Becoming Maronite: The Development of The Lebanese Maronite Identity In Relation To The Lebanese Civil War – An In-Depth Analysis

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEBANESE MARONITE IDENTITY IN RELATION TO THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR – AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Lebanon is home to more than 18 ethno-religious sects since before the independence of the republic of Lebanon in 1943. Until the civil war in 1975, the different sects coexisted rather peacefully in a consociational democracy, based on the sectarian divide in society. However, after 1975, the demographics of the country had changed significantly and the power-sharing system did not change at the same pace. Resentment and the feeling of underrepresentation of various religious communities in the political system led to a fifteen year long civil war in which multiple external forces intervened. These sectarian hostilities lead to the death of more than 100,000 people and the displacement of over a million Lebanese.

The national reconciliation accord in 1989 (the Ta'if agreement) restored the consociationalist state through a restructured political system of confessional power sharing, which aimed to settle the sectarian conflict and end the civil war. But tensions between the various religious communities never ceased to exist, which lead to various uprisings in 2005, 2009, 2011 and the current crisis which started in 2019. However, since the revolts on 6 March 2011, where protesters rallied against sectarianism in the political system, members of different communities seem to reach out to each other and combine forces in order to end the sectarian rule of the Lebanese state (Moaddel 2012, 3). A tipping point in this reconciliation process is the civil war, since the different sects seem unable to abandon the developed grievances and resentment from their daily interaction as ideological divisions between the sects persist (Haddad 2002a, 295-301).

In terms of political power redistribution after the civil war, the Maronites have been the most affected sect, as the restructured confessional system deprived them from their political ascendency. The politicization of ethnic and religious identities increased the divergence between the sects in Lebanon and impacted the way communities perceive themselves and construct their shared identity (Che 2016, 3). Scholars argue that the civil war in Lebanon has impacted the formation and redefinition of the various confessional communities and still influences the relation between the sects up to the present day (Çöp 2019; Haddad 2002a; Kabbara 1991). However, since the Maronite community enjoyed a dominant position in the Lebanese governing institutes, the decline of the Maronite community's political

ascendancy after the Ta'if agreement (Aulas 1985), provide a particular interesting case. For this reason, this paper investigates in what way the civil war influenced the process of identity making and identity itself for the Maronite community in Lebanon. The central research question used in this research is the following: 'How is the Maronite identity in Lebanon constructed in relation to the civil war?'. The Maronite community has historically been developing in relation to non-Christian groups in the Middle East and preserved its very particular identity even after several persecutions. This paper sheds light on the development of the Maronite identity in the years before and after the civil war, from around the collapse of the Ottoman empire to the start of the 21st century. This study proves how both the events prior to the civil war, and the civil war itself and its aftermath, changed the Maronite community in several ways, and its perception of the world and its identity.

Using a constructivist conceptualisation of identity, this paper analyses the impacts of the civil war on the construction of a shared Maronite identity in Lebanon. The preservation of strictly separated sects and attached identities causes unrest and continuous conflict in Lebanon, even though some try to overcome the differences between those sects (Hudson 1999, 109). Nevertheless, the remnants of the civil war create a political and social environment which prevents the various religious communities to consolidate. When the influences of the civil war on community building and identity formation are better understood, it is possible to become aware of the wider context in which the struggles of Lebanese society can be placed. Currently, as the country faces the worst (economic) crisis since the civil war, the urgency of this awareness is higher than ever. A closer examination of the effects of the civil war on sects can potentially offer a better understanding of the implications of another sectarian conflict in Lebanon on civil society.

Relevance

Much is written about the sectarian struggle in Lebanon (Makdisi 2001; Moaddel 2012; Rigby 2000; Weiss 2009). Maronites are because of their minority status in the Middle East even more extensively researched (Çöp 2019; Haddad 2001; Haddad 2002b; Hagopian 1989; Moosa 1986). The aim of this thesis is thus not so much to present new insights about this group, but rather to provide a deeper understanding of the Maronite identity in relation to a specific matter, namely the civil war. The civil

war is generally mentioned when the topic of ‘Maronitism’ is discussed, but the specific implications it had or has for the different sects in Lebanon are not explicitly addressed. It is, however, of importance to understand to what extent the identity of ethno-religious communities are influenced by the experiences of sectarianism as it provides a framework in which we can place the ongoing struggles between the various sects. These struggles are most evident during the uprisings in 2011 and 2019, in which protesters demanded the abolishment of the sectarian system whilst others campaigned for the preservation of the power division between the sects, which demonstrates the deeply ingrained division between the confessional communities in Lebanese society (Haddad 2002a, 297).

In addition, this project considers the significance of the ‘Phoenician myth’ in the construction of the Maronite identity. This ‘myth’ is for many Maronites reality and a fundamental part of their identity, as they believe to descend from this ancient traders nation who lived on the shores of what is now Lebanon. Even though the Phoenician elements in ‘Maronitist’ beliefs have been studied extensively, the comparative element in this research contributes to the already existing knowledge on this topic. Through the examination of the relation between the Maronite community and their Phoenician beliefs in three different time periods, the Phoenician aspect in the identity construction of Maronites is placed in its historical and social context. This demonstrates the differentiating influence on the interpretation and creation of the communal Maronite identity in the course of time, which in its turn can be related to the civil war. The comparison of a pre-civil war, civil war and post-civil war period in itself provides a new perspective on the Maronite identity, as is reflects the opposing perceptions of Maronites on their own community over time.

Methods

In order to properly research a complex phenomenon like ‘identity’, it is essential to use methods which allow for a nuanced and open interpretation of the concerned matter. Qualitative methods provide the tools necessary to approach complicated issues like ‘identity’ because it allows the researcher to be flexible and subtle (Bryman 2016, 483). Interviews are a tool through which one is able to understand the variety of existing explanations and interpretations of a certain topic or question. As a result, multiple possible outcomes are considered and the risk of making

overgeneralizations is reduced. Especially the format of semi-structured interviews used in this research, offers the chance to deepen the understanding of the discussed matters, since it allows the interviewer as well as the respondent to expand on certain topics whilst it also provides the possibility to maintain a certain structure.

For this research, three individual interviews were conducted with members of the Lebanese Maronite community whom I will further introduce in chapter four, which focuses on the post-civil war Maronite identity. The answers of the respondents are most relevant to this period, which the analysis in the chapter demonstrates. The interviews are not used as generalization, but merely to juxtapose personal experiences with micro sources. The three interviews are however lengthy and extensive, which makes these substantial conversations a rich source of information for this study.

However, as Creswell et al. (2007) argue, a combination of methods is useful as two or more methods can complement each other. This project includes a second qualitative method, namely critical discourse analysis. Bryman argues that in critical discourse analysis ‘there is a constant movement back and forth between conceptualization, categorization, analysis and interpretation’ which offers the possibility to employ the constructed themes systematically, compare the results and reach a conclusion (Bryman 2016, 563).

Through an structured analysis of written poetry written by a member of the Maronite community, a holistic account of the Maronite culture can be given. This ‘aesthetic approach’ as Bleiker (2009) defines it, can move ‘beyond conceptual arguments and illustrations’ and provides new perspectives on key political or cultural dilemmas (3). Bleiker argues that poetry is perhaps one of the most suitable aesthetical forms of approaching these matters, as it engages most explicitly with the ‘very essence of who we are and what we do: language’ (ibid.: 4). From a constructivist point of view, language is the medium through which meaning is constructed and how we experience everyday life (Barnett 2017, 145-7). Because of this, reality is always interpreted and represented subjectively, depending on the values and frames integrated in the linguistic process which are used to make sense of the world. Poetry reflects these interpretations of the world and demonstrates the intrinsic beliefs and assumptions of the writer, on which a reality is build (Bleiker 2009, 4). In this way, poetry can be the vantage point from which to crystallise the

origin or implications of constructed beliefs in a specific community. The analysis of written poetry or stories examine how these beliefs and interpretations of reality in the Maronite community contribute to the development of a specific Maronite identity. It is necessary to continuously reconsider and cross-reference the outcomes of the conducted interviews with the analysed poems or stories. This provides a comprehensive and integrated overview of the overtime process of identity-making of the Maronite community.

This study analyses the Maronite community in the context of three time periods. Before turning to this analysis, an historical overview of the Maronite community is provided in the background chapter, which also engages with the existing literature on this topic. The second chapter concerns the pre-civil war period and analyses three narratives that are fundamental for the development of the pre-civil war Maronite identity based on a belief in the Phoenician descent. It is important to keep in mind that these divisions are arbitrary; none are mutually exclusive as all three narratives overlap in some respects. The first narrative analyses the work of poet Said ‘Aql, who wrote extensively on the ‘Phoenician myth’. Thereafter, the concept of ‘Non-Arabness’ is examined, since it influenced the self-perception of the Maronites as being ‘Phoenician’ instead of ‘Arab’. The third narrative investigates the creation of a political Maronite identity, which is also rooted in Phoenicianism. The third chapter revolves around the period of the civil war itself, from 1975 to 1990. It provides a coherent overview of the events as well as an analysis of influence of the presence of Palestinian and Syrian troops on the Maronite community. The fourth chapter concerns the post-civil war period, from 1990 to around the early 2000’s. The conducted interviews are analysed in relation to four elements that were of most significance to the identity construction of the Maronite community in the years after the civil war. In the conclusion, the three periods are compared and the findings are presented.

