

LEBANESE UNIVERSITY
Doctoral School of Literature, Humanities and
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A Cultural Comparative Study on the
Self-Identification of
Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq

A doctoral dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Sociology of Culture

Prepared by
Sung Ock LEE

Under the direction of Professor
Dr. Muhammad SHAYYA

Dissertation Examining Committee

Dr. Muhammad Shayya (Prof. in Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences)	Supervisor
Dr. Ibrahim Maroun (Prof. in Institute of Social Sciences)	Reader
Dr. Bassam El-Hachem (Prof. in Institute of Social Sciences)	Reader
Dr. Rashad Ghaneim (Prof. in Arab University)	Discussant
Dr. Al-Rabih Makki (Assistant Prof. in Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences)	Discussant

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Introduction

A monolithic view which perceives the Middle East¹ as a large, single Arab-Islamic expanse could lead to a misconception of the region, for there are many religious or ethnic minority groups, despite the fact that the region is primarily an Arab-Islamic dominant society. Besides Turkey, Iran and “Israel,” which are non-Arab countries, Mordechai Nisan pointed out some twenty years ago, that within the twenty or so Arab-defined countries, with a total population of approximately 180 million, there are, about 35 million people, or about twenty percent of the inhabitants, who could be defined as non-Arabs ethnically or nationally, or non-Muslims religiously.² Recent data provided by Dan Smith shows that the Middle East, excluding Turkey and Sudan but including Iran, has about 110 million people out of 350 million, or slightly more than thirty percent of the population, who are non-Arabs ethnically and about ten percent of the population who are non-Muslims religiously.³ These groups are Muslim minorities such as Kurds, Berbers, and Baluchis, heterodox Muslim minorities like Druze and ‘Alawites, as well as Christian minorities, including Copts, Armenians, Assyrians, Maronites, and Sudanese Christians. Shiite Muslims, except in Iran, also constitute a considerable minority in the region, either in number or in the sense of privileges.

Among these groups, Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq are the subject of this comparative or contrastive research. While Maronites enjoy, though relatively speaking, the

¹ Throughout this paper, the term Middle East is used roughly to denote the region including the Arabic speaking countries, plus Turkey, Iran, and Israel. For the origin and definition of the region, see Dan Smith, *The State of the Middle East, an Atlas of Conflict and Resolution*, Earthscan, London, 2006, pp.8-11, Clayton R. Koppes, *Captain Mahan, General Gordon, and the Origins of the Term ‘Middle East’*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.12, No.1, Jan. 1976, pp.95-98, Dilip Hiro, *Dictionary of the Middle East*, MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 1966, p.195.

² Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McMarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, 1991, p.2.

³ Dan Smith, op.cit., pp.114-117. In his book, Arab ethnicity is loosely defined as people who speak Arabic as their mother tongue. Non-Arab population includes non-native foreigners who reside in the region, especially in the Gulf States in addition to non-Arabic speaking natives.

most privileged Christian group status in the Middle East, Assyrians are one of the least privileged in their homeland and least known, even in the Middle East, not to mention the international community.

In Lebanon, though Maronites constitute the largest Christian body, they are not a numerical majority of the overall population. But, they are a non-minority in terms of their social privileges and economic prosperity. They are, however, a minority when it is discussed within the context of the Middle East. This group is internationally well-known, at least in name. In contrast, Assyrians are one of the least known and least numerous among religious minority groups in the region, despite their enthusiastic mission and outreach work to other parts of the world – their theology was introduced even to Korea!- in the past. Maronites comprise about between 7.5 and 8 percent of the total Christian population in the Arab Middle East, while Assyrians (the Church of the East) comprises only 1.6 percent or 1.7 percent when Turkey and Iran are included.⁴ Though these two groups are originated from the same Syriac tradition as the Church, the See of Antioch, in the seventh and fifth century respectively, they show many significantly different social aspects, as well as similarities, today. While Maronites enjoy a majority status within the Christian body in Lebanon, Assyrians became even smaller in number due to their separation into Assyrian and Chaldean Churches. While Maronites have achieved independence of Lebanon based on their experience of political autonomy, Assyrians have not. Right before the Lebanese Civil War, Betts evaluated Maronites as follows: “Unique among the Christian communities of the Near East [Middle East] are the Maronites, alone confined to one major geographical concentration, alone possessing absolute religious and political unity.”⁵ Arabic became the mother language

⁴ Andrea Pacini, *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, p.314, 319.

⁵ Robert Brenton Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, Lycabettus Press, Athens, 1975, p.47

of Maronites and more than a second language to Assyrians. While the former have abandoned their Western Syriac language and a large part of them employ French in their everyday life, as well as adopting a Western life style, the latter continue to speaking Eastern Syriac as their mother tongue. Maronites have been geographically concentrated in Mount Lebanon. Assyrians have been concentrated in the area which falls between northern Iraq, south-eastern Turkey, and northern Iran, west of the Lake Urmia. But they shared the area with other groups such as Kurds. With unfolding history, both developed and maintained their own traditions and identity. In the process of state-building of Lebanon, Maronites participated and developed Phoenicianism in the first half of the 20th century. Assyrians participated, at least partially, in the building of Mesopotamian identity in Iraq in the 1960s and 70s.⁶

Concerning the origins of minorities in the Middle East, the renowned scholar Albert Hourani highlights four factors: a great diversity of faith, various linguistic and racial groups and their movement in the region, two former factors working together forming tribal and national differences on a religious coloring, and localism that is an intense local loyalty. He adds that the Islamic categorization of human beings helped to preserve diversity; Muslim, protected people (*Ahl al-Dhimmah*), and polytheists or pagans. The second category of people, who were also called ‘people of the Book,’ were accorded toleration and protection within the Islamic state. This was adopted and further carried on by the Ottoman Turks as the ‘Millet system,’ in which religious groups were recognized communities of their own, with a considerable degree of autonomy.⁷ It is argued that Islam established a legal distinction

⁶ Amatzia Baram, *Mesopotamian Identity in Ba’thi Iraq*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.19, Oct. 1983, No.4, p.437

⁷ A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, Oxford University Press, London, 1947, pp.15-21. Hourani attributes the regional diversity of faith to rich religious conceptions in the region [compared to other regions in the world] which gave birth to three world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But this generalization

between believers and *Dhimmis* and established a legal inequality. As a result, these protected peoples became minorities well before the Ottoman period.⁸ Chitham adds the division of territory in the first half of the twentieth century to the origins of the minorities in the Middle East.⁹ However, though arbitrary border lines of the twentieth century further separated the existing minority groups into groups inhabiting more than two countries, this was not the origin of these minorities. Most of the present minority groups in the region have not enjoyed majority status throughout history, though the very notion of minority stemmed from the establishment of modern states, along with the related concept of citizenship. Most of the Christian groups in the region have been out of mainstream Christianity before and under Islam, and non-Sunni or non-Arab Muslims have also been minorities.

Carleton Coon suggests a ‘mosaic framework’ for studying the Middle East.¹⁰ This overcomes the monolithic view of the region as the Sunni-Arab Islamic world by exposing and integrating the existence of minority groups in the region which are often neglected and even negated. But this framework tends to see the region as static, while the relationship between majorities and minorities, and other identity groups are always shifting.

Nevertheless, the definition of ‘minority’ itself does not seem straightforward. Richard Tapper collected the general idea of the concept as below.

It is assumed that by ‘minority’ we mean a collection of people, in the population of a given state, who are on the one hand identified by sharing either language, culture or religion, or a

needs to be tested.

⁸ Dominique Chevallier, “Non-Muslim Communities in Arab Cities”, in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (ed.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc. New York, London, 1982, Vol. 2. p.159. Benjamin Braude claims that the term Millet was not used for dhimmis until the nineteenth century and it was not an administrative system, structure, or set of institutions for dealing with non-Muslims. (Benjamin Braude, *Foundation Myths of the Millet System*, in the same book, pp.72-74)

⁹ E. J. Chitham, *The Coptic Community in Egypt, Spatial and Social Change*, Center for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, University of Durham, England, 1986, pp.2-4

¹⁰ Leonardo Binder, (ed.), *The Study of the Middle East – Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., Toronto, 1976, pp.176-178

combination of these, and on the other hand either are substantially excluded from power in the state, or constitute fewer than 50 per cent of the total population, or (more usually) both. ...Sunnis, however are not discussed as such, even where they form a numerical minority (as in Iraq) or are out of power (as in Syria). In Lebanon, similarly, all groups are 'minorities.'¹¹

Chitham defines a minority as a group of people who are in some way different from and dominated by the people around them. The domination is often numerical, although a group deprived of social privileges or one that feels or is felt to be inferior may equally be defined as a minority.¹² In addition to the definition of minority, Gabriel Ben-Dor raises the question of defining a majority. He notes that the definition of a majority is not always constant, and it depends on the self-identity of the political community at any given moment in history.¹³ Tajfel describes the special features of minority groups, quoting Wagley and Harries. (1) Minorities are subordinate segments of complex state societies; (2) minorities have special physical or cultural traits which are held in low esteem by the dominant segments of society; (3) minorities are self-conscious units bound together by the special traits which their members share, and by the special disabilities which these bring; (4) membership in a minority is transmitted by a rule of descent which is capable of affiliating succeeding generations even in the absence of readily apparent cultural or physical traits; (5) minority peoples, by choice or necessity, tend to marry within the group.¹⁴

But the discourse on the minority issue in the Middle East is very limited. Not many books deal with the issue not only because the topic is relatively recent in the social sciences but also because the issue is so sensitive in the region. Ami Ayalon expresses the situation,

¹¹ Richard Tapper (ed.), *Some Minorities in the Middle East*, Center of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Occasional Paper 9, SOAS, University of London, 1992, p.2

¹² E. J. Chitham, *op.cit.*, p.1

¹³ Gabriel Ben-Dor, "Minorities in the Middle East: Theory and Practice", in Ofra Benjio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (eds.), *Minorities and the States in the Arab World*, Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc. 1999, p.8

¹⁴ Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, p.309

especially concerning Copts, as, ‘a Pandora’s box.’¹⁵ Published materials focus on introducing the groups and on issues concerning their human rights. Access to the precise demographic data is not easy, either. For many countries in the region, census results have been either confidential, or too old. In addition to this, some countries have experienced difficulty in conducting the census at all due to a lack of adequate skills or the non-cooperation of the people.¹⁶ But more importantly, members of the minority groups in the region sometimes do not want to highlight the issue. The Nicosia Summit of the heads of all fourteen Eastern Churches, which was held in 1998 in Nicosia, shows such tendency. The patriarchs of these churches were afraid that being vocal about the issue could lead to worse treatment by the homeland governments and believed that formally registering themselves as groups under religious persecution in the United States could lead to the political abuse by the United States. They decided to avoid referring to the West as a power to rely on.

...the Nicosia summit was characterized by a will to avoid acting like “minorities” and emphasized on the fact that Christians are the first inhabitants of the Orient, that they are deeply rooted in their land and are citizens of their countries on equal level with their Muslim counterparts, with whom they share the same problems and challenges, and intend to build a joint future based on participation and equal rights.¹⁷

Here, a question of the self-identity of these minority groups in the Middle East arises. Even if they are invisible and overshadowed by Arab Muslims, they must have developed their own differentiated identities. People form groups along various contour lines such as language, religion, ethnicity, and so on. In other words, a group is formed by awareness of sameness with other potential we-group members and difference from others. Renowned

¹⁵ See Ami Ayalon, “Egypt’s Coptic Pandora’s box”, in Bengio (eds.), op.cit.

¹⁶ Abdel-Rahim Omran, *Population in the Arab World: Problems and Prospects*, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, & Croom Helm Ltd. New York, 1980, pp.127-128. In general, this is still true. For example, in Lebanon the official census has not been carried out since 1932. In Iraq, the last census was carried out in 1987 and the planned census in 2009 was abandoned for fear of stirring conflict.

¹⁷ Carole H. Dagher, *Bring Down the Walls*, Palgrave, New York and Hounsmills, 2001, p.203

social-psychologist Henri Tajfel adeptly sums up this notion: “We are what we are because they are not what we are.”¹⁸ While there are groups whose origin cannot be traced with ease but whose members share a great amount of sameness, or we-ness, there are groups whose origin can be traced relatively clearly, as is case with many religious groups. John Turner elaborates this group formation using the Social Identification Model. According to this model, the necessary and sufficient conditions for group formation are not social cohesion which results from attraction to each other, but social identification, the perception by individuals that they are joined in common category membership.¹⁹ The first question determining group-belongingness is not “Do I like these other individuals?”, but “Who am I?” What matters is how we perceive and define ourselves and not how we feel about others.²⁰ He refers to social identification as the process of locating oneself, or another person, within a system of social categorizations or to any social categorization used by a person to define him- or herself and others.²¹ He continues that

It [social identification] also sometimes be used to indicate the process whereby an individual internalizes some form of social categorization so that it becomes a component of the self-concept, whether long-lasting or ephemeral. And the sum total of the social identifications used by a person to define him- or herself is described as his or her social identity.²²

As for an ascriptive identity, whether consisting of gender, nationality, or religion as in the case of the Middle East, it can be inferred that one would belong to the group, and identify with other members of the group to which he or she is born into, and furthermore, differentiate oneself from others through this identity.

¹⁸ Tajfel, op.cit., p.323

¹⁹ John. C. Turner, “The Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group”, in Henry Tajfel (ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Paris, 1982, p.22

²⁰ Ibid. p.16

²¹ Ibid. pp.17-18

²² Ibid.

Once a group is formed, it pursues its continuity and prosperity, which is to preserve its differences from others. In other words, differentiated group identity is inevitably related to a group's survival, since if it were to lose its distinctive identity, it would disappear and be assimilated to another group. Tajfel elaborates the function of differentiation.

The 'differentiation from others' to which Sumner referred can be understood as fulfilling two main functions, one for the group as a whole and one for its individual members. For the groups as a whole, it 'strengthens the folkways', i.e. it contributes to the *continuation* [emphasis added] of the group as an articulate social entity. For individual members of the group, positively-valued differentiations from others contribute favourably to their self-image and boost self-respect.²³

One's belonging and identity is multi-layered, though not always successively in order. Then, an individual or a group must hold the two tendencies of identification and differentiation at the same time. This ambivalent need appears as a centrifugal identification toward a layer that is concerned or threatened in certain situations, and centripetal differentiation toward an outer layer. William Bloom nicely theorizes the relationship between individuals and group actions by applying identification theory. Exploring how individuals can have loyalty to their nation, he argues that members of a group, who are people holding the same identification, can carry out or can be mobilized to collective actions when the concerned identity is threatened.²⁴

The objectives of this research are first, to expose and integrate the presence of Maronites and Assyrians not only to Lebanon and Iraq respectively, but also to the whole Middle East, which is predominantly Islamic.²⁵ To integrate this presence is imperative in order to have a

²³ Tajfel (1981), op.cit., p.323

²⁴ See William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National identity, and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990

²⁵ This simple objective has importance for the researcher because the general perception of the Middle East in Korea is monolithic – that it is all Arab and Islam. The most representative images of the region are Islam, desert, and oil, nothing else.

holistic understanding of the region. For this purpose, the socio-historic backgrounds of the Maronites and the Assyrians will be explored. Secondly, as group actions activated by either intra-group dynamics or external causes, form the history of a group and mold its identity, the research will examine how Maronites and Assyrians have developed and shifted their identities throughout history. Thirdly, as differentiated identity inevitably accompanies distinctive expressions either clearly visible or melted in everyday life²⁶, the research will examine the traditions and other means of self-expressions of Maronites and Assyrians. They will be dealt with on individual, communal, and institutional levels. Fourthly, as members of a group are supposed to share common identity, the research will investigate the means of self-identification of today's individual Maronites and Assyrians. Lastly, as the current social privileges of the Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq show considerable differences, an effort to understand underlying causes of such differences will be also be made.

These objectives could be summarized as responding to the following key questions.

1. How do Maronites and Assyrians identify themselves? How have their identity discourses developed throughout history? Do these discourses show continuity or are they merely discontinuous inventories?
2. How do Maronites and Assyrians express their differentiated identities?
3. How much do individual members of the Maronite and Assyrian groups identify themselves with the group identities? How do individual members of these groups perceive their groups and their history? How much do these individual identifications correspond to the group identity discourse?
4. What factors have contributed to the currently different social status of Maronites and

²⁶ This is what Michael Bilig calls a 'banal nationalism', or the representation of national identity in everyday life. (Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Korean translation, E-who publication, Seoul, 2008, pp.40-41) Self-expressions of any identity group include such 'banal' practices.

Assyrians?

Several working hypotheses can be built.

- Considering the salience of religious belonging in the Middle East, Maronite identity and Assyrian identity must be the primary identities among members of the Maronite and Assyrian groups.

- Considering that identity is a process rather than a static label, Maronite and Assyrian identities must have gone through shifts in their connotations.

- Considering the widespread usage of the term “Assyrian” in relation to ethnicity, Assyrians must have the need to deny Arab identity, which contains an ethnic meaning, more than Maronites do.

- Considering current differences in the social status of Maronites and Assyrians, Assyrians must feel their minority identity more strongly than Maronites do.

- Considering the development and prevalence of nationalism in the Middle East, Maronites must identify themselves as descendents of Phoenicians, and Assyrians must identify themselves as descendents of ancient Assyrians.

To answer these questions and test these hypotheses, an interdisciplinary approach is employed as the first and most important principle of methodology. Such an approach aims to maintain a holistic view, rather than being limited to the perspective and methodology of a single discipline, which is needed in Area Studies. But this will not be a mere accumulation of knowledge, rather it will be areas of inquiry and interpretation.²⁷ For a holistic understanding and theoretical framework of the phenomena of minority, ethnicity, nationalism, identity, and religion, literature from many disciplines is examined. Examining history is an important part of this research, for historical events form the groups' collective

²⁷ Binder (ed.), op.cit., p.2

memory, which is directly related to their self-identity. In the examination of their history, a chronological examination and a synchronic analysis of certain periods of time are employed to understand the psychological impact of certain events on group identity. As for field research, participant observation and in-depth interviews were mainly used. Acquaintance with and experience of a group's culture and communal activities, as well as language skills for communication, are prerequisites to understanding this group. This kind of cultural understanding facilitates accessibility to the groups' own narratives, or what is called an 'emic' understanding in anthropology, which published materials cannot always do. Visits were made to Maronite monasteries, Maronite churches and Assyrian church on several occasions including participating in the liturgies.²⁸ In-depth interviews are mainly qualitative, which is required for proper interpretation of interviewees' ideas. As the researcher was residing in Lebanon, a considerable amount of effort was made not to lose balance in exposure to both groups, that is, not to concentrate on Maronite group only and its materials.

Initial plans for a research trip to Iraq and conducting a survey there using a questionnaire for both groups were abandoned for security reasons. The war in 2003 in Iraq, and the insecurity that followed, forbade the trip.²⁹ Instead, however, interviews were conducted in Syria with temporary Assyrian war refugees at the time. In addition to Assyrians of the Church of the East, interviewees of these initial interviews included a few Chaldeans and Protestants from an Assyrian or Chaldean background. Also, interviews were carried out in an annual Assyrian National Convention held in Chicago in the same year which provided the latest data and issues concerning Assyrians in Iraq and other parts of the world. Interviews with Assyrians in Lebanon, either Lebanese Assyrian or Assyrian Iraqi refugees, were added later. Interviews with Maronites in the United States were conducted as well in addition to

²⁸ Participant observation of the Assyrian Church of the East was carried out in Beirut.

²⁹ Travel to Iraq for Koreans has been under a strict governmental ban since 2004.

those conducted in Lebanon.

The questionnaire surveys for both groups were carried out in 2008. While surveying Maronites in Lebanon took less than a month, surveying Iraqi Assyrians took about seven months. Inaccessibility to the Assyrians in Iraq itself reflects the difficult situation of the group in Iraq. Following an informant's advice, questions in the questionnaire for the Assyrians which may incite distrust and sensitivity were modified. Those questions included personal information such as first name, monthly income, place of residence, or relatives who are abroad.³⁰ Revealing personal information is considered risky among Assyrians in Iraq, because many Assyrians think it may hinder receiving foreign aid or it may attract attention from the government or radical Islamic groups. In addition to this, it was very difficult to find Assyrians, who would willingly fill in lengthy survey sheets, when they were caught in the midst of urgent security conditions and when the general atmosphere among Assyrians in Iraq was to leave the country as soon as they got the chance.³¹

In the sampling of Maronite respondents, random sampling and snowball sampling were mixed. Geographical distribution of Maronites in Lebanon was the first consideration. Maronite informants from different regions such as Jbeil, Tripoli, Zgharta, Zahle, Sidon, Bherri, Mt. Lebanon, and Beirut were selected to conduct the survey among Maronites. Cities of Maronite strongholds and mixed areas were selected to include the possibility of different tendencies. Of course, the respondents were not restricted to designated cities. In addition, to get younger respondents, Kaslik University and the American University of Beirut (AUB) were selected: Kaslik as the Maronite conservative stronghold and AUB as more liberal and mixed. Also, a group of priests was added from the Kaslik University. The

³⁰ As a result, some items of comparison with the Maronite group could not be made.

³¹ One informant added that many Assyrians did not want to respond to interview requests or surveys because their participation in surveys and interviews in the past had not improved their conditions.

number of Maronite respondents from the sixteen different groups was 220.

As for the Assyrian respondents in Iraq, finding respondents even through online correspondence was very difficult. Therefore, respondents were found among Assyrian refugees in neighboring countries of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon instead. As in the Maronite case, random sampling and snowball sampling, but in a way much closer to snowball sampling, were used for the Assyrian respondents starting from Assyrian informants in Lebanon and Jordan. In Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, Assyrian refugees in Amman, Damascus, and Beirut areas were selected respectively. Though they were residing in the capitals of each country as refugees, or course, they were originally from all over Iraq. From Iraq, respondents were collected from Baghdad and Mosul area. The number of Assyrian respondents from four countries was 46 among which only five were resident in Iraq. However, considering the significant difference in sizes of the two groups, above 700,000 Maronites in Lebanon and 30,000 (rapidly-decreasing) Assyrians in Iraq respectively, the difference in numbers of Maronite and Assyrian samples can be taken as fairly reflecting the difference in the sizes of the communities.

The renowned scholar Neil Smelser criticized public opinion surveys which in most cases are not designed to reflect ambivalent feelings in the participants.³² Bearing in mind this critical point, this lengthy questionnaire survey was designed to contain qualitative data, not as the absolute quantitative statistics,. Questions on self-identification were given with seven degrees from absolute disagreement to definite agreement combining the Likert Scale and Guttman Scale. These seven degrees are “Not at all,” “Strongly disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neutral,” “Agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Definitely.” As identities are competitive and develop against outgroup identities, answers for absolute refusal and definite agreement were

³² Neil J. Smelser, *The Social Edges of Psychoanalysis*, University of Californis Press, Berkely and Los Angeles, 1998, p. 186

added.³³

One of the difficulties in the research was a lack of academic literature on these groups. Published materials on Maronites are mainly political studies about the Lebanese Civil War. Some deal with Lebanese identity, but Maronites are not the exclusive focus in such works. Recently published books on Assyrians mainly focus on their experiences of victimization during World War I and the 1933 event, while some books are mainly a collection of nationalistic claims. Both groups are found in Church history. But the Assyrian Church in particular is dealt with as a minor or an excommunicated church. Church history shows how these groups were institutionalized, as well as their position in theological debate. Church histories written by members of the Maronite Church or the Assyrian Church of the East mainly deal with the history of the churches as institutions, not as people groups. On the contrary, in materials which focus on Assyrian people, which are mainly works of Assyrian nationalists, usage of the term “Assyrian” often includes the adherents of the Assyrian Church of the East, the Ancient Church of the East, the Chaldean Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, and Protestants from these churches, leaving ambiguities in many cases.

Then a comparison between the Maronites and Assyrians could itself be seen an imparity since the term “Maronite” denotes a Christian sect while the term “Assyrian” often denotes an ethnicity. But the subjects of this research are the Maronite Church group and the Church of the East group. The Church of the East includes both the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East. As these churches have been separated recently and are trying to reunite, as will be seen in Part II, they are dealt with as one group, that is a single unit of

³³ While the questionnaire for the Maronite respondents used ruler-shaped scales for questions on self-identifications, the questionnaire for the Assyrian respondents was modified into a form in which small boxes are used for checking as in most of the official documents in the region. See the questionnaire sheets in the appendix.

analysis, throughout this research. While adherents of the Maronite Church are called Maronites as a noun, and the word “Maronite” is also used as an adjective, adherents of the Assyrians Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East have no equivalent noun or adjective.³⁴ The term “Nestorian” was avoided as a designation for this group because it was given with a pejorative meaning.³⁵ The point of departure of this research is the salience of religious, or rather sectarian belonging. The research further examines how these groups develop their identity. Ethnic identity is part of such identity discourse. To call this group or members of this group “adherents of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East” or “people of the Church of the East” whenever it occurs in the research is absurd. So, in this research the group will be called Assyrian in most cases, taking the risk of reducing the meaning of the term. Though Assyrian nationalism includes the above-mentioned churches into its ethnic boundary, the Assyrian Church of the East is the only Church that uses the word “Assyrian” in its name.³⁶ Considering this situation, using the term “Assyrian” for people of the Church of the East may be excusable.

Though interdisciplinary study was pursued and certain amount of theology and language was studied for a better understanding of the groups, discussions on theology, arts, or linguistics will not be presented in the current study. The main focus is on Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq rather than Maronites and Assyrians abroad, because the latter lived under different political, social and religious circumstances. The active phenomenon of migration of both groups and their general issues are discussed. Also, a concerted effort was made to maintain objectivity, not as pursuing the absolute objectivity, but rather in the sense of balanced observation and interpretation.

³⁴ J.F. Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England*, A history of the Archbishop of anterbury’s Assyrian Mission, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, p.4

³⁵ See Part II., Chapter. 2., Section 1 for various names of this group.

³⁶ See Part II., Chapter 2., Section 2 for the issue of boundaries.

This dissertation is composed of three parts, the Maronite Experience, Assyrian Experience, and Comparison. The first two parts have three chapters each which deal with: the history of the groups from a socio-historical perspective; discourse on self-identification, which examines how each group has defined and developed the group and themselves in history and in the modern era; and the self-expression of their identity. The third part has two chapters: one explores the differences and similarities between the two groups in terms of self-identity, while the other examines the self-identification of Maronites and Assyrians today. The dissertation culminates in a conclusion, which summarizes the findings of the research and makes an attempt to build a cultural model to approach Middle Eastern groups.

Glossary of Christian terms³⁷

Anaphora : the prayer of oblation and consecration in the Divine Liturgy during which the Eucharistic elements are offered.

Anathema : a formal ecclesiastical curse involving excommunication.

Beatify : to declare (a deceased person) to be among the blessed and thus entitled to specific religious honor. (In the order of sainthood, beatification comes before canonization.)

Canon : an ecclesiastical rule or law enacted by council or other competent authority and, in the Roman Catholic Church, approved by the pope.

Canonization : placing in the canon of saints.

Chrism : a consecrated oil, usually mixed with balsam or balsam and spices, used by certain churches in various rites, as in baptism, confirmation, and the like.

Christology : a branch of theology that deals with the nature, person, and deeds of Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiastical : of or pertaining to the church or the clergy; churchly; clerical; not secular.

Hermit : a person who has withdrawn to a solitary place for a life of religious seclusion. (cf. monk, a man who is a member of a monastic order.)

(Divine) Office : the prayers, readings from Scripture, and psalms that must be recited every day at specific times by all who are in major orders.

Liturgy : a form of public worship, a particular arrangement of services.

Order : a monastic society or fraternity.

Sacrament : one of the solemn Christian rites considered to have been instituted by Jesus Christ to symbolize or confer grace. (Different church traditions have different number of

³⁷ Definitions of terms are taken from *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996

sacraments.)

See : the seat, center of authority, jurisdiction of a bishop or patriarch.

Synod : an assembly of ecclesiastics or other church delegates, convoked pursuant to the law of the church, for the discussion and decision of ecclesiastical affairs; ecclesiastical council.

Other specific Christian terms are explained in the text.

Part I

The Maronite Experience

Chapter 1. Socio-historical perspective

1. From the introduction of Christianity to the eve of the World War I

Maronite nationalistic historiographies usually start their history from the Phoenician era and depict today's Maronites, and the Lebanese in general, as descendents of the ancient Phoenicians.¹ Other sources start from either Saint Maron's biography or the introduction of Christianity to the Phoenicians.

There are some accounts of the introduction of Christianity to Lebanon. Due to geographical proximity, Jesus' own evangelical activity reached Tyre, Sidon and their vicinity.² St. Paul also visited the Phoenician coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon during his missionary journeys.³ Church tradition says that St. Peter and St. Jude who were Jesus' twelve disciples preached in Beirut.⁴ It is also said that St. John Mark of the seventy disciples was appointed as the bishop of Jbeil.⁵ Atiya presents a story - he calls it a legend - that traces one of the early Popes St. Anicetus to Lebanese origins.⁶ There are also reports of early martyrs of Lebanon in the first period of Christianity in Lebanon.⁷ But these traditions, which are directly related to Jesus himself and his apostles, are not particularly venerated or developed among Maronites probably because they are not considered to be exclusively Maronite.

St. Maron who is believed to have given his name to the Maronite Church is known to be a

¹ See Butrous Dau, *Religious, Cultural and Political History of the MARONITES*, no publisher, Lebanon, 1984, for example.

² Matthew 15:21-28 for example.

³ Acts 21:1-6, Acts 27:3

⁴ Antoine Khoury Harb, *Lebanon: a name through 4000 years, Entity and identity*, Lebanese Heritage Foundation publication, 2003, p.24

⁵ Ibid., p.26 and Dau, op.cit., p.156. Neither offers any more details of this story. Dau says Peter appointed him and also appointed Maron as bishop of Tripoli, but without giving any more information on this Maron.

⁶ This was in about 157. Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, p.394

⁷ Harb, op.cit., p.28

monk who practiced solitude in the open air in the region of Cyrrhus, which is north-western Syria today.⁸ His new asceticism and gift of healing attracted a huge following,⁹ and eventually eight hundred monks joined him.¹⁰ *Historia Religiosa* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the only existing source of St. Maron's life, lists his eighteen male and female disciples including Simon the Stylite and St. James the Great.¹¹ Upon his death around 410 AD a dispute broke out over the possession of his body. It was taken by one party to be buried and venerated contrary to his wishes.¹²

This "spiritual garden," or bet (beth) Maron, grew in prestige such that the Emperor Marcianus established a great monastery which held the name of 'Deir Mar Maron' by the Orontes river in 452.¹³ The head of this community used the title of exarch and governed, according to Dau, more than fifty monasteries from the sixth to the tenth century.¹⁴ A letter from the Maronite monastery to the Pope written in 517 and another written in 518 both say that 350 monks were killed by the followers of the Antiochean Patriarch on their way to St. Simon's monastery and asked for protection.¹⁵ Another letter from the monastery to Emperor Justinian in 536 lists 33 monasteries under its supervision.¹⁶ Dau infers from the first letter, which has the signatures of 185 prelates, priests and deacons, that at that time the followers of St. Maron extended into a large community and the monastery of St. Maron was its center.¹⁷ Harb concludes that a large agricultural village developed in the region adding to the social,

⁸ Dau, op.cit., p. 163, Fuad Afram Al-Bustani, *Mar Maroun*, Dar al-Mashriq, Beirut, 1999, pp.26-27. Al-Bustani says that the exact place is not traceable.

⁹ Ibid., p.33 and others

¹⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.394

¹¹ Al-Bustani, op.cit., pp.43-46. Simon the Stylites' being Maronite is not accepted by the Syrian Orthodox Church which believes he is one of its forefathers.

¹² Wadih Peter Tayah, *The Maronites – Roots and Identity*, Bet Maroon Publishers, 1987, pp.21, 23. The date of his death is not accurate. One only can give an estimate between 405 when John Chrysostom wrote a letter to him and 444 when Theodoret of Cyr wrote his biography.

¹³ Harb, op.cit., p.56, Dau, op.cit., p.172

¹⁴ Dau, Ibid., p.172

¹⁵ Ibid., p.173, 175, 180. This martyrdom is commemorated on July 31st in the Maronite calendar.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.181-182

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.179-180

cultural and religious institutions and grew into a ‘monastic city.’¹⁸ It is typical for Maronite traditions to cite this monastic confederation as the origin of the Maronite church and nation.¹⁹

While the coastal cities were evangelized by Jesus and his apostles, the Lebanese mountains seemed to be pagan until disciples of Maron evangelized the region. According to one tradition, a pupil of St. Maron Abraham, or Ibrahim in Arabic form, came to Lebanon hearing it was still pagan. Owing to his Christian faith and religious practices, local people tried to poison him. But at the same time a tax collector came to the area, and people could not afford to pay him. Ibrahim paid for them and won their hearts. He founded a monastery in ‘Aqura-Afka which became the governing center for the region. His name Ibrahim replaced the name of a river in the region called Adonis and the area became known as Moinestre, or Monaitera, derived from Latin word monasterium.²⁰ Another tradition gives an account that people from Lebanon came to Simon the Stylite (389-459) in order to receive his prayer and advice on protection from wild beasts. When Simon learned that they were not Christian, he advised them to go back and get baptized and to erect crosses around their village for protection. And they did what they were told.²¹

The Christianization and Maronization of part of today’s Lebanon was carried out along with the trade route that passed through the Apamea region which connected Egypt and Mesopotamia. In Tayah’s words, “naturally the merchant[s] followed the soldiers, and the missionaries walked in their path.”²² St. Maron’s followers also evangelized the Bedouin Arabs.²³ These Maronite missionaries also brought new agricultural techniques in addition to

¹⁸ Harb, op.cit., p.58

¹⁹ Dau, op.cit., p.183

²⁰ Ibid., pp.184-186, Harb, op.cit., p. 50

²¹ Dau, ibid. pp. 186-187, Harb, ibid.

²² Tayah., op.cit., p.32

²³ Ibid., pp.31- 33 for example.

the gospel so that agriculture and urbanism developed together.²⁴

Maronites are known to be followers of Monothelitism, which claims that Jesus had One Will despite his Divine and Human natures, and was proposed by Emperor Heraclius right before the rise of Islam to reconcile the separation and conflict between Christian groups divided by different Christologies.²⁵ The Byzantine Empire organized the Christian Marada or Mardaite, who came from Amanos region, into a column in its army against expansion of Islam. Some of them settled in Mount Lebanon after the military expedition, when the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II and the Umayyad Khalif Abdu al-Malik made a peace treaty in 685. Ironically, it was the Byzantine Empire itself that dispatched an army to defeat them later in 694.²⁶ These remnants of Christian Maradaites from Amanos mingled with the native people in Lebanon. After the Arab Islamic expansion, the Maronites retreated into the mountains due to the attacks by the Umayyad and by the Byzantine Greeks as well as the decrease of economic activity in coastal cities.²⁷ Dau, however, emphasizes that the persecution before the Crusades should not be exaggerated.²⁸

The Monastery of St. Maron was destroyed during the Persian wars and restored by Justinian.²⁹ In 694 the Greeks sacked the monastery and killed its monks, said to have numbered about five hundred.³⁰ Later it was destroyed completely by Bedouin Arabs in 948.³¹ By this time the Maronites had gradually moved from Orontes into Mount Lebanon, and the Qadisha valley in Mount Lebanon became their center where small villages

²⁴ Ibid., p.32. But he does not give more detail on the agricultural tools they were taught to use. Urbanism, in a primitive form, developed as people grew into a community.

²⁵ For example Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, p.395. The idea of Monothelitism itself was developed by Anicetus. Harb, op.cit., p.62. Discourse on Maronites' being Monothelite is dealt with in chapter 2 of this part.

²⁶ Dau, op.cit., p.215-216, Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1995, p.33

²⁷ Harb, op.cit., pp. 68-70

²⁸ Dau, op.cit., p.190

²⁹ Atiya, op.cit., p.395

³⁰ Ibid., p.396. Harb says it was in Jbeil after the establishment of the patriarchate, Harb, op.cit., p.74

³¹ Dau, op.cit., p.194

developed and the church became a central force both in the religious and economic life of the people.³² But it should be noted that (Maronite) churches and monasteries existed in Lebanon even before the Maronite migrations of the seventh or tenth centuries. So, the claim that all the Maronites came from Syria is opposed by Maronite scholars.³³

In 685, the Maronites elected their own first patriarch, John Maron, when the patriarchal seat in Antioch was vacant. This election is explained mostly in terms of the need for pastoral care and desire for autonomy from Byzantine influence which some analyze as early Christian nationalism.³⁴ While the Maronites expanded to the entire Orontes valley, and to the Antioch, Edessa, Cyr, and Aleppo area, as well as today's Lebanese coastal cities and Mountain,³⁵ there was lack of official church structure to support this expansion. The patriarchal seat in Antioch had become vacant in 609 when the patriarch was killed during a war between the Byzantines and Persians. The next patriarchs elected by Constantinople often resided in Constantinople due to the difficulty of approaching the area which was then under Islamic rule. These elections by Constantinople were/are considered as nominal, uncanonical,³⁶ and neglectful of the patriarchal see in times of urgency.³⁷ Finally when the Byzantines concluded a treaty with the Umayyads, Maronite resentment against the Byzantine Empire and their desire to free their church from western influence led to their establishment of the patriarchal seat without consulting Constantinople.³⁸ With the election of John Maron (Yohanna Maron or Jean Maron), the Maronite church emerged "as the personification of a nation from both the political and religious angles."³⁹ Dau sees the

³² Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.40, Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.397

³³ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.192, for example

³⁴ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.395, *ibid.* p. 198, Harb, *op.cit.*, p.72, Phares, *op.cit.*, p.33

³⁵ Tayah, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38

³⁶ Harb, *op.cit.*, p.72

³⁷ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.198, pp.204-206

³⁸ Harb, *op.cit.*, p.72, Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.395

³⁹ Atiya, *ibid.* p.395

military power of the Maronites, which consisted of the Marada, as enabling the establishment of their own patriarch.⁴⁰

The Byzantine Emperor, who considered this as a violation of his authority could not accept the election and sent an army which resulted in the killing of hundreds of monks in Jbeil.⁴¹ Later when the Umayyads allowed the election of the Antiochean Patriarch in the eighth century by Maronites, the Byzantines tried to prohibit the election and persecuted them, which naturally led to more migration of Maronites to the mountain.⁴² This persecution stopped in the tenth century when Maronites left the Antioch area and settled steadfastly in Mount Lebanon.⁴³ Considering the severed communication between the Byzantines and Maronites as the latter were in the territory of the new Islamic Empire,⁴⁴ as well as the cultural differences and competing ecclesiastical leadership, one can understand the need for pastoral care and autonomy. This first Maronite Patriarch is considered and venerated as not only a religious but also a national and political leader.

Atiya describes the Maronites as engaged in trade and navigation. Some of them piloted ships for the Arab armies and the merchants, and others served in the administration of the caliphs and sultans, and both the Muslims and the Christians learned to live side by side under the tolerant rule of the caliphs.⁴⁵ But Phares understands the same period as one in which the Maronites established Christian autonomy in Mount Lebanon and resisted Islamic power.⁴⁶ Under Abbas rule, Maronites suffered from severe oppression such as the imposition of high taxes. Once, when the Maronites complained about the exaction of high

⁴⁰ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.215

⁴¹ Harb, *op.cit.*, p.74

⁴² Dau, *op.cit.*, pp. 228-229

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.233

⁴⁴ This can be proved by a simple episode: that the Maronites did not know that Monothelism had been condemned as heresy in the Lateran Council in the year 649 until 727 when Christian captives delivered the news. Tayah, *op.cit.*, pp.33-34

⁴⁵ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.397

⁴⁶ Phares, *op.cit.*, p.33 and throughout his book

taxes in a revolt in 759, the result was repression and a high death toll. And Islamic Arab tribes of Al-Tannukh were implanted in the Lebanese mountain thus driving the Maronites to the north of Beirut.⁴⁷ Taya says that the Maronites were in a state of withdrawal benefitting from a quasi-independence in the Mountain for almost four centuries. But their survival was dependent on their military strength.⁴⁸

When the Crusaders came to the region, the Maronites welcomed them and served as guides to Jerusalem and provided archers.⁴⁹ The Maronites enjoyed some privileges under the Crusaders such as the privileges of ringing bronze bells instead of striking wooden planks and possessing land in the holy land.⁵⁰ Their direct contact with the West was restored - or began in some scholars' view - during the Crusade period and it is widely known that the Maronites converted to Catholicism at this time,⁵¹ though many Maronites refused to accept the Catholic faith. Many Latin customs were adopted by the Maronite Church such as wearing the mitre, which is headgear for bishops.⁵² Harb, however, points out that there were also conflicts between the Maronites and the Crusaders, such as the conflict over the imposed feudal system. And the Maronites helped Mamluks in attacking Tripoli in 1137, which led to a retaliatory massacre in the Jibbet area. Also in 1145 the Maronites refused a papal delegation seeking to impose the Latin Mass and the Latin Canon Law.⁵³ But, generally Maronites were allies of the Crusaders, such that the King Luis IX of France who led the eighth Crusader recognized them as "part of the French Nation" in his letter in appreciation

⁴⁷ Harb, op.cit., pp.78-80

⁴⁸ Tayah, op.cit., pp.41-42

⁴⁹ Harb, op.cit, p.82, Atiya, op.cit., p.398

⁵⁰ Harb, ibid. p.84

⁵¹ According to William of Tyre, it was in 1182. Atiya, op.cit., p.398

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Harb, op.cit., pp.84-86

of their help such as providing archers.⁵⁴ This cooperation also led many of them to follow the retreating Crusaders to Cyprus after their defeat in 1283.⁵⁵

Soon, this collaboration of the Maronites with the Crusaders met retaliation from the Mamelukes as a natural course of events. Though Maronite leaders, or *muqaddams*, resisted the Mamelukes, they even had to face the betrayal of one of their own *muqaddams* and, in the year 1293, saw their last victory in a battle at Jubeil. Their further help to the Crusades, for example, in the siege of Tripoli in 1298, led to a storm of vengeance. The Mameluke expedition of 1305 brought about what Phares calls “the Nakbat Kisrwan,” or the catastrophe of Kisrwan.⁵⁶ The Mount Lebanon area from north of Beirut to Nahr al-Kalb was allocated to 300 Turkoman families such as Assaf, Hamadeh, Arslan, Ma’an, Shehab and Freikh in defense against possible future Crusader attacks, and this eventually resulted in the social and cultural transformation of the region.⁵⁷

Retreating Crusaders did indeed attack coastal cities from Cyprus until 1404 when their relation with the Mameluks turned toward trade.⁵⁸ Among these Crusader attacks, the one on Alexandria in 1365 brought about the severest reprisals on the Maronites when the Patriarch Gabriel was burnt alive near Tripoli.⁵⁹ The Mameluke conquest of Cyprus in 1425 accompanied the loss of many Maronite souls there including women.⁶⁰ Contact with Rome in 1438 and 1439 brought a papal delegation to Tripoli which was forced to return by the Mamelukes. The delegation’s stay in Beirut resulted in suspicion, leading to the killing of

⁵⁴ Dau, op.cit., pp.362-364

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.367

⁵⁶ Phares, op.cit., p.35

⁵⁷ Dau, op.cit., p. 376, Ibid. p.43

⁵⁸ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs, From the earliest times to the present*, 10th edition 1970, 11th reprint, MacMillan Education Ltd., Houndmills, 1986, p.134

⁵⁹ Tayah, op.cit., p. 234, Dau, op.cit., p.241

⁶⁰ Dau, ibid. p.399

Maronites. This led the Patriarch to flee to Qannubin.⁶¹

But Hitti notes that the Mameluke expeditions in the first decade of 1300s were not only against Maronites but also against the heterodox Muslims in the region such as the Druze, whose persecution led them to move into the mountainous area.⁶² He also reports that between 1260 and 1303 Mongols attacked and ruined the coastal cities at least four times.⁶³ Also, earthquakes, plagues, drought and famine worsened the situation and during the Mameluke rule, according to Hitti, Lebanon and the adjacent area lost two thirds of their population.⁶⁴ Some people who fled the terror of Mamelukes in this period were found in naturally mummified form in 1990 in a grotto in Qannubin Valley.⁶⁵ Although Maronite historians tend to follow Dwaihi's account of *muqaddams*' victorious battles and see the period as autonomous, with the Patriarch exercising his authority over *muqaddams*,⁶⁶ Taya points out that their relationship with Muslim rulers is not very well known and that the Mameluke rule was more direct than the Abbasids.⁶⁷ Maronite internal division in this period is also recorded.⁶⁸

Ottoman rule of the Maronites is known to have been less direct since they were located far from major cities.⁶⁹ Harb does not fail to notice the economic consequences of the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope (1498), which decreased the importance of Mediterranean trade. This weakening of the coastal cities, in addition to the Ottoman neglect of them, led to the development of mountainous areas which enabled Maronites to escape close Ottoman

⁶¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.400, Ibid. p.376

⁶² Hitti, op.cit., p.128

⁶³ Ibid., p.127. Interestingly other sources do not mention the Mongol invasion.

