. Meeting minutes sometimes noted members' "finding himself absent in the city of Miami."⁷⁷⁹ Into the 1960s, meetings increasingly failed to meet quorum as the rate of membership "drops" (*bajas*) increased, and new memberships declined.⁷⁸⁰ Associational records show an increased focus on providing a relative place of sanctuary for its members—only members—offering dominos, but also making it known that the revolutionary ban on gambling would be strictly enforced, as the board posted signs reading, "Gambling is forbidden, nothing but Domino matches will be allowed, and if you are not a member, do not occupy a table."⁷⁸¹ Secretaries increasingly submitted inventories of associational goods and furniture, with estimated value, including a 1964 inventory that included 5 sets of dominos and 1 backgammon case, or "*juego de damas arabes (taule)*."⁷⁸² This emphasis on diversions

⁷⁷⁸ Guerra, 135.

⁷⁷⁹ "Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 24 April 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913.

⁷⁸⁰ "Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano," 26 May 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba; "Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano," 15 December 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba; "Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano," July-August 1968, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16989, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁸¹ "Actas de la Union Libanesa de Santa Clara," December 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 29, 211, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁸² "Relacion de bienes de esta asociacion [Asociación Union Libano-Cubano] del año 1964," ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba; "Actas del Asociación Union Libano-Cubano," 26 March 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba. "*Taule*," "*Tawle*," or "*Tawlah*" is the Arabic term used for backgammon, a popular table game in the Levant (and other cultures around the world). The term literally means "table."

accompanied an increased focus on relations and communications with “our representative [on this island],” who has our “friendship and complete collaboration...having seen the great help he has given to the Lebanese Colony in Cuba.”⁷⁸³ This reorientation toward the Levant, and the disengagement with Cuban politics, perhaps explained why these ethnic organizations, and those of their Chinese neighbors, continued to operate under state supervision while Afro-Cuban organizations closed per government orders. This gaze toward the Levant only increased as the revolutionary government moved forward with efforts to remake Cuba and Cubans and space for independent civil society decreased.

After 1959, loyalty, proper civic behavior, and revolutionary sacrifice became inextricable from conceptions of belonging and citizenship. While on the surface, these qualities called back to the egalitarian republicanism of the Independence-era *mambises*, in substance, revolutionary citizenship departed from early iterations republican citizenship and locally-derived understandings of belonging. In 1960, *Pueblo y Estado*, a pamphlet emblazoned with a photo of the “*guajiro* concentration” on its cover, outlined the revolutionary boundaries for minority cultures and citizens’ responsibilities. In 1959, the government called for the “*guajiro*” farmers to bring the countryside to the capital, officially to build support for agrarian reforms, but also in an effort to show Cuba’s urban elite and rival revolutionary movements the power and size of Castro’s rural base of support. The pamphlet argued on behalf of active civic participation as it explained,

We recognize our debts. One has to pay them. We have responsibilities towards our people. One has to face them. These responsibilities are

⁷⁸³ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana,” 14 May 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17342, Havana, Cuba.

especialmente obligatorio para las élites en todos los sentidos de la palabra (Políticas o económicas élites, intelectuales élites, morales élites), que es para todos los hombres y todos los grupos que se destacan debido a sus ventajas, sus funciones o sus cualidades, no de la gente, sino dentro de la gente. Minorías que se separan de la gente son *false minorities*. Las élites que abandonan a la gente, *desert*. Las élites que usan a la gente, *betray*.⁷⁸⁴

The instability of Syrian and Lebanese Cubans' place in the emerging revolutionary nation found literal expression in the difficulties in establishing a permanent headquarters for the SLH. Members understood the precariousness of associational life in this revolutionary era and took concerted steps toward securing their future.

In the early years of the revolution, the SLH moved to show its place in Cuban society and create a permanent home through construction of a society headquarters. At a meeting held on 20 November 1959, the board informed the members how the SLH recently spent 18,000 pesos for a plot of land intended as a place on which they hoped to construct a new meeting and event space to be designed by architect and SLH member José Milton.⁷⁸⁵ For his part, Milton addressed the board "to express with heartfelt and emotional words, that he felt deeply honored and highly pleased to see what he dreamed and longed for as a child, when he was brought in his parents' arms, to the bosom of this Society, that is, the social building, for which he had put all his knowledge and his best efforts to surpass his work on other social buildings."⁷⁸⁶ Plans for the building continued to move forward, even as members grew uneasy about the future.

⁷⁸⁴ *Pueblo y Estado* (Havana: Centro de Documentación e Información Social Cristiano, 1960), 5.

