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The Modern Maronite Identity in the Twenty First Century Lebanon: Historical and Ethnological Perspectives

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Ethnology (H 006)

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LIETUVOS MUZIKOS IR TEATRO AKADEMIJA

Šarūnas Rinkevičius

Modernusis maronitų identitetas Libane 21-ajame amžiuje: istorinė ir etnologinė perspektyvos

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INTRODUCTION

The Lebanese coast, separated from the Syrian desert by the range of Lebanese mountains, continuously inhabited for several thousand years and being on the crossroads of trading routes and civilizations since the Phoenician times, throughout the ages has developed as a unique space famous for its diversity, consisting of multiple ethnic and religious communities with this diversity being institutionalized in the modern-day Lebanese confessional system. But what is the modern Lebanon? How did it become an Independent State in the twentieth century? Who is responsible for inventing the modern Lebanese mythology and symbols?

The Maronite community, consisting of around 3.5 million people worldwide[1] with approximately 1 million Maronites currently (as of 2023) residing in Lebanon, is the most influential of all the Christian communities in terms of political, economic, and social issues in the Middle Eastern region. It can be partly explained by the fact that Maronites constitute a larger percentage[2] of the population in Lebanon than any other Christian community does in other Middle Eastern states; however (and which is even more

[1] Currently, there are more Maronites residing in diaspora compared to the number of Maronites residing in Lebanon. It is not exactly known when and where the first Maronite diasporan community emerged, however, it must have happened in the second half of the nineteenth century (the Cypriot Maronite community, established in the seventh century and currently consisting of around 12,000 members today, is not considered to be part of the diaspora). Antonio Bishallany, a native of the village of Salima in East Lebanon, who was working as a translator for U.S. Protestant missionaries in Beirut, was invited to visit the United States and, after departing Lebanon on 22 August 1854, he spent two years in the U.S. before he died in 1856, thus becoming one of the first *recorded* Maronites to reside in the diasporan country (Labaki 2014, 74). Although, politically, diaspora is not playing a substantial role in the Lebanese politics, the financial support to the Maronites residing in Lebanon is a crucial factor for the local community.

[2] In 2023, the Maronite community comprises around 27% of the Lebanese population. It is estimated that, in 1943, when the Lebanese independence was declared, Maronites comprised around 40% of the total Lebanese population.

important), the Maronite community, being a relatively small[3] community[4], has managed to develop its distinct[5] modern[6] collective identity[7], and, after gaining influence in the Lebanese politics in the twentieth century, it transformed these ideas into a political entity by virtue of being the main advocates for the establishment of the modern Lebanon within the current boundaries. Consequently, we can state that the modern-day Lebanon can be

[3] By applying the term *small community*, I refer to the concept of the *small nation* as developed by Miroslav Hroch who elaborated on the differences in the modern collective identity construction between the governing nations and non-dominant (I would also add *competing*) ethnic groups within a state. Hroch wrote that small nations are "those which were in subjection to a ruling nation for such a long period that the relation of subjection took on a structural character for both parties" (Hroch 2012, 9–11) or, simply, a 'non-dominant' group in a state. Malešević added that "the label 'small nation' has less to do with the size of one's territory or population and much more with specific ideological vistas, geopolitical ambitions and economic projections or military strategies", therefore it is important to deconstruct and historicise its sociological underpinnings and its political uses" (Malešević 2019,133–134); consequently, it has to be supplemented with a wide historical and ideological analysis of the Maronite community. In this regard, we should take into consideration the fact that the Maronite community is living in the Arab world consisting of 22 members states of the Arab League. Also, the Maronite community, since the beginning of developing its modern collective identity, always had competing rival entities offering and suggesting different visions for the future of Lebanon.

[4] Instead of using the term *nation*, in the Maronite case, I prefer using the term *community* considering it to be more accurate when describing the Maronite relations with the Lebanese nationalism.

[5] I have to note that, in any community, there are different individuals with different perceptions towards various questions; consequently, not each and every Maronite shares the same ideas with the majority of the community; at the same time, it does not necessarily mean that only the Maronites share the ideas perceived as the Maronite thought. For example, the Maronite Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883) was a famous Arabist; meanwhile, one of the most famous intellectuals developing the Maronite thought was Michel Chiha (1891–1954) of the Chaldean origin. However, not only historical development of the Maronite thought but also the Lebanese confessionalism enable us to apply the concept of the modern Maronite collective identity as representing the Maronite thought and the Maronite community.

[6] By saying 'modern', I refer to the contemporary Maronite collective identity, yet I apply the term *modern* due to the fact that the Lebanese confessionalism provides a framework of the modernist discourse.

[7] There are many types of identity – cultural identity, national identity, professional identity, social identity, etc., yet, in my study, I apply the term *modern collective identity* referring to the nationalism studies instead of applying he term *nation* which I consider to be not accurate for defining the Maronite case due to its complicated historical, cultural and political development that is the subject of the second and the third sections of the work.

perceived as a product of Maronite intellectual and political activities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although I started my narrative with a reference to the very origin of Lebanon's idea which emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century, as almost a quarter of the twenty-first century has already passed, we still have plenty of unanswered questions regarding the Maronite community and Lebanon in general in the domain of the modern collective identity studies. These questions can be reduced to two main aspects: ***firstly***, this topic is part of a broader discussion regarding the modern collective identity construction and nationalism theories and their application to small nations. The Maronite community serves as an informative example for the broader discussion of identity studies that can be expressed by the following questions: What are the necessary conditions for the national movement to form a modern collective identity? Why did some communities manage to create political entities while others did not? What is the theoretical model that we can apply to the analysis of the modern collective identity construction? How does a community construct its modern collective identity when it is not bound to the nation state? Is the nation state the sole outcome of the national movement? What are the relations between communalism and nationalism?

Secondly, the unique sociopolitical system of power sharing in Lebanon – *confessionalism* – which is based on religious affiliations, where the attachment of communities to religious identities should not be understood as a sign of religiosity, but rather as religion-centred communalism being not only a social or political, but a cultural phenomenon as well, provides us a framework for analysing the processes within the single community in Lebanon instead of focusing on the analysis of the state unity. This system reflects a unique cultural and political landscape of Lebanon with the 18 officially recognized religious communities residing in Lebanon, each having its own communal self-perception of the modern collective identity with weak metaconfessional Lebanese unity. Hence, the national idea of Lebanon cannot be understood without the analysis of each communal case in the first place as the communal entity is the first layer of unification among various local communities, particularly considering the key role of the Maronite community in advocating the Lebanese independence and providing Lebanese cultural symbols throughout the twentieth century. Although the Lebanese Constitution claims Lebanon to be an Arab state[8], the question of the Lebanese

[8] As of May 2023, the Lebanese Constitution can be found via the following link: <https://www.lp.gov.lb/backoffice/uploads/files/Lebanese%20%20Constitution-%20En.pdf>.

cultural context is much more complex. We can continue with the other questions relevant in the context of the twenty-first century in Lebanon: Is Lebanon a nation-state? How is the modern collective identity being constructed in Lebanon? What are the connections between being *Maronite* and *Lebanese*? Can we consider the Maronite community as a nation, or is it a part of the Lebanese entity? What is the Maronite modern collective identity vision for the twenty-first century? Was the Maronite modern collective identity in the twentieth century different compared to the Maronite modern collective identity in the twenty-first century?

The aim of the work. The aim of the work is to analyse the modern Maronite collective identity in the twenty-first century based on the theoretical model provided for assessing the modern collective identity of the small community.

Hypothesis: The Maronite community has been the main advocate of the Lebanese nationalism; yet, we still cannot equal the Maronite identity and the Lebanese nationalism in the context of the twenty-first century.

The object of the work. The object of the work is the modern collective identity of the Maronite community in the twenty-first century.

The objectives of the work. The objectives of the work are as follows:

1) To define the main concepts in the field of the modern collective identity and nationalism studies, explaining, afterwards, the dichotomy between the cultural and the constructivist approaches towards the modern collective identity studies and, finally, to overview the most recent developments in the field;
2) To conceptualise the theoretical model I propose for the modern collective identity studies of small communities, consisting of collective memory, language ideology, and communalism;
3) To evaluate the historical development of the Maronite community from its origin to the most recent context by highlighting the main historical factors that contributed to the development of the modern Maronite thought[9];
4) To appreciate the development of the modern Maronite thought; to assess the modern Maronite thought in the domains of collective memory, language identity, and communalism as reflected in the

[9] By saying *the modern Maronite thought*, I refer to the complex of ideas expressed and developed by the Maronite community in the modern era that led to the formation of the modern Maronite collective identity.

twentieth century; to evaluate the concept of the Lebanese nationalism;

5) To analyse the modern collective Maronite identity in the twenty-first century based on the thematic document analysis of the *Synod of 2006* as reflecting the religious part of the community;
6) To analyse the modern collective Maronite identity in the twenty-first century based on the empirical data collected during the fieldwork trip to Lebanon in December 2022 as reflecting the secular part of the community.

The structure of the work. The work is divided into four parts:

First, I provide the main definitions in the field of the modern collective identity and nationalism studies, while also explaining the classical dichotomy consisting of the constructivist and primordialist approaches and evaluating the most recent developments in the field. Afterwards, the theoretical model for the analysis of the modern collective identity of small communities, consisting of three layers – collective memory, language ideology, and communalism – is elaborated.

Second, I discuss the historical development of the Maronite community by highlighting its key aspects having long-term influence on the formation of the modern Maronite thought. For achieving this goal, I start with the description of the origin of the community, then I proceed to analyse the historical development of the community throughout the Ottoman times by elaborating the revival of the community, the rise of its foreign connections, and the establishment of *mutaṣarrifiyya*[10]. Afterwards, I focus on the declaration of the Lebanese independence, the rising internal tensions in Lebanon that led to the Civil War, the implementation of Taif Agreement and its implications to Lebanon, and, finally, the most recent Lebanese history after the Cedar Revolution of 2005.

Third, I disclose the development of the modern Maronite thought starting with the analysis of its origin; afterwards, I proceed with defining the modern collective Maronite identity in the twentieth century based on the three theoretical layers – collective memory, language ideology, and communalism. Additionally, I also discuss the question of the Lebanese unity and nationalism aspiring to assess the reasons why Lebanon has been struggling to establish a unified vision of the Lebanese identity.

I have to note that the second and the third parts of the work are essentially important for the whole study for, basically, the fact that, during

[10] The entity was originally named as *Mutaṣarrifiyyat Ǧabal Lubnān* (or *Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate*), but usually is referred to in its shortened form as *mutaṣarrifiyya*.

the twentieth century, under different social and political circumstances compared to those we see today, the Maronites already provided multiple cultural symbols creating a cultural background for the analysis of the modern Maronite collective identity in the twenty-first century. Consequently, the analysis of the Maronite history and the modern Maronite thought is necessary for both the identification of the Lebanese cultural symbols and the thematic basis of the thematic document analysis and qualitative field research (preparing a questionnaire)[11].

Fourth, I approach the object of the study which is the evaluation of the modern collective Maronite identity in the twenty-first century. The task is based on the ethnological research of both religious and secular representatives of the Maronite community consisting of a combination of thematic document analysis of the *Synod of 2006* and the qualitative field research based on the fieldwork trip to Lebanon in December 2022.

At the end of the work, I attach appendixes containing the titles of each Text of the Document of the Synod and the questionnaire.

Methodology. The methodology of the research is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, based on a combination of several theoretical approaches serving different purposes in each part of the work.

In the first part of the work, for the definition of the main concepts and theories in the field of the modern collective identity studies, I apply the theoretical framework of nationalism studies. When constructing the theoretical model for studying the modern collective identity of small communities and applying a combined theoretical framework consisting of collective memory, language ideology and communalism, in addition to nationalism studies, some insights from the field of social sciences, concerning such aspects as the definition of the *social group* and its differences from the national movement, are provided as well.

In the second part of the work, I apply critical historical analysis for presenting a timeline of the Maronite history with its milestones, each reflecting key events, essentially important for the development of the modern Maronite thought since the formation of the Maronite community until our days.

In the third part of the work, I apply the critical content analysis structurally based on the theoretical model, consisting of three layers

[11] This historical analysis also provides an explanation why the post-colonial approach (I am sure some of the readers may ask about it) is not accurate for assessing the development of the modern Maronite community's identity whose origin can be traced back to the sixteenth century.

(collective memory, language ideology, and communalism), for analysing the development of the Maronite thought in the twentieth century.

In the fourth part of my work, I conduct an ethnological research, structurally based on the theoretical model, consisting of three layers (collective memory, language ideology, and communalism), and, methodologically, divided into two blocks assessing perceptions towards the modern collective identity of both the religious and the secular parts of the community in the twenty-first century.

Thematic document analysis. *The religious part of the community*. The Maronite Church[12] is an organisation represented by the priests, bishops, monks, all of whom are united by the authority of the Church under the ideological and theological guidelines that are expressed in the Document[13] of the Synod[14]. Consequently, making an assumption that all the Maronite Church's representatives, by virtue of being part of a hierarchical institution, are following the same ideological guidelines in accordance with the Canon Law towards various questions, covering the theological, social, political, and cultural aspects of the Maronite community, I claim that analysing the modern collective identity of the Maronite community's religious representatives based on the final document of the Maronite Synod published in 2006 (which is valid until the next Synod is being held, and thus it is by default the main

[12] The Seat of the Maronite Church is located in Bkirki (also Bkerke), northeast of Beirut, consequently, sometimes the Maronite Church is synonymously labelled as Bkirki/Bkerke.

[13] As of February 2023, the Document could be found via the following link: <https://www.maronite-heritage.com/LNE.php?page=Maronite%20Synod%202004>.

[14] The Synod of 2006 was only the second synod of such a scale of the Maronite Church in the history after the Synod of 1736, providing a series of statements regarding various questions, such as culture, politics, and liturgy. The idea of convoking the Synod appeared after the Second Vatican Council while the subjects of the Synod were specified after a wide range of consultations that took place in 1985, by creating some consultation committees afterwards. The first session was held in February/June 2003 at Our Lady of the Mount Monastery in Fatqa. It was attended by 443 members (including bishops, delegates of eparchies, universities, seminaries, delegates from other Christian denominations and other religions, delegates from the media) with 433 interventions during the discussion made with various persons, including bishops, generals, delegates of eparchies, universities, media, and also from other Churches and Muslim communities and many states across the world. The second round took place in October 2004, while the third round was convened in September of 2005. In this round, the bishops voted on the texts and on the suggestions and the resolutions so they could be given the official ecclesiastical character. The concluding synodal Mass was held on 11 June in 2006 (Tabar 2006, 187).

document defining the position towards various questions of the Maronite Church[15]) is the most accurate way to assess the perceptions towards the modern collective Maronite identity of the religious part of the Maronite community. The very first sentence of the Introduction, which was prepared by the Secretary General, Archbishop of Antelias Youssef Bechara on 10 May 2006, underlines the importance of the Synod:

> Synodal work, that is, working together, exchanging opinions, and arriving at encompassing thought and common decisions that can be adhered to by all, has been the core of the Church's life ever since its inception. This affirms the statement that: "The Church does not operate except through Synods." (Introduction: 1)

The Document consists of 23 texts, each dealing with a certain issue[16], all assessing certain religious and secular issues. When analysing the documents of Synod, I was searching for thematic references related to the origin of the Maronite community, the golden age, the worst age, the relations between the Maronites and the mountains; afterwards, I moved on to the language-related questions and, finally, I assessed the communalism by attesting the Church's position towards politics, confessionalism, and relations with other communities.

Ethical review. Before conducting the thematic document analysis, I contacted the owner of the website Antonio Feghali via e-mail asking for both the relevance of the text as well as the permission to use the website for the references in the work and, in both cases, I gained the permission. Antonio Feghali also allowed to refer to his name in my work. Originally, the document was prepared in Arabic; however, there are official translations to French and English as well, thus making all three versions equally relevant. Therefore, I analysed the English version of it.

The qualitative field research. *The secular part of the community.* During my fieldwork trip to Lebanon in December 2022, I made 19 semi-structured interviews with political and cultural representatives of the Maronite community. These representatives are active members of the community, willing to speak and share their ideas about identity-related

[15] Differently to the Synod of 1736, mainly addressing theological questions, regulating Canon Law, and also Latinizing the Maronite Church, the Synod of 2006 addressed a much wider variety of questions concerning not only the theological questions and Canon Law, but also many social, political aspects as well; consequently, both Synods deal with different questions and aspects.

[16] The titles of each text can be found in Appendix No. 1

questions; besides, these people can also be seen as an influential and visible part of the community, having ways to spread their ideas and thus influencing the opinion of the masses. These positions include teachers of universities and schools, political activists and politicians, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs – overall, the persons that can be defined as the *intelligentsia* as defined by Miroslav Hroch (Hroch 2012, 87–96). Dr. Ralph Zarazir, who is highly involved in public and political work locally and internationally, assisted me in organizing all the interviews and, after all, I have to acknowledge that, without his assistance, it would have been impossible to make the interviews, especially considering the importance of personal connections in Lebanon as well as the difficult political and economic circumstances in Lebanon nowadays. The people I interviewed were chosen based on their willingness to speak and share their ideas after the consultations made with Dr. Ralph Zarazir aspiring to include as many different personalities from different professions as possible.

In the interviews, I followed an order of some thematic blocks, starting with the collective memory, consisting of the questions about the golden age and then the worst age, the Lebanese ancestors, the Phoenician legacy, the differences between Lebanon and the other entities in the region; later, I proceeded to the language ideology segment by discussing the importance of languages for the Lebanese people, the concept of the Lebanese language, and, in most cases, switching to the discussion about the Lebanese multilingualism; finally, I switched onto the question about the communalism, in order to assess such things as confessionalism, politics, or the openness of the Maronite community[17]. Most of the interviews were made in Beirut in English, which, I assume, precisely represents the Maronite community due to its multilingualism, yet, since usually Maronites tend to refer to several languages simultaneously, in addition to English, plenty of words in Arabic and French were being used during the interviews, requiring some level of preparation in the knowledge of these languages. All the interviews lasted approximately one hour each, with the shortest interview lasting around 40 minutes and the longest interview exceeding an hour and a half, and all of them were recorded (except for one); therefore, the quotes provided in the text are precise as all the interviews were transcribed in full. The records will be preserved personally by me for, at least, several years counting from the date they were recorded.

Ethical review. The qualitative field research was carried according to Document Section 22 *Guidelines for the Assessment of Compliance with*

[17] For the entire questionnaire, see Appendix No. 2.

Research Ethics[18] on academic ethics and procedures approved by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Lithuania. In line with the ethical standards of the research, the participants were first briefed on the purpose of the research and were given the researcher's self-introduction. Then, the permission for making the audio recording was also gained. Considering the importance of protecting the privacy and safety of the research participants, several aspects should be marked. It has to be stated that I clearly understand that, recently, Lebanon has been going through very difficult times with the political uncertainty and deep financial crisis taking place simultaneously; apart from that, the Maronite community is relatively small in numbers, and most of its active members are easily recognizable based on the description of their professions, age, or gender even without providing their names; moreover, several research participants agreed on participating in the research only with the anonymity being granted. Consequently, none of the criteria which could allow precise identification of the interviewees is provided in the work. Each of the interviewees was provided a random number with the research participants being identified in the text by the formula *Interview No. X*[19].

When analysing both the documents of the Synod and the interviews with the research participants, I followed the thematic guidelines that can be found in the questionnaire. These thematic guidelines were prepared based on the analysis of the Maronite community's history and on the history of the modern Maronite thought combined with the three layers proposed for analysing the modern collective identity of a small community (collective memory, language ideology, and communalism). I attempted to find the most commonly referred aspects based on the thematic blocks provided by the interviewees (as well as the Document of the Synod)[20]. In the text, I indicated the most commonly expressed and shared ideas, yet, I also wanted to demonstrate the full scale of different ideas and opinions of the members of

[18] Guidelines for the Assessment of Compliance with Research Ethics. Retrieved from: <https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/V-60-Dėl-Atitikties mokslinių-tyrimų-etikai-vertinimo-gairių-tvirtinimo-su-pakeitimais.pdf>

[19] It can also be noted that the youngest interviewee was in the twenties; whereas, the oldest interviewee was in the seventies, yet most of the interviewees were in their thirties or forties; each interviewee has a degree of the higher education with several persons holding the Doctor's degree. Most of the interviewees regularly travel abroad and are living in Beirut or in the vicinity.

[20] There was one exception – considering the importance of Phoenicianism in Lebanon in the twentieth century, in those cases when the interviewees did not mention this aspect, I wanted to learn the interviewee's opinion regarding this question considering it to be the key aspect of the modern Maronite thought in the twentieth century.

the Maronite community. Therefore I provide plenty of quotes in my work thus highlighting different aspects expressed in the similar answers differing in some details. Also, I believe, describing ideas expressed by one or a few interviewees is also important for understanding the full panoramic view of the Maronite community's modern collective identity as perceived by its members.

I have to remark that in both thematic document analysis and in the qualitative field research I wanted to let the Maronites, both religious and secular, speak by themselves. Consequently, where relevant for developing a certain idea, I quoted the Document of the Synod, and the interviewees by considering the quotes (instead of paraphrasing) in order to be able to better reveal the topic. I also did not change anything in the quotes and provided them as recorded and transcribed; consequently, in case there are some grammatical inaccuracies, they were intentionally left in the quotes with some explanations in parentheses in some cases provided, when some minor gentle grammatical intervention was needed for making the text more readable and easier to understand its hues.

The overview of literature. While preparing the work, I relied on the sources published in English, French, Polish, and Lithuanian. The literature used in this work can be divided into theoretical and Lebanon/Maronite-related sources.

The literature used in the theoretical part of the work. I start with the overview of the main theoretical approaches of the modern collective identity and nationalism studies. For the definition of the main concepts, namely *modern identity*, *nation*, *ethnie*, *nationalism*, *national identity*, I refer to the works of several prominent scholars of the field who provided the most quoted explanations for the above mentioned concepts, such as Anthony D. Smith (1986; 1999; 2009), Hugh Seton-Watson (1977), Anthony Giddens (1999), John Armstrong (1982). I also refer to Miroslav Hroch (2012) for supporting my arguments about the differences between the nationalism of great and small nations and explaining why I apply the author's elitist approach to the modern collective identity construction while also referring to the work of Siniša Malešević (2019) for some insights about small nations. At the same time, I also assess the difference between the national movement and a social group based on the explanation of Dorien van de Mieroop (2015). The work of Vytis Čiubrinskas (2008) is valuable for the definition of *otherness*, while Rogers Brubaker (2012) assesses the nation's relations with the State.

When explaining the main differences between the already classical dichotomy consisting of *constructivism* and *primordialism* (an example of such an application is the work of Kristina Šliavaitė (2011), yet, many works

can be referred to for defining this dichotomy), I start with the definition of the classical concept of *imagined communities* presented by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1984) and the criticism of Alvydas Jokubaitis (2006) towards it claiming the lack of the cultural factors. Then, I also refer to Anthony D. Smith (1986) for evaluating the cultural aspect of it, because the vitality of the pre-modern identity raises the possibility of forming the modern nation (Smith 1986). I also refer to the insights of Anthony D. Smith (1986; 1999; 2010), Paul Gilbert (2000), and Maurus Reinkowski (1997) for explaining the expansion of the nationalism theories from the classical above mentioned dichotomy.

For the most recent development in the modern collective identity studies, I refer to the work of Lucia Volk (2010) who elaborated the post-modernist criticism to the field, and to the works of Emad Khazraee and Alison N. Novak (2018) and Ruth Page (2018) for the elaboration of the factor of the social media and its role, and also to the concept of netnography provided by Robert V. Kozinets (2010). I also elaborate on the topic of individualism in the modern collective identity studies referring to the works of Cosmo Howard (2015), Shah Ghanshyam (1994), and Anthony D. Smith (2009).

When turning to the theoretical approach consisting of three layers for analysing the modern collective identity of small communities, I start with the theory of collective memory by analysing it with the already classic reference to Ernest Renan (1990). This concept is supplemented with the use of *cultural memory*, which is elaborated by Jan Assman (2011), while also referring to the works of Eric Hobsbawm (1983), who proposed the concept of *invented tradition*, Duncan Bell (2003), and Peter J. Verovšek (2016), also referring to the works of Maurice Halbwachs (1992), Zheng Wang (2017), Giorgio Shani (2011), and Gary Alan Fine (2013). Afterwards, I proceed with the language ideology supplemented by the insights of Benedict Anderson (1984), Rudak Wodak (2012), and Rogers Brubaker (2012). Finally, I come to the analysis of communalism referring to the insights of Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1991) evaluating sectarianism as provided by Melani Cammet (2014), and Lucia Volk (2010), assessing the religious nationalism as outlined by Rogers Brubaker (2012), and consociotionalism as explained by John Nagle (2015).

The literature in the work used for the Maronite/Lebanon related questions. First, I rely on the work which aims at analysing the Middle Eastern history in general, and such a work was prepared by Bassam Tibi (1997).

Second, there are plenty of works whose main purpose is to provide a comprehensive overview of the Lebanese history without focusing on any specific community. These works were prepared by Kamal Salibi (1988), who was opposing to the idea of Lebanon having a different identity from the rest

of Arab world, and Albert Hourani (1981; 1983; 2013), who in his numerous works analysed the Lebanese history in the light of Middle Eastern history. Additionally, the works on the Lebanese history prepared by Sandra Mackey (2006), and William Wilson Harris (2012) that I refer to are also necessary to mention.

Apart from the above mentioned works, there are plenty of publications dealing with the questions of the Lebanese history of a smaller scope. Of these works, the contribution of Carol Hakim (2013) should be discussed in terms of analysing the Lebanese identity and history development in the light of the development of the Maronite thought in the nineteenth century. Apart from that, I rely on the work of Amin Maalouf (2001) for explaining the historical details about the times of the French Mandate. Besides, the work analysing cultural Lebanese-Syro relations prepared by Carsten Wieland (2014), and the works prepared by Robert G. Rabil (2001; 2011) assessing the most recent developments in the Lebanese politics should be mentioned. Additionally, Ussama Makdisi (2000) connects Lebanese sectarianism to the events of 1860, while the work of Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn (2009) provides an explanation about the influence of the Ottoman times to the early years of the modern identity formation of Maronites. Moreover, the work of Youssef Choueiri (1989) provides a survey of the modern Arab historiography, while the work of Raghid El-Solh (2004) is valuable for the analysis of the element of Arabism in Lebanese history.

Third, there are plenty of works published on the various aspects of the Maronite culture and history. For instance, Emma Loosley (2005) published several works regarding the Maronite history, although her main publications are focused on the various aspects of the Syriac Christianity. I also refer to the works of Husseyin Sirriyeh (1998) who is using the concept of *political Maronitism* while explaining the developments within the Maronite community and its relations with the other communities, as well as relations with the State in the light of political events, whereas Rania Maktabi (1999) provides an evaluation of the census of 1932 which became the basis of the proportion of the confessional sociopolitical system of Lebanon. In addition to this, Krzysztof Kościelniak (2003) prepared a work about the historical demographics of Lebanese Christians. Also, a significant contribution to the field was published by Ray Jabre-Mouawad (2009) where the author makes a comparison between the perception of both Maronite and Melkite communities towards the Arabic language. As for the language ideology, the insights of Deanna Ferrea Womack (2012) are significant for providing an understanding of what was exactly the influence of missionaries for the Lebanese people; meanwhile, the work of Michelle Hartman and

Alessandro Olsaretti (2003) provides insights about Michel Chiha, while Arkadiusz Płonka prepared works (2004; 2006) about Said Akl's activism. At the same time, Georges T. Labaki (2014) discusses the issues of the Maronite diaspora.

For the modern history of the Maronite identity and identity-related questions, I refer, in the first place, to the works of Franck Salameh (2010; 2011; 2015; 2020) and Asher Kaufman (2001; 2004). Both of them in their numerous works on Lebanon described many aspects of Lebanon in the twentieth century by focusing on such topics as identity, memory, language, and history. They argue that the Maronite community invented the modern Lebanese symbols and gradually managed to export them throughout the society, while analysing most of the aspects of the Lebanese history in the twentieth century by focusing on the Maronite thought and the most important thinkers whose contribution to the intellectual heritage and political activism exerted great influence in the twentieth century. Kais M. Firro (2003; 2004) in his several works also provides a historical overview of the Maronite community by focusing on the formation of the Maronite thought as well as and emphasising the arguments being used by the proponents of the Lebanese independence for separating the local population from Syria, which was the state with which the opponents of the Maronites wanted to unite their land. Besides, studies of Maurus Reinkowski (1997), and Michał Moch (2012) greatly contribute to the discussion about the modern Maronite identity. Additionally, the work of Basilius Bawardi (2016) is valuable for the evaluation of the Lebanese-Phoenician narrative in the twentieth century.

Fourth, while assessing the works on the most recent phenomena in Lebanon, we have to mention Maximilian Felch (2018) who introduced the term *Christian nationalism* in the Lebanese context, and Alexander Henley (2008), who prepared the most recent works analysing the post-war aspects of the Maronite history. Eduardo Wassim Aboultaif and Paul Tabar (2019) prepared a work on the Maronite communal memory, while Paul Tabar (2006) prepared an account on the Maronite Church and Maronite politics in the post-war period along with Robert G. Rabil (2001) and Fiona McCallum (2012) who discussed the role of the Maronite Church and its leadership in Lebanon. The Cedar Revolution was discussed by Janine A. Clark and Marie-Joelle Zahar (2015).

Finally, we approach the most recent works about the Lebanese issues that are mainly dealing with the sustainability of the Lebanese confessional system as well as the social, political, and economic issues in Lebanon. There are numerous works dealing with the post-war experiences of Lebanon to be mentioned, such as Lucia Volk (2010) or Sune Haugbolle (2010). Also, there

is a growing amount of literature based on the analysis of the commonist social movements, aiming at the transformation of the Lebanese confessionalism; John Nagle (2015) must be mentioned in this context. Apart from that, multiple works were produced about the most recent Lebanese issues following the Cedar Revolution by Rupert Sutton (2014), Vanessa E. Shields (2008), Karim Knio (2005; 2008), Ersun N. Kurtulus (2009) in which its various aspects are assessed. Also, the work of Daniel Meier (2018) is useful for referring to the Hizbullah's role in the recent Lebanese politics, while Ohannes Geukjian (2014) discussed the political instability after Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The works of Natalia Bahlawan (2021), Alexander Henley (2016), Jamal Nassar (1995), Robert Rabil (2011), Imad Salamey and Paul Tabar (2012) are useful for the insights about the Lebanese confessionalism and its sectarian culture.

In the context of the above-mentioned works dealing with the issues related to Lebanon, I have to note that my work fills the gap in the context of the studies concerning the processes in Lebanon in the twenty-first century, the Maronite studies, and the studies of the Middle Eastern Christians in general. As we see, very few works have been prepared about the modern collective Maronite identity in the twenty-first century. However, not only the lack of publications, but also the current situation in Lebanon and the whole Middle East requires study about of the most recent developments within the Maronite community in terms of the modern collective identity; therefore, my study should be perceived as a contribution to several fields at the same time.

The novelty of the work. There are two perspectives revealing the novelty of the work and its contribution to the field.

The first perspective is related to the theoretical model combining the collective memory, language ideology and communalism I provide for assessing the modern collective identity of small communities. I believe that my contribution to the field of the modern collective identity studies, firstly, will provide a better understanding of how the small communities can develop their own identity and what are the factors we should observe for evaluating it. I also suggest that, despite the growing post-modernist influence in the field, for a comprehensive understanding of the modern collective identity, we need to apply the modernist theories.

The second perspective is related to the contribution to both the Maronite and Lebanese studies. There are numerous works dedicated to the Lebanese history, focusing on its various aspects, however, these works are mainly focusing on the history and events of the twentieth century and earlier. The analysis of the post-Civil war period and, especially, of the twenty-first century in Lebanon, and the processes within the State is predominantly

occupied with the topics related to the abolishment of the confessionalism, search for the meta-sectarian Lebanese unity, and, recently, with the analysis of the social movements, international relations, social and economic issues. Hence, my contribution can be revealed by two dimensions: *firstly*, since the Lebanese confessionalism is a core principle of the Lebanese sociopolitical system, the understanding of each community is a key element in understanding any sociopolitical process in Lebanon; *secondly*, combining the analysis of the historical development of the Maronite community with the analysis of the most recent self-perception in the light of the modern collective identity construction theories will contribute to the Maronite studies since we still lack works analysing the case of Maronites, especially the cultural side of it in the twenty-first century.

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1. DESCRIBING THE MODERN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

1.1. The Modern Collective Identity Studies

In this part of the work, based on the nationalism studies, I define the main concepts in field of the modern collective identity studies; then, I proceed to the evaluation of the dichotomy of the primordial and constructivist approaches which has become an integral part of many studies of the modern collective identities; finally, I assess the most recent developments in the field and explain the main factors from the field contributing to my work.

1.1.1. Defining the modern collective identity

Very few scholars would argue that the modern collective identity, for which the personal self-identification of individual as a group member is more important than in their unique, personal characteristics, is a product of the modernization of states and societies, the process which took place at some point between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, the precise date depending on specific local circumstances in each particular case. Among numerous scholars and thinkers to define this process, Anthony D. Smith claimed that *nation*[21] is a modern category of a community which could not emerge prior to the late eighteenth century when the first societies entered the modern era through the social, cultural, and political modernization (Smith 2009, 10–11). The concept of the modern collective identity can also be explained by comparing the pre-modern and modern forms of collective identities or the ways the community members are bound together. Historically, the emergence of the modern identity is closely connected to the decline of the monarchic system, wherein the relations between the society and the state were based on the religious affiliation or family ties. This type of connection between the state and its inhabitants started to transform following the rise of secular national movements that stimulated this social transformation by involving the masses into the state life and gradually turning them into the modern collective entity. The pre-modern states and their inhabitants were bound to the dynasties with a sacred mission attached to them by both governors and the inhabitants of the state with these dynasties being perceived as the protectors of certain sacred traditions. Modern transformation marked a shift towards the new model, in which, the State represents its people with the ruling elite being legitimized through the representation of masses

[21] The term is derived from the Latin word *natio* meaning 'birth'.

turning into a *nation*, the community with the shared perceptions of collective self-identification, which is bound by the common beliefs and expectations and, according to Anthony D. Smith, is

> a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or 'homelands', create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized laws. (ibid., 29)

or what Benedict Anderson labelled as *imagined communities*[22] connected by the common spoken language (Anderson 1984). For such a community to exist, every member of such a community has to conceive oneself as a part of this community, as discussed by Hugh Seton Watson:

> the nation exists when significant number of people in a community perceives themselves as a part of this nation. It is not necessarily that the entire population of the state share this common perception and behave like this, also it not possible to provide any number which would indicate any minimum amount of people or percentage which are guided by this concept. When significant part of community believes in this idea, they have national consciousness. If this group is too small or does not have sufficient amount of active proponents, that their idea would expand in the society, it is very difficult for the elite to form the nation. (Watson 1977, 6)

We also have to understand the relations between the terms *modern nation* and *modern collective identity* that should not be confused: every *nation* is based on a certain collective identity, which is a matter of consciousness by learning own unconscious side and this applies to both collective communities and individuals and which is being formed through the

[22] Although the concept of *imagined communities* is applied in many studies, some scholars (Jokubaitis 2006) criticised it for focusing on the matters that are beyond the imagination, such as economy, politics and fundamental changes in the cultural life, while leaving the gap between the nation as an *imagined community* and cultural, political and economic explanation of the origin of nationalism. Besides, this model does not provide an explanation on the dynamics of the nations (Jokubaitis 2006, 11–12). Despite this criticism, I consider this concept to provide a comprehensive explanation about the historical formation of the modern collective identities as well as explaining the ways the communities turn into a nation.

definitions of the 'self' and 'the other', and through clearly defining the line between *us* and *them*. Collective identities are always partially relational – composed of comparisons and references to other collective identities from which they are distinguished (Wang 2017, 18). According to Vytis Čiubrinskas, in social and cultural anthropology, the collective identity is being perceived not only as *same-ness*, but necessarily also connected to the *difference*, *making of difference*, and *otherness* (Čiubrinskas 2008, 7). Hence collective identity can be observed through the direct or indirect relations with the *other* by using symbols, cultural memory, historical heritage, by constructing a national mythology which explains the origin of the nation, and also by creating a framework for the future generations, distancing from the *other*, or by instrumentalizing the collective memory (Smith 2000, 80). However, not only the differences and the relations to *the other* reveals the modern collective identity since it always has its own cultural content as represented by the term *ethnie*[23] and which can be observed by six categories: 1) a collective proper name; 2) myth of common ancestry; 3) shared historical memories; 4) one or more differentiating elements of common culture; 5) an association with a specific 'homeland'; 6) a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population Anthony D. Smith continues to write that "the more a given population possesses or shares these attributes (and the more of these attributes that it possesses or shares), the more closely does it approximate the ideal type of an ethnic community or *ethnie* (Smith 1991, 21), consequently, assessing these factors is crucial for analysing the ethnicity, nations and nationalisms, these factors being effective foci for group mobilisation for concrete political goals (Reinkowski 1997, 502).

The modern collective identity, the national identity, and the nation are the part of studies of nationalism[24], which was named as the secular and modern equivalent of the pre-modern sacred mythology by Anthony D. Smith (Smith 1999, 84), and which provides a theoretical model for understanding how a society or a community acquires certain collective qualities connecting the members of the society, and what are those connecting qualities that can keep its members together. One of the core features of nationalism is that, while being not a universally defined ideology, in every case, it still obtains a

[23] A French word for labelling an ethnic community.

[24] According to Reinkowski, the *national identity* is a sentiment considerably more inert and vague than *nationalism* since it lacks some of the latent components of nationalism, such as doctrinal content(s), the existence of intellectual leaders, or its capability to mobilize the population (Reinkowski 1997, 498).

certain model of development, unique dynamics, and different forms[25] (Anderson 1999, 25). For better understanding of these unique characteristics, in each particular case, we should consider the following questions: Are the aspirations of the national movement bound to the current state or not? Is it a small nation or not? How was the independence achieved? Is the national movement the sole such movement in the state? Are there any competing, opposing ideologies? For example, the work about small European nations prepared by Miroslav Hroch is a superb example providing a model of how the formation of the modern identity of great (or the title nation) and small nations was different and how the national movement of a small nation, not represented by the state, acts towards claiming its vision of identity (Hroch 2012).

Another universal quality of nationalism is a tendency of linking it to the State, with the latter being either as a/the reason[26] or as an/the outcome of the national movement. Anthony Giddens explained it by the influence from the context of the discipline of international relations which connects international affairs with the nation states and calls them *actors*. Since there is a tendency of identifying a modern nation with a nation state (Giddens 1991, 16), therefore, according to the definition of Rogers Brubaker, nationalism is

> a state centred form of collective subject formation; a program for the co-constitution of the state and the territorially bounded population in whose name it speaks; a set of discursive practises by which the territorial identity of a state and the cultural identity of the people whose collective representation it claims are constituted as a singular fact. (Brubaker 2012, 12)

Indeed, nationalism is usually connected to the political aspirations and a certain level of autonomy or statehood expressed by the national

[25] There are many different types of nationalism, just to list a few: religious nationalism, cultural nationalism, political nationalism, stateless nationalism, post-colonial nationalism, etc. Yet, in my study, I do not rely on a specific theory of nationalism aiming to explain the case of the Maronite community's development of the modern collective identity in the light of the nationalism studies, focusing, above all, on the cultural aspect of it.

[26] For example, when the state itself is the stimulating force behind the formation of the modern collective entity in the form of a *civic nation* or by the citizenship by providing a new fusion of different symbols attempting to involve various communities under the umbrella of the state (Čiubrinskas 2008, 8).

movement at a certain point. Anthony D. Smith claimed that nationalism is an ideological movement to attain and maintain autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members believe to be constituting an actual or potential 'nation' for living in accordance with its own laws and rhythms, free from all and any outside interference (Smith 2009, 61–63). Partha Chatterjee goes further to claim that "nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power" (Chatterjee 1993, 5–6). National self-rule can be either total, in the form of a sovereign territorial State, or else it can be partial, through some form of a communal or federal self-government. Anthony D. Smith referred to Max Weber (1948) claiming that nations normally require their own states, specifically, that "a nation is a community of sentiment that would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own" (Smith 2010, 28).

1.1.2. Classical definitions of the modern collective identity

Many works dealing with the questions related to the modern collective identity construction include a clearly expressed distinction between the primordialist/cultural and constructivist approaches towards the character of the modern collective identity. Although, recently, many theoretical developments expanded identity studies with some additional contribution to the field, the above-mentioned dichotomy is still quoted in many works being capable of explaining the essential aspects of the modern collective identity. Briefly speaking, we can define both of these approaches as follows: primordialism focuses on natural or cultural factors which are used for explaining the mechanisms how the nations are being formed while considering ethnicity to be an objective factor based on language, religion, territory, tradition, relations with the other social groups. To compare, constructivism defines a nation as a modern construct (or invention) with its symbols being constructed whereas belonging to a certain ethnic group is based on the choice of an individual (Lindholm, H. "Introduction: A Conceptual Discussion", *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Formation of Identity and Dynamics of Conflict in the 1990s*. Lindholm, H. (ed.), 1993, 12: from Šliavaitė 2011, 115–116).