⁶⁴ Ibid. pp.132-133

⁶⁵ Harb, op.cit., p.90

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.92 for example

⁶⁷ Tayah, op.cit., p.87

⁶⁸ Dau, op.cit., p.399

⁶⁹ Tayah, op.cit., p.90

scrutiny.⁷⁰ During the sixteenth century, the Maronite Patriarch appealed to the Pope several occasions to free and protect them from the Ottoman yoke or to intervene in their conflict with the Greek Church.⁷¹ The Eliano mission which came to Lebanon in order to examine the Maronites' orthodoxy in 1560, for example, resulted in an Ottoman attack on Maronite churches and monasteries out of suspicion, which in turn gave rise to another Maronite appeal for papal protection.⁷² Turkish expansion included the plunder of the Patriarchal seat, the killing of Maronites in Cyprus when it was conquered, the conversion of churches into mosques or commercial centers, and the levying of illegal taxes.⁷³ Despite these difficulties, as well as the Ottoman suspicion of the Faranji (Frank) and the Roman suspicion as Monophysites and pressure to Latinize,⁷⁴ the early Ottoman period is marked as a peaceful and autonomous one for Maronites in comparison to other part of the empire.⁷⁵

In the meantime, Maronite youth began to study in Rome. One of the first students in 1470 was El-Qila'i who later became a Maronite historian.⁷⁶ In 1584, the Maronite college in Rome was inaugurated. This event is often regarded as one of the most important in Maronite history.⁷⁷ Later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the alumni of this college contributed greatly to Oriental studies in Europe. Among the most famous are Gabriel Sahyuni (1577-1648)⁷⁸ who lectured for the first time in Arabic and Syriac in Rome, Abraham Haqlani (1605-1664) who worked at the Vatican library and above all Yusif Sim'an Asem'ani (1687-1768) who knew 30 languages, collected rare Eastern manuscripts and wrote

⁷⁰ Harb, op.cit., p.98

⁷¹ Dau, op.cit., pp.418, 425, 429

⁷² Ibid., pp.426-429

⁷³ Ibid., pp.432-433 and 448-449. Dau argues that Turkish armies killed eighteen thousand Maronites when they conquered Cyprus in 1570 and that Maronite women, who learned that they were heading for the harem, chose to burn three ships which they were aboard and kill themselves.

⁷⁴ Harb, op.cit., p.114

⁷⁵ Dau,op.cit., pp.443-445

⁷⁶ Tayah,op.cit., p. 106

⁷⁷ Dau,op.cit., p.434. For Dau, it is *the* most important event.

⁷⁸ Or Gabriel Sionita in Latin form.

a large number of books.⁷⁹ Others returned to Lebanon and contributed to the intellectual development of the Maronites at home through the establishment of European style schools. Tayah, however, indicates that students struggled to overcome identity crises and the College suffered from a chronic lack of enrollment, since parents were unwilling to send their children abroad, for fear of Turkish distrust, diseases, and mistreatment.⁸⁰ He also points out that there was a persisting dispute between the Maronite hierarchy and Jesuits over the education of clergy.⁸¹

The Maronite Church was also crucial to the birth of other Eastern Catholic Churches such as the Chaldean and Greek Catholic Churches in the seventeenth century and the Syriac Catholic Church in the eighteenth century.⁸² With respect to the discord between Maronite intentions for such help and the Roman understanding of it, Tayah notes that,

Their[Maronites'] ultimate aim was a comprehensive and final Reunion of all the Eastern Churches, a Reunion warranted by local autonomy and a harmonious evolution of the ecclesial institutions. ...Sadly enough, the atmosphere in Europe dictated a more triumphalistic [sic.] - not to say imperialistic – style of approach.⁸³

Meanwhile, in Mount Lebanon the Druze Maan family, which was originally sent to the region by Seljuks to block the Crusaders,⁸⁴ arose to amir status. When Ottoman Janissaries were attacked near Akkar in 1584, Ottoman retaliation reached the Shuf region where the Maan family was centered. Amid the killing of the Druze, a young Maan amir was rescued by Maronites and raised in secret for 6 years.⁸⁵ When this Druze amir Fakhr ed-Din, was later

⁷⁹ Dau, op.cit., pp.587-607, Tayah, op.cit., pp.119-126

⁸⁰ Tayah, ibid. p.66

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 66

⁸² Tayah, op.cit., pp. 149, 151-152 and 154

⁸³ Ibid., p. 156

⁸⁴ Hitti, op.cit., p.157, Dau, op.cit., p.452

⁸⁵ Dau, op.cit., pp.453-455

entrusted with the district, he moved his government to the Maronite city of Dair al-Qamar.⁸⁶ He formed an alliance with Sunni Shihabs and Maronites and expanded the territory.⁸⁷ Trade with the West, for example, Florence increased.⁸⁸ His three main plans were to form a greater Lebanon, to disconnect from Ottoman relations, and to modernize.⁸⁹ This interpretation of ‘greater Lebanon’ often makes people present him as the father of modern Lebanon. Hitti says that security, prosperity and non-sectarianism also attracted immigration.⁹⁰ The title of “Lord of Arabistan” was given to him but it is told that he preferred the “Amir of Mt. Lebanon, Sidon and Galilee.”⁹¹

Under Fakhr Ad-Din (1590-1635), Maronites were hired to high positions in his court, allowed to build churches, ride on horseback with saddles, wear fine turbans and garments, and bear arms.⁹² The Maronite and Druze relationship was friendly.⁹³ Phares analyzes this amicable relationship as that the Druze needed the Christians for trade, and that the Christians needed the Druze as a political shield.⁹⁴

While expanding his territory in the pursuit of autonomy, Fakhr Ad-Din continued to appeal to the Pope for the liberation of the Holy Land.⁹⁵ His inclination to the West and pursuit of an alliance with the Western Powers at that time led to a five-year-sojourn and brought him eventually under Ottoman suspicion, culminating in his death along with his sons in 1635 on a charge of apostasy.⁹⁶ Tayah doubts his conversion to Maronite faith and

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.456-459

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.460, 463

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.472

⁸⁹ Hitti, p. 160

⁹⁰ Hitti, op.cit., pp.161-162

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 164

⁹² Dau, op.cit., pp.460, 530, Harb, op.cit., p.118

⁹³ Atiya, op.cit., p.405

⁹⁴ Phares, op.cit, p.48

⁹⁵ In 1611, 1625-28. Dau, op.cit., p.490,494

⁹⁶ Dau, op.cit., pp.487, 490, 495-496, Hitti, op.cit., pp.165-166

cites his ambitious expansion plan as too risky.⁹⁷ Lebanese historian Philip Hitti interprets his time as the clear cut break from Syria.⁹⁸ But he also concludes that “The dawn of a new era of modernization for a greater and independent Lebanon under the Mani [Maani] amir turned out to be a false one. ...[It] had to wait one century more”⁹⁹ until Bashir II (1788-1840) of the Shihab family.

In terms of church organization, the Maronites went through a different kind of westernization, that is, Latinization, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Four Maronite Synods held in the last quarter of the sixteenth century under papal orders introduced various Latin practices into liturgy and church discipline. In turn, a Synod against Latinization was held in 1644 at Hrash.¹⁰⁰ The modern Maronite Order was founded in 1695. In 1732, it formed a monastic order, for the first time in the East, fitting within the juridical frame of Western Orders. Later it was split into the Aleppine and Lebanese Baladite orders in 1744.¹⁰¹

The three day Lebanese Synod of 1736 at the Monastery of Saidat al-Laweizeh is considered a highly significant event in Maronite history. Some traditional practices were abolished “for the sake of conformity” to Rome.¹⁰² Bishops who used to reside with the Patriarch were now to live in their own dioceses. Monasteries with both nuns and monks should be physically and administratively separated by gender. Clerical marriage was strictly limited to the lower ranks of clergy. Ordinary priests were forbidden from blessing and distributing the holy oils or administering Confirmation. Fast days were abridged. And the

⁹⁷ Tayah, op.cit., p.92

⁹⁸ Hitti,op.cit., p.166

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.184

¹⁰⁰ Tayah,op.cit., p.99

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.98,108, pp.110-112

¹⁰² Dau, op.cit., p.559

flioque and the Latin catechism were finally accepted. The insertion of the papal name in the liturgy was approved. Also, the Synod dealt with the law of personal family status. Noticeably education for girls was also approved, though its realization had to be postponed with other decisions. With the attendance of missionaries, Druze, and Prince Mulhim himself with major family leaders, besides Synod members, the Synod was more like a general council, or national assembly.¹⁰³ This pro-Roman tendency was initiated and supported by some Roman alumni such as Assemani who participated in the Synod in person.¹⁰⁴ Hitti's evaluation is that the relation with Rome was sealed through this synod.¹⁰⁵ The nine Synods that followed it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mostly focused on the application of the decisions made in 1736.¹⁰⁶

However, this Synod also brought about the long standing conflict between "Integrists" and "Reformists" within the Maronite Church.¹⁰⁷ One such conflict was revealed in the so-called "Hindiya affair" in 1768. Hindiya was a Maronite nun who claimed that she united hypostatically with Christ.¹⁰⁸ Roman condemnation, the Patriarch's support, and the different stances of others on this matter, according to Tayah, acted as a catalyst to the persisting conflict between the Roman Party and the Party of the Tradition.¹⁰⁹

After Fakhr al-Din's second successor Ahmad, in 1697 the governorship of Ma'an family was handed over to the Shihab family, whose first ruler was Bashir I (1697-1707), related to the Ma'anis from maternal side. During Haydar's reign (1707-1732), an old conflict between the Yemeni and Qaisi factions ended with the destruction of Yemenis, though the same period

¹⁰³ Atiya, op.cit., p.401, Dau, op.cit., pp.558-560, Tayah, op.cit., p.100

¹⁰⁴ Tayah, ibid. p.100

¹⁰⁵ Hitti, op.cit., p.179

¹⁰⁶ Tayah, op.cit., p.100, Dau, op.cit., p.563

¹⁰⁷ Tayah, ibid. p.100

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.114-115, Atiya, op.cit., p.402

¹⁰⁹ Tayah, ibid., p.116

witnessed the emergence of new rival factions. The feudal pyramid was reconstructed. The people provided the Shihabs with armed men and taxes, and in turn, solidarity and cohesion increased among the people.¹¹⁰ Haydar's son Mulhim (1732-1754) followed his expansionary policy and added Jabal Amil, Al-Biqa, and Beirut to his territory, which Hitti interprets as "the Greater Lebanon of the Maans reassembled."¹¹¹ Trade with Europe was also encouraged.

Mulhim's son Yusuf (1770-1788) became the first Christian Maronite governor of Lebanon. Freedom and security in his territory also attracted a number of Christian families from neighboring areas.¹¹² When he was deposed by the ruler of Accar, then a strong power in the region, Bashir II (1788-1840) who is known as Bashir al-Kabir replaced him.¹¹³ His rule saw stabilization, modernization, openness to foreign influence, and peace between the Maronites and Druze.¹¹⁴ His pursuit of justice was and is still famous, and one can still see the old saying engraved in his palace in Deir al-Qamar: One hour of justice excels a thousand months of devotion.¹¹⁵ But his heavy taxation resulting from war and his projects brought a conflict with the Maronite Patriarch in 1819, leading to the excommunication of the Amir,¹¹⁶ and an attack on tax collectors by commoners, or *ammiyah*, in 1820.¹¹⁷

The annexation of Syria (today's Lebanon and Syria) by Muhammad Ali of Egypt in 1831 and his daring war against Turkey led to a change in administration and lifestyle in the region.¹¹⁸ Despite the modernization scheme of Ibrahim, Ali's son, and his ally Bashir II, high taxation and military conscription for the war resulted in strong resentment on the part

¹¹⁰ Hitti, op.cit., p.169

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.169-170

¹¹² Ibid., p.170

¹¹³ Ibid., p.175

¹¹⁴ Atiya, op.cit., pp.405-406

¹¹⁵ Hitti, op.cit., p.187

¹¹⁶ Harb, op.cit., p.122

¹¹⁷ Dau, op.cit., p.624

¹¹⁸ Tayah, op.cit., p.164

of the people. The uprising against the Egyptian regime was spread by Shiites in Jabal Amil in 1839, and by Druze from Hawran in 1840 until it was quelled by Bashir, who used the Maronites to do so.¹¹⁹ Tayah sees the harsh military conscription and the disarming of the populace as the cause of the rifts between the Maronites and the Druze, which later opened the door to twenty years of religious and social strife.¹²⁰

In 1840, the Maronites and the Druze rose together against Egypt and Bashir after swearing an oath together at Antiliyas.¹²¹ As Bashir fled, the Druze who had withdrawn in an earlier revolt returned to the area.¹²² And later in the same year, these two factions reached the point of war against each other. But European powers intervened quickly and created the *qaemaqamiyat*, dividing the area into Maronite and Druze districts.¹²³ *Qaemaqams*, however, did not function well, since people were mixed especially in the Druze district. And it brought further open conflicts in 1845 such as the burning of each other's villages,¹²⁴ or mass killing incidents, which Tayah calls a "massacre."¹²⁵

In the northern Maronite district, a revolt against feudalism broke out in 1858 in Kisrwan influenced by European ideas, especially the French Revolution. This was expressed in the form of attacking the Khazen family, then the feudal lord, "in the name of [the] republic." The very organized movement was supported by the Church clerics.¹²⁶ But in the south, the revolt broke out, this time against Christians in 1860,¹²⁷ which is known as '*madhabih sittinat*' in Maronite history. A pattern in the killing of Christians, mainly Maronites, was that

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 165, Dau, op.cit., p.631, Harb, op.cit., p.126

¹²⁰ Tayah, ibid., p.165

¹²¹ Harb, op.cit., p.126

¹²² Ibid., p.128

¹²³ Phares, op.cit., p.49

¹²⁴ Atiya, op.cit., p.407

¹²⁵ Tayah, op.cit., p.168

¹²⁶ Harb, op.cit., p.130, Tayah, ibid., pp. 176-178

¹²⁷ Phares, op.cit., p.51

Turkey offered Christians protection, disarmed them, and killed them.¹²⁸ Maronite military help from the northern district led by Yusuf Karam and Tanyus Shahin was blocked by France, which promised them peace.¹²⁹ This mass killing also reached Damascus where 12,000 Christian souls perished.¹³⁰ Maronites in the south became refugees exposed to starvation and disease.¹³¹

An Ottoman judicial court sentenced forty-eight Druze to death, eleven others to life sentences, and others to shorter periods in prison or temporary exile, for killing. But the sentencing of the guilty was more symbolic than comprehensive and the Christians were not compensated for their losses.¹³² And the territory was reorganized as Mutasarrifat recognized Mount Lebanon as one entity under a foreign Christian governor.¹³³ Yusuf Karam rose again against this foreign rule but his rebellion did not receive much support.¹³⁴ It was already an outdated movement.¹³⁵

Under Mutasarrif, feudal privilege disappeared legally in 1864,¹³⁶ and this feudal decrease gave way to the Church for leadership.¹³⁷ This period also saw modernization and cultural awakening such as the establishment of the American University of Beirut (1866) and Saint Joseph University (USJ 1875), introduction of printing press and accompanying nationalism.¹³⁸ These modern schools and universities were founded by Western missions in competition. Along with those missions foreign investment also came to Lebanon and

¹²⁸ Hitti, op.cit., p.194

¹²⁹ Dau, op.cit., p. 647

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.649

¹³¹ Atiya, , op.cit., p.408, Dau, ibid., p.651

¹³² Dau, ibid. p.650

¹³³ Harb, op.cit., p.134...

¹³⁴ Dau, op.cit., pp.645-655, Hitti, p.198

¹³⁵ Tayah, op.cit., p.190

¹³⁶ Dau, op.cit., p.654

¹³⁷ Atiya, op.cit., p.408, Hitti, op.cit., p.202, Dau, ibid., p.657

¹³⁸ Atiya, ibid., p.409

produced a new class of entrepreneurs.¹³⁹ Also, sericulture and silk industry which were introduced by the French and the Scottish prospered until the First World War.¹⁴⁰

2. From World War I to the present

Direct Ottoman rule over modern day Lebanon at the end of the nineteenth century, the Young Turks' ascension to the power, and the First World War affected Lebanon greatly. Monasteries in strategic positions were converted into castles, a military court dealt with all kinds of cases, nationalists were executed, and bishops were exiled.¹⁴¹ Severe famine struck in 1917 and 1918 took about 150,000 souls which was one third of the population.¹⁴² The war-ravaged country was also exposed to a swarm of locusts, disease, and even to an earthquake in addition to poverty and famine.¹⁴³ At the time of famine, the Lebanese Maronite Order had mortgaged its whole property to France so that it could help starving people.¹⁴⁴

The fall of the Ottoman Empire gave way to new independent political entities in the Middle East. In 1919, Maronite Patriarch Hoyek attended the Paris Peace Conference as a national representative and claimed that Lebanon has enough historical reason to be an independent country. Meanwhile the King Crane Commission reported that the majority of the population in Lebanon preferred the French mandate.¹⁴⁵ The Pan-Arabist campaign led by Faisal occupied Damascus and attacked Baabda, the former capital, succeeded for a short time, then was defeated by the French army.¹⁴⁶ The Lebanese border was set after a series of

¹³⁹ Tayah, op.cit., pp.191-193

¹⁴⁰ Hitti, op.cit., p.189

¹⁴¹ Dau, op.cit., p.692-3, Atiya, op.cit., p.409, Harb, op.cit., p.142

¹⁴² Tayah, op.cit., p.193, Phares, op.cit., p.62

¹⁴³ Dau, op.cit., pp.759,761

¹⁴⁴ France later exempted this debt. Harb, op.cit., pp.144, 146

¹⁴⁵ Dau, op.cit., p.698

¹⁴⁶ Phares, op.cit., p.65

discussions¹⁴⁷ to include Beka valley and coastal cities, or to form the so-called “Greater Lebanon.” Under the French mandate, a constitution was established, modern codes for civil procedure were introduced, and religious courts dealing with personal status were adopted.¹⁴⁸ The mandate period also witnessed a Druze rebellion in 1925 citing the plans to deconstruct the unity of the region, and French preference toward Christians as another reason.¹⁴⁹

The Arabist rejection of the mandate, the Christian wish for full independence, and the international atmosphere terminated the mandate in 1943. The first and only census in 1932 provided the basis for a power-sharing format among different religious sects in Lebanon which culminated in a “gentlemen’s agreement” called the National Pact, or *al-mithaq*, in 1943. In this pact, Maronites have the privilege of providing the country’s president while Sunnis provide the premier and Shiites the parliamentary speaker. All governmental and parliamentary positions and seats were allocated to each sect according to the power-sharing formula of a six-to-five Christian-Muslim ratio. Salibi evaluates the National Pact as an ideal framework for a working democracy.¹⁵⁰

The Second World War did not greatly affect Lebanon, rather, according to Dau, the country entered upon a period of war prosperity.¹⁵¹ Within the newly formulated Lebanon, each sect, or religious group maintained its own solidarity and network to the extent of organizing armed forces.¹⁵² In the case of the Maronites, these were the Kata’ib (Phalangist) party founded by Pierre Jemayel in 1936, and the Tigers of Camille Chamoun.¹⁵³

In post-mandate Lebanon Arabism and Lebanism competed with each other in defining

¹⁴⁷ This discussion and related matters will be dealt with in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁸ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.698, 701

¹⁴⁹ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.194

¹⁵⁰ Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, I.B.Tauris, London, New York, 2003, p. 192

¹⁵¹ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.704

¹⁵² Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McMarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, 1991, p.183

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.173

Lebanon's identity.¹⁵⁴ But on the surface a free economic system, education, free press, progress in the industrial sector, and democracy all indicated the development of Lebanon.¹⁵⁵ President Chamoun refused to support Nasser in the Suez War of 1956. Muslims in Lebanon, who already felt suppressed, reacted with pride to Arab victory over Israel. While Chamoun, in preparation for his re-election, eliminated pro-Nasserists in electoral reform, stimulating Muslims' opposition, the establishment of the United Arab Republic and Nasser's visit to Damascus were seen as a threat to Christians.¹⁵⁶ This conflict was expressed as pro and against Chamoun. Maronite Phalangists, or al-Kataib, were in full support of Chamoun.¹⁵⁷ Meouchi, the Maronite Patriarch at that time, stood on the Arabist side by saying that Maronites are a ship in Muslim sea.¹⁵⁸ The clash ended with Chamoun's resignation, to be replaced by General Fouad Shihab's police state.¹⁵⁹ Though Chamoun and Shihab tried to assert that problems in Lebanon were externally generated,¹⁶⁰ the civil war in 1958 is interpreted as a mixture of internal and external problems,¹⁶¹ showing the already precarious situation in Lebanon.¹⁶²

Lebanon was never free again from the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1967.¹⁶³ And the Cairo Agreement of 1969 allowed Lebanon to be used in Arab activities against Israel.¹⁶⁴ The increasing Palestinian population reached around 400,000 out of a population of 3 million,¹⁶⁵ the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) transferred to Lebanon and its activities

¹⁵⁴ Salibi, op.cit., p.37

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.190-191

¹⁵⁶ Claude Boueiz Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860-1960: A Century of Myth and Politics*, Saqi, London, 2005, p.176

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.184

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.176, Atiya, op.cit., p.411

¹⁵⁹ Antoine Khoury Harb, *Lebanon: a name through 4000 years, Entity and identity*, Lebanese Heritage Foundation publication, 2003, p.39

¹⁶⁰ Kanaan, op.cit., P.269

¹⁶¹ Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic Revisited: Reflections on the Collapse of Pluralist Politics in Lebanon*, Papers in Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., 1977, p.10

¹⁶² Nisan, op.cit., p.183

¹⁶³ Hudson, op.cit., p.11

¹⁶⁴ Harb, op.cit., p.40

¹⁶⁵ Ritchie Owendale, *The Middle East since 1914*, Longman, London and New York, 1992, p.116

increased. This Palestinian factor upset the fragile communal balance in Lebanon. In 1973 the Maronites already began challenging the Palestinians openly.¹⁶⁶ The Phalangists demanded more control by the Lebanese government over the Palestinians, which the latter came to resent.¹⁶⁷ In April 1975, unknown assailants fired at a Sunday church gathering attended by the Maronite leader Pierre Gemayel. An immediate retaliation was made so that a bus filled with mainly Palestinians was fired upon by Maronite militiamen killing all of its twenty-eight passengers.¹⁶⁸ This event is generally considered as the starting point of the fifteen-year Lebanese civil war. In 1975 alone, 500 commercial firms were destroyed or bankrupted, and 300,000 fled from Lebanon.¹⁶⁹ Soon, in 1976, the war became a kind of a “war of all against all.”¹⁷⁰ Syria intervened in favor of the Christians in 1976 and a ceasefire was brokered, suggesting a five-to-five ratio power sharing and a return to the National Pact.¹⁷¹

But the war continued from all factions. In 1979, the so-called “the Republic of Southern Lebanon” was proclaimed by Sa’ad Haddad.¹⁷² Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, and the PLO withdrew. Hezbollah aimed at establishing an Islamic republic and was founded separately from the Shiite Amal movement.¹⁷³ The Lebanese Forces’ leader Bashir Gemayel’s assassination after his election to the presidency led to Maronite revenge against Palestinians with Israel’s tacit agreement.¹⁷⁴ This Sabra-Shatila massacre took 1,000 to 2,000 estimated victims.¹⁷⁵ In the same year, a Druze-Shiite coalition supported by Syria destroyed seventy-five villages in the Shouf region, killing 2,000 Christians.¹⁷⁶ In 1989, General Aoun, a

¹⁶⁶ Hudson, op.cit., p.12

¹⁶⁷ Owendale, op.cit., p.116

¹⁶⁸ Harb, op.cit., p.41

¹⁶⁹ Nisan, op.cit., p.187

¹⁷⁰ Harb, op.cit., p.41

¹⁷¹ Hudson, op.cit., p.22

¹⁷² Nisan, op.cit., p.188

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.186

¹⁷⁴ Harb, op.cit., p.42, Owendale, op.cit., p.119

¹⁷⁵ Owendale, ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Charles E. Chartouni, *Conflict Resolution in Lebanon: Myth and Reality*, Foundation for Human and

Maronite, started the “War of Liberation” to expel the Syrian presence from Lebanon.¹⁷⁷

While the Taif Agreement was arranged to end the violence in Lebanon, within the Maronite community rivalry between General Aoun of the Lebanese Army and the Lebanese Forces’ leader Geagea resulted in the loss of hundreds of souls.¹⁷⁸

The American-Saudi-brokered Taif Agreement reduced the president’s authority to the extent of status of a “symbol,” in Chartouni’s expression,¹⁷⁹ and asserted Lebanon’s Arabity.¹⁸⁰ Chartouni sees the civil war reflecting,

...the fragility of Middle Eastern geo-political boundaries, and the pending issue of national identity, the lack of internalized national legitimacy, the absence of encompassing political cultures, the highly segmented nature of political societies, the strength of transnational ideologies as vehicles for opposition and political counter-culture, the diffused insecurity that pervades the groups and political entities, the incidental effect of civility among groups, violence as a political culture and finally the non plausibility of the territorial State as a framework for politics.¹⁸¹

Odeh and Hudson alike oppose the idea that the Lebanese civil war was a religious war. Rather, Odeh tries to explain it as a class conflict in sectarian guise.¹⁸² Nisan also sees the Bank crisis in 1966 and the feelings of deprivation by the Shiites in the South together with corruption and the multiplicity of parties as contributing to the collapse of national confidence and political stability.¹⁸³ The fact that the Taif Agreement was brokered and needed the consensus of non-Lebanese parties reflects the fact that Lebanese civil war was not purely Lebanese.¹⁸⁴ Taif Agreement makes it clear that confessionalism should be

Humanitarian Rights (Lebanon), Beirut, 1993 (year uncertain), p.15

¹⁷⁷ Ovendale, op.cit., p.120, ibid. p.16

¹⁷⁸ Nisan, op.cit., p.191

¹⁷⁹ Chartouni, op.cit., p.38

¹⁸⁰ Nisan (1999), op.cit., pp.7-8

¹⁸¹ Chartouni, op.cit., p.19

¹⁸² B.J. Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, Zed Books, London, 1985, p.25

¹⁸³ Nisan (1991), op.cit., p.185

¹⁸⁴ Chartouni, op.cit., p.17

abolished in the near future but it has not been implemented.¹⁸⁵ The Sectarian affiliation of citizens on the Lebanese ID card is not shown any more after Taif.¹⁸⁶ But a project by President Elias Hrawi to introduce civil marriage to people who wish to adopt it faced strong opposition from all religious factions in 1998.¹⁸⁷ All in all, post-war Lebanon is more partitioned and people are less related to people from different religious sects.¹⁸⁸

Attempts at dialogue have been made. The Synod for Lebanon of 1995 in the Vatican was for all Lebanon: 120 people participated and Muslims were also present as observers.¹⁸⁹ For post-war Maronites, with Aoun in exile in France, Geagea in prison, and no other strong figures, the Patriarch became the sole community leader.¹⁹⁰ After a long period of attempted recovery, the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 set the new stage for Lebanon. Syria withdrew from Lebanon and a sense of Lebanese patriotism was evident. Aoun came back to Lebanon and Geagea was freed from prison. These two rivals in the past once again divide the Maronites into two political factions, one with the Shiites and the other with the Sunni. Some interpret this as de-sectarianization of Lebanon. Others interpret it as a survival strategy by Christian leaders in the broader context of Christian decline.¹⁹¹ The Israeli war with Hezbollah in 2006 partly contributed to Lebanese patriotism as Christians sympathized with their co-patriots in the South and Dahiyeh, suburb of Beirut. Nevertheless, Hezbollah's 2007 riot and seizure of Beirut triggered Christian fear, and brought all the issues together to the table.

¹⁸⁵ Dagher, op.cit., p.174

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.172. But public documents still contain individuals' sectarian belongings and in 2009 the Ministry of Interior allowed to delete their sectarian belongings for whom wished to.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p.177

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.127-128, and See Samir Khalaf, "On Roots and Routs; The Reassertion of Primordial Loyalties", in Theodore Hanf and Nawaf Salam(eds.), *Lebanon in Limbo*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003. Khalaf's research results show this tendency more clearly.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.101, 107

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.138

¹⁹¹ See Nisan's article (1991), op.cit.

Chapter 2. Discourse on Maronite Identity

1. Name(s) of the Church and its people

It is often said that the Maronite Church was named after Saint Maron the hermit who lived in the fourth century.¹ And the origin of this name ‘Maroon’ or ‘Muroon,’ according to Patriarch Duwahi, is Syriac for ‘Mara’ meaning “Lord.” It became ‘Maruna,’ a diminutive form, used for personal name. Then it became ‘Maroon’ in Arabic.² In this light, Antoin Harb connects a shift of faith from the Baal Adon to St. Maron’s Christianity as both names mean “Lord.”³ It seems this name had been used as a personal name even before Saint Maron as Duwahi mentions a clergyman named Mooroon who lived in the third century.⁴ The oldest picture of the saint is found in the Maronite codex, the Rabbula Gospels, with the Syriac word ‘Moran’ written near him. Dau explains it as a variant of his name⁵ that appears as Maron, or Marona in Western [Syriac] and Moran, or Moranas in eastern [Syriac].⁶ He also presents ‘Maro’ or ‘Mara’ as the name of the region east of Ma’arat al-Na’man where the saint lived.⁷

Atiya, however, emphatically distinguishes Saint Maro, or Maron, from John Maron

¹ See for example, Fuad Afram Al-Bustani, *MarMaroun*, Dar al-Mashriq, Beirut, 1999, p.57

² Farj Allah Salih Dib, *Al-Madihiyah wa al-Masihiyunal-Arab wausul al-Mararinah*, Naufal, Beirut, 1999, p.77, and ‘Maroon’ as a Syriac name in diminutive form in Al-Bustani, op.cit., p.75 in FN21

³ Antoine Khoury Harb, *The Maronites: History and Constants*, The Maronite Heritage Center, English Edition, 2001, p.54. Baal also means the “lord.” According to Dau, the word Adonis meaning lord (A-Don-is) is Greek form of Hai-Tau with Canaanite-Amorrite suffix ‘on’ which makes ‘Hai-Dho-n’. (Butros Dau, *Religious, Cultural and Political History of the Maronites*, no publisher, Lebanon, 1984, p.392)

⁴ Dib, op.cit., pp.81-82. Dib suggests that Duwahi has mistaken a Biblical place name ‘Merom’ as ‘Maron.’ (Dib, op.cit., pp79-80) ‘Merom’ is found in Joshua 11:5 in the Bible.

⁵ Dau, op.cit., p.166

⁶ Ibid., p.323

⁷ Ibid., p.168. It is plausible that this place was called after the famous Moran monastery in it.

(Yohanna Marun), the first Maronite Patriarch.⁸ He notes that historians accept the view that the church and the nation became identified with Yuhanna Marun of seventh century, not Saint Maro, though they are frequently confused.⁹ An early missionary to Lebanon says that the name of the Maronite Church was taken from John Maron.¹⁰

El-Hashem presents another version of the naming, while doubting its historicity, quoting Michel Breidy, which says there was a monk named Maroun who taught monotheletism in the period of the Emperor Marcianus (582-602). His followers and his teaching were called “Maronite” by the Romans, from his name “Maroun” (Maron). And when this Maroun died, people in Hama built a monastery named “Deir Maroun.”¹¹ Interestingly Farj Allah Dib claims that Maron (Muran, Maran) is the name of a big Yemenite clan (*ashira*) which is part of the Khulan tribe.¹² And the word ‘an-Nasik’ which is found after the name Maron, and is translated as ‘hermit’ is also a name of a clan, not hermit.¹³ Also, he claims that the title ‘Mar’ does not mean “saint” but a title of respect for [high, influential] elders of Arab clans that means administrator in Arabic.¹⁴ Thus, according to Dib, ‘Mar Marun An-Nasik’ was a leader of the An-Nasik, a sub-clan of the Marun clan. Similarly, ‘Yohanna Marun Sarum’ was

⁸ Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, pp.394-396

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.396

¹⁰ Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty three years in Syria*, Vol. I, Fleming H. Repell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1910, reprinted in 2007 by Rowland Press, p.80

¹¹ Fr. Elias Khalifeh el-Hashem, “The Rise of Eastern Churches and their Heritage”, The Maronites, in Middle East Council of Churches, *Christianity, A History in the Middle East*, 2005, Beirut, English Translation, p.273 in footnote. Salibi also presents this quoting Said ibn Batriq who saw the Maronites as followers of the Monothelite monk Mar Marun. Said ibn Batriq became Patriarch of Alexandria in 931. (Kamal Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Mediaeval Lebanon*, Naufal Group, Beirut/Paris, 1991, second edition, p.97)

¹² Dib, *op.cit.*, pp.67-69

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 69

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.73. Farj Allah neglects all linguistic facts in Aramaic but interprets these terms as Arabic. In his book p.77, Dib presents Agnatius’ suggestion that the word ‘Mar’ has the meaning “human being” (al-mar’).

a leader of Marun (or Moran) family (sub-clan, bait) in the seventh century.¹⁵ He also objects to Duweihi's etymological view of the word 'Maron.' He presents the Arabic root 'MRN' which conjugates 'maran,' 'yamurun,' 'maranah,' 'murunah' as meaning "Leen fi Salabah" (to be serious, or seriousness in idiomatic Arabic). 'Al-murran' is a 'fu 'aal' pattern word meaning "to be capable and merciful." 'Murranah' is a singular form of 'al-marran.'¹⁶ Dib suggests that 'Maron' is not a diminutive form as Duweihi explains but a Syriac dialect which took a person's name for a group name. So, 'Yohanna' of 'Yohanna Maron Sarumi' is his first name and 'Maron' is the clan name.¹⁷

The gathering of St. Maron's followers, bet Maron, was depicted as "God's spiritual garden" which produces "spiritual fruits" by Theodoretus, author of the only source of St. Maron's biography. This usage is often found in modern writings on Maronites as an exemplary expression to follow.¹⁸ After his death around 410 A.D., a monastery named after him was erected probably because its monks had St. Maron's relics or the whole body.¹⁹ It seems his followers consisted of a cluster of monasteries of which St. Maron Monastery was the center. A letter written in 517 has the signature of the Superior of the St. Maron Monastery, who holds the title of Exarch.²⁰ Another letter written in 518 shows a list of 33 monasteries, which Dau calls "the Maronite confederation."²¹ If there were monasteries following St. Maron's teaching and St. Maron Monastery's supervision, it is not a big logical leap to presume they could be called 'Marony,' or Maronites, considering the usage of the Arabic

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.69,72

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.69-70

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.77-78

¹⁸ Antoine Khoury Harb, *The Maronites: History and Constants*, The Maronite Heritage Center, English Edition, 2001, p.44 for example

¹⁹ Ibid., p.56 The exact year of his death is not known.

²⁰ Dau, op.cit., pp. 172,175

²¹ Ibid.,181

relative adjective, *ya nisbah*, which does not necessarily mean an institutionalized group in that name. If the location of the monastery was in the region called 'Maro' or 'Mara' as Dau says,²² this is much more plausible. In this way, the St. Maron's monastery is considered "the cradle of the Maronite Church" by people like Antoine Harb.²³

Dib explicitly denies the religious (monastic) orientation of this monastic cluster by arguing that the word 'deir' which is translated into 'monastery' originally means gathering of three or four houses in Arabic, from thence the meaning of the Christian monastery was derived.²⁴ This supports his theory of Maron being a clan name and St. Maron and Yohanna Maron clan leaders since if 'deir' is a gathering of three or four houses, 'Deir Maron' would indicate a Maron clan, which is possibly part of a Christian tribe.²⁵ His theory, however, still needs more evidence since his claim is mainly based on a single Yemenite genealogical record from which he could not trace the tribe's migration.²⁶

There is an attempt to relate the name 'Maronite' to 'Marada,' known as Maronite military people, or "marauding" people.²⁷ But their linguistic connection seems very remote. Walid Phares explains that the word 'Marada' or 'Mardaite' means "rebels" in Arabic.²⁸ He also suggests the possibility of a derivation from the Arabic adjective form 'Marid' meaning

²² Ibid., p.168

²³ Harb, op.cit., p.56

²⁴ Dib, op.cit., p. 67

²⁵ Dib on the same page explains there were Christians in Yemen but does not point out that the Khulan tribe was Christian. See Part I and the beginning of Part II of his book.

²⁶ His source is Al-Hamdani's book 'Al-Iklil,' Dib, op.cit., p.68. He follows Salibi's methodology that is criticized by Elie Wardini.

²⁷ Consonantal correspondence between these Arabic and English words is more interesting. The English word 'maraud' is taken from French 'marauder.' (*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996, P.1174)

²⁸ Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1995, p.33

“giant,” or in reference to the city of Mardine in Turkey.²⁹ Dau further connects this word to the ‘Amorites’ who were called ‘Mardu’ in Sumerian writing of 2000 BC and suggests that the words Amorite, Mardu, Marados (or Marathus in Syria), Mardaites and Maradah are all different forms of one word.³⁰ Nisan, after presenting theories concerning John (or Jean) Maron as living in the fifth or sixth century, and even in 1070 in Lebanon, says that the followers of Jean Maroun were called Mardaites and later Maronites.³¹ So it is not confirmed when the term Marony, or Maronite came into use. But Father Fghali, in his article on the relation between Mardaites and Maronites, claims that there is neither etymological connection between the two words nor relation in the naming of the Maronite group.³² He further questions how as Greek sources call this people ‘Marada’ but Arabic sources ‘jarajima,’ the Semitic word ‘marada’ could be related to the Greek word ‘marada.’³³ He infers that the word ‘marada’ seems to be taken from Greek word ‘mardaitai.’³⁴ If this Greek word means to ‘rebel’ or to ‘maraud’ and is taken from Aramaic, and the Arabic is from the same word, it is plausible for people today to connect the group name ‘marada’ to the rebelling or marauding character of this people. This also needs a psychological connection between “rebelling” and “marauding.” But Arabs in the seventh century called the group ‘jarajima,’ a tribal name. And he says that Mardaites appear in different forms and names in

²⁹ Ibid., p.41

³⁰ Dau, op.cit., p.211

³¹ Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McMarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, 1991, p.171

³² Father Boulus Fghali, *Al-Maradah wa al-Jarajimah fi hiwar baina al-Mutran Yusuf Al-Dibs wa al-Ab Henry Lamens al-yasu'iy* (Marada and Jarajima in dialogue between Bishop Yusuf Al-Dibs and Father Henry Lamens the Jesuit), *Al-Dirasat al-Amniyah*, No.31/32, Jul.-Dec., 2007, p.125

³³ Ibid., p.129

³⁴ He does not give its meaning. He adds a question in his footnote whether this word was taken from the Aramaic language and gives the answer “maybe.” Ibid., p.125. Neither form ‘mardaitai’ or ‘maridaitai’ is found in Greek dictionaries. Could this Greek word have originated from Aramaic, and given its meaning to French, and then English? Oxford English Dictionary says that middle French ‘maraud’ means ‘rogue’ and further etymology is uncertain. (Oxford English Dictionary Online, from entry ‘maraud’

(<http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/cgi/entry/00301797...>)

sources such as ‘marada’ in different forms, ‘liporiyun’ meaning “thieves” taken from the Greek word ‘lapora,’ ‘jarajima,’ and “thieves.” And the original meaning of the Semitic root ‘mrd’ is not known.³⁵

The official name of the Maronite Church is “the Antiochian Syriac Maronite Church” (*kanisah al-Antakiyah al-Suriyanyah al-Maruniyah*). Maronite is ‘Maruny’ in classical Arabic but often called ‘Morani’ in colloquial form and ‘Mawarneh’ instead of ‘Mawarinah’ for the plural. The colloquial pronunciation seems to be closer to the Syriac.

Concerning the Maronites’ ethnicity, ‘Phoenicia’ is the keyword at the core of modern discourse on their identity. This discussion will be dealt with in the next section.

Scholars infer that the word ‘Phoenicia’ is the equivalent word, if not the exact translation, for the Semitic word ‘Canaan’ meaning “red” or “purple.” It seems that the name of the purple dye for which the region was famous gave this equivalent Greek name to the region.³⁶ Hitti explains that the oldest name for today’s Syria or Palestine region was ‘Canaan.’ And that the purple dye was called ‘kina‘ni’ in Akkadian, ‘knaggi’ in Hurrian, ‘kena‘’ in Phoenician, ‘ken‘an’ in Hebrew and ‘Phoinix’ in Greek,³⁷ where the root is also found in the mythical bird ‘Phoenix’ that regains its youth by continually bursting itself into flames, rising again from its own ashes. But he argues that, while the word Canaan was earlier considered to be of Semitic origin, more recently this has been doubted.³⁸ Cho notes that the Greeks call this people ‘redskin’ due to their darker skin color.³⁹ Dau thinks that the Greek word

³⁵ Fghali, *ibid.*, pp.125-126. For discussion on Marada and Jarajima, see the next section.

³⁶ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.18, Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, I.B.Tauris, London, New York, 2003, p.172

³⁷ Philip K Hitti, *Ta'rikh al-lubnan*, Dar al-Thaqafah, Beirut, 1972, p.82

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.82

³⁹ Cho In Hyung, (trans. and ed.), *Seoyang Godaesa* (Ancient History of the West), Kangwon University, Choonchun, 1982, p.121

‘Phoenicia’ is clearly a translation of the Semitic name Canaan since both ‘Canaan’ and ‘phoenike’ mean “red.” So, ‘Phoenician’ was the name applied by the Greeks and ‘Canaan,’ or ‘Canaanites’ were the self-appellation of the same people group.⁴⁰ Kaufman agrees that the root of the word ‘Phoenicia’ in Greek meant “purple”⁴¹ and the Phoenicians called themselves ‘Canaanites’ and their land ‘Canaan’ at least until the first century. But he adds the idea that as the term ‘Can’ani’ in Biblical Hebrew implies a merchant, the name of the country in antiquity was possibly derived from the most famous profession of the ancient Lebanese, that is, commerce.⁴²

But there are scholars who claim that the word ‘Canaanite’ was not used by Canaanites themselves since they differentiated themselves by their city names such as Tyrian or Sidonian.⁴³ Hitti, while holding onto the idea that the people called themselves ‘Canaanite,’ concludes that the Greeks first called their partners in the purple cloth and dye trade ‘Phoenician,’ but that later in the twelfth century B.C. the latter replaced the former.⁴⁴

It is interesting, nevertheless, to note that many of the scholars do not even mention Canaan while speaking of Phoenicia.⁴⁵ The name ‘Canaan’ is found in the Bible as the son of Ham, who is the father of eleven tribes including Sidon, Heth, the Jebusites and the Amorites.⁴⁶ Based on this story, Dau takes these tribes as sub-branches of the Phoenicians.⁴⁷ Considering the ancient Middle Eastern eponymous habit, that is the custom by which a

⁴⁰ Dau, op.cit., p18

⁴¹ Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for an Identity in Lebanon*, Doctoral dissertation, A Bell & Howell Company, Ann Arbor, 2000, p.184

⁴² Ibid., p.4, In the Bible Canaan implies merchants or traders, e.g. in Ezekiel 16:29, 17:4

⁴³ Nina Jidejian, *I love Lebanon*, Vol.I, p.27 She adds that Egyptians used ‘Kinahnitho’ meaning ‘people of Canaan’ and Greeks called them ‘Phoenicians’ meaning the “red men.” Elsa Marston, *The Phoenicians*, Marshall Cavendish Corporation, New York, 2002, p.12

⁴⁴ Hitti, op.cit., p.83, Philip K. Hitti, *A short history of Lebanon*, MacMillan St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1965, p.15. Hitti also mentions that in the twelfth century B.C. Palestinians invaded the southern part of Syria and eastern part of Canaan, after which it came to be known as Palestine. (Hitti (1972), op.cit., p.111)

⁴⁵ For example, Harb, op.cit.,

⁴⁶ Genesis 10:6, 10:15-18

⁴⁷ Dau, op.cit., p18, The following sections in his book deal with these eleven tribes.

single person who bears the name of the group is said to be that group's ancestor,⁴⁸ and if one takes the Bible story as a reliable source, one could reason that Canaan gave his name to the land and its people and that later, to the Greeks, it also became the name of a purple dye for which the people were famous as well as the land and people from which it came. On the other hand, one could also reason that the name of a purple dye 'Canaan' gave its name to the people and the land that produced it, again known as Phoenicia to the Greeks.