⁷⁸⁵ "Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano," 20 November 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁸⁶ "Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano," 20 November 1959, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

Hesitation persisted as, throughout 1960, various board members suggested that the society postpone construction until additional funds could be raised, expressing unease about the future of the society.⁷⁸⁷ Fundraising for the new building would be ongoing, including a promotion during the 1960 Un Día en el Líbano festivities for a free beer to all who donated toward the building.⁷⁸⁸ José Milton left Cuba in 1963, never to return, and in that year, the secretary for Havana's chapter of the Lebanese World Union recorded meeting minutes on associational letterhead that indicated "while Mr. José Milton's absence lasts, the offices of The Institution must be transferred to the fourth floor" of the Milton Building in the Marianao section of the capital, even as this meeting took place at the SLH meeting space still located, near Cuba's capitol building, at 460 Amistad.⁷⁸⁹ Still, with the purchase of land and construction of a building members hoped could provide the Cuban community at large with a rentable event space for special occasions and other reunions showed the SLH board's commitment to Cuba and desire to provide community service. While revolutionary fervor and a desire to belong encouraged, among many, a commitment to patriotic sacrifice and civic participation, Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian communities often looked toward the Levant and other population nodes in the Americas to orient themselves in a nationalist revolutionary culture where their claims to citizenship and belonging remained uncertain.

⁷⁸⁷ "Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano," 15 January 1960, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁸⁸ "Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano," 10 November 1960, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁸⁹ "Actas del Union Mundial Libanesa," 19 April 1963, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16914, Havana, Cuba; Michael Vasquez, "Miami-Dade Commission names street after developer José Milton," *The Miami Herald*, 1 September 2015, accessed 4/18/2021: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article33279270.html>.

The 1959 founding of the FIEL marked a swing within Cuba's Arab community toward transnationalism, South-South solidarities, and a reorientation of attentions away from Cuba toward the Levant and other associational nodes in the *mahjar*. At the 1959 inaugurating convention, the delegates resolved to meet for its First Congress from 31 January to 5 February 1960 in Mexico City.⁷⁹⁰ Ahead of the First Congress, Natalio Chediak visited Mexico City and the United States, "finding a great welcome by all the Lebanese Societies of those countries" of the FIEL and how it worked "for their enhancement" and its mission to "bring together all Lebanese residing in the American Continent, for the glory of Lebanon and for the pride of all Lebanese."⁷⁹¹ Chediak returned to Havana prior to the congress in order to fetch his credentials and rejoin the Cuban delegation. The text of the credentials given to the delegates, and addressed to the FIEL's Mexico-based president, Pedro Checa, highlights the SLH's increasingly transnational orientation,

We are pleased to provide you with the Credential that accredits the delegates who are listed in it, and who are to represent this society in the First Congress of the FIEL, which will be held under your dignified Presidency...The Lebanese Society of Havana predicts a resounding success to this First Congress of the FIEL, having the honor of having the enthusiasm and collaboration of you and Dr. Natalio Chediak Ahuayda, for the achievement of the great conquests of our noble and patriotic purpose. [The SLH] wishes to send you and other members of this First Congress of the FIEL, a fraternal greeting and encouragement so that all of you offer your interest and sacrifice in favor of the greater development of such a transcendental event...the reaffirmation of the principles and institutional norms that will lead us to the World Confederation of

⁷⁹⁰ "Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 15 January 1960, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁹¹ "Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana," 15 January 1960, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

Lebanese Societies, which will undoubtedly strengthen the Lebanese Government in everything that benefits Lebanon and its independence.⁷⁹²

The First Congress of the FIEL proved to be more than its name suggested as it hosted associational representatives from outside the Americas, including Australia and Africa, and less than a month after the Mexico meeting ended, the Lebanese president issued Decree 3423, mandating the establishment of a “permanent central committee headed by the Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister, its mission was to plan a Diaspora conference aiming to adopt a permanent ‘official institution’ for the Lebanese emigrants worldwide.”⁷⁹³ In 1960, the World Lebanese Union (WLU) held its First Congress at the UNESCO Palace in Beirut, where, “inaugurated by the Lebanese President of the Republic Fouad Chehab, the Prime Minister Saeb Salam and the Foreign Minister Philip Takla,” the delegates adopted it as the “sole official representative of the Lebanese Diaspora.”⁷⁹⁴ The FIEL held a second congress in November of 1961 in Buenos Aires, before holding a joint meeting with the WLU in Boston on 21 October 1962.⁷⁹⁵ The FIEL, widely considered a precursor of the WLU, eventually merged with the global organization and remained closely tied to the SLH.

⁷⁹² “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 29 January 1960, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁹³ World Lebanese Cultural Union, “Brief Historical overview of FIEL and WLCU,” *Constitution and Bylaws*, 4 September 2018, 62 (accessed 4/16/2021 via <https://wlcu.world/ng/identification-and-bylaws/٢-٩-نيسان-ابريل-%D9%A0١٨/>).

⁷⁹⁴ World Lebanese Cultural Union, “Brief Historical overview of FIEL and WLCU,” *Constitution and Bylaws*, 4 September 2018, 62 (accessed 4/16/2021 via <https://wlcu.world/ng/identification-and-bylaws/٢-٩-نيسان-ابريل-%D9%A0١٨/>).

⁷⁹⁵ World Lebanese Cultural Union, “Brief Historical overview of FIEL and WLCU,” *Constitution and Bylaws*, 4 September 2018, 62 (accessed 4/16/2021 via <https://wlcu.world/ng/identification-and-bylaws/٢-٩-نيسان-ابريل-%D9%A0١٨/>).