Many authors combine these two theoretical approaches into a synthesis depending on a specific case in order to provide a profound explanation of the process of the modern collective identity formation, while also aiming to minimise the weaknesses of both primordialism and

constructivism. Primordialists tend to consider *ethnie* as a stable entity which is unchangeable – or almost unchangeable – throughout the time with its beginning not being clearly defined, and which is considered to exist for its own sake rather than for some ends meaning that the members of the community find the existence of group membership valuable in itself, not for some additional benefits. As Paul Gilbert wrote,

> primordialism is best understood as holding both that ethnicity is a recurrent feature of human social organisation independent of the particular circumstances people are in, and that it draws on deep-seated human attachments. Situationalists – including modernists – deny the first, holding that ethnicity is invoked only in certain situations. But they do not need to deny the second. Instrumentalists need deny neither, holding only that which ethnicity is invoked is to be explained in terms of the ends its invocation serves. (Gilbert 2000, 26)

However, when applying this approach, we tend to misunderstand the dynamics of the national feelings, conflicts or friendships with the other ethnic entities and social groups[27], while also facing the risk to apply the modern

[27] The Maronite community is not a subject of the social identity (although – to some extent – it may be, yet, this question is outside the scope of my study); however, in order not to confuse the social identity with the modern collective identity that may seem similar, we have to consider the differences between them. The social identity, according to Wang, possesses 1) constitutive norms which specify rules for group membership and identification; 2) relational content which focuses on the relationships people have with others based on the comparisons we make by determining the personal qualities and a certain level of superiority; 3) cognitive models which explain how group membership associates with the way how the world works and describes the group's social reality while allowing interpretation of the world, and which explains how the collective identity shapes an individual's worldview; 4) social purpose which is being acquired if the group attaches specific meanings and goals to its identity and, as a result, identities encourage actors to act in accordance with and interpret the world through lenses relating to group purposes (Wang 2017, 18–20). Back in 1981, Tajfel wrote that social identity consists of the way individuals perceive themselves in relation to the surrounding social and physical world. Nevertheless, group memberships are considered to be crucial, and social categorization is viewed as "a system of orientation which helps to create and define the individual's place in society;" however, every individual can be a member of a number of different social groups, which are the result of an individual's segmentation of the social world into categories based on such dynamic variables as similarity, common fate, and proximity because social identities are fluid (van de Mieroop 2015, 408–409). Consequently, different approaches are applied for analysing the social and modern collective identity, for example, in the social identity, meaning making and framing processes being the

concepts for pre-modern phenomena since constructivists generally tend to minimize the significance of primordial factors in the formation of nations by claiming that everything can be constructed. Constructivism can also lead to imagining that anything can be formed anywhere depending on the resources at disposal and the efficiency of using the instruments of identity construction (Wieland 2014, 209–211), thus ignoring the cultural factors.

The combination of the two above-mentioned theoretical approaches provides an opportunity to minimize each other's minuses by modelling a relatively universal explanation of the identity formation. It can be better explained with an example provided by Anthony D. Smith who claimed that the vitality of pre-modern identity stimulates a greater possibility to form the modern nation because, according to him, "nationalism is not a wake of nations to its own consciousness; it creates nations where they are not present, but for this we need some certain signs, which should be the basis for reference" (Smith 1999, 71). As a consequence, a certain subject (elite or state), by applying the constructivist instruments, can stimulate and develop the cultural identity of masses, but identity cannot be started to be formed out of nowhere as it requires certain cultural elements that could become the basis for cultural symbolism for which factual accuracy is not a necessary element (Smith 1986, 212–214). Otherwise, we can claim that

> identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (Hall 1996, 4)

Hence, since nations are constructed, they are joinable in time as they are increasingly chosen rather than given (Anderson 1991, 145), and also, based on Wang's arguments, although in analysing the case of the social identity which is much more mobile and dynamic than the modern collective identity, it is accurate to claim that "the content of identities is neither fixed nor predetermined, but rather the outcome of a process of social contestation" (Wang 2017, 19). Hence, it can also change throughout the time.

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key processes to assess (Khazraee, Novak, 2018, 5). In my study, I focus on the modern collective identity studies based on nationalism studies.

We have already come to the conclusion that some cultural aspects are necessary to be instrumentalised in the identity construction which are being instrumentalised by the elite (or the intelligentsia) that is the responsible part in a certain community for transporting the concept of identity to the masses with all the instruments it possesses in the process of identity construction. The elite is made of intellectuals, consisting of, according to Miroslav Hroch, governors, representatives of free professions (such as doctors, lawyers, artisans), priesthood, teachers, nobility, townsmen. We can divide the elite to lay and religious, to the state-funded and foreign-funded representatives, to that one having contact with masses and not having it – in each case we have to define the essential aspects for the identity construction according to the specific circumstances under which the national movement is being formed (Hroch 2012, 87–99). However, we also need to note that the collective identity construction is not possible without the role of masses whose relations with the influential representatives of the community can be defined as interdependent. The masses have to be empowered by some layer of the community capable of transporting certain ideas across the community and also defending it on the political level. However, without the support of the masses, the ideas shaped by the elite cannot acquire a long-lasting substantiation that could be transported to the domain of politics. It is often tempting to treat nations as purely discursive formations, created and manipulated by states and their elites, but it evades the problem of passion which is the strong devotion and passionate attachments felt by so many people to their nations. The people have to their own interests, needs and welfare to be bound up with the welfare and destiny of their nation (Smith 2009, 13–14), therefore, the elite, while creating modern symbols, usually refers to the cultural symbols of masses. The masses are enacted under the influence of elite with the main symbols and concepts being invented firstly in the elite, mostly taken from the masses. Anthony D. Smith described it in the following way: “We need to take into account pre-existing traditions, memories and symbolism among non-elites, just as elites themselves often had to alter their own ideas and symbols if they were to carry the majority of the population with them” (ibid., 32). The elite enacts cultural symbols and spreads them through various instruments aiming to claim these symbols over the masses, as otherwise another competing vision of identity may emerge.

It should also be noted that the formation of the elite or the development and spread of the ideas among the intelligentsia can not only take place organically from inside, but it can also be stimulated from outside by actors residing in another state who can have both explicit and implicit goals

regarding a certain community or a certain entity. The stimulation can be based on multiple backgrounds, such as intellectual/romantic interest, financial support, education, religion, political factors, etc.[28] Therefore, connections with the foreign actors should be emphasised since such stimulation plays a significant role in the history of national movements. A perfect example is the role of the Catholic Church in supporting and influencing the local priests and spreading certain ideas that gradually influenced the national movements. It is also crucially important to stress that, without the emerging local elite, it is impossible to inspire the national movement that could reach the masses.

1.1.3. Recent developments in modern collective identity studies

It is accurate to state that the previously discussed theories provide the classical axis of the modern collective identity studies which, in the recent decades, was supplemented by various additional theories attempting to explain the identity construction processes. Already more than a decade ago, Anthony D. Smith observed that

> over the last three decades we have witnessed a number of new, often overlapping departures in the field such: 'rational choice' approaches to nationalism, which are particularly popular in the United States; feminist and gender interpretations; cultural studies of 'hybridised' national identities and multi-culturalism; post national and globalisation approaches; and the study of 'everyday nationhood' and the consumption of nationalism. (Smith, 2009, 133)

I will not discuss all these recent developments having a different aim in my work, which is to provide the theoretical model capable of explaining the modern collective Maronite identity and preparing the questionnaire for the ethnological part of the work. Consequently, in this subsection, I will consider several crucial aspects of the most recent developments in the modern collective identity studies while also explaining its relations to the modern collective Maronite identity.

[28] In some cases, such an intervention from outside can invoke the cultural ambivalence, which, actually, cannot be applied to the case of the Maronite community.

Firstly, the already discussed constructivist-primordial dichotomy had already started to be supplemented with different insights by the end of the 20th century. As early as in 1999 Anthony D. Smith defined additional approaches explaining the development of a nation, including primordial, perennialist, modernist, and ethnosymbolist methods (Smith 1999, 5–6) with each of those having its own methods and dynamics, for example, neo-perennialists being those who "are mainly concerned with tracing the roots and continuity of specific modern nations from pre-modern epochs, maintaining that, mutatis mutandis, we are to all intents speaking about the selfsame national community in ancient or medieval as in modern epochs" (Smith 2009, 10). In turn, *situationalism*, for example, can be perceived as a more general theory than modernism, due to asserting that ethnicity is not a constant aspect of the social life, but rather a feature that it presents in some situations and not others, whereas *instrumentalism* claims that ethnic groups are formed and maintained to serve particular social ends, principally economic and political, although instrumentalists neglect the overpowering emotional and non-rational quality of ethnic bonds (Gilbert 2000, 25–26). Yet, in this regard, one of the most important paradigms is Anthony D. Smith's critique towards modernism coined as ethno-symbolism stressing the importance of symbols, myths, values, and traditions, and also claiming that nations to be mare far more long-living than the modernist times. Apart from considering the nations to be 'real' sociological, dynamic, purposive, historical communities – just as modernists do – the ethno-symbolists also criticise modernism proposing to consider symbolic or material resources, *la longue durée*, or the relation to the pre-modern times, ethnicity, elitism, and conflict and reinterpretation (Smith 2009, 13–20). Therefore, I apply several aspects of this theory by emphasising the importance of both the historical and cultural development of the Maronite community; yet, I believe, there some additional aspects that are crucially important for the modern collective identity construction which were discussed in the previous chapters.

To sum up, there are plenty of recent theoretical extensions contributing to the modern collective identity studies, and the main reason why I provided this very short overview was to discuss how this field has expanded over the years. However, it is complicated to apply these theoretical approaches to the Maronite case with the exception of some elements of ethno-symbolism due to the fact that the Maronite community, having its specific historical development that will be discussed in the following chapters, is operating within the Lebanese confessionalism.

Secondly, it is also essentially important to understand that the previously discussed concepts of the modern collective identity (including both the classical constructivist-primordial axis and its extensions) are part of the modernist discourse; however, we have already entered an era of the post-modernist criticism of the modern collective identity studies. Instead of being a distinct explanatory category, the post-modernist criticism provides rather a set of approaches relying on the idea that all the collective identity-related concepts are considered to be generated by the modern form of identification resulting either from the breakdown of the traditional hierarchies, or being formed from the modern popular movements (Gilbert 2000, 24–25). Anthony D. Smith observed that the post-modern criticism is based on the idea that "we are entering a post-modern era and therefore witnessing the emergence of a 'post-national' order in which the formerly dominant realm of the national state has become fragmented and superseded, and nationalism is increasingly repudiated and/or attenuated." It is also important to note that the most common argument in the post-modernist criticism is

> repudiation of grand theories and narratives, and a mainly constructivist approach, which sees nations and nationalism as the creations of various elites, often for symbolic as well as instrumental reasons. For post-modern constructivists, reacting against the essentialism and naturalism of nationalism and 'primordialism', see the nation as ultimately a fiction engineered by elites using 'invented traditions' for purposes of social control, as Hobsbawm and Ranger had claimed, or, taking their cue from Anderson, as a novel form of 'imagined community', a discursive formation of linguistic and symbolic practices. (Smith 2009, 11–12)

Moreover, among multiple domains of the post-modernist criticism, another crucially important aspect to note is the post-modernist emphasis on individuality[29] instead of collectivism arguing the individual preferences to be a more significant factor for the self-identification instead of the collective

[29] For example, we can understand the role of individuality in collective identity studies in the following way as described by Halbwachs: "There are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society. Social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies, and trade unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time. It is, of course, individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past." (Halbwachs 1992, 23)

self-identification, while also claiming that the public sphere has not been eradicated, but, instead, colonised by private interests (Howard 2015, 125–126). However, it should also be noted that the late modern individuals are not considered to be independent or self-sufficient from the non-negotiable aspects of the social life and the structural contradictions of the late modern identity, since individual identity, as described by Shah Ghanshyam, is not just one's relationship with others or an ascriptive or achieved membership of this or that collectivity, it is essentially a matter of being, and it is this consciousness of belonging to this or that collectivity and of being a member of an imagined community that determines the form of this identity (Ghanshyam 1994, 1133).

We can continue listing further post-modernist theoretical domains, for example, such as the anti-identitarian collective identity (Fominaya 2015); however, one more time, we still have to admit that, due to the Lebanese confessionalism, we cannot fully apply the post-modernist approach to the Maronite case. Indeed there are personal preferences expressed by various individuals towards identity-related questions, however, as we shall see in the following chapters, the Lebanese confessionalism closed the confessional communities within themselves, with confessional categories being the first aspect in regulating the collective and, partly, even the individual relations to the modern collective identity.

Thirdly, we should also consider the impact of globalization on the modern collective identity construction, which affects identity through the time-space distantiation (Shani 2011, 380) or compression, which means that the world is coming to be organised less vertically, along the nation-state lines, and more horizontally, according to communities of shared interests and experiences. As a result, more communities transcend the nation-state boundaries, and, consequently, individuals, who in much of their lives feel more allegiance and affinity to these communities than they do to the nation states in which they reside, rise in numbers. Such communities are based on a long list of shared experiences and orientations, such as tastes in fashion, music, cinema, literature; beliefs and opinions; lifestyle options, (Block 2006, 16), however, these identities are not necessarily contradictory to each other and may overlap with the concepts of nations. It is important to stress that this topic is beyond the scope of my work because it is a subject of social studies.

Finally, an important methodological aspect must be discussed which is related to the impact of the social/digital media – a domain that has already

turned into a platform where various social interactions, representing various processes, can be observed and which greatly shapes the modern lifestyle and the means for spreading information, therefore the role of social media can be understood as a part of discursive process in identity construction (Khazraee, Novak 2018, 4). For example, on such social media platforms as *Facebook*, as Ruth Page argues, the shared stories emphasise the commonly held beliefs between the multiple tellers, from which collective identities can emerge. The platform, allowing the masses to share their views towards various different questions, serves as a way to identify the opinion of the members of a certain community, therefore, for example, analysis of the comments can provide a discourse of shared stories (Page 2018, 102–103). Additionally, there is also a concept of netnography explaining how the web assists in stimulating the modern collective identity (Kozinets 2010, 2–3), and, although this topic is beyond the scope of my study, I can state that the web resources have already become an inseparable part of the various studies, including mine, as we shall see in the following chapters.

1.2. A Theoretical Model for Approaching the Modern Collective Identity

In this part of the work, I will provide a model for analysing the modern collective identity of small communities. This model consists of collective memory, language ideology, and communalism, each being discussed separately in this part of the thesis.

1.2.1. Collective memory

The collective memory[30] is one of the key elements in the identity construction that has been discussed since the nineteenth century starting with

[30] The term *collective memory* itself is built on the pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs, who inherited Émile Durkheim's understanding of sociology as the study of how individuals living together *express a certain state of the group mind*. And, although originating from the field of the social studies, it explains the instrumentalisation of the past motives in the modern collective identity as well. Halbwachs opposed individualist paradigm of the memory by claiming that the collective memory is always mediated through the complex mechanism of conscious manipulation by the elites and unconscious absorption by the members of the society. He also perceived sociology as the study of how individuals living together *express a certain state of the group mind*, and applied this insight when arguing that it is impossible to separate individual memories from the effects of the society (Verovšek 2016, 3–4). Aleida Assmann claimed that the term *collective memory* is an umbrella term for different formats of the memory that need to be further distinguished, such as the family memory, the interactive group memory,

the famous lecture *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* given by Ernest Renan in 1882 at Sorbonne University providing the key principles of how important is the past for the modern identity formation. Afterwards many scholars and thinkers developed its important role for the identity construction with Anthony D. Smith being one of them and describing the collective memory as "relationship of shared memories to collective cultural identities: memory, almost by definition, is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities" (Smith 1999, 10). Gary Alan Fine contributed to the discussion by claiming "that it is not memory itself that matters, but the shared knowledge demonstrates that community exists and becomes a basis for self-referential actions" (Fine 2013, 396).

The collective memory (as any other form of memory as well) and history are two distinct areas dealing with the different phenomena, and this difference, while discussing ethno-history, is perfectly defined by Anthony D. Smith who claimed that

> Ethno-history, we may recall, differs from 'history' in that the latter is concerned with a more or less disinterested and professional enquiry into the past, whereas the former stands for the members' own records and memories of a community and its own rediscovery of an 'authentic' communal past or pasts. In the latter endeavour, the communal past appears as a series of original moral lessons and imaginative tableaux, which vividly illustrate the identity and uniqueness, and the centrality and essential goodness of the community – whatever the shortcomings of its individual members. (Smith 2010, 151)

What is more, we must also observe that the reason for the past motives being used in the process of the modern identity construction is strictly functional, what was described as the politico-ideological abuse of history by Eric Hobsbawm; however, historical continuity (or, otherwise, primordial assumptions) is a necessary condition for the use of past motives

and the social, political, national, and cultural memory (Assmann 2008, 55–56); consequently, I state that I refer to the cultural aspect of the collective memory, yet I assume the term *collective memory* to be more accurate to refer to – provided that we consider the complexity of the Maronite community and the Lebanese confessionalism.

in the modern discourse since plenty of information that can be used as a basis for constructing a modern identity is accumulated in the past of various communities (Hobsbawm 1983, 6). Additionally, Duncan Bell observed and quoted Anthony D. Smith to claim that "although many nations are indeed creations of modernity, they only exert their power over people through being rooted in the memories of pre-existing communities, in an (often) ethnically derived past" (Bell 2003, 71). Finally, we can state that there are many memories and only one history as there is no universal memory since every community has its own images and questions regarding its past (Assman 2011, 24–30).

Jan Assmann also assessed, I believe, a universally applicable and essentially important to discuss concept in the domain of memory which is the *myth*, connecting memory and history: "cultural memory transforms the factual information into remembered history, thus turning it into myth" (ibid., 37–38). These myths provide memories referring to the past, explaining the genesis of a community. As Duncan Bell wrote:

> We should understand a nationalist myth as a story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation's past and its place in the world, it historical eschatology: a story that elucidates its contemporary meaning through (re)constructing its past. […] They [myths] subsume all of the various events, personalities, traditions, artefacts and social practices that (self) define the nation and its relation to the past, present and future. Myths are constructed, they are shaped, whether by deliberate manipulation and intentional action, or perhaps through the particular resonance of works of literature and art. (Bell 2003, 75)

The myth that replaced the chronologically earlier religious affiliation to the State as one of the key principles of the modern identity (Armstrong 1982, 291–292) is also related to the concept of *nostalgia* discussed by Anthony D. Smith (Smith 1986, 174–176), and which is closely connected to the concept of the historical *golden age* providing an explanation of the nation's origin and the relationship between the nation's past, present, and future while also explaining the shortages of the present in the context of the historical *golden age* and explaining how the past glory was lost (Assmann 2011, 62) and also distancing a certain community from the other communities (Smith 1986, 147). Moreover, the references to the past are always changing in time, and, in every generation, the perception of the *golden age* is being

reinterpreted, thereby providing the generation's own understanding that it possesses unique heritage and that this heritage provides a basis maintaining own uniqueness (Hroch 2012, 139–143). Anthony D. Smith wrote that the ideal of the *golden age(s)* is one of the key foundations of the national identity with these myth-memories of the *golden age(s)* being categorised in the political, military, religious, cultural domains with all these elements overlapping (Smith 2003, 171–175)[31].

Also, it is essential to observe that the territorialization of memory is of crucial importance as well while explaining the origin of the specific entity by binding a nation with a certain territory because memory requires its territory. Anthony D. Smith coined this concept *ethnoscape* (Smith 1999, 150–154), which is similar to Pierre Nora's proposed concept of 'place of memory' (*lieux de memoire* in French). As Duncan Bell observed:

> The spatial dimension tends to be rooted in particular constructions of an often-idealized bounded territory, for example a romanticized national landscape. […] Time and place combine and are encoded in nationalist representational strategies, shaping the feelings of community and the construction of an inside/outside distinction, framing national identity in terms of a story about history and (a specific, often imagined) location. However, the mythscape should not be mistaken for a reified construct, a narrative without a narrator, for it is grounded in institutions and shaped by ever-present and evolving power relations. It is space in which political actors are engaged constantly. (Bell 2003, 76)

[31] In addition to the concept of the *golden age*, the belief in *chosenness*, inherited from religion, is another critically important aspect to assess that, at least, in the European national narratives, there is a relation to a certain mission believing that a certain community is singled out for special purposes for standing in a unique position to a divine power and to enable and to perform God's will. This mission is revealed in a myth of ethnic election, where the myth refers to a believed tale legitimising the present needs and concerns with reference to a heroic collective past with the present actions and situations being explained and legitimated by reference to these tales about being chosen by God, and thus inspiring the future generations (Smith 2003, 48–49). Although the concept of the *golden age* is more universal, the concept of *chosenness* provides a theoretical framework for searching specific references in the case of a certain community for finding a specific divine mission that is prescribed to this community. In the case of the Maronite community, religion is too closely related to the secular identity paradigm with references to specific places and landscape, naturally binding religious motives to communal idea.

A similar concept coined *mythscape* is used by Duncan Bell who wrote that it "can be conceived of as the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly" (Bell 2003, 75). Mythscape and memory are not synonymous or coterminous, since memory can function in opposition to myth because it represents a conceptually distinct category. The most referred-to memories may not be the ones that are privileged in mythology, conceivably due to the highly personal nature of the incident being recalled, or because it happens to the conflict with the self-image embodied in the various mythical narratives, such as recounting lost battles[32], for example (ibid., 76–77).

Memory is also a matter of the political domain, being used by state actors for shaping the modern collective identity or, at least, some elements of it. One of the ways of instrumentalising memory in politics can be revealed in the field of the politics of memory that is focusing on both the substantive content of collective memory expressed by actors within State institutions and on the interactive channels through which the ideas about the past are conveyed, disputed, silenced, and negotiated outside these formal settings, which means that these interactions between the memory makers and the *memory consumers* who adopt or reject the discourse are particularly important (Verovšek 2016, 3–6). However, for politics of memory to be developing, a defined state politics towards memory is required that is weak in case of the communal-dominated Lebanon. Yet, the idea of instrumentalising memory through politics can be acting on the communal level as well, consequently, this concept supports my claim that the influential part of the society, having at its disposal the tools to shape the identity, usually the State, or, in the case of my study, the elite, is responsible for spreading a certain narrative to the masses.

[32] It should not be confused with the recently growing field of trauma studies claiming that not only the glorious past, but the trauma also shapes the identity. In this sense, the chosenness-myths-trauma is developed by Johan Galtung claiming that three elements – the feeling of being chosen by transcendental forces, glorifying the past victories and great accomplishments, and the chosen trauma, consisting of experiences that come to symbolise this group's deepest threats and fears through the feelings of hopelessness and victimization – all of them are chosen, according to psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan (Wang 2017, 15–16). However, it is a different topic.

1.2.2. Language ideology

The language ideology, a broader concept covering many aspects of how languages are instrumentalised in the modern collective identity construction, is another key element in this process. Probably, one of the most famous and, I could say, already classical attempts to theorise the role of language in the modern collective identity formation was the work of Benedict Anderson who claimed the decisive role of language not only for each community's vision of its modern collective identity, but also in the historical formation of the modern collective identity itself. Benedict Anderson argued that the standardisation of local spoken varieties and the expanding written culture in the vernaculars stimulated by the invention of printing press in the fifteenth century was a key factor for the transformation of the masses into a new community. This transformation can be described as a shift from the pre-modern system based on religious affiliations with the dynasties and states having a sacred mission to the modern system where the relations between the *State* and the emerging modern *nation* were highly influenced by the development of a written culture in the vernacular, which resulted in the growing literacy in the masses, which made the printing profitable for the printing houses and created assumptions for the growing popularity of local regional dialects, which later transformed into substantive languages (Anderson 1999, 47–49). This shift towards the vernaculars, the spoken varieties, supported and developed by the masses, also changed the relations between the language and the State: the sacred language monopoly, relying on the sacred mission of the State or its dynasty, was replaced by the authority of the local languages spoken by the masses that eventually became the centres for the formation of new identities, gradually managing to gather communities around themselves. The feeling of unity within these communities was based on the emotional bounds among the people using the same language, gradually turning these communities into *imagined communities*, united by explicitly substantial bonds of commonness expressed through the same spoken language (ibid., 51).

But language perception is essential not only in the historical formation of modern collective entities; it is a widely developed topic among scholars today. Rogers Brubaker wrote that

> Language is a pervasive, inescapable medium of social interaction, which is necessary medium of public as well as private life, being the main medium of public discourse, government, administration, law,

> courts, education, media, public signage. Public life cannot exist without language. We can go even further to claim that the language has a political dimension, representing the official stance of policy makers. Public life can in principle be a-religious, but it cannot be a-linguistic. (Brubaker 2013, 5–6)

I need to note that Rogers Brubaker is among scholars to discuss not only the social aspect of language, but its ethnic dimension along with culture, religion and other essential aspects of the modern collective identity. However, not only Rogers Brubaker emphasised the role of language – we can also refer to Ernest Gellner, for whom, language plays an essential role in the modern collective identity construction, and this is more central than religion; language is an inescapable medium of both public and private life, while religion is not. Both language and religion are basic sources and forms of the social, cultural and political identification, being the ways of identifying oneself and others, construing sameness and differences. Language, religion, or both is/are generally understood as the central aspects, constitutive of most ethnic and national identifications, and they frequently serve as the key diacritical markers of such identifications (ibid., 2–4). However, their role is different because the State must attribute the privilege to a particular language or a set of languages, but it need not privilege a particular religion. In the modern world, language is chronically and pervasively developed, while much of religion has become privatised and depoliticised (ibid., 16), at least on the State level, or at least to a lesser degree than language. Indeed, not in every case, religion is a less important contributing factor than the language – and we will see that the Maronite case provides such an example – however it is true that language is much more politicised than religion by the language state policy – for example, almost in every Constitution in the world, we will find references to the language while religion cannot so often be found[33].

[33] The language relations with politics are also analysed in the field of the language policy, which is "a concept clearly related to the status of multilingualism in any given society, described as every public influence on the communication radius of languages, the sum of those 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' political initiatives through which a particular language or languages is/are supported in their public validity, their functionality and their dissemination. Like all policies it is subject to conflict and must regularly be re-ordered through constant discussion and debate" (Wodak 2012, 220). The importance of language is reflected through three dimensions of power: power in discource, power over discourse, power of discourse, meaning the struggle over semiotic hegemony, access to the public and influence of historically grown macro-structures of meaning, respectively (ibid.

I must also state that, in each case, language acquires different forms in the process of the modern collective identity construction. Miroslav Hroch, while discussing the importance of the local language in the historical formation of the modern collective identity of small communities, claimed that most of the national movements started from the attempts to create or recreate own ethnic culture and written language, which practically means that the language is also a sort of cultural manifestation along with the collective memory. Nonetheless, I must stress that not all national movements manifested the demands regarding the language as they, initially, declared their demands towards political issues, especially in the cases when a certain community was at least partly involved into the governing structure. In other cases, national movements mostly used to start their quest for a modern collective identity with the cultural and linguistic demands, which represented an aim of a non-governing nation to use their language in the everyday interactions at the State institutions, thus gradually turning these demands into the aim to have its own ruling elite (Hroch 2012, 99–100). At the same time, we can also claim that (not in every case) a community aspiring to claim its vision for the modern collective identity paid too much attention to the language. In some communities, indeed, the language became one of the main substances in creating the new cultural symbols. However, in some other communities, the language was not perceived as a distinct and important factor without elaborating the vernacular.

To sum up, the concepts of the language policy and language ideologies explains how the language becomes an instrument for the identity construction, thus making it an essential contributing factor to the modern collective identity with the State being an important actor in this discourse.

1.2.3. Communalism

Another essential factor contributing to the modern collective identity construction is communalism, which is crucially important in the case of the Maronite community and, although most of the works dealing with the question of communalism are centred around the Indian case, which is different to the Lebanese situation at least due to the fact that the Maronites operate in the confessional system of Lebanon with institutionalised communalism, the case of the Maronite community serves as a superb

2012, 216–218). Yet, Lebanon does not have an officially developed language policy.

example for the communal identity's definition. The communal identity's scale is smaller than that of the national identity and, I believe, the example provided by Aboultaif and Tabar when assessing the memory case in Lebanon can serve as a superb example when explaining the differences between communal and national levels. The authors claim that the nation-based memory is one that is broadly associated with the citizens of a state across any type of backgrounds promoted by the State and accepted by citizens to be their national memory, which establishes a strong framework for a national social cohesion. In contrast, a communal memory is narrow and exclusive, promoted by the elites of a specific community. Such memories are shared by members who have the same background within a State and do not necessarily attempt to integrate members form other communal groups by demarcating the sociopolitical borders between communities, and these memories are competing (Aboultaif, Tabar 2019, 97–98). In the communal-based memory, the nation is defined under the events, personalities, traditions, artefacts, and social practices that pertain to a communal group with the communal elites being aware that their memory making is at conflict with other communities, or at least not compatible with one another, thus weakening the national unity because communal-based memory making prevents the rise of a nation-based memory (ibid., 99–100). We can apply the same principle to the other domains of communal interactions as well.

Historically, the communal identity has been based on the confessional entity, partly due to the fact that, in the history of the modern collective identity development, the religious type of identity was, chronologically, earlier than the construct of the secular mythology. One of the crucial ways how religion contributed to the development of the modern collective identity was the priesthood's role in the national movements, who represented the Church which had both financial and human recourses and, through the network of churches, was in close contact with the masses through the liturgy and, often, through the education in the pre-modern era. In most cases, the ability to communicate in the same language with the masses provided an opportunity for an even better cooperation, which resulted in the great influence by the Church over the society thus being the core of the intellectual life (Hroch 2012, 89–92). Moreover, nationalism and religion are so tightly intertwined that religion is part of the phenomenon rather than an external explanatory factor of it. Religion can be understood as a composing element of the nation, and it sometimes can be a primary diacritical marker between the ethnicity and the nationality; yet, the religious community extends beyond the nation. However, religion does not necessarily define the

boundaries of the nation, but it supplies myths, metaphors, and symbols that are central to the discourse of the nation (Brubaker 2012, 8–9). However, such a theory cannot be unconditionally applied to the Maronite community which, originating from the Maronite Church, has tightly bound the confessional denomination with the national idea and territory, thus creating a territory-bound religion with clear references to specific places and which, thus, cannot be considered as extending beyond the nation. Religion is a centre of the Maronite communalism even among the secular Maronites (at least, culturally). It also has a political dimension, as defined by Anthony D. Smith describing the Maronite community as an example of the sectarian community, where the mobilisation of a religio-ethnic community, aiming to transform it into a nation, is predominantly political because it aims to achieve a measure of the secular power for the community in a world of nations, and to ensure its survival and prosperity "by turning a passive object community into an active subject nation." In this turn, the members of the community embrace the new vision provided by the new secular intelligentsia "preaching an activist message of practical communal salvation" (Smith 1986, 168).

Rogers Brubaker discussed four distinct ways of studying the connection between religion and nationalism, with these ways being, firstly, the way of treating religion and nationalism as analogous phenomena; secondly, specifying the ways in which religion helps to explain things about nationalism, such as its origin, power, or distinctive character in particular cases; thirdly, treating religion as part of nationalism and specifying the modes of interpenetration and intertwining; fourthly, positing a distinctively religious form of nationalism and, finally, claiming nationalism to be a distinctively secular phenomenon (Brubaker 2012, 3). Yet, none of these approaches can be applied to the Maronite case directly due to the highly specific nature of the Maronite collective identity with the intertwining religious and secular elements at the same time having an ambition to transcend these ideas beyond the community for involving the other communities residing in Lebanon and willing to be the face of the Lebanese national identity.

At least in the Lebanese case, communalism acquired a politicised form in the Lebanese confessional framework being both the reason and the outcome for the confessionalisation of Lebanon. Transferring the communal vision into the political sphere though the organisations or some administrative structures is a necessary condition for the national movement to spread, especially in the cases when there are competing communal identities with substantial political and demographic background and/or there

is no single state-supported concept of the State. Furthermore, it should be remarked that the communal identity can resonate politically and take on a real meaning for individuals as the public life becomes a sort of *sectarianism* with a *sectarian group* and a *sectarian party* appearing in cases with strong competing entities regarding the institutionalised, state-supported communalism, where the link between the individuals is mediated by the confessional community, in the contexts where ethnicity or religion is institutionalised in politics, or where a conflict is waged in the name of such categories. We can observe that "the status of a party as sectarian should be seen as fluid because the same party can imply sectarian language and symbols to varying degrees in distinct historical moments or with different audience and constituencies" (Cammet 2014, 10). Sectarianism is a "fundamentally political phenomenon rather than as the expression of essential cultural differences." Sectarianism, or the organisation of politics around the sectarian identity, is thus a historically contingent phenomenon rather than an inevitable product of cultural differences (ibid., 11), and the Lebanese confessionalism is such an example, defined also as *consociationalism* by Lijphart in 1977. However, this system can also be used for the resolution or prevention of conflicts, as both examples can be find in Lebanon. John Nagle observed that the structure of ethnic power sharing represented in the Taif Agreement is a common technology of conflict management in divided societies or a form of democracy. In such cases,

> Rather than seek to piece back the fragments into a shared public identity, consociational arrangements often institutionalize the existence of ethnic differences. In consociationalism, rather than elide identity from the public sphere, consociational structures represent biopolitical modes of governance that allocate all citizens into predetermined identity categories, regardless of the wishes of individuals. (Nagle 2015, 46–47)

At the same time, confessionalism tightens the intra-communal relations within each community and also elaborates on the religion within such a community (definitely, in the cases where religion is the basis for communalism). Rogers Brubaker observed that confessionalisation (in this case, based on the Reformation-era divisions into Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism, yet applicable to the Maronite case) substantially tightened the relationship between a political organisation and a religious belief and practice, and, in so doing, it provided a model for a matrix of the congruence between the culture and the polity that is at the core of the nationalism that

happened through the emergence of territorial churches that were subordinated to the secular political control (Brubaker 2012, 7).

1.3. Concluding Remarks

To sum up the first part of the work, it should be noted that the modern collective identity, as a domain of the nationalism studies, has been developing since the eighteenth century, although I do not consider the term 'nation' to be appropriate for applying it to the Maronite community with the term 'modern collective identity' being used instead. It is a widely discussed topic with various different theoretical approaches existing, however, the classical dichotomy consisting of the primordialist and the constructivist approaches can still be found in many works, and which is often being applied in many works on the basis that we need some primordial factors for the entity to form the modern collective identity which becomes a nation through the instrumentalisation by the elite or intelligentsia, both religious and secular, of those primordial factors that are essential in understanding how the modern communities are being constructed. Although many recent theoretical extensions to the already mentioned axis were provided by scholars with the recently prevailing post-modernist approaches in the field, their application in case of the Maronite community are limited because of the Lebanese confessionalism which enclosed the Maronite community within the modernist categories. Of the main post-modernist developments, the impact of the social media is a decisive factor in the Maronite case, yet this aspect should still be perceived rather as a methodological tool.

Based on the theoretical overview of the nationalism studies, we have to observe that every national movement is being formed under specific and unique circumstances with the unique combination of the local contributing factors essential in forming a modern collective identity. Yet, there are three important domains I propose to consider universally in the case of small communities when attempting to assess their modern collective identity, these three aspects being the collective memory, the language ideology, and the communalism. The collective memory, which is an instrumentalised and sometimes mythologised way of instrumentalising past motives based on past events, is an essential part of the modern collective identity studies since the end of the nineteenth century since Renan discussed them. It defines the relations of a community with the past, the present and the future. At the same time, the language is another crucially important aspect in the identity studies, especially in the historical formation of the modern collective identities as

discussed by Benedict Anderson, although not in each particular case having a distinct character developed by various communities. Finally, the communalism should be assessed as a unit of a smaller scale than the national identity, in the case of the Maronite community being based on the religious affiliations that assisted in creating a structure of cooperation among the members of the Maronite community that gradually turned into the basis of the Maronite collective identity.

2. TRACING THE MARONITE HISTORY

In this part of the work, I discuss the main milestones of the Maronite history evaluating their influence on the historical development of the Maronite community and its modern thought. I start with the analysis of the origin of the Maronite community; then, I proceed to the evaluation of the community's development in the Ottoman times with such factors as the revival of the Maronite community during the times of the Lebanese Emirate, the Maronites' expanding foreign connections and the establishment of *mutaṣarrifiyya* being highlighted. Afterwards, I discuss the history of the modern Lebanese State starting with the analysis of the establishment of the French Mandate and the declaration of the Lebanese independence; then, I appraise the development of the *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, the outcomes of the Lebanese Civil War, and I finish this part of the work with the insights about the Cedar Revolution and the current situation in Lebanon.

2.1. The Early History of the Maronite Church

The origin of the Maronite community is connected to the life of hermit monk from the Taurus Mountains, adherent of West Syriac Antiochian tradition, Saint Maron[34] (or Maroun) (?–ca. 410) who was born in Prima (modern Syria). Not much is known about his life; most probably, he never happened to visit the Mount Lebanon area, where his name was brought by the followers, namely the Maronites, inspired by his teachings, reaching this area at some point by the beginning of the fifth century (Loosley 2005, 186–190).

At that time, the area of Mount Lebanon was part of the Eastern Roman Empire which divided the Lebanese territories into Phoenice Prima (Maritima), mainly concurring with the ancient Phoenicia and the Lebanese coastal cities, and Phoenice Secunda (Libanesia), extending to the Syrian desert and including such cities as Damascus and Palmyra. Differently to Phoenice Secunda, Phoenice Maritima was territorially isolated from Syria by the natural barrier of the mountain range of Mount Lebanon, allowing to avoid political turbulences taking place in the Middle East in the subsequent centuries and thus creating a relative shelter that, over time, attracted various communities that settled in the region.

Due to scarce historical references to the Lebanese territories from this period, not much is known about the Maronites until the sixteenth

[34] Not to be confused with John Maron (628–707).

century[35]. What we know is that, by the beginning of the fifth century, the Lebanese coastal areas were partly Christianised (with ultimately being fully Christianised towards the seventh century) with the Syriac variety of the Aramaic and Greek languages being almost equally used. Despite the process of Hellenization, which had already been taking place for several centuries at the time, the most prevailing variant of Christianity was the West Syriac tradition with the use of the Syriac language by the local population expanding over the territory of modern Lebanon. In 402, Saint Maron's first disciple Abraham of Cyrrhus (ca. 350–422), who was later called the Apostle of Lebanon, observed that there were many non-Christians in Lebanon; consequently, he set out to convert the local inhabitants, thereby introducing them to the way of Christianity presented by Saint Maron, thus spreading the Syriac Christianity among the local inhabitants (Mackey 2006, 14).

We also know that Saint Maron himself did not establish the institutionalised structure of the Maronite Church, which was formed later. When the Maronites, following the Council of Chalcedon in 451, rejected monophysitism and theologically distanced themselves from the Oriental Christians, it was done by the bishops who were adherents of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch; the Maronite Church, as a separate entity, was established in the seventh century. The title of the first Maronite Patriarch is usually ascribed to the Syriac monk John Maron (628–707), born in Kfarhy (modern Lebanon), who established himself in Qadisha Valley, starting the spiritual Maronite tradition of linking the community to the Lebanese mountains (Harris 2012, 35–37).

For the Maronite community, the seventh century marked not only the establishment of the structural autonomy of the Maronite Church, but also the change of the geopolitical circumstances in the region. The first transformation happened in 613 when the Sassanid Persians seized the Roman Levant, however, in 628, the Eastern Roman Empire Emperor Heraclius

[35] Along with the Maronites, in the chronicles dating back to the seventh century, the name of Mardaites (derived from the term *marada* meaning 'rebel') also appear. It was a community of mountainers from the Taurus Mountains with the first reference to Mardaites being dated in 637 when the Maronites along with the Mardaites carried out attacks against the Arabs. However, in the subsequent centuries, the name of the Mardaites does not appear in the chronicles (Harris 2012, 35–37). The name was revived in the twentieth century in the ideological quest for identity even inspiring the title of the political party named *Marada Movement*, with some claims linking the Maronites to the Mardaites; however, it was a distinct entity from the Maronite community.

managed to defeat the Persian army and regain the control of the Lebanese coast. The second transformation took place after the battle of Yarmouk in 636, when most of the Lebanese territories (with the exception of Tripoli until 644) came under the Caliphate control. Afterwards, from the seventh century to the beginning of the twentieth century, with the exception of the period from 1099 to the late twelfth century of the Crusades, the Maronite community was living under the governance of various Muslim states with the last few centuries of Caliphates' rule (1516–1918) being part of the Ottoman Empire.

As it was indicated above, not much is known about the Maronites from the pre-Ottoman times, yet, two crucially important events with the long-lasting consequences to the Maronite community happened in the twelfth century that are necessary to underline: *firstly*, in 1182, the Maronites conducted the union with the Holy See, thus becoming the first Church of the East to conduct this religio-political act, although, without any change in the structure, theology or liturgy of the Maronite Church (Loosley 2005, 184–185), and, *secondly*, the relations between the Maronites and France, mythologised in the nineteenth century, were established. Although at the time not much changed in the aftermath of these events immediately, however, from today's perspective, we can claim that it was the starting point for the Maronite community's Europe-ward orientation, gradually developed in the subsequent centuries.

2.2. Lebanon in the Ottoman Times

2.2.1. The Lebanese Emirate and the revival of Maronites

From the beginning of the Ottoman rule[36], the period which is often labelled by historians as the Lebanese Emirate (Hakim 2013, 14) and the period which marked a revival of the Maronite community eventually leading

[36] The Lebanese coast came under the control of the Ottoman Empire after a single campaign that took place from August 1516 to January 1517, and that was carried out by Sultan Selim I. Afterwards, instead of the imposition of the direct rule over the Lebanese coast, the governing system was based on Ottomans' cooperation with the local rulers whose main role was the collection of taxes and administration of the newly established *sancaks* of Tripoli and Sidon/Beirut that belonged to the *eyalet* of Damascus. In 1521, an *eyalet* of Tripoli was established temporarily and permanently in 1579, whose borders extended along the Syrian coast from the southern part of the Amanus Mountains in the north to the gorge of al-Muamalatayn in the south. In the south, the *eyalet* of Tripoli bordered with the *sancak* of Sidon/Beirut (Abu-Husayn 2009, 91).

to the rise of political strength[37] that was gradually transformed into *mutaṣarrifiyya*, the Lebanese inhabitants were living in a certain state of autonomy following the Sublime Porte's policy not to interfere directly with the local affairs[38], resulting in the rise of the local ruling elites with the periods of the Ma'n (1591–1697) and Shihab (1697–1842) dynasties to be discussed due to their significant contribution to the expanding relations between the Maronites and Europe and the rising political, social, economic, and intellectual potential of the community during these reigns that gradually established the Europe-oriented Maronite intellectual tradition that eventually advocated for creating the modern State of Lebanon.