Though Salibi agrees that the Greeks certainly knew this people by name 'Phoenician,' he concludes that one cannot really tell whether or not these ancient seafaring communities of coastal Syria actually called themselves Phoenicians.⁴⁹ He suggests the Greek word 'Phoenicia' is derived from 'Phoenix.' The term 'Phoenix,' according to him, was used for the date palm and also for the 'bird of Arabia' which was called in Arabic 'tayr al-bulah,' or the "palm bird." He presents the Arabic word 'faniq' which is equivalent to the Greek 'Phoenix' also as the sacred and inviolate bull that was worshipped as a divine being. Also, he introduces the fact that there is a village in western Arabia bearing the name Faniqa, that is Phoenicia,⁵⁰ though it is not clear whether he believes this Greek word is taken from Arabic. Brown says the word 'Phoenicia' in old texts could either mean the name of the region or the date palm (Phoenix).⁵¹ Dib also presents the Arabic root 'FNQ' as meaning 'na'im taraffa.' Further he notes that the purple dye extracted from the sea snail Murex is called in Arabic 'al-Muriq' while asserting that the Phoenician civilization is an extension of the Yemenites.^{52 53}

⁴⁸ The Times, *Concise Atlas of the Bible*, HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1991, p.58

⁴⁹ Salibi, op.cit., p.175

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.172

⁵¹ John Pairman Brown, *The Lebanon and Phoenicia, Vol.I, The Physical setting and the forest*, AUB, Beirut, 1969, p.47

⁵² Dib, op.cit., p.56. Salibi and Dib have a tendency, when a word or a place name is found in Arabic, to believe that the given Arabic word precedes other language usages. 'Faniq' or 'Al-Muriq,' for example, could be seen as taken from Greek words since Dib's source is Jahiliya – that is any time before the seventh century AD - poems and the usage of the word 'Phoenicia' is much older. Though one might explore the possibility of the origin of this bird mythology being Arabic, one could not assert that it is *from* Arabic on the mere base of the existence of the Arabic word.

Freyha simply calls these various explanations of the origins of the words ‘Canaan’ and ‘Phoenicia’ and their relation to geographic boundaries a “mess.”⁵⁴ He sees that the usage of the word Phoenicia was added to the preceding word Canaan, then to the word Phoenicia was added the meaning of trader. The Egyptians called the west of Syria ‘Phoenicia.’ Greeks also used the word *Xna*. But he opposes the theory that the word ‘Canaan’ was used to designate “lowlanders” in comparison to the Amorites, or “highlanders” based on the Semitic root of *KN* which means “low,” since Canaanites or Phoenicians also lived in mountains. Rather, he proposes a different theory that the Semitic root “FNQ” means “being familiar with luxurious life,” and that it was due to the Phoenicians’ wealthy lifestyle that people around called them ‘Phoenician.’⁵⁵

Scholars of the Maronites and Lebanon have various ideas about the Phoenician race. Dau says that the Canaanites, Aramaeans and Sea peoples living together on Lebanon’s land formed the main elements of one and same nation called Phoenicia.⁵⁶ Khoury says, in contrast, that the Amorites were divided into the Canaanites in Palestine and the Phoenicians who settled along the Mediterranean Sea coast in 2500 BC.⁵⁷ Taya claims that the Maronites’ ancestors are the Aramaeans, the Canaanites (Canaanites), and the Phoenicians without mentioning difference between the Canaanites and the Phoenicians.⁵⁸ Kaufman uses the

⁵³ Hitti also introduces a theory that the Phoenicians were from the Persian Gulf. This theory cites Herodotus for whom the Persian Gulf means the Erythraean Sea, saying that there is a city named ‘Saida’ on the eastern shore of the Arabian Peninsula and islands named ‘Sur’ and ‘Arwad’ where temples in the Phoenician style were found. Hitti adds that insufficient archeological research had been done by the time of his writing. (Hitti (1972), *op.cit.*, p.83.) But later publications also do not contain or develop this theory.

⁵⁴ Anis Freyha, *A Dictionary of the Names of Towns and Villages in Lebanon*, Libraire du Liban, 1996, 4th print, p.XVI

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.XVII-XVIII

⁵⁶ Dau, *op.cit.*,p.77. By this, Dau reveals discrepancy in his description of the Phoenicians. He earlier mentioned that Phoenicia was a translation of Canaanite. He did not mention the assimilation of Aramaeans and Sea Peoples to the Canaanites.

⁵⁷ Munir Khoury, *What is Wrong with Lebanon?*, Al-Hamra Publishers, Beirut, 1990, p.18

⁵⁸ Wadih Peter Tayah, *The Maronites – Roots and Identity*, Bet Maroon Publishers, 1987, p.239

term ‘Canaanite-Phoenicians.’⁵⁹ Freyha considers Canaanites and Phoenicians one people in language, religion and civilization.⁶⁰ Wellhausen sees Aramaeans as Canaanites.⁶¹

As seen above scholars also differ in their opinions whether the ancient people in today’s Lebanese and Syrian coast, or the ancestors of the Maronites called themselves ‘Phoenician.’ In any case, the region - the coastal region at least - was known as Phoenicia to the Greeks and later in the sixth century the Romans used ‘Phoenicia’ for its provincial names: Phoenicia Marittima (coastal Phoenicia) and Phoenicia ad Libanum (Phoenicia at the Lebanon).⁶² This Phoenician ethnic claim found as early as in the eighteenth century,⁶³ however, is not exclusively Maronite though the Maronites are its main advocates. Thus, while one could claim that the Maronites are Phoenicians, one cannot claim that the Phoenicians today are Maronites.

2. Maronite identity building in history

There are numerous debates concerning the origin of Maronites among both scholarly and popular circles: whether they are named after the St. Maro of the fourth century or John Maron of the seventh century, whether they came from Syria in the seventh century or in the tenth century, whether their coming was because of Arab attack or Byzantine or monophysite persecution, whether to emphasize the Maronites from Syria or the local inhabitants, whether they were followers of the Chalcedonian Council or of Monothelism, whether their ethnicity and culture are different from other Lebanese or not, and so on.

Despite the scarcity of sources on St. Maro, or St. Maron, of the fourth century, and the often-

⁵⁹ Kaufman, op.cit., p.4

⁶⁰ Freyha, op.cit., p.XVI, Hussein Ali Lubany, *Dictionary of the Names of Palestinian Towns & Villages: Linguistic Import, Plus Historic & Geographical Features*, Libraire du Liban, 2006, p.H

⁶¹ Freyha, ibid., p. XIV

⁶² Salibi, op.cit., p. 175

⁶³ Kaufman, op.cit.

found confusion with John Maron in the seventh century, historians accept the former's monastic leader tradition as irrefutable.⁶⁴ Tayah attributes the defamation of the sainthood of Maron to Eutyches, the Greek Patriarch of Alexandria in the tenth century, who falsely claimed that Maron lived in the seventh century. Eutyches, according to Tayah, did this in order to vindicate the sanctity of Maron and justify himself.⁶⁵ But these two Marons' feast day fell on the same day in the Church calendar on February 9, on which John Maron is known to have died, until 1787 when John Maron's day was moved to March 2.⁶⁶ It shows quite clearly there had been a good reason for ordinary people, at least until 1787, to confuse these two or to consider them as one.

As a Christian group, for the Maronites the first thing to defend and legitimize was their doctrine which has been often criticized as Monothelism, or One Will Christology. Their orthodoxy narrative focuses on the Maronites' continuous adherence to the Catholic faith from the beginning. Maronite monks of the Monastery of St. Maron and its monastic confederation, which had already formed a community, were defenders of the Chalcedonian faith. The confederation's growth, in this religious interpretation, is due to its good Chalcedonian faith and its attachment to the See of Rome.⁶⁷ The letters from this confederation in 517, 518, and 536 are evidence showing the Maronites' adherence to the Holy See, which is Rome, and acknowledgement from the Pope that their holding fast to the Chalcedonian faith was the cause of their persecution even to death.⁶⁸ Though Monothelism had spread within Byzantine territory before the Arab Islamic conquest, the narrative goes,

⁶⁴ Atiyah, *op.cit.*, p.394. See Chapter 1 of this part for his biography.

⁶⁵ Tayah, *op.cit.*, pp.25-26

⁶⁶ Harb, *op.cit.*, p.76. It is strange that John Maron's was moved from his date of death, not St. Maron's. Tayah says that both Roman and Greek Martyrology mention St. Maron on Feb. 14. (Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.26)

⁶⁷ Tayah, *op.cit.*, pp.29-30

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.30, and Dau, *op.cit.*, pp.179-181

the Lateran Council (649) condemned the Ekthesis, a document that contained the teachings of Monothelitism, and the Maronites followed Pope Leo's teaching, that is the Chalcedonian creeds, instead.⁶⁹ Medieval historian and Maronite Patriarch Estephan Duwaihi asserted that the Patriarch of Antioch Macarius was expelled after the Council of 680 due to his Monothelism, and John Maron was elected to replace him. And thus the Maronite church came into existence, from the very beginning, as the representative of Roman orthodoxy in the East.⁷⁰

Tayah says that this accusation of heresy against the Maronites has been circulating in the West since the times of the Crusades.⁷¹ In defense of their Catholic faith, Maronites used to differentiate themselves from other more prominent so-called heresies. Harb accuses Monophysites of considering Islam to be closer to their creed than the Chalcedonian creed.⁷² Tayah claims that the Maronites, unlike the Nestorians or the Jacobites for instance, are not the followers of a heresiarch.⁷³ And he calls the Nestorians the Maronites' own adversaries.⁷⁴

But just as Tayah himself tells, communication between Muslim-held Syria and Constantinople were severed. The news of the Lateran Council's decision of condemnation of monothelitism only reached Syria in 727, through a Christian captive, that is 78 years after the Council. And this news culminated in a schism among the Chalcedonians of Syria.⁷⁵ This episode, contrary to Tayah's claim, supports the possibility that Monothelitism persisted due to severed communication. Also, this narrative lacks the evidence of doctrinal continuity between the sixth century Maronite monastic confederation's beliefs and those of the Maronites' under John Maron's leadership in the late seventh century, for Monothelism was

⁶⁹ Tayah, *ibid.*, pp.33-34

⁷⁰ Salibi (2003), *op.cit.*, p.83

⁷¹ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.33

⁷² Harb, *op.cit.*, p.62

⁷³ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.26

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.35

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, *op.cit.*, p.34

not extant in the sixth century yet. Harb presents the episode of the captive, but with a different interpretation. According to Harb, Christians in Syria, including the Maronites, held One Will as the official belief. Despite the change in doctrinal view in the Byzantine Empire, due to disconnected communication, Christians in Syria could not attend the Council of 680 which adopted the doctrine of the two wills. Therefore the Maronites kept following Monotheletism. And the news from the Byzantine captive caused a schism between the Maronites and the Chalcedonian Greeks within the Church of Antioch.⁷⁶ But, when the Maronites learned that Monotheletism was not of Rome, they did not hesitate to adopt the Roman belief since they followed Monotheletism only because they thought it was the Roman Church's view.⁷⁷

Church historian Atiya maintains the view that it is difficult to explain the segregation of the Maronites without Monotheletism.⁷⁸ While fighting Monophysitism, the Monotheletism of Macedonius was supported and introduced by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century. But it was soon rejected and condemned by church leaders. Its followers in Syria, however, according to Atiya, remained adamant in their monotheletic profession and gradually segregated themselves from both the Orthodox and the Monophysite. Monotheletism, he continues, grew in the long run to be identified with the Maronite national and religious aspiration. And the Arab conquest of the region which put an end to the Christian persecution of heretical groups and the election of Maronite Patriarch were both a part of the process of freeing their church from Western influence. This is, in Atiya's view, how the 'Maronite' church emerged as the personification of a nation from both political and religious angles.⁷⁹ John Maron moved with his flock to the mountain and to isolated villages

⁷⁶ Harb, *op.cit.*, pp.62-64

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p.64

⁷⁸ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.395

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

for safety since the old St. Maro monastery was too close to Antioch to enjoy autonomous peace. When the Greeks sacked the monastery and killed some five hundred monks in 694, and when later Arabs completed the destruction, the Maronites had to move to the Qadisha valley. Atiya thinks they had no Western influence until the Crusades.⁸⁰ It was only in 1182 that the Maronites “converted en masse from this heresy to Roman Catholicism” as William of Tyre reports. However, Atiya notes that the Latinization of the Maronite people did not happen in the Middle Ages. Rather, the majority of the people were unaware of the significance of their communion with Rome and continued their oriental and traditional practices.⁸¹ Also, the tie with Rome was not stable until the fifth Lateran Council (1512-17).⁸²

It seems that the Maronites did not become Catholic uniformly. Salibi reports that there were several anti-Catholic movements among the Maronites after a union that had lasted for three centuries such that at one point two patriarchs existed.⁸³ Even al-Qilai himself mentioned a certain Tuma of Kafartab, whom some argue was the Maronite archbishop in Aleppo, who was Monothelite at the end of the eleventh century, though al-Qilai negates strongly the suggestion that this Tuma was Maronite.⁸⁴ Dau’s claim of Tuma’s failure in the spread of Monothelitism in Lebanon also reflects that there were Monothelites at that time.⁸⁵ The Maronite Church’s orthodoxy also had to be examined continuously by Rome whenever a new patriarch received a papal bull. Patriarch Irmiya visited Rome in 1215 and received the bull which expressed joy because the Maronites had returned to Rome after having been “like wandering sheep” who required corrections in belief and ritual. Salibi thinks this proves the

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.396

⁸¹ Ibid., p.399

⁸² Ibid., pp.399-400

⁸³ Salibi (2003), op.cit., p.97

⁸⁴ Salibi (1991), op.cit., pp.16,44

⁸⁵ Dau, op.cit., p.235

Maronites' heretical status in the past. And he infers that there had been a religious quarrel in which some Maronites who disapproved of the union with Rome had attacked a number of their clergy, including bishops and abbots, and had killed and mutilated some.⁸⁶ In 1590, the Eliano Mission that was dispatched by Rome to examine the Maronites suspected them of Monophysitism and required correction, though this was only because of the presence of Monophysite books in the library.⁸⁷

Lebanese historian Salibi also describes the formation of the Maronites as a Syrian Monothelite communion in the seventh century and posits a tenth century source to prove the existence of the Monothelites in the Orontes at that time.⁸⁸ He points out that this apologetic endeavor began with the Medieval Maronite historian Gabriel Ibn al-Qilai (- 1516) who was one of the first alumni of the Maronite Seminary in Rome in the fifteenth century. Al-Qilai had been taunted by his teachers and fellow students about the heretical origins of his community. And in response to these taunts, according to Salibi, he had argued that not only had the Maronites always been followers of the Latin Church, but that furthermore they had been the chief defenders of Roman orthodoxy. He concludes that al-Qilai wove a fanciful account of the history of his community.⁸⁹

Further, Salibi infers that the Maronites were very possibly migrants from the Arabian Peninsula who came to Syria before Islam, and established themselves as a separate Christian community from the so-called Jacobites or Melkites who already existed in the area and had adopted Monotheletism as their tribal sect at a time when tribe and sect had frequently gone hand in hand. And from the twelfth century onward, the Maronites behaved as a tribe or a

⁸⁶ Salibi (1991), *op.cit.*, pp.57-59, Salibi (2003), *op.cit.*, pp.96-97

⁸⁷ Dau, *op.cit.*, pp.437, 440

⁸⁸ Salibi (2003), *op.cit.*, pp.87- 88

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.77

confederation of tribes, often more than as a sect.⁹⁰ So, the organization of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon was more as a tribal confederation of clans than as a sect: their bishops as representatives of clans, their Patriarch as a tribal chief, and the bishops' council as the supreme tribal council.⁹¹ Also, he continues, considering the Byzantine occupation of the Orontes up to the end of the eleventh century, the Maronites' migration to Mount Lebanon was due to the Byzantines, not Arab Muslims.

However, Asher Kaufman points out that it was Herodotus who claimed first that population in the Middle East originated from the Arabian Peninsula and whose thesis the Arab nationalists later followed.⁹² Also, to see the Maronites' organization only as that of tribal confederation diminishes the nature of the religious institution and fails to explain the role of *muqaddams* in the Medieval period who functioned as leaders in war,⁹³ since if bishops were tribal leaders they would not need another leaders especially for warfares. In fact it was only in 1736 that bishops were compelled to reside in their own bishoprics not with the Patriarch by regulation. If they were tribal leaders, they would live among their tribesmen. However strong the criticism of historical accuracy, the religious interpretation of events - such as that the first Maronite monastic confederation survived due to their clinging to the Chalcedonian faith,⁹⁴ or that the Mamluk's attacks on the Maronites were religious persecution targeting only Maronites,⁹⁵ or that when Maronites expelled the Monophysites from Jibbat Bsharri there came an era of prosperity⁹⁶ - provides the community with the legitimacy and pride that any religious group needs to justify its existence.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp.89-90

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.91-92

⁹² Kaufman, op.cit., p.6

⁹³ Salibi (2003), op.cit., p.92

⁹⁴ Tayah,op.cit., p.28

⁹⁵ Salibi (1991), op.cit., p.72

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.76

In an effort to explain the Maronite people's origin, Maronite Patriarch Istifan Ad-Duwaihi (1629-) introduced the Mardaites, who came from the Amanus Mountains in Anatolia as a defense against Islamic expansion dispatched by the Byzantines in the seventh century.⁹⁷ Due to the scarcity of historic writings on the Mardaites, the only certain fact (or something like that) is that they were called Mardaites by the Byzantines and referred to as Jarjima or Jarajima in the plural form in Arabic sources, named after a village in Amanus, that they fought against the Umayyads, then dispersed after a peace treaty between the Umayyads and the Byzantines in 685.⁹⁸ According to relatively moderate proponents of the theory, the Christian Mardaites came to Lebanon and after the treaty, some of them stayed and mingled with the Maronites who have already absorbed converts and fugitives.⁹⁹ They mingled easily due to a common language and a common Chalcedonian faith so that the distinction of these two peoples became impossible.¹⁰⁰ Tayah claims that though the Maronites, who were composed of coastal Phoenicians and mountain dwellers, were mixed with other people including the Mardaites, the Maronites managed to maintain their distinctive identity, though it is not clear what this 'distinctive identity' and the 'original features' mean.¹⁰¹ For him, Maronite survival itself has depended on their military strength, which started with the Mardaites, or Marada.¹⁰² Dau claims that the Marada was Maronites' military organization. The first Patriarch John Maron knew the necessity of military organization to enjoy freedom. The Mardaite campaigns, according to Dau, for the Maronites, are indeed not extraneous but national events of deep and enduring interest. And the election of their own patriarch, in this

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.82

⁹⁸ Salibi, op.cit., p.82

⁹⁹ Hitti, op.cit., p.205, Harb, op.cit., p.66

¹⁰⁰ Harb, ibid., p.68

¹⁰¹ Tayah, op.cit., p.242

¹⁰² Ibid., p.42

sense, is interpreted as having resulted from such military power.¹⁰³

Walid Phares considers Mardaite history as a story of ethnic resistance and Christian nationalism. After the rise of Islam, some in the region converted to the new religion and became Arabized, some others accepted living as Dhimmi under Islamic rule, and others decided to resist in safer place like Lebanon.¹⁰⁴ He divides Mardaite history into three stages of the Mardaite state. The first Mardaite state, according to Phares, started in 676 AD when the Marada or Mardaite revolt spread in Mount Lebanon. Mardaite became the name of the Maronite army and in less than two years, they established an independent entity in Lebanon which extended from Jabal Al-Loukam in Syria to the Galilee. This Christian power, he continues, sought to establish a homeland for Eastern Christianity and aimed at pushing Arabs back to the Peninsula. But this short-lived Christian state came to an end and withdrew into Mount Lebanon when the Byzantine emperor and the Umayyad Khalif agreed to a peace treaty in 685.¹⁰⁵ The second Mardaite state lasted between 685 and 758. Under the Abbasids, the Mardaites or Maronites faced a different kind of pressure from the settling of Arab tribes in Lebanon.¹⁰⁶ And the third Mardaite state, Phares says, lasted between 758 and 1305 AD. During this period, Christians regrouped themselves, kept an autonomous status under the Crusaders, were influenced by the European feudal system, and renewed contact with Rome. This cooperation with the Crusaders, whom they saw as their religious brothers from Europe, brought retaliation by the Mamluks. The battle of Jubeil in 1293 was the last victory of the Mardaites. And Sultan Baibars' deportation, destruction and killing in 1305 are remembered as the collapse of the independent state, called *Nakbat Kisrwan*.¹⁰⁷ Though these defeated Christians were reduced to a simple struggle for survival, oppression would cause a

¹⁰³ Dau, , op.cit., pp.210, 213-215

¹⁰⁴ Phares, op.cit., p.32

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.33. He even provides maps of the Mardaites states.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp.33-35

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.35

revolutionary current among them in their collective consciousness.¹⁰⁸ For Phares, the Mardaites provide an “ideological legitimacy” to Lebanon of 1920. He says,

Without the success of their Mardaite ancestors, the Christian presence in Lebanon might have been either completely eliminated or extremely reduced, as in the case of many other Christian minorities in the Arab world.¹⁰⁹

Phares equates the Mardaites to the Maronites, then expands the Maronites to the Christians of Lebanon in general in his discussion. For Dau, the Mardaites were certainly Maronites simply because they were organized by the Christian Chalcedonian Byzantines, not the Monophysites, and the Maronites were Chalcedonian.¹¹⁰ Harb only guesses that the Mardaites who remained in Lebanon may have heard Maronite preaching.¹¹¹

As Phares presents the Mardaites as a historical legacy against Arab identity pressure,¹¹² Patriarch Duwaihi, the first proponent of the Mardaites as Maronites, introduced the Mardaites to explain why the Maronites are special and different from other Churches or Christians, that is to say, of a different ethnic breed.¹¹³ Father Fghali wrote an article on the Marada focusing on a discussion between Yusuf Dibs, a prominent Maronite advocate at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Henri Lammens, the most influential historian of the day. While Bishop Dibs strongly argued that the Mardaites are essentially the Maronites because Marada is jarajima in the Arabic sources and that the Maronites were labeled ‘marada,’ or plunderer, by their Byzantine enemies in the seventh century, Lammens argued the opposite. He pointed out that Lebanon was not the center of Marada’s activity, but that it came from the outside. For Lammens, Marada was not an ethnic name but a military unit

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.43

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.39

¹¹⁰ Dau, op.cit., p.211

¹¹¹ Harb, op.cit., p.66

¹¹² Phares, op.cit., p.39

¹¹³ Salibi, op.cit., p.84

which served Rome, and Maronite historians connect the Mardaites to the Maronites only because the Mardaites were Christians and Maronites were Christians in Lebanon.¹¹⁴ Fghali says that as Dibs himself expressed in his writing Dibs presented the Mardaites who fought independently as an example for the Maronites in his own day. Dibs' methodology, Fghali admits, was weak due to his inability to separate the ideological needs of his own day from his role as a historian.¹¹⁵ He concludes that the periods in which the Mardaites were active and the Maronites were organized as an umma, or a nation, coincide and that some of the Mardaites must have stayed and mingled with Maronites as some Crusaders did.¹¹⁶

In any case, it is clear that in the time of John Maron, the Maronite Church was firmly institutionalized, both religiously and communally, and (re-)equipped with confirmed doctrine and an external relationship with Rome in the Crusade era. It suffered from Mamluk retaliation and was re-organized in the time of Patriarch Duwaih, who revised the liturgical works and religious writings and established the Maronite monastic order in addition to his own writing of Maronite history.¹¹⁷

Concerning the Maronite relationship with the Crusaders, Maronites think that "The Crusaders and the Maronites were bound together by the same faith and the same goals: the delivery of the Holy Places [sic], and the safeguarding of Christian civilization."¹¹⁸ According to Maronite writings, the Maronites provided the eighth Crusaders with 30,000 soldiers and were considered as a part of the French Nation.¹¹⁹ While Salibi acknowledges that the Crusade expedition was the turning point for the Maronites, he points out that there

¹¹⁴ Fghali, *op.cit.*, pp.130-133, 135-136

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.132,140

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.140

¹¹⁷ Salibi (1991), *op.cit.*, p.92

¹¹⁸ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.361

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.362-363

are only a few Arabic sources which mention their help to the Crusaders and that later Maronite historians have a tendency to exaggerate the autonomy of Mount Lebanon and the Maronite role in the Crusades.¹²⁰ Tayah argues that the Maronites played the role of middlemen between the Abbasid khalif Harun Rashid and the French king Charlemagne and were not the servants of French colonialism, who “[took] the pulse of Islam for France’s opening and [relayed] to Europe the moods of Islam.”¹²¹

Now, Fakhr Ad-Din’s emirate, or *imarah*, is often depicted as the prototype for a separate Lebanon.¹²² A typical sentence of this narrative goes, “Fakhr Ad-Din is the first leader to have set the grounds for a modern Lebanese state.”¹²³ Even the possibility of his conversion to Maronitism has been raised.¹²⁴ In his time, the Christians, mainly Maronites, and the Druze were closely related,¹²⁵ or in Kanaan’s expression, they lived in a “positive co-habitation.”¹²⁶ Tayah’s interpretation is that since the independent Lebanese nation came to an end with Ottoman conquest, the Maronites *strategically* supported anti-Ottoman feudal forces and allied themselves with the Druze Maans who tried to create a formal Lebanese entity.¹²⁷ But, Salibi says that Fakhr ad-Din had more enemies than friends among the Druze and that was the reason he developed good relationship with the Maronites and encouraged them to settle in the Druze area.¹²⁸ And in fact, Fakhr ad-Din, Salibi continues, was appointed by the Ottomans to rule over Shiites who were on the Safavids’ side and was the

¹²⁰ Salibi, op.cit., p.20

¹²¹ Tayah, op.cit., p.71

¹²² Claude Boueiz Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860-1960: A Century of Myth and Politics*, Saqi, London, 2005, Shiley Kay, *The Bedouin*, C, Russak & Companyrane, 1978, p.57

¹²³ Tayah, p.92

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Salibi, op.cit., p.168

¹²⁶ Kanaan, op.cit., p.59

¹²⁷ Tayah, op.cit., pp.44-45

¹²⁸ Salibi (2003), op.cit., p.67

one who abolished Maronite *muqaddams*.¹²⁹ It was Tannus ash-Shidyaq (1784 -) who created the idealized image of the Shihabs as a hereditary emirate and the successor to the Maanids.¹³⁰ Salibi also criticizes the use of the term “Lebanese Emirate” to describe the Maanids and Shihabis except for the last emir since the title of emir had never been “emir of Lebanon.”¹³¹ Despite his strong argument that “there was nothing especially unique about Lebanon,”¹³² Salibi on the other hand, admits that

One thing, however, is certain [:] by the nineteenth century, something we might call Lebanon already existed with inherent attributes making of it a unique social rather than political phenomenon in Syria and the broader Arab world.¹³³

Nevertheless, Kanaan stresses that even though Salibi criticizes the proposition of *imarah* as the precedent for the modern Lebanese state due to its lack of a historical base, the importance of the *imarah* cannot be changed.¹³⁴ While the Maronites and the Druze lived on good terms, Lebanon became more than a geographical term designating Mount Lebanon, and even when the *imarah* vanished its concept persisted. Under the Shihabs, Lebanon enjoyed more freedom than other regions of the Ottoman Empire and developed a self-conscious, separate community identity which the Maronites felt more strongly than others.¹³⁵ Salibi also presents the Maronites’ union with Rome and well-institutionalized church organization as the factor that allowed them to have a high collective consciousness at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹³⁶ The Church played the role of repository for the

¹²⁹ Ibid. p.126

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp.117, 124

¹³¹ Ibid., p.126. Dau says that Fakhr ad-Din preferred the title of “Emir of Lebanon, Sidon, and Galilee. (Dau, p.469)

¹³² Salibi, *ibid.*, pp.143, 157

¹³³ Ibid., p.164

¹³⁴ Kanaan, *op.cit.*, p.57

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.59

¹³⁶ Salibi (2003), *op.cit.*, p.107

Maronites,¹³⁷ providing internal coherence and an external link.¹³⁸ Priests functioned as a major channel for interpreting the mythology relating to community identity in the Maronite community.¹³⁹

Thus the church had been responsible for collecting many of the community's traditional beliefs and presenting them coherently and authoritatively, and so justifying the development of an exclusive Maronite identity separate from that of the Arab Muslims in the region and throughout the Ottoman empire.¹⁴⁰

For the Maronites, the Christian Shihabi Bashir II was seen as a "reigning prince and the scion of a dynasty of reigning princes" while for the Druze and Sunni he was "a mere fiscal functionary of the Ottoman state."¹⁴¹ So, as a cohesive community, the incidents of 1820, 1840 and 1860 served to promote Maronite identity¹⁴² and the victims were, and are still considered as, martyrs.¹⁴³

Though Arab Muslims in the region considered the Ottomans their religious brothers, when the Ottomans began to crush both Arabs and Maronites at the beginning of the twentieth century, these two groups started to co-operate.¹⁴⁴ And the *imarah* provided the basis for a Lebanese independence claim.

3. Modern discourse

The first proponent of Lebanism was the Maronite bishop Nicolas Murad. In his book, which was written in French in 1844, he asked for French assistance in the formation of a political

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.144

¹³⁸ Kanaan, op.cit., p.61

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.62

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.71

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.63

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.75

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.83

entity for the Maronites in Mount Lebanon with Maronite Catholicism and the attachment to France as justification.¹⁴⁵ Though the Maronite Church continued to teach Lebanism in connection with Christianity from the 1840s, the Lebanist claim reappeared at the beginning of the twentieth century asking for administrative reforms and border corrections of the Mutasarrifiyyah within the context of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁶ It was only in 1919 that this Lebanism asked for an independent state.¹⁴⁷ The current border of Lebanon was established after some debate on Lebanese territory between the supporters of a smaller Lebanon who wanted Mount Lebanon as the state of Lebanon in order to keep totally independent from Syria and the adjacent Muslim surroundings and the supporters of a greater Lebanon who wanted to include the Bekaa valley and coastal cities. Phares suggests that the idea of a greater Lebanon was primarily influenced by economic factors, due to the memory of starvation during the First World War, and the felt need for a port as well as the possibility of a larger market. He also points out that many high-ranking authorities in the Maronite Church possessed large portions of agricultural land in the added territories. He complains that the greater Lebanon is a bi-national state and quotes a comment; “By showing a great appetite for more territories, the Christians lost their basic homeland.”¹⁴⁸

But this greater Lebanon which came to include the non-Maronite population needed a more inclusive narrative in order to justify its existence since the Maronite historiography that starts from St. Maron was not workable for non-Maronites.¹⁴⁹ Patriarch Howayek headed the Lebanese delegation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. He claimed in the

¹⁴⁵ Kaufman, op.cit., pp.67-68

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.17, 324

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.18

¹⁴⁸ Phares, op.cit., pp.69-72. Salibi also notes that the territory of Mutasarrifiyyah, which lacks a port, was limited in its function as a full state. (Salibi, *The Christians of Lebanon, I. The Lebanese Identity*, Middle East Review, Vol. IX, No. 1, Fall, 1976, p.8.) Mounir Khoury reports that the Maronite Patriarch refused to include the Mt. Nasara area to the greater Lebanon because its inhabitants were Greek Orthodox. (Khoury, op.cit., pp.36-37)

¹⁴⁹ Salibi (2003), op.cit., p.170, Kaufman (2000), p.190

Conference that today's Lebanese are descendents of Phoenicians, and thus different from their Arab neighbors.¹⁵⁰ According to Asher Kaufman, this Phoenician idea was popular only among bourgeois Beirutis until 1920 so as to be called "the ideology of the city" by Albert Hourani.¹⁵¹ However, the establishment of Lebanon witnessed the change in identity discourse in Lebanon as a whole, and in the 1940s Phoenician terminologies and expressions were normalized even among Muslim Lebanese.¹⁵² Muslims themselves justified the Phoenician claim by Arabicizing the ancient Phoenicians, arguing that they were Arabs who came from the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁵³ Below is Kaufman's summary of the Phoenician claim.

Around the second millennium BC, Canaanite tribes (belonging to the Indo-European race and not to the Semitic race, some thinkers explained) arrived to the region of Greater Syria from the Persian Gulf. Those who dwelt along the northern part of the coastal range established city-states and sea-trading network and founded many colonies, the most famous of which was Carthage. The ancient Phoenicians even reached the shores of America, long before any European foot stepped there. The name Phoenicia was given to them by the Greeks because of the red-purple colour of the fabric they traded with. They bequeathed to the world the alphabet, naval skills and various other crafts. Phoenicia became a bridge between east and west, a crossroads of cultures and trade. In fact the Phoenicians, above all others, were the forefathers of Western civilization and its disseminators in the Mediterranean basin. Even in times of foreign conquests Phoenicia succeeded in preserving its livelihood and in maintaining its commerce and scholarly skills.

The Arab occupation symbolized the decline of the Phoenician heritage. The shore dwellers, wanting to preserve their uniqueness, were forced to withdraw to Mt. Lebanon because of the foreign occupier. In Mt. Lebanon they kept their national heritage and their virtues which they inherited from their ancestors: the Mediterranean culture, their love of the sea, their commercial skills, their search for peace and their outstanding scholarly qualities. Christianity and the Maronite Church only magnified it. The topographical structure of Mt.

¹⁵⁰ Kaufman (2001), op.cit., p.185. He further connected the Maronites to the French ethnically through the ancient Phoenicians saying that the ancient Phoenicians had established colonies on the French coast from which the Crusaders departed to the Levant.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.190

¹⁵² Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.338

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp.340, 345

Lebanon itself treasured these qualities and willed them to everyone who dwelled in the mountain. Today, with the national revival, and with the formation of Lebanon in its geographical and historical limits, the Lebanese should take again a senior, even civilizing, position among the nations of the world befitting their heritage and contribution to humanity.¹⁵⁴

Though Muslims thought the Phoenician idea was imported from the West and was born as a counter-claim to Arabism, Kaufman argues that this view over-estimated Arabism. According to Kaufman, while Phoenicianism had already grown so as to be identified with the Maronite separatist demand by 1916,¹⁵⁵ Arabism was not yet a dominant identity that had to be confronted.¹⁵⁶ Rather, Ottomanism, Syrianism, and Arabism existed all together at that time, and Syrianism was stronger than Arabism at least up until 1919.¹⁵⁷ When the Syrian claim began to be identified with Faysal's Government in Damascus, many Christians from the coast changed their political orientation and demanded the establishment of a Greater Lebanon.¹⁵⁸ By using the term 'Phoenician,' Kaufman continues, most of its users implied non-Arab, non-Syrian, pro-western identity at that time.¹⁵⁹ He also refutes Entelis's view that sees Phoenicianism and Mediterraneanism as Kata'ib furnished. He says that Phoenicianism has never been an organized movement.¹⁶⁰

Ernest Renan's excavation of Phoenician sites since 1860 and the publication of his book *Mission de Phenicie* provided new information on the ancient civilization and raised interest among Europeans and locals. With archeological discoveries, in Kaufman's words, the past began to be perceived as a source for political and ideological symbols.¹⁶¹ The first articles

¹⁵⁴ Kaufman (2001), op.cit., p.174

¹⁵⁵ Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.132

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.,p.22

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.18,22

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.137

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p.138

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.11

¹⁶¹ Kaufman (2001), op.citi, p.175

that mention the ancient Phoenicians appeared in the periodical al-Muqtataf in 1882 and 1883, though they did not attempt to connect them with the modern population of Lebanon.¹⁶² The Maronite clergy's historiography has also changed since the end of the nineteenth century to include not only the Church's origins but also the people's origins. Beirut Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs assigned quite a proportion of his book to the Phoenicians.¹⁶³ The Young Turks' centralization policy moved the center of Lebanese nationalism to Paris, Cairo, Alexandria, and other migrant communities in the Americas.¹⁶⁴ In Egypt, many Syro-Lebanese societies were formed at the beginning of the twentieth century among which *Alliance Libanaise* is one of the first and most important. It supported the establishment of Greater Lebanon and its activists included Maronite Yusuf al-Saouda, August Adib Pasha, Greek Orthodox Hector Klat, Chaldean Michel Chiha, and Maronite Jacques Tabet, all of whom later became the leading elites of the Greater Lebanon and who provided the image of the Phoenician merchant.¹⁶⁵ In Paris, Shukri Ghanem and George Samneh were vigorously active, and there were also clubs and associations.¹⁶⁶ In the United States, Christian migrants from Mount Lebanon were mainly from lower social classes and they had to face an unwelcoming atmosphere and racism as well as questions concerning their identity. There, in order to overcome such rejection and questions, they developed the Phoenician idea claiming that they were of white ethnicity. And in the 1910s a document of the American Immigration Bureau "Phoenicianized" the Lebanese and made a clear distinction between Arabs and Syrians.¹⁶⁷ These migrants brought with them the Phoenician idea and used it as means for socio-

¹⁶² Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.77

¹⁶³ Ibid., p.68

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.97

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.98-125

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.126-127

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.145-154. It was before the state of Lebanon was established. Lebanese were categorized as Syrian outside.

political assertions among migrant communities.¹⁶⁸ And so Phoenicianism was developed in accordance with the practical needs of migrant communities.

Kaufman explains that these Phoenician advocates were influenced by geographical determinism and an emphasis on culture by the French scholars.¹⁶⁹ This enabled the combination of Christianity, Western culture, and geography in claiming Lebanon.¹⁷⁰ This claim was also supported by archeological findings and related information which enriched and animated images of ancient Phoenicians, whose reference had only been the Bible and Greek and Latin classics thus far.¹⁷¹ It was Henri Lammens that gave the Phoenicians a merchant character for the first time. This economic aspect of the ancient Phoenicians was also used in economic justification for Greater Lebanon.¹⁷² His research also shows that advocates of Phoenicianism were mainly Jesuit-educated Francophiles.¹⁷³ Due to its pagan character, the Maronite Church could not openly display Phoenicianism, despite Patriarch Howayek's outspoken Phoenician claim in the Paris Conference and the explicit writings of Darian, the Maronite vicar in Egypt. This was the reason that Phoenicianism was elaborated mainly in the hands of non-clerics.¹⁷⁴ These lay academics were able to connect Phoenician paganism to monotheism and re-interpreted a religiously continuous identity.¹⁷⁵ Qorm's periodical *La Revue Phenicienne* which began in 1919 served as a channel to express Phoenicianism.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.167

¹⁶⁹ Kaufman (2001), op.cit., pp.180, 182, 183

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.185

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp.175, 189

¹⁷² Ibid., pp.187-189

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.182

¹⁷⁴ Kaufman (2000), op.cit., pp.65, 123-124. But Howayek never mentioned Phoenicia in his preaching. Kaufman thinks that Howayek knew that Phoenicia was a familiar and well-liked notion for the western delegates at the Peace Conference and exploited that.(Kaufman (2001), p.180)

¹⁷⁵ Kaufman (2000), ibid., p.118. We saw also in Harb and Dau. See the first section of this chapter.