Throughout the 1960s and 70s, associational documents recorded a frustration with the lack of resources, declining memberships, and restrictions on travel and transnational networking. In 1961, disillusioned with the revolution, Natalio Chediak left Cuba with his wife and two children, living in Mexico for the two years as he fulfilled his role as Secretary General of the WLU.⁷⁹⁶ Throughout the 1960s, associational records for a number of Lebanese and Syrian organizations in Cuba showed shrinking membership rolls. The paper on which club secretaries recorded minutes and corresponded within and outside of Cuba noticeably decreased in quality, as did the apparent quality and condition of the typewriters.⁷⁹⁷ A noticeable shift in the quality of the letterhead used by the Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano took place around 1964, as a simple black and white name and address replaced a more colorful letterhead that included the Cuban and Lebanese flags.⁷⁹⁸ Yet, public collection and surveillance increased.

Prior to 1959, public authorities did not routinely collect meeting minutes (only recording official investigations into improprieties), but in the years following the revolution, meeting minutes appeared in government archives with regularity. The Cuban government also asked associations to provide, and keep updated, lists of their members and their home addresses.⁷⁹⁹ In the 1960s, the Lebanese and Syrian associations in Cuba

⁷⁹⁶ Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021.

⁷⁹⁷ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 12 January 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 602, 16911, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 23 July 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17341, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 8 March 1974, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1333, 27289, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁹⁸ “Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 29 July 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba; “Actas del Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 14 January 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba.

⁷⁹⁹ Letter from the Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano to Department of Associations, Ministry of Interior, 26 June 1961, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

reported meeting minutes to revolutionary authorities, but these records became less detailed as they went into the 1970s.⁸⁰⁰ What details the secretaries included, focused mostly on contact, or lack thereof, with the Lebanese contacts and organizations outside Cuba, especially “compatriots in Latin America.”⁸⁰¹ Records suggest that as Cuban *mahjaris* felt an increased sense of isolation, and the revolution deemphasized Cuba’s Catholic identity, their collective sense of community grew more inclusive of Muslims and took on an air of South-South solidarity with the Levant and the Arab World. Increased restrictions on travel and transnational collaboration represented a deeply felt departure from the way these associations traditionally operated. In 1971, the SLH sought to offer three “scholarships of 1,600 pesos each” for law students to study “the Law of the ancient civilizations of the Middle East, especially Islamic Law, at the Hikmat Higher Institute of Rights in Beirut, Capital of Lebanon,” but noted that “the Honorable Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba regrets very much since due to the academic calendar of the Universities, Cuban students cannot participate in that interesting Course.”⁸⁰² This was just one of many examples of Cuban authorities frustrating SLH and other associations’ attempts to travel to international meetings, attend universities in the Levant, or increase exchanges of people and resources with sister organizations elsewhere.

⁸⁰⁰ “Actas “Actas del Unión Libanesa de Santa Clara,” 1968, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1278, 76513; “Actas “Actas del Unión Libanesa de Santa Clara,” 2 April 1974-8 April 1975, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 1278, 76512, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰¹ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 14 May 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17341, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰² “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de la Habana,” 23 October 1971, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 639, 17342, Havana, Cuba.

The last recorded visit by a Cuban *mahjari* association member to an international meeting of delegates, at least in the first two decades after the revolution, happened when Pablo Hadad Chediak attended, in 1964, “the Second Congress of the Unión of the Lebanese in the World,” who relayed his “many impressions he was able to communicate to us about his trip” to Lebanon.⁸⁰³ According to associational records, Hadad Chediak reported in a letter to the Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano that a contact met him at the airport in Beirut “who led him to his town, Ghazir, along a beautiful and wide modern avenue. There he was received by his relatives with the expressive custom of hugs and kisses.”⁸⁰⁴ After spending the night in Ghazir, Hadad Chediak “returned to Beirut to attend the act of raising the Cuban flag, at the precise moment the Honorable President of Lebanon arrived at the ceremony, which took place in the UNESCO building, with the attendance of some five thousand people.”⁸⁰⁵ Following the opening ceremonies, Hadad Chediak “found [his cousin] Dr. Natalio Chediak, by whom he was accompanied, from now on, for all the events.”⁸⁰⁶ The year prior to the Congress, Chediak had concluded his last year as FIEL Secretary General in Mexico and had since moved to Lebanon.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰³ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰⁴ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰⁵ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰⁶ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰⁷ Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021.