Since the Ma'an dynasty of Druze origin from the outset of its reign was actively involved into the European affairs with Fakhr al-Din II (1572–1635) establishing contacts with several European states, mainly Tuscany, and Pope Clement VIII, also relying on the support of the Maronite community, the latter started to expand its influence in the local affairs (Abu-Husayn 2004, 20–21) and, consequently, already in the seventeenth century this growth, also perceived as a revival, was observed by one of the most famous Maronite intellectuals Isfifan al-Duwayhi (1670–1704) who already in his time wrote that, under the government of Fakhr al-Din II, the Christians raised their heads, built churches and even the majority of the Emir's army and advisers and servants was made up of the Maronites (Hokayem 1992, 8–9).

During the rule of the Shihab dynasty of the Hejaz origin, particularly during the reign (1788–1840) of Bashir II (1767–1850) who was a Maronite himself and whose influence, with the European support, expanded to the surrounding territories, the Maronite role in the local affairs reached significant influence, and the community started to rise in numbers. In this context, we have to consider two aspects related to the Maronite community's

[37] According to Michal Moch, there were three contributing factors, assisting to the gradual strengthening of the Maronite community's position in Lebanon, namely 1) the location of the community in the mountainous area combined with the local governing system; 2) cohabitation with the Druze community that emerged as a powerful cooperation in the 17–18th centuries; 3) the intensive relations with foreign actors (Moch 2013, 114–115). All these factors are covered in this part of the work.

[38] Consequently, the Maronite community was not a subject to the *millet* system, which was finally abolished in 1856 and which was based on cooperation between the Ottoman State and various religious communities directly and independently from the other communities with the religious head of the confession being the main administrative leader of the community within this system, thus strengthening the religious authority within each community being subject to the *millet* system.

development at the time that reflected the transforming Maronite relations with the other local communities and also the changing social structure within the Maronite community itself. *Firstly*, already in the eighteenth century, the tensions between the Maronites and Druze, another community that was growing at the time, fuelled by both Bashir II's favour towards the Maronites and the international interference[39], started to rise (Hourani 2013, 131–132), which led to the massacres of 1840 and 1860, and the local governing system was totally changed afterwards. *Secondly*, due to the growing influence of lay Maronites, the Maronite Church and the local Maronite merchants started to distance from each other. In the long term, this distance resulted in, at least, two tendencies: *on the one hand*, the Maronite Church freed itself from the control of the local influential families; *on the other hand*, lay Maronites gradually started to be more actively expressed in the political affairs, thereby also changing the traditional balance of power of the local families (ibid., 132); *finally*, such a gradually evolving distance between the lay and the religious elite also meant that the Maronite Church was not the only one representing the Maronite community in the political and administrative domain anymore.

2.2.2. Expanding foreign connections of Maronites in the 16th–18th centuries

When assessing the historical development of the Maronite community and assessing the main turning points of it, we have to observe that the Maronite foreign connections, established as early as in the twelfth century, have been playing a crucial role in the historical development of the Maronite community with two powers behind these connections – the Holy See and France[40], often overlapping – being the main contributing actors whose actively developed interest in the Lebanese affairs started to be observed in the sixteenth century until reaching its peak in the nineteenth

[39] Politically, France supported the Maronite community, while Great Britain supported the Druze community.

[40] The actual beginning of the French involvement into the Maronite affairs can be traced back to 1535 when the Capitulations Agreement was signed between France and the Ottoman Empire, among other things, granting France the role of the guardian of the Catholics residing in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans did not oppose such interference of France since the greatest concern of Sublime Porte's foreign policy at the time was Austria and Spain (Harris 2012, 85–87). However, it was more a political act rather than the start of effective cooperation between the Maronites and France at the time; only in the nineteenth century France started to be actively involved in the domain of education in Lebanon.

century with these connections mainly being reflected in the domain of education.

Chronologically, the Maronite connections with the Holy See preceded the Maronite connections with France, starting to intensify during the time of the Patriarch Musa al-Akkari (1482–1567; Patriarch from 1525 to 1567)[41] who regarded the exchange of documents with successive popes as the Maronite lifeline and repeatedly stressed the submission of his community via traveling bishops, Franciscan monks, and Italian merchants. In 1543, the patriarch asked Pope Paul III to authorise six Franciscans to open a school in Mount Lebanon to teach children Latin "so they may understand holy books" receiving confirmation in 1561, yet even deeper connections between the Maronites and the Holy See were established in 1584 when the school for the Maronites in Rome, known as the Maronite College, was established which was aimed at deepening the Holy See's influence in the region and spreading its ideas (Harris 2012, 93–94).

We have to note that these connections, being established and stimulated in the sixteenth century, did not stop in the following centuries – actually, they continued to expand. In addition to the Maronite College's presence in Rome, in the seventeenth century, the Holy See started to open Catholic missions in Lebanon and the neighbouring regions thus further spreading its influence: Franciscans had already been custodians of the Catholic shrines in the Holy Land since the fifteenth century; Capuchins came in 1626, Jesuits came in 1652, being followed by Carmelites, Dominicans and others. These missions not only established monasteries based on the rules of the Western monasticism, but also opened local schools along with seminaries, often under the shelter of monasteries, that were not only preparing religious intellectuals, but, gradually, among the alumni of these schools, the number of lay intellectuals started to rise (or, at least, upon graduation, the religious persons more often started to work outside the religious domain). Already Fakhr al-Din II, seeing the rise of the Maronites' connections with Europe, began to employ Maronite priests in his exchanges

[41] We have to note that, although the beginning of the Maronite foreign connection historically started with the conclusion of the union between the Holy See and the Maronite Church in 1182, this act mainly marked the formal acceptance of the papal authority, and only in the sixteenth century the gradual process of the Maronites moving from the formal submission to Rome to partial Latinisation of the doctrine and ritual started; therefore, it was the sixteenth century when the Holy See started actively participating in the local Lebanese affairs.

with the courts of Europe, and, later, the Turkish rulers of the Syrian coast; consequently, in the eighteenth century, the local trade started to pass into the hands of Eastern Christians who had an advantage of the consular protection and knowledge of not only European languages but also the modern trade, and, finally, by the nineteenth century, the newly emerged lay elite became the leaders of the cultural, political and intellectual life among the Eastern Christians (Hourani 2013, 56).

In this context, we should discuss several factors having essential contribution to the development of the Maronite community and its thought with their long-lasting influence that can be observed even today in the cultural domain. *Firstly*, the Maronite community was the first Christian community of the Middle East to conduct the union with the Holy See. Afterwards, similar unions between the Holy See and other Eastern Churches, most of whom were Arabic-speaking Eastern Christian communities, were made[42]. These Eastern Churches accepted the authority of the Pope while retaining their own liturgies, customs and religious law; however, of these Churches, only the Maronite Church retained internal unity by not splitting into the Uniate and non-Catholic groups, thus gradually making Maronites the most influential group of the Eastern Catholics in the Ottoman Empire (Hourani 1981, 105–106).

Secondly, a distinctive Christian culture expressed in Arabic started to be developed by the priests educated in the colleges in Rome who came back to the Lebanese cities with a knowledge of Latin and Italian (Hourani 2013, 242). What is more, among the priests who graduated from the College and the missionaries, some individuals started to show their interest in the Maronite community's traditions and history. They published their works in Arabic[43] (ibid., 128–133) and also translated the works of Catholic theology to Arabic. In this way, the ideas from Europe started to spread among Arabic-speaking Christian communities in the Middle East, at the same time contributing to the spread of the knowledge about the Middle East in Europe since some of these intellectuals started to teach Arabic in Europe – an example of such an activity could be the Assemani[44] family in Rome or the Maronite priests who taught Arabic at Sorbonne University (ibid., 54–58).

[42] Currently, there are 23 Eastern Catholic Churches.
[43] One of the first such Maronite intellectuals was Gabriel ibn al-Qilai (1447–1516).
[44] With the most famous representative from the family being Yusuf al-Sim'ani (Joseph Assemani 1687–768).

Thirdly, we should also consider the role of the Catholic Church as another significant contributing factor to the development of the Maronite Church and the formation of the modern Maronite identity. Even though the Maronite Church was not fully integrated into the structure of the Catholic Church, it still relied on the support of the Holy See. Considering the Catholic Church's institutional autonomy and financial resources, it was independent from the state actor with its priesthood being controlled by its authority and having some autonomy, differently to the other Christian denominations (Hroch 2012, 90) residing in the Ottoman Empire who were fully dependent on the relations with the Sublime Porte. Consequently, the Maronite priesthood did not have to look for compromises as, in the case, for example, of the Orthodox communities, which were dependent on the relations with the State. Nonetheless, the development of the priesthood from the local population also greatly contributed to the strengthening autonomy of the Maronite community and allowed to develop its own elite originating from within the community.

Finally, the Synod of Lebanon in 1736 was convoked, thus providing the first ever codified document of the Maronite Church affirming the Concordate with Rome, guaranteeing regular relations, entrenching the hierarchy, liturgy, Canon Law, customs, and declaring the Maronite Church's official stance towards various questions, thus significantly contributing to the intellectual development of the community, defining the main concepts of the Church and its relations with the community, and also contributing (as well as reflecting it) to the development of the intellectual tradition of the community. This document of the Synod was the main source describing the Maronite-related issues until the Synod of 2006 was convoked.

To sum up, all of these aspects that provided assumptions for the development of the Maronite community and, particularly, its intellectual tradition, were heavily influenced by the foreign factor, namely, the relations with the Holy See (and, later, with France), that made, as we will see, an even more significant contribution in the nineteenth century, and these foreign connections, actively being developed since the sixteenth century onwards, gradually became an integral part of the Maronite community and its self-identification.

2.2.3. Establishment of *mutaṣarrifiyya* in 1861 and its implications

The nineteenth century marked the turning point for the Maronite community and its history (particularly, in the political domain) when, with the establishment of the *mutaṣarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon in 1861, the first ever territorial unit in history that provided a status of the political autonomy for the Maronite community also designating a territorial concept of modern Lebanon that later became the axis of the modern Lebanese State, appeared. Apart from that, with the establishment of the *mutaṣarrifiyya*, the political position of the Maronites in the local affairs significantly strengthened and continued to rise in the light of the other ethnoreligious communities residing in the Mount Lebanon area (Firro 2004, 16) up until 1920 when the Greater Lebanon was established. However, it is even more important to observe that the establishment of this entity was also the turning point for the formation of the Lebanese political sectarianism (Hourani 2013, 136), the topic that will be discussed later, but, before moving to this topic, let us have a look at the circumstances under which the *mutaṣarrifiyya* was established, that happened following the conflict massacres of the Maronites in 1860. The first phase of the conflict started in 1840 as a result of the clashing interests of the rising Druze and the Maronites that evolved into clashes and, after the Ottomans tried to calm down the tensions between the communities, the rule of Omar Pasha (1806–1871) in 1842 was imposed over Mount Lebanon, thus ending the Shihab rule and, at the same time, partitioning the territory of Mount Lebanon into Christian (in the North) and Druze (in the South) sections based on the majority of the local inhabitants (Hourani 2013, 62–64). However, the tensions continued to rise, and the conflict broke out again in 1858, when the peasantry led by Tanyus Shahin (1815–1895) in the Maronite district of Keserwan revolted against the Maronite Khazin family (ibid., 132–136), at the same time inspiring the Maronites in the Druze-controlled districts to revolt as well. Overall, the conflict ended with several thousand Christian casualties in Mount Lebanon and Damascus and, afterwards, following the negotiations between the Ottomans and the European powers, in July 1861, the Lebanese *mutaṣarrifiyya*[45] was established. It was a privileged *sanjaq* under the governance of *mutaṣarrif* (or *governor*) who had to be Christian by religion, selected by the Ottomans and approved by the great powers. By being Christian, he had to please the Maronites, while, by being a non-Maronite representative of the Ottomans supported by the great powers, he did not have to be involved in the internal Lebanese conflicts. The aim of this

[45] Concurring with the territory of Mount Lebanon, but excluding the city of Beirut.

administrative reform was to establish the new system where all the communities would live together with the dominant role attached to the Maronites (Wu 2009, 53–55).

The establishment of the *mutaṣarrifiyya* was a decisive historical event for the development of both the Maronites and Lebanon, and this claim can be supported by, at least, two arguments. *On the one hand*, the *mutaṣarrifiyya* created assumptions for the Lebanese confessionalism to evolve. Indeed, the modern Lebanese confessionalism was invented later, however, during the years of the *mutaṣarrifiyya*, the culture of sectarianism and its integration into the political life was formed during this era. I consider that the following quote of Ussama Makdisi is capable of providing an excellent argumentation supporting this idea:

> In the aftermath of 1860, a culture of sectarianism developed in the sense that all sectors of society, public and private, recognized that the war and the massacres marked the beginning of a new age – an age defined by the raw intrusion of sectarian consciousness into modern life. At a public level, the discourse of sectarianism permeated all facets of administration, law, education, and, finally, with the establishment of the Lebanese republic, the state. (Makdisi 2000, 163–164)

On the other hand, we need to observe that, with the establishment of the *mutaṣarrifiyya*, the Maronite intellectuals started to develop the concept of the modern *Lebanon* as a political, geographically defined entity, which, in the beginning, was mainly connected to the Maronite and the Christian communities[46]. The first ever recorded account in history containing the modern idea of establishing a separate entity of Lebanon with a certain level of autonomy appeared in 1844 in Paris when the tract titled *Notice historique sur la Nation Maronite et sur ses rapports avec la France, sur la Nation Druze et sur les diverses populations du Mont Liban* was published by the Maronite bishop Niqula Murad (Firro 2004, 15) According to Ussama Makdisi,

> [T]he work of Maronite Bishop Murad represented a vision of a new Christian regime also being a work which fused a European nationalist idea with a tradition of Maronite ecclesiastical autonomy

[46] The territory of the *mutaṣarrifiyya* concurred with the territory of Mount Lebanon, the area that was inhabited mainly by the Maronites.

to present the case for a Maronite-dominated Christian Lebanon (Makdisi 2000, 81–82).

Another work to mention is the account of Tannus al-Shidyaq titled *Kitab akhbar al-a'ayan fi Jabal Lubnan*, published in 1859, which provided the genealogy and history of the notable families of Mount Lebanon. In 1902, in the Jesuit Journal *al-Mashriq*, Henri Lammens published a series of articles under the heading *Tasrih al-Absar fi ma Yahtawihi Jabal Lubnan min al-Athar* providing the author's views on Lebanon's geography, history, archaeology, and population movements, thereby arguing that Mount Lebanon was only a part of Lebanon, which, however, includes the wider territories in the Mediterranean region. Another work to mention is the pamphlet under the title *La nationalité maronite*, prepared by Ferdinant Tayan in 1905, where the author, while speaking about the territory of Mount Lebanon, argued that the Maronites constitute a separate nation based on the religious background by claiming that, in the Middle East, nations are formed around the faith (Firro 2004, 15–17).

Historically, the most influential work was published in 1908 in Paris by Bulus Nujayim (also known under the pseudonym Michel Jouplain) under the title *La Question du Liban*, wherein, for the first time ever, the concept of the Greater Lebanon[47] was introduced. Differently to the above-mentioned works with the arguments favouring the autonomy of Lebanon on the conceptual level, Bulus Nujayim provided a concept of the Greater Lebanon with clearly defined boundaries on the map based on the historical and geographical arguments, aspiring the *mutaṣarrifiyya* to be extended to include Beirut, the plain if Biqa', Bilad Bshara, Marj'iyun, al-Hul in the South and 'Akkar in the North. Soon afterwards, this idea became the basis of the national aspiration and argumentation for some intellectuals[48] and politicians

[47] A concept of *Mount Lebanon* (*Mont Liban* in French and *Jabal Lubnan* in Arabic) appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century when the whole Lebanese mountain range in its entirety acquired this name (Hakim 2013, 14–15), yet, it turned into a political entity only in 1861, when the *mutaṣarrifiyya* was established, an entity overlapping with the territory of Mount Lebanon and with the majority of the population being Christian. A concept of the *Greater Lebanon* (*Le Grand Liban* in French and *58awlat lubnān al-kabīr* in Arabic*)* was developed by Nujayim Bulus, who argued for the extension of Mount Lebanon to include the surrounding territories with the majority of the population being Muslim with the extended Mount Lebanon concurring with the modern-day Lebanon (Firro 2004, 15–16).

[48] The first organisation advocating for the extension of the *mutaṣarrifiyya* was *Hizb al-Ittihad al-Lubnani* (Party of the Lebanese Unity) founded in 1908 by the

along with the Patriarch Elias Hoayek who led the Lebanese delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference demanding an independence of Lebanon within the boundaries of the Greater Lebanon and convincing the international community that Lebanon is a distinct and separate entity from Syria by arguing that Syria formed a distinct historical entity while Lebanon had always been and would always be the link between the Mediterranean and the Semitic civilizations (ibid., 15–16). Albert Hourani summarised the idea of Nujayim in the following way: "there has been a Lebanese nation since the beginning of history and the *mutaṣarrifiyya* was no more than a stepping stone towards real independence, which would some day be achieved with the help of Europe" (Hourani 1983, 275).

However, while the Patriarch Elias Hoayek based his arguments on the idea of Bulus Nujayim at the Versailles Peace Conference, the geographical boundaries of Lebanon were still the question of debates among the Lebanese intellectuals, with, at the time, the main question being whether Lebanon should be extended from Mount Lebanon to the Greater Lebanon or not because, within the Maronite community, there were varying opinions that expanding the borders of Mount Lebanon to the Greater Lebanon can bring the change of demographics (Firro 2004, 14–18). The question was solved in 1920 when, with the French support, the boundaries of Mount Lebanon were extended, and the entity of the Greater Lebanon was established that, historically, became recognised as the French Mandate.

2.3. The Modern Lebanese State and its Development

2.3.1. The French Mandate and the declaration of Lebanese independence

The establishment of the French Mandate in the political domain was influenced by the international conditions that emerged during WWI. Under the Sykes-Picot Agreement signed in 1916 and internationally recognized in the San Remo Conference in April 1920, the Middle Eastern region was divided by Great Britain and France. After WWI, which was lost by the Ottomans, the French troops embarked to Beirut on 8 October 1918 with the establishment of the French Mandate within the territory of the Greater Lebanon taking place on 1 September 1920 (Hokayem 1992, 17–19).

Lebanese emigrants in Egypt with one of the most famous of its members being Yusuf al-Saouda.

It should be noted that, at the time, just before establishing the French Mandate, there was uncertainty in Lebanon about the political future of Lebanon. While the Maronites supported the idea of the Lebanese dinstictiveness, the other parts of the population, mainly, Lebanese Muslims[49] were willing to unite with Syria (Abisaab 2014, 295–296). France also did not explicitly define its position until February 1919. Until then, the French Chambers of Commerce mainly supported the integration of Lebanon into Syria with the most eager to adopt the idea of the Greater Syria being the *Comité central Syrien* established in 1917. It rejected the idea of a single Arab political entity and saw the Lebanese independence as a rival to the Greater Syria which was perceived to be a rival to the single Arab state (Firro 2004, 3–4). Consequently, France, although relying on the support of the Maronites, but also considering the wish of the local Muslims to unite with Syria, decided that the Mandate would be a transitional form of governance until the local population finds the way to settle the dispute over the future of the state considering the Lebanese relations with Syria (Firro 2004, 3–9). For this reason, Kamal Salibi wrote that, for the Maronites, the Mandate period marked the new ambitions for the independence, while, mainly for the Muslim population, it marked the prevention from unifying with Syria (Salibi 1988, 32).

Although the Mandate was a temporal entity whose future had to be decided by the will of the Lebanese people, gradually, the discussions about the Lebanese independence became the dominant discourse among various Lebanese communities with the steps taken by the Lebanese towards the independence, for example, by introducing the Lebanese Constitution on 23 May 1926 with the Lebanese institutions, currency, and national symbols being established as well. Additionally, the continuing uncertainty from France regarding the Lebanese independence[50] despite its repeated discursive support to the Lebanese independence, combined with the aspirations for the independence of the local inhabitants resulted in the beginning of the negotiation between the leaders of local communities over the Lebanese future (Hokayem 1992, 26–29).

The Lebanese communities realised that, after the German invasion of France in 1941, the moment to declare the independence came, assuming

[49] For more information on the topic, see El-Solh (2004).

[50] Although the Franco-Syrian treaty signed on 9 November 1936 affirmed the full separation of Syria and Lebanon (El-Solh 2004, 44–45). Afterwards, Lebanon started its relations with Syria.

that the French would not be capable of intervening in the Lebanese local affairs, while also considering the wish of the British and Americans to end the French dominance over Lebanon (Salibi 1988, 183–185). Consequently, on 22 November 1943, the National Pact was signed with the most influential signatories being the Maronite leader President Bechara El Khoury (1890–1964) and the Sunni leader Prime Minister Riad Al Solh (1894–1951) (Reinkowski 1997, 499). The declaration of the Lebanese independence was based on two promises regarding the Lebanese foreign policy: the Maronites promised not to look for the unity with France, while the Muslim leaders promised not to look for the unity with Syria (Maalouf 2001, 16–17), or, as Raghid El-Solh defined, "between 1936 and 1945, Lebanon developed from being a 'foyer of French influence' and a 'Maronite homeland', as perceived by the founders of Grand Liban, to a country with an 'Arab face', as declared by the leaders of first independent government in 1943" (El-Solh 2004, 287). However, probably an even more important question was related to the interior policy as the National Pact also had to please various religious communities residing in Lebanon by providing a fair power sharing model among the local communities. A confessional system, which allocates legislative, executive, judicial and civil service along the confessional lines, also established a unicameral Lebanese Parliament which was also based on the confessional quota system (Shields 2008, 479–480), and which was described by Michel Chiha to be an equivalent of the Swiss model of the cantons with the only difference being personal adherence in Lebanon instead of territorial units being the axis of the division (Hokayem 1992, 30). The idea for the confessional system for the first time was widely discussed on 13 November 1936 after the representatives of Lebanon and France signed the *Friendship and Union Treaty* formalising the modern borders of the Greater Lebanon, which means that the idea of the sovereign Mount Lebanon was abandoned. This move required finding the compromise with the non-Maronite population of the Greater Lebanon for governing Lebanon, and a new system of confessionalism that could satisfy all the ethnic and religious communities was introduced by proposing a confederate model for the State based on the religious affiliations, distributed based on the demographical[51] basis of the communities (Firro 2003, 151–152). The initial 6:5 proportion for power sharing among the Lebanese religious communities was based on the census of 1932 (Maktabi 1999, 220–221). It was transposed to the independent Lebanon, thus becoming the main principle of the Lebanese sociopolitical

[51] For more information about the demographic data of the Lebanese Christians and the shifts in numbers, see Kościelniak (2003).

system along with the multiparty system which will be discussed in 3.4 subsection.

2.3.2. *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon* and the road to Civil War

Although, with the declaration of the Lebanese independence, the various communities of Lebanon shared the hope for the bright future being united by the will to live in the independent Lebanon, from the very early days of the independence, tensions between different Lebanese communities started to rise around the same pre-independence dichotomy: the one, mainly Maronite-supported, advocating for the Europe-oriented (and independent from Syria) Lebanon, while the other was mainly Sunni-supported idea of Arabism and the unity with Syria. The National Pact defined Lebanon as a country with an *Arab face*, and, a year later, in 1944, Lebanon became one of the founding members of the Arab League, although the internal ideological discourse was much more diverse, and there was no general long-term consensus over the future of Lebanon. El-Khazen wrote that the National Pact symbolised an attempt to unite by the Lebanese inhabitants, however, it

> was based on two faulty assumptions: an internal one based on the belief that elite consensus reflected grass-roots communal support; and an external one derived from the assumption that the balance-of-power in the region would remain unchanged in the sense that it will always reflect the value system of Future events showed that these faulty assumptions were at the root of conflict in Lebanon, first in 1958 and later in the 1970s. (El-Khazen 1991, 39)

Moreover, the above-mentioned tensions were also supplemented by two crucially important social aspects contributing to the tense atmosphere in the 1950s and 1960s. *Firstly*, the proportion of the power-sharing model among the religious communities in the framework of the confessionalism was not universally accepted by all communities, thus raising two major concerns: *on the one hand*, the accuracy of the census of 1932 was questionable among the local population; *on the other hand*, there was no mechanism (for example, periodic census) introduced into the Constitution that could represent the demographic shifts within the time in Lebanon. *Secondly*, the unequal share of the economic growth among the communities of Lebanon in the subsequent decades after the declaration of the Lebanese independence was also a significant contributor to the rising tensions. Economically, the situation in Lebanon at the time was promising and rapidly

developing: in the 1950s, Lebanon's free market, the minimalist State, along with the strong currency, made Beirut the Middle Eastern hub of banking and financial services. Between 1949 and 1957, the Lebanese economy grew at more than 7 percent per year, while, in 1953 and 1954, the economic growth reached 15 percent annually. The Lebanese success attracted many people from the Arab world: for instance, in the 1960s, non-Lebanese students comprised around 60 percent of the university student numbers, while the number of tourists was rising as well. After the law adopted in 1956 which claimed the guarantee of the government to grant secrecy of bank deposits, the total deposits in banks doubled by 1961 (Harris 2012, 206–210). Consequently, Lebanon was nicknamed as the M*erchant Republic* or the *Switzerland of the Middle East*. However, the economic success of Lebanon did not reach the whole population: outside Beirut, mountain resorts and services, the economic growth could not be observed as the income from services went overwhelmingly to the already well-off, whose conspicuous consumption dramatized the income disparities, while, at the same time, agriculture, which supported half of the population, stagnated. Services, which are one of the key reasons for the economic dynamism, had the least capacity for absorbing the entrants to the labour force. To sum up, much of the Sunni community, most Druze and Shia, as well as many rural Maronites, shared little of the *Merchant Republic*, thereby causing the growing feeling of alienation to the State (ibid., 194–195).

The first warning sign that the rising tensions can turn into a conflict was observed in the Crisis (or Insurrection) of 1958 when the internal tensions acquired the international dimension after both pro-Western Maronites and Nasser-inspired pro-Arabists Muslims claimed that the other side had broken the National Pact not to take Lebanon into alignments (ibid., 195); however, the Lebanese President Fuad Shihab (1958–1964) managed to restore Lebanon's national integrity at the time (Sirriyeh 1998, 59). Yet, despite the handling of the crisis of 1958, the internal tensions continued to rise, and, due to multiple internal and external factors combined together, it eventually turned into the outbreak of the Civil War on 13 April 1975 (Reinkowski 1997, 499–500). The war itself had its several phases with foreign interventions, and it finally ended in 1990 after the Taif Agreement was signed in Saudi Arabia. The war ended with more than 144,000 killed, 184,000 injured, 13,000 kidnapped, and at least 17,000 missing; in addition, about 175 towns were partially or completely destroyed, and over 750,000 Lebanese were internally displaced as the physical damages in the country estimated at 25 billion US dollars (Ghosh, Khoury 2011, 382). The war changed the cultural, political

and social landscape of Lebanon, thus marking several significant changes in the State which is the subject of the following chapter, yet, some remarks are also needed to be made about the Maronite community's internal divisions and conflicts that happened during the war, and which weakened the secular part of the community, particularly in the domain of politics. Despite being on the one ideological side by the beginning of the war, the differences between the Maronite leaders led to the clash between the Frangiehs and the Chamouns on the one side, and the Gemayels and the Geagea on the other side in the late 1970s over Syria's role in Lebanon as well as or over the power within the Lebanese politics (Moch 2013, 134). Yet, an even bigger clash happened during the War of Elimination in 1990 between the Lebanese Army[52], led by General Michel Aoun, and the Lebanese Forces[53], led by Samir Geagea, mainly due to the disagreements over the Syrian role in the Lebanese politics and ending with exile of Aoun to France and Geagea's 11-year imprisonment. Although it was the final stage of the Civil War, it also weakened the leadership of the Maronites, ultimately leaving the community without strong political leaders for several years.

2.3.3. After the war: the implementation of Taif Aagreement

The Taif Agreement[54] signed on 22 October 1989[55] in Saudi Arabia not only officially marked the end of the war but also brought several significant changes to the social and political Lebanese landscape with several long-term consequences for both the Lebanese and the Maronites to assess. *Firstly*, the Taif Agreement determined Lebanon as an Arab state and a *final homeland* for all its citizens, thus ending the debate over the Lebanese identity and implementing these changes to the Lebanese Constitution (Knio 2005, 227–228). *Secondly*, the Taif Agreement transformed the power share in the Lebanese Parliament between the Christians and the Muslims from the proportion of 6:5 to the proportion of 5:5 (ibid., 227–228). Consequently, some scholars consider this shift to be the loss for the Maronites naming it *a disastrous new low* (Rabil 2001, 31–32) for the political ambitions of the Maronite community. *Thirdly*, the Taif Agreement paved the way for the rise

[52] Lebanese Armed Forces.

[53] A Lebanese Christian-based political party, established in 1976.

[54] The entire text of the Taif Agreement can be found via the following link <https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf>

[55] The Taif Accord, also known as the Document of National Reconciliation, was signed on 22 October 1989 and ratified on 5 November 1989.

of the Syrian influence in Lebanon supported by the Syrian military presence in Lebanon which ended only in 2005 (ibid., 27–28). *Fourthly*, in the aftermath of the Taif Agreement, the new political and military power within Lebanon – namely, Hezbollah – emerged with a strong autonomy within the Lebanese affairs, supported by its strong military flank and political power arising from the financial resources at its disposal[56]. Until 2005, a tacit cooperation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese State persisted, yet, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, Hezbollah openly expressed its support to Syria amid differences between the Lebanese State and Hezbollah towards the State vision. Considering the fact that Hezbollah has been gradually gaining both political and military power in Lebanon, especially in the context of the Syrian Civil War, when the cooperations improved (Meier 2018, 516), Hezbollah is now a significant factor in the Lebanese politics. *Finally*, both sides that clashed in the war failed to achieve a victory with the war contributing to the *no victor, no vanquished* reality (Ghosh, Khoury 2019, 384). The main reason for such evaluation is mainly the poor implementation of the Taif Agreement that resulted in the turbulent development of the political life in Lebanon afterwards. Some postulates, such as withdrawal of all foreign forces, were not implement immediately, and other postulates, such as the abolishment of the sectarian system, were not achieved even thirty years later (Kurtulus 2009, 195) Additionally, after the war, Lebanon also lost the status of a business and financial centre of the Arab world, and the previous economic prosperity was not restored, either (Reinkowski 1997, 501). Yet, we have to note that many things changed in Lebanon after the assassination of Rafic Hariri and the subsequent Cedar Revolution.

[56] Hezbollah was formed as a Shia militia in 1982, and, in 1985, Hezbollah started its active participation in the Lebanese Civil War. After Taif, it entered the political field, and ended up becoming one of the most influential powers in the Lebanese politics based on the Lebanese Shia community with the first participation in the election in 1992.

2.3.4. Cedar Revolution and the current crisis

The Cedar Revolution[57] of 2005, which marks the formation of the current political conjuncture of the Lebanese State[58], started after the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister at the time Rafiq Hariri on 14 February 2005. Afterwards, the masses went onto the streets soon afterwards for expressing their opposition to the Syrian hegemony over the Lebanese politics. The events united various communities of Lebanon with differing political visions and eventually led to the resignation of the pro-Syrian Lebanese Government later in February. I also must observe that, at the same time, the pro-Syrian forces in the State also mobilised, and, in March 2005, Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah managed to gather around 500,000 people supporting Damascus. However, in early March, anti-Syrian-oriented 800,000 people marched to the Martyrs' Square expressing their support towards the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon (Sutton 2014, 99). Consequently, I would provide three aspects about the outcomes of the Cedar Revolution to the Lebanese affairs that shaped current political conjuncture.

Firstly, following the Cedar Revolution, the Syrian troops finally retreated from Lebanon. Moreover, the role of Damascus also decreased in the Lebanese affairs.

Secondly, signs of cross-sectarian unity of the Lebanese people were clearly visible in the streets, especially being symbolised by the use of the Lebanese flag with the cedar on it, as never before (Kurtulus 2009, 199–200).

Thirdly, in 2005, the current political blocks in the Lebanese politics emerged: on the 8th of March, the coalition led by Hezbollah with its allies formed a pro-Syrian block of the parliament named *March 8 Alliance*; as a response, on the 14th of March, an alliance made of Sunni, Druze, and various Maronite political movements was established named *March 14 Alliance* (Knio 2008, 446–447) This new division between the two alliances in the

[57] The revolution obtained its name after several revolutions at the time took place, such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Velvet Revolution in Georgia, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, in Lebanon, the Cedar Revolution is also called as the *independence intifada* (*Intifadat al-Istiqlal*), or the *Reluctant Revolution* (Kurtulus 2009, 196). Some scholars even equalled it to the Arab Spring (Sutton 2014, 97).

[58] These changes include not only the transformation of the political conjuncture (yet without the change in the electoral system (Shields 2008, 477–478)), but also some other details, such as the rising role of NGOs in Lebanon (Clark, Zahar 2015, 2), can be observed.

parliament also reflects the transition from the dichotomy of the twentieth century between Lebanists and pan-Arabists to the most recent dichotomy between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah with its supporters. The *March 8 Alliance* involves Hezbollah with the pro-Syrian stance, while the *March 14 Alliance* has its geopolitical orientation towards the US, Europe, and Saudi Arabia (Meier 2018, 516). Yet, we have to remember that Hezbollah is supported by its military presence making it interdependent with the Lebanese State, especially in the light of the Syrian Civil War boosting cooperation with the Lebanese State (ibid., 521–522).

As for the Maronite community, it should also be stressed that, after 2005, the Maronite political elites were also divided. Michel Aoun with the Free Patriotic Movement took the pro-Syrian stance and pro-Iranian orientation in the geopolitics collaborating with Hezbollah and Amal parties in the domestic issues. At the same time, the traditional pro-Western elites, such as Phalanges and Lebanese Forces, retained their pro-Western orientation. By February 2006, Michel Aoun had already become the leader of the anti-Syrian Free Patriotic Movement and reached 'mutual understanding' with Hezbollah, while claiming that common understanding with Hezbollah over the national issues would better protect the Christian interests, and, therefore, the Free Patriotic Movement became part of the *March 8 Alliance*. However, it created tensions and divisions with other Christian communities, including the Maronites (Geukjian 2014, 530).

As a conclusion, we can state that once the final settlement was achieved between the parties in Lebanon following the Cedar Revolution in 2008 in Doha, several years of political and economic stability followed, marked by the significant growth of GDP, which provided positive thinking in Lebanon and expectations for the future growth. However, recently, after the protests of 2019 triggered by the huge public debt, low economic growth, and the high unemployment rate and calling for the toppling the Lebanese confessionalism[59] (Bahlawan 2021, 150) and the crisis following the Beirut explosion in 2020, the Lebanese economy and the Lebanese Lira collapsed. Apart from that, Lebanon is also experiencing a political crisis with any predictions difficult to make: in the summer of 2023, there are continuous efforts supported by various actors to achieve political stability in Lebanon; however, the solution has not been reached yet. As a matter of fact, this topic is beyond the scope of my research, and therefore I proceed to the topic of the

[59] Even the Lebanese President has recently spoken on the topic: https://www.presidency.gov.lb/English/Pages/SpeechesDetails.aspx?nid=26138

modern Maronite identity analysis which is a much less assessed topic in the academia than the current economic and political crisis in Lebanon.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

To sum up the second part of the work, we can state that the Maronite community has passed through different periods in its history. The community formed in Lebanon in the fifth century as a branch of the Syriac Christianity, however, not much is known about the Maronites until the Ottoman conquest, although there is a tradition to date the beginning of the connections between the Maronites and Europe in the twelfth century. With the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century, which provided an autonomy for the Maronite community under the rule of various local dynasties, the Maronite community, at the time already being Arabised, started to deepen their connections with Europe and to develop its own thought. Gradually, the Maronites gained considerable influence in the local affairs, and, in 1861, *mutaṣarrifiyya* was established within the boundaries of Mount Lebanon, which was the first ever autonomous Lebanese entity, and which paved the way for the Lebanese confessionalism.

In the light of WWI, the geopolitical situation in the Middle Eastern region changed, and, in 1920, the Lebanese French Mandate was established as a temporary structure until the permanent political settlement would be reached, at the same time expanding the territory of the Mandate from Mount Lebanon to the Greater Lebanon. The Lebanese independence was achieved in 1943 after the consensus had been reached among the local communities; however, despite the economic and cultural success of Lebanon in the 1940–1970s, often providing a nickname to Lebanon as the *Merchant Republic* or the *Switzerland of the Middle East*, due to the lack of internal unity, mainly between pro-Western and pan-Arab sides, the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975 and lasted until 1990. After the war, which was politically ended in 1989 with the Taif Agreement, the current political, social, and geopolitical order was established; however, despite the poor implementation of the Taif Agreement, internal unity was not reached. Only in 2005, with the Cedar Revolution, the current political conjuncture was established showing a certain degree of the inter-communal unity in Lebanon However, the recent economic and political crisis caused massive exodus of the Lebanese people from Lebanon, and, in the near future, serious political decisions must be taken in order to overcome the recent issues, including the possible transformation of the Lebanese confessionalism as well.

3. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN MARONITE THOUGHT

In this part of the work, I discuss the development of the modern Maronite thought starting with the evaluation of its origin; then I proceed to the analysis of the modern Maronite collective identity in the twentieth century based on the domains of collective memory, language ideology, and communalism. Finally, I appraise the attempts to reach the national Lebanese unity while also assessing the main opposing ideas to the modern Maronite thought.

3.1. The Origin of the Modern Maronite Thought

Dating the beginning of the modern Maronite thought is a question of debates among scholars. Albert Hourani refers to the Maronite Patriarch Istifanus al-Duwayhi (1670–1704) and his work *Ta'rikh al-azmina*, which is an account providing an outlook on the history of the Maronite Church and its people, their patriarchs and secular chiefs with the concept of Lebanon as a separate territorial unit with its unique history and character appearing for the first time, although without having any form of aspirations towards the political status of Lebanon expressed at the time. Additionally, several similar works were prepared in the following century by Amir Haydar Shihab (1761–1835) on the history of Lebanon by presenting its history in the context of his own family's history and an outline by one of his collaborators, Tannus al-Shidyaq (1794–1861), on the history of the noble families of Lebanon of the Maronite, Druze, and Muslim origin; more importantly, in the work, the author provided a concept of the Lebanese entity as a form of a hierarchy of families with the family alliances and the common interest in preventing the encroachments of the Ottomans outweighing the differences of religion while also providing one of the first attempts to territorially define Lebanon with some sort of aspirations for its unity and autonomy (Hourani 2013, 57–58).

However, despite the early origin of the Maronite thought emerging long before the nineteenth century, none of the above-mentioned works turned into a coherent idea of Lebanon at the time, as these were rather sporadic works by the Maronite intellectuals contributing to the origin of the modern Maronite thought developed by the community itself, being important intellectual guidelines for the later Maronite intellectuals with the modern Lebanese concept emerging only in the twentieth century. As Carol Hakim observed

> [until 1920], Lebanonism[60] did not spawn a coherent and popular nationalist ideology or movement, but core ideas and basic historical myths and representations, around which Lebanese nationalism eventually crystallized, were conceived by members of the Lebanese clerical and secular elite. (Hakim 2013, 263)

Only the twentieth century marks the rise of the modern Maronite thought, which was the result of several essential and sometimes overlapping contributing factors that should be assessed when attempting to explain how the modern Maronite thought emerged continuing the Maronite intellectual tradition that started its active development in the seventeenth century. Let us have a look at them:

Firstly, the already discussed establishment of the *mutaṣarrifiyya* in 1861 not only empowered the Maronite community in the long run in terms of the political and economic strength, but also provided a political framework for imagining Lebanon as an autonomous entity that could eventually become a sovereign entity, in the beginning, within the territory of Mount Lebanon. This topic has already been discussed in the previous part of the work[61].

Secondly, following the secularization of the Ottoman Empire in terms of the civil rights, a move that was made in 1856 with the declaration of the edict of *Hatt-i Humayun* that abolished the *millet* system and equalled the rights of the citizens of the State attempting to create an Ottoman nation in the form of a secularised society, differently to the expectations of the Porte, invoked mixed reactions among various communities of the State that became suspicious that the Ottoman Empire may attempt to assimilate them. Consequently, the non-Turkish population rejected the adoption of the Ottomanism and started developing their own visions instead, and, in the Ottoman Arabic lands, the process of *an-Nahḍa* [62] began (Hourani 2013, 96). In case of Lebanon, the quest for the modern self-identification was being developed along two main axes either 1) considering Lebanon to be part of the unified Arab world, Lebanon would also be perceived to be an integral

[60] *Lebanonism (or Lebanism)* is a term that can be used as a substitution to the Lebanese nationalism. Initially developed by the Maronites living in the area of Mount Lebanon and claiming Lebanon to be a separate entity from the other entities and identities of the region by the second half of the nineteenth century (Hakim 2013, 2–3), in the early 1950s, Lebanonism started to spread across the different communities of Lebanon (Salameh 2015, 48).

[61] See 2.2.3. Paragraph.

[62] Meaning ‘the awakening’.

part of Syrian history and culture and thus becoming part of *an-Nahḍa*, or 2) focusing on the idea that Lebanon is a distinct entity from Syria and, to some extent, from the Arab world. The latter approach was mainly supported by the Maronite community that at the time had already been developing its intellectual thought for at least two centuries and, consequently, should not be considered as a response to the Arabist thought; it was a concept, developed mainly by the emerging Maronite elite independently from the other concepts being developed in Lebanon at the time[63].

Thirdly, the foreign, mainly the French, influence in the field of education was a significant contribution to the development of the modern Maronite collective identity. In the nineteenth century, France replaced the Holy See as the main foreign supporter of the Maronite community. Throughout the nineteenth century[64], Paris supported various missionaries and established the French educational network through the Catholic schools, with the most important institution being established in 1875 in Beirut that later turned into Saint Joseph University which became a place of education for many Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals[65] and gradually turned into the centre of the Maronite thought[66] and the lay elite[67] (Kaufman 2001, 176–177). Indeed, France was not the only state to be involved in the local affairs. Some other states were also active, for example, the US established the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, which turned into the American University of Beirut in 1920, however, France was the most active and influential foreign force[68] in Lebanon (Womack 2012, 5) relying on the most influential and numerous Christian community in the Levant.