¹⁷⁶ Kaufman (2001), op.cit., p.186

Closely related to Phoenicianism was the refuge theory. Henri Lammens at St. Joseph University developed the idea of “l’asile du Liban” arguing that Mount Lebanon had become a refuge for oppressed minorities. And in this way, so the argument went, the authentic character of its people was preserved despite Arab-Islamic occupation.¹⁷⁷ Supporters of smaller Lebanon argued that the essence of a Lebanese state was to provide a homeland for the Christians of Mount Lebanon and for the Christians of the Middle East. Samne wrote that Lebanon was created to become an asylum for the Christians of the Levant. He asserted that this was the main reason that Europeans had established an autonomous entity in 1860 and France decided to create an independent Lebanon in 1920.¹⁷⁸ But Salibi notes that this refuge idea was an alternative to Phoenicianism for Lebanese nationalists to promote the image of Lebanon as a refuge and a haven for freedom during the French Mandate. And this image, he continues, was a powerful one, and certainly more suitable than Phoenicianism as justification for a Lebanese national identity. A weakness of this thesis was that the Sunni became the persecutors and oppressors.¹⁷⁹

Lammens proposes that the Arabs, though having arrived in Lebanon first in 631, had not been successful in penetrating the Mountain, at least not until the Fatimid occupation.¹⁸⁰ But Salibi strongly opposes the idea. He says that Lammens’ refuge theory was optimal for France to oppose Arabism by setting Syria apart from Arab, and further Lebanon from Syria. He argues that there has been no evidence of mass migration of the oppressed to Mount Lebanon and that this theory was based on an assumption that the Islamic empire could not rule over the mountain, which is not true. According to Salibi, relative autonomy or minimum intervention of government in Mount Lebanon was bestowed as long as its inhabitants gave

¹⁷⁷ Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.59

¹⁷⁸ Phares, op.cot., p.72

¹⁷⁹ But Salibi also adds that the idea has recently gained recognition and become more widely accepted as Sunnis and others from other parts of the Middle East seek refuge in Lebanon. (Salibi (1976), op.cit., p.12)

¹⁸⁰ Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.64

no trouble.¹⁸¹ This minimum intervention, however, was clearly interpreted as the historical base for the Lebanese state by the nationalists and as the most important factor for Maronite survival.¹⁸²

Lebanese identity negotiations culminated in 1943 in the *Al-Mithaq al-Watani*, or the National Pact, between Riyad al-Solh and Bechara al-Khoury. With the Pact, Christians were to stop seeking French protection and support; Muslims, on the other hand, would accept Lebanon as a genuine independent state within the context of an Arab world. Its motto was *al-Ta'ayush al-Silmi*, peaceful co-existence.¹⁸³ Power distribution among different religious groups had emerged in a regular pattern during the thirties. Lebanon in the mid-thirties was already a *fait accompli*,¹⁸⁴ and Muslims also began to accept the existence of Lebanon in the thirties and the forties.¹⁸⁵ But Claude Kanaan thinks the Pact was a response to the crisis of the time, not a long-term aspiration.¹⁸⁶ Due to the Pact's acceptance of Lebanon's being *Balad Dhu Wajh Arabi*, a country with an Arab face, Phares argues that Lebanon was in the process of Arabization and the beginning of the decline of Christian domination.¹⁸⁷ In Solh's expression, it was "Lebanonizing Muslims" in return for "Arabizing Christians."¹⁸⁸ Farid el-Khazin points out that the Pact was a double negation formula of no East and no West between the Sunnis and the Maronites.¹⁸⁹ Scholars agree that the Pact was based on faulty assumptions; that elite consensus reflected grassroots communal support, that the balance of power in the region would remain unchanged,¹⁹⁰ and that the intercommunal balance of

¹⁸¹ Salibi (2003), op.cit., pp.130-144

¹⁸² Khoury, op.cit., p.186, also in Phares, Kanaan

¹⁸³ Khoury, ibid., p.37

¹⁸⁴ Kaufman (2000), op.cit.,p.336, 338

¹⁸⁵ A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, Oxford University Press, London, 1947, p.39

¹⁸⁶ Kanaan, op.cit., p.141

¹⁸⁷ Phares, op.cit., pp.88-89

¹⁸⁸ Farid El-Khazen, *The Communal Pact of National Identities: The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact*, Papers on Lebanon 12, Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, 1991, p.35

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.38

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.39

power within Lebanon was stable.¹⁹¹ But the Pact was an official state symbol of national unity¹⁹² though it was an unwritten gentlemen's agreement. Despite its inability to deal with crises, Christians after the civil war still cherished the Pact as a necessity for co-existence and communal survival for all Lebanese and believed it promoted pluralism, tolerance, and diversity.¹⁹³ But some believe that the Pact merely delayed the crisis of identity without deliberate discussion of what type of state the Lebanese wanted.¹⁹⁴ In B.J. Odeh's analysis, it was a formula that consecrated primordial ties and more basically preyed upon and encouraged the development of primordial religious feelings.¹⁹⁵

Since its establishment, Lebanon, with the Maronites at the very center, has been undergoing the process of identity defining and re-defining constantly. But in the post-1943 negotiation, the Christians, Khazen points out, had little to give up in return for Muslim acceptance of Lebanon's sovereignty. He expresses the anxiety of the Christian position, saying,

Thus if the Christians, particularly Maronites, are blamed for their lukewarm attitude towards Arabism, their critics are equally blamed for not proving that Arabism is not what many Christians suspect: that is, an instrument of domination at the disposal of Arab rulers who, in most instances, are rejected by their own people. ...what would it have taken for the Christians to be accepted as full-fledged partners in Arabism? ...after being accepted in the Arab fold, would Christians acquire the same rights and privileges as other 'native' Arabs? ...would they be able to participate in Arab decision-making...?¹⁹⁶

This Christian anxiety was also shown during the 1958 civil war. Christians, who already

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.152

¹⁹² Ibid., p.59

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp.66-67

¹⁹⁴ Safia Antoun Saadeh, *The Social Structure of Lebanon: Democracy or Servitude?*, Dar An-Nahar, Beirut, 1993, p.95

¹⁹⁵ B.J. Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, Zed Books, London, 1985, p.15

¹⁹⁶ El-Khazen, op.cit., pp.62-63

feared Arabization in the forties,¹⁹⁷ felt their identity threatened when Egypt and Syria merged to establish the United Arab Republic in 1958 and Muslims in Lebanon responded to it by welcoming Nasser's visit to Damascus enthusiastically and calling for Lebanon to join them.¹⁹⁸ Lebanese Muslims gained information mainly from and responded to Radio Cairo and Radio Damascus which promoted Arabism and urged participation in the UAR.¹⁹⁹ President Chamoun had refused the Egyptian demand to assist it in the Suez War in 1956.²⁰⁰ He became a symbol of resistance to Nasserism.²⁰¹ The Maronites regarded the attack on Chamoun's right to complete his mandate as an attack on themselves. So, Maronite support for him was increasingly becoming linked with their own political survival.²⁰² And the Kata'ib started to support him openly.²⁰³ Christian fear was also triggered by Patriarch Meouchi's comment: "We, the Maronites, are a ship [nuqtah, literally 'a drop'] in the Muslim sea. Either we have to coexist with them with love and peace, or we have to leave, or else we will be annihilated."²⁰⁴ He also stated that the Maronite community was Arab before the advent of Islam and that it will always remain faithful to Arab Nationalism.²⁰⁵ Phares explains that the crisis of 1958 was a result of Lebanon's participation in the Arab League, which has its own concomitant majority rule, when Lebanon could not follow. These events also revealed the weakness of the Pact, pushing Lebanese foreign policy toward Arabism, and hence, isolating and repressing the ethnic claims of the Christians.²⁰⁶ ²⁰⁷ The events of 1958,

¹⁹⁷ Mordechai Nisan, *Christian Decline and Models of Lebanon*, The Ariel Center for Policy Research (ACPR) Publishers, 1999, p.22 and El-Khazen, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Kanaan, *op.cit.*, p.226

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.201

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.39

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.263

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.261

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.263

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.176

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.263

²⁰⁶ Phares, *op.cit.*, pp.98-99

²⁰⁷ Another aspect of the crisis was the feeling of deprivation among Sunni people. (Kanaan, pp.200-206) For Sunnis, a Western intervention under the guise of the United Nations was a fear, at the same time. (Kanaan,

however, according to Kanaan, did not alter Maronite community mythology in any fundamental way.²⁰⁸

Later, the Treaty of Cairo in 1969 which allowed Palestinians to use Lebanese territory for their resistance activities against Israel was further seen as a capitulation by the Christians.²⁰⁹ Though the degree of acceptance of Arabism among Christians was high,²¹⁰ the Palestinian influx into Lebanon and their arming in the seventies incited fear among the Christians that led to a reactive arming.²¹¹ Lebanon in the sixties was often cited as a model of consociational democracy²¹² accompanying economic prosperity and the development of civil society. But the civil war that broke out in 1975 proved the precariousness of the system, if not its total impasse. The Maronites are said to have held the false belief that the loyalty of Muslims to the Lebanese state took priority over other loyalties.²¹³ Tawfik Khalaf attributes the cause to the original error made in 1920 and says the Maronite illusion lay in the fallacy of the liberal and westernized state.²¹⁴ ²¹⁵ The Lebanese civil war has been often depicted as a religious or confessional conflict between Christians and Muslims. Hourani criticizes this view saying that the solidarity of each community was exaggerated and so was the extent to which each had accepted the Lebanese political system.²¹⁶ He points out that there were the ideologies of the mountain, that is, of the Maronites, and the urban ideas which formed the

op.citi., p.187)

²⁰⁸ Kanaan, op.cit., p.282

²⁰⁹ Tawfik Khalaf, "The Phalange and the Maronite Community: from Lebanonism to Maronitism", in Roger Owen (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, Ithaca Press, London, 1976, p.49

²¹⁰ El-Khazen, op.cit., p.53

²¹¹ McLaurin, R. D. (ed.), *The Political Role of Minority Groups in the Middle East*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1979, p.5

²¹² Khouri, op.cit., p.122

²¹³ John Entelis, *Christian Vision of the New Lebanon: Opportunities and Risks*, Middle East Insight, Vol.2, No.4,1982, p.34

²¹⁴ Khalaf, op.cit., pp.55-56

²¹⁵ The former president Suleiman Franjiyeh, in an interview, reported that the war in 1975 and 1976 was a US plan. America, according to him, was ready to move Lebanese Christians to Canada, US, or Australia upon their request, so that Lebanese territory could be given to Palestinians. (*Interview with Franjiyeh*, Middle East Insight, Vol.2, No.4, 1982, p.27)

²¹⁶ Albert Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and City", in Roger Owen (ed.), op.cit., p.35

official ideological basis of the Lebanese state.²¹⁷ Rather than a confessional war between Christians and Muslims, it was more like a conflict between the Maronites and the others,²¹⁸ at least in the first phase.

The Battle of Tel al-Za'atar in 1976 signified a change in Maronite attitude. Before the battle, it was a defensive war. The formation of the Lebanese Front narrowed the differences among Christian factions and a new non-traditional leadership emerged, especially among the Lebanese Forces, a virtual executive body of the Lebanese Front.²¹⁹ The war became a “war of all against all”, with foreign involvement in the same year.²²⁰ Within Maronite leadership, there emerged a friction between the Lebanese Forces and the Marada of Frangiyeh concerning Syria. Unfortunately the assassination and killing of the other faction’s leaders and supporters were committed in the following years as a solution for unifying the Maronites and solidifying Christian arms. When the Tiger militia of Chamoun was defeated in 1980 and more than 500 Christian souls perished at the hands of other Christians, the Lebanese Forces became a single organization.²²¹

Lebanon also witnessed a change in Lebanese identity discourse along this division. The Lebanese monastic orders, especially those in the University of Kaslik, supported militias and promoted the “Christian plea” emphasizing the Islamic threat to the Christian minorities in Lebanon and the Middle East. On-going battles and divisions gave way to the idea of federalism. This idea also introduced the notion of pluralism, which in turn strengthened the Christian ethnic claim. Priest Boutros Dau argued for the Maronites’ non-Arab, Aramaic

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.36,39

²¹⁸ Lewis Snider, “The Lebanese Forces: War time Origins and Political Significance”, in Edward E. Azar et al. (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984, p.123, Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic Revisited: Reflections on the Collapse of Pluralist Politics in Lebanon*, Papers in Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., 1977, p.8

²¹⁹ Snider, op.cit., pp.123,127,130

²²⁰ El-Khoury, op.cit., p.41

²²¹ Snider, op.cit., pp.131-132

identity.²²² Phares calls this period an “ideological civil war” in which publications on ethnic identity flourished, an exchange of journalistic attacks and counter-attacks between Muslims and Christians arose, and, after the assassination of president-elect Bashir Gemayel in 1982, more Christians took a stance on the ethnic agenda and called for a federal structure.²²³

Lebanon was divided into Muslim-Palestinian-controlled zones and Christian areas. In the Christian ministate, the Lebanese Forces functioned like a government, performing the levying and collecting of taxes as well as military conscription activities but within the scope of Lebanese law.²²⁴ Its strength lay in an organized structure, various social programs, and successful mobilization in addition to military power.²²⁵ It established “popular committees” in each area which gave people higher expectation for the governmental role, brought an idea of alteration in the political system, and tried to minimize corruption.²²⁶ Bashir Gemayel by himself was a powerful resource who was able to impose himself on the Maronites, other Christians, and other groups as well as to negotiate with Israel. Under his leadership the claim for the Christian cause was at its apex. His assassination also brought an end to his promise to make a fundamental change in the Pact, hence also to the possibility of a newly structured Lebanon.²²⁷ Jureidini and McLaurin express disappointment that Amin Gemayel reasserted Arabism too hastily and that his government was not ready for the Israeli withdrawal.²²⁸ Amin Gemayel’s visit to Syria in 1984 was regarded symbolically as surrendering to Syrian policy.²²⁹

The civil war ended formally with the Taif Agreement reinforcing Lebanon’s Arab face by

²²² Phares, *op.cit.*, pp.123-127

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.124, 128-129

²²⁴ Snider, *op.cit.*, pp.139-140

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.118

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.149. Later these popular committees were dissolved by governmental request in 1977, and afterwards re-organized. (*Ibid.*, p.151)

²²⁷ Paul Jureidini and R.D. McLaurin, “Lebanon after the War of 1982”, in Azar et al., *op.cit.*, pp.19-20

²²⁸ Jureidini, *op.cit.*, pp.20-21

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.29

acknowledging “privileged relations” with Syria. It also reduced presidential power. But General Awn, the Prime Minister at that time and the Chief Commander of the Lebanese Army, refused to accept the Agreement and he already had launched the “Liberation War” against Syria before the Agreement. The clash between Awn’s followers and the Lebanese Forces under Samir Geagea’s leadership in 1990 not only cost many Christian souls but also destroyed Western sympathy.²³⁰ The Vatican also urged reconciliation.²³¹ Awn was exiled to France, Geagea later sentenced to life imprisonment, and Gemayel was not strong enough, which all in all made Maronite leadership void, and the Patriarch emerged as the central and unifying figure.²³² Phares comments that the Christian civil war brought to an end the political role and cultural identity of Christians.²³³ Dagher describes the concept of *al-Ihbat al Masihi*, or Christian disenchantment, after the Taif which moved the leadership of the country into the hands of Muslims.²³⁴

After the war the Lebanese government declared opposition to any form of sectarian or ethnic identity, dissolved the Lebanese Forces, and shut down the news media. This new policy was followed by many arrests of Christian activists. The official textbook emphasized the nonconfessional character of the Lebanese people, their affiliation with Arabism, and their resistance to Israel’s occupation. Even the Kata’ib party declared its allegiance to the Arab identity of Lebanon.²³⁵ And many resorted to religion especially after the Synod of 1995. But scholars question the piety of this increase in religious practices and instead point out the assertiveness of each community’s identity.²³⁶ Much research has shown that postwar Lebanon became more sectarian in every sector, or as in Samir Khalaf’s expression, “re-

²³⁰ Phares, op.cit., p.157

²³¹ Ibid., p.168

²³² Carole H. Dagher, *Bring Down the Walls*, Palgrave, New York and Hounsmills, 2001, p.138

²³³ Phares, op.cit., p.179

²³⁴ Dagher, op.cit., p.137

²³⁵ Phares, op.cit., pp.28-219

²³⁶ Dagher, op.cit., p.125

tribalization” was reaffirmed.²³⁷ Usama Makdisi explains that while political elites seek to contain sectarian conflict, citizens use sectarianism to express their discontent.²³⁸ Saade says that during the civil war, the Lebanese learned to give priority to intra-group solidarity and identity at the expense of social association between the different religious groups.²³⁹ But as Nawfal Salam points out, while the Taif Agreement succeeded in containing sectarian violence, it also reinforced sectarianism.²⁴⁰ But during and after the war, there were reports that the experience of living in a state, both for Muslims and Christians, had resulted in a more common Lebanese identity in the territorial sense through the Muslims’ acceptance of Lebanon as a reality and the Christians’ acceptance of their Arabity.²⁴¹

Not only did Phoenicianism become a taboo,²⁴² but even mentioning the conflict also became a taboo. Oren Barak reports that until the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and the subsequent events, many Lebanese have evaded an open discussion of the conflict. This situation was called “collective amnesia” by Samir Khalaf.²⁴³ And when mention is made of sectarian conflicts in Lebanon, they are ascribed to foreign intervention,²⁴⁴ as they were after 1958 crisis, in an effort to preserve national unity. Syrian withdrawal in 2005 also served to enhance Lebanese nationalism.

But for the Maronites, with Awn and Geagea’s reappearance on the Lebanese political scene, the political division of the community also reappeared with different alliances this time; Awn with the Shiites and Geagea with Sunnis. For some this hints at the de-

²³⁷ Samir Khalaf, On Roots and Routs: “The Reassertion of Primordial Loyalties”, in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam(eds.), *Lebanon in Limbo*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003, , p.112.

²³⁸ Ussama Makdisi, *Reconstructing the Nation-State, The modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon*, Middle East Report, Middle Eastern Research & Information Project. Inc., No.200, Vol.26, No.3, Jul.-Sep. 1996, p.26

²³⁹ Saade, op.cit., p.123

²⁴⁰ Nawaf Salam, “Taif Revisited”, in Hanf (ed.), op.cit., p.39

²⁴¹ Salibi (1976), op.cit., p.12, Salibi (2003), op.cit., pp.220-222.

²⁴² Kaufman (2000), op.cit., p.418

²⁴³ Oren Barak, “Don’t Mention the War?” *The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetfulness in Postwar Lebanon*, Middle East Journal, Vol.61, No.1, Winter 2007, pp.50, 53-54

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.64

confessionalization of Lebanon. But so long as other religious communities do not spread into different political stances, full de-confessionalization cannot be claimed. Leaders seem to alter their alliance not to be on the losing side. And each of them gives a different interpretation of certain events, resulting in the lack of a collective memory for the Maronites. Identity negotiation continues to alter its discourse.

Chapter 3. Self-expression of Maronites today

1. Religious hierarchy

The Maronite Patriarchate was established in 685 with the election of its first Patriarch Yohanna Maron (John Maron). Following Yohanna Maron's example, a tradition of the election of the patriarch from among the monks continued until the seventeenth century, or the time of the Patriarch Duwaih. ¹ The official title of the Maronite patriarch is "Patriarch of Antioch and All the East." When a new patriarch is elected in a synod by all the Maronite bishops and archbishops, the chair of the synod, who is the oldest bishop, says "The Holy Spirit calls you to be patriarch, namely, to be father for the heads of the great city of Antioch and for the rest of the juridical territory of the Apostolic See, I mean father for all of us." The patriarch-elect answers "I obey and accept all the apostolic orders and the holy councils gathered by the Holy Spirit in the righteousness, justice, and faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ." ² Then afterwards the bishops pray a special prayer for him, laying their hands on the newly elected patriarch invoking the Holy Spirit. The patriarch-elect must also take a patriarchal oath in front of the assembly of all the bishops. He is given a staff, the symbol of "a good shepherd" after the model of Jesus and also the symbol of his being the "father of fathers." The chair holds the staff while all the bishops also put their hands on the upper parts. Then the patriarch-elect holds it by the lower part. The chair raises his hands over all the others' hands. They raise their hands three times. And the patriarch-elect repeats the sentence "I am the Good Shepherd" three times. The assembly announces, "He is worthy and deserving." Then kisses of peace are exchanged. ³ He is elected for life. In regard to the election of a patriarch, Aziz Atiya adds that the new patriarch should not be less than forty

¹ Synod Text, p.17 from www.maronitesynod.com

² Ibid., p.86. This is written in the liturgy book of Shartuniyyah which goes back to 1915.

³ Ibid., p.87

years old and must obtain two-thirds of the votes in the synod.⁴ The Maronite church gives notice to Rome, then the Pope presents the pallium as well as the ring, staff and a pectoral cross to the new patriarch. Papal confirmation has become a requisite for the stability and legitimacy of his position in modern times.⁵

In Maronite history the patriarch represents a father, teacher, head, and a spokesperson.⁶ He is to protect the unity of his church and maintain it, sharing in faith and leadership with the Roman See and other churches.⁷ The Patriarch is a symbol of the final source of authority to whom every one shows respect. He is also seen as the steward of the Eastern heritage, who while keeping a special relationship with Rome, leads his flock in fellowship with Rome and Eastern Catholic churches. He is also the protector of the home country.⁸ The Patriarch is regarded as a successor of the Apostle Peter. As a symbol of this apostolic authority the Maronite patriarch is given “Boutros,” the Arabic form of Peter, as his middle name after his election.⁹ His authority is real, based on the church laws,¹⁰ as the patriarchal system itself is traced back to the Nicean Council in the fourth century. The Patriarch also has ordinary bishopric authority.¹¹ The Bishoprics of Jubeil and Batrun belong to the patriarch with a titular bishop’s administration on his behalf. The Patriarch also holds economic privileges. For example, all the bishops offer him part of the episcopal tithes. His funds are also

⁴ Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, p.412

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.412

⁶ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, p.88

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.69

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.93

⁹ But this tradition is not very old. The first Maronite patriarch who used this name was Joseph Butros Hobaisy (1823-1845). The next patriarch Joseph al-Khazin (1845-1854) did not use the name Peter. The following eight patriarchs up until the current time continued using it. Before the nineteenth century, there were only three patriarchs in the twelfth century whose first (ordained) names were Butros. It seems John was more popular.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Maronite_Catholic_Patriarchs

¹⁰ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, p.69

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.66

strengthened by the diaspora Maronites and funds from the West.¹² He has full powers to nominate all Maronite archbishops, bishops and titular bishops. As for his duties, he is obligated to convene a synod at least once every three years, consecrate the chrism, and control the original text and secondary versions of the liturgies. He is also the one who issues the final verdicts for personal status cases from the lower courts. And according to Atiya, he alone can grant absolution from grave sins like apostasy, the use of consecrated sacramental vessels in sorcery, the attempt to assassinate a bishop, or the expulsion of a priest from his parish.¹³

The Maronite Synodal Text of 2003 explains that the Patriarchal seat is in Lebanon as a result of the difficulties and persecution of the past that led the group to an inevitable migration to Lebanon from the vicinity of Antioch.¹⁴ As the official title of the Maronite patriarch has “Antioch” in it, it seems that the Maronite Church needed to present reasonable justification concerning its location in Lebanon, not Antioch. At the present time, the Maronite Patriarch resides in Bkirki during winter and in Diman during the summer season. Bkirki was originally purchased by Hindiya for her new congregation, and Tayah calls it an irony that her disputed monastery turned into the patriarchal seat.¹⁵ Diman faces the historic Qannubin where earlier patriarchs resided.

The emblem of the Maronite patriarchate consists of a tower which represents Lebanon, the stronghold of freedom and religion, the cedar which represents eternity, and stars which symbolize holiness. It has the Maronite motto in Syriac and Latin, which reads “Gloria Libani Data Est,” which means “the glory of Lebanon is given,” a verse from Isaiah.¹⁶ Maronite

¹² Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.413

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.412

¹⁴ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, pp.88-89

¹⁵ See Chapter 1 for Hindiya affair.

¹⁶ Rev. Buturos Dau, *Religious, Cultural and Political History of the Maronites*, 1984, p.434, Carole H. Dagher, *Bring Down the Walls*, Palgrave, New York and Hounsmills, 2001, p.139. Isaiah 35:2

patriarchs have moved their residence many times mainly in hopes of escaping governmental interference. Some of these locations were monasteries in Yanuh, Mayfuq, Lehfed, Jubeyl, Majdel Mauche, Kfifan, Kefar-Hai, and Qannubin.¹⁷

As seen in the earlier chapters, the Maronite patriarchate has meant not only religious headship but also national leadership from its first inception. The first patriarch Yohanna Maron is known as the nation-founder.¹⁸ Some patriarchs are revered as martyrs such as Patriarch Gabriel who was burnt alive in the fourteenth century. Some are revered for their saintly deeds such as Patriarch Yuhanna As-Safrawy, who is remembered for his special prayer for the epidemic of the seventeenth century and Patriarch Jurges Besebely, who is honored for his ceaseless feeding of the poor, also in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ Patriarch Duwaihi of the eighteenth century is considered the father of Maronite history and also a great church reformer. Aziz Atiya did not fail to mention that during the Mutassarriyyat, many leaders emerged within the Maronite hierarchy, among whom the patriarch was the most powerful personality.²⁰ Patriarch Howayek himself led the Lebanese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and is respected as the founder of modern Lebanon. Carole Dagher notes that because of his role in the foundation of Lebanon, the Maronite Patriarch is regarded as “the Patriarch of Lebanon” even by the Muslims.²¹ To the contrary, Patriarch Meoushy was mocked by his own people as “Muhammad Meoushy” due to his support of Arabism in the crucial period of 1958.²² After the Lebanese civil war, it was the patriarch

¹⁷ Dau, *ibid.*, pp.235-237

¹⁸ See chapter 1, and 2. It has also already been mentioned that Kamal Salibi sees the whole ecclesial system of the early Maronite church as tribal.

¹⁹ Dau, *op.cit.*, pp.539-542

²⁰ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.408

²¹ Dagher, *op.cit.*, 2001, p.51

²² Claude Boueiz Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860-1960: A Century of Myth and Politics*, Saqi Books, London, 2005, pp.176, 266

who had to fill the political vacuum among the Maronites.²³ The present patriarch Cardinal Mar Nasrallah Butrous Sfeir (1986-2011) is also a national figure who appears on TV news almost every day, receives visitations of state guests, and issues statements that become references for all of Lebanon.²⁴

Maronite archbishops and bishops are appointed by the patriarch in the synod.²⁵ In the past, there were a couple of ways to choose a bishop in addition to the patriarchal appointment. Sometimes ecclesial leaders were involved in the process, and other times people could request the patriarch to appoint a certain priest.²⁶ A bishop-elect is required to have the parish people's testimony about his qualifications.²⁷ The ceremony of inauguration of a new bishop is focused on connecting the bishop-elect to the Maronite patriarch and the Pope. A prayer for the invocation of the Holy Spirit to bestow gifts on him is offered.²⁸ In the church structure, a bishop is the one who connects believers to the patriarch, and further to the universal Catholic Church.²⁹ The highest authority of the Maronite church lies in the patriarch and in the bishops' council.³⁰ Today, there are twenty-six bishoprics including four Patriarchal Vicariates, five in the Middle East outside Lebanon, and six in diaspora. The Maronite bishops' council consists of forty-four prelates.³¹

As the head of his parish, the Bishop ordains priests and deacons and leads liturgies.³² He is expected to carry out his teaching, sanctifying and administrative ministries following

²³ Dagher, *op.cit.*, pp.138-139

²⁴ It is interesting that when his statements or activities are on the news they start with "Bkirki announced today that..." as in the name of a presidential palace or a capital that represents the president or the state.

²⁵ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.413

²⁶ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, pp.90, 91

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.91

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.75

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68

³¹ See <http://www.bkerkilb.org>

³² Synod Text, *op.cit.*, p.67

Jesus as his model.³³ His administrative duties include the handling of ecclesiastical property, receiving offerings, and applying laws of personal status with the help of deacons and secular professionals.³⁴ He also appoints general representatives, judges, scribes, and other administrators in his bishopric.³⁵

Maronite bishops used to reside with their patriarch or in hermitages, monasteries or in the cities until the Synod of Lweizeh in 1736 when the land was divided into bishoprics and bishops were allocated to each bishopric. Later, the Second Vatican Council set the regulation that a bishop should reside in his bishopric.³⁶ Especially during the celebrations of feasts he has to stay with his people so that the feasts do not degenerate into dissipation.³⁷ Also he is strongly advised to set aside enough time for visiting his flock, which is considered to be “division of God’s people.”³⁸

Along with their patriarchs the Maronite bishops have also been political and social leaders as well as spiritual guides. They led the modernization of Lebanon by opening schools and silk factories in the nineteenth century, allowing opportunities for education and employment.³⁹ Atiya explains that their influence on the modern nationalist movement was tremendous since Lebanese Christians as a whole tended to identify their native homeland with the Maronite church.⁴⁰ The bishop of Beirut, Yoseph Dibs, and the Vicar in Cairo, Darian, were also prominent figures in developing a modern Phoenician discourse as seen in the chapter 2. But currently the Church expresses its concerns about the new challenges posed by the Maronite migration from rural villages to urban centers and emigration overseas

³³ Ibid., pp.94, 73

³⁴ Atiya, op.cit., p.413

³⁵ Synod Text, op.cit., p.73

³⁶ Ibid., p.72

³⁷ Ibid., pp.94-95

³⁸ Ibid., pp.108, 72

³⁹ Ibid., p.90

⁴⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.409

from Lebanon, voicing the need for more unity, support and awareness of lay participation.⁴¹ Accordingly, the need for the redistribution of bishoprics has also been raised to reflect recent demographic changes.⁴²

The word for priest, *kahin* in Arabic, has two pronunciations with different meanings in Syriac. One is *kuhnoto* which means “offering a sacrifice” and can be understood as “sanctifying liturgy.” The other is *kahinoto* which means “fertility” or “prosperity.” Also another word used for priest, *qashishoto* means “to serve people.”⁴³ Lower ranks of parish priests are usually called *khoury* and many of them are married.⁴⁴ George Hayek explains that the word *khoury* came from *khoresquf*, a priest who used to take care of village affairs in early Christian era.⁴⁵

The calling of a parochial priest is based on the needs of people⁴⁶ and is selected by them but the bishop has the power of veto and consecrates the priest.⁴⁷ If a priest is married when he is called, he keeps his marital status. But if not, he is required to maintain his celibacy after the consecration. The Maronite church sees this tradition of married priests as an apostolic tradition, which should be preserved.⁴⁸ During his consecration ceremony the priest puts both hands on the altar of the local church which he will serve. The bishop announces a “betrothal bond” between the new priest and his people in front of the congregation mentioning the names of the new priest, the village, the local church, and the altar ten times.⁴⁹

⁴¹ Synod Text, op.cit., p.98, and throughout the texts.

⁴² Ibid., p.83

⁴³ Ibid., p.109

⁴⁴ Atiya says khouries are entirely secular and married. (Atiya, op.cit., p.413)

⁴⁵ George Hayek, *Wadi Qadisha: min al-A 'maq...ila al-qimam, Dar Bashariya lil-Tiba 'ah wa al-nashar, Zuq Mikhail, 2002, pp.27-28*

⁴⁶ Synod Text, op.cit., p.120

⁴⁷ Atiya, op.cit., p.413

⁴⁸ Synod Text, op.cit., p.118

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.120-121

He is to be a link between the bishop and parish people.⁵⁰

In the past, the *khoury* was originally from the village in which he served, often married and living with his family, and working as a farmer like the other villagers. That means he was always among the villagers and shared religious and social life with them. He functioned as an important reference in the village.⁵¹ Considering that Maronite churches until the sixteenth century were mainly in the form of “family church” in small agricultural villages, it is natural that priests were set among them.⁵² Usually he was not highly educated but knew Arabic and Syriac in addition to some knowledge of theology and liturgy.⁵³ With this qualification, he could teach the children in a village school or “under an oak tree.” The parochial priest also copied books and kept records of birth, baptism, betrothal, marriage, and death in addition to ordinary ministries.⁵⁴ In the 1736 synod, some of his religious functions such as the distribution of communion were restricted.⁵⁵ Atiya reports in the 1970s that most of them practiced a secular vocation due to financial difficulties.⁵⁶ The Maronite Synod suggested that the bishopric establish a “priest fund” to ensure the financial needs of priests and deacons so that they could live their lives with proper dignity.⁵⁷

The deacon is a lay minister who knows about liturgy and church affairs through experiences and different stages of training.⁵⁸ A deacon, or *shammas*, also assists priests in the liturgy with a special role and also in the “love ministry,” which means charity. A call for the return to the tradition of permanent deacons and financial support has been raised recently. The Synod Text emphasizes that this is not because the number of priests is less than needed

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.117

⁵¹ Ibid., p.113

⁵² Ibid., p.77

⁵³ Atiya, op.cit., p.413

⁵⁴ Synod Text, op.cit., p.113

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.114, see also chapter 1

⁵⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.413

⁵⁷ Synod Text, op.cit., p.118

⁵⁸ The personal experiences of this researcher tell that shammas are very proud of their role and that the people of the church usually show respect to them.

but in order to go back to the biblical tradition.⁵⁹ It should be noted that the Second Vatican Council emphasized the role and responsibility of the laity in church.⁶⁰

At the present time priests are educated in four different universities. They are Kaslik University, to which Patriarchal Ghazir seminary is entrusted, Antonin University, Sagesse University, and Washington Catholic University to which the bishoprics of Washington and Los Angeles are entrusted.⁶¹

2. Liturgy and religious rites

It is in liturgy that the Maronite Church most faithfully preserves its Syriac-Antiochene characteristics. Common characteristics of Western and Eastern Syriac tradition are found mainly in the Anaphoras, or prayers for the Eucharist. According to Atiya, at least fourteen Anaphoras are held in common by the Syriac churches and the Chaldean churches. There are two Romanized Anaphoras and the Anaphora of St. John Maron is the Maronites' own.⁶² According to Lucas Rompay, Maronite anaphora "Sharrar" has much in common with the Eastern Syriac Anaphora of the Apostles of Addai and Mari.⁶³ These shared features with other Syriac church liturgies are seen as all having been originated from Edessan liturgy.⁶⁴ Despite later Roman influence, the Maronite liturgy has preserved its uniqueness, and this preservation of Syriac-Antiochene tradition is seen as the factor that kept the Maronites from disappearing or from being assimilated into other churches.⁶⁵ Also, Maronite liturgy

⁵⁹ Synod Text, op.cit., p.119

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.97

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.127-128

⁶² Atiya, op.cit., p.414

⁶³ Lucas Van Rompay, Excurses: The Maronites, in Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (eds.), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p.172

⁶⁴ *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, p.1, from <http://www.bkerkelb.org>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

functions as the most important bond connecting diaspora Maronites to their mother church. In this light, the Maronite Church claims to keep some main Syriac prayers such as *Qadishat alloho* in order to enhance unity through the external unity of expression.⁶⁶ Maronite liturgy is conducted mostly in Arabic with some Western Syriac expressions and prayers. Another significant characteristic of Maronite liturgy is its emphasis on the Virgin Mary from the earliest texts. As she is recognized as the “Mother of God,” she is seen as the one who best understands the divine salvation through Jesus, her son.⁶⁷

The establishment of the Maronite patriarchate at the end of the seventh century was accompanied by the independence of the Maronite rites. A collection of the early Maronite liturgical texts is called “Beit Ghazo.” During the twelfth century, Maronite liturgy came under Roman influence, especially its Episcopal vestments, church art and vessels in addition to the consecration of *Myron*, or holy oil for Chrism. However, as the Maronite Church emphasizes, the texts and the structures of the Maronite liturgy were preserved.⁶⁸ During this period, the use of church bells and rosaries was also introduced.⁶⁹ The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also witnessed non-Chalcedonian influences which were later refuted and abolished. In the sixteenth century, after the establishment of the Maronite seminary in Rome, Latinization of the Maronite liturgy increased. The Eliano mission was particularly severe in its criticism of the Maronite Church and forced Latinization.⁷⁰ Lucas Rompay says, that, whereas the Eliano mission had overly imposed Western zeal, the rest of papal delegations to Maronite Church were quite moderate.⁷¹ As a part of the effort to pursue liturgical conformity, the Roman anaphora began to be used in the Maronite church. More importantly,

⁶⁶ *The Maronite Liturgy – Liturgical Formation*, p.5, <http://www.bkerkelb.org>

⁶⁷ *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit., p.6

⁶⁸ Synod Text, op.cit., p.216, *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit., p.2

⁶⁹ Dau, op.cit., pp.235, 432

⁷⁰ Synod Text, op.cit., p.217, *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit.

⁷¹ Rompay, op.cit., p.171

its liturgical books were printed in Rome: The liturgy for funerals in 1585, Qurbono in 1594, missalette in 1596, the breviary in 1624, the winter Fenqitho in 1656 and the summer Fenqito in 1666.⁷² In 1606, Patriarch Yusif issued a decree to follow the Gregorian calendar,⁷³ a significant step closer to conformity with Rome.

Patriarch Duwaih'y's reign in the seventeenth century is also marked as "a turning point in the history of Maronite liturgy."⁷⁴ His liturgical reform was intended to eliminate Latin and non-Chalcedonian elements from the Maronite liturgy. Though he faced some opposition, he managed to navigate between the conservatives and the reformers.⁷⁵ He provided theological explanations for how each reformation was proper to Maronite liturgy.⁷⁶ But in reality, Roman influence increased after Duwaih'y's reformation.⁷⁷ The Synod of Lweizeh set the direction for the reformation, and the most famous Roman alumnus Assemani himself contributed to it in the eighteenth century. The Second Vatican Council in 1965 was marked by its call to a return to the roots to the Eastern Churches.

The Vatican II called for a return to the roots and a rediscovery of the theological and liturgical identity proper to each Church, with emphasis on the spirituality of the eastern Churches and fathers in order that they contribute to the enrichment of the Christian spirituality at the level of the universal Church.⁷⁸

In response to this call, the Patriarchal Committee for Liturgical Affairs was established and supported by the Liturgical Institute of Kaslik University.⁷⁹ Carole Dagher says it is "ironic" for the Vatican, which forced the Latinization of the Maronite Church in the past to demand

⁷² *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit.

⁷³ Atiya, op.cit., p.415, Dau, op.cit., p.441

⁷⁴ *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit.

⁷⁵ Rompay, op.cit., p.171

⁷⁶ *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.3

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.4

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.3, Synod Text, p.217

that it return to its roots.⁸⁰

The liturgical reformation in the Maronite Church is an on-going process. Liturgy for the Maronites is the symbol of their unity and their faithfulness to their authentic Maronite identity. Considering the weighty importance of liturgy one can understand the reason why the Maronite church put much importance on its reformation. The actualization of the reformation would be accomplished by the research and the education of priests.⁸¹ Some liturgical movements, especially in prayers and hymns, have deteriorated as they have gone too far in the direction of creating new liturgical rituals.⁸² However, the Maronite church is also aware that the liturgical renewal that focuses on its roots does not mean the return to the practices of the past.⁸³

Liturgy is conducive not only to worship in which the faithful express their faith and adoration, but also to a communal celebration in which all celebrants play different roles. Each participant is expected to fulfill the appropriate function in accordance with the requirements of his ecclesiastic order and his service. The Maronite church instructs that one should not go beyond the limits of his role.⁸⁴ The celebrants are required to wear priestly vestments according to their rank and role. The stole may only be worn over the *Jibbi* or the monastic *Abaya*.⁸⁵ Atiya reports that the Maronite vestments are a mixture of the Syrian and Latin, the former used especially among the lower ranks of clergy in rural areas.⁸⁶ Creating a unified system of vestments and their colors for priest, assistant priest, deacon, sub-deacon,

⁸⁰ See Dagher, op.cit.

⁸¹ *The Maronite Liturgy – Liturgical Formation*, op.cit., p.1

⁸² *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit.

⁸³ *The Maronite Liturgy – Renewal of the Maronite Liturgy*, <http://www.bkerkelb.org>, p.1

⁸⁴ *The Maronite Liturgy – Liturgical Formation*, op.cit., pp.1-2. Only males are included in the Maronite ecclesiastic order.

⁸⁵ *The Maronite Liturgy – General Norms*, <http://www.bkerkelb.org>, pp.2-3

⁸⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.414

reader, and cantor according to their ranks and roles is also an issue for liturgical reformation.⁸⁷ The choir's role in the Maronite liturgy is only to assist the congregation. It must follow the Maronite tradition, and improvisation and excessive emotional expressions are not allowed in the liturgical performance.⁸⁸ Icons also occupy an important place in the Maronite Church. They are considered to be visual displays of God's greatness that actualizes different moments of divine salvation through saints' lives. They are required to be put in specially designated places in the church.⁸⁹ All icons and statues are covered with dark cloths during Passiontide.⁹⁰ The church building itself composes and provides the holy space. An altar must be oriented toward the east as in the Eastern tradition.⁹¹ To celebrate in the same holy space under the same liturgical regulation offers and re-enforces a common experience for the participants.

Sacraments are called "mysteries" in the Eastern churches. Baptism, Chrism and Eucharist are the mysteries of Christian initiation. To be a candidate for baptism, one should have a Godparent who will help him/her learn to live a Christian life. With rare exceptions, a baptismal ceremony is conducted by a priest in the candidate's parish. Either the candidate is plunged in the baptismal water three times, or water is poured on the head three times. The Chrism, or the anointing with holy *Myron* (holy oil for Chrism), follows right after the baptism and is considered the completion of the one mystery of Christ. However, giving communion after baptism was prohibited in 1736. As a part of the endeavor to restore ancient Eastern traditions, the inclusion of all three of these sacraments in a single ceremony is about

⁸⁷ Synod Text, op.cit., p.233, *The Maronite Liturgy – Ecclesiastic Art and Feast Days*, <http://www.bkerkelb.org>, p.2

⁸⁸ *The Maronite Liturgy – Liturgical Formation*, op.cit., pp.2-3, Synod text, p.234

⁸⁹ Synod text, p.234, *The Maronite Liturgy – Ecclesiastic Art and Feast Days*, op.cit., p.2

⁹⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.415

⁹¹ *The Maronite Liturgy – Ecclesiastic Art and Feast Days*, op.cit., p.1

to be revived, and is awaiting the Maronite Council's decision.⁹² Liturgy is divided into two parts: that of God's Word and that of the Body and the Blood of the Lord. Only the rite of the *Qurbono* can be conducted for the Eucharist and it must be on the main altar of a church. As this rite has central importance, multiple masses in a single church are not recommended. Also, the proper vestments for the ceremonial participants are requisite. Communion is not given to non-Christians. The distribution of the Eucharist is restricted to priests and deacons except on urgent occasions. Both elements of the Eucharist are given by intinction, or dipping the bread or wafer into wine.⁹³

The marriage bond in the Maronite Church is intended to be an image of the bond between Christ and the Church. A matrimonial ceremony should be celebrated by an ecclesiastic hierarch or a priest delegated by him and needs at least two witnesses. Traditionally a betrothal ceremony was called a "rite of ring" and matrimony a "crowning rite." This traditional process of marriage is also recommended for the restoration of marriage vows.⁹⁴ Another sacrament is holy orders. Bishops, priests and deacons belong to ecclesiastical orders and perform in the liturgy according to their rank. Recently, a call for the return to the tradition of the ordination of the cantor, reader, and sub-deacon has been raised.⁹⁵ The other two sacraments are called the mysteries of healing or the mysteries of reconciliation and they are penance and the anointing of the sick. The individual confesses and the priest pronounces the prayer of absolution. Confession during Lent is the most popular act of confession.⁹⁶ Only the priests are allowed to perform the anointing of the sick, or the unction.⁹⁷ The holy

⁹² *The Maronite Liturgy – General Norms*, pp.1-2

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.4, *The Mystery of Reconciliation*, p.1

www.maronite.org.au/maroniteness/sacraments/sacraments-reconciliation.htm

⁹⁷ *The Maronite Liturgy – General Norms*, op.cit., p.4

oil used in the unction represents Christ.⁹⁸

The divine office consists of the night office, matins (morning prayer), the third, sixth, and ninth hours, vespers, and compline (the last service) - seven canonical times in total.⁹⁹ Prayers for the canonical hours are considered the monastic characteristics of the Maronite liturgy.¹⁰⁰ Churches and monasteries used to ring bells for prayer especially at the sixth hour, which is noon. In agricultural villages in the past, it functioned much like today's clock by letting villagers stop working and recite the Lord's Prayer once and a prayer for Mary ten times. The Rosary prayer begins with making a sign of the cross with one's right hand reciting "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." Then it continues with the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and three Hail Marys.¹⁰¹ This is followed by the Glory Be.¹⁰² Then one announces the name of the Mysteries and the Decade he/she is about to pray.¹⁰³ Then one should pray the Lord's Prayer once, Hail Mary ten times and Glory Be once. Between decades one inserts the 'Fatima Prayer.'¹⁰⁴ One continues to the next decade until he/she finishes the fifth decade. After five decades, one finishes his/her prayer with a longer prayer of "Hail Mary, the Holy Queen."¹⁰⁵

Maronite feasts are categorized into dominical feasts, which are related to Jesus, and Marian feasts. Other celebrations are in remembrance of the prophets, apostles, martyrs and

⁹⁸ www.maronite.org.au/maroniteness/sacraments/sacraments-anointing_of_the_sick

⁹⁹ Atiya, op.cit., p.414

¹⁰⁰ *The Maronite Liturgy – foundations and nature*, op.cit., p.6

¹⁰¹ Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

¹⁰² Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

¹⁰³ Mysteries are grouped into Joyful Mysteries, Luminous Mysteries, Sorrowful Mysteries, and Glorious Mysteries. Each has five events of Jesus and Mary's lives and this event is called a decade. Mysteries do not mean sacraments here.

¹⁰⁴ O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are in most need of Thy mercy.