CHAPTER 1

Historical overview & Literature Review

This chapter provides a condensed overview of the development of the Maronite community in its historical context. Essential events and periods of time important to the formation of the Maronite community are highlighted and thus create a broader understanding of the background of the Maronite community. Subsequently, the review of the literature lays out the theories and concepts which are elemental to the creation of a collective Maronite identity.

The Maronite church was founded in the 5th century by Saint Maron in what is now north-east Syria and bases its liturgy on the West Syriac rite, delivered in Syriac (Haddad 2002b, 30). Having a Christian religion and speaking a different language, Maronites perceived themselves different from the other minorities in this area as they did not consider themselves Arab but rather identified as Phoenician (Entelis 1979, 13). Because of their minority status and beliefs, the Maronites were persecuted multiple times until the 11th century, when an alliance between the Maronite church and the Catholic Roman church and the 'West' in general was established (Haddad 2002b, 30).

During the following centuries the Western influence in the mountain era of the Maronites became more visible as the Ottoman rule weakened and the Ottomans had to concede to charges from, among others, France. This led to the intervention of France in multiple issues and the 'safeguarding' of the Maronite community from the surrounding Islamic world (Entelis 1979, 16; Haddad 2002b, 31). After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and at the end of the first World War in 1920, Greater Lebanon was established under a French mandate. The Maronites were granted autonomy and governance which led to friction, as half of the inhabitants of this area were Muslim. When Greater Lebanon became independent in 1943, an agreement was made between the various communities which resulted in the 'National Pact' (Haddad 2002b, 31-32). Through the National Pact, every religious community was granted a share of the Lebanese political power system, depending on the seize and demographics of this community which inherently intertwined religion and politics in Lebanon (Moosa 1986, 291).

Review of the Literature

In order to explain the significance of the civil war for the construction of the Maronite community, it is of importance to provide an understanding of the most compatible theories and concepts related to the development of the Maronite identity. One of the guiding concepts of this study is the notion of 'identity', which is a contested concept as its meaning is fluid and can be defined in multiple ways. In this thesis, identity is approached from a constructivist perspective, meaning identities are understood as social and constructed in relation to others (Barnett 2017, 147). Wendt (1994) argues that

> social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object. [...] [Social identities thus take the form of] cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine 'who I am/we are' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations (385).

A shared, or 'collective' identity in a group is thus created when a sense of alikeness prevails between people, which often simultaneously invokes feelings of differences regarding 'others'.

The manners in which the civil war impacted the construction of a shared Maronite identity are multiple, but relate in various ways to the concept of a 'collective identity'. Lebow (2008, 475) argues that external conflict creates cohesion and constructs a common identity between those who sacrifice for the same cause. In this sense, the civil war and a shared adversary are possibly at root of the creation of an 'us versus them' mentality, potentially causing the strong preservation of the enclosed community as it is now.

Furthermore, grievances and frustrations which are caused through the politicization of ethnicity enlarge inequalities which can reinforce the polarization in society. Shaykhutdinov (2011) defines 'grievances' as 'a deprivation of basic needs or rights of some sort' on 'which people think they are rightfully entitled' (143). 'Relative deprivation' is associated with 'grievances' in the sense that it is defined as 'the actors' perceptions of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities', which can lead to sentiments of frustration (Gurr 1968, 1104). In

its turn, sentiments of frustration can potentially increase cohesion within a community whilst fostering grudges held towards out-groups. Also, ‘frustrations’ reinforce the existing divisions between groups and enhance fear and mistrust between communities (Che 2016, 2). Shared frustrations can thus result in the development of relative deprivation and grievances within a community, which are in the case of the Maronite community related to the decline of the Maronite power in the aftermath of the civil war.

Bloom et al. (2015) argue how a community potentially becomes (over)protective of the group's culture and values when it experiences outside threats, and in reaction increasingly rejects non-group members who challenge the values, norms and cohesiveness of the community (204-206). Because of the community’s violent past, it appears that Maronites feel the need to ‘protect’ their community from impending ‘outsiders’ through the strengthening of the ‘Maronite identity’. This ‘defensive’ approach creates an ‘us versus them’ culture in which the Maronite community stress their similarities and emphasize the differences between the Maronite ‘self’ and Arab or Muslim ‘other’ (Felsch 2018, 27).

Hence, ‘religion’ and ‘ethnicity’ are fundamental elements to the creation of a collective Maronite identity. The cohesiveness of the Maronite community is firmly rooted in the identification as a religious community (Haddad 2002a, 195), as religion not only provides a unified system of beliefs, belonging and behaviour which connects members of the community (Bloom et al. 2015, 204-206), but also functions as a social system which ‘serves mainly as a reference in regard to the world at large’ (Ghossein 1982, 28).

‘Ethnicity’ relates to the development of the Maronite identity in the sense that it creates a feeling of cultural distinctiveness between group members (Eriksen 1994, 5-10). An ethnic identity is constructed through a certain interpretation of the past which provides a shared history and myths of common origins. Eriksen argues that these ‘notions of shared origins are usually crucial for ethnic identity, and interpretations of history are therefore important to ideologies seeking to justify, strengthen and maintain particular identities’ (ibid.: 70). The Maronite community aims to demonstrate its historical and ethnic legitimacy as they claim the Phoenicians to be their ancestors, tracing their origins back to 1200 BC (Entelis 1979,13). The ‘myth of the Phoenicians’ plays an important role for the creation of a common understanding on ‘origin’ in the Maronite community, as it provides a narrative

through which community members can define what is distinct in their culture, religion and history (Kaufman 2004, 10-15). Bell (2003) argues that these kind of narratives, or ‘mythscapes’, present an uni-vocal history of a group (75), which Eriksen (1994) calls ‘present-day constructions of the past’ in which ethnic groups selectively render heroic history in order to prove their uniqueness and ancientness (85-89).

Furthermore, the ethnic identity of the Maronite community interrelates with nationalist ideology since nationalism also stresses the similarity between its adherents based on shared cultural elements (ibid.: 121). Nationalism often develops in relation to the described ‘us versus them’ mentality, and is broadly shared in the Maronite community. Ritli demonstrates how nationalism is twofold, as it consists out of the ideology of nationalism and the sentiment of nationalism. The nationalist ideology seeks to unite the political and national unit into one nation; the sentiment of nationalism addresses the sense of solidarity and connectedness felt towards a given group of people (Ritli 2011, 3). Religion as order-creating cultural system can reinforce nationalism through a shared religious identity and narrative, constructing nationalist claims (Brubaker 2012, 6). In this way, the sentiment of religious nationalism could potentially increase antipathy towards groups that do not share the beliefs, behaviour and ‘feelings of belonging’ of their own community whilst increasing the bond between community members (Bloom et al 2015, 204).

Eriksen (1979) points out that an ethnic movement becomes a nationalist movement when it demands command over a state (121), which applies to the Maronite community since Maronite nationalism ‘equated political Lebanon with the Maronite community, inseparably connecting one with the other’ (Entelis 1979, 34). Maronites perceive Lebanon as their homeland because their ancestors have been living there since before the establishment of Lebanon, fuelling the community’s desire to develop Lebanon into a ‘national home for the Christian Levantine’ up until the creation of an independent Lebanon. Maronite nationalism, influenced and supported by Western notions on nationalism, was synonymous to the general Lebanese interpretation on nationalism; ‘Lebanonism’ (ibid.: 16).

Kertzer’s (1988) theory on commemoration, in which he explains how commemoration of political or historical events create strong affective bonds with others, contributes to the understanding of the development of a collective identity (169-177). Through the process of memory making and commemoration, traumatic events that are experienced by communities, are collectively processed (Haugbolle

2010, 8). This creates a sense of common identification which can lead to the development of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991, 6). Several historical events experienced by the Maronite community are memorised as traumatic and commemorated as such. The collective memory which developed in the light of these experiences unifies the Maronites as community since it differentiates from the interpretation of events by outer-groups.

The development of a collective Maronite identity is, as demonstrated, a complex process comprised of various ideologies, approaches and ideas. The concepts and theories described form the basis of a theoretical framework in which the construction of the identity of the Maronite community can be placed. In the following chapters the collective Maronite identity will be analysed in relation to the discussed theory.

CHAPTER 2

Pre-civil war Maronite identity

The aim of this chapter is to clarify how the pre-civil war events influenced the development of the Maronite identity. Central to this period is the idea of Phoenicianism, which is analysed in relation to three main narratives corresponding to a certain time period between 1920 and 1975. These three complementary narratives demonstrate the impact of Phoenicianism on notions of Maronite legitimacy, feelings of anti-Arabism and the construction of a political Maronite identity. First, however, this study provides a background of the events during the pre-civil war period.