Like the previous comment about the “modern” infrastructure, the retelling of events focused on images of Lebanese modernity and abundance, during events that “lasted day by day and in different, and sometimes distant places, with a constant splendor: huge tables, with large quantities of exquisite food and an abundant variety of drinks. From each table, each one chose the food they wanted in the quantity they wanted, but almost all were wrong about the capacity of their stomach.”⁸⁰⁸ At this congress, Chediak won the election for WLU Secretary General, against a Chilean opponent.⁸⁰⁹ As the meeting drew to a close, discussion shifted toward the idea of return to Lebanon, pointing to how “for two years there has functioned in Beirut a chapter of the World Union, constituted by Lebanese who, after living in the outside for more than five years, have returned to Lebanon.”⁸¹⁰ Early in the revolution, Lebanese organizations sought to send remittances and monetary aid to Lebanese family members and organizations, but regularly expressed frustration at the Lebanese consul who refused the funds, perhaps because Cuban authorities had expressed desire to keep currency on the island.⁸¹¹ Well into the 1970s, contact with the Lebanese consulate in Havana continued, but the nature of these communications shifted away from aid to Lebanon, defined by request to Lebanese authorities, from Lebanese descendants in Cuba, for aid and

⁸⁰⁸ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁰⁹ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸¹⁰ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 30 September 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

⁸¹¹ “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 29 January 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662, Havana, Cuba.

support.⁸¹² Cuban associations remained spectators to many future congresses of the WLU, which eventually changed its name to the World Lebanese Cultural Union.⁸¹³

Through the turbulent years of the 1960s, the Lebanese and Syrian population in Cuba dwindled.⁸¹⁴ As revolutionary forces incrementally nationalized greater numbers of Cuban businesses and properties, more and more Cubans of Lebanese and Syrian descent chose to leave for the United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Lebanon.⁸¹⁵ As with most Cubans, most left in the waves of out-migration from Cuba between 1960-1962 and further trickled out during the Freedom Flights of 1965-1973.⁸¹⁶ Still, some left on flights to Venezuela or Mexico.⁸¹⁷ The 1970s did not witness the same out-flow of populations from the island, but as associational rolls continued to shrink, the meeting minutes offered fewer and fewer detailed accounts of collective actions and events. Inventories showed that associational boards attempted to repair, rather than replace, broken

⁸¹² “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 29 January 1964, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 125, 1662; “Actas del Asociación Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 26 January 1968, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988.

⁸¹³ “Actas del Unión de los Libaneses en el Mundo,” 4 June 1975, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16919, Havana, Cuba; “Actas del Unión de los Libaneses en el Mundo,” 19 November 1972, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 690, 18012, Havana, Cuba; World Lebanese Cultural Union, “Brief Historical overview of FIEL and WLCU,” *Constitution and Bylaws*, 4 September 2018, 62 (accessed 4/16/2021 via <https://wlcu.world/ng/identification-and-bylaws/٢-٩-نيسان-ايريل-D9%A0١٨/القاءن-الاساسي-٩-نيسان-ايريل-٢>).

⁸¹⁴ Menéndez, 182.

⁸¹⁵ Blanca Sesin, interviewed by the author, 8/12/2019; Ivan Santana, interviewed by the author, 12/21/2020; Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021; George Dargham, interviewed by the author, 3/12/2021.

⁸¹⁶ María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 23-45.

⁸¹⁷ Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021; Felipe Yaber, interviewed by the author, 8/31/2020.

appliances and damaged furniture.⁸¹⁸ And, while displays of Cuban patriotism became common and formulaic, mentions of Lebanon as “our country” appeared just as regularly.⁸¹⁹ The passage of the 1976 “Communist” Constitution marked a moment of institutionalization of the revolution’s socialist nature, and cleared the path for the systemic reorganization of associational life on the island. In 1978, Decree 26 created a new “Regulation for the Law of Migration,” that increased the state’s surveillance of people’s movements and further restricted legal out-migration.⁸²⁰ As Cuba solidified its ties to the Soviet Union, Lebanese and Syrian associations looked to non-aligned nations and ideologies with great interest.⁸²¹ In 1979, after years of dwindling membership rolls, the Cuban government merged all of the island’s Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian into one organization—the Unión Árabe de Cuba.

Conclusion

In the late 1970s, former SLH board member Antonio Caballero left Cuba with his wife and son after being released from prison. Antonio had been accused of treason and barred from membership in the SLH and other similar associations. On 1 December 1965, the acting president of the SLH informed members that “Emilio Faroy Ora and

⁸¹⁸ “Relación de Bienes de Esta Asociacion del Año 1964,” Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba.

⁸¹⁹ “Actas del Unión Libanesa de Santa Clara,” 7 May 1974, ANC, Regsitro de Asociaciones, 1278, 76514, Havana, Cuba.

⁸²⁰ “Reglamento de la Ley de Migración,” *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, 31 July 1978, Year LXXVI, No. 25, Havana, Cuba, 307-328. It is important to note that out-migration had been restricted since the 1960s, but the 1978 decree codified this policy under the new constitution.

⁸²¹ “Actas de la Asociacion Unión Líbano-Cubano,” 26 January 1968, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 610, 16988, Havana, Cuba; “Actas de la Sociedad Palestino-Arabe,” 18 October 1968, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 705, 18214, Havana, Cuba.