¹⁰⁵ Our lady's Calendar 2007, front cover pages.

confessors.¹⁰⁶ The most important feasts are Christmas, Easter, the feast of the ascension,¹⁰⁷ the feast of the assumption,¹⁰⁸ the feast of the cross,¹⁰⁹ and St. Maron's day,¹¹⁰ a special feast for the Maronites. All Wednesdays and Fridays are days of abstinence from food except between Christmas and Epiphany, and the Fridays before Lent, Easter and Pentecost. During the Great Fast, that is the fifty days of Lent before Easter, one is recommended to abstain from food until midday, but the fast is broken on Saturdays and Sundays.¹¹¹ When Patriarch Yusif introduced the Gregorian calendar, he allowed the bishops, who were obliged to abstain from meat at all times, to eat meat on certain days. He also decreased the number of fast days and allowed the laity to eat fish and to drink wine during Lent. Though these changes did not receive Papal approval, according to Atiya, very few returned to the old practices.¹¹² Later fasting was regulated by the Synod of 1736. Compared to other Eastern churches, the Maronite fast regulations are considered less strict.¹¹³ All in all, the Maronite liturgical year reflects the process of salvation in the tradition of the Eastern church and is also currently subject to reformation to revive tradition.¹¹⁴

3. Monasticism

Maronite history starts with monasticism and without it the Maronite church itself would not exist.¹¹⁵ When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christian martyrdom also ceased. In its place, some pious Christians started to practice monastic life for self-perfection, or what was called "white martyrdom," the voluntary martyrdom of living

¹⁰⁶ *The Maronite Liturgy – Ecclesiastic Art and Feast Days*, op.cit., p.3

¹⁰⁷ May 15

¹⁰⁸ August 15

¹⁰⁹ September 14

¹¹⁰ February 9

¹¹¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.415

¹¹² Ibid., p.441

¹¹³ Ibid., p.415

¹¹⁴ *The Maronite Liturgy – Ecclesiastic Art and Feast Days*, op.cit., p.4, Synod Text, op.cit., p.235

¹¹⁵ Synod Text, op.cit., p.137

a life dead to the world.¹¹⁶ Tayah says it is no wonder that bedouins who saw a hermit in prayer called him *rahib*, or God fearing.¹¹⁷ Among more than fifteen monastic patterns, Maronite monasticism is considered a part of the Stationaries, or those who stand still, and the Subdials, or those who live in the open air.¹¹⁸ While monasticism in Egypt developed from hermitism to cenobitism, in Syria it developed in the opposite direction – the adopting and embracing of the life of a hermit was considered the ultimate and most perfect state for the monk.¹¹⁹ Tayah also relates individual characteristics of the Maronites to this solitary monastic ideal.¹²⁰

As seen in earlier chapters, the first Maronite monasteries suffered from attacks by the Byzantines and Arabs. Maronite monks and nuns also shared the tragedy of their people when the Mamlukes destroyed monasteries and killed them. These attacks did not destroy monasticism but rather led them to deeper valleys or higher mountains.¹²¹ Tayah claims that this long persecution gave the Maronites a philosophy of sad resignation, which nonetheless did not surrender to fatalism.¹²² Natural caves provided good living spaces for hermits and monks as one only needed to make an entrance in the front to create an enclosed space. Hermitages and monasteries were founded in either natural or artificial caves, which were also often homes to churches or to shrines. Also, pagan temples were often converted to churches and monasteries.¹²³ Their altars faced east as in ordinary churches. Some hermitages consisted of a room or two. In the case of two floors, the lower layer was for

¹¹⁶ George Hayek, *Nusak Lubanan: Liqa' al-Sama' wa al-Ard*, Arab Scientific Publishers, Beirut, 2005, pp.37-38. In comparison to this, actual martyrdom was called “red-martyrdom.” (Wadih Peter Tayah, *The Maronites – Roots and Identity*, Bet Maroon Publishers, 1987, p.15)

¹¹⁷ Tayah, *ibid.*, p.16

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.265

¹²¹ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, p.139

¹²² Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.265

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.18

animals and the upper for the person.¹²⁴ Though there were no detailed monastic regulations, the Syrian *Ordo*, a loose set of rules, remained in use for centuries. An account of St. Antonius' life, the teachings of the early Church Councils and early Church Fathers, and the Book of Huda written by Rabbula were also monastic guides for centuries.¹²⁵

After the establishment of the Maronite Seminary in Rome in 1584, Maronite monasticism was also affected by Western elements. With Latin missionaries' activities in Lebanon such as the opening of schools, Maronite monasteries experienced a waning for a while. A Roman delegation led by Dandini in 1596 reported that Maronite monasticism did not have any specific laws or regulations but was similar to other forms of monasticism in its operation.¹²⁶ The monastic reform started at the end of the seventeenth century when three Maronite monks came to Lebanon from Aleppo and established the Lebanese Maronite Order under Patriarch Duwaih'y's permission. They were Gibrael Hawwa, Abdallah Qaraali, and Yusef Batin, later joined by Gibrael Farhat. This reform attempted to establish a unified system of administration under a central authority for all individual monks and nuns as well as the properties of monasteries.¹²⁷ The law prepared by Qaraaly originally had twenty-two chapters and was later reduced to fifteen in the final version approved by Patriarch Duwaih'y.¹²⁸ It included the traditional rules of obedience, chastity, and poverty attributed to the patron and father of monasticism St. Anthony as well as Duwaih'y's addition of humility.¹²⁹ George Hayek describes the birth of the monastic order in 1695 as the rising of the Phoenix.¹³⁰ In 1700, the Antonine Order was also established by Gibrael Al-

¹²⁴ Hayek (2002), op.cit., pp.108-109, Synod Text, op.cit., p.139

¹²⁵ Synod Text, op.cit., p.148, Tayah, op.cit., p.19

¹²⁶ Synod Text, ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.140

¹²⁸ Synod Text, p.148

¹²⁹ Atiya, op.cit., p.416

¹³⁰ Hayek (2002), op.cit., p.66

Bulwazani.¹³¹

The Maronite Order was divided into the Aleppine Order, which later changed its name into the Maryamite Order, and the Baladite Order. George Hayek attributes the cause of this division to issues surrounding the headship and posts of the order that heightened as the number of Baladites, or monks who originated from Lebanon, increased while the leadership remained in the hands of the Aleppines. The order was permanently divided in 1770 when 190 Lebanese or Baladite monks and 60 Aleppine monks separated and took to different locations. Nevertheless, monasticism among the Maronites in the seventeenth century saw prosperity in numbers and finance in general.¹³² Also, female celibacy increased greatly in the same century, giving rise to congregations like Hindiya's Order of the Sacred Heart.¹³³ Even foreigners participated in Lebanese monasticism such as Francois de Chasteuil, the hermit of the Qadisha valley (1632-1644).¹³⁴

A Jesuit traveler in the eighteenth century described the austere two-year training period for a Maronite monk prior to his vow. He never consumed meat, wore only a simple black robe, awoke at midnight to pray, labored in agriculture and service to others during the day time, reported his meditation and thought to the abbot everyday in the morning and evening, fasted and kept silent, prayed meditatively and liturgically, and avoided mixing with people. And women were prohibited from entering the church. If a monk failed to meet his duty in any of these areas, he could be expelled by the abbot. The monks and the trainees kept simplicity and purity in eating as well. Their food was mere vegetable salad, radish, a little bit of salted fish and dry black bread. However, the traveler continues, they had great hospitality

¹³¹ Synod text, p.140

¹³² Hayek (2002), op.cit., pp.69-70

¹³³ Atiya, op.cit., pp.416-417

¹³⁴ Dau, op.cit., p.571

despite their poverty.¹³⁵

Traditionally, Maronite monasteries and convents were located and functioned together. Though the Synod of 1736 decided to separate them, the application of the decision was not easy and took long time. For instance the Lady of the Field Monastery was mixed until 1818. The Patriarch Yusef Hobaisly issued the final statement in 1824 to separate all mixed monasteries. But even after the physical separation of mixed monasteries, the female Lebanese and Antonine orders were legally under their respective male orders until 1984, when the Lebanese female order was officially established.¹³⁶

Today there are five monastic orders with 723 monks, 565 among whom are priests. There are six foundation and nunneries with 820 nuns. But nuns are not counted among ecclesiastical ranks. Among these orders the Lebanese Maronite Order, the Maronite Mariamite Order, the Antonin Maronite Order, and the Lebanese Maronite Sisters and the Congregation of the Antonines Maronite Sisters belong to the Pontificate. The Congregation of the Lebanese Missionaries, which began its service in reaction to Protestant missionary activities in Lebanon,¹³⁷ the Congregation of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family, and the Congregation of the Maronite Missionary Sisters of the Holy Eucharist belong to the Maronite Patriarchate. Others either belong to a bishopric or are old independent convents such as the Sisters of the Visitation and St. John Hrash Monastery.¹³⁸ Also, after the canonization of St. Sharbil, a monastery and church were established in Massachusetts in 1981, aiming to follow the saint's holy life.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Hayek (2002), op.cit., p.68

¹³⁶ Synod Text, op.cit., pp.141-142. But the Lebanese Maronite Sisters and the Congregation of the Antonine Maronite Sisters continue to share spiritual aspects of the Order with their male orders.

¹³⁷ www.kreimists.org/about/index.php

¹³⁸ Synod Text, op.cit., p.143

¹³⁹ Ibid.

To be a monk or a nun, one must go through the necessary procedures and training. The Maronite Mariamite Order, for example, provides high school students or young people over the age of eighteen who are interested in monastic life with student training programs of three to six months, during which the trainees are exposed to monastic life but are not given the monastic robes. To be a student trainee, one needs the recommendation of one's parish priest and one's academic records, in addition to identity documents and photos.¹⁴⁰ After this student training, one can continue on to the novice training, which takes two years. This training includes prayers, spiritual retreats, learning Syriac, studying religious subjects, and manual labor.¹⁴¹ After the completion of this novice training and the taking of vows, one moves to a brother's house joining other monks and starts further studies in philosophy, theology and other required subjects in addition to spiritual and cultural activities. Then a monk "lives for the salvation of others."¹⁴²

The schedule below shows an approximation of how nuns or monks in general spend their time on ordinary days. The example is taken from the Monastery of Mar Elias El-Rass in Mazraat Rass, which was founded for nuns in 1736 following the decision to separate double monasteries in the Synod of Luweizeh.

- 6:00 AM wake up (bell rings), prepare oneself.
- 6:30 AM the Morning Prayer including a mass at the chapel
- 7:30 AM a simple breakfast
- 8:00 AM work as assigned for each person such as agriculture and embroidery
- 11:30 AM Rosary Prayer together at the chapel
- 12:00 lunch
- 3:00 PM meditation, individually but at the chapel
- 3:30 PM recreation such as chatting over tea

¹⁴⁰ www.omm.org.lb/arabic/ra-postulat.htm

¹⁴¹ www.omm.org.lb/arabic/ra-noviciat.htm

¹⁴² www.omm.org.lb/arabic/ra-seminar.htm

5:30 PM Rosary Prayer and Litany¹⁴³ of the Virgin together at the chapel
6:00 PM Vespers
6:30 PM dinner
8:30 PM Compline (except summer days)
Followed by silence and solitude
10:00 PM sleep

This daily schedule has flexibility on feast days.¹⁴⁴

Hermitage is still seen as the utmost practice of self-perfection in monastic life. The Lebanese Maronite Order Law of 1710 also includes regulations on hermits. To start a hermit life, a monk needs the abbot's permission and blessing. A monk becomes a hermit not to be freed from monastic law but to pursue more spiritual benefits. Hermitage is not without a code of its own. Liturgy among hermits is required to be conducted in accordance to the hermits' ranks. Hermits should respect each other. It is forbidden for hermits to gather for the purpose of talking. A hermit should not allow any sound to be heard in the next room. A hermit should not eat or possess food in the room except a water jar for night time. When other things are found, it should be reported to the abbot. A hermit is not allowed to eat meat even when he is sick, without the abbot's permit. When a hermit's illness is prolonged, he should either go back to the monastery or stop eating meat and accept death.¹⁴⁵

The law of 2000 has slight changes: Asceticism is a grace of the Holy Spirit. A hermit should disconnect with the world and the people in it and only meditate on heavenly affairs. A hermit belongs to a monastery and has to obey the abbot. A hermit is not allowed to leave

¹⁴³ A ceremonial or liturgical form of prayer consisting of a series of invocations or supplications with responses that are the same for a number in succession. (*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996, p.1122)

¹⁴⁴ Saturdays have mass twice. In the past, common prayer was seven times a day but nowadays this has been modified to three times. A mass is conducted by a priest from the same order (the Lebanese Maronite Order) who visits for service regularly since nuns cannot lead any liturgy by themselves. From the interviews with nuns.

¹⁴⁵ Hayek (2005), *op.cit.*, p.54-56

his hermitage except on necessary occasions with the abbot's permission. To be a hermit, a monk needs his abbot's permit and acceptance, at least ten years' experience as a monk who made his vow, witness from others about his observance of the monastic law, and should be at least forty years of age and healthy both physically and spiritually. A hermitage should not have more than three hermits. Each hermit in the same hermitage should spend his time alone except during liturgy and common prayer. A hermit should pray seven canonical times. A hermitage church should contain Eucharistic elements. A hermit can leave the hermitage only on Christmas, Easter, his patron's day, and St. Anthony's feast day to celebrate with others and renew his vow. He also has to set aside time in daylight for manual labor. Ordinary people are prohibited from going into the hermitage. A hermit should follow the traditional Maronite fast regulation. He is allowed to have a meal only once a day and one more light meal when necessary. Consuming meat is only allowed when he is sick or when the abbot permits. The monastery should appoint a person and a monk to take care of the needs of a hermit. A hermit can sleep a maximum of five hours a day, or six hours when necessary. The abbot should check the hermit at least once a month and help his confession and prayer. When a hermit becomes sick, only encouraging words are allowed and necessary care should be given. The abbot can stop a hermit practicing asceticism without his agreement when he is gravely sick.¹⁴⁶

There are three Maronite hermits in Lebanon. Hermits meditate in silence, pray and fast.¹⁴⁷ One of them has his hermitage at Our Lady Hawqa Monastery in Qadisha Valley. His day is divided into prayer for fourteen hours, manual work for three hours, study for two hours, and sleep for five hours, to which one more hour can be added in case he is sick. He sleeps from seven PM to midnight and from thence begins prayer. He eats once at noon with no meat. He

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.60-62

¹⁴⁷ Synod Text, op.cit., p.145

conducts mass by himself which a few visitors attend during the summer season. This hermitage is under the supervision of the monastery of Quzhaya which also provides his food and looks after his well-being. Villagers count this hermitage as their property and call the hermit *habisna*, or “our hermit.”¹⁴⁸

Concerning the calling for a monastic life, Father Henry Polard emphasizes that the calling of God for all people is only one and the same: to love. And to be a monk or not is only a difference in the method of achievement of this one goal. He also highlights that a monk does not choose to be a monk, but is chosen by God.¹⁴⁹ He says that the taking of vows or organizing monastic orders came from the West.¹⁵⁰ Also he adds that the organization and centralization of monasteries in the worst case leads to the death [of spirituality].¹⁵¹

Maronite monasteries have been not only a spiritual source for the church but also an integral part of village as the first Maronite monasteries formed agricultural communities. Maronite churches consider the existence of a monastery in their parish a gift. Maronite monasticism has given birth to Lebanese saints throughout its history.¹⁵² It has also contributed to the development of agriculture by fostering feelings of attachment to the land and literature. The first printing press in the Middle East was located in the monastery of Quzhaya in 1585.¹⁵³ Monasteries have also been visiting places for prayer, refuge, and

¹⁴⁸ Information from personal visitation and interview by the researcher. The interview was possible only because a Father from the same monastic order arranged and accompanied a group including the researcher, otherwise the hermit does not speak with visitors. The visit was on 22 November, 2003. After this Colombian monk chose his hermitage in the location, the Lebanese Maronite Order improved the cliff path with iron bars which made visitor access easier, too.

¹⁴⁹ Father Henri Paulad Al-Yasu'i, *Al-Hayah al-Ruhbaniyah fi ayamina* (Monastic life in our days), Dar al-Mashriq, Beirut, 1994, pp.22-23, 26

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.41

¹⁵² See next section of this chapter for the saints.

¹⁵³ Synod Text, *op.cit.*, p.147

shelter for the poor and the hurt, especially during times of war.¹⁵⁴ It has also provided social services and education. Today, Maronite monks and nuns run ninety-two schools and about twenty technical and arts schools, three universities, and a graduate school, thirteen hospitals, many orphanages, and nursing homes for the old and the handicapped.¹⁵⁵ Their life of service plays the role of a Christian model for ordinary people so that some voluntarily become “civil nuns.”¹⁵⁶ People think they need monks and nuns, especially hermits, to fight evil, represent God’s presence in society, and mediate between the world and God through prayer.¹⁵⁷ Qadisha Valley where Maronite monasticism prospered became a symbol of Maronite spirituality and history. As Harb says, the Maronite monastery is “the beating heart” of Lebanon.¹⁵⁸

4. Veneration of Saints

In Lebanon the most visible religious markers of the presence of Maronites, and Christians in general, besides churches and monasteries, are related to veneration of saints: shrines or sanctuaries, and private and public displays of photos of saints [iconic photos]. A special noteworthy phenomenon is *mazar*, which means literally a “visiting place” in Arabic. It usually enshrines a statue of St. Mary or other saints adorned with artificial or natural flowers, candles, smaller icons, and rosaries. The sizes of *mazar* vary. Bigger ones with life-sized statues are usually in the open air, with the statue on a platform sometimes covered with a small dome, while smaller ones are platforms fully covered with glass and locked with a key. Bigger ones can serve as a geographical marker located at a cross-roads or the entrance of a

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.150-152

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.151

¹⁵⁶ Personal encounters with civil nuns while conducting interviews with nuns in December 2003.

¹⁵⁷ Hayek (2005), op.cit., p.158

¹⁵⁸ The Group for the Preservation of Wadi Qadisha consists of the Maronite Patriarchate, municipalities, and various NGOs, all of which work to preserve the national heritage of the Qadisha Valley, Qannubin, Ehden, and Quzhaya Valley and protect them from further deterioration with the help of UNESCO. (Hayek (20002), op.cit., p.173)

village. Smaller ones can be located in any place that has sufficient room such as the entrance of a small street, the inner and outer entrance of a building, under a tree, or even at a hollow space of a tree or a small cleft in a rock. Just as one may make the sign of the cross and recite a prayer when one passes by a church, Maronites do the same in front of a *mazar* by either stopping at or visiting it. The erection of statues of saints seems to be an Italian influence that came with Latinization, but in this case was voluntary, to show the Maronites' conformity with Roman Catholicism.¹⁵⁹ It serves as a place for reinforcing Christian or Maronite identity.

Among those venerated icons, the most popular, oldest and most closely related to official liturgy is the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus.¹⁶⁰ In addition to regular prayers to Mary and the dedication of feasts, churches, monasteries, monastic orders, shrines and mazars to her, Mary accompanies people in many other forms in daily life: Often Maronites carry photos or small statues of Mary, sometimes with the Infant Jesus in her arms, or build *pietas* in their houses. They also place small icons, in the form of rosaries or pendants symbolizing Mary or Mary and Jesus in their cars, especially around the driver's seat. They may also wear necklaces or bracelets with relevant icons. Mary is the patron saint of Lebanon. In May, a special month dedicated to Mary according to the Catholic calendar, female devotees wear a simple dress in a light sky-blue color and tie their waists with white rope in symbolic imitation of Mary's sanctity.¹⁶¹ Statues of Mary in her shrines and mazars are decorated with a floral wreath around her neck and blue shawls are placed around her shoulders. A pilgrimage is made especially on the last evening of the month to Harisa, the most popular

¹⁵⁹ According to an interviewee, a professor at Kaslik University, the mazaaraat appeared in Lebanon in the seventeenth century. As a minority group, the Maronites had to prove their Catholicity by conformity and any practices from Italy were considered orthodox Christian models to be followed. From a personal interview with him in May, 2008. Sister Benedicte Landron also confirms the Italian origin of a small shrine introduced by Capucin in the seventeenth century. From a personal interview with her on 6 December, 2003.

¹⁶⁰ For the Marian character of Maronite liturgy, see section 2 of this chapter.

¹⁶¹ Blue and white are symbolic colors of Mary.

and famous shrine of Mary.¹⁶² Children also visit Marian shrines on Mother's Day to pay homage to her and offer her flowers and letters of thanks, as she is the prototype of the Mother. Such Maronite fervor in devotion to Mary produced a Calendar filled with Mary's feast days from all around the world.¹⁶³

As fitting to this devotion, Lebanon has several famous Marian shrines. On the summit of Harisa near Bkerki, the Maronite Patriarchate, stands the shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, or Saidat Lubnan. It was erected in 1908 with a gigantic statue of Mary given by France which weighs thirteen tons. Under the statue is a small chapel and one can reach the platform of the statue by spiral stairway. It functions as the main pilgrimage destination for devotees, especially in May. Pope John Paul II also visited the shrine and conducted a mass in the basilica which is adjacent to it during his trip to Lebanon in 1997. Miniature replicas of this shrine in different sizes serve as mazars in many places. In Maghdouche, where tradition says that Mary used to wait for Jesus during his visits to Sidon, Tyre and the coastal areas, the Marian shrine is called Our Lady of Mantara.¹⁶⁴ It also has a huge statue of the Virgin and Child on a tower whose stairs take visitors to the top.¹⁶⁵ The city of Zahle also has a fifty-four-meter-high tower with a statue of Mary. In Bechouat, people reported that they saw the statue of Mary blinking her eyes and moving her eyes and hands. The coastal city of Enfe has a Marian shrine named Our Lady of the Wind whose old wall painting depicts Mary silencing the sea.

Many religious studies relate the widespread cult of Mary veneration to the worship of

¹⁶² Sometimes car accidents occur during this pilgrimage due to the darkness. The Lebanese government advises pilgrims to be careful and use lights.

¹⁶³ This calendar is produced by Mary's shrine in Harisa, Our Lady of Lebanon, in 2007.

¹⁶⁴ The name is taken from the Arabic word "Natra" which means "to wait."

¹⁶⁵ A local tradition says that the villagers of Maghdouche left for the mountain after Islamic conquest and they concealed the entrance of the cave that Mary used to wait for Jesus. This cave, its altar and other religious equipment were not found until 1721 when a young shepherd found its entrance while he was seeking his lost goat. The rediscovery of the cave is commemorated every year on the 8th of September.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Mantara

ancient fertility deities in the area such as Inanna, the Moon goddess of Mesopotamia, Ashtarte, the goddess of Phoenicia, Venus, the virgin goddess of love and fertility in Greco-Roman mythology, or Isis, the goddess of fertility and motherhood in Egyptian mythology. Some argue that this pagan worship of the goddess was replaced by the veneration of Mary and absorbed into Christianity during Constantine's Christianization of the Empire in the fourth century.¹⁶⁶ Theologically, the full implication of Mary's role in redemption was formulated specifically at the Council of Ephesus in 431.¹⁶⁷ Concerning the possibility of excessive adoration of Mary, the Catholic Church officially instructs theologians and preachers to explain rightly about Mary and always in relation to Christ as to avoid "all words and deeds which could lead 'separated brethren and anyone else into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church.'"¹⁶⁸ David Farmer says that in the Eastern Churches, there has always been deep and universal veneration of Mary unlike in the West because they were not troubled by the controversies of the Reformation.^{169 170}

The veneration of the cross, though it is not the veneration of a saint, is also remarkable among the Maronites. Many churches are dedicated to the Holy Cross, and crosses are also often erected on hilltops or summits of mountains. Dau says that traditionally Maronite villages or areas were surrounded on four or seven sides by crosses as protective guardians. There are often engraved crosses on the boundaries of property such as a field or a garden, as

¹⁶⁶ See Douglas S. Winnail, for example, *Tomorrow's World* magazine, 2003, Nov.-Dec. Volume 5, Issue 6, <http://www.tomorrowworld.org/cgi-bin/tw/twmag.cgi?category=Magazine27&item=1104205354>

¹⁶⁷ David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2004 (fifth edition), p.355

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.357. Thomas Aquinas described the special honor paid to Mary as 'hyperdulia', i.e. a veneration which exceeds that paid to other saints, but is at the same time infinitely below the adoration ('latria') due to God alone, which would be blasphemous if attributed to any creature. (Same book, p.355)

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.357

¹⁷⁰ A fresco in the Monastery of Our Lady Qannubin, for example, depicts Mary with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is in the form of a dove, Mary occupies the middle of the scene. Such positioning of Mary in religious art could feed misunderstanding among Muslims who abhor the idea that God gave birth to Jesus through Mary as a man begets his son.

sources of blessing. Also, people customarily say “in the name of the seven crosses” to prevent all kinds of evil and to receive divine blessings.¹⁷¹ Dau says that the origin of this phrase is not known, but Antoine Harb cites a story related to the conversion of the Lebanese people through Saint Simon the Stylite that may have brought about the expression. When these Lebanese requested prayer for protection from wild beasts, he instructed them to go back, get baptized and then to erect seven crosses around the area. According to Harb, there are some fragments of these crosses in Hasrun, Bsherri, Ehden and Aitu.¹⁷² He also notes that the cross had special importance among St. Simon and his followers and that it had become a symbol of the triumph of Christianity over paganism in the Lebanese mountains.¹⁷³ Today, the cross also continues to serve as a marker that shows a village is Christian when erected at the village entrance, over a street, or on top of a mountain.¹⁷⁴ The Maronites also have a special liturgy for the miracle of the bleeding cross commemorated on April 20.¹⁷⁵ David Farmer stresses that the dedication of churches to St. Cross or the Holy Cross is not to a saint but to Christ on the Cross. It seems the veneration of the cross is related to the discovery of the fragment of the Cross at Jerusalem in Constantine’s time.¹⁷⁶

The veneration of other saints is also very popular among the Maronites. Parallel to the veneration of Mary, churches and mazars are dedicated to different saints. People pray to

¹⁷¹ Dau, op.cit., p.249

¹⁷² Harb, op.cit., pp.50-52. Dau also presents the story but without mentioning seven crosses. (Dau, op.cit., pp.186-187)

¹⁷³ Harb, op.cit., p.52

¹⁷⁴ However, a cross with a pointed bottom edge is a symbol of the Lebanese Forces. The display of this cross is to show the inhabitants’ support of the Lebanese Forces which by its nature implies one’s Maronite identity.

¹⁷⁵ Tradition says that a relative of Nicodemus who appears in the Bible came to Beirut and had a crucifix, a cross with a figure of Jesus crucified upon it. He left this cross when he moved out from his house and a Jew moved in instead without noticing the presence of the cross. When other Jews found it, they condemned the owner and started lashing and piercing the side of the body on the cross. The body poured down real blood and water and they converted to Christianity. The feast of the miracle of the bleeding cross is to commemorate this event. Dau, op.cit., p.187

¹⁷⁶ Farmer, op.cit., pp.125-126

saints, install saints' icons at home and wear ornaments which contain icons. One can easily purchase photos of saints on the streets or in street shops, but after purchasing he/she must go to a priest to receive a blessing for the photo, and only then does it become a venerable icon. According to Dau, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the town of Becharry alone had three hundred and sixty-five altars that were dedicated to different patron saints. People multiplied churches in order to make religious practice and life more convenient and also to benefit from the protection of as many saints as possible.¹⁷⁷ St. George is the patron saint of soldiers, St. Joseph the protector of families, and St. Elijah is the model of zeal and courage.¹⁷⁸ Concerning saints' veneration, Taya describes the daily fabric of saint veneration in this way:

Omnipresent in the life of the Maronite is God, His Mother, and the Saints. While the Cross guards your door lintel, raises your dough, and keeps you in your wake and in your sleep, in your goings and comings, 'Adra (The Virgin) answers your cries for help; St. Elias makes your seed grow and your dry become green; St. Arthemius (Shallita) protects your beasts, while Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, the handsome Roman Cavaliers, insure their fecundity. St. Anthony the Hermit drives away evil spirits and St. Anthony of Padua, through his mother's pleas, helps you find your lost objects and...a good husband!¹⁷⁹

Among the Old Testament figures, the prophet Elijah is most popular. His statue holds a sword in a raised arm. His strong warrior image was also popular during the Lebanese civil war.¹⁸⁰ Trimingham explains that the cult of the prophet Elijah replaced the pagan worship of the sun and points out the similarity between the names Elias, Elijah in Arabic, and Elios (Helias), or the sun god.¹⁸¹ Besides Mary and Elijah, biblical figures are not very popular

¹⁷⁷ Dau, op.cit., p.584

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Tayah, op.cit., p.268

¹⁸⁰ A story found in 1Kings 18:20-40. Interview with sister Benedict Landron

¹⁸¹ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, Longman Group Limited and Librairie du Liban, London, 1979, p.79. Elijah originally means my god is Yahweh, or Jehovah.

among Maronites, though churches are dedicated to John the Baptist, St. Paul, St. Peter and so on. Rather, martyrs from early Christian history such as Sarkis and Baccus, or St. George, often traditional figures without a precise official history, are often venerated.

John Gullick, in his Lebanese Greek Orthodox village research from the 1950s, also reports that villagers had one or two pictures of saints or the Holy Family in post-card size among their family photos. He also asserts that the modern usage of photos started as a part of the acculturation process.¹⁸² He observes that people have visited shrines for vow fulfillment, healing, conception, or the determination of the sex of an unborn child. In most cases visitations are related to medical problems while others are penitential and some other people deny healing through saints and attribute such belief to ignorance. He reports a decline in the usage of shrines after the introduction of modern medicine and also the disappearance of wearing or using amulets or religious medals.¹⁸³ It seems that more time and effort is taken in visitations to shrines by Maronites and visitors from other religious sects in relation to dire needs like healing, while casual visitations to a nearby mazar to secure blessing and protection can be likened to putting on religious accessories.

The Maronites also have their own more recently canonized saints who are popularly venerated, replacing old saints. St. Sharbil, St. Rafqa, and St. Nimatullah each have their own liturgy for their feasts and prayers for them. They are the source of much pride and are considered intercessors by Maronites. Individual photos of each of these saints or photos of them together are among the most popular saint veneration items along with bracelets that function as rosaries and car ornaments that are related to Mary. A film entitled “Sharbil”,

¹⁸² John Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village*, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. New York, 1955, p.38

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.93-94

which shows the saint's life, was screened in 2009 though it did not attract a huge number of people, especially lacking viewers among the youth.

St. Sharbil Makhoul (1828-1898) was named Youssef when he was born. He was called "saint" from his childhood due to his deep religiosity. He started his monastic life in the Monastery of Qozhaya. He spent sixteen years in monasteries and twenty-three years as a hermit. After his death on Christmas Eve, his tomb emitted light. Numerous cases of healing of the sick after praying to him have been reported. He was canonized on October 1977.¹⁸⁴ His tomb at Annaya has become a modern shrine of Maronite pilgrimage,¹⁸⁵ attracting many Maronites and others, and the monastery was also re-designed to serve as his museum.

St. Rafqa (1832-1914) was born to a very poor family and lost her mother when she was young. While she was getting more interested in religion, a dispute between her stepmother and her aunt made her decide to start her monastic life. She served in kitchen and in the education of girls. She prayed to share the suffering of the cross in order to experience deeper union with God. Then she suffered from severe pains from paralysis, arthritis, blindness, and headaches but endured with joy and love.¹⁸⁶ Miracles of healing related to her are also reported and she was canonized in June 2001. A booklet published by the Monastery of St. Joseph, where St. Rafqa's tomb is located, presents her as the patron saint of the sufferers.¹⁸⁷

St. Niematullah Al-Hardini (1808-1858) was attracted to the monastic life from his early age. He entered the monastery of Qozhaya. After his theological education, he served as a teacher, and St. Sharbil was among his pupils. His body was incorrupt after death and miracles attributed to him are reported.¹⁸⁸ His canonization in May 2004 was a Maronite national event and the ceremony was televised from the Vatican live along with simultaneous

¹⁸⁴ www.bkerkelb.org Maronite saints part and other sources.

¹⁸⁵ Atiya, op.cit., p.419

¹⁸⁶ Dau, op.cit., pp.776-778

¹⁸⁷ front cover page of the booklet

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.767-772

translation.

The Canonization process of a saint also accompanies the development of a standardized icon. Only the bust of Sharbil appears in icons in monks' attire with closed eyes and a long white beard, which has a small black part in the middle. Rafqa stands as a young, tall, and beautiful lady with a graceful face holding a Bible and a rosary in her hands. Nimatullah is kneeling and praying with open arms and open eyes toward heaven. All have haloes behind their heads. These icons have become visible symbols of the Maronites.

Three Massabki brothers - François, Abd El-Moety, and Rafael - were martyred in Damascus in 1860 during the upheaval of the region which resulted in the Christian, especially Maronite, massacre. They were beatified in 1926.¹⁸⁹ Other Maronite saints such as Marina are also under the procedure for beatification. The recent beatification of Yacoub Haddad (1875-1954) who is better known as Yacoub the Capucin also drew significant Maronite attention though he was Lebanese Roman Catholic and not Maronite. He was beatified during a special Mass conducted in Beirut on 22 June, 2008. The Maronites were major celebrants of the ceremony.¹⁹⁰

Other Maronite martyrs are also honored and their tombs, if in existence, become shrines, or *maqams* in Arabic, where people visit and pray. Supernatural body preservation, light from the tomb, and reports of healing are common characteristics that help one to be recognized as a saint. Dau presents the cases of Abu Karam (1640d) who was martyred,¹⁹¹ Yunes Abu-Rizq (1697d) who was forced to convert but resisted and was martyred instead,¹⁹² Kanaan Daher (1741d) who was also martyred against the threat of forced conversion, Fr. Daniel Al-Alam

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.765-767

¹⁹⁰ www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/2008...

¹⁹¹ Dau, op.cit., pp.574-575

¹⁹² Ibid., pp.575-576

(1815-1884) whose body was incorrupt and whose tomb emitted light,¹⁹³ Estephan Ne‘meh (1887-1938) whose body was incorrupt,¹⁹⁴ and others as examples of such martyrs. Martyrdom and the development of related martyrology have served as enhancements of group cohesion by honoring common heroes and legacies. In this light, Tayah quotes Ignatius of Antioch who said that “ill treatments [made them] better disciples.”¹⁹⁵

5. Languages

As the official name of the Maronite Church indicates, the liturgical language of the Antiochene Syriac Maronite Church has been Western Syriac though a larger part of the liturgy was replaced by Arabic. The Syriac language which was originally a dialect of Ruha, or Edessa, was from Eastern Aramaic and later diverged into Eastern, or Nestorian, and Western Syriac.¹⁹⁶ Basile Aggoula explains the emergence of the Syriac language as a revolt against Greek cultural hegemony at that time. The first thing that Christians in the Ruha area had done against Greek dominance was to develop a new language and translate the Bible into it. It seems that the movement was centered in Ruha on the basis of its politically autonomous status and its experiences in continuous revolt against the Roman Empire. He emphasizes that Eastern Christians at that time opted for Syriac as their sacred language as with Hebrew for Judaism and Arabic for Islam. As Aramaic became more and more associated with paganism, Christians used Syriac to differentiate themselves from paganism and pagans. Since a local dialect had its limitations, in the expression of new thoughts and terminologies, words from Greek, Assyrian and Babylonian were borrowed. Words used in

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.779

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.781-782

¹⁹⁵ Tayah, op.cit., p.235. Tayah also points out that the cult of martyrs was based on the site of their burial and fervor for the relics degenerated into a commercial trade during the Middle Ages. (Tayah, pp.23-24)

¹⁹⁶ Father Boulus Fghali, *Al-Muhit Al-Jami' fi al-Kitab al-muqaddas wa al-sharq al-awsat*, Bible Society, Beirut, 2003, p.336. Eastern Aramaic has three main branches; Syriac, Jewish Aramaic, and Modern Aramaic. Many speakers of modern Aramaic have migrated to Western countries. (Same book, p.53)

paganism were also given new meanings. Aggoula says that, however, though its writing already existed in the first century, this language found before the year 313, when Christianity was officially recognized by the Roman Empire, cannot be called Syriac. Usage of this new language also meant a clear departure from Judaism.¹⁹⁷ The book of *the World's Writing Systems* informs us that the origin of the Syriac script is not fully clear and that the divergence of the language into Eastern and Western Syriac was because of Church schism which dissociated the two groups from the fifth century.¹⁹⁸ The Western Syriac writing system is called *Serto*, and its language is called *suryoyo*, or *turoyo* in dialect.¹⁹⁹ According to Father Fghali, Western Syriac influenced Ethiopic language,²⁰⁰ which is called Geeze.

Western Syriac nouns end with the vowel 'o' while Eastern end with 'a.' However, in Lebanon, where Maronites use Western Syriac, many village names that end with the 'a' vowel are found. However, onomastician Elie Wardini warns not to interpret this phenomenon as evidence that Eastern Syriac was used in Lebanon at one time. Rather, he claims that these 'a' vowels are proto Semitic 'a's.²⁰¹ Syriac was not a spoken language in Lebanon where the Western Palestinian type of Aramaic was spoken. He infers that Syriac came to Lebanon as a liturgical language of the Maronite Church with St. Maron.²⁰² As a church language, it did not leave many literary works,²⁰³ but it contributed later to literature by translation in which the Maronites participated during the Umayyad and Abbasid Empire.²⁰⁴ Theophilus ar-Ruhawi translated the Iliad and the Odyssey into Syriac. He was

¹⁹⁷ Special lectures by Basile Agoula at the Maronite Center in Antliyas between Jan. 13 and Mar. 16, 2005.

¹⁹⁸ Peter T. Daniels, *Aramaic Scripts for Aramaic Languages*, in Peter T. Daniels and William Bright (ed.), *The World's Writing Systems*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1996, pp.499-500

¹⁹⁹ Theophilus George Saliba, *Way of Teaching Syriac*, Thomas Press, Beirut, 2007, p.20

²⁰⁰ Fghali, op.cit., p.53

²⁰¹ Elie Wardini, *Lebanese Place-Names (Mount Lebanon and North Lebanon), A Typology of Regional Variation and Continuity*, Librairie du Liban Publishers, 2007, p.23

²⁰² Wardini sees this introduction as happening in the sixth century. (Wardini, p.55)

²⁰³ Agoula lecture on Jan, 13, 2005

²⁰⁴ Wardini, op.cit., p.56

the one who introduced the usage of Greek vowels in Syriac writing.²⁰⁵ Arabic written in Syriac script is called Garshuni, or Karshuni.²⁰⁶ The first Arabic dictionary was in Garshuni and was compiled in Lebanon in the seventeenth century. The Maronites also printed the Psalms in Garshuni in the same century in the monastery of Quzhaya which had the first printing press in the Middle East.²⁰⁷

Regardless of its introduction to the Maronites in Lebanon, it seems Syriac became the spoken language among them at some point. When Arabic spread among the region, the Church and mountains became the shelter of Syriac.²⁰⁸ Facing the Ottomans, Syriac was the factor that Maronites could use to affirm their identity.²⁰⁹ But the use of Arabic increased. European travelers reported Syriac as vernacular in Hasrun, Ehden, Bsharri, and al-Hadath in the seventeenth century. A document written in 1810 says that ‘many Maronites’ spoke Syriac.²¹⁰ Atiya says the Maronites did not give up Syriac and preserved it as the spoken language of their community until the seventeenth century.²¹¹ Dau claims that it was the vernacular until the nineteenth century in northern Lebanon.²¹²

The use of the Syriac language is directly related to Maronite religious identity as Christians and also to ethnic differentiation. When fear of Arabization increases, the reassertion of identity through the Syriac language also increases accordingly such as the lay effort to include more Syriac in liturgy.²¹³ Among such people, some extremists who call themselves “Ultra zealot Syriac Maronites” even claim that all Maronites should have a copy

²⁰⁵ Dau, op.cit., p.333. Agoula says that the vowel signs were used for grammatical analysis, which means that people did not understand the text fully without them. (Agoula lecture on March, 3, 2005)

²⁰⁶ Daniels, op.cit., p.501

²⁰⁷ Agoula lectures on Jan. 27, 2005 and Mar. 3

²⁰⁸ Wardini, op.cit., p.56

²⁰⁹ Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1995, p.45

²¹⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.420

²¹¹ Ibid., p.403

²¹² Dau, op.cit., p.65

²¹³ Wardini, op.cit., p.56

of the Peshito Bible, which is the Bible in Syriac.²¹⁴ For those Syriac supporters, Syriac is the same as Aramaic. Dau also does not distinguish Syriac from Aramaic and expresses pride that Aramaic is derived from the Phoenician alphabet.²¹⁵ Pride in Syriac as a Christian is well-represented in the writing of Syriac Orthodox bishop George Saliba – the Syriac Orthodox Church shares Western Syriac with the Maronite Church. He says that as Syriac is Adam’s language and the language of Jesus, it is the language of Christianity and its liturgy, protected and preserved by God. It never perishes. And it is what the East contributes to the world.²¹⁶ He also adds that the twentieth century is a golden age for Syriac because its education was being carried on in monasteries and schools.²¹⁷ The instruction of the Syriac language is often jointly programmed between the Maronite Church and the Syriac Church.

However, Salibi strongly asserts that the language of the Maronites has been Arabic since the ninth century and that this indicates the Arab origin of the Maronites. He continues that this Arab origin has nothing to do with liturgical language since Syriac was originally the liturgical language of all the Arab and Arameo-Arab Christian sects.²¹⁸ He also suggests that under the Ottomans the Maronites became involved with other religious groups in the region as one unit and “[a]s the lay spirit among the Maronites (and other Christians) grew, the use of Syriac in writing declined.”²¹⁹

Arabic became the only official language in Lebanon in 1943.²²⁰ Education in Arabic and emphasis on Arab identity in education were taken as challenges by the Maronites and other

²¹⁴ <http://www.beith-morounoye.org/mainframe1.html>

²¹⁵ Dau, op.cit., 64. He says that Pahlawa and Sanskrit are of Aramaic origin and Sanskrit was spread to China and Korea through Buddhism. But linguistically Sanskrit is not derived from Aramaic.

²¹⁶ Saliba, op.cit., pp.16, 21

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.17

²¹⁸ Kamal Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*, I.B.Tauris, London, New York, 2003, p.90

²¹⁹ Kamal Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Mediaeval Lebanon*, Naufal Group, Beirut, Paris, 1991, second edition, p.168

²²⁰ Phares, op.cit., p.94

Christians.²²¹ Education became an intense field of debate over Lebanese identity. Wardini points out that Arabic went through stagnation between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, experienced revival in the nineteenth century, and rose as a world language with the establishment of the modern Middle Eastern states and the formation of the Arab League.

Christians in Lebanon themselves acknowledge that they are not good in Arabic, since they learn more about Western culture and somehow become strangers to their own surroundings. Carole Dagher quotes a priest concerning this issue, “This has developed a certain schizophrenia of the Lebanese Christian personality.”²²² Famous novelist Amin Maalouf also once expressed such an identity crisis in relation with his usage of French and Arabic.²²³

While distancing themselves from Arabic and resisting Arabization, Maronites adopted other languages instead. At first Maronite alumni of the Maronite College in Rome returned to Lebanon with the Italian language, and trade with Italian cities also made Italian popular among the Maronites. But that soon gave way to French when the Jesuits came to Lebanon.²²⁴ The Maronites interpret this favor for foreign languages as transferring to “brother Christian tongues” because the already faded Syriac language could not be their distinctive characteristic any more.²²⁵ In this light when French became the official language in Lebanon during the French mandate, they did not regard it as colonialism but rather attached themselves voluntarily to it, regarding it as a means of cultural and religious preservation.²²⁶ Both smaller and greater Lebanisms were expressed in French. The idea of Phoenicianism proposed during the French mandate was expressed mostly in French during

²²¹ Ibid., p.101

²²² Dagher, op.cit., p.28

²²³ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, (trans. By Barbara Bray from French), Penguin Books, 2003, pp.1-2.

²²⁴ Dau, op.cit., p.635, Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for an Identity in Lebanon*, Doctoral dissertation, A Bell & Howell Company, Ann Arbor, 2000, pp. 45-46, 54-56

²²⁵ Phares, p.45

²²⁶ Ibid., p.45

the thirties.²²⁷ In Qorm's play, for example, Lebanese people are depicted as speaking better French than the French, and a girl even corrects a French soldier's French.²²⁸ For Qorm, though the language of Lebanon was originally ancient Phoenician, there was no need to revive it since the idea is enough in the Lebanese mind and also because Phoenicianism could be expressed in French.²²⁹ It is interesting to note that despite the Maronites' emphasis on their continuous relationship with France, the spread of the French language among them happened only in the nineteenth century.

The issue of language was important in the Lebanese nationalism discourse, especially the debate on the sole use of the Arabic language which has been always at the core of the Lebanese identity issue. Besides, in addition to assertions for Syriac, called Aramaic by preference for its exponents, there was a minor claim for reviving the Phoenician language. In fact, Said Aql, tried to create a Lebanese vernacular.²³⁰ The Phoenician language, though it is not spoken now, was a source of pride for the Phoenicianists and the modern Lebanese people as a whole because it stood for the antiquity of the country and the prestige of their Phoenician forefathers – with the possibility of the application of these qualities to themselves.²³¹ Moreover, Christian identity could be preserved and even promoted since the Bible was written in Hebrew, considered a Kanaanite dialect, and hence Phoenician in language and style.²³²

Many decades after those initial national identity discourses around languages, today the languages used in Lebanon reveal a different trend. While the use of French among Muslims,

²²⁷ Kaufman, op.cit., p.13

²²⁸ Ibid., pp.171-180

²²⁹ Ibid., p.261

²³⁰ Ibid., p.294

²³¹ Despite the Phoenicianists' claim that Phoenicians "created" the first phonetic alphabet in the world, scholars say rather, that they refined what the Semites and Egyptians had invented. (George Harris, and others, *Iraq – its people, its society, its culture*, Harf Press, New Haven, 1958, p.49, Asher Kaufman, p.5)

²³² Dau, op.cit., p.93. As seen above, to explain its continuity, Dau explains that written Aramaic adopted the Phoenician alphabet but this linguistic connection between the Phoenician language, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac was not fully employed and elaborated in Phoenicianism since it did not emphasize Christian identity.

especially among the Shiites increased, among Christians it decreased. Carole Dagher relates this to the shift in French policy after the Lebanese civil war which de-emphasized their commitment to the Maronites but opened up more to the Muslims communities.²³³ But French is still widely spoken among Maronites.