Prior to the 1970's and after the after the establishment of the earlier described National Pact in 1943, which endorsed the 'principle of shared ownership of the country by all confessions', Lebanon was a relatively stable country (Henley 2016, 169; Hudson 1999, 106). The National Pact formed the political climate of the country and the relations between the various sects until the civil war in 1975. The agreement included several important understandings concerning the Maronite and Muslim interpretation of the newly formed state of Lebanon; Lebanon would be a country for all Arab people but would be independent from other Arab countries. The 'Arabs' would not reach out to neighbouring Arab states for protection and oppose any form of incorporation in a 'pan-Arabian' nation or 'Greater Syria' (Moosa 1986, 291). Furthermore, the Maronites agreed to end the close cooperation with France and not give 'Western imperialism' foothold in Lebanon (Hagopian 1989, 103). The Maronites outnumbered the Muslims in most of the political and governmental institutions in the country by a 6:5 ratio (Hudson 1999, 106).

Even though the pact was accepted unanimously, its actual effectiveness was debated since the confessions involved were unsatisfied with the outcome (Hagopian 1989, 104). The underlying tensions of the opposing ideologies foundational to the different communities, obstructed the formation of a coherent nation and divided Lebanon in separate regions with different identities. It is in the context of this alleged solidarity and in the aftermath of the construction of an independent Lebanon that the Maronite identity construction took a new turn as it brought about structural changes with regards to the community's political, social and cultural affairs.

As shortly touched upon in the previous chapter, Phoenicianism is of importance to the foundation of the Maronite community. The idea of Phoenicianism is not exclusively used by Maronites as part of their identity but has been incorporated most strongly and persistently in the Maronite community and culture (Bawardi 2016, 128-130). The linkage between the Phoenicians and the Maronites was voiced especially in connection to the ambition of the creation of a Maronite state, which became Greater Lebanon under the French mandate. Phoenicianism developed mostly in connection to Maronite nationalism and the creation of an independent Lebanese state in the first decade of the 20th century, but was exploited during the 20th century for several other purposes as well (Kaufman 2004: 246).

The Phoenician idea created three main narratives in the Maronite community that were intertwined with the social and political events of its time. The first narrative developed between 1920 and 1940 and centralized the geographical legitimacy of the Maronites in relation to the entitlement of the to-be created state of Lebanon in the context of Phoenicianism. This idea was most profoundly expressed in poetry and other written language. The second narrative can be placed in the period between 1940 and 1950. The Phoenician idea developed into an ideology that emphasized the differences between ‘Arabness’ and Maronites. The use of Phoenicianism served to highlight the uniqueness of Maronites and made clear that the Arabs and Maronites were from very different descent (Bawardi 2016, 2-4). The third narrative emerged between 1960 and 1975. During these fifteen years prior to the civil war, the Maronite identity became more and more politicized as several political parties were founded, basing their party ideology on the Phoenician idea and mobilizing the Maronite community into political action .

These narratives form the underlying framework of the analysis of the development of the Maronite identity before the civil war. Through a close examination of the three separate narratives, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the relation between the Phoenician idea and the Maronite community in a certain time span. It is important to notice that the time periods in which the narratives are divided are not immutable and in reality prove to be more nuanced, however, this framework does correspond with the prevailing discourses in the Maronite community and also offers the possibility for a structured and comparative analysis. Through a close reading of the poetry of the influential poet Said ‘Aql, the first narrative is studied. The second narrative is examined by a

comparative analysis of three forms of nationalism related to Phoenicianism. Finally, through an in-depth analysis of the Phalange party, the first Maronite political party, is it possible to come to an closer understanding of the third narrative that employs Phoenicianism in the construction of a political identity for the Maronite community.

2.1 First narrative (1920-1940): Language and legitimacy

The Phoenician ancestry as part of Maronite identity was in the period preceding the independence of the Lebanese state often referred to in the context of legitimacy; the Maronites descended from the Phoenicians and thus were the rightful owners of the area where their ancestors had once lived, simultaneously denying entitlement of this area to other communities. Through identification with the Phoenicians, Maronites provided themselves with a 'role among the world nations, and entitlement to their own territory and independence' (Bawardi 2016, 32-42). In this sense, geography rather than religion, acted as a unifying concept for the Maronite community during this time.

Phoenicianism was in the period before the independence of Lebanon mostly expressed through poetry, as French literature had significantly impacted this form of art in the years under the French mandate (Kaufman 2004, 171). Poetry disseminated the ideals and ideology of Phoenicianism through Lebanese society, as written literature was still the main source of broadcasting ideas in this time (Bawardi 2016, 53). It is for this reason that the Phoenician idea in relation to geographical legitimacy stands out in literature and poetry written by Maronites between 1900 and 1940. The work of Said 'Aql (1911 – 2014) is particularly relevant in this context since 'Aql was, and still is, one of the most important Arabic poets of the 20th century' (Kaufman 2004, 171). His work promotes the ideology of 'Lebanonism' [1] or Lebanese nationalism, based on Phoenicianism and Maronite nationalism, which propagates the Christian foundation on which Lebanon is supposedly built and simultaneously rejects any connection with the 'Arab world'. The following analysis demonstrates how 'Aql aimed to dissent Lebanon from the Arab world through the creation of a separate Phoenician past in his literary works.

[1] Used by Said Aql in *If Lebanon Were to Speak* (1960)

If Lebanon Were to Speak (‘Aql 2006) was chosen for the analysis of this thesis because it shows a great variety of interpretations and relations between Phoenicianism, Lebanon and Christianity as is consists out of 38 separate stories revolving around Lebanon’s past. Because of the variation in *If Lebanon Were to Speak* it is possible to provide a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, this work of ‘Aql is used for educational purposes (ibid.: 70) and republicized in English in 2006, which demonstrates the continuing significance of ‘Aql’s stories in present-day Lebanon.

The stories in the book *If Lebanon Were to Speak* are the primary sources studied in the following analysis. This analysis examines the symbolism and patterns used in order to understand the beliefs and assumptions ‘Aql integrates in these stories. In his book, ‘Aql merges Greek mythology and biblical stories together into an alternative, Phoenician, historiography. In this reconstruction of the Lebanese past, certain places and characters are glorified in relation to Phoenicia, or Lebanon (‘Aql interchangeably uses these denominations). The underlying moral of the stories is Christian, since ‘Aql aims to demonstrate how Lebanon, Phoenicia and the Christian spirit are inseparably linked. This study shows in what way ‘Aql connects heroism with Christian norms and values, and how he creates a narrative of the Lebanese past that enables the Maronite community to identify with Phoenicianism whilst fuelling the development of a sense of entitlement at the same time. This analysis examines only the most emblematic of the 38 stories in *If Lebanon Were to Speak*, since the scope of this research is limited.

One of the most remarkable manners in which ‘Aql glorifies the Phoenician, and thus, Lebanese, past, is through the alteration of the descent of many mythological heroes. The first story describes the origin of the philosopher Pythagoras through the following passage:

> Thou art Lebanese, my son,
> In Sidon, itself
> At the foot of the mountain of fragrances
> Thou wast born (‘Aql 1960, 15).

‘Aql transforms Pythagoras into a Phoenician, just like he considers Homer Phoenician, as the title of the story *Homer, who came from Lebanon* already

indicates (ibid.: 49). Pythagoras and Homer are both historical figures symbolising wisdom and justice and are of significance to Greek national history. ‘Aql ascribes the ‘greatness’ of these personages to Phoenicia as he appropriates the fame and prominence associated with these great man, which contributes to the idea that Phoenicia brought forth the most brilliant and memorable figures and persons, hence reinforcing the conception that Lebanon is the cradle of civilization.

Not only is Lebanon described as the ‘cultural and academic capital of the world’ (ibid.: 159), ‘Aql also perceives Phoenicia as the birthplace of Christianity. In the story *The Day Jesus Visited Lebanon*, he describes how Jesus started his divine mission on earth by taking a bath in the river Jordan, which springs in the mountains of Lebanon. This bath symbolises the baptizing of Jesus, and ‘Aql claims that Jesus did not baptize in any other water than the river that springs in Lebanon’s mountain (ibid.: 75). Furthermore, ‘Aql describes how Jesus performed a miracle in Tyre and Sidon, two of the ancient Phoenician cities, after which he praised the ‘land of Lebanon’, which is ‘envied by all the other nations’ as Lebanon is the ‘chosen nation’ (ibid.: 77). According to ‘Aql, these words that were uttered by Jesus himself have significant impact on the contemporary Maronite community since they are the ‘true inhabitants of Lebanon’ and thus the ‘chosen people’, based on the narrative in this story. This line of thought produces a sense of entitlement in the Christian, but specifically, in the Maronite community, which incites further claims as being the ‘legitimate’ and ‘rightful’ inhabitants of Lebanon, on which the second narrative elaborates further.

