



Orient-Institute Beirut of the DMG in the DGIA

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Enabling Memory – Raising Awareness Documentation and research projects of urban architecture and history in Lebanon (Beirut / Saida / Tripoli)

In 1961 the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) was established in Beirut by DMG, the German Society for Oriental Studies). It is now one of the 8 German historical research institutes constituting the DGIA (Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland).

In the fields of modern and classical literature, linguistics etc., the Orient-Institute is directly involved in the documentation and preservation of the rich cultural heritage of Lebanon and the Middle East. A new direction of the Institute's activities is the research on the urban environment in Lebanon, hoping to bring this legacy closer to today's society and to contribute to the recent protection efforts in Lebanon.

Cities are heterogeneous structures of social organisation. Every day, thousands of men and women act in this complex system and leave their mark on the city's appearance. Cities are expressions of collective actions by their inhabitants corresponding to cultural traditions. Social interaction therefore is visible in – and hence can be read from – the spatial and built settings of human action: architecture and urban organisation. Urban centres are the expression of the conventions and conflicts in a society. In this sense cities provide a rich source for studies of cultural traditions and processes of transformation. Cities with their many layers allow a unique approach to societies in historical perspective.

Architecture and history are interwoven and help to explain each other. The three urban research projects at the Orient Institute are designed to combine architectural surveys with micro-historical approaches and to retell stories of social action and the transformation of urban space from the Ottoman period (1516 to 1918) up to the present. These projects draw a detailed picture of urban societies and daily life. For some buildings it was possible to clarify the biography of the owner, his economic and social background, his training, and his motivations for building activities. For certain

buildings there are a variety of sources – waqfiyyas, court records, or contemporary accounts and descriptions, historical photographs, inscriptions, decoration, furniture, wall paintings, ground-plans, location details, or construction materials – that supply the information needed to understand in detail the architectural space and its changes over time.

These large projects on three major cities of the region bring together for the first time the documentation of history and architecture on the same level, connecting them within digital systems.

Further information: www.oidmg.org



Tripoli Survey of the northern suq districts



وزارة الثقافة
Ministère de la Culture

Orient-Institute
Beirut

Refugees from South Lebanon in Zokak al-Blat