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[63] For more on the topic see the 3.5.1. Paragraph.

[64] The first French institute of higher education that was established in Mount Lebanon was the college in Aintoura, founded in 1734 by Lazarist priests.

[65] The Egyptian City of Alexandria was a centre of intellectuals of the Arabic speaking lands in the nineteenth century, with many Europeans and Levantine people coming there. The education influenced by France seemed attractive to the people from Levant, mainly Christians, whose number there rose during WWI. Afterwards. most Lebanese intellectuals came back to Lebanon and started to influence the modern identity construction in Lebanon (Kaufman 2001, 178).

[66] Particularly, after 1902, when the Oriental Faculty was inaugurated at the university focusing on teaching Semitic languages, archaeology, history and geography, the university became a platform for sharing and spreading the ideas.

[67] For example, when the Greater Lebanon was established in 1920, among the first functionaries of the Lebanese State, most of them were the Saint Joseph graduates.

[68] Active involvement into the Lebanese affairs was also influenced by the aspirations of the great powers to gain influence in the political sphere as well, including

The long-term influence of the foreign schools on the Maronite community and the region should be assessed in the following way. *To start with*, the foreign schools became the main platform for the European ideas to spread among the Christian communities in the Middle East, while, at the same time, under the influence of the most recent European tendencies of the time, they were stimulating interest in the history and culture (Hourani 2013, 54–55). *Apart from that*, these schools also widened the distance between the Maronite Church and the Maronite community, because, through the expanding network of schools with the secular curriculum, the young generation became aware of the world beyond the Church whichh had possessed the monopoly in education in the previous centuries. *Moreover*, some intellectuals went away from their communities to the Protestant community created by American and British missionaries and recognised by the Sultan in 1850. They started to express a sort of anti-clerical element (ibid., 96). Consequently, as we can see, the foreign factor played a significant role in the development of the modern Maronite thought, and many Maronite intellectuals were thus influenced.

3.2. I. The Maronite Collective Memory: the Land of Cedars

From the very beginning of the modern Maronite thought formation, the Maronite intellectuals used the past motives, based on the Phoenician civilization[69], centred in the modern Lebanese territory[70], perceived as the *golden age* of the whole Lebanese history, as one of the key ways to distance Lebanon from Syria by demonstrating the uniqueness of Lebanon compared to its neighbours[71] with the motive of the *mountain people* appearing later. From the outset, the use of the Phoenician motives[72] by the Maronite community was influenced by the Western interest in the ancient civilizations, inspired by the newest findings in archaeology and the rising amount of

France, the US (working with the Protestant communities), Russia (working mainly with the Orthodox communities) (Tibi 1997, 97).

[69] A similar idea was developed in Egypt at the time, which was evolved into the idea of Pharaonism.

[70] The Phoenician civilization thrived between 1550 and 586 BC, mostly in the territory of the modern-day Lebanon.

[71] At the time, various intellectuals developed different ideas. For example, Nadra Moutran, an advocate of the concept of the Greater Syria before 1920, claimed the Maronites to be descendants of Assyrians, Marada and, especially, Phoenicians (Firro 2004, 8–9). The Mardaites were added to the Phoenician mythology in 1902 by Henri Lammens (Kaufman 2001, 177). Yet, only Phoenicianism gained influence in the Lebanese identity formation.

[72] In the context of my study, I assess the functional aspect of the use of past motives.

travelogues, one of which, the travelogue of Ernest Renan titled *Mission de Phénicie* and published in 1860 following his visit to Lebanon, where the author described the historical Phoenician places and his trip, provided an account on the local history without intermediacy, and contributed to the knowledge about the Phoenician legacy in Europe. Previously, the information about the cities of the Phoenician coasts usually was based on the Bible, Greek and Latin authors. The newest findings presented at the educational institutions reached the local Lebanese *intelligentsia* who started deepening their own interest in the local history with the use of these past motives as a functional matter for the modern collective identity construction (Kaufman 2001, 175–176). The Phoenician enthusiasts, in the beginning, were almost exclusively graduates of Saint Joseph University, mostly Maronites, equipped with the information about the Phoenician past from school and university, and they were not affiliated to the Church (ibid., 170). Thus they were contributing to the development of the secular intellectual tradition of the Maronites, while the Maronite Church did not have a unified stance over the identity in Lebanon until Elias Hoayek (ibid., 179–180) as there was no focus on the Phoenician question to that extent.

The ideology-based use of the Phoenician motives crystallised only after the Greater Lebanon was established in 1920, and it became known as *Phoenicianism*, which was being actively developed from the 1920s to the 1970s[73], mostly by the secular intellectuals mainly (although not solely) representing the Maronite community which revived the Phoenician symbols and integrated them into the modern discourse. It was mostly used in the literature[74] with its main purpose being neither literary nor artistic pleasure, and with the intention as a means of disseminating political and ideological values and ideas with these texts making the movement's ideological beliefs available and accessible to all social strata and age groups (Bawardi 2016, 54).

Phoenicianism cannot be equalled to the Lebanese nationalism; it could rather be assessed as a flow of various intellectuals not being an integral ideological discourse, and providing different visions of how the Phoenician past motives can be connected to the contemporary Lebanon, the most

[73] The Phoenician literature was also being actively developed during the Civil War years (Bawardi 2016, 130).

[74] For a more detailed analysis about the use of the Phoenician motives in literature, see the work of Bawardi (2016).

influential of them to name[75] being Said Akl, Michel Chiha[76], and Charles Corm[77]. Let us have a short look at the ideas these intellectuals represented.

Said Akl (1912–2014) was a poet, entrepreneur, writer, politician, one the most prominent figures of the twentieth century in Lebanon, and one of the key persons supporting the Phoenician idea. He attempted to connect the modern-day Lebanese people to the Phoenician times in many ways. For example, in his epic poem *Cadmus*, Said Akl used a Greek myth about the origin of Europe, who was the daughter of Agenor, king of Tyre, while she was also the sister of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes and the Greeks' first teacher who brought them the Phoenician alphabet and, in the Aklian Lebanonist imagination, it was evidence for Lebanese historical connections to Europe (Salameh 2010, 115–117). Franck Salameh commented on Akl's wish to connect the Lebanese and Phoenicians in the following way:

> In Said Akl's view, this was so because the Lebanese were simply lazy! They are par excellence Phoenicians! They love cutting corners, and they hate complicated matters. That's precisely why, Akl argued, "our ancestors invented a simple alphabet consisting of twenty-two symbols, rather than having to rely on the thousands of pictorial Hieroglyphs and strenuous Cuneiform of their time!" So, yes, the Lebanese value simplicity and shortcuts, according to Akl. (ibid., 219)

Another intellectual, Charles Corm (1894–1963), who was born into a francophone family in Beirut and graduated from Saint Joseph College in 1911, although in his early writings he was a supporter of the Syrian federation, by 1919, he became a strong proponent of the establishment of the Greater Lebanon independently of Syria. In July 1919, he began publishing the monthly francophile journal *La revue phénicienne*, which is known as the voice advocating for the establishment of a separate entity of Lebanon from the Arab and Syrian national movements by elaborating the ties with the Phoenician civilization and claiming that Mount Lebanon formed the Lebanese character. Although only several issues were released, the journal became one of the most important publications in Lebanon, as it represented the political, commercial and intellectual Beirut elite advocating for the

[75] There are more names to list: Hector Klat (1888-1976), Bechara al-Khoury (1890-1964), Yusuf al-Saouda (1891-1969), Emile Edde (1886-1949) and the others.

[76] For more about the works of Michel Chiha, see the work of Hartman and Olsaretti (2003).

[77] For more about the works of Charles Corm, see the work Salameh (2015).

formation of the Greater Lebanon (Kaufman 2004, 3–5). Charles Corm was so passionate about the Phoenician legacy that Maronite-born secular Arab nationalist Ameen Rihani (1876–1940) in his book *Qalb Lubnan* even criticized Corm's tendency to *phoenicianise* every rock and tree in Lebanon: "Corm sees the Phoenicians everywhere in Lebanon. A stone or a worship place? A church? They all go back to the Greek-Roman era, and yes, they are Phoenician" (Kaufman 2001, 143).

The other intellectual, Michel Chiha (1891–1954), who was born in Beirut into a Chaldean Catholic family originating from Iraq, a businessman, politician, thinker, journalist, poet and one of the major architects of the Lebanese confessional and economical systems with many connections in the Lebanese political and social life spending the WWI years in Egypt among the Syro-Lebanese and becoming friends with Hector Klat, Yusuf Al Saouda and Bechara Al Khoury (later to become his brother-in-law), is an example that the Maronite thought is an open concept of identity, not reserved for the Maronite community solely. He had never been such a Phoenicianist as Charles Corm and Said Akl, his ideas could be defined as a fusion of Phoenicianism and Mediterraneanism (Kaufman 2004, 159–160). Michel Chiha perceived Phoenicianism as a functionally conceptual way to find the ground for the national Lebanese unity without questioning the historical accuracy of the national mythology. For Chiha, Phoenicians were *heroic ancestors*, however, unlike Corm, al-Saouda, or Akl, Chiha did not claim the Phoenician identity to be the sole and ultimate identity of the Lebanese people. It was rather a conscious functional decision to find *a past remote enough and great enough* to serve as a common denominator for all Lebanese (Kaufman 2001, 162–164).

Indeed, there were many more intellectuals developing the Phoenician idea, all of whom not only expressed the fascination with the Phoenician past in the academia, literature, or other forms of art, and symbols were introduced as well, for example, decorating the Lebanese lira coins and banknotes with the cedar tree and a Phoenician vessel[78] (Kaufman 2004, 236) with the Lebanese cedar becoming the main symbol of Lebanon due to its multiple references in both the Bible and the European travelogues between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, with the most famous cedar forests

[78] Phoenician symbols can be found on the current Lebanese coins and banknotes.

being in Bchare and Tannourine. Consequently, Lebanon is often synonymously referred to as the *Land of Cedars*.

The active development of Phoenicianism ended with the Civil War, although the war itself was not the sole reason for it. Already by the 1960s, the generation of Phoenicianists who were the to express their vision of the Lebanese nationalism in the Phoenician terms, had either reached old age, or passed away, and only a few political parties continued to refer to the Phoenician motives (ibid., 236). However, many Phoenician symbols were retained in the cultural discourse of Lebanon, but the question how widely these motives are perceived today is not widely discussed and precisely known; therefore, this point is listed among the objectives of my research to be answered in the empirical part of the work.

3.3. II. The Language Ideology and Maronites

Language is another important contributing factor to both the Maronite thought and the historical development, reflected by the three aspects, along which I make my empirical research. These aspects include:

Firstly, Syriac, a language introduced by the first Maronite bishops to the local Aramaic speaking population in the fifth century as the language of liturgy, was gradually adopted by the adherents of the Maronite Church in the daily use, which, in turn, with the rise of caliphates in the seventh century, gradually started to be replaced by Arabic. Most probably, by the end of the seventeenth century, the local population had fully switched to using Arabic, although travelogues from the time indicate that, still then, there were some villages in Qadisha Valley where Chaldean was spoken in small numbers (Jabre-Mouawad 2009, 11), while also using the Syriac script for writing the local spoken variety of Arabic until the eighteenth century[79] which became heavily influenced by the use of Syriac locutions (Ibid, 3). Consequently, the Syriac language, which is mainly used today only in the Maronite Church's liturgy, also attracted attention of the modern Maronite thinkers, for example, Said Akl wrote that "the Syriac script, in which the 'Lebanese language' was

[79] The most famous example of such synthesis can be observed in the writings called *Karšūni*, used from the twelfth to the eighteenth century for writing in the Arabic language in the Syriac script. Before establishing the first Arabic printing press in 1733, there was one Syriac printing press in Qodeesha Valley at Qannoubeen Monastery in Northern Lebanon which published the first Arabic language copy of the Old Testament in the Syriac script (or *Karšūni*) in 1610 (Salameh 2010, 242–244).

written prior to the Arab conquest, depicted the Lebanese phonology and inflections exactly as they sounded in spoken form" (Salameh 2010, 241–242).

Secondly, the official language of Lebanon is Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic, or *Fuṣḥā*) with the predominant majority of Lebanese inhabitants being native Arabic speakers of the Lebanese dialect. Over the course of the twentieth century, the language spoken by the Maronites and the Lebanese attracted attention of various Maronite intellectuals[80]. For some of them, the question of standardisation[81], or *Lebanonisation*, of the local spoken variety of Arabic was the core question of the modern Lebanese identity, thus supporting the claim of the Lebanese uniqueness by distancing Lebanon from Syria (ibid., 245–248). Said Akl, a prominently active supporter of the *Lebanonisation* of Lebanese Arabic, based his idea on the existence of numerous of Arabic dialects (ibid., 215), when aiming to develop an idea of the Lebanese language which, he argued, was a direct descendant of the Phoenician language. Therefore, the local spoken variety of Arabic was perceived by him to be an independent language rather that a dialect of Arabic. In order to support this idea, he prepared a Lebanese alphabet based on Latin letters[82], while simultaneously claiming that the historical truth was restored since the Latin alphabet was inherited from the Phoenicians (Kaufman 2004, 169). Said Akl used the Latin script for the first time in 1928, yet, these poems are currently lost; for the first time, he published in the Latin script in 1948; this was a poem titled *Meshwar* (Bawardi 2016, 78). In 1961, Said Akl published a work titled *Yaara* which was his first collection of Lebanese dialectical poems to be published in the Lebanese (Latin) script; however, the most famous example of the attempted *Lebanonisation* of the local spoken variety by Said Akl was the periodical *Lebnaan* which started to be published in 1975, in the beginning only with small sections, and, since 1980, when the whole printing business of Said Akl was computerised, being entirely printed in the Latin script (Salameh 2010, 243), and which was published until 1990 (Bawardi 2016, 84).

[80] We have to note that, in the nineteenth century, the Maronites were active in publishing books, newspapers and periodicals in Arabic in Lebanon and Egypt (Hourani 2013, 303–304).

[81] It should be noticed that, on different occasions, initiatives to standardise the dialects of Arabic can be observed, however, none of these attempts has been given State support (Salameh 2011, 72).

[82] For more information about Said Akl's attempt to create the Lebanese language and his publishing *Lebnaan*, see the works of Płonka (2004; 2006).

However, some other intellectuals were not such active supporters of *Lebanonising* the local spoken variety, or they even claimed the language not to be a required component for the national consciousness. For example, Charles Corm, although being supportive for the idea of the Lebanese uniqueness, argued that there is no need in standardising the local variety of Arabic because the language plays a role of a communication tool for spreading ideas as these ideas are more important than the language in which they are being expressed (Kaufman 2004, 120–122).

Thirdly, the Lebanese multilingualism has been one of the most famous features of the Maronite community since times immemorial. Today, in addition to the spoken Lebanese dialect, Modern Standard Arabic and, liturgically, Syriac, the Maronites are known for the wide use of French with Lebanon being known as a highly francophone country. French started to gain its current influence in the nineteenth century as a result of the active involvement of France into the education in Lebanon, as discussed above. Through these schools, a new generation accustomed to reading in foreign languages, mainly in French at the time, emerged, which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, also replaced Italian as the *lingua franca* of trade and, in some families, particularly in Cairo, Alexandria and Beirut, French or English replaced the local languages in the daily communication (Hourani 2013, 303–304). The tendency of using several languages in Lebanon is being practiced today as well, supplemented by the universal spread of English within the past decades.

Such Lebanese multilingualism also attracted attention from some intellectuals, who, while attempting to integrate the language narrative into the national mythology, developed a theory of the Lebanese polyglotism instead of promoting a certain language. One of the most famous advocates for the Lebanese polyglotism was Michel Chiha, who claimed that the polyglotism more than geography defined the inhabitants of Lebanon at all times. Since the Phoenician era, even before the invention of the alphabet, according to him, the ancient Phoenicians, being sailors and traders, had been multilingual, had been using at least two of three languages, one local and one international, and, consequently, the modern Lebanese were simply following the footsteps of their ancestors (Kaufman 2004, 165).

This multilingualism has gradually evolved into a specific local spoken variety of Lebanese, consisting of several languages that are being mixed in daily communication simultaneously, especially in the case of the Maronite

community. This mixture is best reflected with an example of *Hi kifak ca va*, consisting of *Hi* used in English, *kifak* – the way to ask how are you in Lebanese Arabic, and *ça va* is the French expression for asking *are you OK*. Consequently, we can also assert that the Maronite polyglotism allows us to understand the core principles of the Maronite identity reflecting the Lebanese and the Maronite historical developments as well.

3.4. III. Lebanese Confessionalism and Communalism

When speaking about any aspect of the Lebanese social or cultural life, we cannot avoid the Lebanese confessionalism which is so deeply integrated into the Lebanese confessionalism[83] that it is one of the main characteristics of Lebanon, and, despite many attempts to criticise it, as the journalist Robert Fisk said, "if you take sectarianism out of Lebanon, it will cease to exist – because confessionalism is the identity of Lebanon" with, as Rola El-Husseini defined, the loyalty to family, personal representative, and clerical leader of the religious denomination prevailing over national commitment (Henley 2016, 2–3). The Lebanese confessionalism is an institutionalised form of communalism, combining both the religious and political aspects and entrenching the communities within themselves in relation with the other communities residing in Lebanon, while also providing a model of democracy which allows religious and tribal-ethnic affiliations to dominate, and thus making fusion between secular politicians and leaders of the churches in the social and political domain of the Lebanese affairs (Moch 2012, 120–121). Consequently, we can state that "the confessional nature of the Lebanese politics continues to function as an impediment before the emergence of overarching loyalties to a 'Lebanese nation' " (Kurtulus 2009, 208). How deeply communalism is rooted in the Maronite self-perceptions and how it was formed historically within the community, we can observe in the following quote provided by Carol Hakim who claims that

> the awakening of a new secular and political communal sense of belonging among the Maronites was favored by the preponderant influence of the Church, its political clout, and its supervision of the

[83] The system contains: 1) proportional allocation of political positions among communities according to their numerical representation in the population; 2) a grand coalition between the communities' leaders; 3) communal autonomy whereby each community is free to determine its own affairs such as the personal status laws (Shields 2008, 475–476). For a more detailed study in the field of the political science concerning the system, see the work of Shields (2008).

> educational system and social sphere, which allowed it to inculcate the Church's basic values and worldview to its flock. It was equally supported by the nature of the Lebanese regime that allocated offices in the administration of a communal basis, helping in the crystallization of a Maronite political interest. […] With time the Maronites came to identify with this feeling of communal belonging, which matched their new sociopolitical conditions. The substance of this secular and political Maronite communal feeling varied greatly, reflecting the various views and interests of its adherents. Nevertheless, a basic identification with a loosely defined political sense of communal belonging and solidarity developed throughout the nineteenth century among the Maronites. Therefore, if the Patriarchate did not succeed in its separatist schemes, aiming at turning the community into a 'nation' and securing for it a distinct political entity, it did prove ultimately more successful in its efforts to convert the Maronites into a political community conscious of its separate identity and its specific corporate interests. (Hakim 2013, 135–136)

The Lebanese confessionalism is based on the multiparty system[84] with each electoral district having seats available to the different confessional groups; the candidates are elected according to both religious and party affiliations in the following way: for example, in Mount Lebanon, District Three (Baabda and Aley), there are 11 seats reserved for two Shia, three Druze, five Maronite, and one Greek Catholic, thus each voter in this district chooses two Shia candidates, three Druze candidates, and so forth from different political parties[85]. It has also become standard practice that individual candidates form lists through cooperation and compromise with other religious groups. Voters either vote for an entire list or they can cross off names from any given list and replace them with other candidates representing that given sect (a practice known as *al-tashtib*)[86] (Shields 2008,

[84] For more information about the political parties and their ideologies in Lebanon, see the work of Nasser (1995).

[85] Being a party member is not limited to the religious affiliations, and persons from different communal backgrounds can become members of different political parties; however, parties are usually created along the ideological lines that generally concur with the religious affiliations.

[86] There have been many proposals to abolish or, at least, to transform the confessional system in Lebanon. For example, in 2013, there was the so-called 'Orthodox Proposal', initially prepared by the Maronite Church and the Greek Orthodox Gathering and endorsed by all Christian parties prior to the anticipated elections of

483–484). Apart from the quota distribution in the Parliament, the highest political positions are also divided among the communities with the President being a Maronite, the Prime Minister being a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of Parliament being a Shia Muslim, the seats of the head of the army, the Central Bank, the Supreme Court also being reserved for the Maronites.

When considering the relations between religion and politics in Lebanon, it has to be noted that, despite the fact that, within this system, the politics and religion are overlapping, yet they are distinct domains[87] without the active and direct participation of clergymen in politics, although such practices *do* sometimes occur. The question of the Maronite Church and its relations with the political life of the State or the State affairs is a complex issue, which I undertake to discuss in this paragraph from the point of view of two aspects. *The first aspect is the Church's relations to the State and the Maronite community.* Historically, the Maronite Church has been playing a significant role in the history of the Maronite community in the pre-modern era, by virtue of being both the political and cultural centre of the community's life, while, with the rise of the secular elite in the modern times, the Church has preserved its role within the framework of the Lebanese confessionalism, yet, currently, it no more possesses the pivotal role as it used to be in the past. Over time, according to Paul Tabar, the role of the Church in Lebanon passed through three different phases: the parochial phase, extending from the early stage to the last quarter of the nineteenth century; the nationalist stage, with the highest point in 1943 and continuing until the Taif Accord of 1989; the transnational/diasporic phase, that began to develop in the 1990s and has been continuing up to date (Tabar 2006, 186–187). The current phase, which is relevant to this study, can be revealed through two perspectives. *Firstly*, the growing Maronite diaspora forced the change in the Church's policy, particularly, after Taif, when, for the first time in the history of the Maronite Church, the more Maronite Dioceses were abroad than in Lebanon (twelve in Lebanon in comparison to six in the Middle East and eight in the Americas, Australia and Europe) (ibid., 192); therefore, such a situation required not only an administrative, but a conceptual approach to the new reality as well. This

2013 (which were then not held), suggesting that the Lebanese electorate should only be allowed to vote for the candidates of their own denomination. All previous electoral laws, as the Proposal stated, suffered from 'serious sectarian injustice'. The actual purpose of this proposal was that Christian MPs would pursue genuine Christian nationalist policies, since all MPs would represent the interest of their confessional communities. However, the system was not transformed (Felsch 2018, 33).

[87] To learn more about these interactions, see the work of Henley (2017).

new approach was declared in the Document of Synod of 2006, when the Church transformed itself from the nation-building institution to a transnational/diasporan one presenting the Church's future mission as being primarily an initiator of the dialogue between different religions and cultures (ibid., 185–186). At the same time, the Church attempted to maintain its role as a nation-building institution strongly advocating the granting of the Lebanese citizenship to the descendants of Lebanese emigrants and giving the Lebanese abroad the right to vote and to the parliamentary representation also being active in encouraging the Lebanese Maronites abroad to establish branches of the Maronite League in the countries of their residence (ibid., 197–198).

Secondly, both the absence of strong Maronite lay leaders and the internal Maronite divisions between 1990 and 2005 (and also earlier) resulted in the more active role of the involved religious Maronite leaders into politics claiming the Church to be the last line of defence of Lebanon's Maronites', and, more broadly, Christians' interests (Baroudi, Tabar 2009, 196). Consequently, the Maronite Church figures, mainly the Patriarch, started to openly comment on the current issues of the State (Rabil 2001, 35–36) and, in the case of Sfeir, for example, by visiting every major city in the world and speaking about every single political, economic and social issue in Lebanon on Sunday sermons, annual Easter and Christmas messages, press interviews, and during his trips abroad (Baroudi, Tabar 2009, 216–217), attempting to reconciliate the communities of Lebanon and to fill the gap in the Maronite community leadership (McCallum 2012, 329–333). Henley added that, after Taif, the religious leaders became even stronger (Henley 2016, 8), especially considering the lack of a strong political Maronite leadership. For example, on 20 September 2000, the Council of Maronite Bishops released a statement "call to whom it may concern in and outside Lebanon to participate in the rescue" where, among other questions, it asked for Syrian withdrawal, and it was one of the first public acts of criticising Syria, and challenging its role in Lebanon (Rabil 2011, 96–97). Currently, the Patriarch al-Rahi is also actively involved in the political affairs of the State, extensively using *Facebook* and his official website as a platform for commenting on the current issues, while mainly focusing on political and social aspects of the current events.

The *second aspect is related to the structure of the Church*. The Maronite Church should not be perceived as a single monolithic institution. Although focusing on the Civil War years, I assume the analysis of the Church's structure prepared by Alexander Henley to be informative, due to

providing three layers of the Maronite Church: Monastic[88] orders[89], the Patriarchate[90] and the Holy[91] See[92]. Like many of the churches in the Middle East, the Maronite Church provides educational, health and social services, often delivering them through the monastic orders (Rabil 2011, 319–320). Although these institutions are administratively acting independently from the Maronite Church, however, from the point of view of the ideological framework, they are working within the spirit of the Maronite Synod of 2006, and thus I claim that, regarding most of the questions related to the social and political sphere the representatives of the Church structure, they are following

[88] The most powerful being the Lebanese Maronite Order (the same that established the University of Saint Spirit of Kaslik which became the driving force of the intellectual Maronitism). Other influential monastic orders are the Antonin Maronite Order (known as *Antonins* or *Mar Chaya Monks*), the Mariamite Maronite Order (known as *Aleppians* or *Halabites*), the Maronite Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Congregation of the Lebanese Maronite Missionaries (Henley 2008, 357).

[89] After having an active role in the wartime, in the 1980s, they gradually retreated from active political participation (Henley 2008, 357), and today they are not attempting to have a political role in the State. In the monastic perception, Lebanon is considered as the final bastion of Christianity in the Muslim-dominated East. The current monastic structuring of the orders dates back to the reforms implemented after the Synod of 1736, bringing monasteries closer into the practical work of the Church and enabling the monastic orders to extend their pastoral activity throughout Mount Lebanon and to increase their educational and agricultural work amongst the peasantry (Henley 2008, 356–357).

[90] Canonically, the Patriarch is the head of the Maronite Church whose powers are limited by the two main constraints on the patriarchal influence – externally from the Holy See, and internally from the Synod of Bishops, yet, the Patriarch's activism is not defined in the Canons; consequently, it is up to the Patriarch whether to be actively involved in the political affairs or not (McCallum 2012, 318–319).

[91] Canonically, there are four aspects to assess regarding the relations between the Maronite Church and the Holy See. The Special Synod for Lebanon (1991–1995), the Papal Apostolic Exhortation *Un Synode pour l'Espérance* (New Hope for Lebanon) (1997), and the Maronite Synod (2003–2006), which have all addressed the need to move forward and find peace within the Church, community, and the country (McCallum 2012, 318–319). Apart from that, we also have to consider the current Canon Law governing the Eastern Catholic Churches – the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalum* of 1990 which ascribes the executive and juridical authority to the Patriarch and highlights the historic importance of the patriarchal institution and which is the common law for all the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*. This system allowed for each of the *sui iuris* to adopt a code of more particular laws attuned to these Churches' specific conditions and traditions. In the case of the Maronite Church, a draft *Codex particularis* was prepared in 1993, although it was not promulgated until the Synod of 2006 (Abbass 2007, 14–15).

[92] As of 2023, the text of the Papal Apostolic Exhortation *Un Synode pour l'Espérance* can be find via following link: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19970510_lebanon.html

the same guidelines and are serving as part of the hierarchical structure of the Church.

When considering the role of laymen of the Maronite community within the framework of the Lebanese confessionalism, we have to observe that, since the lay elite of the Maronite community emerged in the nineteenth century, both elites have been acting independently (although closely interconnected) from each other. At times, both elites can supplement each other – Baroudi and Tabar claim that, within the confessional conceptual framework, the Church leadership is brought to the forefront when the Maronite political leaders do not manage to properly convey the political feelings of the Maronite community at large (as it happened in the post-war years), while the Church leadership recedes to the back stage when it fails to tap these feelings (as it happened in the war years or afterwards) (Baroudi, Tabar 2009, 196). The relative power of each group depends on the internal political and social dynamics within the community, and also these connections can be observed through the personal connections. However, the Church is not directly involved into the political sphere, although, among political representatives of a single community, there can be both secular and religious leaders.

Within the confessional framework, the specific political culture of the Maronites was formed, which was even coined as *Political Maronitism* or *Christian Nationalism*[93] for the sake of naming the activities of the Maronite community between 1926 and 1975 by some of its opponents. This culture is not monolithic, either, with plenty of the Maronite political parties with their internal rivalries with the one of the common things being the possession of a

[93] It is s a concept developed by Maximilian Felch who applied it for defining the Maronite political ambitions and identity regarding the idea that Lebanon is an essentially Christian nation and the belief of the Lebanese Christians that Christians have a historical right to dominate the Lebanese political affairs. It is an important shift in the perceptions of the identity of the Lebanese Christians because, in the past, non-Maronite Christians in Lebanon were mainly adherents of Syrian and Arab nationalisms, while the contemporary Christian nationalists – although mainly led by the Maronites – claim to serve all Christians' interests and are united by the common political interests (Felsch 2018, 27). Yet, I do not apply this term for the reason that, although on the political level, a certain level of inter-Christian unity has been observed, on the level of communalism, we observe various Christian denominations having their own prospectives, for instance, Melkites, Armenians, Greek Orthodox adherents; consequently, I believe the concept of the modern Maronite collective identity to be more precise for defining the Maronite intellectual activism.

unique character by not becoming an inclusive nationalist movement because the nationalism of each one has typically been subsumed under an overriding sectarian identity (Salamey, Tabar 2012, 500–501). Consequently, there is no single voice of the secular part of the Maronite community – we will find many voices as it is normal practise in any multiparty system, supplemented by various non-political institutions and organizations; therefore, for observing the broader panoramic view of the secular part of the community, there is no single organisation, document or institution to analyse. As a result, the anthropological research serves as a perfectly accurate way to understand the main identity-related patterns. Yet, there are two blocks – namely, religious and secular – whose voices have to be heard when analysing the modern collective Maronite identity in the twenty-first century.

3.5. Towards the National Lebanese Unity: One State, Different Visions

One of the most complicated questions to discuss when analysing the modern collective Maronite identity, its relations to the Lebanese identity and the Lebanese issues in general is the concept of the Lebanese nationalism, synonymously also known as *Lebanism* or *Lebanonism*, which, due to the deep internal divisions in Lebanon, is not universally applied and accepted by all the communities of the Lebanon paradigm. We will find many arguments claiming that there is no such thing as the Lebanese nationalism with the deeply enrooted communalism in Lebanon with each community providing its own identity concept combined with the State vision. These divisions have been so deep that the case of Lebanon even provided a concept of *Lebanonisation*[94] to name this type of polarisation. More than a decade ago, Ersun N. Kurtulus observed that

> almost seventeen years after the end of the civil war, it is still not possible to conceive of the Lebanese citizens as a collective agent: an adequately united political actor with clearly recognizable community boundaries, enjoying a reasonable amount of internal cohesion and a sufficient degree of consensus about the nature and identity of the community, and consequently, having the capacity to determine, on

[94] Apart from Lebanonisation, more terms applied for defining the internal Lebanese divisions, for example, the polarisation, ethnification, ghettoisation, confessionalisation and cantonisation of the country can be found (Reinkowski 1997, 494).

the basis of a common understanding, its relationship to the outside world. (Kurtulus 2009, 197)

The presence of all these different visions of identity and State development in Lebanon can be observed since the beginning of the development of the modern Maronite thought because the Maronite community was not the only one to develop its own modern collective identity among the inhabitants of Lebanon: in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, the other communities provided their own visions for their future and Lebanon as well, being supporters of Arab Syrianism or non-Arab Syrianism, Islamic revival, various forms of Arabism, and also Ottomanism, promoted mainly by the Ottoman central government. Even today we can count several visions of the collective identity among various communities of Lebanon, to name a few – Druze, Syriacs, Armenians, Shia, Chaldeans and others, mostly based on their religious affiliations. Of these, the most influential rival concept to the Maronite thought in the twentieth century was that of binding Lebanon to Syria. The Syrian idea started to be developed in parallel to Maronite-supported Lebanese connections with Europe and began as the idea of the Greater Syria as *watan* (homeland), initially spreading among the Lebanese intellectuals who were in touch with the Protestant missionaries who had been active in Syria and Lebanon since the 1830s, and who were placing Lebanon as a/the centre of the non-Arab Syrianism (as a matter of fact, Arab-linked Syrianism gained its popularity later). Yet, before the French Mandate was established in 1920, these ideas mainly attempted to oppose the Ottoman centralisation (Bawardi 2016, 31) with the Lebanese intellectuals fluctuating between the idea of the Greater Syria and that of the Greater Lebanon at the time (Firro 2004, 1–3), and even when the Greater Lebanon was established and the Lebanese independence was declared, these fluctuations continued to be observed, and ultimately they acquired the political dimension in the 1940s with the rising Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, or pan-Arabism (in Arabic, coined as *qawmiyya*) strongly affected by the political activity of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) advocating for the unification of the Arab countries. As we have already discussed[95], the Maronites mainly supported the West-oriented vision of Lebanon emphasising the distinct character of Lebanon[96]; the Muslims

[95] See 2.3.2. Paragraph

[96] For this reason, historically, the Lebanese nationalism has been often equalled to the Maronite thought.

mainly supported political unification with Syria based on the claim that Lebanon is part of the Arab world[97].

The Lebanese confessionalism is both the reason and the outcome of the internal Lebanese divisions based on the communal identities. Patriotism in the sense of loyalty towards the State does not fit well in the case of Lebanon where the State has been traditionally weak and monopolised by a certain confessional group (Reinkowski 1997, 512). Indeed, there is a feeling of attachment to Lebanon by the Lebanese people, yet the Lebanese people think of themselves as Maronite, or Sunni, or Shia, and, at the same time, as Lebanese, much as the Welsh or the Scots see themselves as the Welsh or the Scots, while simultaneously being British. The national identity in Lebanon cannot claim the same place as it does in England, France or Italy because, in Lebanon, the link between the individual and the State is much weaker, and it is mediated by the confessional community[98] and the confessional identity, the national identity, and the superstrata ideologies are the three pillars that span the fragile net of the modern collective identity in Lebanon (ibid., 513). And, although, after Taif and, especially, recently, the growing support

[97] These clashing ideas can be also observed not only in the political, but in the cultural domain as well. For example, the prominent Lebanese Historian Kamal Salibi (1929–2011) in his numerous works provided critical views towards the modern Maronite thought, attaching Lebanese people to the Arab ethnicity. For more information, see the works of Kamal Salibi (1988) and Youssef Choueiri (1989) for the analysis of Salibi ideas on the Maronite history.

[98] To illustrate it, we can take an example from the domain of collective memory. In the post-war Lebanon, the Lebanese State failed to create an overarching national memory of the Civil War; therefore, it became the task of various non-governmental groups to create a narrative. Consequently, there are two levels of memory in Lebanon: a weak collective-national memory that is supposedly shared by and among the Lebanese across religious backgrounds, and a strong communal memory represented in the form of a narrow sectarian memory, exclusively by and among the members of a religious community. It is a result of this process, starting after the end of the Civil War when various political parties started to create the communal level by creating a memory calendar of each group thus politicising communal memories. Therefore, these different communal memories (at least, those of the Maronites, Shia, Sunni, and Druze) have become stronger than the collective-national memories (Aboultaif, Tabar 2019, 97–101). Moreover, we can quote Lucia Volk who wrote that "in Lebanon there are no state-sponsored memories of glorious battles won by putative ancestors or paradigmatic losses that require (pro)active vigilance. [...] In other words, Lebanon's history contains sufficient material from which to choose battles to memorialize, but it did not happen." (Volk 2010, 19)

towards deconfessionalisation of Lebanon[99] can be seen, there is no strong political entity in Lebanon to support this idea at the moment. This topic has become a subject of many discussions recently, yet this is beyond the scope of my research, and I aimed at understanding the recent developments in the identity construction in the Maronite community which is acting within the Lebanese confessionalism.

3.6. Concluding Remarks

To sum up the third part of the work, we can claim that the origin of the modern Maronite thought can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when the new Maronite elite, educated in the European institutions, started to emerge. This elite started to be interested in the local history with sporadic attempts to conceptually define Lebanon, however, only in 1844 the modern Lebanese idea emerged for the first time. Since then, the gradually rising number of works about the modern Lebanon, prepared by the elite mainly educated in European-supported academical institutions and gradually forming the Maronite non-religious layer, appeared with the dissertation of Michel Jouplain prepared in 1908 being the most influential work at the time being used as a reference at the Conference of Versailles in 1919 for arguing for the expansion of the territory of Mount Lebanon to the Greater Lebanon. After 1920, the Maronites started to develop their identity vision based on three lines actively developed until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1975:

in the domain of the *collective memory*, the Phoenician narrative, as the main paradigm, was developed in one way or another connecting the modern day Lebanese people with the ancient Phoenicians and claiming, based on these arguments, that the Lebanese people have a distinct character when comparing to Syria (the latter fact is the most important in this context);

in the domain of the *language ideology*, it appeared that several languages are important in the case of the Maronite community, capable of culturally defining it. Firstly, the community's origin is Syriac, although this language is barely used now outside the liturgy; secondly, the aspect of the Arabic language is much more complex: on the one hand, Arabic is an official Lebanese language with most of the population being native Arabic speakers of the Lebanese dialect; on the other hand, several intellectuals in the twentieth

[99] Already the Constitution of 1926 contains Article 95 postulating that the confessional proportion model should only be applied transitorily until another model could be found. (Reinkowski 1997, 507)

century claimed the Lebanese dialect to be a distinct Lebanese language; thirdly, the Lebanese people, and, particularly, the Maronites, have always been famous for their multilingualism with several languages being spoken simultaneously with the influence of French reaching its peak in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while currently getting more influence from English; this multilingualism is most characteristic to the Maronite community. The unified concept of the Lebanese language is still non-existent until today;

in the domain of the *communalism*, we have to observe that the Maronite Church historically has always been a centre of the community's life; however, the rise of the secular elite by the end of the nineteenth century created two layers of the elite in the Maronite community. The Lebanese confessionalism, whose initial aim was to create unity among the various communities of Lebanon, preserved the active role of religion in the political life in Lebanon; therefore, both layers are crucially important today, and also, both of them have to be considered when assessing the modern Maronite identity.

Definitely, various intellectuals provided a number of interpretations towards the above-mentioned questions; however, we can claim that the ideas I have discussed above can be perceived as the main pattern of the modern Maronite thought in the twentieth century.

However, we have to admit that the above-mentioned ideas were not the single concept developed by various Lebanese intellectuals representing a wide range of Lebanese communities; in the twentieth century, the greatest opposition came from the supporters of Arabism advocating for the idea of uniting Lebanon with Syria, and thus with the Arab world, with this division eventually turning into the Lebanese Civil War. After the Taif Agreement, although there was an attempt to find universal Lebanese unity, which by some was considered to have happened in the light of the Cedar Revolution that also changed the political conjuncture in Lebanon, the unity is still far from reality. Nevertheless, what is even more important, there are very few works regarding the Maronite community in terms of the cultural side of its development. Therefore, it was the main reason I analyse the modern Maronite identity and the relations of the currently expressed opinion with those being actively developed in the twentieth century.

4. THE MODERN MARONITE IDENTITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AN ETHNOLOGICAL STUDY

4.1. Analysing the Identity of the Religious Fraction of the Community

In this part of the work, I conduct thematic document analysis for assessing the modern Maronite collective identity analysing the perceptions towards the collective memory, the language ideology, and the communalism based on the religious part of the community, represented by the Document of Synod of 2006.

4.1.1. The collective memory

The golden age

In the Document, the perception of the universal golden age for both the Maronites and Lebanon is not explicitly defined; however, based on the references supplemented by the broader explanations about the historical development of the community, we can learn that *the good days* for the community and the Church started in the Ottoman times, during the rule of the local emirs, that was described as a period of the improving social state of the Maronites compared to the previous era:

> In modern times, since the days of the Ottomans, the Maronite Church has had the opportunity to expand both in geography and responsibility. Christians have enjoyed an elevated status. They built churches, rode horses, bore arms, and stood by the Emir as brothers and advisors during the Ma'an rule and as administrators during the Shehab rule. (Text 20:8)

Additionally, the cultural renaissance of the Maronites, stimulated by "their openness to Western culture and sciences" (Text 12:14e) and combined with the expanding Maronite connections with the Holy See, contributed to *the good days* of the Maronite community:

> During the Ottoman period there were signs that were beginning to emerge related to there being a great Maronite cultural renaissance, thanks to the openness of our Church toward the Italian renaissance

coming via the Maronite College in Rome[100], which was established by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584. (Text 3:16)

This renaissance also brought several important changes to the development of the Maronite culture, such as the Synod of 1736, some other prepared documents (Text 14:4), or the reformation of the rituals (Text 12:14e; f). Overall, the topic of the golden age is not widely discussed in the document focusing on the other questions instead.

The worst age

Similarly to the descriptions of the golden age in the document, the perception of the worst age of the Maronite community is not explicitly defined, either, with very few references to the topic in the whole document being observed. Yet, differently to the case of the golden age, the *bad days* for the Maronite community, according to the document of the Synod, do not constitute a single period being marked by several periods, the first one being the times of Mamluk rule: "During the Mameluke period, the Maronite/Muslim relationship was mostly that of oppression and persecution, especially during the period stretching from 1267 to 1367, which was the century of calamities for Maronites" (Text 3:10). It should be observed that the above-mentioned Ottoman times, described as *the good days* in the document, came following the end of the Mamluk rule.