‘Aql also emphasizes the Christian values and morals on which Phoenicia is built throughout the book. In several stories the Phoenician hero or heroine puts aside his or her rancour against the enemy in order to ‘do the right thing’. In the story *Ranzabaal* the Phoenician princess Ranzabaal is enslaved by the King of Assyria (Assurbanipal), who fights Sidon already for several years. When Assurbanipal is wounded, Ranzabaal bandages his wounds, setting aside her grudges. When Assurbanipal asks the prince of Tyre, who is held captive as well, why Ranzabaal bandaged him despite hating him, the prince answers: ‘She did that our of kindness for a wounded man. The wounded deserve kindness where we come from [Phoenicia], even if they are enemies’ (ibid.: 92). ‘Aql makes clear that the enemies of Phoenicia do not follow the Christian value which dictates that one should love

everybody, including your enemy[2], whilst Phoenicians on the other hand are described as altruistic and noble.

'Aql demonstrates in *If Lebanon Were to Speak* how the famous places an figures of the ancient Phoenician nation are connected with present-day 'Maroniteness'. This connection not only illustrates the 'greatness' of the contemporary Maronite community and the Lebanese nation, but also entitles the descendants of the Phoenicians to a territorial claim, based on an historical explanation. In the years prior to the Lebanese independence, Phoenicianism was further integrated in the Maronite community

2.2 Second narrative (1940-1950): 'Non-Arabness'

The first narrative on Phoenicianism progressed into the second narrative of 'non-Arabness' as sentiments of nationalism rose in the years prior to the independence of Lebanon. Through an analysis of the three central types of nationalism in this period, namely pan-Arab nationalism, pan-Syrian nationalism and Maronite nationalism, the development of the Arab and opposing non-Arab identity is traced. The three ideologies are compared with regards to the interpretation of Arabism in relation to Phoenicianism which, in its turn, explains how these three different approaches to nationalism shaped the general perception of the 'other'. First, the historical background in which these three forms of nationalisms developed is outlined after which the comparison is made and the impact of these different forms of nationalism on the Maronite community are examined.

As described in the previous chapter, the fall of the Ottoman empire in 1922 resulted in the division of the autonomous region of Mount Lebanon and the province of Syria by several Western powers. The French supported the Lebanese opposition against the Ottoman empire and restructured the land borders in favour of Mount Lebanon, reducing the area of what is now Syria (Traboulsi 2012, 3). As a result of these territorial alterations, feelings of anti-imperialism and nationalism developed, fuelling the desire of inhabitants of the Syrian province to recreate the Greater Syria or Arab entity that had once existed under Ottoman Rule. In the light of the forthcoming independence of Lebanon (in 1942) and of Syria (1946), the desire to

[2] Luke 6:27

establish a ‘Greater Syria’ or pan-Arab entity became increasingly popular whilst at the same time Maronite nationalism developed. This development highlighted the matter of Arabism, questioning the definition of ‘Arab’, a pressing issue during the colonial period (Kaufman 2004, 209-221).

These ambitions were manifested in different ideologies, from which the following two are of most relevance because of their impact on the Maronite community: pan-Syrianism and pan-Arabism (Pipes 1992, 40-48; Tsupokyemla 2014, 976-980). Syrian nationalism has two approaches; the ‘pure pan-Syrianism’ and the ‘pragmatic pan-Syrianism’ (Pipes 1992, 40). Since the ‘pragmatic’ and less radical pan-Syrianism approach has much in common with pan-Arabism, this study focuses on the ‘pure’ form of pan-Syrianism. The ‘pure’ pan-Syrianists believe in a Greater Syria which incorporates all regions and people believed to be Syrian from descent. This form of pan-Syrianism rejects all forms of pan-Arab nationalism, as it believes Greater Syria is a state in itself, without being part of a ‘greater Arab union’ (ibid.: 41). The Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), founded in 1932, is the embodiment of the ‘pure’ form of pan-Syrianism since it aims to prove the uniqueness of the Syrian state and believes the Syrian identity to be utterly different from any Arab identity (Kaufman 2004, 215).

Pan-Arabism also comes in many varieties and forms, and is described and interpretated very differently by scholars (Bawardi 2016; Hagopian 1989; Kaufman 2004; Tsupokyemla 2014). However, the ideology fundamental to the Ba’ath party is considered to be representative for the general interpretation of pan-Arabism (Pipes 1992, 48). The Ba’ath party formalized in the 1940’s and aimed to revive the ‘Arab spirit’ through an emphasises on the ‘linguistic and cultural homogeneity’ and glorious history of the Arabs (Pipes 1992, 46-8). It is important to note that the development of these different ideologies must be placed in the context of its time, as the independence of Lebanon and Syria influenced the formation of nationalist sentiments.

Pipes points out that there is no uniform perception of Arabism and that the definition depends on ‘religious identity, location and era’ (ibid.: 45), which becomes clear when examining the different interpretations of Arabness by the three ideologies. The pan-Arabists considered language the most important indicator of Arabness, since it is the shared aspect between all Arabs worldwide (ibid.: 46). Consistent with this belief was the idea that actually all Arab states were artificial, as

they were created by imperial powers who tried to impose Western norms on the Arab people, braking up the ‘natural cultural entity’ the Arab nation was supposed to be (Tsupokyemla 2014, 1976). Furthermore, pan-Arabists denied the Phoenician ancestry of the Maronites and declared it a ‘French colonial misconduct’ and actually appropriated Phoenicianism themselves, by stating that Phoenicians are Arabs, since they originated from the Arabian Peninsula (Kaufman 2004, 218). The ideology fundamental to the Ba’ath party and pan-Arabism is secular, as it also considers non-Muslims Arabs (Tsupokyemla 2014, 297).

The SSNP distances itself from the Islam in a more extreme way, as it denies any connection to religion in general. Pan-Syrianists also strongly reject the idea of the existence of a defined ‘Arab’ identity; they emphasize the importance of the Arab language but they have a different account of history. The SSNP ideology referred to the Phoenicians as ‘Canaanites’, to indicate the larger geographical area inhabited by the Canaanites, including the area considered Syrian by the pan-Syrianists. From this perspective, Phoenicians were the ancestors of the Syrians, opposing the claims of the Maronites and the Arabs (Pipes 1992, 41-3).

The different interpretations of ‘Phoenicianism’ and ‘Arabness’ shaped the way the pan-Arabists and the pan-Syrianists perceived the Maronite community just like it did the other way around. The pan-Syrian movement strongly disliked the Maronite hegemony under the French mandate and in the newly formed state of Lebanon, since the National Pact granted them political ascendancy (Kaufman 2004, 218). The SSNP saw the Maronite authority and its attached Maronite nationalism ideology as a direct impediment to the creation of a Greater Syria and aimed to abolish the by France supported Maronite rule in order to incorporate Lebanon into a Greater Syria. The pan-Syrianists disagreed with the ideological convictions and historical beliefs of the Maronite community, but did not perceive them as ‘enemies’ since pan-Syrianists believed that the Maronites were geographically connected to the Syrian homeland (ibid.: 207).

Since the pan-Arabists denied the Maronite-Phoenician relation, they perceived the Maronite community as Arab, as they shared the Arabic language, region and history. Lebanon was thus considered part of a greater Arab nation, however, in contrast to the ideas of pan-Syrian nationalists, it could exist as a separate state as long as it was an integrated part of an Arabian cultural and political entity (Pipes 1992, 46).

The Maronite community regarded both forms of nationalism as a direct threat to the existence of the Maronite community and Lebanon in general. As a counterreaction, the Maronites highlighted the differences between the Maronite community and outer-groups. For example, Maronite nationalists revived the ancient Phoenician language and accepted France as the second language in Lebanon to stress their non-Arabness (Bawardi 2016, 127-130).

The different ideologies and interpretations of the past incorporated by the various nationalist movements crystallized the disparities between the Maronite, pan-Syrianist and pan-Arabist identity. Moreover, it incited the desire of the Maronite community to harness itself politically against the impending outside-threats that aimed to overthrow the Maronite hegemony. The following narrative elaborates on the political mobilization of the Maronite community in relation to Phoenicianism.

3.3 Third narrative (1950 – 1975): Formation of the political Maronite identity

After the first decade of relatively harmonious coexisting, cracks appeared in the Lebanese sectarian society as the subject of Arabism divided the different confessional groups (Moosa 1986, 294). Several regional events, such as the creation of Israel, the national independence of the Arab countries and the struggle between the two dominating powers also led to unrest in Lebanon (Aulas 1985, 17). In 1958, this unrest increased due to the strengthened relation with the Western powers and the fear that the incumbent president Chamoun would illegitimately stay in office for a second term, which resulted in tensions in the opposing Muslim communities (Salibi 1966, 215). Eventually these tensions resulted in the crisis of 1958, in which the Maronites were accused of breaking the National Pact by requesting help from the USA (Sorby 2000, 80-82).