Antonio Caballero Mata, who hold the positions of President and Treasurer respectively...have been sentenced by the Courts of Justice, and this board unanimously agrees: to remove Emilio Faroy Ora and Antonio Caballero Mata from their positions as President and Treasurer of this institution and also to terminate them as members for having been sanctioned by the Revolutionary Courts.”⁸²² Just a few years earlier, in 1961, members had congratulated Caballero on the arrival of his first son.⁸²³ Caballero first fled to Lebanon before finding his way to Hialeah, Florida to join the Dergan Family, to which his wife, Janet Dergan Najul de Caballero, belonged.⁸²⁴ In the 1960s, Hialeah had become home to a large Cuban exile community, and many of Cuba’s *mahjaris* also made their home there, closer to many of their former neighbors and where they felt a sense of familiarity and continuity in lives now defined by rupture.

The spirit of 1940 slowly faded as a coup sparked a revolution, and a revolution extinguished the hopes of many who chose to cross the Florida Straits or the Atlantic to find themselves anew. Many Cubans of Syrian and Lebanese descent, who in 1940 sought to establish themselves as proud and loyal citizens of a Cuban nation that represented the progressive and modern aspirations of a region, eventually soured on their prospects for a future in Cuba.⁸²⁵ Their identities shifted away from Cuba and

⁸²² “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 1 December 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 602, 16911, Havana, Cuba.

⁸²³ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 7 March 1961, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 603, 16913, Havana, Cuba.

⁸²⁴ “Actas de la Sociedad Libanesa de La Habana,” 12 January 1965, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 602, 16911, Havana, Cuba.

⁸²⁵ Blanca Sesin, interviewed by the author, 8/12/2019; Ivan Santana, interviewed by the author, 12/21/2020; Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021; George Dargham, interviewed by the author, 3/12/2021.

toward Lebanon. In Miami, the Dergan family initially attended Catholic Mass at Hialeah's St. John the Baptist parish, located in a heavily Cuban neighborhood. Yet, by the time Caballero arrived with Janet, the Dergans had participated in the founding of Miami's Maronite Parish, Our Lady of Lebanon, a project of unity and partnership with Miami's Anglicized Lebanese community.⁸²⁶ As the revolution wore on, Cuba's Lebanese and Syrians increasingly fostered their transnational identities.

Many Cuban-Lebanese and Cuban-Syrian exiles in the United States stayed close to the wider Cuban exile community while also building stronger ties to the U.S. descendants of Lebanese and Syrians. The experiences of exile and loss in the wake of the 1959 Revolution bound them to the larger Cuban-American community, Spanish remained a prominent language in their homes and businesses, and they participated in the narratives associated with Cuban-American identity formation and retrospective politics.⁸²⁷ In many ways, these émigrés, some of whom migrated and started over more than once, felt the revolution to be a final betrayal.

Similarly, many Cubans on the island felt betrayed in other ways. During an interview in her Havana home, Rene Dour Chediak Chediak, when asked about her parents' and her own feelings for Lebanon, she answered, "[My parents] felt more Lebanese. Here there are both. The Cubans were born in Cuba, my parents were Lebanese...but Cuban citizens. But we always lived thinking about Lebanon. Lebanon

⁸²⁶ George Dargham, interviewed by the author, 3/12/2021.

⁸²⁷ Michael J. Bustamante, *Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); Blanca Segin, interviewed by the author, 8/12/2019; Ivan Santana, interviewed by the author, 12/21/2020; Gemma Nassar, interviewed by the author, 3/8/2021; George Dargham, interviewed by the author, 3/12/2021.

was always...we were never able to go,” she said, weeping, “we were never able to go back...we were ten siblings.”⁸²⁸ Disconnected from most meaningful contact with the Mashriq, save for the once-weekly, hour-long Radio Líbano broadcasts of the 1960s and 1970s, and deprived of associational communication with the Lebanese embassy, many felt rejected and retreated to a sense of revolutionary purpose and ethnic *Cubanidad*, marked by maintenance of some Levantine folkways and South-South politics.⁸²⁹ Giving voice to the sense of loss and abandonment felt by many Lebanese and Syrian Cubans, Gabriel Maluf’s grand-nephew, Amin, described meeting one of his Cuban relatives, writing, “He is eighty years old, and this is the first time in his life he is meeting a member of his ghostly family. Though he hesitated to admit it to me, he felt bitter about this. He never understood why their relatives had abandoned them—his father, mother, brother, and himself...He has only one language today, Spanish, and only one country, Cuba.”⁸³⁰

⁸²⁸ Renéé Dour Chediak Chediak, interviewed by the author, 3/9/2019.

⁸²⁹ “Actas de Los Libaneses en el Mundo,” 19 November 1972, ANC, Registro de Asociaciones, 690, 18012, Havana, Cuba. In June 2017, while in Havana, I attended an event at the Union Árabe de Cuba held to welcome the new Lebanese ambassador to Cuba. During the events, the club’s president of the association outlined the UAC’s South-South posture in a speech that railed against imperialism, Zionism, and global economic inequality.

⁸³⁰ Amin Maalouf, *Origins: A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 284-291.

CONCLUSION

“A just, dignified, and loving tribute of eternal gratitude to our venerable ancestors.”