Another new trend is an increase in the use of English. John Gulick, in his research in the 1950s, noted that the Lebanese did not consider the increased use of English as a breach in the cultural defenses since they consider the language only as a tool.²³⁴ Selim Abou's research in 1996 confirmed that the expansion of English is not at the expense of French, but rather as an additional and international language for a trilingual population.²³⁵

The following survey was conducted in 2008 among 220 Maronites in Lebanon. Table 1.1 shows how many Maronites know Syriac, their language of liturgy. The question was "Do you know the Syriac language?"

Table 1.1 Maronites - Syriac language

	Laity (%)	Priests(%)	Total (%)	Percentage without priests
Not at all	127 (61.06)	0	127 (57.72)	
I know a few expressions used in liturgy but I don't know their meaning or how to read it.	32 (15.38)	1 (8.33)	33 (15)	14.54
I know some expressions used in liturgy and their meaning but do not know how to read it.	34 (16.35)	2 (16.67)	36 (16.36)	15.45
I have learned how to read Syriac but I do not know much.	8 (3.85)	4 (33.33)	12 (5.45)	3.63
I know how to read and speak Syriac	2 (0.96)	5 (41.67)	7 (3.18)	0.90

²³³ Dagher, op.cit., p.25. Lebanese Shiites have many expatriates in francophone Africa and when they come back to Lebanon they send their children to French-speaking schools.

²³⁴ John Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village*, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. New York, 1955, p.136

²³⁵ Dagher, op.cit., p.26

No answer	5 (2.40)	0	5 (2.27)	
Total	208 (100)	12 (100)	220 (100)	

“Priests” in the table indicates a group of priests or seminary students among the respondents. One hundred twenty-seven persons out of 220 participants, or 57.72 percent, answered they did not know Syriac at all. Thirty-two lay persons answered that they know a few expressions used in liturgy but do not know their meaning or how to read it. Another 34 lay persons answered that they know some expressions used in liturgy and their meaning but do not know how to read it. Several people marked the first answer at first then changed their answer into the second and third choice. This indicates that though they recite some expressions in Syriac during the mass either knowing or not knowing the meaning, they do not consider themselves as knowing the Syriac language, or more precisely do not count Syriac as a “language” per se because they are familiar only with expressions. Excluding the priest group, only 10 persons, or 4.53 percent, had ever learned how to read Syriac, and less than one percent knew good Syriac. Of the two lay persons who answered that they know how to read and speak Syriac, one was a tour guide and the other a student. One seminary professor answered that he can translate Syriac. This table shows that almost 60 percent of people surveyed do not know even the meaning of their liturgical expressions and 30 percent know only the liturgical expressions.

Table 1. 2 Maronites - Arabic

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Definitely (%)	No answer (%)	Total (%)
Number	1 (0.45)	1 (0.45)	12 (5.45)	11 (5)	104 (47.27)	39 (17.72)	49 (22.27)	3 (1.36)	220 (100)

Table 1.2 shows the Maronites' self-assessment in their Arabic language proficiency. The given sentence to which the surveyed responded was "I think I am good at Arabic." Though Arabic is their mother tongue, only 49 persons, that is 22.27 percent, answered "Definitely." The survey excluded some young Maronites whose first language was not Arabic and did not know how to read Arabic. But during the survey, some among the young university students needed help in understanding the meaning of the questions written in Arabic. There were four illiterates for whom the questions were read aloud and their answers were written down by a survey assistant. Among them one answered not at all, two answered neutral which in most cases was taken to mean "I don't know," and one answered "Agree." Then, 13 people who answered either "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" were not illiterate but they thought they were not good at Arabic. Another 11 passively disagreed with their being good at Arabic by answering "Neutral." This low self-estimation reflects that either Maronites are actually not good at Arabic as Dagher said,²³⁶ or that they want to distance themselves from the Arabic-speaking environment by asserting their inability in Arabic which is not "Christian," and hence not "their language." It is also related to the reality of Arabic diglossia which means the existence of two different systems – one spoken and the other written in this case - in a single language. Though spoken Arabic is the mother tongue of the Maronites, they do not think they are good or fluent at Arabic if they do not master Arabic grammar.

Table 1. 3 Maronites - Second language

	French	English	Foreign language	Other languages	No foreign language	No answer	Total
Number	Fluent 58 Good 47 Fair 30	Fluent 20 Good 23 Fair 11	2	Spanish 3 Italian 1 Latin 1	5	6	222

²³⁶ Ibid., p.28

	Poor 5 No detail 4 Total 144	Poor 1 No detail 3 Total 58		Chinese 1 Arabic 1 Total 7			
Percentage	65.45	26.36	0.9	3.18	2.27	2.72	100.9*

* 2 persons answered French and English together.

Table 1.3 and 1.4 show what foreign languages Maronites speak and how good they perceive themselves to be at them. One hundred forty-four answered that their second language is French and 58 among them, or 40.27 percent of French speakers, answered they are fluent in it. Fifty-eight reported English as their second language, and among them 20, or 34.48 percent of the English speakers, answered that they are fluent in it. One cited Arabic as a foreign language. Two answered “foreign language” without informing what those foreign languages are, indicating “Good” and “Fluent” as their fluencies. One of the respondents who identified themselves as illiterates answered French language as her foreign language which she can read and write. Besides French and English there were Spanish, Italian, Latin, and Chinese. When values are given to each degree, that is 4 for fluent, 3 for good, 2 for fair, and 1 for poor, French speakers have an average of 3.128 and English speakers 3.127. Other languages have an average of 3.57 (3.83 excluding Arabic). That is, 209 out of 220 persons speak a second language with an average fluency higher than “Good.” And about 65 percent of Maronites speak French as their first foreign language and about 25 percent English.

Table 1. 4 Maronites - Other foreign languages

	English	French	Other languages	No other foreign languages	No answer	Total
Number	Fluent 28 Good 49 Fair 29	Fluent 17 Good 17 Fair 11	Italian 15 Spanish 14 German 7	11 Try to learn 1	41	275

	Poor 7 No detail 3 ----- Total 116	Poor 6 ----- Total 51	Arabic 6 Syriac 4 Portuguese 3 Russian 3 Japanese 1 Swedish 1 Philippine* 1 ----- Total 55			
Percentage	52.72	23.18	25	5.45	18.63	125

*By language of “Philippine” most probably the respondent means “Tagalog”.

The question for the second and third foreign languages was “What other languages do you know? How proficient are you?” The answer shows that 116 speak English as their third language and 51 French. In other words, 195 out of 220, or 88.63 percent, of respondents speak French as their first or second foreign language, and 174 out of 220, or 79.09 percent, speak English. In proficiency, English as the second foreign language has a numerical average of 2.86 a bit lower than French, which has a numerical average of 3.21. Interestingly, 6 persons answered Arabic as their other foreign language. Fifty-five answered that they speak other foreign languages besides English or French such as Italian, Spanish, German, and Russian. Japanese, Swedish, and Philippine (most probably Tagalog) languages were also among the answers. Though seven respondents had answered that they know how to read and speak Syriac in the previous survey question,²³⁷ only four answered that they know Syriac as another languages to this question. Two among those who answered “Syriac” were priests. The proficiency of these other languages is on average 2.30 (2.10 excluding Arabic). Only 5 among 220 participants answered they do not know any foreign languages. Five others did not answer for both questions on first and other foreign languages. When they are counted as not knowing any foreign languages, 210 out of 220 persons, or 95.45 percent, know at least

²³⁷ see Table 1.1

one foreign language. Only 41 persons, or 18.63 percent, know one foreign language. Among those 41, nine persons know only English and thirty-two only French. One hundred twenty-three respondents, or 55.90 percent, answered that they know two foreign languages which makes them trilingual. The remaining 46 out of 220 persons, or 20.90 percent know three foreign languages which makes them know four languages, though they are not fluent in the fourth. Of these 46, all but two, speak French and English. That means the third foreign language is additional, not replacing French and English in the same way that English came as an addition, not replacing French.²³⁸

6. Names

When a Lebanese first name is given, one can surmise the name holder's religion, or sometimes even the exact sect, with relative ease. When a person's family name is given, one can tell the person's sect and even the home town directly in many cases. In this light, to give one's first and family names in Lebanon means to reveal a large part of one's sectarian and regional belonging. Elie Wardini points out that when one knows the other's religion or sect from the name, one tries either not to be offensive or is guarded in conversation.²³⁹ Unlike other parts of the Middle East, family names are used in Lebanon in the same way as in the West.²⁴⁰ Among the largest Maronite families are Al-Khazin, Karam, Sfeir, Fram, and Dwaihi. Shehab, Farangy and Makhluף are also famous Maronites. Though family names are

²³⁸ Dagher, *op.cit.*, p.26. In Salim Abou's research in 1996, 85.3 percent of those surveyed said they favored the learning of three languages. His research shows that in June 1996, 44.4% of the overall population of Lebanon answered that they speak French, 22.2% that they speak English, and 20.5% that they are trilingual (speaking French, English, and Arabic). Of the people who answered that they speak good French (Francophone), 49.3% were Maronites, 12.7% Greek Orthodox, 12.1% Shi'a, 10.5% Sunni, and 9.6% Greek Catholic. Among the Druze, the French-speaking population was only 2.9%. While the French-speaking population is increasing among the Shiites, the increase is much slower among the Maronites because they are the most rural of the Christian communities.

²³⁹ Wardini, *op.cit.*, p.70. Lebanon has been through civil wars in which conflicts have been expressed in sectarian forms. Criticizing or mentioning sects, or sectarian issues could risk violence.

²⁴⁰ But the official usage of family name was introduced in the 1910s at the end of the Ottoman reign which required the registration of family names.

given regardless of one's wish, first names are expressions that reflect the parents' personal wishes for their children and their perception of their own religious, ethnic, and national identity. The following research results show naming tendencies among the Maronites in Lebanon, though not providing absolute statistical information due to the relatively small number of samples in the research.

Table 1. 5 Maronites - popular names

Male Name* (female form)	Number (%) (female number)	Female Name*	Number (%)
Joseph (Josephine-Josiane)	11 (8.66) (1)	Mary	6 (6.74)
Elias	10 (7.87)	Rose	4 (4.49)
Georges (Georgina)	8 (6.29) (1)	Mirna	4 (4.49)
Toni (Antoinette)	8 (6.29) (1)	Margarita (Rita)	4 (4.49)
Sharbel	7 (5.51)	Helen	3 (3.37)
Maroun	4 (3.14)	Ibtissam	2 (2.24)
Paul (Paula)	4 (3.14) (0)	Therese	2 (2.24)
Peter	3 (2.36)	Maya	2 (2.24)
John (Janette-Hanneh)	3 (2.36) (1)	Yara	2 (2.24)
Michael (Micheline)	3 (2.36) (1)	Lara	2 (2.24)
Marwan	3 (2.36)		
Total	205		

* The same name in various forms are counted as one name. And the representative form appears in the table.

The most popular name in the sample is Joseph in its various forms. There are 11 Josephs among males, and one Josiane, a diminutive form of Josephine, the feminine form of Joseph,

among 205 names which are given by the respondents. In Arabic writing it comes in six different spellings and five different Roman scripts. They are Joseph (written in Arabic as 1 juuzaf, 1 juuzif, and 4 juuziif), Joe (1 juu), and Arabic form of 'yuusuf' (written in Roman as Youssef and Yousseff). There are ten Elijahs, four of whom are written as Elie and six as Iliyas in Arabic. But all of them wrote their names in Roman script as 'Elias.' This name does not have a feminine form. Wardini reports that the name 'Elie' has more variations; Illo, Lillo, Lulu, Lallus, Eliyya, Elyo, Lilo, Lyes.²⁴¹ There are eight Georges among males and one Georgina among females. All eight males wrote their names in Arabic form as 'juurj' but in Roman scripts six wrote 'Georges' as in the French form, one 'George' as in the English form, and one without Roman script. Though the name has an Arabic form, 'Jiryas', which is used in Lebanon no one among the respondents wrote this name in Arabic form. Toni is also popular. There are eight among males and one among females. Various forms both in Arabic and Roman are used. They are Anthony (anTuunyi), Toni (4 Tuunyi), Antoine (anTwaan), Tanyus, and Tani.²⁴² The female form is Antoinette. This name also has various spellings; Toni, Antun, Antwan, Antonyo, Tanyos, Mtanyos, Tannus, and so on.²⁴³

The most recognizably Maronite names, Maron and Sharbil were also found. There were seven Sharbils and four Marouns. Among seven Sharbils, four wrote their names in transliteration as 'Charbel' which shows French influence, and the other three only wrote their names in Arabic. Also three among four Marouns gave their transliteration as 'Maroun' and the other did not write his name in Roman script.²⁴⁴ One Syriac name, Gaby, a diminutive form of Gabriel, was found. It is written in Arabic 'kaaby.'²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Wardini, op.cit., p.86

²⁴² He explained this name as a saint's name. It is taken to be diminutive form of Tanyus or Tannus and counted as an Arabic form name.

²⁴³ Wardini, op.cit., p.86

²⁴⁴ The transliteration of this name in Arabic is 'maaruun'.

²⁴⁵ Also 'Ghaby' is found among people.

Other popular names are also taken from the names of saints or angels. There are four Pauls, all of whom wrote their names in Roman as 'Paul.' In Arabic three of them wrote 'buulus' and the other 'buul.'²⁴⁶ All three Peters wrote their name as 'Pierre' in French form and 'biyaar' in Arabic transliteration. Nobody wrote this name in the Arabic form Butros. Among three Johns two wrote their name as Jean (in Arabic jaan) in French form and the other as Jack (jaak). No Arabic form of the name Yohanna was found. There was one Hanneh, the Arabic female form of this name.²⁴⁷ There are three variations of Michael among the respondents. They are 'miikhail,'²⁴⁸ 'Michel' with the Arabic transliteration of 'miishaal,' and a feminine form Micheline with transliteration of 'miishaliin'. There are two Marks (mark) who did not give Roman scripts of their names, which many Maronites would write as 'Marc' in French form. There are two Danis both of whom wrote their name in Arabic as 'daany.' But in Roman, one wrote his name as 'Dani' and the other as 'Dany.' As this name is a diminutive form of Daniel both in its Arabic and Western forms, it is counted as Arabic in the table 1.6.

Among Arabic names, Marwan (3 persons), Taufiq (2), Ramy (2), and Munir (2) are found more than once.

Female names show more variation in spelling and pronunciation. The most popular name among the respondents is Mary, which came in six cases. Four of them wrote their names in Arabic 'maary.' Among these four, one wrote in Roman as 'Marie' as in the French form, which is often found and another wrote it as 'Mary' as in the English form. The other two did not write it in Roman script. Other forms of Mary were 'Maria' (maariyaa) and 'Marianne' (maariyaan), both in Western forms. But the Arabic form of this name 'Maryam' was not

²⁴⁶ The feminine form of this name Paula was not found in the sample.

²⁴⁷ It is written as Hanneh though it is 'Hannah' to distinguish from a male name Hanna. Western female forms of this name - Janet, Janette, Jane, and Joan - are found among Christians in Lebanon but were not found among the survey respondents.

²⁴⁸ This name was given without transliteration.

found among the respondents. Two of the six cases were first names consisting of two names as in the French style: Marie-Nour and Maria-Lisa. The second most popular name was ‘Mirna,’ which has four cases.²⁴⁹ There were four derivatives of the name Margarita, three of whom were ‘Rita’(s), a diminutive form of Margarita, and the other Margarita. Also, ‘Rose’ was popular (4 persons) but all in different forms; Rosy, Rosarita, Rosella, and Roset. There were two persons named Therese, both in French form. There were three Helens but all in different and not easy-to-recognize forms: Nora, Eileen, and Nelly. Popular female Arabic names are Ibtissam (2 persons) and Yara (2).

It is worth noting that the Saints whose names are often used in naming Maronites seem to correspond to who are most venerated and popular – the Holy family of Mary and Joseph, St. Eliya, and St. George.

Table 1. 6 Maronite names - form²⁵⁰

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Arabic	51 (40.15)	20 (22.47)	71 (32.27)
Maronite	11 (8.66)	0	11 (5)
Other Middle Eastern	1 (0.78)	2 (2.24)	3 (1.36)
Western	55 (43.30)	64 (71.91)	119 (54.09)
No answer	9 (7.08)	3 (3.37)	12 (5.45)
Total	127 (100)	89 (100)	216 (98.18)*

* The total number of participants is 220 among whom 4 could not be gender-identified.

In Table 1.6 given names are categorized into Arabic, Maronite, other Middle Eastern, or Western origins. Biblical or saints’ names are allocated into either Arabic or Western

²⁴⁹ They were all written in the same spelling.

²⁵⁰ To categorize the names, the following references were used: Jaqueline Harrod & Andre Page, *Bumper Books of Babies Names*, Clarion, No publishing year, www.ummah.net/family/fem.html, www.ummah.net/family/masc.html, www.behindthename.com, www.suggestbabynames.com, www.babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com and personal consultation with Maronite and Lebanese persons.

according to their forms. The table shows that a large number of Maronites, more than half of the total number, have names in Western form or Western names. This tendency was stronger among female Maronites. Sixty-five out of eighty-nine female Maronite respondents, or 73 percent, have Western form names while 55 males out of 127, or 43 percent, have Western form names. As seen above, many Maronites have Western names even when their origins are Semitic and Arabic forms are used. These are mainly saints' names. Among fifty-five male names which are in Western form thirty-nine, or 71 percent, have Arabic equivalents. Those names are mainly saints' names such as Elie, Joseph, John, Mark and Anthony. In female cases, however, out of 65 Western form names only 12 - Mary, Martha, Suzan, and Rose – that is 18.46 percent, or 13, or 20 percent, if one insists upon the inclusion of Rahel, could use their Arabic equivalents. Though feminine forms of saints' names such as Stephanie, Joelle, Jacqueline, Micheline, Antoinette, Georgina, Josiane, and Colette are found and most of them are of Semitic origin, their Arabic feminine forms are not available. This leads parents to choose Western names if they want to name their baby girls after saints.

Religiosity in Maronite naming is reflected in the frequency of saints' names. Among 118 male given names at least 70, or 59.32 percent, are taken after saints. On the other hand, female names are less religious, having about 48 non-religious names out of 86 given names or 55.81 percent such as Rosy, and Arlette and pure Arabic names such as Laila and Ibtissam.²⁵¹ While Maronite males have peculiarly Maronite names of Sharbil or Maroun, Maronite females do not. The feminine forms of neither Sharbil nor Maroun were coined, and female Maronite saints' names such as Rafqa and Marina are not widely used. The Syriac name Kaby is also a Christian religious name which is a derivative of the name of angel Gabriel.

²⁵¹ The numbers are not exact since some Western names have obscure origins.

Among the 55 male names in Western form at least 36 are in French. And 28 female names out of 64 Western form names are in French. These French names include pure French names such as Maurice, Roy, Charle, Reine, and Arlette besides French forms of saint names. Also, there are French-style first names of two-name combinations. Marie-Nour, one such name has both French and Arabic components. Elie Wardini points out that this preference for French names often reflects the dominant trend since personal names are sensitive to fashion. But he also notes that nevertheless, in certain cases the choice of the French version is deliberate and an act of asserting one's non-Arab identity.²⁵² This preference for French names often presents the name of the founder of the Maronite Church as "Jean Maroun," not "Yohanna Maroun."

The adoption of French names also brought the French habit of deleting the pronunciation of the last consonant into Arabic transliteration. 'Edmond' is written without the last letter 'd' in Arabic version that becomes 'idmun' and in the same way 'Edward' becomes 'idwar.' In this way, Lebanese Maronites came to possess names with foreign versions as their original names. Therefore more than one Arabic spelling form exists for their names, and even their pronunciations cannot be realized fully in Arabic, their mother tongue.²⁵³ This also related to the Maronites' preference of Western names over Arabic names which helps them distance themselves from Arab identity. The problem of transliteration also occurs in other foreign language names. Interestingly, re-transliteration of Western form names from Semitic names such as Elijah and Joseph results in the same problems.

Non-French Western names were also found. About five are in Italian forms that end with an 'a' in feminine names such as Rosarita, Rosella and Mirella. Others are mainly English

²⁵² Wardini, op.cit., p.70

²⁵³ This is exactly the opposite of other Arabic speaking people who usually experience problems in transliterating their Arabic names into Roman scripts. For Arabic problems in transliteration see Da'ud ibn Auda, for example, <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/names/arabic-naming2.htm>

names such as Anthony, Ronald, Sam, Grace, Suzan, Sandra and Gladys.

The Arabic names were usually religiously neutral especially in feminine names. Wardini says that given that “French names [are] the norm among Christian Lebanese, when Christian parents choose to give their child an Arabic, religiously neutral name, it is usually a deliberate statement on some aspect of social life. Some make such a choice in order to assert their Arab identity. Others do it in order to avoid being readily identified as Christians.”²⁵⁴ Safia Saade reports that prior to the Lebanese civil war in 1975 many of the educated families began choosing purely non-religious Arabic names for their children such as Ghassan, Sami, Bassam, Walid which are used by both Christians and Muslims.²⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that no Phoenician names such as Cadmus, Europa, Hiram, Elissar, or Hannibal²⁵⁶ are found though Phoenicianism was strong among Maronites from its inception.²⁵⁷ As Asher Kaufman pointed out it seems that Phoenicianism had little impact on Lebanese society,²⁵⁸ and no influence on Maronite naming. It might be partly due to the strong pagan meanings that Phoenician names usually contain - Hannibal “the grace of the god Baal,” for example.²⁵⁹ But a few Phoenician exponents gave Phoenician names to their children such as Charle Corm who named his second son Hiram.²⁶⁰

Table 1. 7 Maronite names - perceived

	Male	Female	Total***
Maronite (%) + *	17 (13.38)	6 (6.74)	29 (13.18)

²⁵⁴ Wardini, op.cit., p.70

²⁵⁵ Safia Antoun Saadeh, *The Social Structure of Lebanon: Democracy or Servitude?*, Dar An-Nahar, Beirut, 1993, p.83 in FN.

²⁵⁶ Elissar, Elissa or Helissa in other forms, is the princess of Tyre who sailed to Tunis and founded Carthage. (Tayah, op.cit., p.275) For stories of Elissar, Qadmus, and Europa, see Nina Jidedian, *I love Lebanon*, Vol.II, Imprimerie Catholique sal., Araya, Lebanon, No publishing year, pp.31-33, 39-41.

²⁵⁷ Female name Elisa is found among Maronites, but not among the respondents. It is considered Italian for Elizabeth.(Harrod and Page, op.cit., p.207) Some Phoenician names are used for commercial or school names, Phoenicia and Melkart for example. Europa, Elissa, and Qadmus are found as street names in the city of Tyre.

²⁵⁸ Kaufman, op.cit., p.414

²⁵⁹ <http://babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com/phoenician-names-2.html>

²⁶⁰ Kaufman, op.cit., p.414. But it seems the name Hiram was more used by Jews in the US, though it is much less used nowadays. According to U.S.SSA., its popularity was about 200 on the list in 1880 and decreased to 1000 in 1980.(<http://babynamesworld.parentsconnect.com>)

	+ 4 (3.14) = 21 (16.53)	+ 2 (2.24) = 8 (8.98)	
Christian	44 (34.64) + 11 (8.66) = 55 (43.30)	24 (26.96) + 2 (2.24) = 26 (29.21)	81 (36.81)
Shared**	26 (20.47)	15 (16.85)	41 (18.63)
Western	8 (6.29) + 7 (5.51) = 15 (11.81)	23 (25.84) + 2 (2.24) = 25 (28.08)	40 (18.18)
Other	7 (5.51)	16 (17.97)	23 (10.45)
No answer	14 (11.02)	2 (2.24)	16 (7.27)
Total	138 (108.66)	92 (103.37)	230 (104.54)

* Numbers after + mark means double answers.

** The category “Shared” means names that are found among both Christians and Muslims.

*** Double answers allowed. And the total number of participants is 220 among whom 4 could not be gender-identified.

Table 1.7 shows how the Maronites perceive their names and how this perception does not always correspond to reality. Out of 51 Maronite males who have their names in Arabic form, five answered that their names are Maronite. They are Eliyas, Youssef, Fadi and Najim.²⁶¹ Twelve others answered that they possess Christian names. They are mostly saints’ names such as Boulos, Eliyas, Mikhail, and Tanyus. Other names are Hanna, Milad, and Farid.²⁶² Another 24 out of 51 Arabic name-holders answered that their names are shared both among Christians and Muslims. But this 24 included Dani and Eliyas, which are Christian. Among 16 who answered ‘Other,’ one person specified that his name is ‘Arabic’ leaving an impression that Arabic names among Christians could be something other than Christian or shared by both Christians and Muslims. No one among the 20 female Maronites who have

²⁶¹ Fadi means ‘redeemer’ and Najim means ‘star.’

²⁶² The name Hanna came from Arabic ‘hanun’ which means “compassion.” It is used by Christians. Milad means “nativity.” It is also mostly used by Christians. But Farid which means “unique” does not have Christian connotations.

Arabic names answered their names are Maronite. Dunya, Karima, Yara, and Hanneh answered their names are Christian, despite the fact that only ‘Hanneh’ among them is Christian in origin. Another nine answered that their names are shared.

Among people who answered their names are Maronite, there are Roland, Mark, Anthony, Antoine, Elias, Yousse, Joseph and Roy in addition to Maroun and Sharbil. They are either French names or saint names. One exception was Najim, an Arabic name. But two among the Marouns and Sharbils answered that their names are Christian rather than Maronite. As mentioned above, there is no specific female Maronite name and nobody among female participants answered that their names are Maronite.

There are nine people who possess names in Western form but think their names are used both by Christians and Muslims. They include Christian names such as Eiiya, Rachel, Sam, Nora, Bassel, and Therese. Other shared names in Western form are Maya, Nadine, and Arlette. Sixteen people who have Western form names thought that they had Maronite names.

Out of 64 female Maronites who have names in Western forms, 18, that is 28.12 percent, answered their names are Christian. Among 55 male Maronites who have names in Western forms, four answered their names are Christian besides saint names. They are Robert, two Edwards, and Alain.²⁶³ Nobody with a form of the name Joseph answered that their names are shared with Muslims.

Table 1. 8 Maronite naming

	Male (%) + *	Female	Total**
Grandparents	25 (19.68) + 1 (0.78) = 26 (20.47)	11 (12.35)	37 (16.81)
Relatives	15 (11.81)	10 (11.23)	25 (11.36)
Famous Maronite	10 (7.87) + 1 (0.78)	4 (4.49)	15 (6.81)

²⁶³ It has already been mentioned that Roland and Roy answered that their names are Maronite.

	= 11 (8.66)		
Famous artists	2 (1.57)	2 (2.24)	4 (1.81)
Other	53 (41.73)	47 (52.80)	100 (45.45)
No answer	21 (16.53)	15 (16.85)	36 (16.36)
Total	128 (100.78)	89 (100)	217 (98.63)

** Double answers allowed. And the total number of participants is 220 among whom 4 could not be gender-identified.

Table 1.8 shows how names among the Maronite respondents were chosen. According to this research, male names are more frequently taken after names of grandfather or relatives. John Gulick says that the ideal is to give the grandfather's name to the eldest grandson.²⁶⁴ Sixty-two out of 220, that is 28.18 percent of the respondents, have names taken after their grandparents or relatives. It means the names of relatives comprise a significant naming pool for a given Maronite family. If the naming pattern of taking after famous Maronites' is added, that is 77 persons out of 220 (35 percent), this Maronite naming pool functions as quite a (sectarian) boundary. Wadih Tayah reports that the baby's name is picked from the Old or New Testament, or from the repertory of the local saints, but always in relation to the ancestral lineage.²⁶⁵

It seems that naming a baby after famous actors, singers, or artists is not popular among Maronites. There are only 4 cases, or 1.81 percent, among the respondents. They are Grace, Firyal, Marwan, and Roy. Among whose answers fell into 'the other' category, there is a person whose name was chosen by casting lots, a person who was named after a [parent's] friend, and three others who answered that their names were taken after saint names. One answered that she does not like her name. One interviewee said that the names of Sharbil or Maroun are not fashionable any more. They give the impression that the person with such

²⁶⁴ Gulick, op.cit., p.112

²⁶⁵ Tayah, op.cit., p.269

names is from a village, too religious, and out of date.²⁶⁶ But the average age of Sharbils and Marouns in the sample is 28, not very old.

Gulick also mentions giving names serially to siblings and the concept of siblings as a solid unit.²⁶⁷ This also happens when Western names are given - Maryan, Mark, and Martine, for example. The research confirms Gulick's observation that the names of the men are more conservative and less variable than the names of the women.²⁶⁸ As seen above, male names are largely taken from saints names and taken less from Western names, though these too must be in large numbers in comparison to their Muslim neighbors. Female names are often selected to give a pet-form or cute sound. Out of 86 given female names, 39 end with the 'a' sound. This makes some Western names which are not popular in the West such as Mirna, Lara, Nina and Roula more frequent among the Maronites. These names of foreign origin seem to be settled in Arabic and found among Muslims, too, except Mirna. Among rare names in the sample, there are Sivan (siifaa in Arabic) which is most probably Armenian or Persian in origin and Saba (saabaa) which is a saint's name.

All in all, the Maronite naming trends change in accordance with the shift of languages adopted by the Maronites. Syriac was replaced by Arabic, leaving a couple of names such as Maroun, Sharbil, and Gaby. The Arabization of French names also reflects a larger social trend. Arabic names, especially saints' names, are largely replaced by the French versions of the same names: Tannous or Tanyus by Antoine, Boutros by Pierre, Boulus by Paul, Girgis or Giwargis by Georges, and Mikhail by Michel to name a few. One could easily expect the next trend to be the English versions of names. In this way, the Maronites keep the continuity of tradition of giving saints' names to their children while catching up with new fashion trends

²⁶⁶ From a personal interview with a Maronite family. The interviewee named his baby boy 'Timur' just because it gives a somehow authentic and rare image to him.

²⁶⁷ Gulick, op.cit., p.113. It seems it happens in any culture.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.112 It is also true in American names. (Stanley Lieberson and Eleanor O.Bell, *Children's First Names: An Empirical Study of Social Taste*, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 98, No.3, Nov.1992, p.516)

at the same time.

7. Everyday life

A. Family

Before modern construction was introduced, the Maronite family usually lived in a house built of stone which also housed domestic animals in a stable, or *Mrah* in Arabic, adjoining the home building or simply separated by a wall.²⁶⁹ This house was oriented west to benefit from the sea breeze and from the afternoon sun. It was furnished with *yook*, a closet built into the wall which stored mattresses, a platform stuffed with cushions to seat the guests, and mats covering the ground. Behind a light partition of furniture, wood, or reeds, round trays, or *tabaq*, for feeding silkworms were held. In a corner, a folded mat would hold leavened dough and a bag filled with herbs would be hung. It also normally had a wide terrace. People took off their shoes at the door. This small one-room house also functioned for social gatherings especially during the cold nights of winter.²⁷⁰ Until the end of the nineteenth century, people slept on the floor on sheepskins wrapped in blankets or quilts.²⁷¹

John Gulick reports that the modern tile-roofed house was introduced only between 1890 and 1914 when emigrant Lebanese funded their families in their hometowns. This modern house became a symbol of prestige and wealth. In terms of construction, modern houses with frames marked a radical departure from the old patterns. The modern house usually had a large central salon, or *maq'ad*, and its own cistern.²⁷² Today, in the twenty-first century, Maronites live in apartments or houses with more than one room, with kitchen, electricity,

²⁶⁹ Tayah, op.cit., pp.245, 266

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p.245

²⁷¹ Gulick, op.cit., p.38

²⁷² Ibid., pp.35-37

water, television, satellites, sometimes a landline telephone,²⁷³ and the Internet. Due to the frequent cuts in public electricity after the civil war, nearly all buildings have their own electricity generators or private distribution lines. Also, houses contain water tanks. Limestone is still a favorite building material for finishing the outer layer. Terraces are also an important space for the social life of the family for enjoying chats over coffee or *arghileh* (or *narghileh*, that is water-pipe), as well as barbeques especially on Sundays. Rooms normally serve only as spaces for sleeping while other activities are centered in the salon, or *'udah*, – a shared space. Middle and upper class houses have two salons: one for guests and the other for the family. The salon and the kitchen are enclosed spaces and separated by doors.²⁷⁴ The distribution and use of space also reflects the family-centered life of the Maronites. Brothers or cousins often possess and live in the same apartment building. Even in the most urbanized cities, people usually know and befriend their neighbors.

Lebanon was the first state to modernize in the Middle East. Until the first half of the nineteenth century, both Muslim and Christian women appeared in public in veils and women of higher class in the silver horn-shaped *tuntur*. But the second half of the same century witnessed changes in many aspects of life in Lebanon. The influx of imported goods led to the dwindling of handicrafts. Also the tempo of life itself began to change, affecting especially the *sahra*, or social gathering in the evening.²⁷⁵ According to Tayah, the renaissance of Arab literature in the nineteenth century which came with the spread of printing press also marked the beginning of a secular competition between American and French cultures.²⁷⁶ With modernization, female education also increased and inevitably

²⁷³ In Lebanon, the use of mobile phone is more popular.

²⁷⁴ This enclosure of the living room and kitchen may be due to Islamic influence, which tends to seclude females.

²⁷⁵ Dau, op.cit., pp.681-683

²⁷⁶ Tayah, op.cit., p.211

brought about changes in family life.²⁷⁷ This modernization also accompanied slow changes in clothing. European clothes were considered less convenient and more expensive than the maintenance of traditional costumes such as the *sharwal*, baggy pants for males with lots of gatherings down to the knees and tight below.²⁷⁸ Wearing trousers among females was opposed and considered a sign of female usurpation of male status or of loose morals.²⁷⁹ As schools and students increased, the concept of time began to change because schools operated on a time schedule. Meal times which were not settled before were adjusted according to the school schedule.²⁸⁰

John Gulick says that diet is one of the most conservative and least acculturated aspects of the material culture.²⁸¹ A common diet consists of *Tannoor* (barley bread baked in clay ovens), *Saj* (baked on metal), *kishik* (fermented barley in yogurt), salted olives, vegetables and fruits. Olive oil and fat from lamb, or *qawarma*, are used for cooking. *Kibbe* and meat dishes, such as *Mehshe* were for Sundays and solemn occasions. Various appetizers are called *mezah*, and a distilled alcoholic beverage made of grapes called *'arak* are well-loved.²⁸² The consumption of alcoholic beverages also serves as a marker for Christians in the Middle East in contrast to their Muslim neighbors who are strictly forbidden from it. Nowadays, *man'usheh* purchased from a local furn, or bakery, is usually served as breakfast. Various sandwiches, rolled rather than layered, are consumed as lunch by those who work. Meat consumption is common for weekdays, but Sunday lunch is a typical family meal with a meat dish. Western dishes or fusion dishes are often served among the Maronite families. Consumption of jambon, or pork ham, also functions as a marker for the Christians in

²⁷⁷ Dau, op.cit., p.223

²⁷⁸ These pants were common for mountaineers but have become the typical Druze costume today.

²⁷⁹ Gulick, op.cit., p.44

²⁸⁰ Ibid, p.44

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.43

²⁸² Tayah, op.cit., p.245 John Gulick reports that in a Lebanese Greek Orthodox village in the 1950s, sheep were killed only on Sundays and neither beef nor pork were eaten at that time. (John Gulick, op.cit., p.41)

comparison to their Muslim neighbors for whom eating pork is prohibited.

As urban trading grew into an important profession among the Maronites, replacing traditional agriculture, the emphasis on merchant characteristics of the Phoenicians also increased, replacing the Maronite image of attachment to the land.²⁸³ In research conducted in the middle of the twentieth century, Maronites and other Christians, many of whom were educated, were found unwilling to work on the land and already a significant proportion of their income came from sources other than farming.²⁸⁴ This despising of manual work also produced a custom of having house maids even among those with only moderate income.²⁸⁵ These house maids are usually from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, or Ethiopia. Also, each apartment building employs a *natoor*, or concierge, who is usually from Egypt or Nigeria.

The personal status of a Maronite is within the jurisdiction of the Maronite Spiritual Court, an arrangement parallel to all other religious sects in Lebanon. The religious jurisdiction over personal status in Lebanon is often criticized as a factor contributing to the lack of state control over its citizens. The average number of a traditional Maronite nuclear family used to be about seven until the first half of the twentieth century.²⁸⁶ But the size of Maronite families has decreased due to emigration and low birth rate among Maronite women. Wadih Tayah sees this as wise birth control for living in dignity.²⁸⁷ Kinship terminology of the Maronites is same with other Lebanese. A husband is presented to others as *zawji* by his wife, and a wife as *marati* which literally means “my woman.” But they call each other with many sweet expressions such as *habibi* or *habibti* (my love), *hayati* (my life), *‘umri* (my life), *qalbi* (my heart), *ruhi* (my soul), and so on. “Mama” and “baba” are used for mother and father,

²⁸³ Tayah says that the character of the “Syrian” merchant was the most familiar, though not so popular, and the Romans used the term instead of “Phoenician” because this latter term evoked the memory of Carthage which they were intent on deleting from history. (Tayah, op.cit., p.274)

²⁸⁴ Gulick, op.cit., p.68

²⁸⁵ This attitude is common among Middle Easterners who think manual work “not manly.”

²⁸⁶ Tayah, op.cit., p.245

²⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.303-304

and sometimes French “papa” or “papi” for dad is used. Grandparents are called *jiddu* (grandfather) and *tetta* or *seta* (grandmother). Teknonyms, that is to call parents after a child,²⁸⁸ such as “umm Eli” and “abu Eli” for Eli’s parents for example, functions as the alternative to a kinship term.²⁸⁹ A father-in-law is called ‘amm, which is originally mean a paternal uncle, but only in the vocative. This is an indication of the patrilineal parallel cousin marriage.²⁹⁰ The term ‘ammi, or my uncle, also has an extra-kinship usage in addressing an elder villager. According to Gulick, this connotes the formality of strangeness and distance equally as much as, if not more, respect.²⁹¹ But also, the practice of reciprocal addressing – calling a child “mama” or “baba” by parents, or “tetta” by grandmother, “ammu,” “khalu,” “khalti” by uncle or aunts - is also widely found.²⁹²

When a baby was born a midwife would proclaim “Kyrie Eleison,” which means “Have mercy, oh Lord.” And friends answered “Mbarak ma yakuun,” which means “Blessed is the one who has been given to you.” Birthdays were celebrated on the baptism day or on the eighth day.²⁹³ Nowadays, almost all deliveries of babies happen in hospitals. The doorway of the room in hospital is often decorated with sky-blue and pink balloons in accordance with baby’s sex, or with flower baskets. Guests are served with specially decorated chocolates, candies, and souvenirs to remember the newborn baby. If guests visit baby and mother at home they are usually served with *maghliyah*, kind of rice pudding with pistachio on it. By being given a name, godparents usually drawn from relatives or close friends of the parents

²⁸⁸ *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996, p.1951. It is found among Koreans, Arabs, and some South American Indians.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teknonymy> , <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/673713/teknonymy>

²⁸⁹ Gulick, op.cit., p.113

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p.116

²⁹¹ Ibid., p.117

²⁹² Ibid., p. 119

²⁹³ Tayah, op.cit., pp.268-269

but godmother and godfather should not be a couple, and being baptized and recorded by the church, legal procedures for a baby are completed. Infant baptism is normal among the Maronites from forty days to about two years after the birth. The baptism of a child is at the very least a family party.²⁹⁴ Since Eucharist is not given to a baptized baby, the first communion at the age of seven or after is also celebrated separately symbolizing religious initiation as a full member to the community. Both in baptism and the first communion, a baby or a child gets dressed in their best suit or dress – often white in girl’s case - , and is given gifts and congratulatory words followed by a family meal or party.

Marriages are celebrated traditionally in the week preceding Great Lent. No marriages are celebrated during the “forbidden times”²⁹⁵ such as fast days. The Maronites do not marry their cousins, though there are exceptional cases that need special permission from the church authority. Marriage is forbidden between any person and his or her godparent’s children, between whom a conventionalized siblingship is recognized.²⁹⁶ An account on the marriage of the Maronite mountain-dwellers at the beginning of the twentieth century reports that a bride price was paid.²⁹⁷ Traditionally, the woman may not come into the man’s house until after they are married. The couple received presents. Also, bride and groom were from the same village resulting in endogamy. After a wedding ceremony held in the bride’s home, a procession to the groom’s house and a party followed. This symbolized the adoption of the girl into her husband’s village and family. Weddings were attended only by those who are invited. Feghali describes a mock battle which took place in the Maronite mountain villages during which the groom’s party approached the bride’s house. The bride’s party pretended to

²⁹⁴ Gulick, op.cit., p.81

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.126

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.82

prevent the approach. Gulick also adds that the bride herself is supposed to behave in a sad and subdued manner and must weep before leaving her father's house.²⁹⁸ Later, the tradition of procession gave way to a honeymoon trip. Nowadays, marriage to an outsider is common. Gulick claims that due to the introduction of Western culture, village solidarity has been weakened and this is reflected also in marriage patterns.²⁹⁹ Today, the marriage ceremony takes place in the church to which the groom's family belongs except in cases of civil marriage.³⁰⁰ A liturgical Wedding in church is followed by a party either in the church courtyard or more commonly in a restaurant. Wedding garments are totally Western. Also, the Western wedding custom of the wedding party or best man and bridesmaids is often found in Maronite weddings. The friends of the bride and the groom are those who remain up until the last moment of the party which provides opportunities for matchmaking among them. Traditionally, oriental dance which is often called "belly dance" by Westerners was danced only at weddings. Gulick says that this could have a symbolic meaning connected with the interest in fertility. He also describes a tradition of the bride's tossing a lump of raw dough, or *mahiily* in Arabic, on the lintel of her husband's house as a widespread custom with the implicit meaning of pregnancy.³⁰¹ Gulick found in the 1950s the traditional dance of *dabke*, that is a group line dance, was de-emphasized among Lebanese who considered it out of date. Today *dabke* is considered a folk dance, one of the nostalgic symbols of Lebanon's traditions.

Marriage to a person of another Christian sect is quite common for the Maronites, and even marriages to a Muslim or a foreigner are found. In the case of such mixed marriage, usually the bride changes her sect to the groom's and children belong to the father's sect. To the

²⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.82-83, 87

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.125

³⁰⁰ Couples who do not want to be bound by church laws concerning their marriage can choose civil marriage, whose legal reference is the civil marriage law of the country where the couple married. The rate of civil marriage among the Maronites is not high. In those cases, France and Cyprus are among popular countries to be married.

³⁰¹ Gulick, op.cit., p.88

question “Are there any non-Marionites among your relatives?” 112 persons out of 220 answered “Yes” and gave information on the relationship and sects to which their non-Marionite relatives belong to. Two persons answered “Yes” at first, then erased the answer. One person answered “I do not care” indicating the question on sectarian belonging could be bothersome or sensitive. The most often mentioned sect is the Greek Orthodox (107 cases)³⁰² which is usually denoted just by “Orthodox” or “Ruum.” The next is Greek Catholic (56 cases) which is called casually “Catholic.” Other Christian sects are Syriac Orthodox (4 cases) which is referred as “Suryan,” Protestant (4 cases), Roman Catholic (3 cases) which is called “Latin,” Armenian Catholic (3 cases), Coptic Orthodox (2 cases), Armenian Orthodox (1 case), and Syriac Catholic (1 case). One person answered “various Christian sects.” Among Muslim relatives (30 cases in all), Sunni is the biggest number (15 cases). The Shia (6 cases) and Druze (3 cases) follow. Six other cases are given only as Muslim, called generally “Islam.” There are rare cases of “Jew” and “Buddhist” (one case each) but with indication of distant relationship.