The years before and after the 1958 crisis politicized the religious communities in Lebanon. The ‘Phalange Party’, the first political party of the Maronite community, became a major part of the Maronite Christian opposition movement, that aimed to reconstruct Lebanon into a Maronite state. Maronite nationalism became the main ideology of the Phalanges in the 1950’s, as an answer to the increasing ‘threat’ of Arab nationalism and ‘deliberately ignored the existence of any non-Christian group in Lebanon’ (Bawardi 2016, 44 – 48). The earlier described non-Arab and Phoenician

narrative was integrated in the political identity of the Maronite community (ibid.: 49 – 50).

The Phoenician idea as a foundation for the political ideology of the Phalange party was thus used to alienate the Maronite community from the Islamic parties in the political realm. In the years before the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, the Phalange party became more outspoken and tried to demonstrate that co-existence with other sects was impossible. The organisation aimed to 'preserve the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of an independent Lebanon' (Entelis 1979, 17) in which Christian and especially Maronite interests would be centralized. It became clear that the ideological doctrine propounded by the Phalange party essentially rooted in sectarian 'othering', focussing on anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudices (ibid.: 20-2). .

In the 1970's the Maronite community faced another challenge besides the persistent threat of pan-Arabism, namely the influx of Palestinian refugees who were driven out of the newly founded state of Israel (Aulas 1985, 17-19). The Phalange party approached the Palestinians with hostility as they perceived them as a new threat to the Lebanese sovereignty and its Christian values (Entelis 1979, 24). This underlined the importance of the protection of the Maronite identity through political action and, from then on, military force, which will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

The three main narratives described present the centrality of Phoenicianism in the Maronite identity in the period before the civil war. These narratives are complementary in the sense that they follow up on each other; the first narrative is used in the context of the founding of the Lebanese state and establishes the argument from which the geographical legitimacy of the Maronites is derived. The Phoenician past, through the appropriation of mythical and religious figures, is thus used to explain and reason the present. From this point on, the Maronite community integrated Phoenicianism in all aspects of Maroniteness, as to oppose themselves to the 'threatening' other, eventually manifesting itself in the formation of a political party. It can be concluded that, whereas other ideologies also partly incorporated Phoenicianism in their national narrative, the Maronites actually constructed the identity of their community based on the Phoenician past.

CHAPTER 3

The Civil war and its significance for the Maronite identity

The civil war restructured the political system in Lebanon and changed the relations between the various confessions which impacted the Maronite community in Lebanon in several ways. This chapter describes how the events of the civil war were of significance for the identity construction of the Maronite community. First, an overview is provided, describing the events that led to the civil war, followed by a summary of the developments during the war itself. Subsequently, using the theory of Sambanis et al (2020), the occurrences most influential to the (re)creation of the Maronite identity during the civil war are analysed.

3.1 The developments during the civil war

The years preceding the civil war were defined by national unrest and reinforced divergence between the different communities. The Islamic parties in the countries became increasingly dissatisfied with the division of the confessional system as they believed the sectarian divide did not represent their interests well enough (Naor 2019, 126). The Cairo agreement increased tensions as it gave right to the Palestinian refugees present in Lebanon to arm themselves against Israeli forces. This was under the pretext that the Palestinians would not violate the Lebanese sovereignty, an agreement the Palestinian forces did not honour as they attempted to assassinate the leader of the Phalange party, Jamayyil. This, among other events, resulted in the outbreak of the fifteen year long civil war (Moosa 1986, 297).

After the assault on Jamayyil, various Lebanese communities clashed violently (ibid.: 298-299). Eventually, some confessional parties demanded the abolishment of the sectarian system, as they believed it did not function anymore. However, the Maronite community clung to the confessional system, fearing that an abolishment of the sectarian system would mean a loss of political power (Naor 2019, 126). The consociational democracy collapsed as the tensions exploded in 1975 after which multiple militias and foreign powers stepped into the power vacuum, under which the Lebanese Forces (LF), the militia of the Christian alliance ‘the Lebanese Front’ under

Jamayyil; the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Syrian forces under Al-Assad (Sirriyeh 1998, 63).

The decline of the Maronite authority became especially evident in the Ta'if accord which was adopted by all parties in 1989 and heralded the end of the civil war. This so called 'document on National Reconciliation' restructured the power divisions in the sectarian system in favour of the Sunni and Shia Muslims. The agreement equalized the parliamentary representation of Muslims and Christians and also included a section that envisaged the gradual abolition of sectarianism (Haddad 2001, 466).

3.2 Analysis of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon

Foreign interventions during a civil war can greatly affect identities of ethnic communities, argue Sambanis et al. In their study, the authors conceptualise the relation between ethnic polarization and foreign intervention in an ethnic heterogenic country that experiences civil war (2020, 2156-9). This theory demonstrates how

> actual or expected intervention on behalf of the government, rebels, or both, induces arming (i.e., increases conflict between groups), which makes ethnic identities more salient and increases polarization modelled as the perceived (social, ideological) distance between minority groups and the state (ibid.: 2159).

In sum, Sambanis et al. show how identities are sharpened and shaped by foreign intervention. When this idea is applicated to the case of the civil war in Lebanon, it can be argued that the Palestinian presence and the Syrian forces that intervened in the Lebanese civil war had a significant impact on the identity creation of all ethno-religious communities in Lebanon.

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon during the Lebanese civil war crystallised oppositions between the sects and catalysed the civil war. The influx of more than 100,000 Palestinian refugees, of which 90 percent were Sunni Muslims, impacted Lebanon demographically and pressured the long-standing sectarian divide (Eleftheriadou 2021, 103). The Palestinian revolutionary resistance that emerged in the refugee camps in Lebanon was supported by several Lebanese Islamic groups, since their dissatisfaction with the power division of the Lebanese state made the

PLO attractive to Islamic sects opposed to the Maronite hegemony. The Maronite community perceived the armed Palestinians on Lebanese land as a direct infringement of the national sovereignty of Lebanon and supported the Israeli forces instead (Entelis 1979, 21-3). The presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon thus further polarized Lebanese society and increased inter-sectarian tensions.

The foreign intervention of the Palestinians validated the fear of the Maronite community to be overthrown by outside forces (chapter 2.2). The main concern for the Maronite community was that the majority of their fellow Lebanese gave up on the established political regime as the PLO 'challenged the status quo' with the help of Lebanese citizens. As a response, the community strengthened its nationalist ideology and emphasized the idea of 'an all-pure Maronite enclave (Entelis 1979, 24)' which reinforced anti-Muslim sentiments. The Phalange party radicalised its ideology in order to 'defend' the Maronite identity and Christian nationality against the Palestinian national revolutionaries. In this way, the Palestinian intervention made the ethnic identity of the Maronite more salient as it amplified the deeply rooted fear of Muslim subjugation and reinforced the desire to construct a Maronite nation within the borders of Lebanon.

3.3 Analysis of the Syrian intervention in Lebanon

The Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1976 intensified the opposition between the Maronites and the Shia community. The Shia community supported Syria's actions, whilst the majority of the Maronites condemned the influence of Damascus in Lebanon. This led to an intensified hatred among the Lebanese sects as well as an increase in violence in general (Haddad 2001, 465-7).

However, in contrast to the response of the Maronite community to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, in which the Maronites formed a joint anti-Palestinian block, the opinions within the Maronite community on the Syrian intervention were divided (Rabil 2001, 30-32). A part of the Maronite community supported the Israel invasion of Lebanon in 1982 to destroy the PLO and oppose the Syrian dominant position in Lebanon (ibid.: 25). The other Maronite camp perceived the Syrian intervention as an opportunity to counter the Sunni-led PLO, since the Syrian troops were mainly made up of Shia Muslims. Ultimately, these different point of views within the Maronite community led to friction. The lack of one, strong leader

and the absence of an unifying objective as well as an national political platform led to increasing disunity withing the Maronite sect (ibid.: 31).

The effects leading to this disorientation within the community were mostly caused by outside parties, following the theory of Sambanis et al. (2000). However, Rabil (2001) argues that the constant defensiveness of the Maronite identity and 'reluctance to reconsider the party's historical record' reinforces outer-group hostilities, which in turn stimulates the various parties concerned to defend itself (30). Following this line of reasoning, the Syrian intervention amplified the divergence within the Maronite community and displays the internal historical structures.

This chapter demonstrated how foreign interventions polarized the Lebanese society. However, Sambanis et al. (2000) argue that foreign interventions sharpen ethnic identities, which is true with regard to the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. It increased anti-Islamic sentiments within the community, as the major Muslim communities in Lebanon, the Shia and Sunni groups, respectively supported the PLO and Assads troops. The strengthened nationalist feelings only underlined this hostile attitude. However, the Maronite community proved to be divided with respect to the Syrian interference in Lebanon, which led to internal divergence. The Maronite identity was thus effected by foreign interventions during the Lebanese civil war in two ways, since it strengthened nationalist sentiments and prejudices, but weakened the community in terms of ideological differences.