~Juan Dufflar Amel⁸³¹

To conclude, let us return to René Dour Chediak Chediak’s memorabilia cabinet, framed by portraits of Cuban revolutionary figures and certificates of recognition from various Cuban civic institutions. Looking more closely at the items displayed, several items recall the various types of citizenship cultures that unfolded in the prior chapters. On the wall, next to Cuba’s revolutionary pantheon, hang certificates of recognition to Chediak’s children, Yamilé and Oscar, which signify the importance of civic participation and reputation that have signified a desire to belong since Cuba’s colonial era. Below, Chediak placed icons of Cuba’s patroness, hovering above a scroll that reads, “I am the Virgin of Charity,” and next to her another icon of *San Lazaro*, a favorite saint of Cuba’s “*santeros*,” practitioners of the island’s syncretic Lukumí religion with roots in Africa, the frame draped in *collares*, beaded necklaces that belong to this particularly Cuban expression of faith. These two saints and the beads evoke a *Cubanidad* defined by rhetorical equality and racelessness, but one that placed importance on tangible expressions of national belonging. Yet, upon close inspection, one notices particularly Levantine features to this makeshift altar: the portrait of Saint Charbel, a ubiquitous image in Maronite homes around the world, and a certificate of recognition for a lifetime of service to Cuba’s Lebanese and Syrian community, issued by the Unión Árabe, made to resemble a yellowed, weathered parchment like a Dead Sea Scroll that marks a

⁸³¹ Juan Dufflar Amel, “Inaugurado Parque Memorial a los Inmigrantes Árabes,” *El Arabe*, 15 (June 1998), 16.

Biblical connection to ancient civilization. These relics of a life spent focused on a transnational understanding of belonging, clinging to a Levantine past beginning to fray at the edges as it, over time, came to resemble the tattered scroll on the jaundiced associational certificate. Finally, centered in the foreground of the photograph, flanked by two candles like so many Catholic altars, a stone place-marker similar to those seen on countless Havana street corners, emblazoned with the Cuban flag, signal an unwavering, state-centered citizenship. These clear representations of *Cubanidad* marked Cuban belonging, as even the more “transnational” UAC certificate prominently displayed the associational seal that includes the island of Cuba encircled in a laurel wreath. The images one might find in a typical Cuban household, San Lázaro and Cachita, juxtaposed against the figure of Saint Charbel, his head bowed and shrouded in a black hood, summoned feelings of prayerful longing, remorse, or grief.

Even when the community attempted to commemorate and memorialize the island’s *mahjari* community, an abstract representation obfuscated this goal against the legibility of certificates, patriotic place markers, and Fidel’s portrait etched in wood. In 1998, a different emotion prevailed as the Unión Árabe de Cuba (UAC) met to commemorate the opening of the newly christened Memorial Park to Arab Immigrants.⁸³² (Figure 16) In a club publication, Juan Dufflar Amel, wrote “on the historic and radiant morning of 3 April 1998, on the eve of the 19th anniversary of the constitution of the Unión Árabe de Cuba, the Cuban-Arab community, surrounded by the admirable people who give it nourishing sap, gathered moved and happy in the familiar and loved streets of

⁸³² Dufflar, 16.

Monte and Agilar, in Havana, to pay just, worthy, and loving tribute of eternal gratitude to their revered ancestors.”⁸³³ The ceremony included a performances of the Cuban national anthem and that of the UAC followed by a wreath laying at the foot of a tall statue in the abstract shape of a couple holding hands, draped in presumably Biblical robes, with one figure’s face cloaked in a hood and hidden behind a long beard. According to the artist, Rafael Consuegra, the clean-shaven figure represented Cubans, holding the other’s hand to “symbolize the fusion of the Cuban and Arab cultures, [and] perpetuates the contribution of these Levantine immigrants and their descendants to the glorious future of our homeland.”⁸³⁴ The ceremony attracted official support as Jesús Montané Oropesa, “assistant to Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro,” presided over the morning’s events.



Figure 16: Memorial Arab Immigrants, Photograph, Havana, 2017. Photograph by the author.

⁸³³ Dufflar, 16.

⁸³⁴ Dufflar, 16.

Yet, today, locals hurrying by on the sidewalk may barely notice the park and the statue, now shaded and partly obscured by the adjacent “Tree of Arab Brotherhood.” In fact, the park is hardly a park or memorial—triggering memories and public consciousness of well-known narratives of belonging—as much as a generic civic plaza, its meaning only explained on a hard-to-find plaque tucked in a corner. (Figure 17) To those who choose to stop for a rest on the park’s single bench shaded by the Tree of Arab Brotherhood and others along the plaza’s edges, the inaugural plaque reads

To the noble and industrious Arab immigration who fused their roots, dreams, and hopes in the melting pot of the nation and the Cuban people, contributing with their participation in the emancipatory deeds to forge and consolidate a free, independent, and sovereign homeland for their descendants. The Cuban-Arab community that continues the generous and fruitful work of our venerable ancestors bids you this fervent tribute of eternal gratitude.⁸³⁵

In a way, this memorial meant to subsume Lebanese and Syrian immigrants into a larger national narrative, within which these “noble and industrious” immigrants did not contribute so much to Cuba as much as Cuba graciously welcomed and absorbed them into its national character. Despite official recognition, the park seems invisible amidst the busy Monte Avenue, nearby bus stop, and the neighborhood’s cramped built environment. Many of the Cubans interviewed for this study—most from the *mahjari* community—expressed surprise at the park’s existence.