Among the above 112 Maronites who have non-Marionite relatives, 19 answered that their mothers are not Maronites. That is 8.63 percent of the total. Among these 19 non-Marionite mothers, 12 are Greek Orthodox, 5 Greek Catholic, 1 Roman Catholic and 1 Muslim. Besides these 19, at least 8 are converted Maronites through marriage.³⁰³ The Original sect of these converted mothers are Greek Orthodox (4 cases) and Greek Catholic (3 cases). One answered that his mother was Sunni Muslim but converted to Maronitism when she married. This means 12.27 percent of the Maronites who participated in the research have non-Marionite origin mothers. Three answered that their spouses are not Maronites. These non-Marionite

³⁰² One could give more than one case to such a question concerning non-Marionite relatives. Since one does not always remember and give all the information on intermarriage between different sects among one’s relatives, this number is only referential to see the trend, not exact statistics.

³⁰³ This can be recognized when their maternal uncle or maternal grandfather is non-Marionite.

spouses are a Greek Orthodox husband, a Greek Catholic husband, and a Greek Catholic wife. Also, there are female respondents who are originally not Maronite but converted to Maronitism when they married.³⁰⁴ At least two female respondents of non-Maronite origin are from Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic respectively. Since the wife often changes her sectarian belonging to that of her husband upon marriage, a Maronite's married sister can be of a different sect. There are at least eight such cases among the research sample. Four of them became Greek Catholic, two Greek Orthodox, one Syriac Catholic and one Protestant.³⁰⁵ It is interesting that this conversion of females upon marriage results in changes in personal status law they follow. If a female Maronite has a non-Maronite mother, and she converts to another sect upon her marriage, and her sister to yet another, it is only her father and brother who remain Maronites. In the worst case, each member of such family could be under jurisdiction of a different religious court. Among the participants, there is a female Maronite whose mother is Greek Catholic and whose paternal uncle is Greek Orthodox indicating she is originally Greek Orthodox converted to Maronitism upon marriage. Another example is a Maronite whose sisters married and converted to Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox resulting in different sectarian belongings among siblings. There is also a case of a Maronite female's conversion to Islam upon marriage. Then, it can be said that a family's membership of the family to Maronite community depends solely on patriarchal inheritance.

Exogamy among Maronites not only includes spouses from other villages, other Christian sects, and less often Islamic sects. It also extends to foreigners. To the question "Are there any non-Lebanese among your relatives?" Seventy three answered "Yes" and gave

³⁰⁴ This can be recognized when their father or brother is non-Maronite. Tracing these cases is more difficult because sometimes females are less inclined to count their own families as relatives. There are cases that the researcher knows personally where converted Maronites upon marriage do not leave any hint about the fact on the questionnaire.

³⁰⁵ This is a minimum estimation due to lack of exact number of sisters. Some answered "sisters."

information on the nationalities of their non-Lebanese relatives and relationship with them. This is 33.18 percent of the total. Among multiple answers of these 73 persons, France has the biggest number (24 cases), followed by Syria (16 cases), US (10 cases), Australia (10 cases), Germany (7 cases), and Canada (4 cases).³⁰⁶ Also, corresponding to the geographical spread of the Maronites in the diaspora, cases of Spain, Belgium, Swiss, Brazil, Argentina, and Greece are found. It is noteworthy that the Eastern European, or the former Soviet Union countries of Poland, Czech, Russia, Ukraine, and Romania have more cases than Brazil (1 case) which has a large Maronite population. There are 6 cases of Poland, 4 Romania, 3 Czech, 3 Russia, and 2 Ukraine.³⁰⁷ These people of Eastern European and former Soviet Union origins who became relatives to the Maronites are all females reflecting the recent influx of such nationals to Lebanon³⁰⁸ and consequent increase of economic interchange with those countries. Other Middle Eastern countries except Syria are Jordan (2 cases), Morocco (1 case), and Egypt (1 case). There are also rare cases of Moldova, Korea, and China. They are also all females. Interestingly, people who answered this question did not mention their non-Lebanese relatives' sectarian belonging as different, in answer to the former question, implying that the families of foreign spouses do not come to minds, or more likely are not considered, as relatives.

In funerals, according to Tayah, the body is laid on an open bed, called *martabeh*. Traditionally professional mourners are employed. Women do not accompany the dead to the church, but they can visit the tomb in procession on the following Sunday. A memorial liturgy

³⁰⁶ Two answered that their Australian relatives are of Lebanese origin. One answered that the Syrian relative is of Lebanese origin. Also, a French relative can be traced to Lebanese origin. Some perceived this question as question of nationality not origin.

³⁰⁷ But in case of Romania it seems that they are all from the same extended family leading to great exaggeration. Czech and Polish cases also seem to be exaggerated. But the possibility of the exaggeration is only 1 case each which increased by answers from the same family.

³⁰⁸ They usually come to Lebanon employed by night clubs to work as dancers. They obtain artist visas.

is celebrated on the ninth, fifteenth, but mostly on the fortieth day after death. *Marhameh*, which is boiled wheat, is served to people as they leave the church.³⁰⁹ It seems that food is served on the memorial day at home. Maronite inheritance law follows the 1959 unified law for all Christians in Lebanon. Before this unified code, they followed the Ottoman law which allows the ratio of a half for a daughter and one for a son. Under the unified law, sons and daughters inherit the same portion, while the wife inherits the half of the property of the deceased if they do not have any child and a quarter if they do. The next priority goes to the parents of the deceased if they, or one of them, are still alive.³¹⁰ Gulick notes that funeral serves as a rite of intensification by gathering entire villagers and commemorating the deceased. He adds that funeral brings together even people of different religions in an event of common concern, thus easing intersectorian tensions.³¹¹

B. Religiosity

In traditional Maronite villages and families the seasons of the year were closely related to the church calendar, which in turn related to the agricultural cycle. Tayah presents Epiphany, and Lazarus' Saturday in addition to Palm Sunday as children's special days. According to him, at the Epiphany night, people keep doors opened in order to allow Christ to bless the children. And Jesus' role player says "daim daim" symbolizing good health. Mothers make dough fries for children. On Lazarus' Saturday, a day before Palm Sunday, children act out the Lazarus' resurrection:³¹² one lies down while others weep when Jesus' role player says "Lazarus, come out!" and the lying child gets up. Children are awarded with fresh eggs,

³⁰⁹ Tayah, op.cit., p.171

³¹⁰ This information was given by a Maronite lawyer.

³¹¹ Gulick, op.cit., pp.89,92

³¹² John 11:1-44

pastries or cash.³¹³ Palm Sunday which is called *sha'neeneh* is the children's day par excellence. Tayah says its origin drew from ancient spring festivals. Children come to church wearing their best clothes and having decorated candles. Parents decorate candles with fruits and birds' nests as big and beautiful as possible as long as their child can carry it.³¹⁴ Nowadays, beautifully decorated candles with artificial flowers and ribbons are sold at market. Even those Maronites who do not attend mass bring their children in their best clothes. Palm Sunday is one of the most-attended church days after Christmas and Easter. Besides church feasts, Maronite children celebrate St. Barbara's day which falls on December the fourth as their Halloween, visiting neighbors in the evening in Halloween costumes and being rewarded with cash. Also, observation of Halloween on Halloween day is growing popular.

After liturgy on the first day of Lent, the priests draw the sign of the cross on the forehead of each of the participants in the mass. Easter Sunday is celebrated with colorful eggs and homemade cookies called *ma'mool*. In the past, Easter celebration also included an Easter lamb.³¹⁵ Phoenicianists read the continuity between ancient Phoenician religiosity and modern Maronite religious practices – celebration of the transfiguration on the eve of the day at a small chapel in cedar forest in 1948, for example, gathered ten thousand mountain-dwellers. Tayah thinks of this as an “ethnic fair” in which the Maronite Patriarch also participated. People brought their sick children or domestic animals to the chapel invoking the *Baraka*, or blessing.³¹⁶ He also notes that the celebration of the Assumption of Mary on August 15th, which was observed as the *dormition* and Final Victory of the Mother of God in the past, started as the culmination of the rural cycle, when the efforts and toil of the

³¹³ Gulick, op.cit., pp.89,92 However, the researcher did not observe these practices in Beirut.

³¹⁴ Tayah, op.cit., p.270

³¹⁵ Ibid, p.272

³¹⁶ Ibid., p255

peasantry were crowned by the harvest of their labor.³¹⁷

Christmas is the biggest Christian festivity which people from other religions also enjoy as a holiday. For the Maronites and Lebanese Christians in general, decoration of streets and homes in advance of Christmas season is the first task in Christmas celebration. Each municipality puts ornaments in rows on their streets using colored lights and patterns and sets Christmas trees and other seasonal monuments in the public squares. Homes and the entrances of buildings are also decorated with Christmas trees and *magharas*, which mean caves. An interviewee mentioned that the practice of making maghara is not very old. In the past Christians in Lebanon usually only set trees for Christmas but when Christmas became a holiday for everybody, and the Christmas tree appeared in commercial places having lost its Christian connotation, Christians began to add the *maghara* to express and differentiate their Christianity.

The festivities based on the Church calendar not only reinforce Maronite religious identity by commemorating the events but also provide a rhythm for an otherwise monotonous life. As Tayah puts it they function as an opportunity to reaffirm their identity.³¹⁸

However, as seen above, the religiosity of ordinary Maronites does not, and cannot always correspond to official doctrines or regulations. Also, to belong to a religious group does not mean a member of the group is always “religious.” Scholars agree that the measurement of religiosity is difficult because the observation of religious practices such as church attendance cannot represent one’s spirituality.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp.272-273

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.255

³¹⁹ Rodney Stark, *Secularization, R.I.P. – rest in peace*, *Sociology of Religion*, Fall 1999, www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_moSOR/is_3_60/ai_57533381

Table 1. 9 Maronites - self-perceived religiosity

Degree	Not at all	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Definitely	No answer	Total
Number	M 5	M 3	M 11	M 8	M 44	M 19	M 17	M 5	M 112
(%)	(4.46)	(2.68)	(9.82)	(7.14)	(39.29)	(16.96)	(15.18)	(4.46)	(100)
	F 0	F 1	F 11	F 9	F 37	F 15	F 14	F 0	F 87
		(1.15)	(12.64)	(10.34)	(42.53)	(17.24)	(16.09)		(100)
	N 1	N 0	N 3	N 0	N 3	N 0	N 1	N 1	N 9
	(11.11)		(33.33)		(33.33)		(11.11)	(11.11)	(100)
	T 6	T 4	T 25	T 17	T 84	T 34	T 32	T 6	T 208
	(2.88)	(1.92)	(12.02)	(8.17)	(40.38)	(16.35)	(15.38)	(2.88)	(100)

* One person answered that he feels between “Agree” and “Strongly agree.”

Table 1.9 shows the self-perceived religiosity of the Maronites excluding priests and seminary students. The question statement to which the surveyed responded was: “I think I am religious.” Eighty-three respondents, or about 40 percent, agreed. Thirty-four persons answered that they “Strongly agree” and another thirty-two “Definitely agree.” One person answered that he feels between “Agree” and “Strongly agree.” Therefore 150 out of 208 persons, that is 72.11 percent, think they are religious. Seventeen persons answered “Neutral” meaning they do not care, do not know, or feel in the middle. But there are Maronites who do not think they are religious. To the statement “I think I am religious” 25 persons disagreed, 4 strongly disagree, and another 6 denied their religiosity completely. Ironically, this makes 52 Maronites, or 25 percent, saying they are not religious but belong to a religious group. When the answers are given by numerical values of -3 to Not at all, -2 to Strongly disagree, -1 to Disagree, 0 to Neutral, 1 to Agree, 2 to Strongly agree, and 3 to Definitely, the average is 0.94, a little bit less than agree. The numerical average of 12 priests and seminary students is 1.58, which is between agree and strongly agree. Female respondents show a slightly higher average (1.10) than the male’s (0.90), both close to “Agree.”

Table 1. 10 Maronites - church attendance

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Not known (%)	Total (%)
Not at all.	10 (8.93)	2 (2.30)	1 (11.11)	13 (6.25)
Less than 5 times a year.	8 (7.14)	11(12.64)	0	19 (9.13)
Less than once a month.	11 (9.82)	11 (12.64)	1 (11.11)	23 (11.05)
Once or twice a month.	21 (18.75)	20 (22.30)	5 (55.55)	46 (22.11)
Almost every week.	22 (19.64)	23 (26.44)	1 (11.11)	46 (22.11)
Once every week.	30 (26.79)	13 (14.94)	0	43 (20.67)
More than once a week.	10 (8.93)	7 (8.05)	0	17 (8.17)
No answer	0	0	1 (11.11)	1 (0.48)
Total	112 (100)	87 (100)	9 (100)	208 (100)

Table 1.10 shows the frequency of church attendance of the surveyed Maronites. The question was “How many times do you go to church? (except for occasions such as weddings, funeral and baptisms)” The biggest number answered “Once or twice a month” and “Almost every week” (46 each) followed by “once every week” (43 persons). The number of people who go to church more than once a week is seventeen, or 8.17 percent. Thirteen or 6.25 percent of the respondents reported that they go to church “Not at all.” Nineteen respondents go to church “Less than five times a year,” probably meaning they only attend important festive liturgies such as Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter. If numerical values are given to the answers from 1 to 7 – 1 for “Not at all” and 7 for “More than once a week” – the average is 4.49 for the male respondents, 4.36 for female respondents, and total 4.38 which means about once every two weeks. The number of people who answered “Not at all” and “Less than 5 times a year” (32 persons) is close to the number of people who answered they are not religious at all, or strongly disagree to one’s religiousness (35 persons). The average of priests and seminary students, who are expected to observe religious practices more strictly, is of

course 7, more than once a week.

It is common for a Maronite who arrives at church after the liturgy has begun to approach the icon, touch it, and make the sign of the cross on oneself before he or she sits in the pew. Some attend only the communion service, believing the Eucharist to be a blessing.

Table 1. 11 Maronites - fasting

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Not known (%)	Total (%)
No.	46 (41.07)	34 (39.08)	6 (66.66)	86 (41.34)
I fasted from the beginning but later quit. (Fasted less than half the period.)	17 (15.18)	12 (13.79)	0	29 (13.94)
I did not fast from the beginning but later participated. (Fasted less than a half of the period.)	4 (3.57)	1 (1.15)	0	5 (2.40)
I fasted for more than half the period.	9 (8.04)	5 (5.75)	0	14 (6.73)
Yes, I fasted for the full period.	31 (27.68)	34 (39.08)	1 (11.11)	66 (31.73)
Other	3 (2.68)	0	0	3 (1.44)
No answer	2 (1.79)	1 (1.15)	2 (22.22)	5 (2.40)
Total	112 (100)	87 (100)	9 (100)	208 (100)

Table 1.11 shows the observance of the Lent fast in 2008. The given question was “Did you fast during the last Lent?” Out of 208 lay respondents, 86 persons, or 41.34 percent, answered that they did not fast at all. Twenty-nine started but later quit less than half way through the period. Five others did not start but later joined for less than half the period. Another fourteen fasted more than a half of the period but did not complete the fast. Sixty-six persons, or 31.73 percent, fasted for the full period. The result shows that 114 persons, or 54.80 percent participated in the fasting, whether they completed it or not. One respondent answered that she is vegetarian, implying that her usual diet meets the fasting regulations. Among a group

of twelve priests and seminary students, two stated that they did not fast. One of them mentioned that he could not fast due to a health problem. One person answered that he started at first but quit before less than half way through the period. Three answered that they fasted for more than half of the period. Six answered that they completed the fasting.

Table 1. 12 Maronites - prayer

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Not known (%)	Total (%)
Not at all.	10 (8.93)	2 (2.30)	1 (11.11)	13 (6.25)
Less than once a month.	4 (3.57)	7 (8.05)	0	11 (5.28)
Less than once a week.	9 (8.04)	3 (3.45)	0	12 (5.76)
Once every week.	13 (11.61)	8 (9.20)	4 (44.44)	25 (12.01)
Almost every day.	33 (29.46)	37 (42.53)	0	70 (33.65)
Once every day.	27 (24.11)	20 (22.99)	0	47 (22.59)
More than once a day.	13 (11.61)	7 (8.05)	2 (22.22)	22 (10.57)
Other	3 (2.68)	2 (2.30)	0	5 (2.40)
No answer	0	1 (1.15)	2 (22.22)	3 (1.44)
Total	112 (100)	87 (100)	9 (100)	208 (100)

Table 1.12 shows how many times the Maronites pray. The biggest number (70 or about one third) answered that they pray almost every day. Forty-seven answered that they pray once a day. Twenty-two respondents answered that they pray more than once a day. Thirteen answered that they never pray. One person mentioned that it depends on what kind of prayer the question means and that he speaks with God every day.³²⁰ If numerical values are given to the answers from 1 to 7, the average is 4.60 for the male respondents, 4.72 for the female respondents, and 4.60 for total, which is between “Once every week” and “Almost every day.” The average of the priests and seminary students is 6.83, which is close to “More than once a

³²⁰ This person answered he is not religious at all to the religiosity question.

day.”³²¹ The average of prayer practice among the Maronites is much less than the regulated practice of the church’s divine office which is seven times a day.

8. Migration

One of the distinctive features of Lebanon is that its population abroad is bigger than that of its homeland. Among those Lebanese who live abroad, the Maronites were the pioneers of emigration from their Mount Lebanon hinterland. The first en masse Maronite migration was during Muhammad Ali’s reign (1830s) to the Nile Valley in Egypt.³²² Especially under Khedive Ismail (1863-79), Maronites who were educated in the European system in Beirut were recruited to help modernize the administration.³²³

Tayah attributes the main reason behind the massive emigration in the 1880s to the overpopulation of Mount Lebanon. Three epidemic waves of cholera between 1840 and 1875 forced people in Beirut to flee to the mountain, which added more pressure to the already overpopulated area. Moreover, the new Mutassarfiyah arrangement after the 1860 events detached it from farming land, which led to a scarcity of resources.³²⁴ This massive migration resulted in decrease of population in the mountain by one-fourth, or 100,000 between the years 1900 and 1914.³²⁵ Yoakim Mubarak divides this on-going emigration into five waves attributable to the nineteenth century Maronite massacre, the First World War and famine, the Second World War, economic development projects in the 1950s and the 1960s, and the aftermath of the 1975 civil war.³²⁶ McKay adds more reasons for the diaspora in which a combination of factors worked together: Turkish oppression, 1860s incidents, an

³²¹ The average for the priests and seminary students could be different if the answers had an option to write how many times a day. The questionnaire was designed for the ordinary people.

³²² Tayah, op.cit., p.277

³²³ Dau, op.cit., pp.682, 685

³²⁴ Tayah, op.cit., pp.277-280

³²⁵ Dau, op.cit., p.685

³²⁶ Dagher, op.cit., pp.82-83

exploitive feudal system, the influence of foreign missionaries who encouraged and assisted converts to pursue their studies abroad, a depressed economy after the opening of the Suez canal in 1869 which undermined Lebanon's silk industry, population increase and reports of early emigrants which attracted people.³²⁷

Tayah argues that in the first phase of the migration (1864-1900) villagers tended to choose their destination depending on the availability of a ship. A story of the migrant who intended to go to New York and discovered that he was in Australia only two years after his arrival because the shipping agent in Marseille put him on the wrong boat is well known,³²⁸ though some regard it as an apocryphal tale.³²⁹ The next phase (1900-1915), according to Tayah, revealed a more conscious and orderly pattern of migration: the would-be emigrants were supplied by funds against the mortgaging of their properties and the travel and emigration agents mobilized the youth from the mountain villages. Moreover, most of the male émigrés who left single returned to choose a wife, and often displayed their wealth by building the *hara*, or manor, in modern style, which all in all attracted villagers to migration³³⁰ to “pick up gold in the streets.”³³¹ The US quota laws in the 1920s slowed down the migration, but World War II which produced large scale unemployment among city employees and technicians resulted in a new pattern of migration: what was formerly from the mountain villages was now from the cities. In the fifties and the sixties of the last century, states in the Gulf added their names to the Americas, Oceania, and West Africa as Maronite overseas destinations.³³²

It is noteworthy that the first generation of Lebanese migrants in general succeeded in

³²⁷ McKay, Jim, *Phoenician Farewell: Three Generations of Lebanese Christians in Australia*, Ashwood House Academic, Melbourne, 1989, p.30

³²⁸ Tayah, p.280, Dau, p.686

³²⁹ McKay, op.cit., p.34

³³⁰ Tayah, op.cit., pp.282-283

³³¹ McKay, op.cit., p.30

³³² Tayah, op.cit., pp.283-284

terms of occupation and material fortune. Usually they started as peddlers selling cheap items, which later became a family concern by expanding and converting into a specialized business such as clothing or hardware. The very next generation would have more urban-based intellectuals and politicians.³³³ Kayal and Kayal summarize this success among Lebanese diasporas as follows:

Unlike other immigrant groups who had to wait two or three generations to exert their independence from ghetto life and to satisfy their desire for mobility, it was the first generation who amassed the wealth that their sons used as a lever for bringing themselves into wider contacts with society.³³⁴

Also, McKay reasons that they chose to be peddlers in Australia as they quickly discovered that their lack of occupational skills, inability to speak English, and physical appearance made them unwelcome. Meanwhile, peddling required relatively less in the way of capital, specific skills or English, thus posing less of a threat to the labor market, in addition to the fact that it was not manual work which they traditionally have despised. It could also lead to a small business.³³⁵

They did not live in the same villages, for economic reasons. There was an unwritten economic law that they would not open up a business in the same place as another Syrian [Lebanese] unless the town could clearly support two businesses.³³⁶ It was only in the 1920s, in the Australian case, that Lebanese émigrés moved to Sydney for their children's education in the city while maintaining family unity.³³⁷ This fast success is often attributed to their versatility and adaptability.³³⁸

³³³ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.289, McKay, *op.cit.*, p.44

³³⁴ McKay, *ibid.*, p.47

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.41

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.44

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

Descendents of Lebanese émigrés in the 1970s also attribute the success of their ancestors to the qualities of ambition, thrift and hard work in addition to a natural trading instinct, and natural intelligence or shrewdness,³³⁹ hinting at the influence of Phoenicianism on the self-image of Lebanese descendents by their mention of the “natural trading instinct and intelligence” which are the most-frequently mentioned characteristics of the Phoenicians. Philip Hitti mentioned earlier that the Lebanese diasporas accepted the obligations and responsibilities of the land of adoption.³⁴⁰ Unlike other Asian migrants in Australia whose main purpose for staying was temporary to make money and return back to their countries, Lebanese men usually brought their wives and families over as soon as possible to settle down, resulting in the balanced sex ratio among them. According to McKay, this helped them to be looked upon more favorably by the host country.³⁴¹

An interesting phenomenon concerning Lebanese migration is chain migration. In Ghazir, for example, when an émigré from Cuba built a *hara*, or manor, many more decided to head for Cuba.³⁴² Also, in Redfern, Australia, all Maronites from Kfarsghab turned to be the Lahoods, the Hannas, or Khoodis who came on the basis of their village ties. Usually these village ties, often clan ties at the same time, supported the new arrivals by handing on occupational know-how and providing jobs and lodgings until they became financially independent enough.³⁴³

Nevertheless, these Lebanese émigrés did not call themselves nor were called by others “Lebanese” from the beginning. Rather, they identified themselves in accordance with their village origins or sectarian belongings such as Maronites from Kisrwan. This is more than natural considering that Lebanon became a state name only after 1920. But in their lands of

³³⁹ Ibid., p.95

³⁴⁰ Tayah, op.cit., p.282

³⁴¹ McKay, op.cit., p.32

³⁴² Tayah, op.cit., p.283

³⁴³ McKay, op.cit., p.42

emigration they had to answer the question “What are you?”³⁴⁴ They were called “Syrians” or “Turcos” in the US in the early period,³⁴⁵ but distinguished from “Arabs” by 1910. They made use of the Phoenician claim in support of this differentiation.³⁴⁶ Concerning this non-usage of self-appellation among Lebanese migrants to the US, Nihirny and Fishman scornfully criticize immigrants in general, without considering different concepts and importance of belonging in different societies, that immigrants are ignorant of their nation and do not have national awareness until after settlement when immigrants acknowledge the way in which immigrants were categorized by Americans.³⁴⁷ In Australia, Lebanese immigrants were categorized under “Turkey,” “other countries in Asia,” or “other” without specifically designating Lebanese identity until 1954.³⁴⁸ McKay reports that though the development of a Lebanese identity had some impact during the 1920s, it was not until after the World War II that the term “Lebanese” finally supplanted “Syrian.” The independence of the country in 1943 accelerated the use of the term “Lebanese” and the descendants of Lebanese immigrants in Australia who served in the army during the war returned designating themselves “Lebanese.”³⁴⁹ It is safe to say that the de facto existence of a political entity led to and justified the usage of its name as self-identity.

Dagher points out that the political role of the Lebanese émigrés was a myth, entertained by Lebanese leaders for political purposes. Yet their economic contribution cannot be denied, neither can their cultural role be ignored.³⁵⁰ When the Lebanese civil war broke out, Lebanese émigrés who were already settled were not only embarrassed by the war but also

³⁴⁴ Dau, *op.cit.*, p.687

³⁴⁵ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.284

³⁴⁶ Kaufman (2000), *op.cit.*, pp.145-154. See Chapter 2.3.

³⁴⁷ McKay, *op.cit.*, p.29

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.33

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.75

³⁵⁰ Dagher, *op.cit.*, pp.81-82. She adds that these roles demonstrate the different situations of Muslims and Christian communities abroad, but does not give details.

resentful of, and even hostile to, the refugees from their country of origin. And they started to distinguish between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Lebanese.³⁵¹ The experiences of the ‘old’ Lebanese in Lebanon are considered as classic illustrations of primordialism,³⁵² and often nostalgic. While the ‘old’ Lebanese were integrated into the host country to the extent that Hitti expressed as “a man without a country par excellence,”³⁵³ the ‘new’ Lebanese leave behind their families and keep in close touch with the homeland.³⁵⁴ As a matter of course, it is also only these ‘new’ Lebanese who have any interest in issues of the status of Lebanese in diaspora society or the current situation of Lebanon.³⁵⁵ Yet, such interest has not reached the point where this has raised any ethno-nationalistic sentiments or any primordial resurgence.³⁵⁶ McKay thinks this rare display of a sense of national identity among Lebanese émigrés is due to their belonging to different sects which function more often to divide than to unite.³⁵⁷

Maronite and Lebanese emigration is an on-going event that influences Lebanese demography. People count economic hardship and uncertainty in Lebanon as the main reasons for leaving. In a piece of research that *As-Safir*, a Lebanese daily newspaper, conducted in 1998, 31.7 percent of Lebanese answered that the solution to the economic problems they were facing lies in emigrating.³⁵⁸ Tayah calls the Christian, especially Maronite emigration a ‘self-exile’ due to factors such as demographic growth, cultural advancement, social liberation, and an aspiration for a democratic system of equality and

³⁵¹ McKay, op.cit., p.83

³⁵² Ibid., p.84

³⁵³ Ibid., p.29

³⁵⁴ Tayah, op.cit., p.284

³⁵⁵ McKay, op.cit., p.91

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.99, 105

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p.48, 54

³⁵⁸ Dagher, op.cit., p.76

freedom.³⁵⁹ Dagher notes that Lebanese Christians in general leave the country for good, while Muslims, especially Shiite émigrés return home, which in turn contributes to the demographic unbalance between Christians and Muslims in addition to the difference in natural population growth rates.³⁶⁰

For the Maronites, Catholic churches in the host countries helped in their integration into the host societies. At the same time, however, many Maronites in such circumstances abandoned the Maronite church and practiced their religious lives in Latin, or Roman Catholic, churches.³⁶¹ Yet, this was not just because they ‘abandoned’ their mother church and its practices and ‘opted’ for the other for the sake of integration. Rather, more exactly, it was mainly because the Maronites, and also other Eastern Catholics, overseas were under the jurisdiction of the Latin Ordinaries until 1966,³⁶² that is after the Vatican II (1962-1965) which acknowledged the peculiarities of the Eastern Catholic traditions. The Maronite Seminary in the US was established in 1961. Maronite dioceses have been established in the US and Australia. And now the Maronites have US born clergy, a fact that Tayah excitedly calls a transition from the “ethnic” stage to the “ecclesial” state of the Maronite Church. But at the same time he also notices that the third generation leave their church and look for a Roman Catholic Church as the means to secure complete integration.³⁶³ Maronites who are willingly integrated into the host society tend to view their Orthodox compatriots in the diaspora who keep their ethnic church practices as unwilling to mix, integrate, or assimilate

³⁵⁹ Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.282

³⁶⁰ See Dagher, *op.cit.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.82

³⁶² Tayah, *op.cit.*, p.290

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.290-291. The researcher’s personal visit confirmed that it is an expatriate ethnic church, rather than ecclesial, which attracts even non-Maronites. I met a non-Maronite AngloSaxon Catholic lady who used to attend a Maronite cathedral in suburban Los Angeles. She said she was attracted to the beautiful altar in the church and attends fairly regularly. But she said she was still an outsider. Visitation and interview were conducted in August 2003.

into the host society.³⁶⁴

In a piece of research on Lebanese émigrés in Australia conducted by McKay, the rate of baptism of Maronite babies born in Australia in the Maronite churches reflects this abandoning of their mother church. It was 19 percent among the second generation émigrés and only 7 percent among the third generation. All the rest of the Australian-born Maronites were baptized in the Roman Catholic churches.³⁶⁵ When asked the reason for not attending their ethnic church, Maronites answered that: they did not know the Arabic language; Maronite church was their parents' tradition; they had not been there before; the Maronite church was usually small and located at a distance; or, more importantly, because they did not think there was any difference between Catholic churches.³⁶⁶ As overseas born Maronites do not attend ethnic schools or Maronite churches, the Arabic language is disappearing and their ethnic church where Arabic is preserved has become superfluous to the religious life of the second generation.³⁶⁷ As an effort to support the new generation and to ease this linguistic barrier, not only in Arabic but also in Syriac liturgical expressions, bilingual liturgical booklets are offered in the churches and some expressions are transliterated into Latin script so that new generations can read them. Also, liturgy in English is practiced.³⁶⁸

McKay also observed a gradual decline of endogamy among Maronites. But, interestingly, this rate of decline endogamy among the Maronite émigrés is even higher than that of other Lebanese groups. It recorded at 91 percent among the first generation, 70 percent among the

³⁶⁴ McKay, op.cit., p.56

³⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.49-51. Compared to the Maronites, Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox, especially Orthodox adherents, in Australia baptize their babies in their ethnic churches to a far greater rate. The situation could be different in other countries.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.52

³⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.51, 57

³⁶⁸ From the researcher's personal visitation 2003, also overseas Maronite church websites, for example,

<http://www.stmaron.org/addr.html>

second generation and 49 percent among the third generation.³⁶⁹ It is also this family factor that causes the second and third generation individuals to feel Lebanese even though they cannot speak Arabic or have never been to the Maronite church. They think that Lebanese spontaneity, intimacy, and warmth distinguish them from the host culture. Their recreational activities are also often family-based, their businesses are run by the *entire* family and, unlike individualistic Western culture, they feel it is important for their children not to become independent too quickly. Khoury points out that this family solidarity is often wrongly interpreted as national solidarity.³⁷⁰

To be integrated or not and to what degree to be integrated, if at all, are critical issues that all émigrés face. Tayah rightly raises the question “How could they be loyal to America [or to any other migrated country], while keeping their loyalty to their Maronite heritage?”³⁷¹ Dau describes two Lebanons: Lebanon the resident (*al-muqim*) and Lebanon the emigrant (*al-mughtarib*).³⁷² The following legend well-illustrates the ironic reality of emigration.

A Maronite legend told by Father Michel Hayek speaks of two twin semi-gods, Hafroun and Nafroun, born on a mountain peak near Ehmej village, north of Lebanon. Hafroun, as his name indicates (hafar) digs the soil in order to cultivate it, but he ultimately dies of hunger and cold on his unfertile rock. His brother, Nafroun, as his name suggests (nafar), goes far away, seeking fortune overseas. The ocean carries him away to unknown lands and he cannot find his way back. “All the history of the Maronites’ relation with their land is condensed in this legend,” says Hayek. “On the land of gods, there are the Hafrouns, those who cling to their mountain and work hard to make a living there, despite the elements and men’s hostility. And there are the Nafrouns, those émigrés who ventured beyond the seas. The challenge of the Maronites is to contradict myth by reality, to break fatality so that the Hafrouns, those who stayed, don’t die out of misery in their mountain villages, and the Nafrouns, those who

³⁶⁹ McKay, op.cit., pp.52-53

³⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.65-69. Emphasis is McKay’s.

³⁷¹ Tayah, op.cit., p.291

³⁷² Dau, op.cit., p.687

emigrated, don't lose the memory of their fatherland in the anonymity of the world.”³⁷³

But it seems there are Nafrouns who remember and come back to their homeland these days. Table 1.13 shows how many Maronites in Lebanon have experience of living overseas. The question was “Have you ever lived abroad? If yes, how long did you live abroad? If yes, which country did you live in?”

Table 1. 13 Maronites - overseas experiences

Answer	Number (%)
No	137 (62.27)
Less than 6 months.	23 (10.45)
Between 6 months and 1 year.	10 (4.54)
Between 1 year and 5 years.	20 (9.09)
Between 5 years and 10 years.	8 (3.63)
More than 10 years.	13 (5.90)
Other.	5 (2.27)
No answer.	4 (1.81)
Total	220 (100)

Out of 220 respondents 137, or 62.27 percent, answered that they had never lived abroad.³⁷⁴ Five whose answers fall in the “Other” category includes three persons who answered “Yes” but did not give more details, one who answered that she was born in Australia, and the other who answered that she had lived in Canada without information about duration. This makes 79 out of 220, or 35.9 percent who have lived abroad. Even when the duration of less than six months is considered as travel rather than living and excluded from the answer “Yes,” there are still 56 people, or 25.45 percent. This means about a quarter of the Maronites population

³⁷³ Dagher, op.cit., p.215-216

³⁷⁴ Since the question includes an open-ended detail which some respondents did not want to be bothered by, the result may contain more “No” answers than in reality.

themselves have lived abroad and came back. People who lived abroad more than ten years, which can be interpreted as returnees from the emigration, also comprise about six percent. If the number of people who lived abroad between five to ten years is added, it is about ten percent of the total. When these were personally approached for questions concerning Maronite issues, they answered that they were not typical Maronites or Lebanese and so could not properly represent Maronite ideas since they had lived abroad. Their reaction leaves an impression that to be a typical Maronite means to be from Mount Lebanon and not to have left the homeland. But these Maronites who have long experiences of living overseas and consider themselves not typical Maronites could be called a different type of typical Maronites in the twenty first century.

Table 1. 14 Maronites - overseas countries

Duration	Country (frequency)
Less than 6 months	France (9), Cyprus (4), Australia (3), Dubai (2), Syria (2), Italy (2), Africa* (2), US, Belgium, Swiss, Brazil, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, China, Korea (1 case each)
Between 6 months and 1 year	France (4), Canada (2), Brazil, US, Germany, Jordan, Saudi, Egypt, Syria (1 case each)
Between 1 year and 5 years	France (9), UAE (4), Germany (2), Cyprus (2), Egypt (2), Saudi (2), Africa, Australia, Canada, Jordan, Qatar, Syria, UK, Ukraine, Europe**, Rome, Korea*** (1 case each)
Between 5 years and 10 years	Ghana, Australia, France, Poland, Canada, Venezuela, Thai (1 case each)
More than 10 years	Saudi (4), France (3), Australia (2), Kuwait (2), US (2), UAE, China, Canada, Mexico, Syria (1 case each), other****(1)

* Respondents tend to describe African countries as Africa without giving specific names but give great detail in the case of UAE as Dubai or Abu Dhabi, or even giving a state name in case of US.

** The respondent did not give specific name.

*** The frequency of Korea is exaggerated in the questionnaire survey result because there are two Lebanese Korean respondents. Mixed marriage between Lebanese Maronites and Koreans is very rare.

**** One respondent answered that he had lived in Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan.

As seen in the above table 1.14, the answers of respondents who stayed abroad less than six

months gave most varied names of countries. It seems that some of them counted travel as living experience.³⁷⁵ Their overseas experiences are in France, Cyprus, Australia, Dubai, Syria, Italy, Africa, US, Belgium, Switzerland, Brazil, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and China. Countries where respondents stayed between six months and one year are mainly where many Maronite emigrants live such as France, Canada, Brazil, US, and Germany, and the Middle Eastern countries. Countries where the stay was between one year and five years include more Gulf States, France, UAE, Germany, Cyprus, Egypt, Saudi, Africa, Australia, Canada, Jordan, Qatar, Syria, UK, Ukraine, Europe, Rome, and Korea. Countries where respondents lived between five years and ten years are Ghana, Australia, France, Poland, Canada, Venezuela, and interestingly Thailand.³⁷⁶ Thirteen respondents have lived in Saudi, France, Australia, Kuwait, US, China, Canada, Mexico, and Syria more than ten years and came back to Lebanon. Many gave multiple names of countries meaning that living abroad does not always correspond to settling in one country in the place of Lebanon. France is the country where Maronites abroad most frequently lived, with 26 cases. The next is Australia (8 cases), a longstanding Maronite destination for emigration. It is followed by UAE which has seven cases. This has a higher frequency than Canada (6 cases) or the US (4 cases). A high frequency of the Gulf States of UAE, Saudi Arabia (7 cases), Kuwait (2 cases), and Qatar (1 case) reflects a large number of Maronites, either migrant workers or settled émigrés, in the region. Another high number is found for Cyprus (6 cases), a close Mediterranean country where Maronite presence has a long history. It seems that Maronite emigrants who leave for Brazil or Australia rarely come back to Lebanon.

The next questionnaire survey question was “Do any of your family members live abroad now? If yes, what is their relationship to you? Which country does he/she live?” Out of 220

³⁷⁵ One respondent mentioned that it was an one-week trip, and another ‘many countries in Europe’.

³⁷⁶ One respondent out of eight in this category did not give the name of country he/she lived.

respondents 124, or 56.36 percent, answered “Yes.” Among these 124 respondents, 63 persons, or 28.63 percent of the total, have their nuclear family members abroad such as parents, children, siblings, and in two cases even spouses. The boundary of family, *‘aila* in Arabic, for the Maronites also generally includes grandparents, grandchildren, uncle, aunt and cousins.³⁷⁷ Three respondents answered that their friends were abroad. The frequency (or number) could not be counted exactly since many gave a relationship such as “my uncle and his family.” A rough estimation by giving “family” double count shows US (59 cases), France (58 cases), Australia (51 cases), and Canada (36), which are traditionally perceived as countries which have large Maronite population, the highest number. Also, the Gulf States show a large number: Saudi Arabic (20 cases), UAE (20 cases), Kuwait (11 cases), Qatar (9 cases), Bahrain (2 cases), and Oman (1 case). Other Middle Eastern countries are found but in small numbers: Cyprus (2 cases), Egypt, Syria and Jordan (1 case each). European countries also have quite a number of the Maronite population: Germany (12 cases), Sweden (6 cases), Belgium (5 cases), Spain (3 cases), Switzerland (3 cases), Ireland (2 cases), Denmark (1 case), and Luxemburg (1 case). Other Eastern European countries including Russia also have their entries: Russia (2 cases), Poland, Romania, Czech Republic (1 case each). But South American countries such as Brazil, which people used to say had more of the Lebanese population than Lebanon, are not found in many cases among the respondents. There are five cases for Brazil, two cases for Argentina, and one case for Venezuela and Panama in addition to a vague answer of “South American countries.” On the other hand, African countries are more often mentioned, though in many cases people just gave “Africa” instead of specific names: Africa (5 cases), South Africa (2 cases), Ghana (2 cases), and Cote d’Ivoire (2 cases). Other countries are Mexico, Thailand and Korea.

³⁷⁷ See Section 7. Of this chapter: Everyday life.

Despite the fact that Egypt was the first destination for the first wave of Maronite migration, it seems it does not have a large Maronite immigrant community today. As many of the first immigrants to Egypt were elites who worked in the Egyptian administration, they came back to Lebanon when Lebanon became an independent state, to run the country.³⁷⁸ Also, the Maronite population abroad extends its presence to countries in Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, and even to odd Asian countries. Answers that include “somebody and his/her family” are especially often found for France, US, Australia and Canada. Also Germany, South Africa, Belgium, and Argentina have “family” units. This indirectly reflects that the Gulf States have Maronites who stay temporarily for work rather than to settle and integrate.

In summary, at least a quarter of the Maronites in Lebanon have lived overseas in person, and more than half of them have close relatives living abroad. One respondent, for example, has lived in Germany (between one year and five years) and his paternal and maternal uncles and cousins live in Australia, US, Brazil, Abu Dhabi, and Spain. Another respondent has lived in Saudi Arabia for more than ten years and his mother and siblings are in the US while his father is in Saudi Arabia. Another respondent, though he has never lived abroad, has cousins, a brother, and a sister-in-law in France, US, Kuwait, and Canada. Another similar case is a respondent who has never lived outside Lebanon but has uncles, aunts, and cousins in Mexico, Sweden, Australia, Abu Dhabi, and US, all in different continents. One interesting point to note is that though Maronites have large numbers of non-Lebanese spouses,³⁷⁹ which naturally make for non-Lebanese in-laws, it seems they do not count these foreign in-laws as their family overseas while Lebanese in-laws abroad are frequently mentioned as such.

³⁷⁸ See Chapter 2 of this Part

³⁷⁹ see section 7. Every day life of this chapter.

Concerning the decreasing number of Christians in Lebanon and the Middle East, Dagher claims that “it is up to Muslims today to preserve a Christian presence” in the region, and the Christians’ departure is a signal that Islamic civilization is not able to nurture pluralism and conviviality any more. And she presents Christian emigration as a barometer to measure the health of Islamic civilization.³⁸⁰ Yet, it seems her claim reveals a Christian weakness that desires survival like a guttering candle.

9. Network and Mass media

Though belonging to the Maronite Church makes people by definition “Maronite,” it has not been always the Church which leads the Maronites in all aspects of their secular community life. It was feudal lords who functioned as political leaders in the past. In the modern state of Lebanon, these traditional leaders and new entrepreneurs became leaders of political institutions such as political parties and other organizations. Today’s existing Maronite political institutions were mainly formed in reaction to the increasing arming of Palestinians in Lebanon after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. Christians regarded this as Muslim arming and organized themselves also into militias. This led to the appearance of the Lebanese Resistance Movement, or *Tanzim* in Arabic, Guardians of the Cedars, Lebanese Nationalist Front, Maronite Monk Orders, the Maronite League and so on.³⁸¹

At the very beginning of the twenty first century, Maronite political opinion is divided into two major camps of Samir Geagea and Michel Aoun, and expressed through various political parties which are generally leader-centered.

The oldest Maronite political party of *Kataeb* was founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel modeled after Spanish and Italian Fascist parties, hence the name Phalange Party. It is

³⁸⁰ Dagher, op.cit., pp.74-75

³⁸¹ Phares, op.cit., pp.104-105

officially secular but its members are mostly Maronites and it is considered a Maronite party. It was co-founded by Charle Helou, George Niccasse, Shafic Nssif, and Emile Yared, yet it was centered on and led by a charismatic leader Pierre Gemayel. It is dedicated to Lebanese nationalism with the motto of “God, Nation and Family” and has pursued federalism. It was a strong supporter of the government during the 1958 crisis and had the most powerful militias during the Lebanese civil war. After the death of Bashir Gemayel in 1982 and Pierre Gemayel in 1984, the party’s leadership entered a period of decline and rivalry. Amin Gemayel, the former leader and the former president of Lebanon regained the leadership in 2005.³⁸²

Lebanese Forces was organized under Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun in 1976 to meet the need for coordinating various Christian militias under a joint command in the Tel al-Za’atar campaign which was one of the crucial battles in the war.³⁸³ It was a collaboration between the Phalange, Ahrar, Al-Tanzim, Marada and Guardians of the Cedars under by young and strong leadership of Bashir Gemayel against the alliance of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It behaved virtually like an independent organization. But the Franjeh family massacre in Ehden in 1978 collapsed the alliance. The Unification of the Rifle campaign launched in 1980 also increased Christian-Christian enmity. The Lebanese Forces also had to face internal power struggles. Samir Geagea emerged as its leader in the eighties. During the two government period (1988-1990), he supported Aoun’s Liberation War at first. But when Geagea agreed to the Taif Agreement and Aoun did not, fierce fighting broke out between the two, a conflict known as the Elimination War in 1990. The Lebanese Forces leader Geagea was arrested on an accusation of war crimes and the party was banned in 1994. After the so-called Cedar Revolution in 2005 which drove out the Syrian presence in

³⁸² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kataeb_Party

³⁸³ Lewis Snider, “The Lebanese Forces: Wartime Origins and Political Significance”, in Edward E. Azar et al. (ed.), *The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984, p.127

Lebanon, the party became legal and its leader was also released from jail and came back to his position.³⁸⁴

It is interesting that Lebanese Forces followers consistently supported him while he was in prison and his wife succeeded to his political role. He is called *hakim* meaning a doctor as he was a medical school student though he did not complete the program.