CHAPTER 4

Post-civil war Maronite identity

The years following the civil war were defined by a powershift, from dominant Maronite hegemony to a more equal, or Muslim-favoured power structure in Lebanese politics and governance. The decline in 'Maronitism' led to friction in the Maronite community as well as feelings of deprivation. Furthermore, the events of the civil war were experienced very differently by the various parties involved. Through the creation of a collective memory, the fifteen years of civil war were re-narrated and incorporated in the identity of the confessional communities. It is through these developments that the Maronite communal identity was reinterpreted and in some cases readjusted. Even though the issues that influenced the Maronite identity in the post-war period are multiple, it is possible to determine four elements that were of most significance to the identity-construction of the Maronite community in the years after the civil war. First an outline of the general context of this period is provided, after which the various elements that were of influence to the construction of the Maronite identity are addressed.

The end of the civil war in 1990 was ratified by the signing of the Ta'if agreement by all parties. This agreement preserved the distribution of the three main positions in parliament as prescribed in the National Pact, but altered several other aspects. These changes seemed minor in comparison to the ferocity of the war itself, nonetheless, most parties involved were unsatisfied with this new accord (Haddad 2001, 466). The Ta'if agreement broke up the Maronite camp, as the opinions on the acceptance of the agreement were divided. An internal conflict within the Maronite community concerning the various visions on how Lebanon should be governed or developed reinforced this division. Additionally, rivalry between the Maronite leaders obstructed the reconciliation process within the community and in relation to the other sects which led to a continuation of the integration of Lebanon in 'the Syrian sphere of influence' (Sirriyeh 1998, 62-63). The political influence of Assad in the Lebanese parliamentary elections led to a pro-Syrian Cabinet and Parliament in favour of the Muslim communities and further diminished the political power of the Maronite community (ibid.: 64).

The lack of unifying leadership underlined the segregation within the Maronite community. Additionally, the migration of many Maronites during the civil war

influenced the seize and political weight of the community. This made it more difficult for the Maronite community to claim certain political privileges which they enjoyed until the outbreak of the civil war (ibid.: 65).

In the context of this internal struggle and declining authority, the Maronite community identity developed in relation to four fundamental and interrelated aspects. The first aspect concerns collective memory making. Through this process, history is 'reclaimed' by the Maronite community and offers a potential interpretation of reality representing the believed 'legitimacy' of its existence. Secondly, grievances play a major role in the re-interpretation of the Maronite identity. An instrumentalist approach in combination with the grievance-frustration link are used to examine the protective attitude of many Maronites, as well as the fear of becoming, or staying, a minority. This relates to the third element, namely 'fear of others'. This 'fear' can be interpretated in various ways, but seems to be particularly connected with a notion of superiority. The last aspect analysed concerns the generation-gap within the Maronite community, which results in division within the community. Using the three interviews as foundation for this analysis, this study provides a deeper understanding of the post-civil war identity-making process. However, taking the limited number of interviews in account, it is of importance to realise that this analysis is not presenting an indisputable truth, but rather aims to contribute to a broader perception of the effects of the Lebanese civil war on the Maronite community.

The interviews[3] through which the four analysed elements were identified were conducted with three Maronite man. The first respondent, Jaor[4] is a 40 year old lecturer who teaches religious history at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK). He has worked for several years in a Maronite parish in Italy as a priest before returning to his hometown Byblos in Lebanon. Rick (48), the second interviewee, works in sales and lives in Beirut. He is not married and does not have children. Greg (25), the last respondent, is a theology and philosophy student at USEK and lives on the campus of the university. The three interviews were conducted in a time span of two weeks and took approximately around one up to two hours each. Initially, these interviews were meant to be conducted face to face, however, in the context of the current pandemic, the interviews were eventually carried out online.

[3] Recordings of the interviews are in the possession of the researcher
[4] Names of the respondents are feigned

4.1 Collective memory making and reclaiming the past

It is often assumed, that in the aftermath of violent conflict on a national level, a 'collective national memory' develops (Sacranie 2016, 5). This collective national memory is mostly created in relation to 'state-sponsored memory', in which the state organises national commemorative practices and thus constructs a specific narrative on the past (Ashplant et al. 2000, 10). Yet in Lebanon, a collective national memory does not seem to exist. Instead, the civil war seems to be approached with some form of institutional amnesia, in which the Lebanese state ignores the physical and mental remains of the political conflict (Haugbolle 2010, 9). The lack of state-led commemoration increases the construction of alternative forms of remembrance and memory cultures in the various communities in Lebanon (ibid.: 8). In the Maronite community the construction of a particular memory culture also attributes to the re-shaping of their communal identity in which the past is represented in a way that gives community members the opportunity to 'imagine themselves in relation to the meaning of their own history' (Bawardi 2016, 128; Haugbolle 2010, 30).

It seems, however, that Maronite community members mostly try to 'forget' the experiences of the civil war. When I asked the respondents if they talked much about the civil war with relatives or friends they denied this. Greg, who did not experience the civil war himself, said that he barely talks about the events of the civil war with his parents (Greg, 00:57:11). Jaor argued that the intensity of the war and the violence against the Maronites and other Christians are among the reasons why the community does not like to talk about the conflict (Jaor, 00:42:00). Rick, on the other hand, downplayed the civil war by saying that 'war is war' and it is brutal, but it 'just is like that' (Rick, 00:09:30), which demonstrated a certain form of acceptance.

However, when the causes and the guilty parties of the civil war were discussed, the respondents had clear answers and seemingly remembered the causes and actors concerned. When it came down to the 'causes' of the civil war, all three respondents mentioned that these were 'plural' but that there were some events that 'sparked' the war. Interestingly, the respondents all mentioned different events; Greg argued that the influx of Palestinians in Lebanon triggered the already existing tensions between Muslim- and Christian communities in Lebanon (Greg, 01:35:05); Rick mentioned that the interference of 'outside' forces worsened national politics and thus lead to the civil war (Rick, 00:23:48); while Jaor stated that the absence of a

steady Maronite leadership negatively affected the whole country and made the formation of various militias possible (Jaor, 00:50:27). When examining these different accounts of the causes, it turns out that the commonalty is the foundational idea that ‘the other’ is to ‘blame’; the ‘other’ being external forces or Lebanese Muslim communities. Furthermore, the pre-civil war Maronite rule is generally regarded as beneficial for the whole country whilst the decline of Maronite leadership is related to overall national deterioration.

It might appear obvious to point the finger to the other parties involved when one is asked who is ‘responsible’ of starting a war. One party will probably perceive themselves ‘victim’ and the other ‘perpetrator’, argue Licata et al. (2011). However, in the context of the Lebanese civil war it is important to note that the parliament passed an amnesty law which claimed that ‘every community was equally guilty’ (181). This law aimed to convince all parties involved that the war had no ‘perpetrators’ nor ‘victims’. However, the reactions of the interviewees demonstrate that the objective of the Amnesty Law rather created a situation in which every group, including the Maronite community, perceived itself ‘victim’. Rick acknowledged this when he mentioned that the Muslim communities are ‘the winners’ of the war (Rick, 00:24:30). Greg said that ‘survival is our identity’, and that ‘they [Muslims]’ tried to wipe us out, but ‘we still exist’ (Greg, 00:37:40). In this way, the narrative that is foundational for the collective memory on the civil war in the Maronite community attributes the responsibility or even ‘blame’ for the civil war to outer-groups, which consist often out of Muslims.

In line with the construction of a collective memory is the shared tendency within the community to ‘long’ for the past. In this conntext, the ‘past’ is the time before the civil war, or even before the independence of Lebanon, when Lebanon was still under French mandate. During these times the Maronite community had clear political ascendency and perceived their political hegemony as self-explanatory (see chapter 3). After the civil war the Maronites felt like they constantly had to struggle for their rights; this is evident from the comment made by Greg, who emphasized the constant survival of the Maronite community (Greg, 00:37:40) as well as in the statement from Jaor, in which he pointed out that it is ‘a huge advantage that the Muslims are divided’ because otherwise they will ‘take over and the Maronites have to go’ (Jaor, 00:48:00). Rick described how the pre-civil war decades were prosperous because of the Maronite leadership and refers to the Phoenician

ancestry of the Maronites, as he explained that the Phoenicians were famous for their trading abilities, ‘just like the Maronites’ (Rick, 00:33:54). He added that the objective of the Maronite community is to ‘complete what the Phoenicians started’ and that this can be achieved by learning from the past (ibid.: 00:34:00).

This indicates a certain nostalgia, which tends to glorify the memories of certain periods, especially when the present does not equivalate these previous ‘good’ times. In order to legitimise the existence of the Maronite community in present-day Lebanon, the collective memory making of the Maronite community emphasizes the pre-civil war years and abates the experiences of the civil war itself.