⁸³⁵ Plaque in the Parque Memorial a los Inmigrantes Árabes, 3 April 1998, Havana, Cuba.



Figure 17: Plaques in Arab Immigrants Memorial Park, Havana, 2017. Havana's Parque Memorial a los Inmigrantes Árabes; Left: plaque explaining the “Tree of Arab Brotherhood;” Right: the plaque commemorating the park’s inauguration and purpose. Photographs by the author.

Founded in 1979, the UAC formed at a pivotal moment in Cuban history.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet subsidies allowed Cuban society to stabilize after the tumultuous years of revolutionary reinvention and experimentation of the 1960s. The consolidation of the remaining *mahjari* organizations in the late-1970s allowed for the community to use a state-sanctioned organization to advocate on behalf of community members and interests. The association, housed in the former home of a Jewish club, held meetings in “Jerusalem Hall,” and featured a since-closed restaurant on the second level with a balcony overlooking Havana’s famous *Paseo del Prado*. By 1997, Cuba’s *mahjari* community had reestablished and reasserted its transnational ties. In that year, the UAC sent two representatives, Alfredo Deriche Gutiérrez and Dufflar, to a meeting of the executive committee of the Federación de Entidades Americano-Árabes (FEARAB) held in Montevideo, Uruguay. For Cuba, the 1990s marked a time of recalibration and reinvention, of suffering and scarcity, and of introspection and outreach. When the Soviet

Union collapsed in 1991, the loss of Soviet subsidies rocked the Cuban economy and sent the island's people spiraling into an economic and social crisis known as the "The Special Period." Cuba, deprived the favorable trade relations with the Eastern Bloc countries that had sustained its economy over the previous thirty-five years, now found it necessary to undertake far-reaching realignments in its foreign and commercial relations. Havana now boasts a House of the Arab Museum (Museo Casa de los Árabes), that features a library and archive full of materials related to the Cuban *mahjar*, though its displays feature more generic representations of "Arabic" culture and history rather than the homage to Cuban *mahjaris*. The Museum once housed Havana's only mosque, which has since moved across the street, and serves as a place to hold welcome receptions for foreign dignitaries and students from the Persian Gulf who study at the University of Havana. (Figure 18) The park, rather than memorializing the nineteenth and twentieth-century Levantine migrants who represented the vast majority of Arabic-speaking immigrants to the island, is a monument to an alliance with Arab nations in the present. The Cuban holds hands with a robed, bearded caricature that more closely resembles the Bedouin ancestors of the Gulf-state dignitaries they court for aid and South-South solidarity.



Figure 18: Displays and Courtyard, Museo Casa de los Árabes, Havana, 2017. Exhibits feature maniquines in “traditional” Arab dress. Left: The museum’s courtyard, it often serves as venue for hosting diplomats and students from Gulf States.

Also in 1997, Rosa María Díaz Chediak, niece of René, visited Lebanon for “a congress because [I was a member] of the Association of Arab-Americans...and they do congresses.”⁸³⁶ Cuban officials supported the trip, probably as a means of soft diplomacy and raising Cuba’s profile as a welcoming destination in the minds of upwardly mobile and connected *mahjari* representatives from across the Americas. Díaz recounted in an interview how “First, we went to Syria. Then we went to Lebanon. I had a great time, I really loved it. It was beautiful. We got to visit some towns, we went to Ghazir, Jounieh...which is up a mountain...well, everything is up in the mountains. Truly, it was a lovely trip...my mother always wanted to go, but I think I’m the only one from our family who had the chance to go. And the truth is, I really loved it.”⁸³⁷ In Lebanon, Díaz received a warm welcome from family, including some who had previously lived in

⁸³⁶ Rosa María Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, 8 September 2019, Havana, Cuba.

⁸³⁷ Rosa María Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, 8 September 2019, Havana, Cuba.

Cuba, “we went to a cousin’s house, José Elias...it reminded me of Cuba...We’ll see if I ever have the chance to return. You know, it reminded me of the community here around 1960.”⁸³⁸ Díaz’s words betrayed the sentiments among a previously hypermobile population that now seemed stuck in place.

The trip to Lebanon was not, as we might have expected for Díaz’s parents or grandparents, a “homecoming” or even a nostalgia tour. Rather, in her recollection in 2019, it evoked nostalgia for a lost time in Cuban history. Díaz continued, “there was a large Lebanese community [in Havana]. There was the Lebanese Society, the Syrian Society, and the Palestinian Society...we had Arabic dances...we had lots of parties...the Lebanese of that era were very united, but now there are only about two or three left of us old timers, but we’re still here to tell the stories.”⁸³⁹ At home, Díaz maintains her connections to Lebanon through food, using recipes from a cookbook she coauthored for the UAC, but she can only use some of the recipes because “we don’t have the ingredients here anymore, no lamb, no loose wheat.”⁸⁴⁰ (Figure 19) Díaz’s recollections expressed a longing for something that had been lost, not across the Atlantic, not in the snow-capped Lebanese mountains, but right outside her door. Díaz travelled across the world in order to be reminded of a bygone Cuba, to be reminded of home.

