

THE TRIPOLI PROJECT AT OIB

Transforming Urban Worlds: Local Agency and Material Culture in 19th and early 20th Century

Tripoli

In late 2006, a major research project on the city of Tripoli (Lebanon) officially began, supported by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) and the Orient Institute Beirut. The project, which involves three PhD students (a historian, an architectural historian and a building archaeologist), covers many aspects of the history of Tripoli but focuses on city and society in the 19th century. Its main focus is to examine how modernity was expressed and experienced in different fields of daily life by diverse social strata within a local 'peripheral' context.

The project:

As part of a cooperation between the Orient Institute Beirut, the Freie Universität, Berlin, the Technische Universität, Berlin, the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin, the Aga Khan University, London and the Lebanese University, an interdisciplinary research group is looking at the urban fabric of Tripoli in the 19th and early 20th centuries under the combined aspects of material culture and social history. The project observes a micro-historical approach that takes local actors into consideration; it aims at analysing complex transformations of society and its urban spaces (Lebensräume) in Tripoli at a time that would have profound consequences for the entire Middle East. Tripoli is especially rich in sources, boasting an almost complete corpus of Ottoman court records (1666-1914) and a city centre with a great number of historical residential and commercial buildings still intact. Using these sources as a basis, changes in society and the concomitant processes of alteration in urban structure and architecture will



Horse tramway for public transports in Tripoli (by courtesy of W.-D. Lemke)

be reconstructed and analysed. A combination of methods drawn from social, cultural and architectural history will allow an investigation of individual actors and their social practice within their urban worlds (DWELLING, WORK and PUBLIC SPHERE). A broad range of local actors emerge as the protagonists of these changes, allowing a better understanding of the transformation of society and its public and private spheres in a Middle Eastern provincial town. The research project is based on the assumption that change in the 19th century followed local rhythms; in the Ottoman provincial areas they therefore did not adhere to the usual periodisation of the reform era, which is geared to the development in the centre.

Permanent research group

- Karla Börner (PhD candidate TU Berlin): Residential Buildings in Tripoli
- Juren Meister (PhD candidate DAI Berlin): Commercial Buildings in Tripoli
- Christian Sassmannshausen (PhD candidate FU Berlin): Tripoli during the Ottoman Reform Period
- Stefan Weber (Assistant Professor AAKU-ISMC): Tripoli before the Ottoman Reform Period

Applicant Body

- Professor Gudrun Krämer (Freie Universität, Berlin)
- Professor Dorothee Sack (Technische Universität, Berlin)
- Dr. Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin)
- Professor Stefan Weber (AAKU-ISMC, London)

Lebanese Hosting Institution

Orient Institute Beirut

The Municipality of Tripoli supports the project and provides an office for the field campaigns.



Court record out of volume 36 with reference to Suq Haraj



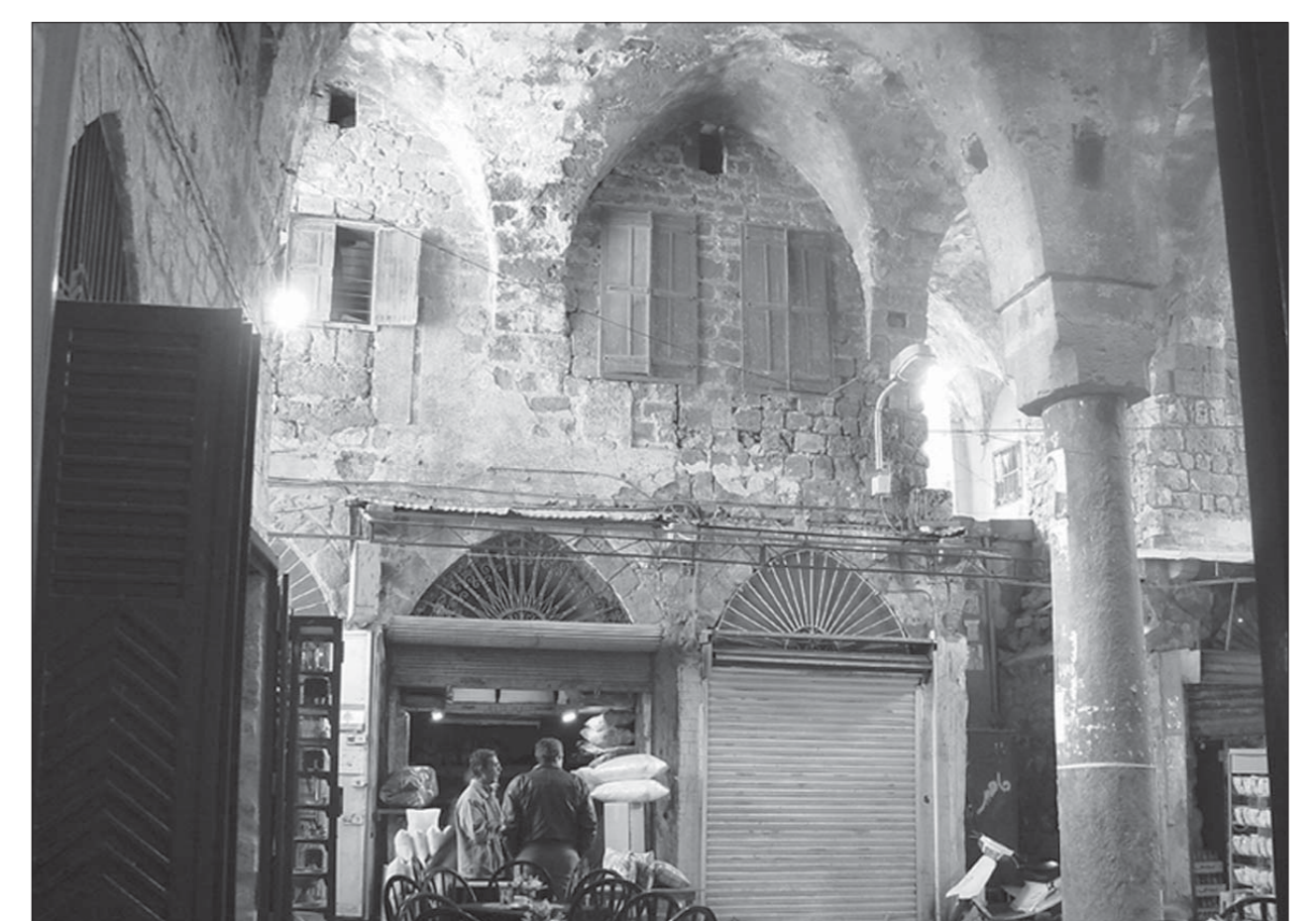
Bait Mughrabi in Tripoli al-Nouri



Residential buildings on Abou Ali river, late 19th century (W.-D. Lemke)



Suq street of Tripoli around 1900 (National Library of Australia)



Suq Haraj, commercial building with a vaulted hall as public place