4.2 Grievances and the ‘minority-element’

In the context of selective memorising, Hermez (2017) argues that memory not only fulfils the role of remembrance of the past, but also recreates the way people perceive themselves in the present or even future (144). This means that the constructed collective memory of the Maronite community has direct implications on the contemporary daily lives of Maronites, especially when it comes down to grievances and frustrations the Maronite community experiences. The grievances and frustrations are reinforced by the described narrative in which the Maronite community perceives itself as ‘the victim’ of civil war (Licata et al. 2011, 183). Relative deprivation and grievances caused by frustration can crystallize group-identities and reinforce the distances between in-group and outer-group identities. These developments can also be observed in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, when the diminished political power of the Maronite community led to the decline of group autonomy and an increase of sentiments of frustration. As a result, grievances and feelings of relative deprivation in the Maronite community emerged.

The interviews demonstrated that both Rick and Jaor experienced feelings of relative deprivation, as they argued that the Maronites were the ‘first’ inhabitants in Lebanon. However, to Rick’s and Jaor’s regret, other sectarian communities outnumbered the Maronites in the period after the civil war (Rick, 00:39:49; Jaor, 00:25:56). This echoes a more general frustration in the Maronite community, namely the feeling that they have become a ‘minority’ in ‘their own’ country. In line with the grievance theory of Shaykhutdinov (2011, 143), it can be argued that the Maronite community expected to be the dominant authority in Lebanon, based on their

perceived geographic legitimacy. However, since the expectations are not met, as they have become a minority in terms of size as well as political power, feelings of deprivation developed withing the Maronite community.

The grievances the Maronite community seems to experience in relation to their 'minority status' also appear to enhance the determination of the group to strengthen the 'Maronite identity' and emphasize the uniqueness of their community in order to prevent further dilution of the Maronite identity. Greg demonstrated this determination to protect the Maronite community when he stated that 'we have the right to defend the identity of our community and its history' (Greg, 00:15:31). Also, Rick mentioned that 'war is sometimes necessary', implying that when the Maronite community will be further marginalized, he will defend the rights and values of his community (Rick, 00:08:00).

The frustrations about the 'minority status' of the community are inherently entangled with a 'fear of extinction'. Rick argued that it is unfair that the Maronite community is constantly at risk and mentioned that the Ta'if agreement increased the threatened position of the Maronites (Rick, 00:14:39). This connects to Jaor's reasoning, as he explained that he is scared that the majority of the Muslims will overthrow the government and implement the Islamic rule (Jaor, 00:46:29). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Greg emphasized the constant survival of the Maronite community through history (Greg, 00:37:40) which indicates the continual 'defend' modus in which the Maronite community legitimizes itself. The grudges held towards outer-groups are thus related to the lingering fear of extinction which has increased in the aftermath of the civil war. The grievances developed are intrinsically linked to the constant fear of outer-groups, on which the following section will further elaborate.

4.3 Fear of others and sentiments of superiority

Fear of outer-groups occurs when groups experience what Bloom calls 'symbolic identity threats'. The 'otherness' of outer-groups is perceived as a potential risk for the shared distinct identity of the community in which 'otherness' is mostly ethnically of religiously defined (2015, 204). Connolly argues that this 'conversion of some differences into otherness' can lead to the 'demonization of others' (1991, 61). At the same time specific elements and aspects of the own community are glorified and

emphasized (Lister 2004, 101). In the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, the Maronite community seems to have created multiple ‘evil’ others, which increased the ‘fear of others’ and reaffirmed the ‘negative characteristics’ ascribed to outer-groups, reinforcing the narrative created by the Maronite community in which they place themselves.

The constructed narrative appears to be grounded in sentiments of superiority, in which the positive aspects of ‘Maronitism’ are opposed to the inferiority of outer-groups (Bawardi et al. 2016, 51). This dichotomy between ‘fear’ of others and perceived in-group ‘superiority’ in the Maronite community are concentrated around two themes; religion and self-determination. However, this ingrained dichotomy is subject to change, as the Maronite community seems to develop a tendency in which it aims to find commonalities instead of deviances in outer-groups. In the following analysis it becomes clear to what extent the ‘fear of others’ in relation to sentiments of superiority do dominate the construction of the Maronite identity, and whether the Maronite community overcomes an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality.

The remark made by Greg when he was asked about his opinion on other confessional groups clearly demonstrates the position in which the Maronite community places itself: ‘they [Muslims] need Christians’ (Greg, 00:37:50). Furthermore, Greg pointed out that everything ‘went wrong’ in Lebanon when the Maronite leadership ended (ibid.: 01:35:05). Jaor reinforced this statement as he argued that Lebanon was free and liberal when Maronites were leading the country (Jaor, 00:50:27). Following this reasoning, the Maronite community appears to perceive themselves as invaluable and essential to the existence of Lebanon as well as other confessional communities.

This idea is consolidated when the interviewees are asked what they consider the ‘core values’ of the Maronite community. Rick and Jaor both mentioned the liberal values of the Maronites and stress their openness to the world (ibid.: 00:52:00) on which Rick further elaborated by saying: ‘[..] they [the Arabs] loved us before because we are very liberal, as Maronites, as Christians in general. But Maronites more [...]’ (Rick, 00:16:20 - 00:19:44). This quote demonstrated that Rick considers the Maronite community to be very progressive and tolerant, and also shows a certain complacency as Rick defined the Maronite community as the ‘Arab’s favourite’. By stating that ‘the Maronite community is loved more’, Rick implied indirectly that other communities are loved less, thus (unintentionally) creating a hierarchical order.

Moreover, Rick pointed out that Maronite schools 'have a broader imagination and are progressive' and he also stressed the 'open-mindedness' of the Maronite community several times. Rick, a businessman, said that the economic climate is not the same anymore as before the civil war and that the decline of Maronite influence in all sectors of society is one of the reasons business is bad at the moment. However, he also mentioned the constant threat of outside forces as a reason for the economic recession (ibid.: 00:13:25). This 'threat' is interpreted differently by the three respondents; Rick referred to the influx of Syrian refugees after the emergence of the Syrian civil war (ibid.: 00:59:60), whilst Greg and Jaor explained they perceive the lingering influence of Hezbollah as threatening.

Even though the Ta'if agreement prohibits the interference of foreign forces in national affairs and the so called 'Islamitization' or 'Westernization' of Lebanon (Haddad 2001, 466), it condones the armed segment of Hezbollah (Wiegand 2009, 675-6), which many Maronites find threatening and incomprehensible. Especially Jaor expressed his concerns about the underlying ideology of the party, as he stated that the 'Muslim ideology' of Hezbollah is just not compatible with the free and liberal ideas of the Maronite community and Christians in general (Jaor, 00:43:00). When the respondents were asked why many Maronite political parties work together or align with Hezbollah nowadays[5] they clearly stated that they reject any cooperation with Hezbollah. Jaor emphasized that he 'belongs to the Western mentality, to freedom and to the liberal economy', implying that Hezbollah holds opposite values and ideologies. He regretted the fact that some Maronites support Hezbollah, but Jaor also pointed out that these diverse opinions and preferences within the Maronite community should be celebrated, as they showcase the liberal values of the Maronites (ibid.: 00:52:22).

This 'diversity' in the Maronite community seems to develop in various directions. For one, anti-Arab sentiments, fuelled by the Phoenician thought in the period between the 1940's and 1950's, no longer prevail in the Maronite community. Greg even stated that he identifies as Arab and adds: 'I am proud to be a Maronite and Arab' (Greg, 00:08:19). Jaor on the other hand, explained that he cannot be Arab since you cannot be Arab without being Muslim (Jaor, 00:57:00). Rick has a different opinion; he believed being Arab is a political identity you can adopt (Rick, 00:06:00).

[5] For example the Free Patriotic Movement and the Marada Movement

These various interpretations of Arabness in relation to the Maronite community demonstrate the changing discourse on the Arab - and Maronite identity. 'We share the same land, the same language, so there is no problem to say that we are Arab' explained Greg (Greg, 00:10:26). However, despite the commonalities which seem to interconnect the Maronite community with outer-groups in some aspects, other ideas and opinions show that the Maronite identity continues to be influenced by fear of others. Greg mentioned for example that, although he does not want to be characterized as an 'extremist', he finds is suspicious that the explosion in the port of Beirut[6] was in the historically Christian side[7] (ibid.: 01:40:23). This demonstrates that Greg considers it possible that the explosion was a premeditated attack, organised by Muslim communities, indicating a persistent suspicion towards outer-groups and a constant fear to be the target of the 'evil other'. The relation between the Maronite community and other outer-groups is described very accurately by Rick: 'at first glance, we like each other, but at the bottom-line we are just very different' (Rick, 00:18:06). The following section elaborates further on the differences within the Maronite community.

4.4 The generation-gap

Griffin (2004) argues that the events experienced in the 'formative' years between the age of 10 and 30 are likely to be of more significance to a person than memories made after these years (554). This means that members of the same generation often share particular feelings and emotions connected to a certain significant event which happened in their youth. The memories of these events are thus very alike and create a 'generation specific collective memory' which will most likely influence the values and behaviour of the members of this generation (ibid.: 544-6).