⁸³⁸Rosa María Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, 8 September 2019, Havana, Cuba.

⁸³⁹Rosa María Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, 8 September 2019, Havana, Cuba.

⁸⁴⁰ Rosa María Díaz Chediak, interviewed by the author, 8 September 2019, Havana, Cuba.



Figure 19: Rosa María Díaz Chediak with cookbook, Photograph, Havana, 2019. Díaz co-authored this recipe book for the Unión Árabe de Cuba, entitled, *El sabor árabe en su mesa*, or *The Arabic Flavor on Your Table*.

Since the 1990s, Cuban *mahjaris* have worked to reestablish the transnational networks lost over decades of revolutionary politics and exile. In the early twentieth century, *mahjari* organizations established and maintained the transnational networks that allowed the community to prosper and establish economic footing and social acceptance while remaining connected to family and the politics in the Levant. These networks afforded Cuba's Lebanese and Syrian communities to exercise influence inside and outside Cuba, protect collective and individual interests, and create a distinct ethnic identity. Rather than belong to one place, the Cuban *mahjar* existed in that "floating island of elsewhere," marked by mobility and transnational citizenship. Yet, as Chediak explained while looking at her cabinet alter to Lebanese-*Cubanidad*, being born in Cuba, and staying on the island all these years, meant she belonged in, and to, Cuba.⁸⁴¹

⁸⁴¹ René Dour Chediak Chediak, interviewed by the author, Havana, Cuba; 9 March 2019.

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VITA

JOHN T. ERMER, JR.

Born in Hialeah, Florida

ACADEMIC HISTORY

2000-2004	B.S., Political Science & English Florida State University Tallahassee, Florida
2005-2016	Instructor Miami-Dade County Public Schools Miami, Florida
2012-2014	M.A., History Florida International University Miami, Florida
2013-2016	Curriculum Consultant Miami-Dade County Public Schools Miami, Florida
2016-2021	Doctoral Candidate Florida International University Miami, Florida
2016-2020	Graduate Assistant Florida International University Miami, Florida
2020-2021	Dissertation Year Fellow Florida International University Miami, Florida

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Paper Presentation, “‘As Homogenous as Possible:’ Triscornia, Immigration, and the Construction of Liberal Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba,” *American Historical Association Annual Meeting*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2022 (Accepted)

Panel Organized, “Triscornia and the Construction of Modern Cuba: Liberalism, Race and Public Health in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba,” *American Historical Association Annual Meeting*, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2022 (Accepted)

Paper Presentation, “*Sociedad Libanesa*: Transnational Identity Formation and Associational Life among Lebanese and Syrian Migrants in Twentieth-Century Cuba,” *Middle Eastern Studies Association Conference*, Montreal, Quebec, 2021 (Accepted)

Panel Chair, “*Transnacionalismo y doble ciudadanía*” Latin American Studies Association, held virtually, 2020

Paper Presentation, “*Vecino de esta ciudad*: The Deportation of Abraham Nased and the Contestation of Cuban Citizenship during the Second U.S. Occupation,” *Latin American Studies Association Congress*, held virtually, 2020

Book Review, Anna Clayfield, “The Guerrilla Legacy of the Cuban Revolution,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, Vol 45, No. 2 (May 2020)

Book Review, Scott Morgenstern, Jorge Pérez-López & Jerome Branche, “Paths for Cuba: Reforming Communism in Comparative Perspective,” *New West Indian Guide*, Vol. 94, No. 1-2 (May 2020)

Blog Post, with Bianca Premo, “Paperless Citizenship in Cuba,” *Legal History Blog*, 2020

Op-Ed Article, “Why President Trump’s hard-line approach to Cuba is a mistake,” *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2019

Paper Presentation, “*Colonia Libanesa*: Identity and Citizenship in the Cuban Mahjar, 1880-1970,” *12th Cuban Research Institute Conference on Cuban and Cuban-American Studies*, Florida International University, Miami, Florida, 2019

Invited Talk, “*Vecino de esta ciudad*: The Contestation of Cuban Immigration and Citizenship Law during the Second U.S. Occupation and the Deportation of Abraham Nased,” *Cuban Research Institute Lecture Series*, Florida International University, Miami, Florida, 2019

Invited Talk, “The Cuban Mahjar: Citizenship, Identity, and Lebanese and Syrian Migration to Cuba, 1880-1980,” *Cuban Heritage Collection Research Colloquium*, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 2019

Paper Presentation, “*Hombre Maquiavelico*: Sebastián Kindelán, French Exiles, and the Legal Fight over Cuba’s Economy,” *Encounters, Rights and Sovereignty in the Iberian Empires Conference*, Universidade de Évora, Évora, Portugal, 2018

Invited Talk, “The Cuban Mahjar: Lebanese and Syrian Migration to Cuba,” *Cuban Heritage Collection Research Colloquium*, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 2017