However, according to the document, more than the period of the Mamluk rule, the years of the Civil War were described as the most difficult time throughout the Maronite and Lebanese history. The following quote provides a detailed description, explaining the reasons fur such a perception, giving some details as to how the Civil War affected the Maronite community in general:

> [The] War was the most dangerous and difficult event ever endured by our Lebanese and Christian society, which still suffers from its

[100] The Maronite College in Rome is mentioned several times in the document elaborated for its significant contribution to the Maronite history. In several passages, the College is highlighted for the contribution to the Arab renaissance, while also being a significant factor for the Arabisation of the Maronite community (Text 3:16), its role in "introducing the West to the civilization and the heritage of the East," reviving the Arabic language and its literature (Text 17:8), and also contributing to the Maronite multilingualism and contacts with the West. (Text 17:9)

> results and aftermaths. The recent war has destroyed the political, economic, and social infrastructure. It even devastated the personal and psychological norms of the individual along with his values and moral systems. (Text 20:17)

Some other passages (Text 11:33; Text 15:8) share similar ideas to the quote above by stating that the post-war period itself had long lasting negative effects on both the Maronite community and the Lebanese society, and that they also "impacted tragically on the Maronites in their presence and mission," resulting in the spread of the Maronite diaspora and negatively influencing the Lebanese conviviality[101] (Text 15:8). The latter motive, as we shall see in other passages, is highly esteemed in the whole document as one of the crucial aspects of the Maronites and the Lebanese. Yet, in the Document, the motive of the worst age of Lebanon, similarly to the motive of the golden age, is not widely discussed, either.

Maronites and Lebanon

Considering the collective memory of the Maronite community, one of the most widely discussed aspects in the Document, highlighted on multiple occasions, is the description evaluating the origin of the Maronite Church: on many occasions, we find references to the Syriac[102], Antiochene or Chalcedonian[103] character of the Maronite Church. There are two passages in

[101] According to the document, in addition to the Lebanese Civil War, the conflicts of 1840, 1860, 1920 also had the same negative influence for the Maronites and the Lebanese people as well. (Text 15:8)

[102] In one of the passages, the fact that the Maronite Church originated from the Syriac Orthodox Church and not from the Greek Orthodox Church (Text 18:8) is emphasised. In another passage, the emphasis is put on the liturgical aspect: "The Maronite liturgy belongs to the Antiochene Church and is organically connected with the Syrian culture in both her branches, Eastern and Western. It draws her sources from the basic liturgies of Antioch, Jerusalem and Edessa" (Text 12:14). Consequently, the Syriac and Antiochene motives are often interconnected in the Document. At the same time, "Our rooting within the Antiochene heritage eventually leads to the Syriac heritage, conveyor of the distinctive spirituality of our Church and her rich treasure." (Text 6:59)

[103] The Chalcedonian nature of the Maronite Church is being emphasised in another passage: "The ascetic and monastic origin of the Maronite Patriarchate does not mean that our Church is the result of an independent monastic movement within the Antiochene See. The Monastery of Saint Maron was integrated in the structure of the Antiochene Church since her foundation after the Council of Chalcedon (451) and until the creation of the Maronite Patriarchate within its walls." (Text 2:19)

the Document providing the summarised definitions of the Maronite identity in detail, one of them being as follows:

> [T]he text introduces the essential elements of the identity of the Maronite Church and it becomes apparent that she is firstly, an Antiochene Syriac Church, with a special liturgical heritage; secondly, a Chalcedonian Church; thirdly, a Patriarchal Church with an ascetic and a monastic aspect; fourthly, a Church in full union with the Apostolic Roman See; fifthly, a Church incarnated in her Lebanese and Eastern environment, and the Countries of Expansion. (Text 2:5)[104]

At the same time, despite plenty of common aspects shared with the other Christian communities based on either the Chalcedonian or the Syriac origin of the Maronite Church, the latter is unique, having its own distinct personality[105], which is based on the Lebanese historical-cultural landscape, which is, I believe, perfectly described in the following passage, and, I assume, quoting the document itself will be much more informative, as it provides better insights than any paraphrasing:

> The Christian religion made its way into Lebanon since its inception, centering especially in the coastal cities. It witnessed a new campaign of expansion when the inhabitants of the Lebanese mountain discovered Christianity at the hands of St. Simon the Stylite through the merits of the evangelization campaign launched by the disciples of St. Maron headed by Abraham of Cyrrhus. This people preserved their characteristics, rituals and distinctive customs which did not contradict with their new faith. We can say that in the domain of Mount Lebanon, the Canaanite-Phoenician culture was a reference complementing the Aramaic-Syriac dimension in the forming and development of the Maronite culture with all its various dimensions. The many temples which were transformed into churches, some of which are still standing, are a living witness to this cultural interconnection between the different historical epochs[16]. No doubt

[104] The same six elements are elaborated in Text 15:6.

[105] The same idea was expressed in one of the passages in the text: "Despite the common points with the Syrian, Chaldean and Coptic rites, the Maronite enjoys a distinct personality and possesses his proper constitutive elements. These characteristics kept the Maronite from disappearing or from being assimilated into another rite." (Text 12:5)

> that the connection of the Maronites with the mountainous land of Lebanon, whether they were indigenous inhabitants or refugees fleeing persecution, and their ongoing interaction with its constants and variables, made them attached to the land in such a way as to constitute sanctification. They made of it the See of their Patriarchate, which is the symbol of their unity and their ecclesiastical specificity. This land has also marked the culture of its children with activity, resolve, generosity, hospitality, and the clinging to freedom. (Text 18:14)

Already in the above provided passage, there appeared the motive of the mountains when referring to the Maronite identity. These connections between the Maronites and both the land and the mountains of Lebanon are one of the key elements of the Maronite community as described in the Document, appearing multiple times and elaborating on various aspects of the Maronite community cultural self-perception with slight differences, yet describing the same aspect of the phenomenon. In one of the passages, the land is described as a guarantor of freedom: "The Identity of the Maronite family was also greatly marked by the land seen as guarantor of freedom" (Text 10:9) for those Maronites, seeking refuge in the mountains, as we learn from another passage:

> When the Maronites set their face toward northern Lebanon for the sake of preserving the freedom of their religious beliefs following the Arab conquest, they settled in the region of Aj-Jibbi, and the valleys of Qannoubine and Qozhaia, seeking refuge in those mountains with their rugged paths, and hide in the steep walled valleys. (Text 8:5)

Consequently, the mountains became a natural and historical place of inhabitance of the Maronite community and, until the twentieth century, they were serving as a guarantor for the community's survival:

> The Maronite Church developed in an agricultural setting and continued weaving its identity until the turn of the twentieth century within this same environment, deriving her values from it. Thus, the Maronite became attached to two most important things: a land he cultivated and irrigated for centuries, with his sweat and the blood of his children; and a dwelling to take shelter in with his family. They are the first things he would possess and the last he would relinquish,

> defying death throughout history to protect both of them. The land and its riches are the source of his livelihood and survival. (Text 20:3)

The land and the mountains are important for the Maronites to such a degree that even specific and spiritual relations between them and the Maronites are elaborated. In one passage, we find a reference to the emotional aspect of the Maronites to the mountains: "Maronites were emotionally attached to the land which they considered as a loving mother who joins her children in closeness and cooperation" (Text 10:8). In another passage, we find the sacred motive of the land, connected to the Maronites and inherited from the forefathers: "The land, in our Tradition, is not a possession that we dispose of at will. Rather, it is an inheritance from the fathers and the forefathers. This inheritance is more like a valuable trust or even 'a sacred relic' " (Text 23:7). What is also important to stress, is that in another passage we learn that the land even contributes to the humanisation of the Maronite person showing, at the same time, how deep these connections are: "The land contributes directly to the humanization of the Maronite man and imprints on him its unique traits and qualities. Our ties to it cannot be strictly interest oriented, but rather, it is also fundamentally sentimental and humane" (Text 23:8).

Moreover, in another passage, it is stated that even the family names are originating from the places these families come from, thus showing how deep the mountains are integrated into the self-perception of the Maronite community:

> Maronites carried the names of their villages and areas (Bsherrani, Ehdeni, Akouri, Hakilani, Hasrouni, Bejjani, Amsheeti, and others), as if the land had become the Maronites' family tree. With relocation to cities and evolution in lifestyles, economic constituents have changed from handicrafts and agriculture, to an economy based on services, commuting, stock markets, and modern technology. Accordingly, the Maronites' relationship with the land has drastically changed. (Text 15:6)

The natural place of inhabitance also is an important factor making differences among various Christian denominations in Lebanon: the Maronites are traditionally attached to the mountains, differently to the other Christian communities residing in Lebanon. In one of the passages, we learn that:

> The Maronites, in general, were rural and mountain dwellers. They embraced the faith of the monks of Saint Maron and their doctrine, whether in Syria or in Lebanon. They were distinguished in their culture from the other Christians of the big cities who were stamped with the impress of Greek culture, without that meaning that they were cut off from that culture, which, during the first Christian centuries, was an essential instrument of expressing the Christian faith, especially in the ecumenical councils. (Text 18:8)

Indeed, there are many more passages in the text assessing the cultural and historical importance of the mountains for the Maronite community[106] providing different aspects of these connections, although many motives are overlapping. Consequently, I can claim that, among all the aspects in the domain of the collective memory discussed in the Document, the motive of mountains and land is among those discussed the most. Therefore, we can state that Lebanon is an essential factor for the very existence of the Maronites as a collective entity; hence, without the Lebanese land, there would be no Maronites: "For, if a Maronite were to gain the whole world and lose the land on which his historical identity was formed, he would be losing himself" (Text 23:1), because, as we find in another passage, "Lebanon is the patriarchal residence and the location of the Patriarchal See, of the Maronite saints, of Maronite holy places and monasteries, as well as a place of witness. […] their spiritual homeland" (Text 5:24). Yet, as we learn from a further passage, another crucially important feature of Lebanon and the Maronites is their coexistence of various confessions and all those willing to live in Lebanon; however, it is of importance to observe that the Maronite community is an essential part of the Lebanese history, responsible for the creation of the modern Lebanese State and this model of coexistence:

> The expansion of the Maronites throughout Lebanon, and their coexistence with other confessions springs from their fiducial and apostolic values. The land was not theirs alone; rather, on it, they came across all those yearning for freedom and for a dignified life. In this manner, Mount Lebanon was formed and consequently, Lebanon, whose name became linked with the Maronites, an essential element of its historical and political entity. (Text 23:11)

[106] To name further examples, we can refer to Text 10:8, Text 23:10, and Text 4:4.

Consequently, we can conclude that the connections between the Maronites and Lebanon should be perceived as having a specific cultural and even spiritual dimension, repeatedly described in multiple passages within the document of the Synod.

Different communities of Lebanon, Phoenicianism and the Arab world

Considering further aspects provided in the Document of the Synod regarding the collective memory of the Maronite community, I searched for such elements as the unique characteristics of the Maronite community, its relations with the other communities residing in Lebanon, relations to the ancient past and the Arab world. Based on the evaluation of these elements, there are several points to discuss.

First, one of the most commonly found motives in the Document is the message of John Paul II expressed in 1989[107], often referred to – whenever considering Lebanon's specific mission in the Middle Eastern region – as a model of coexistence between different religions. The essence of the message of John Paul II can be revealed via the following quote:

> Perhaps the most sincere expression concerning the true Lebanese identity was that launched by Pope John Paul II when he said, "Lebanon is more than a country. It is a mission of freedom and a model of pluralism for the East as it is for the West." It is neither an exaggeration nor a boast to say that the Maronite Patriarchate has a pioneering role in this pluralistic nation to be a mission. (Text 2:38)

Consequently, there are plenty of references in the Document to the Maronite Church calling it to take the leading role in the Middle Eastern region for coexistence of different communities with the motives of *coexistence*, *conviviality*, *dialogue*, or *seeking sense of common home* (all the terms are used in the Document) being found on multiple occasions in the Document[108]. Several examples to list, in one of the passages, it is stated that "This pleasant exchange with Islam and the Muslims in the Arab world is truly at the very core of the mission of our Church and is one of the most prominent signs of our Church's presence in the Arab East" (Text 3:2), whereas, in

[107] As of May 2023, the Document can be found via the following link: <https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/pont_messages/1989/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19890515_libano.html>

[108] To list such examples, we can quote Text 1:25; Text 3:1; Text 3:22; Text 4:43; Text 6:60; Text 11:28; Text 11:39; Text 13:29; Text 19:36; Text 19:51.

another passage, we read that "Conviviality that is based on dialogue, respect, and cooperation in building a country where justice and truth prevail and where human rights are honored, is one of the foundations of genuine hope" (Text 1:25). One of the reasons for such deeply rooted Lebanese conviviality into the modern Lebanese State is caused by the fact that, from the days of the Greater Lebanon, the Lebanese model was based on mutual consensus, and, according to the Document, it was the Maronite Patriarch who played a crucial role in achieving this model of Lebanese coexistence:

> The Maronite Patriarch Elias Boutros El Hoyek played a historic role in the establishment of this model of consensual partnership between Christians and Muslims within the Republic of Greater Lebanon[18]. His famous address still lives on: "I have always worked for peace by words and deeds, and although I am the patriarch of the Maronites, all of the Lebanese have delegated that I petition for the independence of their country. Therefore I am for each one of them, and not just for the Maronites." (Text 3:18)

Finally, the general diversity of Lebanon is another significant factor to elaborate on while discussing the modern collective Maronite identity, and it is something that has to be preserved for the future generations: "The enculturation of the Maronite Church in its diverse cultural milieus throughout history has led to the formation of a special Maronite heritage that must necessarily be discovered and preserved" (Text 18:24). Overall, it should be stated that, along with the motive of the land and the mountains, the Lebanese coexistence (with the variety of synonymous terms) and the Lebanese cultural and historical diversity are two further topics that are the most developed topics in the Document, definitely demonstrating how important they are for the Maronite Church.

Secondly, another widely discussed and regularly appearing motive in the Document is the balance of the Maronites between the East and the West. In one of the passages, we read that "The Maronites are proud of their Eastern culture, rich heritage, openness to the pluralistic culture of the West and their steadfastness in the true doctrine of the Catholic faith" (Text 6:22). Another passage suggests that "The Maronite culture is open to Arab culture, yet deeply rooted in the Syriac, Chalcedonian and Lebanese heritages, interacting with the rest of the cultures it encounters in its relationship with the West and its worldwide expansion" (Text 18:19), while also showing how different cultural motives are overlapping in the Maronite history. According to Text

18:20, the connections between the Maronites and the West were established as early as during the times of Crusades, yet, only during the Ottoman times and the rule of the Ma'an Dynasty (we can remember that this period concurs with *the good days*, as defined above in the Paragraph), this cooperation reached its peak:

> However, this civilization interconnection and cultural interaction did not assume its full dimensions until the start of the 16th century with the establishment of the Maronite School in Rome (1584), and the opening up of Lebanon to the West under the rule of the Ma'an Dynasty, and the arrival of the Catholic missions to the East, which led to the erection of many important schools in the different regions. (Text 18:20)

The balancing between the East and the West[109] also significantly contributed to the development of the Arab culture, the latter being, according to the document of the Synod, another essential contributing element to the Maronite history. One of the passages indicates that "Maintaining the heritage of openness to the East and the West, our sons and daughters were pioneers in preserving, disseminating and enriching Arab culture" (Text 6:60). This enrichment was possible due to the active involvement of Maronites into bringing the modernity to Lebanon: "Arab acculturation with the Christian spirit was due to Maronite participation, which worked to create the culture of conviviality with Muslims and a connection to modernity" (Text 6:59). The Arab world is necessary for the Maronite Church to exist due to several factors that are indicated in the following passage: "The Church looks at the Arab world as an important part in the sphere of transformations because of its geographical position, its cultural ties, the wealth of its natural resources, and

[109] In one of the passages of the Document, we can find an axis broader than the East-West axis, combining plenty of cultural and historical motives with the Maronite Church being at the centre of it: "At the same time, she is the Church of extended bridges and the Church of borders where civilizations meet. She united the Aramaeans of the Syrian interior with the Canaanites of the Lebanese coast and mountain, and reconciled the Syriac culture with the Arab culture. She lived the dialogue with Islam in her daily life, and preserved her Eastern identity while in communion with the Roman Church. All this gave her the opportunity to be a bridge between different groups of people. By introducing the Eastern Christian heritage the Maronite Church contributed to the West, and opened the door of dialogue and exchange between the Latin Church, the Maronite Church and the rest of the Eastern Catholic Churches." (Text 4:43)

its political problems[110] that draw the attention of the whole world" (Text 15:17).

However, I believe, that the most informative quote explaining the Maronite relations with the Arab world, connecting plenty of cultural and historical factors that contributed to the specific Maronite cultural identity and its relations with Arabism, while also reflecting the complex nature of the relevant questions, is as follows:

> In one respect, they [Maronite youth] are unaware that the Maronite Patriarchate has "become a live depository of a unique historical Arab experience," [21] and they are also in ignorance of the contributions of their grandfathers and fathers to Arab history and heritage; and in another respect, the majority refuses Arabism as a synonym for Islam and what ensues thereof, as it bears on the concept of Lebanon the multi-confessional. If they fancy over this saying, that "the culture of Lebanon is the criticizing conscience of the Arab world" [22] and accept this role for their nation, they wonder today if the prospects of criticism are possible and available in a complex national and Arab atmosphere. (Text 11:41)

Overall, we can state that the question of the collective memory, as we learn from the Document of the Synod, is a widely discussed topic with plenty of motives repeatedly being emphasised with the most prevalent ones being the Lebanese conviviality and the balance between the East and the West.

4.1.2. The language ideology

Syriac

Although in the Document there are many references to the Syriac origin of the Maronite community, only a few passages deal with the Syriac language. In these passages, the Syriac language is described as the language of the liturgy of the Maronite Church, thereby naming this language as the "authentic Maronite heritage" (Text 18:9) and "a fundamental element that

[110] Concerning the topic of politics, one passage suggests that "Lebanon did enjoy a measure of political, economic, media and cultural freedoms that many states in the Arab World have not witnessed" (Text 19:26). I assume it to be an aspect of the Maronite collective self-identification.

needs to be preserved as much as possible" (Text 4:28), or claiming that "the relationship between the Maronite Church and the Syriac language is deep rooted and well established, with liturgical, social, and cultural overtones" (Text 17:72), At the same time, the Syriac language is endangered. No further references to the Syriac language are provided in the Document.

Lebanese/Arabic

Differently to the case of Syriac language, in the Document, the Arabic language is a far more elaborated topic with its importance for the Maronites being based, *firstly*, on the historical contribution of the Maronites to the revival of Arabic language and modernising. One passage indicates that "The commitment of Maronites to the Arabic language and to its revival, have contributed fundamentally to bringing about the Second Arabic Renaissance during the nineteenth century" (Text 18:18)[111], while another passage suggests that the Maronites played "a major role in linking the Arab World to modernity" (Text 3:18), and also that the Maronite community was "the pioneer of modernity which she introduced to the East centuries ago" (Text 15:13), although without further developing this particular topic. This Maronite contribution to the Arabic revival can be observed in multiple fields, and, in one passage, we also learn that both the Maronites and the Christians in general also played a significant role in Egypt in the nineteenth century, as we have already discussed in the historical part of the research:

> Maronites, and Christians in general, played a pioneering role in this second phase of the renaissance by introducing Egypt to the field of Arab journalism and to the arts in terms of Arabic theatre, the historical novel, free-verse poetry, and the cinema. Their participation was also evident in the ways in which they launched industries and banks in Egypt, thus also playing a pioneering role in strengthening the Egyptian economy. (Text 3:17)

Apart from that, we have to note that, in the Document, the necessity for promoting the Arabic language within the Maronite community for enhancing the cooperation between the Maronites and the Arab World is expressed because "promoting the Arabic language is at the heart of the spiritual mission of the Maronites, since it is an optimum tool linking them with the Arab and Islamic world" (Text 17:73). In another passage, we find a

[111] The other passages elaborating this idea to list are Texts 1:18; 3:18; 16:28; 17:7.

similar idea supplemented with the motive of keeping the cultural resonance of the Maronites in the Arab World by claiming that the enhancement of the knowledge of Arabic of the Maronite community "meets a need with Arab Christians and is at the core of the national responsibilities of the Maronites, not only because it is the national and official language of Lebanon, but because Lebanon will not have the opportunity to keep its cultural resonance in the Arab World" if Arabic is not being promoted. Moreover, the necessity to promote the Arabic language is also a tool for the Muslim and Christian coexistence in Lebanon. In the Document, this motive is described in the following way: "support for partnership requires a commitment to the centrality of the Arabic language" (Text 3:22). Yet, apart from the above-mentioned passages, the motive of the Arabic language is not as widely discussed an aspect of the Maronite community as the Lebanese multilingualism which is the subject of the following Paragraph.

Lebanese multilingualism

The Lebanese multilingualism is a widely discussed topic in the Document as one of the key defining elements of the Maronite community in multiple domains. It is a characteristic aspect of the community, which, as indicated in one of the passages – "The Maronite youth in Lebanon live 'trilingual cultural domains: Arabic, French, and English' " (Text 11:36), being a trilingual community today[112]. While the spread of English is quite a

[112] Historically, there have been more languages having a certain role for the Maronite and Lebanese development. I believe that the following quote from the Document provides a comprehensive overview about the languages and their role in the historical development of the Maronite community: "We must note here that by defending linguistic pluralism the Maronites were loyal to a tradition that, since ancient times, had characterized the inhabitants of the area that is now Lebanon. Plurality of languages was a widespread phenomenon during many epochs in the history of this nation, and the dominant local Semitic languages, as well as other Semitic ones, were in use contiguous to non-Semitic languages. After the foundational phase in which the Phoenician language prevailed, Phoenician and Aramaic came into contemporaneous use in these lands, and in coastal cities, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Greek were all spoken. Then, in the Roman era, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin became the dominant languages. With the Arab Conquest, Lebanon came to know a new aspect of bilingualism exemplified by the two languages, Arabic and Aramaic, extending till the 18th century, in which the use of Aramaic decreased and when trade relations with Italy grew, the Italian language entered Lebanon. During that time, the area witnessed the establishment of many schools that taught both Italian and French in addition to Arabic. After the events of 1840–1860, French was destined to completely replace Italian due to the spread of educational institutions established by French missionaries. No need

new phenomenon, and the role of Arabic for the Maronite community has a specific context discussed above, we also need to have a look at what the Document says about French. Its significance is described as being rooted in the Maronite history, already having reached some spiritual dimension, as we can observe from the following passage:

> Christians in general, and Maronites in particular, are linked to their spiritual roots in a principal way through the French language, on which Christianity left an indelible mark, and through which they are directly and strongly connected to the Catholic theological heritage and its fundamental human values. (Text 17:76)

However, it would be accurate to claim that the Maronite multilingualism by itself is one of the most significant features of the community that contributed to the development of the community and is still its defining cultural and social factor. In one of the Paragraphs, it is stated that languages are a way for the dialogue with the other communities, thereby linking the multilingualism to the already above discussed topic of the Lebanese coexistence: "The Maronites realized the importance of languages as tools for communication, mutual understanding and dialogue" (Text 17:8). Such multilingualism, in the words of the Document, "is of a beneficial character arising from trade exchange and the requirements of international political relations" (Text 17:12). But, at the same time, this multilingualism reflects the cultural side of the Maronite community, as the document suggests:

> Studying the linguistic history of Lebanon, one notices that the linguistic pluralism that has long existed in the country is of two types: the linguistic pluralism that is of a predominantly cultural character, being a tradition that dates back over three thousand years and is one of the constants in the ancient and contemporary history of Lebanon, achieving the openness of Lebanon to the outside world and an interconnection with it. (Text 17:12)

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to elaborate on the phenomenon of 'linguistic pluralism' prevailing in Lebanon today. Its heralds began appearing in the second half of the 19th century with the advent of Protestant missions which introduced the English language. It seems quite clear that linguistic pluralism is a deeply entrenched and an ongoing hallmark of Lebanon, and is one of its distinctive characteristics." (Text 17:11)

To sum up, the Maronite multilingualism is one of the key elements describing the community whose knowledge of many languages has been characteristic to the community since the ancient times not only due to being a cultural feature of the community, but at the same time serving as a mission to the dialogue with the other communities.

4.1.3. Communalism

The Maronite Church

The Document provides extensive information about the Maronite Church and its role within the Maronite community. While most of this information is directed towards the theological and historical questions, there are some passages describing some features of the Maronite Church that are connected to the Maronite collective identity related questions. In one of the passages, it is claimed that the Maronite entity is not a nation, and, because of the numerous diasporan communities, the Maronite entity transcends the national borders:

> The Synod is adamant that the Maronite entity not be confined to a nation or to one kind of nationalism, because it conceives that this Eastern Church has experienced a wide expansion. This means that the Maronite entity transcends national borders to attain the role of a universal Church. (Text 6:63)

Consequently, a major share of the information provided in the document is related to the diasporan questions, since the vast diaspora turned the Maronite Church into a universal Church: "The Maronite Church has been transformed into a Universal Church, whose members in the world significantly outnumber those in Lebanon and in the Patriarchal Domain." (Text 15:9)[113]

Hence, we can state that the Maronite Church sees itself as a universal entity trying to reach plenty of communities. There is one passage that, I believe, summarises plenty of aspects related to the Maronite collective self-

[113] The universalism of the Maronite Church in terms of elaborating the dialogue of civilizations and cultural exchange is discussed in Text 15:24 in more detail. At the same time, in the passage Text 1:18, there is a call, despite the Church's expansion, to "remain authentic to her heritage, and to interact harmoniously with other Church traditions." Also, this commitment is repeated in Text 1:25.

identification from the point of view of the Maronite Church and, I assume, the Paragraph has to be quoted in full:

> The Maronite Church is open-mindedly interactive with the political history of the environment to which she belongs. Her ecclesiastical presence obliges her to be, in the midst of the society where she lives, a sign of the Lord's presence in our world, the salt of the earth and its leaven. The Maronite Church, steadfast in her Antiochene origins and her Lebanese strongholds, lives her Eastern affiliation through her children's awareness of their vocation and mission. She is an integral part of the march of civilization in this region of the world, in addition to her cultural contribution in the renewal of Arab heritage and its diffusion. The Maronite Church took upon herself the causes of the Arab World, and contributed to crystallizing Arab political awareness through the pioneering role of the Maronites in modernity, in the liberation movement, in the intellectual field and in the written media in Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine and Syria. (Text 19:42)

Apart from that, in the Document, some information has been given about the role of the Patriarch within the community, who is a key figure being seen as a guarantor and symbol of the community's unity: "Wherever they may be, Maronites have expressed their attachment to the centrality of the patriarchate and also to the person of the Patriarch, as guarantor and symbol of their unity" (Text 1:19). Apart from the role in the community's unity, the Patriarch has also played a significant role in the community's historical development: "The Maronite Church has been able to survive thanks to her attachment to her patriarch as her head and her father, and to the centralizing function that the patriarch exercises" (Text 5:3). This historical role is strongly related to the fact that, in the era of the Islamic rule, the religious authority of the community used to be perceived as a formal social and political leader of the community in the framework of the *millet* system):

> Within this framework, the Maronite Patriarch was both the religious and temporal leader. There was no clearly defined civil authority alongside him until much later. He derived his legitimacy from the concept of elections that the Maronites practiced which was quasi popular in its beginnings. It would come about at the hands of the clergy, community leaders and the people, without the Patriarch being obliged to secure approval from the governing Islamic authority, as was the norm with other Eastern Patriarchs. (Text 20:6)

Additionally, "The Patriarch was responsible for providing the Islamic authority with a list of names of adults and their holdings for the collection of tribute and land taxes" (Text 20:6). Overall, we can state that, in the Document, the Maronite Church is described as the essential historical and cultural element of the Maronite community which, consequently, was contributing to the formation of its modern collective identity as well.

Being Maronite

In the Document, there are several references (the topic is not as widely discussed as the other above-mentioned aspects) assessing the relations between the Maronites and the other Christian communities of Lebanon. To begin with, as the Document suggests, these relations are guided by the Holy See[114] searching for the unity among various Christian denominations:

> The status of the communion between the Maronite Church and the Roman Apostolic See, distinguished by its historical roots and its uniqueness, gives our Church a special ecumenical role in this region that she is called upon to undertake for the sake of developing the theological dialogue and the dialogue of love between these Churches and the Catholic Church. (Text 2:30)

These relations are particularly significant in the diasporan communities, where the Maronite parishes are open not only for Maronites: "One notices, therefore, that our Maronite parishes in the Countries of Expansion have become parishes for all Christians and not only for Maronites" (Text 5:36). In another passage, a similar view is being shared:

> The parish should be open to all non-Catholic parishes and ecclesiastical communities found on its territory or in neighboring ones, by encouraging meetings between the different apostolic movements and organizations. Furthermore, it is to consolidate a spirit of brotherly cooperation with them and participation in endeavors within the limits of mutual respect, planning to nurture faith and love. (Text 13:28)

[114] Based on the guideline provided after the Second Vatican Council, looking for the ecumenical initiatives whose aim is to strengthen the relations among the Christians (see Text 1:27).

However, no further information is provided about the topic.

Politics

Finally, we have approached the final question of the Document's analysis which is related to the Lebanese confessionalism and, although in the Document there are no direct references to it, we can still assume that the Lebanese confessionalism is being seen as a positive tool serving the social and political needs of the Maronite community inviting the Maronites to actively participate in the political life of the State. In one passage, the invitation to participate in politics is founded on the principles provided by the Holy See and expressed in the *A New Hope for Lebanon*: "The Apostolic Exhortation, A New Hope for Lebanon, urges lay believers to participate in political life in their quest to build their nations and their societies, so as to provide the best opportunities for their children" (Text 9:29). In another passage, we find a more detailed explanation how the Maronites are participating in the political life, and, I consider, this passage should be quoted in full:

> The Maronites' experience in politics is one of the oldest and most diverse and comprehensive among those of the Christians of the East. The role of the Maronites in their direct involvement in politics is discerned on three levels: within the ecclesiastical framework, under the patronage of the Maronite Patriarchate; at the level of politicians, especially the influential; and, at the common, public level. This involvement in politics started a few centuries before the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon. They experienced politics from the position of authority as well as from the side of the opposition. They have made choices and taken initiatives at crucial historical junctures, and interconnected within an incongruent environment with wisdom, tact and flexibility mixed with firmness, as a result of a long pursuit in politics permeated by some errors. (Text 19:1)

As a conclusion, we can state that the political participation of the Maronites is strongly encouraged and is considered to be an important factor contributing to the protection of the Maronites', and Christians' in general, interests in the region, yet, the topic overall is not widely developed in the Document.

4.2. Analysing the Identity of the Secular Part of the Community

In this part of the work, I conduct an empirical study of the collective identity of the secular part of the community based on the interviews I made during my fieldwork trip to Lebanon. I do my analysis of the interviews in the domains of the collective memory, the language ideology, and the communalism.

4.2.1. Collective memory

The golden age

When asked about the *golden age* of Lebanon, most of the interviewees referred to the period of 1943–1975 (otherwise known as the *Merchant Republic of Lebanon*, or the *Switzerland of the Middle East*), with small date variations in each particular case. The first reason for this period to be perceived as the best era in the Lebanese history is connected to the economic state of Lebanon at the time, and I consider the following quote of all the quotes that I have collected to serve as the best example for supporting this claim:

> Economic golden age [was] after WW2 when Lebanon was nicknamed the *Switzerland of the Middle East*. So at that time Dollar was equivalent to two Lebanese Lira[115]. We were more powerful than French Frank, *Deutsche Mark*. The golden age, from economic point of view, was after our independence from France, which was [declared] in 1943, but the last soldier left Lebanese soil in 1946. Between 1946 and 1970 we lived in an ascending prosperity. (Interview No. 18)

In addition to the economic prosperity, another contributing factor to the Lebanese *golden age*, as observed by another interviewee, was the Lebanese achievements in the social sphere at the time:

> The golden age of Lebanon was in the 1960s. That was the golden age of Lebanon. It was flourished, it was a *Switzerland of the Middle East*. I think it was a jam – everything was open, you had the biggest

[115] To compare, in July 2023, the unofficial US Dollar and Lebanese Lira rate was around 90,000.

> universities, the biggest actors, it was a place to vacation, it was a jam of the Middle East. (Interview No. 6)

Nonetheless, I assume, it is important to state that, although elaborating on the period of 1943–1975 as the *golden age* of the Lebanese history along with the other interviewees, two of them highlighted the years before the Lebanese independence to be the *golden age* of the Lebanese history. One of the interviewees claimed the years following WWI and the establishment of the Greater Lebanon, wherein the Maronites played a major role, to be the best period of the Lebanese and the Maronite history:

> For Maronites, the best was immediately after WWI. Why? Because at the time the war killed 30% of the Maronites and they [Europe] wanted to give them [Maronites] a reward – not a reward, something back. This area was attacked a lot. I know *why* [that] because I was responsible for the Church here. 60% of the village died here from the famine. So after that they wanted to give a prize. To pay a prize. They asked the Patriarch [Hoayek] to do negotiations for Lebanon to have a big [Greater] Lebanon. And everybody was thinking that Maronite must decide for that. That was era that Maronite were in charge of Lebanon. (Interview No. 3)

Another interviewee highlighted the times of *mutaṣarrifiyya* to be the best period of Lebanese history and the reason for such an evaluation was the political neutrality regarding the international relations of Lebanon applied at the time. Yet, when reading the following quote, one should assess it in the light of the Lebanese history in the twentieth century when Lebanon entered the Civil War partly due to the alignments with the external forces:

> The best thing that they [the Lebanese] have done is applied the neutrality. They came to resolution that they are gonna distinguish themselves from what's happening around them and they are not gonna fight Arabs, Turks or the Western world. And this is why we hear that this was a golden age of Lebanon. And this example just proves a point that properly enforcing rules and laws and keeping neutrality can solve all the problems in the region and people can live happily. (Interview No. 14)

Finally, we have to observe that one interviewee emphasised the period of the Ottomans as the best era of the Lebanese history when, as we

have already discussed in the historical part of the work, the Maronite community started its revival by expanding its foreign connections, developing its thought, and rising its influence in the local affairs, and when the idea of Modern Lebanon started to be developed by the Maronites:

> We had to wait until the Ottomans arrived in 1516 and got rid of Mamlukes to come back there to live, out of these caves and villages and valleys, to rebuild these villages. And at the same time you had this new system [the *millet* system] of the Ottomans who allowed people to rule themselves, and Fakhr al-Din saw that Maronites with their new college [Maronite College in Rome] were becoming extremely prosperous *and* so there was this marriage between military force of Druze Fakhr al-Din and intellectual force of the Maronites, and this is how this Modern Lebanon would start here. (Interview No. 13)

In general, the interviewees quite intensively discussed the *golden age* of the Lebanese history with the predominant emphasis on the *Merchant Republic of Lebanon* with a few additional details being expressed as well.

The worst age

When considering the worst age in the Lebanese history, as claimed by most of the interviewees[116], this period ended the Lebanese golden age with the outbreak of the Civil War starting in 1975 and, as perceived by some interviewees, it has been continuing until today. The worst age created a gap, distancing those golden and these bad days and the latter, being an experience of the entire life, depending on the age of the interviewee, was a very actively developed topic by many interviewees. In the following quote, we can find a comprehensive evaluation of the worst age of the Lebanese history, connecting it to the personal reflection as well as war experience and the golden age discussed above:

> Unfortunately, I didn't live the golden age, I was too young. When the war started, I was a little boy, I was 4–5 years old. So the golden age I hear about from my parents, let's say, or what I read from the

[116] One interviewee told that the worst period was the era of Mamlukes (Interview No. 13), the period that we do not know much about. Another interviewee went back to WWI and claimed that the great famine of the time was the worst period of Lebanese history due to the huge casualties at the time: "The great famine. We lost more than the third or the half of Lebanese people." (Interview No. 17)

> history of Lebanon. I really missed it personally as an experience. But, of course, I lived the worst part of Lebanon. Since forty years now living wars, troubles, crisis, occupation, whatever you want. So no, I didn't live that period. What I lived is really not the best part of it. (Interview No. 9)

Most of the interviewees claimed that the war itself was the worst period of the Lebanese history; however, in addition to the war, the subsequent period was a better elaborated topic providing a far more detailed description about the situation in Lebanon actually being one of the most in-detail developed topics in all the interviews due to the fact that it is a living experience of the interviewees. We have already seen in the previous example a list of factors, contributing to the perception of the worst age of the Lebanese history in the most recent decades. The following example, indicating many different details as well, provides a comparison between the war years and the current times in Lebanon, thereby explaining the feelings shared with many (not all) interviewees. One more time, a comprehensive quote with plenty of details serves best to manifest the key points, as follows:

> The worst period of Lebanon, besides the war, which was hell, I think [is] the last 15–17 years. These are the worst. If you want to narrow it down, it's the last few years. But it started 17 years ago when Hariri was assassinated. The worst era of Lebanon – it's this one. The one I've been open awake on it's this. Even when our parents tell us, for example, the war of the 1975 it was very bad but what they used to say is there was money. You used to know you are being hit in this area like they are bombing you in this area and not the other, you would know where to hide. There was money. There was fun. It was joyous even if they were at war. Now it's depressing. It's the most people afraid that emigrated from the country for 70 years, maybe for 50 years from war. And we are going backwards everyday by everyday. The inflation, the poverty rate, the unemployment rate, all of that, so I think this decade is the worst in Lebanon. (Interview No. 6)

Another interviewee, despite providing an answer with less detail, was even more precise to date the worst age of the Lebanese history, by connecting it to the explosion of 2020 and the current economic crisis: "if you wanna add for the worst, it is the 2020–21, after the explosion, and Lira collapsed versus Dollar. It's complimentary" (Interview No. 5).

Apart from the economic and social factors contributing to the perception of the worst period in Lebanese history, the political aspect, connected to the Maronite community and its role in the post-Taif Lebanon, considering the amendments imposed by the Agreement, were mentioned by another interviewee who elaborated both the loss of the leading role in the political life in Lebanon by the Maronites, and also the rise of the Syrian role in the Lebanese politics:

> I would say post-1990, post-Taif Agreement. My personal view is that Maronites lost the war during that period. Some people will tell you that the war was the worst time but, in my opinion, the results were very bad too. After the Taif Agreement, the political role of Christians diminished, they had less influence, and there were particular actors who had increased their role after this event. I'd say that one the worst periods was between 1990 and 2005, especially for Christians, taking into account all internal aspects of Syrian occupation, which was imposing [imposed] for people. I'm not saying that it's much better now, but I think that's when the problems started – the Christians lost the war and all of these problems happened. (Interview No. 19)

Considering all the answers provided by the interviewees, I must also note that two interviewees told me not to believe in the worst or best periods in the Lebanese history. One of the interviewees elaborated on the cycles of the Lebanese history by claiming that conflicts in Lebanon tend to occur regularly: "I don't think there is a golden age and the worst age. Every ten years we are encountering similar things at different level" (Interview No. 10). Another interviewee provided a more detailed answer to this question by expressing an idea that Lebanon does not possess the best or the worst periods; hence, the Lebanese people should focus on the emerging possibilities provided by the circumstances. The interviewee provided some examples of how the difficult situation that is being experienced currently can be turned into chances:

> So I don't think that we have golden age and we have the worst period. I think we have a continuum of evolution and, during evolution, you may have some periods of difficulties, you may have some periods of bad decisions – this is true, but if you look at the whole evolution of the country, we are doing a great job even if now, I may say, we are at the worst period of our history. I don't feel that. We are at the bad period from the economic point of view, but at the same time we have

been getting this community and this country and all this Lebanese community. I am thinking wider than the Maronite when they taking this country to a continuous evolution. Now we have more Lebanese outside the country than we have Lebanese here. Is it bad? No, it's not bad because we are able to export our way of thinking outside the country. We have a bad economic crisis. Is it bad? No, because now it's the time to rethink about our system and *rethink* make clear decisions how to make things better. So if you look at the small details, you may have periods that are bad. If you look at the whole timeline, you can see that we are going up the Lebanese community, the Lebanese society is now a much more homogenous than it was hundred years before or less. So look at the announcement of the big [Greater] Lebanon during the Ottoman reign and you can see how now we are much more homogenous even if we have our political differences, our social differences, but they are much less in contrast, so you have less contrast in this difference. So we are going forward for real Lebanese model that can accept all Lebanese communities in one system and can get out of this confessional system. I see it in a positive way. (Interview No. 12)

Overall, I can state that the concept of the worst age of the Lebanese history was, probably, the most intensively discussed topic among all the topics covered in the interviews. The research participants discussed it vividly, and it can be explained by the fact that most of the interviewees connect this period to our days, thus making it a living experience.