Because a younger generation did not experience the events important to the older generational members in their 'formative' years, the significant events are interpreted differently by each generation. When this happens in the same ethnic and/or religious community, differences in 'collective memorising' develop. If this

[6] The so called 'blast of Beirut' on 4 May 2020 caused the death of 207 people and left 6,500 people injured (BBC 2020).

[7] Beirut was divided in two parts during the civil war, an Christian east-side and Muslim West-side (Baranko 2020, 115-116).

collective memory divergence cannot be overcome and influences the way in which members of the same community perceive each other or the community, it can create a so called ‘generation gap’ (Khalaf 2009, 57-60).

In the case of the Maronite community, the differences between the different generations become evident in the remembrance of the Lebanese civil war and the meaning attached to it. The older generation Maronites who experienced the civil war in their formative years perceive this event as a turning point for the Maronite community; before these violent years life for the Maronite community was better (ibid.: 61). The past before the civil war is highlighted in the collective memory of the older Maronite generation whilst memories of the violence of the civil war are rather forgotten. Khalaf (2009) argues that the older generation ‘positions themselves between collective nostalgic memory and collective amnesia’ whereas the younger generation actually focuses on the present, in which the remnants of the civil war are a central part of their everyday reality. This generation of Maronites is less sentimentally attached to a ‘romanticised’ past and thus less involved with certain myths and constructed images of the Maronite community (ibid.: 59).

During the interviews, it became clear that two of the interviewees belonged to the ‘older generation’ Maronites, whilst Greg, who is 25, clearly belongs to the ‘younger generation’. The differences between the two generations became evident when they were asked about the current difficulties Lebanon faces. Greg stated that the prevailing crisis in Lebanon can only be solved if politics and religion are separated, however, he fears that the older generation Maronites might not accept the split between church and politics, since in their perspective, these two facets of Maronitism are inherently intertwined and should not be separated (Greg, 00:58:42). Whilst discussing this topic with Jaor, it became clear that Greg’s assumptions were mostly accurate, as Jaor argued that ‘religion comes first in this country, religion is in our blood’ (Jaor, 00:43:00). He believed a power division in politics necessary since it is the only way to preserve the Maronite influence in Lebanese politics which is also a ‘guarantee for the survival of the Maronite community within Lebanon’. Furthermore, Jaor was clearly concerned that Muslims are unable to practice secular politics, because he believes that the Quran stipulates theocracy, in which the only accepted form of governance is the governance of God (ibid.: 00:42:44).

The interviews also demonstrated the divergence in the interpretation of the Maronite past within the community. Rick and Jaor mentioned the connection

between the pre-civil war powerful position of the Maronites and the prosperous development of Lebanon several times, but they hardly talked about the civil war itself, and mostly referred negatively to the post-civil war period (interview Rick; interview Jaor). Greg reasoned that the older generation clings to the past because they believe that the civil war made ‘everything worse for the Maronites’ and that this is also the reason why his relatives do not like to speak of the war (Greg, 01:02:26). This stimulated the older generation to romanticise the past, because ‘they all want to find a way to connect themselves to history’, Greg explained (ibid.: 00:12:18).

Greg regretted this attitude of the older generation Maronites, since he was of the opinion that the Maronite community as a whole should focus on the present instead of a glorified past in order to find pragmatic solutions to the current crises. Rick agreed that solutions should be found, but he believed this the responsibility of the younger generation, as he recognized that his ‘own’ generation is stuck in its believes and habits, and has been through a lot already (Rick, 00:50:59).

The answers from the three interviewees indicate a generation gap within the Maronite community. The younger generation’s experiences most influential to the shared memory of this group are recent memories, mostly related to the various economic and political crises after the civil war. The pre-civil war past is no memory of their own, but a story repeatedly told by the older generation Maronites. But for the older generation Maronites, this very same period to which present-day Lebanon is constantly compared has been highly influential for the development of their collective memory. The different perspectives on for example the political power division in relation to religion show the discrepancy between two generations of Maronites, in which the civil war serves as the tipping point.

The interviews with the three Maronite respondents demonstrate that four major elements were of significance to the identity-construction of the Maronite community in the years after the civil war. When comparing these four different elements, it becomes clear that they are interrelated in several aspects. The process of collective memory making, in which the pre-civil war period is emphasized and the civil war period itself is more or less ignored, is of importance to the ‘sentiment of superiority’ which developed in the Maronite community in order to oppose themselves to outer-groups. However, in chapter 4.4, the analysis demonstrated that the creation of a particular collective memory within the Maronite community depends on the generation one belongs to. The younger and older generation Maronites differ in their

perspectives on the Maronite past as well on contemporary issues in Lebanon. This stimulates the diversity in the Maronite community, which affects certain pre-civil war sentiments, such as the previously prevailing anti-Arab sentiment. However, other feelings and fears show to be persistent over time, as the analysis of the grievances in the Maronite community demonstrated. The fear of extinction and of staying/becoming a minority are still evident in the older as well as the younger generation Maronites. As a result, the majority of the Maronite community continuous to stress its uniqueness and emphasizes differences between the Maronite community and outer-groups. But as demonstrated in the last section, the younger generation does question some aspects of the general culture within the community, which will probably also influence the way the Maronite identity is constructed in the future.

COMPARISON AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to shed light on the Maronite identity and the influence of the civil war on its development. The structured analyses of poetry, theory and conducted interviews have shown the multiple aspects influencing the Maronite identity throughout the three time periods evaluated. During the different time periods, particular elements of the Maronite identity were emphasized which related often to the events of that specific time.

The construction of a common understanding of origin through the development of a 'mythscape' (Bell 2003), has been demonstrated to be central to the pre-independence period. 'Phoenicianism' was used to present a uni-vocal history foundational to the Maronite community in order to reinforce a group identity. In the following years, Phoenicianism was further integrated in the Maronite identity, demonstrated through the analyses of three different narratives which developed on the verge of the Lebanese civil war. The Maronite identity was defined by an 'us versus them' mentality which translated in a defensive approach towards outer-groups and an growing popularity of Maronite nationalism. Foundational to the nationalist ideology was the Phoenician claim of the nation, which was of great importance with regards to the establishment of an independent Lebanon and resulted in the politization of the Maronite community.

The start of the civil war increased the perceived outer-group threat, which enhanced nationalist sentiments within the Maronite community. The fear of losing political ascendancy stimulated the Maronites to militarize the political section of the community, the Phalange party, who violently took part in the civil war. Compared to the years before the independence of Lebanon, in which the nationalist Maronite ideology was mainly conveyed and disseminated through written culture such as the work of Said 'Aql and other proponents of Lebanonism, the militarised Phalange party perceived it necessary to participate in war in order to protect the Maronite identity and establish a Christian state. This demonstrated an important shift within the construction of the shared Maronite identity, as the focus of the Maronite community in the early 20th century was to establish and create an uniform idea of Maronitism and proclaim its geographical entitlement to Lebanon's territory. The threat of several outside forces and the possible loss of political ascendancy, made

the community turn to an offensive approach as to protect and reclaim ‘their’ Lebanon from the Arabic and Muslim ‘others’.

However, the end of the civil war irreversibly changed the position of the Maronite community with regards to the confessional groups. This impacted the Maronite identity in comparison to the pre-civil war Maronite identity in several ways, as the interview analyses illustrated. First, the traumatic experiences of the war led to the construction of a collective memory which re-narrated the events of the war. This provided the Maronite community with the possibility to reproduce the earlier composed ‘us versus them’ framework in which the ‘other’ was now responsible for the fifteen years of civil war. Yet, perhaps the most important effect of the civil war in relation to the Maronite community was the emergence of new grievances and frustrations, a result of the deprivation of the Maronite community’s power within the political system in Lebanon. The interviewees all connected these feelings of relative deprivation with a lingering fear of outer-groups, who were perceived as threat to Maronite and/or Christian values, beliefs and life in general.

Fear and notions of superiority are intrinsic to the Maronite community’s identity, as these two aspects are ever present in the Maronite community, pre- or post-war. However, a new tendency seems to develop: the split of identity’s within the Maronite community. The civil war is of significance to this divergence, since it created contrasting interpretations of the present-day reality and historical events by the different generations of Maronites. The strong grip through which the older generation Maronites nostalgically holds on to a glorified past might be prone to change as the younger generation aims to influence the present without using the historical narrative employed by their elders. The Phoenician myth, so important to the period before the civil war and during the war itself, might be exchanged for a different interpretation of the Maronite history.

It is beyond the scope of this research to connect the implications of the changing Maronite identity and community to the current tensions within the Maronite community and in Lebanon in general. However, this study can contribute to a broader understanding of the impact of such events on the development of sectarian relations and in-group identities. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates the inextricable interconnectedness of the political and cultural and the impact of this interwovenness on the collective beings.

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