

establish his home in Ras Beirut. The others followed over the next decade and from the three compass points around Beirut: Jabr Dumit and the brothers Jirjis and Anis al-Khoury al-Makdisi came from towns north and east of Tripoli; Bulus Khawli came from the region of the Kura east of Tripoli; Daud Kurban and Mansur Jurdak came from Shwayr a village in the Metn region of Mount Lebanon northeast of Beirut. Moreover Jabr Dumit's wife Heda Salibi came from Bhamdoun in the Shuf Mountains southeast of Beirut and Bulus Khawli's wife, Nessima al-Rasy came from Marjoun farther southeast in the foothills of the Lebanon Mountains. From the north, east, and south, these Arab Protestants converged on Ras Beirut. Though by no means representative of the entire community, these life histories constitute the base of the settled community of the Protestants of Ras Beirut.

Jabr Dumit (1858 – 1930, BA 1876)

The eldest and first Arab Protestant to establish his long-term home in Ras Beirut, Jabr Dumit was born in 1858 or 1859 in Safita, a predominantly Orthodox Christian town, in present-day Syria northeast of the coastal city of Tripoli. Dumit's father died shortly after his birth and his mother, who never remarried, raised him an only child. Butrus al-Bustani singled out the young Dumit while visiting his school and assured Dumit's mother of her son's future success if she entrusted her son to him.⁴²⁸ Dumit matriculated at the Abeih Seminary and then moved to Ras Beirut to continue his higher

⁴²⁸Samir Shehadeh, interview with author, March 3, 2012. Usually Anglo-American missionaries conducted supervisory visits to mission schools, often to secure the brightest students for further education. Indeed, accounts of being singled out for academic promise figure prominently in Protestant convert narratives. In one example, Abraham Mitrie Rihbany writes of being a young boy in the mission school of the Shwayr when the English missionary came to inspect the school and chose him because he was a "bright boy." In *A Far Journey* (1914, by Atlantic Monthly Company), 68.

education at the SPC.⁴²⁹ He earned his BA in 1876, one of five graduates of the School of Arts and Sciences.⁴³⁰ He then moved to teach at the American missionary school in the town of Homs also in present day Syria.⁴³¹ Dumit's education and promise made him part of the growing network of "native" teachers who circulated between mission schools, the most successful ones selected to teach at the SPC's Preparatory School in Ras Beirut.

The exact year Dumit returned to Ras Beirut to start teaching at the SPC is uncertain. According to his grandson, he began in 1878, whereas the college's faculty directory lists him as instructor in the SPC's Preparatory School in 1889. Perhaps his translation work for British General Garnet Joseph Wolseley of the British expeditionary force to Sudan in 1884-1885 interrupted his teaching for a while.⁴³² Jabr Dumit's translation colleague and close college friend was the famous writer Jurji Zaydan (1861 – 1914) from Beirut, also a renowned intellectual of the Arab *Nahda* who worked as a journalist, publisher, novelist, linguist, and historian in Cairo. Zaydan noted in his diary of 1886 that he travelled with Dumit to London leaving from Beirut in 1886 for several months.⁴³³ Whereas Zaydan settled in Cairo, Dumit returned to Beirut where one can

⁴²⁹ Shehadeh interview. That Dumit did attend school there is confirmed in a letter he wrote in 1870 to "May Ziade asking her to write for *al-Mar'a al Jadida*, Jabr Dumit begins his letter to May by explaining that he was at school with Jiryis Tohme (father of Julia Tohme) in Abeih in 1870." Hala Ramez Dimechkie, *Julia Tu'mi Dimashqiyyi and Al-Mar'a al-Jadida 1883-1954*. (MA Thesis: American University of Beirut, 1998), 17.

⁴³⁰ The Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut, *Directory of Alumni*, 4th edition, June 1967.

⁴³¹ Reverend Yusuf Badr was pastor of Mission church there for 18 years from 1872-1890, Said Makdisi, *Teta*, 149.

⁴³² Ussama Makdisi, *Faith*, 75.

⁴³³ Jurji Zaydan, *Yawmiyyat Rihlah Bahriyyah [Diary of a Sea Voyage]* (Damascus: Fajr al-Nahda, 2010), 10-11. Not published until 2010, though written in 1886. Jabr Dumit's granddaughter Heda Naguib Dumit married Jurji Zaydan's grandson, George Shukri Zaydan and

safely assume he resumed teaching at SPC's Prep School. Dumit signed a contract with the SPC in 1895, as the first Arab adjunct professor. In 1909 he became the first Arab full professor in the Arabic Department.⁴³⁴ The college's race-based policies, however, still prevented Dumit, as an Arab, from full participation on the faculty as a voting member until 1920.⁴³⁵

In 1893, Dumit married Heda Salibi, the daughter of Mitri Salibi, a Protestant pastor, from Bhamdoun, a town close to Abeih in the Lebanese Mountains of the Shuf. Mitri Salibi lived and worked in the village of Shwayr, where he co-founded the school with William Carslaw in 1874.⁴³⁶ Heda had five brothers who graduated from the SPC (between 1888-1908) who may have been Dumit's students. Dumit was known to open his home to his students, perhaps putting him in touch with the Salibi brothers leading to an introduction to Heda.⁴³⁷ Dumit and Heda Salibi settled in Ras Beirut and had three boys and three girls and thus functioned as the first family of the settled community of Ras Beirut Protestants.

Daud Kurban (1860 – 1935, BA 1882)

Daud Kurban was born in Marjoun to the far south of Beirut, but his family came from the aforementioned village of Shwayr. Shwayr, a predominantly Orthodox Christian village, was known for its impregnability as a high mountain fortress and the

it was at their house that Naguib Dumit discovered Zaydan's London diary. Thanks to Elizabeth Holt for bringing this book to my attention.

⁴³⁴ Tibawi, "Genesis," part II, 203.

⁴³⁵ Penrose, 70.

⁴³⁶ Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years*, 677.

⁴³⁷ Shehadeh interview.