Maronites and Lebanon

When discussing the connections between the Maronites and Lebanon, all the interviewees emphasised the mutually interconnected character of these relations by elaborating both on the importance of Lebanon for the Maronite community and on the essential role of the Maronite community in creating the modern-day Lebanon. I can state that this question out of all the questions I raised provided the most univocal opinions from the interviewees as each and every interviewee connected the Maronites to Lebanon, and I can thus conclude that the popular belief claiming that "the Maronites are the main reason why Lebanon exists" is supported by every person I have talked to. One such example can be observed in the following quote: "if you have to think of Lebanon, you have to think of Maronites, because we are the reason that Lebanon is Lebanon" (Interview No. 4). Each

interviewee sharing the same view provided some specific details on this question. One of the interviewees shared the idea that the Maronites are "maybe the only community who identify itself to a country named Lebanon" (Interview No. 7), while another told me that "we led the other communities to embrace the Lebanese identity" (Interview No. 18) when referring to the activities of the Maronite intellectuals who advocated for the establishment of Lebanon as a separate entity from Syria[117]. As another interviewee observed, the Patriarch Elias Hoayek[118] and the Maronites advocated for establishing Lebanon immediately after WWI:

[117] However, I also need to note that not only the Maronite activism in the twentieth century leading to the Lebanese independence was highlighted by the interviewees as a factor when elaborating on the historical Maronite role in Lebanon. Several interviewees told me that the Maronite community brought Christianity to Lebanon with this motive appearing several times in the interviews, and an example of such an opinion is as follows: "I think the Maronite are the main people who live in Lebanon at the beginning. So you know when *Mar* Maron came to Lebanon, he came from Syria and he speak with the people here and they weren't Chirstian at the time. He brought the good new[s] from Christ and he baptised them. The main people living in Lebanon, the first religious people are the Maronites. The others came later on" (Interview No. 3). Another interviewee shared a similar view about bringing Christianity to Lebanon, while also adding some details about the origin of the Maronite community itself: "There were nothing like Maronites before they came here to Lebanon. When they were in Syria, they weren't Maronite, they came here and formed this institution." The interviewee continued that the historical origin links the Maronites to Lebanon and connects all the Maronites across the world: "[A]t least for me, even if you're a Maronite, you're Lebanese, no matter if you're in Europe, Cyprus, or America, you are Lebanese because the Church started here, when our predecessors came from Syria to Lebanon and started Maronite Church, which spread to other places, so I think it's a very close tie to being a Maronite and Lebanese." (Interview No. 19)

[118] The activities of the Patriarch Elias Hoayek was a repeatedly appearing motive in the interviews claiming his (and the Maronites' in general) crucial role in establishing the modern-day Lebanon in 1920. For example, in another detailed passage, we read that "[T]he new Lebanon was also an idea and a project that Maronite Patriarch took to Versailles after the WWI Conference, and he was one behind this Sykes-Picot, let's say, idea, because, at that time, there was two current. One current wanted Lebanon to be pan-Arab country, and the other, Maronite Patriarch, who defended an idea of Lebanon. So they are the founders of this Lebanon. And I don't see this Lebanon without them. Any Lebanon without Christians and without Maronites is completely different than you see today. It's completely different. *Yani*, the spirit they have, the culture they have, the legacy they have, the way they act, and the way they think, and the way they interact in this country make it very important. It's not a secondary. On all aspects. What their cultural, what their social, what their political, which put them really in an important situation in shaping the present and the future of Lebanon and make this

> If we think that the Maronite people invented Lebanon during negotiations between the Patriarch [Hoayek] and the French Mandate, the French at that time said not, we cannot give you the whole big [Greater] Lebanon. They used to have *mutaṣarrifiyya* going to the Ottoman occupation. Now, when Patriarch Hoayek went to France, he requested to have big [Greater] Lebanon with Tripoli in the North and South. So if you think that Maronites are the builder, the establisher of this big [Greater] Lebanon, if we think this, say that the Maronite is Lebanon. Although we can say if you take off the Maronite people from Lebanon, Lebanon will not be Lebanon, will be something else – I don't know, maybe so it's a kind of marriage, it's a kind of Maronite marriage[119] – we have no divorce, so it's Maronite marriage between the State and the Maronite. (Interview No. 17)[120]

Let us have a look at one more example – this time, the interviewee explains the reasons why the Maronites assume they are responsible for creating the modern Lebanon and what is their mission in the State. In this case, the interviewee's idea of linking the Maronites to Lebanon is based on the idea of having a specific mission instead of binding it to historical events. The Maronites' mission, as we learn from the following quote, is similar to that one of conviviality as provided in the Document of the Synod:

> You know, there is a common belief and it's very deep in our subconscious thinking that Lebanon has been made to create a land or to find a land for this Maronite community to exist. So we have it in our deep belief, and it's a reality anyway. So all that has been done through the history has led to the creation of Lebanon with this special message to the whole world. So I don't think it's easy to have such a small country despite all the wars, the Civil War, other wars – despite

community very important community, *yani*, it's not a secondary role in this country." (Interview No. 11)

[119] For the explanation about the Maronite marriage, see Footnote No. 145.

[120] A similar view was expressed by another interviewee elaborating on the territorial expansion of Mount Lebanon: "[I]t is the creation of Lebanon. Because that you know before WWI we didn't have Lebanon as a country. We had Mount Lebanon, the city of Tripoli, city of Saida, the city of Beirut but pertaining to the Ottoman Empire. We didn't have country. The Patriarch at the time went to Paris at end of WWI and managed to convince international community that Lebanon has its own identity despite that it didn't have fixed borders. Maronites were the leaders and founders with its known surface until now." (Interview No. 18)

> all of this, we are still able to have this country with this diversity and where everybody still accepts the other even if there are some periods of tension, *but they are*, it's really a very unique experience in the world and a lot of lessons have to be learnt from this experience. So that's why *we are*, Lebanon is here, because Maronites need a land, where they can diffuse and disseminate their way of thinking. (Interview No. 12)

Moreover, I must note that another interviewee provided another type of argument for supporting the Maronite contribution to the development of the Lebanese history by claiming that the Maronites were leading in several spheres at the time, with the education being an especially valuable side of this contribution, and, although currently the influence of the Maronites in Lebanon is decreasing, they are still playing a huge role in the Lebanese affairs in plenty of areas:

> Maronites also had a big role in educational level, schools and universities – they were in charge of all of the cultural developments which happened *because of the Maronites*, and also all the hospitals on the social level were led by Maronites. They were dominant in this country. Recently, the role has changed, because they became weaker, their political role became weaker, because President does not have the same power anymore. Maronites also don't have demographical presence, because there are less people who are Maronite and vote for Maronites. But on the social and educational level, they still play a big role, but there are certainly more other communities – plenty of Maronite or Catholic offices, schools or hospitals have Muslims in them too. With weakening of political role, the social role gets weaker too. It's important to emphasise that other confessions have bigger roles too, so they have more schools and hospitals and so on. The balance of power from other confessions shifts to their side. (Interview No. 19)

It is important to note that, in the above mentioned passage, we find a crucially important aspect related to the Maronite community which is the presidency of Lebanon prescribed to Lebanon and which has a symbolic value for the Maronite community related to the key role of the Maronites in creating the modern Lebanon, as we learn from another interview:

> You know that Maronite is the reason Lebanon is found. Lebanon was only Mount Lebanon. But when opportunity was given to Hoayek, Lebanon was expanded. We think that Lebanon is found for all, it is not found for Maronite. But when Lebanon is Mount Lebanon, we were the majority. But when we have East and the West, we are not the majority. To put our hat in good place and to feel that we are and we will be in Lebanon for all the years that will come, they give us the presidency of Lebanon. (Interview No. 4)[121]

As we learn from another interview, the presidency in Lebanon prescribed to the Maronites is not only the political matter – it is also a cultural aspect distancing Lebanon from the other entities in the Middle East and providing a unique character to Lebanon:

> It's important political and economical and for our presence in this country or in this region, let's say, the Middle East region. To have the only region or only State with a President is a Christian – this is very important for the whole world to have it in the Middle East in such situation. (Interview No. 5)[122]

But, according to another interviewee, the Maronite political aspirations, although serving the political needs of the community, also had their price in the history and, probably, should be changed because the demographics of Lebanon are changing with the motive of losing once dominant position over the local affairs appearing regularly in almost every interview. The broader comment is as follows:

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[121] A similar idea that Lebanon is for all, was expressed by another interviewee: "Maronites and Patriarch Hoayek in 1920 had in mind to create Lebanon as a country not only for Maronites, so he added more areas to the so-called Greater Lebanon and these areas were mostly Sunni areas, so if we have kept Lebanon as it was before when Lebanon was established, it was 60/40, ratio of Christians: Muslims, and with just Maronite dominant areas it would be 75/25), so the Christians had in mind to create a modern country for everyone, they wanted to run it but not for just Maronites." (Interview No. 19)

[122] A similar, although slightly different passage on the topic was expressed by another interviewee who, when asked about how different Lebanon is from the other entities in the region, pointed to the Lebanese democracy and the Christian representation in politics: "[A]nd the system in Lebanon is different. You have the democracy, you have the rotation of power, you have freedom. The only country where Christian is president in the whole area and despite the number we have this sect of Maronite entity to play a big role in the area." (Interview No. 17)

> I think that this is one of the main problem of Maronites, that they have to handle a mission that, at the end, took us to big political conflict because, if you want, at certain point the Maronite were the basis of Mount Lebanon, and the basis of creation [of Lebanon], and the basis of this is the demographic changes [that are] not anymore the same. Also, in the mind of Maronites, they still want to play this role, but this is the all issue and everything you see and specially in our political conflict between Maronites and Lebanese president of how Maronites should rule and etc., etc. I think the Maronites should be part of society and should play role as part of society without having to try to rule a country that is not anymore able to be ruled this way. And this is how we are losing it year after year. Key positions were for Maronite and not anymore for Maronites, and neither for Maronites is a compromise for other communities that all the prerogatives of the Lebanese President were lost with time, if you follow the history. (Interview No. 9)

The decreasing influence of the Maronites over the Lebanese affairs is a matter of a concern, as I have already written, expressed by every interviewee. These concerns even led some interviewees to the pessimistic thoughts about the Maronite future in Lebanon, considering the future of the Lebanese Christians to go in a similar way as happened to the Christians in Syria or Iraq: "In 100 years they [Maronites] will be a minority. Cause they don't have a power any power anymore, just like any other Christian in Arab countries like in Iraq, in Syria, they live because they allow them to live. Not more than that." (Interview No. 3)

In another passage, we find an expressed disappointment with the Maronite politicians whose work, leading Lebanon to the political and economic turmoil, is criticised. Indeed, nothing is surprising that people are criticising politicians, especially under the circumstances of the financial crisis that Lebanon is suffering now; more important in this passage are the thoughts expressed towards the Maronite-Lebanese connections that are reaching the spiritual dimension, as reflected in the following quote:

> The Maronite community is stuck in this country, and this country is in her soul and body, and belief in Lebanon is sacred by God, and because of that they advance every community to preserve this country from any dangers coming from outside. But now, this case is in the, I don't know, in the minimum of how the Maronite politician

> active in Lebanon. Their work now is very weak, if you compare to our ancestors, to preserve this country. Maybe because they're divided or maybe the outside forces *is* [are] more stronger than their value or the attitude at this stage. (Interview No. 15)

The spiritual dimension of the land and the mountains, the sacred connections between the Maronites and the Lebanese land are so deeply integrated into the perceptions of the Maronites whom I interviewed that I clearly conclude these motives to be an ontological element for the Maronite community (similar significance was expressed in the Document of the Synod). Almost every interviewee agreed that the Maronites are connected to Lebanon through the nature and geography, with one of such examples being as follows:

> If you relate this to the geographical location of Maronites, and if you relate this social demographic development of the Maronite, so you will find more Maronites who were landowners, villagers that were working in agriculture compared to Orthodox, who were living in cities, in Beirut and who were mainly different profile entrepreneur. This is what you will find now in big Orthodox and Maronite families. (Interview No. 9)

Another interviewee shared a similar view about the geography: "Without the geography – there would be no Lebanon. It's the geography, which was the natural fortress, where the Maronites were able to come and hide and to preserve their identity. This is how they were able to preserve." (Interview No. 7)

Although both above mentioned quotes are informative, yet, considering all the data collected through the interviews, I assume the following quote to provide the most detailed description connecting the geographical factor to the Lebanese history and defining its contribution that reaches even the Phoenician times:

> Geography played a role. It's obvious, because we are a country that is open to the sea, we are totally different from the countries that are totally deserted, and two hundred kilometres away is the desert. So this geography plays a role. This is why Lebanon was more like an open country for different civilizations, different cultures, and this is why Lebanese people *who* are culturally diversified much more than Arabs around us. This is why the Phoenicians were in Lebanon –

> because of the country, because they would not live in a desert. So they can export, they can go. So Lebanon by geography is very important for its cultural identity. (Interview No. 9)

What is more, the mountains, the Maronite attachment to them is an essentially important cultural and historical factor, perceived as making the Maronite community different compared the other communities and distancing them, at least, from the Orthodox people[123], while also providing some collective features to the Maronites, as described by another interviewee:

> The Maronites are more related to mountains than cities. Historically, the Orthodox were in the cities, the Maronites were in the mountains. Historically, they [Maronites] are not the aristocrats, they are peasants, the poor people who lived in the mountain and were fighters. (Interview No. 11)

Additionally, it should be stated that, because of the Maronite historical presence in the mountains throughout the ages, the attachment to them can also be revealed through the fact that many places that are historically, culturally, and also spiritually important for the Maronite community are located in the mountainous areas of Lebanon, while, for the other communities, these places do not possess the same value. This idea was expressed by one of the interviewees as follows:

> Maybe they [Christians] have the same God or the same belief but the Maronite had a plus values in Lebanon than the other Christian communities. They start the idea of Lebanon, they have a spiritual links in this country. You can see the Maronite house stuck in Lebanon by visiting the valley Qannoubine and Patriarkia Marounia [Bkirki] or some places that can't find another Christian communities in Lebanon. (Interview No. 15)[124]

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[123] According to one of the interviewees, the Maronites are the mountaineers along with the Druze community, who also historically used to live in the area of the mountains: "Druze and Christians are completely mountaineers, Mediterraneans, they're local, they originate from this land." (Interview No. 13)

[124] One more aspect was elaborated in the interviews revealing the differences in the geopolitical orientation of various Christian communities residing in Lebanon with the Maronites traditionally being oriented Westwards, while the Orthodox Christians in Lebanon feel greater attachment to the Middle East: "I think

Consequently, based on the claim of one of the interviewees, we can state that the real Maronite spirit can be found in the mountains because "[Y]ou cannot feel the Maronite identity in Beirut" (Interview No. 9). Beirut, currently the cultural, economic, and political centre of Lebanon, historically, just as the other major cities of Lebanon, used to be inhabited by other communities. Naturally, living in the mountains also contributed to the Maronite self-image, thus assisting in preserving the Maronite values which are described as follows, starting with the liberty, because the Maronite community is the community:

> who worship one thing – liberty. Liberty of freedom, liberty of thought, liberty of speaking, of whatever. Liberty is liberty with the capital L. So this is why these people came and stayed in these high mountains. And every time when the invaders were pushing to exterminate them, they used to go up up up more and more to the upper mountain. Whenever they had an opportunity, they expand again. (Interview No. 7)

The land, the mountains, the love of freedom – everything is closely interconnected in the perceptions of the interviewees, as indicated in most of the cases. Another interviewee elaborated on the motive of the mountains by even more in detail discussing the lifestyle, the character, and the history of the Maronite community:

> I think the Maronites have the history of being under pressure, and idea to come to Lebanon, they're hardworking people, they're great at this *teraz* in Lebanese, it comes from the culture of Maronites, because they came not to comfortable places with beaches, they had to create their own place, grow crops, food, trees, and essential things to survive, and that's why they live in remote areas with mountains, snow, which naturally protected them. I think these are the main character ideas of Maronite: being attached to the land but also having a background that they need to defend it – it comes from their history where they faced a lot of attacks and pressure, not just from Muslims,

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Maronites and Lebanon grew up in the past, they have more powers than others, and historical background means that France (our good mother) and other Western powers had good ties and power in Lebanon. I think is this a cultural aspect, which is important, some people would say that the Orthodox would have more ties to the Middle East and this area, and question why Maronites have more ties with the West, but that's the opinion that I have." (Interview No. 19)

but also Christians, who were killing each other, based on the question on what do you believe and trying to figure out which way of believing was right. (Interview No. 19)

Finally, I consider it would be appropriate to end the topic about the Lebanese-Maronite relations with the statement of one of the interviewees who not only elaborated on these relations, but also claimed that, without Lebanon, the Maronite community is endangered, and Lebanon is a necessary condition for the Maronite community to exist; otherwise, the Maronites, especially in the diaspora[125], would merge with the other communities[126]. The more detailed quote is as follows:

> I told you before that Maronites cannot exist without Lebanon. If Lebanon stops existing, the Maronites won't exist too. Of course, there are people who go to churches in Sydney, they're very happy, and their children go there, but children of these children won't go, so it'd disappear. Can there be an Anglican Church without England? No. Same goes for Maronites and Lebanon. […] Of course, the Maronites played a huge role there as well – for example, if we look at their flag, the cedar, it became the flag of Lebanon. Historically, they used to be equal to Lebanon, even now we say that Maronites cannot be without Lebanon, it's impossible. Maronites in Australia or

[125] The Lebanese diaspora is a very wide topic which is beyond the scope of my research; however, some observations on this aspect were made since the diaspora is deeply integrated into the Maronite self-perceptions, appearing at times in various contexts. For example, one interviewee told me that "Lebanon is difficult to be beaten because of the diaspora. You see one tenth of the iceberg, but we are enrooted in the society from outside to inside." (Interview No. 17)

[126] Particularly, considering the fact, expressed by most interviewees, that the Maronites in the diaspora are gradually losing their connections to Lebanon, and eventually the situation turns into, as it was described by one interviewee when speaking about diaspora, "they do not feel belonging anymore" (Interview No. 3). With the time the gap between Maronites residing in Lebanon and those residing in diaspora is widening and the diaspora, according to one interviewee, is less attached to Lebanon: "The diaspora has to be split in different diaspora: the diaspora of Lebanese that has been away for like hundred years, these are different from diaspora that emigrated during the war or during recent years. Those who left during the last years are still very attached to this country and love it. The whole diaspora definitely shares the love with this country, but if you would tell me that one of the main difference is the lifestyle. There is no connection between those who live in Lebanon and outside of it. It's as simple as that. The difference between the people living outside the Lebanon – they always believe that Lebanon will get better, whereas those who live in Lebanon are just waiting for an opportunity to leave the country." (Interview No. 14)

in any other place would disappear if Lebanon disappears. (Interview No. 13)[127]

To sum up, I can state that, similarly to the idea expressed in the Document of the Synod, all the interviewees elaborated on the motive of the mountains and the spiritual connections between the mountains and the Maronites, making it also one of the most vividly discussed topics in the interviews and leading to a claim which was popular among the interviewees that Lebanon is a necessary condition for the Maronite community to exist.

Phoenicianism and the historical mosaic

When preparing the questionnaire before my trip to Lebanon, I also wanted to understand whether the once actively developed concept of Phoenicianism still has any relevance within the Maronite community. This question gained even more importance due to the fact that the Document of the Synod is not covering this topic, which is, considering the Lebanese and Maronite history of the twentieth century, one of the essential aspects in the Maronite thought. During the interviews, I realised this topic to be not as important as it once used to be as most of the interviewees shared the idea that the Phoenician legacy does not have direct relations to the modern-day Lebanon, for example, by claiming that "Basically, after these many centuries and decades have passed I don't think that we are like straight related to Phoenicians" (Interview No. 6). Additionally, a more detailed opinion was shared by another interviewee:

> To tell you the truth, we don't care. We don't care if you were a Phoenician. Lebanon was a country where people who are seeking freedom and getting away from torturing, they went to Lebanon to escape these things and a lot of Christians in the region came here.

[127] In addition to this idea, we should also mention two opinions that considered Lebanon's role in the Maronite self-identification worldwide. In this regard, Lebanon is a unifying aspect, common to all the Maronites across the world because every Maronite is originating from Lebanon: "Lebanon was made, was built, and the idea of Lebanon was for Maronite. So you cannot find a Maronite elsewhere. His origin must be from Lebanon. Any Maronite's in the world origin must be Lebanon" (Interview No. 3). Also, we have to observe that being Maronite is not as universal as being a Catholic due to the Maronite attachment to Lebanon: "[B]ecause they are coming from the same land. As for, let's say, Catholicism, you have different countries, they can come from, I don't know, Lebanon, from Lithuania, from France, so it changes. Maronite has only come from Lebanon, so they have, I think, the same spirituality or the same focus." (Interview No. 5)

> Definitely, they went through bad days to migrate, and Phoenicians… I would be proud if my ancestors because Phoenicians were a big empire in the history, but if they are not ancestor... I don't really care, why would we care? (Interview No. 14)

Another interviewee contributed to the discussion in the following way: "It is very old, the Phoenician. It is too old to do a connection with the people living now and Phoenicians. Because Lebanon was on intersection of routes, so person came and some of these persons stayed here. And later on, you know, everybody passed by." (Interview No. 3)[128]

However, we have to note that some interviewees, despite neglecting the direct influence of the Phoenicians to the modern-day Lebanese people and not interconnecting both, while elaborating on the other aspects of Lebanese history, mainly Saint Maroun, who was highlighted by some interviewees in various contexts to be a crucial figure in the Maronite history, at the same time expressed their opinion that some elements of the Phoenician legacy are relevant to the modern Lebanese people:

> I am not sure if we go and dig in the past to find and reveal if we are Phoenicians or we are *Canaani*[129] descendants of Saint John Maroun. I don't think this will change a lot. Our mission has really changed, and we are at the much more advanced and complex stage of defining targets and objectives, and, I think, this discussion is useless for the moment. You can find a lot of theories. Some say that Maronites are Phoenicians, others say that no, Phoenicians have left this land during some wars during Arab conquest. So I am not sure if we are the Phoenicians. Maybe we are not the Phoenicians but what we know is that we are keeping from the Phoenicians this eagerness to be open,

[128] I need to note that one interviewee told me not to believe in any ancestors of Lebanon, and to focus instead on the historical presence and the origin of the Lebanese people in the region by arguing that "It's a very problematic topic, I believe that we are part of this area, we didn't come from somewhere, we are not Phoenicians, Arabs, we want to be related to this area – I am somebody who is tied to this area, I am not somebody who came from abroad to live here." (Interview No. 19)

[129] In addition to the Phoenician motives, also, the Canaanite motive, as an important aspect in the Maronite thought, appeared several times in the interviews, for example: "Ethnically, all Maronite people think that they are Canaanite. *Canaani* means Phoenicians. The others think they are Arabs. So, there is some differentiation between the Maronites and the others" (Interview No. 17). However, no further comments were made about the topic.

> to be open for the West, to be open to the strangers, and to collaborate with other civilizations. We keep this in our mind. Maybe it's our Sun, maybe it's our sea that dictate, this not the genetic only. And we have from Saint Maroun this capacity to struggle and to struggle more not to give up before getting to what we believe in. And, finally, we have some needs in this region that we feel that we can close a gap that exists in the needs, and that's a whole fusion of all of this genetics, history, needs and role model from Saint John Maroun. (Interview No. 12)

In addition to the idea expressed above, another interviewee shared some similar considerations about the Phoenician legacy regarding the modern Lebanese people with the exception of Saint Maroun, who was not mentioned in the following quote:

> Not anymore. Phoenician wasn't a people. It was not a country. We have Tyre, Byblos, people who were living on the coastal area. These were the Phoenician people. And where is the connection to Maronite? I don't know. The Phoenician were atheists and were merchants. I don't think Lebanese are Phoenician. The Phoenician people were living in this area and are still living. But to say that we have this gene of Phoenician – you know Lebanese are trading and commercial people – is it coming from the gene – I don't know. (Interview No. 3)

When asked about Phoenicianism, several interviewees explained that this ideology was and, to some extent, is still a matter of the ideological clash in the political domain between various fractions of Lebanon, having different perceptions towards the development of Lebanon, and drawing a line based on the social/cultural affiliations, the same lines that we have already discussed in the historical part of the research concurring with the Arabist and non-Arabist parties of Lebanon:

> You will always have in Lebanon different versions, and these different versions are always related to the religious belief or the social beliefs. And if you do your interviews, you will see that more Christians will try to identify themselves as the descendants from the Phoenicians, and more Muslims will see themselves as Arabs. This is the story that will never end in Lebanon – are we Phoenicians or are

> we Arabs because – it's an identity thing. In my opinion, it doesn't make sense. (Interview No. 9)

Another interviewee contributed to the topic by claiming that Phoenicianism was a response to the tendency observed in the West of mixing the Arab and Muslim cultures, while at the same time gaining its political dimension during the Civil War of the Maronites against the Arabism:

> [Phoenicianism] was used only against Arabism. Not to be Arabic, you are Phoenician. But this is during the war between the Christians and the Muslims. Because, I told you, all the Western countries, they used to confuse between Arab and Muslim because being Arabic is not you can be not Muslim and be Arab like our ancestors they were Arabic but Christians. (Interview No. 10)[130]

Indeed, I have to remark that there were several interviewees who considered the Phoenician legacy to be the core of the Lebanese identity: "[I]n reality, we are Canaani, Phoenician, Lebanese. We are not Arabic people" (Interview No. 4). Another interviewee contributed to the topic as follows: "Since we are coming after Phoenicians if you want, our ancestors, so we were also people open to the sea. We were sailormen, and adventurous in the DNA" (Interview No. 7). The Phoenician presence is also important historically for the Lebanese history because most of the Lebanese coastal cities were established in the Phoenician times, and therefore they are currently counting several thousand years of existence: "[W]e had Phoenicians who established all the cities on the coast" (Interview No. 18). Consequently, we can claim that the Phoenicianism is still an active living ideology, although this ideology is not dominating the discourse among the interviewees I talked to.

Based on the interviewees I have made, it would be accurate to claim that, more than the Phoenician legacy, the multilayered character of the Lebanese history with the overlapping different historical periods, as well as

[130] A similar, detailed explanation was provided by another interviewee elaborating a highly similar topic as well: "My point of view is that we are part of this area, part of these Arab countries – Christians for a long time refuse to say that they're Arabs, this is not because of geopolitical aspect, but political aspect, because saying that you are Arab equals Muslim and they don't want to say that they're Arabs because they don't want to be absorbed. If you're Arab, you're Muslim, even when I come to Europe, people think like that, maybe it's lack of culture, but Lebanese didn't want to be associated with Islam, but it's not true. All Arabs and Phoenicians, to my knowledge, come from the same part." (Interview No. 19)

the 18 officially recognised communities living in Lebanon, both motives being compared to the mosaic, was among the most commonly expressed ideas during the interviews, elaborated by every interviewee with different details provided as having importance. One of the interviewees combined both historical and cultural diversity of Lebanon by referring to the message of John Paul II:

> Look, Lebanon is like a puzzle. It's mosaic. So you can find the Phoenician roots in it, you can find some Arab, you can find some European from the Crusaders, and you can find a little Armenian minority. So it's a mixture. [...] If you look at the Bible, the Old Testament, it used to be the *Azil*. All kind of birds come to the cedars of Lebanon. Or kind of refugees come here. For that reason, we got a lot of refugees in Lebanon. First of all, the Armenians. And then the Palestinians, and the Syrians, and we have all kind of people. Maybe this is what pope John Paul II said – he said Lebanon is not a country, it's a message or mission. *Rissala* in Arabic. It is more than a country. (Interview No. 17)

Another interviewee shared a similar view without providing any specific references either to history, or to any community, while focusing on the fusion instead:

> Yes, you know, first *into* diversity, the culture that is really very, very different from one community to the other, and this ability to make a good fusion of all these, it's really cosmopolitan model. So you can see all kinds of people, all kinds of civilizations coming and living together. (Interview No. 12)

Consequently, this historical and cultural diversity of Lebanon is capable of reflecting the modern Lebanese cultural landscape and the fusion consisting of different communities residing in Lebanon. Another interviewee shifted the topic to the political domain and listed several names by claiming that the real Lebanese ancestor can by anyone contributing to the development and prosperity regardless of the confessional origin:

> I think we can call it the ancestor of Lebanon that every person come is Lebanese and work correctly for this country and every confessional – maybe he is Muslim like as-Sulh [1894–1951], maybe he is Maronite like Camille Chamoun [1900–1987], maybe he is Shia

> like Kamel Asaad [1932–2010], maybe he is like Sabri Hamadeh [1902–1976], Shia – every person has a good work for Lebanon I can call them our ancestors. (Interview No. 15)

Considering the above-mentioned aspects of the cultural and historical diversity, we naturally move onto the question of the Lebanese conviviality, a topic which is widely discussed in the Document of the Synod. In one way or another, this motive appeared almost in every interview; for example, one interviewee introduced the term *equilibrium*:

> There was always a equilibrium between Muslims and Christians in Lebanon, which doesn't exist in the other Arab countries where there is a huge majority of Muslims and almost irrelevant presence of Christians. Which makes the Christians partners in this country in terms of decisions, in terms of ruling the country, in terms of culture, influence, educational institutions, their way of love, with everything, *yani*[131], the way they live, this interaction between Christians and Muslims, it made with country with the difference spirit of coexistence. (Interview No. 11)

Another example of the Lebanese coexistence that can be discussed in many domains, for example, social, historical, cultural, even political, can be found in the geographical distribution of the places of habitation of various communities with several interviewees emphasising this factor as being one of the most descriptive factors of not only the Lebanese, but also the Maronite conviviality. The main argument supporting this idea is based on the fact that the Maronite community is the only community in Lebanon to reside in every part of Lebanon with any other community residing in Lebanon. One interviewee told me that "In Lebanon, we have 1611 villages. There is not one single village mixed between Muslim Sunni and Muslim Shia. Not one between Druze and Shia. Druze and Sunni. It's only the Christians who live with everybody" (Interview No. 7). Another interviewee contributed to the topic in the following way: "Maronite is only community to spread all over the country. In North Lebanon, you don't find Shia. You don't find Catholic in the North. But you find Maronite in the North. In all districts" (Interview No. 18). One more interviewee also observed this tendency:

[131] A widely used word in Arabic meaning 'so', 'that is', 'namely'.

> Actually, if you want, there is a strong correlation between this society and religion in Lebanon in a way that religious groups, as you maybe noticed, are located in different regions. For instance, you will find the Shia in the South, you will find the Druze in the North of Lebanon, so, in a way, Maronites or the Christians used to live in the villages, and in the Mount Lebanon, and more inner part of Lebanon, so this is in a way what socially makes them different, let's say, from Orthodox, if you want, to a comparison with the Christian religion. (Interview No. 9)

Consequently, as we see, this motive of coexistence, with this coexistence being reflected by the geographical distribution, was perceived to be an important factor by every interviewee, and this motive could be a superb ending for the topic of the collective memory; however, I believe, ending the discussion about the Lebanese conviviality with the following quote would be more informative and accurate since it explains the Lebanese coexistence on the political level, especially considering how complicated it was in the twentieth century. The main idea of the quote relies on the principle expressed by the interviewee that, since the political system in Lebanon failed, on the political level, there are some clashes between various communities within Lebanon; however, on the popular level the daily interactions among various communities can be described as full of respect and understanding:

> They [Lebanese] live it in a daily interaction[132], they live it in a real coexistence, and we have also totally failed political system with problems between Christians and Muslims of politically. I believe that, on the popular level, on the social level, no, we have success story, people live very well together. We have great interactions as families between each other, there *is* [are] friends between each

[132] An example of the Lebanese coexistence in the daily interaction can be reflected in the following quote: "I'll give an example. Another example. Because we succeeded to create this culture of equality between the Muslims and the Christians. We were able to do this. What's this? It's 25 of March which is the Anunciation Day to Virgin Mary. OK? So because Mary was cited in the Quran more than 40 times, we succeeded to create in Lebanon, and this is unique in the world an Islamo-Christian religious holiday, common Christian-Muslim holiday on the 25 of March dedicated to Mary. Because it's venerated by Muslims and Christians. And the guys who created this concept has succeeded to bring the 18 different communities of Lebanon, 18 to come and pray together on the 25 of March for the peace in Lebanon. This would have never existed if there are no equality between Christians and Muslims." (Interview No. 7)

> others, and we have an excellent social model, if you want. And I don't want to talk about some extremists that exist here, and they exist always in societies. But the majority of people live well off together. They understand each other, they respect each other, the differences, they respect each other's particularities, and, at the same time, they are able to live together and are able to and are sharing their occasions, their everything, *yani*, they are living greatly together. (Interview No. 11)

Overall, we can state that the motive of the cultural and historical diversity is one of the key elements describing the Lebanese history, and it is deeply integrated into the modern collective Maronite identity.

4.2.2. The language ideology

Syriac

The Syriac language, which is a language of origin for the Maronite community, was mentioned by several interviewees as a contributing factor to the Maronite identity due to considering it to be the language of the Maronite Church and the liturgy with very few regular speakers of it[133]: "[I]t's rare to use now, only in the small convent in Lebanon use Syriac. And maybe only in the Mass of Maronite use this Syriac language" (Interview No. 15). Another interviewee described the relations between the individuals of the Maronite community and the Syriac language based on the own experience based on attending church services: "I can speak [Syriac] but I don't know what I am talking about. In the church, there is part when somebody died, there is ten minutes, when I was kid, nowadays they say in Arabic, then they were singing Syriac, I remember very well, I can say 10 minutes." (Interview No. 3)

However, historically, the Syriac language had the key role in the development of the Maronite community, and it is still being considered to be one of the essential elements of the Maronite collective identity. One of the interviewees emphasised the historical importance of the Syriac language by

[133] One interviewee told that still there are some communities speaking Syriac and expressed a wish to preserve the Syriac language: "[T]he good thing is that the Syriac people, communities in Lebanon, the Syrian, the Chaldean, they still speak between themselves Syriac which is an Aramaean. And it's good that they are preserving the language actually. [...] We used to speak Syriac. Unfortunately, now we are speaking Arabic. But we have to preserve the Syriac language. We are not doing enough for this." (Interview No. 7)

claiming its key role in the historical formation of the Maronite community that originated from Saint Maroun who linked the community to Lebanon:

> What is the Syriac that carried this identity to our day? The Syriac is the Maronite Church, or Saint Maroun, who is the founder of the Church, the army, the Marada, the patriarchate, and the idea of Lebanon. Before him, the Maronites were simply people who were living in Cyprus, Syria or Lebanon, they weren't linked to country, with Saint John Maron, it was Lebanon. (Interview No. 13)

Afterwards, the interviewee, the only one to cover this topic, moved to the description of the events that happened in the twentieth century and elaborated on an attempt to institutionalise the Syriac language in Lebanon (although ending without any result), and, I believe, the quote has to be provided in full:

> Charles Malek [1906–1987], Greek Orthodox, but the most Maronite of all, wrote two letters to Maronites[134], in which he emphasises the importance of Mount Lebanon, and Bkirki, and the Syriac language to the Maronites and the Lebanon, he says they are very important. And he points the finger and warns that these things shouldn't become just part of the museum. About Syriac language, he says that you are responsible for teaching this language, but not the way they do in the West, as a curiosity, as something for university or museums, but this language will be Lebanese language. And, in 1946, Patriarch Antonio asked father Raphael Armalette to write the letter in Syriac in which he said that the official language of Lebanon should be Syriac. It's in 1946, exactly 3 years after Lebanon was declared an Arabic nation with Arabic language. (Interview No. 13)

To sum up, despite the historical and cultural importance of the Syriac language to the Maronite community, overall, this language does not play the key role in the modern Maronite collective identity construction.

Lebanese Arabic

[134] One of the letters can be found via the following link: <https://maronitefoundation.org/uploads/MaroniteAcademy/courses/Charles%20Malek%27s%20letter%20to%20the%20Maronites.pdf> [last accessed 15 June 2023]

When preparing the questionnaire before my trip to Lebanon and having in mind both factors – the one being the presence of Lebanese dialect with the other being the discussions of the twentieth century about the Lebanese language – I intentionally included the question about the Maronite perception towards Lebanese language expecting either development of the topic or neglecting this idea by the interviewees. When asked this question, apart from the openly expressed general sentiments towards the Lebanese spoken variety, for example, by telling me that "Lebanese language is very easy and is very soft. It's pleasant to hear, to listen" (Interview No. 18)[135]. Most of the interviewees did not elaborate on the topic about the distinctiveness of the Lebanese language by claiming it to be part of the Arabic language. For example: "[I]t's a dialect that comes from Arabic *yani*. You cannot ignore that it's really Arabic" (Interview No. 11). Another interviewee contributed that "I don't have this complex of being attached to Arab World personally, but some people yes, they do." (Interview No. 9)

Instead of focusing on the distinctiveness of the Lebanese spoken variety, many interviewees emphasised the closeness of Lebanese Arabic to Modern Standard Arabic, for example, by stating that "[T]he Lebanese language is most similar to Arabic than the others" (Interview No. 17). Some others continued elaborating the topic of the Lebanese and Arabic linguistic relations with several interviewees highlighting a pivotal role of the Maronite community in the process of *an-Nahḍa*:

> They told us *an-Nahḍa* began in Iraq before Lebanon 200 years. But we all know, and all history books talk about literature and language of Lebanon, and poetry, all of them made *an-Nahḍa* 200 years before and you have to know that Lebanon is the first place in this Middle East that we have the first university *Dżāmi'at al-Ḥikmah*, and maybe you know about it. (Interview No. 4)

Apart from *an-Nahḍa*, another interviewee emphasised the role of the Lebanese people in the development of the Arabic language tradition in the

[135] Another interviewee provided a more detailed description about the Lebanese spoken variety, by describing it as a refined accent: "It's very important. When you travel all over the world, most of the time, if you in the mall, supermarket, public place, you recognise mainly Maronite or Lebanese Christian by spoken Arabic. Because the spoken Arabic is refined accent. It is influenced by foreign languages. That's why. For the Muslims, Lebanese Muslims, also you recognise them by the language because they use less foreign words. And they tend to use much more official language mixed with Lebanese Arabic." (Interview No. 18)

middle of the twentieth century: "[S]o Lebanese participated in renovating Arabic in 1960s." (Interview No. 17)

In addition to this, some interviewees provided further details about the relations between Lebanese Arabic and other dialects of Arabic. One of the interviewees elaborated on the similarities between the different dialects of Arabic, and, despite pointing to the specific character of Lebanese Arabic, claimed it to be a part of the Arabic language. The interviewee also referred to the Said Akl's ideas and, when providing arguments to support his own claims, he told me that understanding the other dialects is an essential factor binding Lebanese Arabic with the other Arabic dialects:

> Now if we are talking about the dialect, Lebanese dialect, I don't think it's a language, *because* Said Akl used to say it's a language. Really, I don't think we have all the components to talk about a Lebanese language. We are a dialect of Arabic. It's clear. Because I can speak with my dialect with somebody coming from Algeria, another coming from Morocco, and another coming from Syria. They use different dialects of Arabic, and I can speak with them and I can understand what they say with some difficulties sometimes, but, finally, we are able to communicate with this language, so I am not sure if we have a Lebanese language. We have a dialect, we have a Lebanese way of saying things, maybe it's related to this community or this society, temperament. We have a special social personality, but not a language. (Interview No. 12)

However, the similarity of Lebanese Arabic with the other Arabic dialects raises questions between the research participants, because, at the same time, differently to the above quoted opinion, some other interviewees expressed their idea that Lebanese Arabic differs from the other dialects of Arabic to a degree that Arabic speakers of other dialects cannot understand Lebanese Arabic and vice versa:

> It's a part [of Arabic], but, at the same time, separate. Because when you talk Lebanese they don't understand what you are talking. Because you are talking Lebanese slang. Our Lebanese slang is a composition from our *Fuṣḥā*, composition of our Syriac, and the Aramaic, and we have a lot of things that we use from Turkey, but the main Arabic slang, Lebanese slang, is not like other. They can understand what we are talking *for* Kuwait, Saudi, Egypt, but they don't understand our slang, and they think that they understand it, but

when we talk fast, we can talk it in a fast way and can't understand it. (Interview No. 4)

When providing references to the specific features of the Lebanese dialect, the Aramaic influence was elaborated by several interviewees as the main characteristic of Lebanese Arabic:

> The Lebanese accent of Mount Lebanon and mostly used by Maronites is mainly the familiar Arabic, but modified and influenced by Syriac language *there* [that] was spoken 2000 years ago by Jesus and his disciples. We call it Aramaic. Even though our spoken Arabic is the closest to official [Modern Standard] Arabic. (Interview No. 18).

Another interviewee even provided specific examples about the words of the Aramaic origin in Lebanese Arabic, and also explained the relations between Lebanese Arabic and other dialects of Arabic, while in the same passage claiming that the more geographically Arabic dialect is close to Lebanon, the mutual understanding becomes easier:

> Aramaic, the language of the Christ. Every word with two letters is from Aramaic. Let's say *nut* – jump. No *nut* in Arabic. All two letters are coming from Aramaic, Aramaic from the Christ. There is a lot of words in Lebanese language. [...] We can understand it's separate language. Syrian can understand us. Egyptian are close. Palestinian. It's an Arabic impregnated by the Aramaic. But if we talk, all the Arab countries will understand, but when they talk we will not understand Moroccan, Algerian, let's say. [...] More you are far from Lebanon, more it becomes difficult. More you are near, more you can understand Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian and more you are far, more it becomes difficult. (Interview No. 13)

Finally, I need to note that only one interviewee directly told me that Lebanese is a distinct language, and *we need to do more about this language* (Interview No. 2), thereby sharing a similar view to the one expressed and developed by Said Akl. However, I also need to observe that two interviewees told me that the written tradition of a language is a necessary component for the dialect to become a distinct language, thus opening the space for Lebanese Arabic to become a language one day. While the first interviewee used this argument for supporting the claim that Lebanese Arabic is a dialect of

Arabic[136], the other interview did not oppose the idea of the distinct character of Lebanese Arabic, by claiming that if it becomes a written language one day, it would definitely become a distinct language as there are no linguistic components that would prevent from such a move. The quote is highly informative and worth quoting in full:

> Scientifically, the only difference between a dialect and a language is the fact that it's written. Scientifically, it's the only difference. You can take any dialect, and the moment you write it, it becomes a language. For example, you travel to Barcelona, and in the airport you see those yellow signs with three lines – one in English, which would tell you where to go get your luggage, and two in Spanish, and you see, why it's Spanish twice? No, look, in the second, there's an accent on the *o*, five words are the same, but, on one of them, there's an accent on the *o* which makes it separate from the other one. This is Catalonian, this is Spanish, two different. Here, if you take Lebanese and compare it with Arabic, there are zero Arabic words in some sentences. But it is a dialect. And it's a dialect of Arabic. Why? Because it's not written, because the language in the school or on the TV is Arabic. So whatever you do, what you're speaking, is the dialect of Arabic even though we don't use any words in Arabic while speaking. The same language 200 years ago was called Syriac. When Assemani came from Rome to Hasroun[137] 300 years ago, they said he spoke in Syriac. Maybe he was speaking the same thing we are speaking today, but it was called Syriac because, back then, they wrote everything in Syriac and taught Syriac at school. Today it's called Arabic, at the moment. When we start teaching Syriac at school, we will call what we speak Syriac, or a dialect of Syriac. (Interview No. 13)

To sum up, we can state that, although the question of Lebanese Arabic still raises discussions within the Maronite community with plenty of

[136] The quote is as follows: "[I]t's [Lebanese Arabic] a spoken language, it's not a language that is written, there are no established rules, at least I don't know anyone who teaches this language in academy. If you go to school, you can learn Arabic, but not Lebanese. The point of view of some people is that they're not accepting the fact that Lebanese is a dialect and not a full language that has all the necessary features, but I am not that aware about the differences between dialect and a language, but there is a common saying that if a language cannot be written, you cannot call it a language, that's a case of Lebanese." (Interview No. 19)

[137] A village in Qadisha Valley.

various opinions being expressed, however, I would say that, more than Lebanese Arabic, the Lebanese multilingualism defines the Maronite approach towards language and its importance to its modern identity, as we shall see in the following paragraph.

Mixture of languages and multilingualism

When talking to the interviewees about the language, one of the most commonly expressed opinions to my questions was the claim that the Maronite community is multilingual[138], with this multilingualism being the main feature capable of defining the Maronite identity in the linguistic domain. One interviewee told me that it reflects the need to be open for the Maronite community by having three languages at their disposal: "[T]hey [Maronites] are already speaking three languages. This is part of our culture. Because we need this need always to be open to others, we don't live in this closed compound, let's say" (Interview No. 11). The motive of openness to other civilizations was also emphasised by another interviewee as follows: "[Y]es, this reflects our tendency and our love to be open to other civilizations. This is more important than having a language. Being multilingual and being able to express our ideas in many languages is much better than having our own language." (Interview No. 12)

In addition to the Maronite multilingualism, another essentially important aspect describing the modern Maronite community in the linguistic domain and, actually, originating from the Maronite multilingualism, as most of the interviewees told me, is the way the Lebanese and, particularly, the Maronite speak, e.g., by mixing several different languages in their daily conversations at the same time. This phenomenon, according to one of the interviewees, is particularly related to the Christian community: "[Ww]e do speak more and more, we mix languages, we mainly mix Arabic and French and somehow English, and but it's not only, to my opinion, the Maronite thing. It's more a Christian thing" (Interview No. 9). As it was already indicated in the previous quote, this mixture consists of English, French and Arabic that are being used simultaneously, at the same time:

> Everyone's like that. We don't use Arabic, we don't use the French, we don't use English, we just mixing much. Some words I don't even remember in certain language, I just talk them in another, and

[138] For example, "Christians, especially Maronites, they are talented in linguistics. They have this to speak more than one language." (Interview No. 17)

everyone around understands, and everyone around is fine with it. (Interview No. 6)[139]

What is more, the already mentioned way of speaking by mixing languages also influenced the modern means of communication on the digital platforms: "[B]ut rarely we type in Arabic. We type in French, we type in English, we send voice messages in Arabic, yes, we call in Arabic maybe, but to say faster to communicate in English or in French." (Interview No. 6)

Additionally, another interviewee provided an even broader analysis of the languages that are historically important to the Maronite community, with each language having the historical basis for being integrated into the Lebanese spoken variety:

> Look, we use today Arabic. In the past, Syriac, as a common language, they spoke at the time. Liturgy Syriac. But daily we use Arabic. The origin of Arabic is Aramaic. And Aramaic is the language of Jesus. And Syriac was Aramaic. It's a chain. And we speak Lebanese Arabic now. It's a kind of derived from Aramaic and Syriac. And we got some Turkish words inside. We got some words from Turkish, we got some words from French, we got some words from English. (Interview No. 17)

Of these languages, we also have to state that the French language has specific historical and cultural relations with the Maronite community as we have already discussed in the previous chapters, and as it was reflected in the interviews with the Maronites widely using the French language. One such example is as follows:

> Even though you try to analyse the 100 Sunni living in Beirut and 100 Maronite or Christians living in this region, you will find that we have

[139] Another interviewee describing this combination of the modern Lebanese spoken variety defined it in the following way: "Lebanese language is combination. It's a an Arabic language, of course, it's a dialect of Arabic, it's not the Arabic that we write normally, so it's a part of Arabic but it's a combination between French, there is a lot of French, and some kind of English, there is some words from English, so it's a combination, it's not pure Arabic language as in other Arabic countries. So it's more a combination, I can say." (Interview No. 5)

> a majority here speaking French and majority there speaking English. Because there is a cultural factor. (Interview No. 9)

However, although the Maronite community is still a Francophone community, the French influence has already started to fade, due to being gradually replaced by the English language:

> In the 1960s, most of the Maronites in cities spoke French, and, especially, in the heart of society. This is the language of the salon. They still keep this language for some people – they like to speak French. But English now invaded French language. (Interview No. 17)

Considering both the Lebanese and the Maronite multilingualism as well as the expanding role of English, I can emphasise one more time that giving interviews in English reflects the Maronite community in the same way as it would reflect in case of giving interviews in French or in Arabic. The Maronite community is multilingual, with this multilingualism being historically rooted in the community. To sum up the linguistic domain of the Maronite identity, I believe that the following quote, expressed by one of the interviewees, is capable of providing the most extensive conclusion towards the above-mentioned discussion regarding the language and its role for the Maronite community and its identity:

> Basically Arabic, we call it Lebanese Arabic, is the one we speak and the one we speak only. Like you will not see anyone speaking Syriac, or anyone speaking the Professional [Modern Standard] Arabic. We don't speak it, we just learn it. And they still conduct the Mass in it because it's more professional and more high to do because you can't do it like naturally the way you talk, because it's very different from the way you write and we read. So Arabic is very important, but it has been going out of style, going out of use, I don't know how to say, because we are not using it anymore, we are focusing on English or French. Because we are learning everything, the key words that we use, the Internet, the daily stuff, even the Pope, for example, even if you wanna read tweets or read articles about Maronite stuff, you go and read them in English. (Interview No. 6)

4.2.3. Communalism

The Maronite Church

When speaking with the interviewees, I also asked the question about the importance of the Maronite Church for the Maronite community and the relations between the community and the Church, to what every interviewee agreed that the Maronite Church is in its very core the historical centre of the community, while also emphasising its role for the Lebanese State in the light of two dimensions: on the one hand, it had a crucial role in establishing the modern Lebanese State, highlighted the activism of the Patriarch Hoayek in 1919; on the other hand, the Maronite Church is still actively involved into the Lebanese affairs, and the role of the Maronite Church in Lebanon is important to such a degree that these relations are equalled to family ties, as it was indicated by many interviewees. Such an example can be seen in the following quote:

> Maronite Church is godfather of the State. A lot of respect. Maronite Church does not request something for Maronite, they request well-being of Lebanon. In some periods we had some clashes between State and Church. Like a mother, like a father to the State. Also, to the other communities. Bkirki is an umbrella of the Christians and the Muslims in Lebanon. Always a positive role for the prosperity of Lebanon. For the ascending of Lebanon. (Interview No. 18)

Based on the previous quote, we can also claim that the Maronite Church is perceived to be an influential entity not only within the Maronite community, but it is also cooperating with the other Lebanese communities as well, both Christian and Muslim, like it was stated in the Document of the Synod. The secular part of the Maronite community I interviewed perceive the Maronite Church to be an entity involved into the political affairs of Lebanon, the motive being developed in many interviews, and thus providing different sides of the phenomenon. In the following quote, we find another example how the relations between Lebanon and the Maronite Church are equalled to the family ties by labelling Lebanon as the son of the Maronite Church; additionally, the role of the observer of the Lebanese affairs is prescribed to the Maronite Church:

> Maronite Church played and is playing now as a safety ball for the State. Why? Because the Maronite Church thinks that Lebanon is like

> a son for the Maronite Church. The Church monitors State's decisions from distance. And indirectly they direct the State towards the peace and this kind of value. And to preserve the rights of minority in Lebanon, implementing this way of the Christianism value. At the same time, Maronite Church is independent. The other sects got money from the [foreign] states except the Maronites[140]. Maronite Church did not get money from the State. It's own financial support. This is the good relation, and sometimes there is an ambiguity, sometimes they say to the Patriarch don't involve in the politics issue. (Interview No. 17)

Before moving to the evaluation of the Maronite Church's political involvement into the local affairs and explaining some other mixed feelings expressed by other interviewees, we have to observe that, actually, there is also a third dimension of the Maronite Church's involvement into the Maronite community's life having a cultural, and even a spiritual dimension. One interviewee claimed that the Maronite Church is more than an identity, by equalling it to a sanctuary: "The Church has always been for us in Lebanon more than identity. the sanctuary, where you meet in harsh times and in good times" (Interview No. 9). Apart from that, we can also claim that the Maronite Church is also a cultural centre of the Maronite culture worldwide being the main unifying organisation abroad allowing the Maronites to preserve their collective identity and also serving as a platform for meeting the needs of the other Christian communities:

> You know, Christian countries, unfortunately, *they melt it today*, local communities sometimes. But what is keeping them like that, is that the Lebanese Maronite churches have followed them. So, in many countries, you will find a Maronite Church *there*, where they still come with their kids to the Mass on Sundays. And this is what is keeping them together. Link together. But of course, it's not, you cannot find church in every place in the world, you know, but definitely you have so many places today where you have these Maronite churches which are keeping the people together and keeping the, let's say, these Lebanese Christians, because, I do not talk about

[140] The motive of foreign involvement into the Lebanese politics appears on some occasions in Lebanon, mostly when referring to Saudi Arabia's support to the Sunni and Iran's support to the Shia communities in Lebanon based on the religious affiliations, while the Maronite community nowadays does now have any foreign supporters except for its diaspora.

> mainly Maronites, but Lebanese Christian, now it's one identity [of] the Lebanese Christians today. (Interview No. 7)

I can come back to the topic of the political involvement of the Maronite Church into the local affairs, the topic which has attracted much attention of the interviewees. As I have already discussed, every interviewee agreed that the Maronite Church plays an important role in the local affairs of Lebanon, and this influence is achieved by the active participation of the Maronite Patriarch in the political life of Lebanon whose influence was observed by many interviewees as well. One of them told me that "He has a lot of political influence. Mainly the Maronite Patriarch plays a major role in Lebanese politics. People wait for his sermons on Sunday to see his position on lot of issues, main issues to Christians and all in Lebanon." (Interview No. 9)[141]

One of the interviewees, when elaborating on the topic of the Maronite Church and its influence on the Maronite community, stated that the main reason for the Maronite Church to obtain such influence in the Lebanese affairs is its financial resources:

> Yes, sure, because they possess the money. They have the money, they have the power, and those who are still loyal to the Church are those who have common, *yani*, the majority of them are those who have common interests with the Church in terms of financial or material interests. So being loyal to the Church is not a matter of religiosity anymore. (Interview No. 12)

As we can understand from the previous passage, and, particularly, its end with the reference to the material interests and loyalty, some interviewees expressed mixed feelings towards the political involvement of the Maronite Church into the Lebanese affairs with the following quote, I assume, being the most informative example in terms of providing the reasons what factors invoke these mixed feeling within the Maronite community:

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[141] A similar idea was shared by another interviewee regarding the role of the Maronite Patriarch: "I think it's important with Patriarch so he don't have a political power but he can guide, he can influence without imposing, but, of course, you have a lot of politicians that take with the Patriarch speech, or they can exchange if you want some ideas and respect his ideas." (Interview No. 5)

> Very problematic. You know, the community vision of the Church is not *very*, at least what I feel, is that I don't see Church as a good example. So we have a lot of corruption, we have a lot of bad people governing the Church, we have a lot of bad examples, they are not leading by example. So you can say that Saint John Maroun was leading by example – I accept. But you cannot say that now those who are leading the Church in Lebanon and the Maronite Church especially are leading by example. So now we say listen to the speeches but don't do what they do. So it's really problematic. The Lebanese community has been a long time that this Maronite community does not feel secured by the Church. It's not a source of security. Especially when the Church goes into some small political and small details that are meant to be for someone who is in the level of the Church. Church for us is the religious reference. Even this role of religious and spiritual reference is not well played, it's not well done. We don't see the good example. And on the political level, we have the feeling that the Church is doing, at least, as bad as the politicians. (Interview No. 12)

However, in the end, it should be also stated that, according to many interviewees, with time, the influence of religion is fading in general, and this is the global tendency that reached Lebanon as well despite the specific relations between the Maronite Church and Lebanon: "[T]he relation is very tight between the State and the Church. Now, it's fading because the evolution, I think, in all the countries the Church is not anymore as powerful as before" (Interview No. 3) .To be more precise, the influence of the Maronite Church for the Maronite community also depends on the generation and the place of residence, as described by another interviewee in the following quote:

> Of course, for my parents, it was different than for me, and for me, it's different than for my children, and it depends where you live. In the villages, it is still influencing a lot of the society directly by the priest, or indirectly, as I told you, by the way that you feel this belonging to this identity. (Interview No. 9)

However, overall, the Maronite Church has always been and still is one of the key pillars of the Maronite community's identity with a very broad audience and, in this context, we see that both the interviewees and the Document of the Synod provide a similar view towards the Maronite Church's influence on the community.

Another important aspect which I wanted to assess during the interviews was whether a non-Maronite person can become a Maronite, or, otherwise, we can ask whether the Maronite community is an open community to join. As a response to this question, several interviewees told me that Maronites are not only the religious community; according to one of them, it is a social movement:

> I don‘t know if we can define the Maronites as a religious definition. I know the name comes from the Saint, and it all has to do with something religious from the background at the basis, but I think Maronites in Lebanon are not only a religious community. It’s a social movement, it’s a historical dynamic that has been evolving through years. (Interview No. 12)[142]

In the further passage, the same interviewee elaborated on the topic with additional arguments provided by claiming that being a Maronite is not only about adoring God; it is also about sharing the values and the mission because, religiously, the numbers of those actively practising have been decreasing:

> So, being Maronite is not about adoring one God or another, or having this kind of spiritual or religious practise. It’s about values and the mission. This is how I see. That’s why I don’t think how we practice because if you go and see the percentage of Maronites who are really, who have good religious practises, I’m sure it will be very low. You

[142] The interviewee was not the only one to argue that the Maronite community is more than a religious group. Another quote to share the explanation how the Maronites are attached to Lebanon, how their political activism contributed to the Lebanese history and why it is valuable: “You cannot think of Maronite as a religious group, although it is a religious group or confession. You have to think of the Maronites as a culture, an identity that is very much related [to a] very specific country, a very specific region, a very specific history. It’s not very old history, it’s not thousands of years, but, I mean, through the last hundred of years they were very strong in Lebanese history and they were prominent here. And, I think, it‘s very important that culturally this identity be preserved because, if you look around us, it‘s very dangerous, that a lot of Christian groups just disappeared, even groups that were very much related to some region like in Iraq or in Syria. They just disappeared in the last years. So, hopefully, that, politics being apart, this cultural group can stay and maintain. It‘s part of our roots and our culture. This is why people defended that much, this is why even during the war they were always ready to protect villages.” (Interview No. 9)

> can see this because when I was kid or boy, I used to go to the church and see the crowd at churches at the time. Now you go to the church, it's really exception to see a lot of people at the church. This is not only in Lebanon, this is international phenomenon. (Interview No. 12)

This view, claiming that the Maronites are more than just a religious community, is different from the Church's position expressed in the Document of the Synod arguing that the Maronite Church has only the religious domain without any connections to nationalism. Consequently, now, when analysing the data I collected on the fieldwork trip and comparing it with the Document of the Synod, I consider that asking the interviewees whether it is possible to become a Maronite for a person with different confessional background provided very informative answers from the cultural point of view. Religiously, indeed, becoming a Maronite is an easy act to make: "Yes why not. It's easy. It's not a closed sect. It's an open sect for everybody. It's a freedom. Maronites are not very strict about your freedom" (Interview No. 17)[143]. However, despite sharing a similar view, another interviewee also touched the cultural aspect which is important if one chooses to become a Maronite: "Can anyone become Maronite? Yes, it's not an ethnicity, so everyone can become Maronite if one is convinced with this culture and history" (Interview No. 13)[144]. Consequently, once we dig more into the cultural domain when analysing whether one can become a Maronite, we see that it is a much more complicated question:

> Trap question. From religious point of view, you can be baptised. But if you wanna become really a Maronite, you have to embrace all the system. All the history, the victories, defeats, the pain, the sorrow, the tears – everything. It's not just about the spiritual ritual in which you

[143] A similar, more detailed explanation provided by another interviewee is as follows: "Yes, it's an open religion, you can become Maronite, you have to be baptized. It's an open religion, it doesn't require anything because we follow the same Catholic rules and we consider ourselves as one of the churches, we are like Rome, maybe people who are more religious will explain it in more detail but from the beginning we considered ourselves to be one of the churches around the world. All of us are under Rome, we believe same things as other Catholics believe." (Interview No. 19)

[144] One interviewee told me that it is very rare that someone chooses to be(come) a Maronite: "I don't see people going to be Maronite to facilitate their life because you don't facilitate your life if you are Maronite. It's not really the best, let's say, destination for you. So you don't do it for these purposes. So when you want to be a Maronite, should really want it. You know, you should really want it." (Interview No. 11)

> are baptized as Maronite. It's a whole issue. Of course, starting point is Lebanon. But, all over the world, we have churches under the name of Saint Charbel. In Brazil, US, France, Maronites are everywhere. Mostly this happens when Maronite wants to divorce from his wife.[145] It's difficult to divorce in Catholic Church to what we belong to. Of course, they can become Orthodox, Evangelical – it's more easy. But mainly Maronite do not change religion. Because it's something that runs in the veins, under the skin. This only happens when you want get divorced. Only. We don't have cases otherwise. Only to shortcut. (Interview No. 18)

As already mentioned in the passage above, another important question is when a Maronite changes the religion, it is of interest whether this person is still considered to be a Maronite or not. According to one of the interviewees, even if the person changes religion, this person is still considered to be a Maronite because of the values the Maronite possess:

> Still Maronite. Value kept. Maronite can keep the value. The value still in the same person. But he changed for some reason, maybe for marriage or anything. But you can see it, you can feel this is Maronite because of value. Because he has in his head, in his mind the Maronite value. You can feel it. Maronite is a value more than a commitment. Value acquired. First of all, from Christianism. Second, from this struggle. Maronite people struggle for life. They resist. So they have, as we say, this power of will. They can accustom all type of pressure. We call this is the Maronite even he is not the Maronite. They used to live in the mountain. Getting some goat. Poor life. Simple life. Get connected with God and the saint. At the same time they like to get enlightened by new ideas, books. The first book printing in Lebanon in Wadi Qanoubin in the North. First printing machine in the whole

[145] Every interviewee agreed that the only reason why the Maronite can change a religion is the will to divorce because the Maronites have very strict marriage laws making a divorce very hard and challenging to make. Therefore, many interviewees also explained me the concept of the Maronite marriage which gained a broader cultural, non-confessional meaning perceived as a very tight agreement between the agreeing sides: "[L]ike I told you, so much a problem that now it became a saying in Lebanon it's a Maronite marriage. Even if you make a business or something, or, for instance, between a Sunni and a Sunni and a Shia, they make a business 'let's go for a Maronite marriage' because they know it's very difficult to divorce." (Interview No. 7)

> Middle East. So it's a mixture, but you cannot leave the Maronite and stay without it. It's a way of life. (Interview No. 17)

A similar idea connecting the Maronites to certain values was expressed by another interviewee who also emphasised the motive of struggle and resistance[146], telling me that, during the times of difficulties, the values of the Maronites can be revealed, and these values are kept for all lifetime of the person even though this person decides to change his/her religion:

> No. Maybe this is difficult to every person in Lebanon wish to be a Maronite. This a Maronite and born by Maronite family, it's the family teaches their children, and they give the young of this family a speciality. It's not a decision I want to be a Maronite, no, it's a long, it's a path, life to be a Maronite in Lebanon. [...] You can [be] by freedom, by the expression of view, but when the difficulties come to you, the Maronite, you can notice the Maronite quickly. (Interview No. 15)

One more interviewee shared a similar view introducing another important detail when describing the Maronite character by claiming that, actually, it is possible for a Maronite to change a religion and stop being a Maronite, however, only living in the diaspora make this change possible:

> Maybe in his belief of God he can change, but the value and the culture that parent put in his soul with his character, it's difficult to leave it in easy way. Maybe the years and in the other country. But if he is in Lebanon, he can't. He has to leave Lebanon to diaspora and stay long time. (Interview No. 15)

As a conclusion, based on the insights of the interviewees, I can claim that being a Maronite is more than representing a religious denomination, as it has also a social, cultural, and historical dimension. This combination of several dimensions are closely connected to Lebanon, thereby creating a unique synthesis between Lebanon and the Maronites.

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[146] Actually, the motives of resilience, struggle and similar qualities were often prescribed to the Maronite community by the interviewees. To demonstrate one more example, "But you will be amazed how resilient are the Lebanese people. How much, they don't lose hope. They always start again, they always stand up again and continue despite all the dramas they lived." (Interview No. 11)

Political involvement and confessionalism

Since Lebanon is famous for its confessionalism, practically meaning that the public sphere in Lebanon is deeply politicised with religion and politics being closely interconnected, and, to some extent, interdependent, in the interviews, I also wanted to understand the opinion of the Maronitesabout the confessionalism, while also discussing whether it is possible to be *not* involved into politics in Lebanon at all. I want to begin the analysis of the interviewees' answers to the above provided questions with the assessment of the importance of confessionalism to the Maronite community. During the interviews, I asked the same question all the interviewees: If confessionalism is abolished in Lebanon, would it be good or bad for Lebanon?

The answers of the interviewees indicate that approximately half of them in one way or another expressed their wish to see this system being abolished with different arguments being provided in favour of the abolishment. One of the interviewees relied on the human mind and IQ, while believing that negotiations is the way to achieve a win-win situation:

> It's important to think by the mind, not by the heart. But everybody in this area thinks by the heart. I believe in IQ. [...] No. I believe in mind. It's not a loss for Maronites. Because they have the capacity. They have all the power to get everything. Mind power. And the others. If we abolish the confessional system, we get, as we say in negotiations, win-win. Everybody wins. The good will win. So this is win-win situation for everybody. (Interview No. 17)

Another interviewee told me that abolishing confessionalism would allow to make the governing system of Lebanon more effective by allowing the most competitive people to serve Lebanon and the Lebanese people without any sectarian limitations:

> So if this will be abolished, it will be better for everyone. At least, you wouldn't have to point fingers, at least you wouldn't have to wait in line for something because of confession you are not. [...] So, instead of focusing on which confession does what, we should be focusing on which good person does what. This is a Lebanese person at the end. By desecting the confessions, you are desecting who does what to who. (Interview No. 4)

However, despite the expressed wish to see the Lebanese confessionalism being abolished, several interviewees also told me that abolishing the system would be a challenging act because of the variety of different communities in Lebanon with different, even clashing, visions for Lebanon, and confessionalism is the only way to achieve the equilibrium among various Lebanese communities:

> If you want my personal opinion, I will be glad that day when everything will be free of any religious, or confessional, or secular, because then you will have a true democracy, but the problem also is related, as you said, to different religious groups that are very different socially, and the way they think, the way they behave, the way they see the country or the belief in the country – it's too different. We have *in* two opposites in the same country, as you have may noticed. If you leave it to majority, sometimes the majority will lead you to somewhere different. And if you keep doing this type of democracy that we have where everything has to be 50/50, although we are not majority anymore, this makes it more difficult to rule. Because then one part of Lebanon will say OK, we'll let the Christian rule with us, but the Christians are not a majority, so they need, in a way, to rule in a certain way where they give us some prerogatives. And one part of the Christians say no, this is our right to keep it, and this is creating conflict, the war, and now it's creating political conflict in Lebanon. But, unfortunately, you still need to respect these rules in order to keep the equilibrium in Lebanon, otherwise you might go in a way where some communities will be demographically much more numerous than other communities. [...] So this is why it's always good in a way to keep this equilibrium, I don't know, consensual democracy, you say. (Interview No. 9)

Another interviewee provided a similar view about the possible abolishment of the Lebanese confessionalism by claiming, similarly to the previous interviewee, that the deconfessionalisation of Lebanon, although perceived as a beneficial development for the State lacking the secular legislation currently, would result in the social issues of the State, especially considering the fact that Lebanon is home to 18 ethnically different communities. Apart from that, the interviewee also emphasised the lack of unity in Lebanon considering the Lebanese nationalism:

> Let's go to a definition. Abolishing confessionalism like they are talking now means Islamisation of Lebanon. Why? Because today, in this context, we abolish confessionalism means OK, the people who are the most numerous will get everything. Today Christians, unfortunately, are less numerous. If we say let's go to a secular State with laicism as a fundamental issue, yes, I agree with this. It has to happen. And it will be a major positive achievement in the future. This is why we have to start today by doing one thing – *is* to separate religion and State, which is not done. Even though in Lebanon we don't have a State religion – it's important for you to own. In Arab world, the State religion is Islam. Here, we don't have a State religion. But we have 18 different communities, and we have 18 different ways of getting married, getting divorced, inheritance, etc., etc. We have 18 different ways, so we have to unify the Civil Code in the Constitution so we have one Civil Code for everybody. And who wants to get married with the Shia, he will go to do it. But he will have to abide by civil laws of the Lebanese State. We have to start with this. Because, unfortunately, in Lebanon, we don't have a Lebanese citizen[147]. We have a Maronite citizen, Sunni citizen, Shia citizen, so we have, at least, four different aspects so we have to unify this. So we start by unifying this, then we go to complete laicity of Lebanon. (Interview No. 7)

[147] The lack of the Lebanese unity is a very complex question to discuss. As we can understand from the following quote, there are still many different visions of Lebanon provided by different Lebanese communities, and the clash of these different visions was one of the main reasons for the war in Lebanon in the past, and the arising issues are reaching the geopolitical dimension. What is also important and how it is related to religion – is that the boundaries between these visions can be drawn based on the religious affiliations. More on this topic can be learnt below: "You will find that there are lot of Lebanons in the minds of the people. Our vision of Lebanon is a vision of Maronites. Maronites were always open to other cultures, Maronites were always a welcoming society, they played a major role, a very positive role in the history of Lebanon during good times and bad times, so, for me, yes, Maronite represent identity of Lebanese people, but I cannot say that this is the only identity and they could respect other people. They find different identity for Lebanon and you understand this is the particular question with the very difficult answer because we have wars and because of mainly how we see Lebanon. And this goes beyond Lebanon because the relationship of Lebanon with neighbouring countries, the relationship of Lebanon with Europe, with Asia with different countries like Iran, or Saudi Arabia, or with the US, or with Israel, or with France, Russia, and it is always s complicated, and religion is in the middle of everything, unfortunately." (Interview No. 9)

One more interviewee emphasised the demographics, which appeared several times in the interviews, while at the same time explaining that its meaning is connected to the fact that Lebanon is not ready to the full secularisation yet because many Lebanese are still thinking in the religious terms, and even though secularism is being pursued, the majority of the people would still continue voting based on religious affiliations. Consequently, before abolishing the system, the change of people's minds is necessary:

> We cannot abolish it, it will be bad, unless people move to secular mind, thinking. Today, if you want just to move it to secular system or nonconfessional system while people are still confessional in their minds, it's not good. Because it will be sort of, *yani*, the supremacy of the numbers for community on the others. I believe that we have to move some day to a nonconfessional system, but you have to prepare the spirits and the minds, and people should be able to elect others even if they are not from the communities. Today, people elect only people from their community. The choices are limited, and this is very bad, and this is the very bad signal about maturity of the people in order for them to move to a nonconfessional system. As far as you still have you *still have* this behaviour, I don't think you can move to nonconfessional system, it will hurt minorities like Christians or Maronites, etc. So moving to non-confessional system is a process and it's a preparation of minds and this way of thinking that has to be built through time in order for all the people to act and think according to political or competence things or criterias, whatever, but not over the confessional criterias like they do today. (Interview No. 11)[148]

At the same time, several interviewees expressed their strong support for preserving the Lebanese confessionalism. Some of them told me that abolishing confessionalism in Lebanon would negatively affect the Maronite community because the system allows to preserve their identity: "I think the

[148] Another interviewee shared a similar opinion: "You know, you have to think how the others think. *Yani*, you have to see the Shia, the Sunnites, the Druze, how they think. If you accept, *yani*, to change the Law and to start choosing your deputies not only because a Maronite or other, you have to see if the other will accept in all the world. I don't think it will be, it can happen, *yani*, you cannot change the mind very easy and for everybody, they choose the, *yani*, for the Shia, they will choose the Shiaite, not the best person to rule, they will choose in their own way. I think it is difficult to change the system here, and if you change the system, we will be like Christians in, at the end, like, to end as Christians in Iraq and Syria." (Interview No. 10)

confessional system is useful for the Maronites, it preserves their identity, the identity in the *is simple* the way *that life to live* in Lebanon" (Interview No. 15). Such a preservation of identity within the confessionalism is important due to the fact that in Lebanon there is no Lebanese national unity with many different communal identities prevailing instead:

> Multiconfessional system in Lebanon is important because the problem is that in Lebanon we don't have citizenship. There's no such thing as a citizen of Lebanon. When you see Lebanese, first you think if he's Maronite, Sunni, Shia, or Druze. Lebanonism does not exist. That's unfortunate. Maybe, in the early days of Lebanon, it existed, but not now. (Interview No. 19)

Another interviewee contributed to the topic by claiming that "It would be the end for the Maronites and end of the Christians because the confessional system in Lebanon is, what you would call in the West, positive discrimination, the thing is – they should change its name to positive discrimination" (Interview No. 13). Additionally, two interviewees argued in favour of communalism, mainly based on the comparison between the Maronites in Lebanon and the Copts in Egypt: although there are around 10 million Coptic people living in Egypt, their political representation does not reflect the number of their population. We can read these arguments in the following quote:

> If you look to the Christians at the Middle East, in Egypt you have 10 million Coptic, Copts, maybe some say, they say 17, I heard 17, the government says 4 million, 5 million – let's say 10 million. What is the political value of the Christians in Egypt? Zero. They have no local power. Whatsoever. They are admitted from time to time to have a minister in the government or to have its 2–3 deputies in the Parliament, maybe 5 today, [Abdel Fatah al-] Sisi tried to make it a little bit more, it's 5. At the time with Mobarak and Sadat they had none. Zero deputy, zero member in the Parliament. They didn't care. So practically these people in the power sharing, they don't exist in Egypt even though they are 10 million people. While in Lebanon, and this is the uniqueness of this country, that the Christian and the Muslim lead equally. (Interview No. 7)[149]

[149] An almost identical opinion, referring to the Copts in the comparison, was shared by another interviewee: "I think when we live in a neighbouring Arabic and

Another interviewee, also supporting the Lebanese confessionalism, told me that abolishing the system would negatively affect the Maronite community; however, there is no need for the abolishment in order to improve the situation in Lebanon – what is needed, it is simply the application of the already existing laws:

> Changing the system will be very bad. What would be good to do is to apply the laws and the rules under the current system. This system which is working has cost us hundreds of thousands of victims during the war, and more than 500,000 injured, to reach this system, and this resolution in 1989. So now coming it and changing it would be bad for us. We just need to slightly improve it and apply what's left in the remaining sections in the Constitution. (Interview No. 14)

One more interviewee provided another possible solution for solving the current issues in Lebanon, and this solution is based on the *cantonisation* of Lebanon. According to the interviewee, otherwise, the system would collapse anyway:

> For my point of view, I will prefer to have a canton as a separation. For me, it's the only way to survive. To do separation. So, every community lives in her own area and do whatever she wants. From the political point of view, the way of living or the way to choose the religion. Otherwise, we will be dissolved. The partition, or we will not be in this confessional situation. So, now you know every religion has position. If they dissolves it, the number will rule. The number is not in our favour. So I prefer if we can do partition what they did in Yugoslavia. (Interview No. 3)

After the discussion about Lebanese confessionalism, I can state that the interviewees split between those willing to alter the Lebanese confessional

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Muslim countries, we cannot go to a totally secular system, although in the social behaviour, the Maronite and Lebanese Christian are mainly secular. They are influenced by the West. History taught us that we live in a Arab and Muslim ocean, and we are a minority. If we wanna give up the confessional political system, we would be outnumbered. In Egypt, we have 12 million Copt Christians, but barely they have two seats in the Parliament. They don't have the right to PM, President. In Lebanon, we are one million almost, but since we are founders and godfathers of this Lebanon identity, through the confessional system, we preserve our rights, our country, our freedom, our principles, that differs from the Arab neighbouring countries." (Interview No. 18)

system and those supporting it with both sides providing arguments in favour of each opinion. But in the light of these discussions another and, I would say, more universal question whether is it possible to live in Lebanon without being involved into politics at all, stands. Indeed, as several interviewees told me, it is up to each individual to choose to participate or not, yet on the communal level the question becomes much more complicated because it is related to Lebanese confessionalism. One of the interviewees, representing the majority of the answers, I would say, told me that "Here in Lebanon you can't live without politics. If you don't have any relations with politics, you can't do nothing, this is all about the system. In this system you have to live like this." (Interview No. 8)[150] Another interviewee shared a similar opinion and also contributed to the topic by claiming that if the community is not interested in politics, it cannot defend its own interests in decision making:

> No, you cannot live without being involved at all. If everybody is not interested in politics, they will take all your power in the decision making. you must be present in all political decisions. That's why Christian parties at the time were very strong, and, in time before the war, and during. If there is not political parties, there will be not *be* here anymore. You must be still doing politics and doing parties. (Interview No. 3)

Participating in politics is also necessary not only for defending the interests of the community, but also for the future of the Christians in the Middle East, with several examples from the region being listed where the Christian presence is endangered:

[150] The political involvement of the Maronites in the Lebanese affairs is also a factor that makes a difference between those Maronites residing in Lebanon and those residing in other countries: "There is a difference because of the power. In Lebanon, Maronites have a power to become a President, they participate in deep in the social and political life, and they are the builder of Lebanon from the beginning. The Patriarch Hoayek contributed deeply in getting the independence of Lebanon from French Mandate, so Maronite people of Lebanon are strong, and because they got the future, the positions, the power outside Lebanon, that's beginning of diaspora. Now, the last election they participate for deputies. So they start to involve the political life. So they feel themselves more and more in life. But the Maronite outside diaspora, let's say, in Cyprus, we have Maronites in Cyprus, in other countries, they don't have this feeling of power. And they don't have the all rights like the Maronites in Syria and others. Here, they have the rights to be whatever they [like]. They are the part of power. And that is the reason why the Maronites are well being." (Interview No. 17)

> Because they [Maronites] feel they have a sense of, maybe, danger, maybe the sense of kind of mission that we have in this part of the world, and, I believe, without the Maronites in this part of the world, Christianity will maybe disappear with time. Look what happened in Iraq, Syria, with the Copts in Egypt, they are disappearing. (Interview No. 7)[151]

Additionally, we also have to note another important tendency that I observed during the interviews. Several interviewees told me that, despite liturgical and theological differences between various Christian denominations[152], due to the decreasing numbers of the Christians in Lebanon and the shared political goals (and problems as well) in Lebanon, in the political domain, all the Lebanese Christian communities should be perceived as a unifying entity. One of the interviewees told me that "You don't feel any difference here with any Christian. The problem is on all Christians. You don't have this pleasure to think otherwise, you have a lot of problems on Christians so we are on the same boat" (Interview No. 3). In addition to this, there was also the opinion expressed to highlight the call for unity within the Lebanese Christian unity for defending their interests:

> I think we must unite and mix, and I talk not only about Maronitism, but about Christianism in this period and, especially, in Lebanon. Because, if you lose this part, you will lose the image or your hybrid image that you have. So mustn't talk about Catholicism, Orthodox, or Maronites, I think it's more to unify your force and your resources to be more powerful. (Interview No. 5)

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[151] A similar idea based on the previously discussed motive of the foreign support for the other communities was shared by another interviewee: "I think, in the future, we will have same, we will have same future as Christians in Iraq and Syria. Because Muslims – Sunnis are supported by Saudi Arabia, Shias are supported by Iran. The Christians are supported by nobody. They are supporting themselves." (Interview No. 10)

[152] An example demonstrating some differences can be presented: "In the end of the day, we are all Christians, and, in the end of the day, we have also Orthodox and Catholics in Lebanon. Now, there are some differences, if you want, from a religious point of view between Orthodox and Catholics – the way they pray or they don't do the holidays etc., but this is not something that will make these groups less or more Christian than the others." (Interview No. 9)

Another interviewee contributed by sharing a similar yet broader explanation about the differences between the Christian communities and the common problems faced by these communities currently:

> I think, now, we have less and less differences between among Christians, you know, I think there is more and more feeling that we are all the same, concern same, let's say, challenges of survival, of sustained presence [in] this area, in region, of being a minority. So, I think, that the sensibility of anything between, you know, Orthodox and Maronite, and Catholics, it's a tradition, it's not anymore the rivalment, we don't feel the big difference, *yani*, between us, *yani*, we feel that we are same community same anything so I don't think there is any more like before, maybe it was like something like it was more important, today I don't see it anymore very relevant. I think we are all the same somehow. (Interview No. 11)

As a conclusion, we can state that there are different opinions towards the confessional system of Lebanon, yet, I would say, more voices are supportive towards it by virtue of considering this system as a guarantor of the social and political powers of the Maronite community. Apart from that, I would say, it is important to emphasise the popular among interviewees opinion that the Maronites and the Christians in Lebanon in general, despite having some different perception towards the identity of Lebanon, recently, at least on the political level, started to perceive each other as being on the same side in the social and political landscape of Lebanon.

4.3. Comparison and Concluding Remarks

To sum up the final part of the study, after the analysis of both the religious (the Document of the Synod) and lay (19 semi-structured interviews on the fieldwork trip to Lebanon) positions towards the modern collective Maronite identity, I can conclude that, overall, both layers of the community reflect similar views towards many questions; yet, there are some differences to be observed.

In the domain of the *collective memory*, we can observe that the Document of the Synod text focuses on the importance of the Lebanese land and the mountains, their historical connections to the Maronite community and their role in shaping the modern Maronite and Lebanese character. Apart from that, the conviviality among various different communities in Lebanon

is emphasised multiple times, while also elaborating on the role of the Maronites as the mediators between the East and the West. The interviewees, in turn, in general, emphasised the role of the mountains and the land to the Maronite community being its formative contributors, while also claiming that both the historical and the cultural mosaics of Lebanon are essentially important aspects defining Lebanon and the Maronites.

Considering the golden and the worst age perception, the Document of the Synod did not elaborate on this topic to a greater extent with few references, while the interviewees discussed these topics in detail. The Document of the Synod defined the golden age to be the Maronite Renaissance which started in the sixteenth century with no reference to the Phoenician past at all, while, at the same time, elaborating on the Syriac origin of the community. Other motives appeared to a smaller scale and more occasionally, and the worst period is scarcely discussed in the Document at all. In turn, during the interviews, I observed that most Maronites perceive the golden age to be the years between 1943 and 1975, replaced with the worst period of the Lebanese history continuing until today. Both topics were quite intensively developed. The Phoenician elements, although not being the main paradigm in the self-perception of the interviewees, were considered to bear at least some role in the historical development of the Maronite community, differently to the Document of the Synod which did not cover this topic at all. There were some additional aspects mentioned by some interviewees to a smaller scale.

In the domain of *language ideology*, we can conclude that the Document of the Synod emphasised two aspects which are important for the Maronite community, with the first being the role of Arabic, which is one of the key features of the Maronite community, by virtue of uniting the Maronites with the Middle East and, at the same time, elaborating on the Maronite role in the Arabic Renaissance, with the second aspect being the Lebanese and the Maronite multilingualism. Moreover, on many occasions, the historical role of Syriac was emphasised. No references were made towards the concept of the Lebanese language. The interviewees, in turn, almost univocally emphasised the Lebanese and the Maronite multilingualism, however, differently to the Document of the Synod, the interviewees elaborated and discussed the spoken mixed variety of the Maronites which was not mentioned in the Document of the Synod. Moreover, although in the interviews, Syriac was mentioned to be a/the language of origin and liturgy, the topic was not elaborated substantially. Apart from that, I need to note that the opinions of

the interviewees towards the Lebanese Arabic language were different with most of the interviewees claiming it to be a dialect of Arabic and providing specific details about this dialect, while a few participants put emphasis on the concept of the Lebanese language.

In the domain of *communalism*, we can conclude that both the Document of the Synod and the interviewees emphasised the crucial role of the Maronite Church for the Maronite community. At the same time, both the Document of the Synod and the interviewees also agreed that active participation in politics is necessary for the Maronites, although several interviewees told me about not being interested in the political life in Lebanon. The Document of the Synod did not cover the topic of the Lebanese confessionalism, whereas many interviewees claimed it to be a very important condition for the Lebanese Maronites, and that it is impossible to avoid involvement in the political affairs of the State. The Document of the Synod called for dialogue with the other religions many times; the interviewees also claimed that the Maronites are open for dialogue with other religions; apart from that, they also emphasised the fact that the Maronites are an open community to enter, yet, they have specific values acquired through the cultural lifestyle, if the individual level of people is considered. As for the interactions with the other Christian communities, while the Maronite Church focuses on ecumenism, the secular lay of the Maronites claimed that, under the recent political and financial conditions of Lebanon, the Lebanese Christians must stand united politically.

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion after my study, I can state that the Maronite community is more than just a religious denomination, and it has always been more than a communal entity; yet, it is a smaller unit than the nation. It has a nationalist vision for Lebanon, nevertheless, it mainly operates within the Lebanese confessionalism, and therefore the Maronite community can be considered a small community being be a part of the broad Arab world. However, we need to note that the community's modern collective identity is so deeply attached to Lebanon in both religious and secular layers of the community that we can claim that, in the twenty-first century, the modern collective Maronite identity and the Lebanese identity are mutually interconnected, thereby confirming my hypothesis about the Maronite connections to Lebanon. Now, let us have a look more closely at the outcomes of the thesis:

1) Although the rising influence of post-modernism is entering the sphere of the modern collective identity studies (a concept that is more precise for labelling the Maronite entity rather than the *nation*), in most works, we still find references to the already classic dichotomy consisting of both *primordialist* and *constructivist* approaches seeking to balance them when explaining the modern collective identity of various communities that are the part of the modernist discourse. The case of the Maronite community, due to its specific character as operating within the Lebanese confessionalism, also requires a modernist approach to its modern collective identity, because the post-modernist discourse cannot entirely explain it;
2) For evaluating the modern collective identity of a small community, the assessment of three layers, namely the *collective memory*, the *language ideology*, and the *communalism*, are essential, each providing how a certain community mobilises itself over certain issues;
3) The analysis of the historical development of the Maronite community demonstrates that the community originating in the fifth century has passed through various historical periods of its development. Not much is known from its origin to the sixteenth century when the Ottoman rule was established and when the revival of the community began, which led to the establishment of *mutaṣarrifiyya* in the nineteenth century that also marked the

beginning of the Lebanese confessionalism. In 1943, the Lebanese independence was declared, yet, despite the high hopes of the Lebanese people, the internal unity was not achieved with the Lebanese Civil War breaking out, which changed the Lebanese social, political, and economic landscape, and which also meant that a new approach to analyse issues is required, especially considering the recent Lebanese financial and political crisis;

4) The origin of the modern Maronite thought can be traced back to the sixteenth century as a result of both the revival of the community and the rising foreign connections, yet, the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the modern collective Maronite identity construction. The modern Maronite collective identity in the twentieth century was expressed along the thematic spheres of the collective memory, mainly manifested by Phoenicianism and other ways of distancing Lebanon from Syria, the language ideology, mainly conveyed by the Lebanese language concept and the Lebanese multilingualism, and the communalism, mainly rendered with the active involvement of the Maronite Church into politics, fusion between politics and religion, and strong *communalisation*. Although the Maronite community tried to bind the modern Maronite thought with the idea of Lebanon, the meta-confessional Lebanese nationalism has still not been reached;
5) The thematic document analysis of the Document of the Synod suggests that all three layers are important factors capable of describing the modern collective identity as reflected by the religious part of the community. The Document of the Synod considers several factors from the collective memory to be essentially important, such as the motive of the mountains and the land, thus attaching the Maronites to Lebanon, the coexistence of various communities in Lebanon, and balancing between the East and the West; from the domain of the language ideology, it asserts the historical significance of Syriac, while focusing on the Arab language that serves as a mediator between the Maronites and the Middle East, connecting the Maronites to the Arab World, and also the Lebanese multilingualism, having been known for centuries and reflecting the Maronite community; from the domain of the communalism, it invites the Maronites to actively

participate in the State's political life and calls for, at least, the Christian political unity;

6) The qualitative field research suggests that the secular representatives consider the times of the *Merchant Republic of Lebanon* to be the golden age of the Lebanese history with the subsequently coming turmoil as the worst period in the history, while also emphasising the historical and cultural diversity of Lebanon as essentially important contributing factors, whereas the Phoenician legacy is just part of this mosaic, differently to the perception of the Maronite intellectuals seen in the twentieth century; besides, the motive of the geography and the mountains also frequently appeared; from the domain of the language, we learn that Syriac is a symbolically important language, yet the Lebanese way of Arabic is a significantly more important factor, either connecting the Maronites to the Arab world, or showing the distinctiveness of Lebanon with the Maronite multilingualism and the Lebanese way of mixing several languages at the same time, which is an essential factor defining the Maronite community by most of the research participants; from the communalism domain, we learn that the secular representatives consider the Maronite Church to play a critical role in the Lebanese affairs, and we claim that, to a large extent, without participating in the politics, the Maronite interests cannot be defended, while also emphasising that the Christians are politically united today. Most of the research participants equalled the Maronites to Lebanon and vice versa.
7) The religious and secular representatives of the Maronite community share similar views on many aspects of the three layers I have analysed. For example, both agree on the deep spiritual connections between the Maronites and Lebanon, both emphasise the Lebanese historical and cultural diversity and coexistence among various communities, and also both speak about how important the geography and the mountains are for the Maronite community. Apart from that, both agree on the Lebanese multilingualism as a crucial element of the Maronites, both speak about the importance of the Maronite Church to the Maronite community and the need for the active participation of the Maronites in politics. Yet, there are some differences between the religious and the secular representatives of the Maronite community, with these differences mainly being observed in the

perception about the golden age and the worst age of Lebanon, about the role of the Arabic language; however, these differences are significantly less important than the similarities between these positions.

I must admit that it would be too ambitious to claim that my research, consisting of two ethnological elements – the Document of the Synod and the interviews made during my fieldwork trip to Lebanon – reveals the full scale of the modern Maronite collective identity and reflects the idea shared by every single Maronite; it rather provides a very likely reflection of the Maronite community due to the fact that both the Maronite Church and the influential representatives (or the *intelligentsia*) of the community I have analysed are capable of influencing the masses and are willing to spread their ideas to the masses.

Finally, I believe that my work will contribute to not only the studies of small communities regarding their modern collective identity construction, but also the Maronite and Lebanese studies. From the prospective of the studies of small communities, we can better understand what are the methods and theories to be applied when assessing the modern collective identities of the communities when they are either non-dominant in their state with rival or parallel concepts being developed, or when they are communities acting in a greater state or a sphere of meta-identity. From the prospective of the studies of the Maronite community and Lebanon, my main contribution to the field is based on the fact that, in the twenty-first century, very few works have been prepared covering the Maronite issues with even fewer references to the modern Maronite collective identity, while the application of the ethnological research allows us to understand the most recent tendencies within the Maronite community. Yet, considering the ongoing Lebanese economic and political crisis combined with the lack of the works on the topic I have analysed and their importance for understanding the Lebanese affairs, there are still plenty of aspects that should be assessed in the future works regarding the modern collective identity of the Maronite community. At least two questions are of critical importance to any study aiming to understand the processes in Lebanon and the possible future scenarios of the State development and the inter-communal relations, with the first being the future of the Lebanese confessionalism, and the second being the Lebanese Maronite relations with the diaspora.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT RESEARCH PARTICIPANT: age, gender, education, organization (if applicable), etc.

I. Maronites and Lebanon [the questions asked to understand the importance of Lebanon for Maronites' identity]

- How would you describe the inhabitants of Lebanon?
- Are – and in what aspects Maronites are – different from other ethnic-religious groups in Lebanon? How would you recognize a Maronite?
- What does it mean to be a Maronite of Lebanon? In what aspects does it differ from the Maronites in other regions/countries?
- What places in Lebanon are the most important for the Maronites and why? How could you comment on the role/importance of Mount Lebanon for the Maronites? Does this place have the same importance for other main ethno-religious groups of Lebanon?
- How would you describe the role of the Maronites in the society of Lebanon?

II. Historical narratives and identity [the questions intended for clarification of the key historical narratives in the construction of identity of the Maronites in Lebanon]

- What is the most important golden age in the history of Lebanon? What was the role of the Maronites in these periods?
- What are the worst periods in the history of Lebanon? What was the role of the Maronites in these periods?
- Who are the ancestors of Lebanese people?
- What is the origin of the Maronite community?
- What are the main historical differences distinguishing Lebanon from other entities?

III. Language and identity [the questions asked to understand the Maronites' perception of the languages used daily and their role in the identity of the community]

- What language(s) is/are mainly used by the Maronites in Lebanon? What language(s) is/are used for a) everyday communication, b) reading, c) writing? What is the language that culturally can represent

the Maronite community? What languages do you use for your daily activities?

- How would you define the Lebanese language?
- In your opinion, how important is/are language(s) for the Maronite identity and why?

IV. Religion and identity [the questions asked to understand what is the role of religion for the modern identity of the Maronites]

- How do you describe the confessional system of Lebanon?
- If confessionalism is being abolished one day, what would be the impact for Maronites?
- Can anyone become a Maronite?
- What are the relations between the secular and the religious Maronites in Lebanon? If a Maronite changes religion, is this person still a Maronite? Can anyone become a Maronite?
- How do you understand the relations between the Maronite Church and the State?
- What are the most important institutions representing the Maronite community and forming its identity?
- What are the relations between Maronites and the other Christian denominations in Lebanon?

V. Concluding question

- What other aspects are important for building the identity of the Maronites?

SANTRAUKA

Įvadas

Disertacijos objektas yra modernusis maronitų identitetas 21-ame amžiuje. 5 a. kaip siriškosios krikščionybės atšaka susiformavusi Libano krikščionių Maronitų bendruomenė šiandien yra įtakingiausia krikščionių bendruomenė Artimuosiuose Rytuose ir tai lėmė ne tik didesni demografiniai rodikliai lyginant su kitomis krikščionių bendruomenėmis regione (palyginimui, maronitų pasaulyje yra apie 3.5 milijono, iš kurių apie 1 milijonas šiuo metu gyvena Libane ir tai sudaro 22-27 procentus visos Libano populiacijos), bet ir tas faktas, kad 16-19 a. maronitai įgijo ekonominę ir politinę įtaką Libane, 19-20 a. išvystė savo modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto viziją, savo ekonomine ir politine įtaka įtvirtino ją politiniame lygyje ir 20 a. tapo pagrindiniais atsieto nuo Sirijos Libano ir Libano nepriklausomybės apologetais, todėl egzistuoja populiarus teiginys, kad be maronitų ir jų politinės ir intelektualinės veiklos nebūtų šiuolaikinio Libano. Tiesa, ši maronitų vystoma Libano vizija buvo tik dalis idėjinio spektro Libane, vystyto 19-20 a. – įvairios kitos Libano bendruomenės tuo pačiu metu vystė kitas identiteto ir valstybės vystymo vizijas, todėl, kai 1943 m. buvo paskelbta Libano nepriklausomybė, tai veikiau žymėjo pasiekto konsensuso sudarymą tarp įvairių Libano bendruomenių dėl geopolitinės valstybės vystymo krypties ir valdžios pasidalinimo konfesinių kvotų pagrindu oficialiai įteisinant 18 bendruomenių, o ne nacionalinės Libano vienybės pradžią, o šios konfesinės bendruomenės tapo Libano socialinės ir politinės sistemos, socialinio, politinio ir intelektualinio gyvenimo pagrindiniais subjektais.

Taigi **tyrimo tikslas** yra išanalizuoti modernų kolektyvinį maronitų identitetą 21-ajame amžiuje remiantis mažų tautų/bendruomenių analizei pateikiamu teoriniu modeliu.

Tikslui pasiekti keliami šie **uždaviniai**:

1. Apibrėžti pagrindinius modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto ir nacionalizmo studijų konceptus, paaiškinti įvairiuose darbuose dažnai naudojamą dichotomiją, susidedančią iš kultūrinės ir konstruktyvistinės prieigos prie modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto studijų bei įvertinti pagrindines naujausias tendencijas šiame studijų lauke;
2. Pateikti teorinį modelį mažų bendruomenių modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto analizei, kuris susideda iš kolektyvinės atminties, kalbos ideologijos ir komunalizmo elementų;

3. Įvertinti istorinę maronitų bendruomenės raidą nuo jos susiformavimo pradžios iki 21 a. išryškinant svarbiausius istorinius bendruomenės raidos faktorius, turėjusius įtakos formuojantis moderniai maronitų minčiai;
4. Įvertinti modernios maronitų minties raidą ir, remiantis kolektyvinės atminties, kalbos ideologijos ir komunalizmo teorinėmis prieigomis, pateikti 20 a. vystytą maronitų bendruomenės modernią mintį bei aptarti Libano nacionalinės vienybės klausimą;
5. Išanalizuoti maronitų modernų identitetą 21-ajame amžiuje remiantis 2006 m. sinodo dokumentu, kuris atspindi religinę bendruomenės dalį;
6. Išanalizuoti maronitų modernų identitetą 21-ajame amžiuje remiantis empirine medžiaga, surinkta lauko tyrimo Libane metu 2022 m. gruodžio mėnesį, kuri atspindi sekuliarią bendruomenės dalį.

Tyrimo tezė: Maronitų bendruomenė buvo pagrindinė Libano nacionalizmo vystytoja 20 a., tačiau ir 21-ajame amžiuje mes vis dar negalime tapatinti maronitų identiteto ir Libano nacionalizmo.

Tyrimo aktualumas ir naujumas

Darbo aktualumas ir naujumas atsiskleidžia per dvi perspektyvas. *Pirmasis aspektas* yra susijęs su indėliu į Libano ir maronitų studijas. Pastaruoju metu Libano tema parengiama daugybė mokslinių ir publicistinių straipsnių ir įvairių studijų, tačiau beveik visi šie darbai yra skirti šiandieninės Libano finansų ir politinės krizės analizei bei tiria įvairius Libano klausimus, susijusius su socialiniais, ekonominiais, politiniais, tarptautinių santykių klausimais, tačiau 21 a. Libano raidos kontekste maronitų bendruomenė netapo daugybės tarpu objektu. Šiame kontekste paminėtina, kad yra parengta darbų apie maronitų bendruomenės istorinius ir kultūrinius procesus bei bendruomenės raidą 20 a., tačiau šie darbai negali nuosekliai paaiškinti procesų Libane ir maronitų bendruomenėje 21 a. Patarojo klausimo aktualumą išryškina vieningos Libano nacionalinės idėjos trūkumas: kadangi Libane valstybė oficialiai pripažįsta 18 konfesijų ir kiekviena iš šių bendruomenių yra Libano socialinio ir politinio gyvenimo pagrindas, kiekviena bendruomenė pateikia ir savo specifinį valstybės idėjos ir vizijos matymą ir turi savitą santykį su Libanu, todėl sudėtinga vertinti ir centralizacijos ar dekonfesionalizacijos judėjimus Libane neįvertinant kiekvienos bendruomenės vidinių procesų, kurie yra globalesnių Libano klausimų pamatas. Taigi dėl darbų trūkumo egzistuoja poreikis pateikti atsakymus į įvairius aktualius klausimus, tokius kaip: kokie Libano ryšiai su maronitais ir maronitų ryšiai su Libanu? Ar maronitai yra tauta? Kokia maronitų

bendruomenės identiteto ir Libano vizija 21-ajame amžiuje? Ar šie elementai skiriasi 20 ir 21 a.? Šiuos klausimus reikėtų vertinti įvertinant faktą, kad maronitai 20 a. buvo pagrindiniai Libano nepriklausomybės apologetai.

Antrasis darbo aktualumo aspektas yra susijęs su mažų bendruomenių nacionalizmo ir modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto studijomis. Apibrėžiant mažą tautą (arba bendruomenę), darbe remiamasi Miroslavu Hrochu, kuris atskyrė dideles/titulines tautas nuo nedominuojančių tautų valstybėje formuojantis tautiniam sąjūdžiui (papildant šį apibrėžimą, priskirtinos ir besivaržančios bei konkuruojančios vizijos vienos valstybės kontekste formuojant modernų kolektyvinį identitetą), o maronitų bendruomenės atveju būtent šis konceptas nuosekliai paaiškina bendruomenės modernaus identiteto raidą. Remiantis maronitų pavyzdžiu, galima kelti ir kitus aktualius teorinius klausimus: kokios yra reikalingos sąlygos tautiniam sąjūdžiui suformuoti modernų kolektyvinį identitetą? Kodėl vienos bendruomenės transformavo savo tautinius sąjūdžius į politinį darinį, o kitos ne? Kaip mes galime analizuoti modernų kolektyvinį identitetą ir kaip atrodo identiteto vizija, nesusieta su tautine valstybe? Ar būtinai tautinis sąjūdis veda į tautinę valstybę? Koks ryšys tarp komunalizmo ir nacionalizmo? Darbe mažų tautų (ir bendruomenių) tyrimams pateikiamas teorinis modelis, susidedantis iš trijų elementų: kolektyvinės atminties, kalbos ideologijos ir komunalizmo.

Literatūros ir anksčiau atliktų darbų apžvalga

Literatūrą, kuria buvo remiamasi darbe, sudaro šaltiniai anglų, prancūzų, lenkų ir lietuvių kalbomis, ir ją reikėtų padalinti į dvi dalis. *Pirmoji dalis yra skirta teorinio modelio konstravimui*. Tai pradedama daryti nuo tokių koncepcijų, kaip modernus kolektyvinis identitetas, tauta, etniškumas, nacionalizmas, nacionalinis identitetas apibrėžimo, o tai daroma remiantis tokiais autoriais kaip Anthony D. Smith (1986; 2009; 2010), Hugh Seton-Watson (1977), Anthony Giddens (1999), John Armstrong (1982). Apibrėžiant mažas tautas/bendruomenes ir nacionalizmo skirtumus tarp mažų ir didelių tautų, taip pat paaiškinant, kodėl remiamasi elitistine koncepcija atliekant etnologinį tyrimą, remiamasi Miroslav Hroch (2012) darbu jį papildant Siniša Malešević (2019) įžvalgomis. Darbe taip pat, remiantis Dorien van de Mieroop (2015), paaiškinamas skirtumas tarp tautinio sąjūdžio ir socialinės grupės, Vyčio Čiubrinsko darbu (2008) remiamasi apibrėžiant "kito" reikšmę, o Rogers Brubaker (2012) darbas vertingas dėl santykių tarp tautos ir valstybės apibūdinimo. Kalbant apie klasikine tapusios dichotomijos, susidedančios iš konstruktyvizmo ir primordializmo, apibūdinimo, pradedama nuo įsivaizduojamų bendruomenių koncepcijos, kurį pateikai Benediktas

Andersonas (1984) ir Alvydo Jokubaičio (2006) kritikos šiai idėjai teigiant, kad ši idėja turi būti papildoma kultūriniais faktoriais, kadangi tauta negali būti sukurta be kultūrinio pamato. Toliau diskusija papildoma Anthony D. Smith (1986) idėja, kad ikimodernaus identiteto gyvibingumas didina galimybes formuotis moderniai tautai. Darbe taip pat remiamasi Anthony D. Smith (1986; 1999; 2010), Paul Gilber (2000), Maurus Reinkowski (1997) darbais, kurie praplečia klasikinį, aukščiau minėtą dichotominį nacionalizmo tyrimo diskursą. Vertinant naujausias studijų lauko tendencijas studijų, remiamasi Lucia Volk (2010) darbu, kur įvertinama post-moderni kritika modernizmui, taip pat Emad Khazraee ir Alison N. Novak (2018) ir Ruth Page (2018) darbais, kur įvertinama socialinių tinklų svarba bei Robert V. Kozinets (2010) pateikta netnografijos koncepcija. Darbe taip pat paaiškinama ir individualizmo reikšmė studijų laukui remiantis Cosmo Howard (2015), Shah Ghanshyam (1994), Anthony D. Smith (2009) darbais.

Analizuojant **kolektyvinę atmintį**, pradedama nuo klasikine tapusios Ernest Renan (1990) koncepcija apie praeities svarbą moderniai bendruomenei, šios įžvalgos taip pat papildomos Jan Assmann (2011) pateiktais kultūrinės atminties elementais, taip pat remiamasi ir sukurtos tradicijos koncepciją pasiūliusio Eric Hobsbawm (1983) bei Duncan Bell (2003), Peter J. Verovšek (2016), Maurice Halbwachs (1992), Zheng Wang (2017), Giorgio Shani (2011), Gary Alan Fine (2013) įžvalgomis. Analizuojant **kalbos ideologiją**, remiamasi Benedict Anderson (1984), Rudak Wodak (2012), Rogers Brubaker (2012) darbais. Analizuojant **komunalizmą**, remiamasi Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1991) darbais įvertinamas sektarianizmas, remiantis Melani Cammet (2014) ir Lucia Volk (2010) darbais, remiantis Rogers Brubaker (2012) darbu analizuojamas religinis nacionalizmas ir, remiantis John Nagle (2015) pateiktomis įžvalgomis, įvertinamas konsocionalizmas.

Antroji literatūros dalis yra Libano ir maronitų klausimų analizei skirti darbai. Visų pirma, pradedama nuo Bassam Tibi (1997) darbo, skirto universaliai **Artimųjų Rytų istorijos analizei**. Kita darbų grupė yra darbai apie **Libano istoriją arba įvairius jos aspektus:** Kamal Salibi (1988), kuris kritikavo modernią maronitų istoriografiją, taip pat įvairius maronitų istorijos klausimus analizavę Albert Hourani (1981; 1983; 2013), Sandra Mackey (2006), William Wilson Harris (2012). Paminėtinas ir Hakim Carol (2013) darbas, kuriame analizuojami Libano ir Sirijos santykiai 19 a., taip pat Amin Maalouf (2001) indėlis aptariant Prancūzų mandato reikšmę Libano istorijai, Carsten Wieland (2014) darbas vertinant kultūrinius Sirijos ir Libano ryšius, Robert G. Rabil (2001; 2011) darbai aptariant modernius Libano politikos klausimus, Ussama Makdisi (2000) indėlis susiejant Libano sektarianizmo

kilmę su 1860 m. sukurta politine Libano sistema, Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn (2009) darbas įvertinant Osmanų imperijos reikšmę maronitų raidai, Youssef Choueiri (1989) darbas pateikiant įžvalgas apie modernią arabų istoriografiją ir Raghid El-Solh (2004) darbas pateikiant informaciją apie arabizmo matmenį Libane. Dar viena darbų grupė yra skirta **maronitų istorijos ir kultūros analizei:** Emma Loosley (2005) analizuoja įvairius Maronitų Bažnyčios raidos klausimus koncentruojantis į sirų krikščionybės klausimus, Husseyin Sirriyeh (1998) pateikė koncepciją „politinis maronitizmas" vertinant maronitų ambicijas Libane 20 a., Rania Maktabi (1999) įvertina 1932 m. Libano surašymo kontekstą, Krzysztof Kościelniak (2003) įvertina istorinę Libano krikščionių demografinę raidą, Ray Jabre-Mouawad (2009) lygino maronitų ir melkitų bendruomenių sampratą apie arabų kalbą, Deanna Ferrea Womack (2012) analizavo misionierių įtaką Libane, Georges T. Labaki (2014) yra vienas iš autorių, analizuojančių maronitų diasporos klausimus, Michelle Hartman ir Alessandro Olsaretti (2003) darbas pateikia įžvalgų apie Michel Chiha darbus, o Arkadiusz Płonka darbai (2004; 2006) pateikia įžvalgų apie Said Akl veiklą. Šiame kontekste paminėtini Franck Salameh (2010; 2011; 2015; 2020) ir Asher Kaufman (2001; 2004) darbai, kuriuose analizuojami įvairūs, šiam tyrimui aktualūs, maronitų bendruomenės kolektyvinio identiteto raidos klausimai, tačiau šie darbai analizuoja 20 a. klausimus neaptariant 21 a. klausimų. Taip pat paminėtini ir Kais M. Firro (2003; 2004) darbai, kuriuose analizuojama maronitų bendruomenės intelektualinė raida, taip pat ir Maurus Reinkowski (1997) ir Michal Moch (2012; 2013) darbai, kuriuose analizuojami įvairūs maronitų modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto klausimai. Taip pat vertingas Basilius Bawardi (2016) darbas dėl libanietiškojo-finikietiškojo diskurso analizės 20 a. kontekste.

Kita darbų grupė, apimtimi mažesnė už ankstesnes, yra skirta darbams apie **modernius maronitų klausimus:** Maximilian Felch (2014) siūlo naudoti sąvoką „krikščionių nacionalizmas" maronitų politinės ir idėjų veiklos įvardinimui, Alexander Henley (2008) analizuoja pokarinius Libano aspektus, Eduardo Wassim Aboultaif ir Paul Tabar (2019) parengė tyrimą apie maronitų kolektyvinę atmintį, Paul Tabar (2006) analizavo Maronitų Bažnyčios dalyvavimo politikoje pokariniame Libane klausimus, Robert G. Rabil (2001) ir Fiona McCallum (2012) analizavo Maronitų Bažnyčios lyderystės klausimus pokariniame Libane, Janine A. Clark and Marie-Joelle Zahar (2015) analizavo Kedro revoliucijos reikšmę. Paskutinė darbų grupė skirta **modernių Libano klausimus, kurie reikalingi modernaus Libano temos atskleidimui, analizei.** Įvairių pokarinių Libano klausimų analizę pateikė Lucia Volk (2010), John Nagle (2015), Rupert Sutton (2014), Vanessa E. Shields (2008), Karim Knio (2005; 2008), Ersun N. Kurtulus (2009), Imad

Salamey ir Paul Tabar (2012), Daniel Meier (2018), įvertindami tokius klausimus kaip pokarinė Libano patirtis, socialiniai, ekonominiai, politiniai, tarptautinių santykių iššūkiai, Libano centralizacijos ir konfesionalizmo transformacijos procesai. Kalbant apie konfesionalizmo ir kitus sektarinius klausimus, remiamasi Alexander Henley (2016), Jamal Nassar (1995), Robert Rabil (2011), Natalia Bahlawan (2021) darbais. Taip pat paminėtinas ir Ohannes Geukjian (2014) darbas, kuris yra aktualus dėl Libano politinio nestabilumo analizės pasitraukus Sirijai iš Libano. Sune Haugbolle (2010) darbas vertingas dėl karo ir atminties Libane tyrimo. Tyrime remiamasi taip pat įvairias internetiniais šaltiniais cituojant įvairius dokumentus.

Teorinės prieigos ir metodologija

Tyrimas yra paremtas tarpdisciplinišką ir multidisciplinišką metodologija, paremta kelių prieigų kombinacija, kiekvienai darbo daliai turint skirtingus tikslus. *Pirmojoje dalyje* remiamasi **nacionalizmo studijomis** šiame studijų lauke konstruojant modelį mažų tautų/bendruomenių modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto analizei, susidedančiai iš kolektyvinės atminties, kalbos ideologijos ir komunalizmo elementų.

Antrojoje dalyje taikoma istorinė-kritinė analizė;

Trečiojoje dalyje taikoma kritinė turinio analizė, kuri, struktūriškai, atliekama remiantis pirmojoje dalyje pateiktu teoriniu modeliu iš trijų elementų; remiantis šia darbo dalimi taip pat suformuojamas etnologinės tyrimo dalies klausimynas;

Ketvirtojoje dalyje atliekama etnologinė tyrimo dalis, kurioje modernusis maronitų identitetas analizuojamas remiantis religine ir sekuliaria maronitų bendruomenės dalimi – abi dalys istoriškai turėjo kritinę reikšmę formuojantis moderniam kolektyviniam maronitų identitetui, o ši reikšmė buvo išlaikyta Libano konfesionalizmo kontekste. Darbe, remiantis Miroslavo Hrocho idėjomis, laikomasi prielaidos, kad elitas arba inteligentija yra atsakingas už identiteto konstravimą ir nors ir masės yra būtinos identiteto vizijos plėtrai, būtent elitas arba inteligentija akumuliuoja ir kryptingai naudoja šią energiją, susieja ją su masėmis ir kuria bei vysto politinius tikslus ir su valstybe susietas vizijas.

Religinės maronitų bendruomenės dalies identiteto vizija tiriama remiantis 2006 m. Maronitų Bažnyčios sinodo dokumentu. Kadangi šiai institucijai būdinga hierarchinė struktūra, darbe remiamasi prielaida, kad oficialiai reiškiama bažnyčios atstovų pozicija įvairais klausimais, tame tarpe ir identiteto, turi atspindėti oficialų institucijos mokymą, kuris yra išreikšta oficialiame sinodo dokumente, apimančiame įvairius teologinius, socialinius

ar istorinius klausimus. Oficialus sinodo dokumentas buvo išleistas trimis kalbomis – arabų, prancūzų ir anglų, taigi visos trys dokumento versijos yra lygios. Darbe buvo remiamasi interneto puslapyje „Maronite-heritage“ esančiu tekstu, dėl kurio autentiškumo buvo kreiptąsi į jo administratorių, dvasininką Antonio Feghali, kuris ne tik patvirtino dokumento autentiškumą, bet ir suteikė sutikimą cituoti šį dokumentą.

Sekuliarios maronitų bendruomenės dalies identiteto vizija buvo tiriama lauko 2022 m. gruodį Libane atlikto lauko tyrimo pagrindu, kur buvo atlikta 19 pusiau struktūruotų interviu su politiniais ir kultūriniais maronitų bendruomenės atstovais iš įvairių amžiaus grupių, kurių profesijos apima mokytojus, universiteto dėstytojus, advokatus, gydytojus, politikus, inžinierius, buvusius kariškius. Tai asmenys, kurie yra aktyvūs maronitų bendruomenės nariai, norintys skleisti savo idėjas maronitų bendruomenės viduje ir turintys galimybių ir resursų būti matomi bendruomenės viduje. Interviu suorganizuoti padėjo dr. Ralph Zarazir, o šiame kontekste būtina įvertinti asmeninių ryšių faktorių bei politinės ir ekonominės krizės šalyje kontekstą, dėl to be Ralph pagalbos savarankiškai nebūtų pavykę atlikti tokio kiekio interviu ir ypač su matomais bendruomenės atstovais. Didžioji dalis pašnekov(i)ų sutiko kalbėti anonimiškumo sąlygomis, todėl darbe nėra pateikiama jokių asmeninių identifikacinių detalių, kurios leistų atpažinti asmenis, kas nėra sudėtinga šioje santykinai mažoje bendruomenėje, kur aktyvūs nariai yra matomi ir lengvai atpažįstami. Vizito metu Libane darbo autorius buvo apsistojes krikščioniškame Beiruto Achrafieh rajone, kuris istoriškai buvo Libano kalno dalis, didžioji dalis interviu vyko Beirute, keli įvyko Betrune, interviu truko vidutiniškai apie valandą, vyko anglų kalba, kaip ir įprasta maronitams, šnekamajame kalbos variante naudojant daugybę arabiškų ir prancūziškų žodžių. Interviu buvo įrašyti, todėl darbe pateikiamas tikslus citavimas.

Klausimyną sudarė keli tematiniai blokai. Paprastai interviu buvo pradedami nuo *pirmojo tematinio bloko*, kurio funkcija buvo įvadinė ir jis apėmė ryšius tarp maronitų ir Libano, idėjas apie Libano išskirtinumą ir Libano sampratą apskritai. Pagal atsakymų turinį, didžioji šiame bloke surinktos informacijos dalis papildė kolektyvinės atminties tematinę dalį.

Antrasis tematinis blokas buvo susijęs su istoriniais naratyvais siekiant išsiaiškinti maronitų kolektyvinės atminties elementus. Todėl šiame kontekste buvo kalbama apie tokius elementus kaip Libano istorijos aukso ir blogiausias amžius bei maronitų vaidmuo jame, finikizmmo samprata, maronitų bendruomenės kilmė.

Trečiasis tematinis blokas buvo skirtas išsiaiškinti maronitų kalbos sampratai ir vaidmeniui tapatybės konstrukte. Buvo keliami klausimai apie

naudojamas kalbas, apie libaniečių kalbos konstruktą ir idėją, taip pat pokalbių metu buvo pereinama prie klausimo apie libanieičų poliglotizmą ir kasdienybėje naudojamą kelių kalbų sintezę.

Ketvirtasis tematinis blokas buvo skirtas komunalizmui įvertinti keliant klausimus apie religiją: buvo kalbama apie tai ar kiekvienas norintis asmuo gali tapti maronitu, taip pat kalbėjome apie Maronitų Bažnyčios vaidmenį bendruomenėje ir istorijoje, taip pat ir apie maronitų dalyvavimą politikoje.

Pokalbiai buvo užbaigiami klausiant ar kalbantis asmuo norėtų dar ką nors pridėti ir paprastai po to būdavo užakcentuojamas koks nors pašnekovui ar pašnekovei svarbus maronitų ar Libano istorijos, kultūros ar politikos aspektas.

Analizuojant etnologinio tyrimo metu surinktą medžiagą, ji buvo apdorojama pagal tematinius blokus ieškant dažniausiai atsikartojančių motyvų.

Disertacijos struktūra

Disertacija yra padalinta į keturias dalis.

Modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto apibrėžimas

Pirmoji dalis yra teorinė darbo dalis, kur pateikiami pagrindinių nacionalizmo studijų kontekste vartojamų konceptų apibrėžimai, įvertinama jau klasika įvairiuose darbuose tapusi dichotomija, susidedanti iš konstruktyvistinės ir primordialistinės prieigų, taip pat įvertinamas ir post-modernistinis nacionalizmo studijų lauko kontekstas paaiškinant, kodėl ši prieiga nėra tinkama maronitų atvejo analizei ir nurodant elementus, kurie yra pritaikomi šiame tyrime. Šioje dalyje taip pat paaiškinama, kodėl darbe taikomas elitistinis požiūris į identiteto studijas ir remiamasi inteligentijos ir įtakingų bendruomenės atstovų, o ne masių pozicija analizuojant modernųjį kolektyvinį maronitų identitetą.

Po pagrindinių nacuonalizmo studijų lauko apibrėžimo įvertinimo, pereinama prie teorinio modelio konstravimo mažų tautų/bendruomenių modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto analizei. Šis modelis susideda iš kolektyvinės atminties, kalbos ideologijos ir komunalizmo ir šio modelio pagrindu darbe atliekamas maronitų modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto tyrimas ketvirtojoje dalyje.

Maronitų istorijos analizė

Antrojoji darbo dalis yra skirta maronitų istorijos pagrindinių bruožų ir pagrindinių veiksnių, formavusių modernų maronitų identitetą, analizei.

Šioje dalyje aptariami Maronitų Bažnyčios ir bendruomenės ištakos ir susiformavimas, vėliau analizuojama maronitų bendruomenės raida Osmanų laikais, kurių reikšmė susideda iš kelių elementų – tai Libano emyrato laikai ir maronitų benduomenės augimas, maronitų užsienio ryšių plėtra ir Libano kalno *mutasarriffiyat* susikūrimas. Galiausiai pereinama prie modernios Libano valstybės raidos klausimų, analizuojant tokius aspektus kaip Prancūzų mandatas ir nepriklausomybės paskelbimas 1943 m., po to sekęs Libano klestėjimas ir auganti įtampa, pasibaigusi pilietiniu karu, mėginimai pasiekti vienybę ir stabilumą po karo, 2005 m. Kedro revoliucija ir dabartinė ekonominė ir politinė krizė.

Modernios maronitų minties pradžia ir raida

Trečioji dalis yra skirta maronitų idėjų istorijos analizei. Analizė pradedama nuo maronitų minties genezės, o po to pereinama prie trijų elementų analizės vertinant maronitų modernios minties ir modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto raidą 20 a. kontekste: kolektyvinės atminties kontekste vertinamos maronitų referencijos į praeitį ir finikizmo diskursas; kalbos ideologijos kontekste įvertinami sirų, arabų, libaniečių kalbos ir libanietiškojo poliglotizmo aspektai; komunalizmo požiūriu įvertinamas santykis tarp religijos ir politikos, Maronitų Bažnyčios vaidmuo bendruomenėje ir šalies politinė sistema. Ši dalis užbaigiama nacionalinės vienybės galimybės Libane analize, taip pat paminėtina, remiantis šioje dalyje atliekama analize, buvo suformuotas klausimynas.

Modernusis maronitų identitetas 21-ajame amžiuje: etnologinis tyrimas

Ketvirtojoje dalyje atliekamas etnologinis tyrimas analizuojant modernųjį maronitų identitetą 21-ajame amžiuje, susidedantis iš dviejų dalių: vertinant religinę maronitų bendruomenės dalį, analizuojamas 2006 m. sinodo dokumentas; vertinant sekuliarią maronitų bendruomenės dalį, buvo alikta 19 pusiau struktūruotų interviu išvykos į Libaną 2022 m. gruodį metu.

IŠVADOS

Apibendrinant tyrimą, pastebėtina, kad maronitai yra daugiau nei religinė denominacija, tačiau tuo pačiu tai nėra tauta. Bendruomenė turi nacionalizmo ambiciją, neatsiejamą nuo Libano, tačiau tai yra maža bendruomenė, kuri veikia Libano konfesionalizmo viduje ir taip pat tai yra maža bendruomenė platesniame arabų šalių kontekste. Šios bendruomenės modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto vizija yra giliai susieta su Libanu, todėl galima teigti, kad maronitų ir Libano identietai yra tarpusavyje persipynę 21

a., nors ir maronitų modernusis kolektyvinis identitetas nėra tapatus Libano nacionalizmui.

1. Dėl Libano konfesinės sistemos maronitų bendruomenės identiteto tyrimo atveju yra aktualios modernistinės teorijos nepaisant plačiai išvystyto post-modernistinio požiūrio į kolektyvinio identiteto tyrimus, kuris, maronitų atveju, aktualus remiantis tam tikrų metodologinių įrankių pasirinkimu tyrimui. Taip pat daugelyje nacionalizmo studijų lauko darbų galima aptikti klasikinę primordialistinę ir konstruktyvistinę dichotomiją ieškant atitinkamo balanso tarp šių prieigų nepaisant to, kad studijų laukas buvo papildytas įvairiomis kitomis prieigomis;
2. Šiame kontekste kolektyvinė atmintis, kalbos ideologija ir komunalizmas yra esminiai elementai analizuojant mažos bendruomenės modernųjį kolektyvinį identitetą, kurie, kaip rodo šio tyrimo atvejis, nuosekliai paaiškina modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto viziją nacionalizmo studijų kontekste mažų bendruomenių atveju;
3. Maronitų bendruomenė susiformavo 5 a., tačiau iki 16 a. apie ją nėra žinoma daug; tik nuo 16 a. arba nuo Osmanų imperijos valdymo pradžios ji pradeda būti aktyvi socialiniame, politiniame, ekonominiame gyvenime, pradėdama savo atgimimą; ilgainiui bendruomenės įtaka auga, 19 a. įkuriamas Libano kalno *mutasarriffiyat*, o 1943 m. paskelbiama Libano nepriklausomybė pastarąją palaikant maronitams, kadangi kitos Libano bendruomenės siekė unijos su Sirija. Nepaisant Libano klestėjimo, vidinė valstybės vienybė nebuvo pasiekta ir 20 a. kilo pilietinis karas Libane, po kurio Libane prasidėjo dabartinė politinė ir ekonominė krizė;
4. 16 a. žymi maronitų modernios minties ištakas, o šiame procese vaidmenį turėjo ir užsienio faktorius, pradžioje Roma, o vėliau Prancūzija; 19 a. žymi aktyvaus modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto formavimosi pradžią šią koncepciją vystant tiek religiniam, tiek ir sekuliariam elitui. 20 a. buvo aktyviai vystoma maronitų moderni mintis, kurią galima atskleisti per kolektyvinę atmintį, labiausiai apibūdinamą finikizmu ir Libano atskirumo nuo Sirijos idėja, kalbos ideologiją, kurios pagrindiniai akcentai buvo libaniečių kalbos idėja ir libaniečių poliglotizmas, ir komunalizmą, kuris žymi aktyvų Maronitų Bažnyčios įsitraukimą į politiką ir komunalistinių aspektų politizaciją. Vis tik 21 a. pradžioje vis dar matome nacionalinės vienybės trūkumą Libane

konfesinėms bendruomenėms išliekant valstybės politinio ir socialinio gyvenimo pamatu;

5. **2006 m. sinodo dokumento analizė** demonstruoja, kad šiame dokumente pabrėžiami Libano (ypatingai kalnų) ir maronitų stiprūs ryšiai, akcentuojama Libano kultūrinė įvairovė ir koegizstencija tarp įvairių bendruomenių, svarbus yra balansavimas tarp Rytų ir Vakarų; kalbos požiūriu, išryškinama kultūrinė sirų kalbos svarba, tačiau arabų kalbos vaidmuo ne mažiau svarbus ją apibūdinant kaip tarpininkinę tarp Rytų ir maronitų, taip pat pastebėtina, kad Libano poliglotizmas yra ypatingai svarbi bendruomenės savybė; sinodo dokumente kviečiama aktyviai dalyvauti politikoje ir kalbama apie Libano krikščionių politinės vienybės poreikį bei pabrėžiama Maronitų Bažnyčios svarba bendruomenės raidai;
6. **Empirinė analizė demonstruoja**, kad svarbiausias aukso amžius Libano istorijoje yra 3 dešimtmečiai po nepriklausomybės paskelbimo, o blogiausias periodas prasidėjo nuo karo ir tęsiasi iki dabar; finikizmas nebėra svarbus, koks jis buvo svarbus 20 a. kontekste; šiuo metu kalbintiems maronitams svarbiau yra istorinė Libano mozaika; kalbos požiūriu, sirų kalba yra kultūriškai svarbi, tačiau arabų kalba yra svarbesnis elementas, nors labiau pabrėžiamos unikalios libaniečių dialekto savybės nei bendrumas su kitais arabų kalbos dialektas, nors svarbiausias elementas yra poliglotizmas; pripažįstama Maronitų Bažnyčios svarba, teigiama, kad būtina dalyvauti politikoje ir krikščionys yra vieningi, o Libanas neatsiejamas nuo maronitų ir atvirkščiai;
7. Religinis ir sekuliarus bendruomenės sluoksnis turi panašų požiūrį į įvairius klausimus: sutinkama dėl gilių ryšių tarp maronitų ir Libano, dėl kalnų ir geografijos svarbos bendruomenės raidai, pabrėžiama istorinė ir kultūrinė įvairovė, taip pat sutinkama dėl poliglotizmo ir aktyvaus dalyvavimo politikoje bei Maronitų Bažnyčios svarbos bendruomenei. Tačiau yra ir tam tikri skirtumai; bažnyčia beveik nekalba apie aukso ir blogiausią amžių, skiriasi samprata apie arabų kalbą, tačiau šie skirtumai yra mažiau reikšmingi nei panašumai tarp abiejų sluoksnių.

Pastebėtina, kad šis tyrimas atspindi tik sinodo dokumente ir kalbintų maronitų pateikiamą identiteto viziją, todėl teigti, kad tai atspindi visą maronitų bendruomenę, būtų pernelyg didelė ambicija. Vis tik šis tyrimas

atspindi įtakingą maronitų bendruomenės dalį, kuri turi ir noro, ir ambicijų, ir resursų dalintis savo identiteto vizija su bendruomene ir formuoti jos modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto veidą, todėl galima teigti, kad mano tyrime pateikiama modernaus maronitų kolektyvinio identiteto vizija, tikėtina, bus plečiama bendruomenės viduje per įvairius įrankius, kuriuos aprašo įvairios nacionalizmo teorijos. Šis darbas taip pat aktualus ne tik maronitų, Libano ir Artimųjų Rytų krikščionių studijoms, tačiau ir mažų bendruomenių modernaus kolektyvinio identiteto studijoms.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Šarūnas Rinkevičius graduated from Vilnius University Centre of Oriental Studies Asian Studies (Turkology) program in 2015. In 2017, he graduated from Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science Comparative Politics program. In 2018–2023, the author was a doctoral student at the joint doctoral program in the field of Ethnology of Vilnius University, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and Lithuanian Academy of Theater and Music. Dissertation topic *The Modern Maronite Identity in the Twenty First Century Lebanon: Historical and Ethnological Perspectives*. During the doctoral studies, the author completed a fieldwork trip to Lebanon in 2022. Since 2018, the author has been teaching at Vilnius University Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies.

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Akademinių interesų sritys: Artimųjų Rytų krikščionys, Artimųjų Rytų istorija ir nacionalizmo studijos, Turkijos istorija.

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