The Free Patriotic Movement is known also as Aounist Movement. Its leader Michel Aoun was the chief of the Lebanese Army and the transitory Prime Minister during the two government period. He was self-exiled in France when the Syrian army besieged the Presidential Palace at the end of the civil war. The party was founded in 2003 and became a political party officially in 2005. Though he was exiled because of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, when he came back from his exile, he signed a memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah, a Syrian alliance, in 2006 and formed the opposition. The Free Patriotic Movement is also officially secular but its supporters are mainly Maronites and it is considered a Maronite party. It launched its TV station Orange TV in 2007 and radio Sawt al-Mada, or Voice of Scope, in 2009.³⁸⁵ His supporters continued to support him while he was in exile and mobilized again with ease when he came back. The party's website homepage shows the leader-centered tendency very clearly. And he is called "general."³⁸⁶ War time hostility between Geagea and Aoun and their followers also came back after their return to the Lebanese political scene.³⁸⁷

Another Maronite political party, the Marada Movement, is based in Zgharta, its leader Franjiyeh's hometown. This was a militia called the Marada Brigade during the civil war and

³⁸⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanese_Forces

³⁸⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Patriotic_Movement

³⁸⁶ www.tayyar.org, www.tayyar.org/Tayyar/FPMParty/CharterNLogo for example.

³⁸⁷ See for example, www.geocities.com/Pentagon/2389 This site calls itself the Lebanese Patriotic Website. There is a running cartoon figure urinating on the Lebanese Forces logo with a sentence beside it "Enjoy it again."

also known as the Zgharta Liberation Army. It took its name from the Christian army Marada from Maronite history. Its alliance with the Kataeb has been broken since Tony Franjyeh's assassination in 1978. After 2005 it became the pro-Syrian opposition alliance. It became a political party officially in 2006, yet its supporters are the same supporters from the war, and their descendants. It has changed its flag from a classical one with a cedar formed by lightning and a sword in the shape of cross into a simple Greek letter Pi in a circle on a fluorescent yellow-green background.³⁸⁸ There is another minor Maronite party that originated as a war time militia: the Guardians of the Cedars, or *Hurras al-Arz* in Arabic. It was founded by Etienne Saqr and expressed extreme hatred toward Palestinians. It used to create graffiti such as "It is a duty for each Lebanese to kill a Palestinian." It strongly claimed Lebanon's non-Arab ethnicity and demanded the withdrawal of Lebanon from the Arab League. The militia's political party was named the Lebanese Renewal Party in 1972. After the civil war, both party and militia were banned and the leader fled to Israel where he is still giving instructions to his followers. It has been newly organized as a political party under the name of the Lebanese Nationalism Movement but still generally uses the name Guardians of the Cedars.³⁸⁹ Its leader Etienne Saqr is called "commander" Abu Arz.³⁹⁰

In addition to these, there are also Dory Chamoun's National Liberal Party, Moawad's Independence Movement, Carlos Edde's Lebanese National Bloc, Samy Gemayel's Loubnanouna Alliance, and Jina Hobeika's Promise Party (or National Secular Democratic Party). Also, there are Cadmus Hanna's The United Phoenician Party and Stefano el-Douaihy's Phoenician Party though these are not functioning.³⁹¹

The Maronite League is not a political party but has been exercising its political role. It

³⁸⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marada_Movement

³⁸⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guardians_of_the_Cedars

³⁹⁰ <http://www.gotc.org>

³⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_parties_in_Lebanon

was founded in 1952 by George Tabet pursuing the promotion of sovereignty, pluralism and democracy in Lebanon. Its members consist of leading Maronite intellectuals including a former president and ministers. It has as its governmental bodies the General Assembly, Executive Council and twelve special committees. It works to bridge Maronite religious institutions and the lay community.³⁹²

International organizations such as the Lebanon Ladies Association which was founded in 1926 and the Australian Lebanese Association in 1946 were initially founded by émigré Lebanese to help war-divested Lebanon during the World Wars.³⁹³ These “Lebanese” overseas organizations were not exclusively Maronite. Yet, when the wave of Christian-led Lebanese emigration reached another phase, international Lebanese organizations also reflected this change. In Africa, for example, the World Lebanese Cultural Union was divided when the number of Lebanese Shiites in Africa and within the Union increased in the sixties.³⁹⁴ Maronites increasingly organized themselves. The World Maronite Conference was held in Los Angeles, USA, in 1994.³⁹⁵ The International Maronite Foundation which is based in California was founded in 1997. Many of its General Assembly papers deal with their concerns about the Maronite role in Lebanon.³⁹⁶ In 2002, the Maronite International Congress was held in Los Angeles by the initiation and invitation of the International Maronite Foundation.³⁹⁷

Membership of political parties and support for political opinions in Lebanon are expressed through symbols such as party flags, parties’ representative colors, party leaders’ pictures,

³⁹² http://www.maronite-league.org.lb/aboutus_background_en.asp

³⁹³ McKay, op.cit., p.59

³⁹⁴ Dagher, op.cit., p.80

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ www.maronet.org

³⁹⁷ But the Congress faced dissent over the Palestinian issue raised especially by members of The Lebanese Foundation for Peace. www.free-lebanon.com/LFPNews/congress/congress.htm/ This site for The Lebanese Foundation for Peace is dedicated to Bashir Gemayel.

placards, posters of “martyrs,” structures like the Lebanese Forces cross, or graffiti. In times of special mobilization, all these symbols are put together to form car processions. Supporters form the processions by holding and waving their party flags, sometimes wearing clothes in the party’s color, yelling, in cars covered with photos of their “martyrs” or leader(s) and often also with speakers airing the party’s anthem or announcements of their gathering, or honking instead.³⁹⁸

The “Cedar tree” has been the most popular Maronite symbol. Not only does the Maronite Patriarchate emblem have a “cedar tree,” but the coats of arms of the al-Khazen family and Beit al-Sa’ad in the nineteenth century also use the cedar.³⁹⁹ So do Maronite political parties today. The name of the militia and political party “Guardians of the Cedars” shows the importance of the “cedar” for the Maronites. The Kataeb flag has a simplified shape of the tree in a green triangle horizontally divided into three and a brown trunk at the bottom and the Lebanese Forces a detailed image like the one in the Lebanese national flag. The Marada movement and Free Patriotic Movement in twenty first century Lebanon gave up the cedar in their flags and the former opted for the colors of fluorescent green and the latter, orange.⁴⁰⁰ The logo of the Maronite League makes the shape of a cedar tree with the League’s name in Arabic calligraphy.

Flags are the most frequently used items for mobilization, and hence for the re-enforcement of one’s membership of and support for certain political groups. During the Maronite-Druze clash in 1860, a Druze faction once deceived Maronites by carrying

³⁹⁸ Such car processions are also observed during the Christmas season but with carols. In this case, it is rather a mixture of religious expression and commercial advertisement in which advertising directed especially toward co-religionists is achieved by celebrating the religious feast. It is interesting to note that there is no concept of noise pollution in Lebanon.

³⁹⁹ Dau, *op.cit.*, pp.521, 527

⁴⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that though the Lebanese national flag has a cedar in the center meaning that it is the national symbol, none of the Islamic parties ever use this symbol, except during the cedar revolution in 2005 in which anti-Syrian factions held the national flags.

Maronite flags and chanting Maronite war songs.⁴⁰¹ A more direct form of expression during the Lebanese civil war was politicized graffiti. Slogans such as “No to Arabism, No to Syrian unity, No to the PLO” were found in Beirut during the seventies. Walid Phares notes that the graffiti phenomenon was a sociological indicator of the popular desire for ethnic separatism and thus became a sort of underground form of legitimization for what was on the minds of many.⁴⁰² Interestingly, after the civil war, this competition of Christian and Muslim groups was also expressed in more religious forms such as putting stickers on cars, with Jesus on them among Christians, and the Islamic creed among Muslims.⁴⁰³

Maronite political parties claim to be secular and their membership is open to people of other sects. But, in reality, their members and supporters are mostly Maronites. Any Lebanese can instantly tell which party is Maronite. In their operations and policies, the universal principles of politics are naturally applied such as pursuing power over others, forming alliances with other parties either Christian or not in time of need, and breaking them at other times. For example, the Lebanese Forces was an enemy of the Druze during the civil war but now allied. Marada was in an alliance with the Lebanese Forces in fighting against Syria but turned toward Syria in order to oppose the Lebanese Forces. General Aoun went into exile because of the Syrian presence in Lebanon but when he came back from his exile, he supported Syrian policy.

Yet, this secular politics actively adopts and takes advantage of religious symbols and religiosity in its mobilization. For example, posters of political leaders, or *zuama'* in Arabic, are often juxtaposed with pictures of Maronite saints. The leaders' religious practices and discussions with the patriarch are emphasized. During the Lebanese civil war Maronite

⁴⁰¹ Phares, op.citi., p.56

⁴⁰² Ibid., pp.129-130

⁴⁰³ Dagher, op.cit., pp.123-124

militia used to take a moment of prayer in between battles.⁴⁰⁴ But appealing to one's religiosity is not always necessarily the manipulation of religion for politics. Rather, it is possible because 'individuals' take given situations, such as fighting in war, as happening because of their religious belonging and want to defend their 'community' by participating in the group action. The cover page of the book "Lebanese Forces" by George Haik well presents this fused perception of religiosity, community and its defense. It shows a farmer, a warrior and a monk in front of mountains, supposedly Mount Lebanon, in one picture.⁴⁰⁵

Table 1. 15 Maronites - association membership

Answer	No	Religious	Cultural	Social	Political	No answer	Other	Total
Number	138	29	15	16	21	17	2	236
(%)	(62.72)	(13.18)	(6.81)	(7.27)	(9.54)	(7.72)	(0.9)	(107.27)

Table 1.15 shows the answers to the survey question "Are you a member of any Maronite association, club or political party? If yes, what is the characteristic of the association?" The respondents could answer to more than one category of "Religious, Cultural, Social, Political." One person answered "Hizb," which means a political party. One person from the priest group gave information in detail as he is a member of the Lebanese Maronite Order. The result shows that the membership of religious associations is highest followed by political ones. This makes about ten percent of respondents members of the political associations or parties. Most of the Maronites have a clear idea of supporting a certain political party, even when they are not members. Ten percent in membership of political organizations seems to reflect a high political tendency among Maronites. In reality, the religious order itself became

⁴⁰⁴ George Hayek, *Al-Qawaat al-Lubnaniyah: fi muwajihah al-Tarikh (Lebanese Forces)*, Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc., Beirut, 2007, p. 39. It shows a picture of LF militiamen armed and kneeling down for prayer.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., Front page.

a militia and participated in the war.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, sometimes political affiliation is not distinguishable from religious affiliation. Among multiple answers, nine respondents answered that their organization is cultural and social. Respondents were found from sixteen different areas in Lebanon. Seven out of these sixteen respondent groups did not answer this question. So, there is a possibility that the real percentage of Maronite affiliation to any Maronite association could be higher than this survey. Even if not, the result shows 37 percent of the respondents are member of “Maronite” associations. There was no one who emphatically answered that the respondent is a member of any non-sectarian organization or such.

Modern mass media such as publications, radio and television stations also greatly contribute to communication, mobilization, and group consciousness. Maronite mass media not only include purely religious ones but also political or entertainment media which all shape the collective memory of the group. During the civil war when the Lebanese Forces ran a *de facto* Christian mini-state, its leaders were able to remain in constant contact with the population and to mobilize it in times of crisis through two radio stations Radio Free Lebanon and the Voice of Lebanon as well as the television station LBC. Lewis Snider reports episodes of quick and efficient management of emergencies caused by bomb shelling and broadcasting the names of people who were arrested for profiteering through radio operations. He says that this helped in maintaining public order and served as a deterrent to other would-be profiteers.⁴⁰⁷

LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation) is the first private television station in Lebanon

⁴⁰⁶ Phares, op.cit., p.124, Fouad Abi-Esber, *The Rise and Fall of Christian Minorities in Lebanon*, <http://phoenicia.org/christiansmea.html>, The head of the monk orders, Father Sharbel Kassis, then Father Boulos Naaman, became official members of the Lebanese Front leadership. The Order of Maronite Monks militia consisted of 200 priests.

⁴⁰⁷ Snider, op.cit., p.140 and Phares, op.cit., p.115

and it is the most popular channel in Lebanon. Bashir Gemayel first suggested the idea and it was launched in 1985. During the civil war it was considered a tool used by the Lebanese Forces and voiced the opinions of the Lebanese Christians. Its studio was shelled during the War of Liberation. In 1992, at the government's request it moved from Jounieh, the capital of the Christian mini-state, to Adma, its present location. When Geagea was arrested the ownership was transferred to a co-founder Pierre Daher. Now he is no longer the sole shareholder but one of many. It launched LBCSAT, a satellite channel in 1997 and the Saudi prince bought all its stocks and almost half of the local channel stock in 2003. When Geagea came out of the prison, he demanded that the ownership of the station be returned to the party, which Daher refused. This is under a legal procedure and pending.⁴⁰⁸ LBC went through changes in its characteristics and is now considered as a general entertainment television station for all Lebanese, not only Maronites, with many branches and channels.

Politician Gabriel Murr launched another television station called Murr Television, or MTV more generally, in 1991. But the Lebanese government shut it down by force in 2002 with Mount Lebanon radio which is also owned by Gabriel Murr. The charge was breaking the electoral law which bans electioneering advertisements on TV airwaves. It was re-launched in 2009.⁴⁰⁹ Orange TV is the newest Maronite television station. It was launched by the Free Patriotic Movement in 2007, though it is not officially affiliated to the party. The party also launched a radio station called Sawt al-Mada (Voice of Scope) in 2009.⁴¹⁰

There are also purely religious broadcasting stations. Tele Lumiere is the first Christian television station in Lebanon and the Arab world. It was founded in 1991 by a group of committed lay people including former president Charles Helou, former minister George

⁴⁰⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanese_Broadcasting_Corporation

⁴⁰⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murr_Television

⁴¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Patriotic_Movement and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_TV

Frem and others. It is supervised by the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon. Its relationship with the church is regulated by a cooperation protocol. It pursues a non-political, spiritual stance. In 2003, it launched its satellite station called Noursat to cover Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa.⁴¹¹ Also a religious radio station Sawt al-Mahabba, or Voice of Charity, was founded in 1984 by the Maronite Lebanese Missionaries. It operates in Arabic and other languages for purely spiritual purposes.⁴¹² During the unstable situation in Lebanon in 2005, the station was bombed and the building was destroyed but recovered to continue operations.⁴¹³

Publication could be called the first mass media. Compared to other Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon's published Christian media are prospering and developed. These were started in the nineteenth century mainly by Catholic orders such as the Jesuits or Antonins. The Jesuit newspaper *A'mal al-Majma' al-Fatikani* began to appear in 1860 to promote the decisions of the Vatican Council. *Al-Bashir* which was published in 1871 later became a daily, the *Lubnan al-Kabir* (1820). Important publications included the Jesuit father Lewis Cheiko's *Al-Mashriq* magazine in 1898 and *Al-Masarra* by the Paulines in 1910. The development of publication and renaissance of literature was also influenced by the political situation of the time. Publication was persecuted under Jamal Pasha (1914-1920). But after the independence of Lebanon, according to father Tony Khodra, it began to prosper and reached its golden age between 1955 and 1975 in which the Lebanese Maronite Order and Bishopric of Beirut began their monthly *Sharbil* and *Sawt al-Ra'ii*. The Lebanese civil war also affected the publication sector due to the unstable security situation. After the Lebanese Synod in 2001, new church-

⁴¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tele_Lumiere

⁴¹² www.radiocharity.org/about.htm

⁴¹³ *The Maronite Voice*, A Publication of the Maronite Eparchies in the USA, Volume IV, Issue No. VII. August 2008

related publications began to appear.⁴¹⁴

But father Khodra points out that 75 percent of publications are by church organizations, which means that the role of lay Christian organizations or people is almost absent. Also, publication reveals the sectarian nature. The use of different languages and disparity in distribution, about 90 percent of which is concentrated in Beirut and the Mount Lebanon area, are additional problems. More importantly, he continues that only 20 percent of the writers are lay people and 90 percent of publications do not pay their writers, reflecting and resulting in clergy and church control over Christian published media. The absence of female writers, female concerns, and female readers' participation is also reported.⁴¹⁵ These Christian religious publications are generally promoted through TV al-Nur and Tele Lumiere.⁴¹⁶

Due to the spread of Internet usage, Maronite individuals, Church, parishes, religious orders and their monasteries, schools, political parties, overseas organizations, random groups, and mass media themselves are connected through their official websites, personal homepages, individual blogs, cafés and twitters. Though Lebanon suffers from its slow Internet connection, in 2004, 65 percent of the urban population used computers and 79 percent of them used the Internet. Since the Mount Lebanon area is higher than average in both, it is safe to infer that the Maronites have higher accessibility to the Internet.⁴¹⁷ As this survey on Internet usage was conducted in 2004 and as the survey suggests that Lebanon is in its take-off stage that experiences explosive increase in Internet usage, one may presume that cyber space is increasingly becoming a sphere for Maronites to build their collective memory.

⁴¹⁴ Father Tony Khodra, *Al-I'lam al-Masihi fi al-Sharq al-Awsat 'ala 'Atbah al-Alf al-Thalith*, The Middle East Council of Churches, 2001, pp.13-23

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., pp.24-36

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., pp.35, 38

⁴¹⁷ Computer usage was 73% in Mount Lebanon and 63% in Beirut. Internet usage was 81% in Mount Lebanon and 74% in Beirut. *Patterns of ICT Usage in Lebanon*, 2004 ICT User Survey, Feb. 2005, pp.2, 13

Part I examined the Maronite experience: how the group was formed and developed, how group identity discourse evolved, and how differentiated identity found its expression in culture. The disciples of St. Maron in the fifth century moved into Mount Lebanon, evangelized the natives and gradually formed a Maronite community. In the seventh century, the Maronite Church established its own patriarchal system. Though it seems that the Maronite Church followed monotheletism in the midst of Christological debates among different Christian factions, since its union with the Roman Church after its encounter with Western Christianity during the Crusades, it has emphasized its continuous orthodoxy in the Chalcedonian faith. The retreat of the Crusades also brought retaliations on the Maronites. Nevertheless, contact with the West generally brought increased trade with the West and educational levels among Maronites. The establishment of the Maronite College in Rome in 1584 produced renowned Maronite scholars who largely contributed to oriental studies in the West. The history of Maronites also witnesses to conflict with their Druze neighbors who shared the mountains and feudal system especially in the nineteenth century, culminating in a war in 1860, which comprise a painful part of the history. However, the *Matasarraf* system which came as a resolution of the conflict along with the experience of autonomous *Imara*, provided a justifiable basis of the claim to establish an independent Lebanon. Despite debate between advocates of the Greater Lebanon based on Phoenician Lebanism and advocates of the smaller Lebanon which was to ensure Maronite concentration and dominance, newly emerged Maronite entrepreneurs and elites participated in the building of Lebanon with their Sunni compatriots. Phoenicianism and refuge theory also appealed to people of other sects in Lebanon differentiating Lebanon from other Arab countries around. But the prolonged Lebanese civil war which accompanied competition with Arabism led Lebanon to accept its “Arab face.” Maronites are decreasing in Lebanon demographically due to the trend of

emigration and relatively lower birth rate. However, the Maronite group is the only Christian community in the Middle East which has been participating in the modern national political discourse, a fact that led other Christian communities in the region to anticipate that it would be the model of co-existence.

As a Christian Church, the Maronite Church has institutionalized itself, equipped with its own hierarchical, liturgical, and doctrinal traditions in addition to its monasticism. Though the Western Syriac language gave way to Arabic even in the liturgy except some prayer and expressions, the active adoption of foreign languages among Maronites can be seen as an effort to differentiate themselves from people of other sects in Lebanon. Though giving a name to baby is a private choice of parents and the name can be Maronite, Christian, or a shared name with Muslims, the survey showed that certain names form a Maronite name pool for new born Maronite. Also, the French form of Christian names show the popularity of providing a sense of continuity at the same time as being in fashion. Female names are more liberal, and oriented to have cute pronunciation. The Church and the church calendar have been the center of traditional family life for Maronites. Rites of passages are carried out in the church and church feasts provide rhythm in everyday life. Popular saint veneration among Maronites gives glimpse of folk religion. Though the majority of respondents answered that they are religious, there are some Maronites who consider themselves not religious and do not practice religious rites. Village marriage was a norm in the past. But in the modern era, intermarriage with other Christian sects and foreigners increased. Despite the fact the image of a typical Maronite is someone from the mountains, modern Maronites have overseas experiences and family members or relatives who reside outside Lebanon. Also, in accordance with modernization and the development of modern mass media, Maronites have also developed their networking and associations.

Maronites today are in another transitional period with decreased religious authority, divided political opinions, and ever-changing relationships with other religious sects in Lebanon, facing the new era of post-nationalism.

Part II

The Assyrian Experience

Chapter 1. Socio-historical perspective

1. From the introduction of Christianity to the eve of the World War I

Virtually all of the Assyrian nationalistic historiography begins with the prominent history of ancient Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms. The most typical expression of this narration is, “The present Assyrians are the direct descendents of the Assyrian Race which played an important role in world history.”¹ As for the immediate ancestors of modern Assyrians, they are introduced as Aramaeans (or Arameans) in the Mesopotamia region. This group of people converted to Christianity and adopted the so-called “Nestorian Christology,” and since then, they are known as the Nestorians in Western Church history. Since the group became distinguishable with its theology, it will be proper to start the discussion of Assyrian history with the establishment of its church [Nestorian, Persian church in other words]. Various appellations for this group of people and related complexity will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

According to a church tradition, King Abgar V Ukomto (or Ukama) of Urhei (Al-Ruha in Arabic and Edessa in Western languages), who was suffering from a disease, sent a message to Jesus to come and heal his sickness. Jesus sent him a letter and promised to send his disciple. After Jesus’ ascension to heaven, Addai, one of his seventy-two disciples, came to Urhei and healed the king’s sickness. Addai evangelized the city. His mission was passed down to his two disciples, Aggai and Mari. While Aggai was martyred, Mari continued to evangelize in Nisibin and Arzun.² Another tradition tells us that the Christianization of Assyrians took place through Apostle Thomas, followed by Addai, who is believed to be

¹ Mar Eshai Shimun, *The Assyrian Tragedy*, Annemasse, No publishing year, p.9

² Addai Scher, *Histoire De La Chaldee et de L’Assyrie*, Arabic, Beirut, 1913, Vol. II, p.2. This tradition, excluding the story of Mari, is found in the Syrian Church and the Armenian Church, too.

Thomas' disciple, and later through the latter's disciples, Agai and Mari.³ Nisan presents the third tradition of the three magis who visited Bethlehem when Jesus was born.⁴

While the nationalistic historiography of Assyrians focuses on the ancient history, their church history emphasizes the theological schism of the church, especially on the nature of Christ. This history tends to portray the origin of the Assyrian church as a group of theologians refused Chalcedonian diophysite Christology but adopted the "two natures-two persons" theory which was labeled "Nestorian" and migrated to the Persian Empire in the fifth century with their followers. There, they developed their church.⁵

However, it is more plausible to say that there were already Christian groups in Persia before the migration of prominent Nestorian theologians. These groups existed in the very beginning of Christianity, especially among the communities of Jewish converts and Arameans in Mesopotamia which was part of the empire of the Parthians.⁶ Chaldean clergy and historian Addai Sher also asserts that Christianity was already introduced to the "Chaldo-Assyrians," by the end of the first century.⁷ This first century evangelization of Mesopotamia is often associated with stories of Apostle Thomas, Addai and Mari of the seventy two disciples, and/or the King Abgar Ukomto.

The migration of Nestorians took place because the Roman Empire persecuted followers of a Christology different from what it adopted. Though Nestorius was condemned in Roman Empire, his teaching was handed down through the Edessa school of theology. Edessa was the center of Nestorian theology and most of the church leaders in Persia received training at

³ Church history mainly accepts this tradition. See Mar Eshai Simon, p.9 for example.

⁴ Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East – A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, 1991, p.158. The three magi are also claimed by Kurds and Persians.

⁵ See Aubrey Vine, Aziz Atiya, Adrian Fortescue and Wilhelm Baum for its detailed Christology.

⁶ Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar Winkler, *The Church of the East: A concise history*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, p.1, Special lectures by Basile Agoula at the Maronite Center in Antliyas between Jan. 13 and Mar. 16, 2005.

⁷ Scher, op.cit., pp.2-5. For this terminology, see the next chapter.

this school.⁸ When the school of Edessa was forced to close down by Emperor Zeno in 489, the Nestorian remnant fled into Persia and as a result, the theological center was moved to Nisibin.⁹

Since Rome and Persia were at war, and Christianity was adopted as the state religion of Rome, Christians in Persia were regarded as suspicious subjects who follow the enemy's religion. Given this situation, the different Christology was emphasized by Persian Christians and also it was encouraged politically by Persia after the condemnation of Nestorius. Also, territorial separation and linguistic difference between the Roman Church and Persian Church inevitably led the latter to establish their own leadership.¹⁰ King Yazdegerd I (399-420) himself approved the organization of the Persian Church and issued a firman giving recognition to the Catholicos as head of the Persian Christians.¹¹ It is noteworthy that the Persian Christian headship was founded in 410, which was long before the major migration of Nestorian theologians from Rome. Thus, it is safe to assume that the Persian Church precedes Nestorianism, and that the Persian Church became more and more Nestorian in tone with the influx of theologians and their increasing influence. Vine affirms us that Nestorianism and the Christian Church in Persia soon became practically synonymous.¹² On the other hand, Luke shows that the more unpopular Nestorius and his teaching became in the Byzantine West, the more favorably his sympathizers were looked upon in the Persian East.¹³ And Sher claims that from the fourth century onward the Persian Church leaned toward Nestorianism. The schism of the Church is also viewed as a form of nationalism of the time.¹⁴

⁸ Aubrey Vine, *The Nestorian Churches – A Concise history of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians*, Independent Press, London, 1980, p.37

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.41

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.42-44

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.46-47

¹² *Ibid.*, p.43

¹³ Harry Charles Luke, *Mosul and its minorities*, Martin Hopkinson & Company Ltd., London, 1925, p.59

¹⁴ Luke, *op.cit.*, p.48, 64

Interestingly, during this period, the cultural influence of Zoroastrianism on the Persian Church such as abolition of celibacy of monks - a tool for its differentiation from Roman Christianity but a kind of identification with Persian culture which was its host culture - is also observed.

Despite its independency from Roman Church and being subject in Persian Empire, this Church often fell as prey to persecution in Persia due to Persian national sentiment and its Zoroastrian spirit. For example, the religious zeal of Persians resulted in the persecution of Christians in 225. And when Constantine made Christianity the state religion of Rome, forty years of persecution followed in Persia during which more than sixteen thousand men and women gave their lives.¹⁵ According to Foretescue, this was the fiercest persecution under Shapur II (309-379), who claimed that “[The Christians] dwell in our land and share the ideas of Caesar, our enemy.” The emperor doubled taxes on the Christians and arrested, tortured, and executed them all over Persia. The city in which the most intense form of persecution took place was named Martyropolis and Assyrian martyrology reveals the execution of the faithful, especially that of Mar Shimun Bar Sabbae and nine thousand other souls.¹⁶ Yazdagird I, at the end of his reign, persecuted Christians in his empire.¹⁷ King Peroz revived a short period of persecution in which Bar Sauma, the leader of the Church, was himself active in persecuting those who wished to remain in communion with the Church of the Roman Empire.¹⁸ An Egyptian scholar Aziz Atiya, however, asserts that the tendency to exaggerate the gravity of religious persecutions in the East must be re-considered within the general framework of the Eastern state, where the whims of a despot or dictator resulted in

¹⁵ Ibid., p.58

¹⁶ Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy II, The Lesser Eastern Churches*, Georgias Press, Piscataway, 2001, pp.45-47

¹⁷ Ibid., p.50

¹⁸ Vine, op.cit., p.43

the persecution of Christians and non-Christians alike without much discrimination.¹⁹ Under Sassanids (502-651), according to Vine, on the whole Christians felt more or less secure and tolerated within their national boundaries except during occasional persecutions, and eventually a peace treaty was concluded between Rome and Persia.²⁰

But soon, the Arab expansion reached the Persian Empire and the Arabs defeated the latter at Qadisiya in 637. The process of detaching Iraq from the declining Sassanian power began during the brief reign of Abu Bakr (632-34).²¹ Christians in Persia welcomed the advent of Islam to some extent because of the strain of excessive taxation under Sassanids.²² Under the Abbasids (750-1258), Baghdad became the capital and the Church of the East relatively prospered. Despite the transfer of power from the Sassanids to the Islamic caliphate, the conditions were not very different for the Church of the East. In fact, there was a considerable increase in the number of churches, and an increase also in wealth and high social positions among the Christians during the first three centuries of the caliphate.²³ Adherents of the Church of the East continued to thrive as a special community in a similar way as under the Sassanids. The Muslim rulers readily accepted the existing position of the Christians with all their rights and duties.²⁴

Many Christians from the school of Nisibis, Jundishapur, and Marv were recruited as administrative personnel, notably as accountants, scribes, physicians, teachers and interpreters.²⁵ In addition to this, these Christians who were the masters of languages, translated Greek texts into Arabic through Syriac. The famous academy of the 'House of Wisdom' (*Dar al-Hikmah*), which was founded by Caliph Al-Ma'mun in 830, was staffed

¹⁹ Aziz Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, p.257

²⁰ Vine, *op.cit.*, p.64, 67

²¹ Harvey Smith and others, *Area Handbook for Iraq*, The American University, Washington, D.C., 1971, p.31

²² Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.267

²³ Vine, *op.cit.*, pp.100-101

²⁴ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.267

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.268

essentially by members of the Church of the East. They, according to Atiya, monopolized medical specialization and technical knowledge, and some of them became extremely wealthy. The translator Hunayn b. Ishaq (809-73) is among these privileged Christians. This period marked the peak of history of the Church of the East.²⁶

Since the anti-Nestorian laws had no effect under the rule of the Caliph, the Church of the East [the official name of the church] sent out missionaries to Syria, Palestine and Cyprus.²⁷ The Church of the East had already reached China – up to the Korean border!²⁸ Marco Polo reports that he found Christians of the Church of the East in Kashkar, Urumchi, and on the Korean border as well as in Manchuria.²⁹ Parish names among nomads' tents were also recorded. One time, two Chinese Nestorians, the Uigurs in particular, came to Baghdad on their way to Jerusalem and Bar Sauma, one of them, became the patriarch of the church. This church also reached to southwest coast of India, whose church is known to be founded by the Apostle Thomas most probably earlier than the Church of the East reached to China. This expansion was through international trade routes at that time.

Despite the protection of *dhimmi*s as 'People of the Covenant' and the prosperity of adherents of the Church of the East in general, there were pressures and persecutions. 'Umar II (717-720) extended harsh measures on Christians for economic reasons, according to Atiya. And under Mahdi (775-785), the worst persecutions were carried out as a result of war with Rome,³⁰ and at the time of Harun al-Rashid (785-809), churches were destroyed under false

²⁶ Ibid., p.271

²⁷ Fortescue, op.cit., p.104

²⁸ Baum, op.cit., p.93, quoting Marco Polo. The Nestorian Church was known to Korea as *kyungkyo*, the illuminating religion, or later as *Arkaun*, which means "he who serves the gospel." The possibility of the introduction of Nestorianism to Korea through China or through trade with Arabia was raised by a few scholars like E. A. Gordon and Kim Yang Sun. A cross-shape stone artifact was found in the Kyung Joo area in Korea and Gordon claimed that the Buddhist arts in Korea reflect the influence of Nestorian arts in Persia. (The Institute of Korean Church History Studies, *A History of Korean Church*, Vol.I, The Christian Literature Press, Seoul, Korea, 1989, pp.36-38.) The possibility of the introduction of *kyungkyo* to Japan was also raised.

²⁹ Ibid., see Marco Polo

³⁰ Vine, op.cit., p.93

accusations. Under Mutawakkil (846-61), the Patriarch Theodosius was deposed and the Christians suffered from a severe application of the repressive laws.³¹ Mob riots were instigated against the Christians.³² Though historians like Atiya describe these persecutions as occasional or sporadic, and the fame and wealth of Christians vexed the Muslim population and incurred jealousy and animosity towards the Christians,³³ *dhimmi* status as protected people was not as secure in practice as in theory, permitting only certain individuals, not community, to prosper.

Vine describes that with the increasing privilege and wealth of adherents of the Church of the East, or Nestorians as conventionally called, which made their outlook increasingly secular, Muslim antipathy against them mounted. He further criticizes that the decline of the Persian Nestorian Church during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries was partly due to defects within the community itself as it became materialistic while losing grip of the essentials of their faith.³⁴ Atiya also emphasizes that the decline was not altogether the outcome of external persecution but incurred by the internal conditions such as corruption, rivalry and confusion within the church hierarchy.³⁵

The story of expansion of the Church of the East among Chinese, Keraites, Naimans and many other Tartar tribes was known to the West and the legend of Prester John spread among Westerners. According to Fortescue, the Crusaders in their most hopeless moments would always hope that Prester John would suddenly appear from the East, leading an army to help them.³⁶ And the Priest-King Prester John as a “Nestorian” and possible redeemer, eventually

³¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.268, Vine, op.cit., p.93

³² Atiya, ibid.

³³ Ibid., p.270, Vine, op.cit., p.102

³⁴ Vine, Ibid, pp.101-106

³⁵ Atiya, op.cit., pp.272-274

³⁶ Fortescue, op.cit., p.106

became the great hope of Christendom threatened by Islam.³⁷ It is quite ironic that the Crusaders dreamed of Nestorians defeating Islam, while the Church of the East expected the salvation through a Nubian Christian army, since Prester John was known as to be Nubian to them.³⁸

Mongol power favored Nestorians because many Mongolian leaders, sometimes including khans such as Mangu (1251-1260), were also Nestorians. Nevertheless, the Christians suffered with everybody else from the devastations of the hordes of Jengiz Khan (1162-1227).³⁹ When Hulagu ransacked Baghdad in 1258 and massacred 800,000, most adherents of the Church of the East who survived the disaster could only save their lives by taking refuge in churches. They were granted full freedom and their patriarch was given a palace.

However, the favorable position they had enjoyed did not last long. Their abuse of power and several Mongol defeats in war with Mamluks induced Mongolian khan to convert to Islam. The first Western Il-khan to adopt Islam was Ahmad (1280-1284). When Baidu (?-1295) who was previously Christian declared his final conversion to Islam, the position of the Christians was thus reversed. The patriarch had to leave the palace, and the Arabs and the Kurds started to combat the Nestorians in 1295-1296. And there was renewal of persecution which led to the massacre in the city of Maragha, humiliation of the patriarch, robberies and torture of bishops and destruction of monastery of St. Thaddaeus.⁴⁰

When Timur Lane (1396-1405) seized Baghdad in 1393, he left a pyramid of 70,000 skulls in Isfahan and another 90,000 in Baghdad. Both Muslims and Christians suffered equally. The names of churches of Tirhana, Jundihshapur, Balada, Dasena, Karkha had ceased to appear on record since 1318. After 1380 churches were obliterated in the greater towns

³⁷ Baum, *op.cit.*, p.81

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83

³⁹ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.273

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.275

including Baghdad, Mosul, Erbil, Nisibis, and Maragha as well as smaller towns. According to Atiya, whole communities were massacred; others lost their ancient tenacity and entered the faith of the conqueror to save their lives. The few survivors who retained their old religion fled from the open plains and cities and took refuge amidst the fastness of the mountains in today's Kurdistan between Lake Urmia and Lake Van. These surviving Nestorians sank into poverty, ignorance, and seclusion.⁴¹ In other words, while the Church of the East under the Ming emperors in China no longer received support, the Nestorians of its homeland relocated themselves to the mountains. The seat of the Catholicos moved from one location to another depending on where he believed it was the most secure. All in all, the campaigns of Timur Lane were the de facto destruction of the Church of the East in Central Asia.⁴²

Aubrey Vine presents a different idea on the decline of the Church of the East, and asserts its gradual decline.

It has sometimes been supposed that the grave declension of the Nestorian Church was due altogether to the Mongols. This is not so; and although the Mongols wrought considerable havoc in certain areas, and perhaps gave the coup de grace to many already waning churches, the decline was evident long before they invaded the Caliphate. The general impression is therefore one of steady decline, accelerated by the troubled internal state of the Caliphate during its later years, and in some districts culminating in final extinction by Mongol invasions of the early thirteenth century.⁴³

He further claims that the migration of Assyrians to the Kurdistan area was due to the existence of their co-religionists who had already settled there. As evidence of the Church of the East's gradual decline, Vine shows the long list of names of bishoprics disappeared before

⁴¹ Ibid., p.276

⁴² Baum, op.cit., pp.104, 105

⁴³ Vine, op.cit., p.111

Timur's invasion.⁴⁴

Scholars, however, show consensus that a hereditary system of the patriarch was instigated by this time of distress in order to secure and maintain the patriarchship. Nevertheless, in the middle of the sixteenth century, some opposed this system of hereditary succession, and selected Sulaka as their new patriarch after the death of Patriarch Simon Bar Mama in 1551. This decision was supported by Catholic missionaries who worked among Assyrians. Sulaka traveled to Rome in order to obtain papal approval, which he received, but he was murdered by Turks solicited by Simon Denha, the new patriarch of the old line, who was the nephew of Bar Mama. The followers of Sulaka, mainly from Mardin and Diyarbakir,⁴⁵ continued to select their own patriarch and established a union with Rome. While this Sulaka line later returned to Nestorianism, the original line went into union with Rome. At some point of time in the eighteenth century, there were four patriarchs, two united and two Nestorian. The approval of Rome, according to Baum, became an asset in questions of succession: it had no theological significance.⁴⁶

Besides this schism, little is known about the Church of the East and its adherents, or Assyrians as they call themselves, between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Often it is described by Assyrian nationalistic historians as the second Dark Age.⁴⁸

Many scholars have a tendency to believe that the relative peace between Assyrians and Kurds was put off balance when Christians were favored over Muslims under European influence. At this time, the Assyrians lived in tribal communities.⁴⁹ It is true that Assyrians were 're-discovered,' according to Western expression, to the West in the eighteenth century

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.113

⁴⁵ Baum, op.cit., p.113

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.120

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.116

⁴⁸ According to this categorization, the First Dark Age marks by the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital in 612 BC. *Brief History of Assyrians*, by Peter BetBasoo, <http://www.aina.org/aol/peter/brief.htm>

⁴⁹ Baum, op.cit., p.123

and the interest in this group increased. Often times the West put pressure on the Ottoman authority when Kurdish attacks on Assyrians were made, too. However, this Western intervention in Ottoman affairs was not solely a unilateral interference. Rather, it is the changing international power relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, which subjected even the issue of Christian-Muslim relations, a part of domestic politics, to outside influence. The Ottoman government under Sultan Mahmud II reasserted absolute power around 1830 and tried to extend its sphere of influence to autonomous tribes including those of Kurdistan. Local rulers were encouraged to accept government positions, which allowed them to exercise the right to tax and to conscript.⁵⁰ This became grounds of conflict between Kurdish local rulers and Assyrians.

A Kurdish attack against the Assyrians occurred in 1830 and led to European protest against Turkey. In 1842, there was another massacre during which the Kurds took many Assyrian women and children as captives and over ten thousand Assyrians were estimated to have been killed.⁵¹ Right after the English ambassador's attempt to persuade the rulers to recognize the Catholicos as head of the civil government in Hakkari in 1843, another series of massacres was instigated by the Kurdish leader Badr Khan.⁵² Kurds took advantage of the local power vacuum which resulted from the tensions between Egypt and Turkey since 1840. The catholicos fled to Mosul in 1847 and sought refuge in the English consulate.⁵³ Christians in Persia were also subjected to a policy of oppression. The struggle of Assyrians for survival is well reflected in their continuous attempts for seeking external help. The Assyrians had tried to secure their community not only by union with Rome, but also by appealing to the

⁵⁰ Smith, op.cit., p.35

⁵¹ Vine, op.cit., pp.176, 178

⁵² Baum, op.cit., p.127

⁵³ Ibid.

king of East Georgia in the second half of the eighteenth century owing to persecution.⁵⁴ They appealed to Queen Victoria in 1863, the sentiment in favor of union with Rome was increasing in 1884, and some 20,000 Assyrians converted to Russian Orthodoxy for support in 1898.⁵⁵ In 1928, a number of Assyrians crossed the Russian border seeking aid from the Russian Orthodox Church.⁵⁶ This became the origin of the Assyrian community in Caucasia.⁵⁷

Western missionaries were active among Assyrians. Roman Catholic had the uniate Chaldaean Church, Russian Orthodox, which accepted some Assyrian converts built an Orthodox church, and Anglicans and Protestants had various missions. Vine reports that while Rome wanted to make the Church uniated and Russia simply wanted to add this community to their own, Anglicans and Protestants desired to preserve this ancient Church as an entity.⁵⁸ Because the Anglicans gave the impression of simply wanting to help the Assyrians, they were favorable towards the Anglicans.⁵⁹ All the missions wrought great benefit to Assyrians by encouraging general education and improving the attitude of the Turkish and Persian authorities toward this group. Vine carefully concludes that the Nestorian Church probably grew both in number and in spiritual strength during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth.⁶⁰

2. From the World War I to the present

Baum describes the situation of Assyrians in the beginning of the twentieth century as having

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.120

⁵⁵ Baum, *ibid.*, pp.128-133, Vine, *op.cit.*, p.180

⁵⁶ Baum, *ibid.*, p.126, Vine, *op.cit.*, p.180

⁵⁷ Baum, *ibid.*, p.120

⁵⁸ Vine, *ibid.*, p.180

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.178

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.182

become a “plaything” in the politics of the great European powers and their churches.⁶¹ Assyrians at this time were found mainly in the mountainous area of Hakkari, and plains around Urmiyah and Van. Contrary to Vine’s conclusion, Winkler and others see Assyrians of this period of time as reduced to a tribal church owing to their conversion to Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and also owing to the attacks of the Kurds.⁶² Their community consisted of more than a dozen tribes which were led by *maliks*, the leaders.⁶³ Major tribes were Baz, Djilu, Upper Tyari, Lower Tyari, Tkuma, Diz, and Barwar.⁶⁴ Their *maliks* were under the Patriarch, their religious and secular leader.

When the Turkish government decided to expel all the Christians from the Ottoman territory, they used the Kurds as proxies to attack and massacre the Christians. Along with Armenians and other Christians, Assyrians were expelled from their homeland. According to an account, during 1914 and 1918, Assyrians lost two thirds of their population.⁶⁵ Many of them lost their lives to epidemic diseases, hunger and Kurdish and Turkish, sometimes Persian attacks. Recent materials on Assyrians fall mainly into the category of reporting the massacres of this period in detail. During this period, the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimon XIX, in 1918, negotiated with the Kurds in a peace talk, but on the way out he was murdered by these Kurds. The brother of the Patriarch was also killed in Constantinople by Turks. Assyrians desperately tried to save the community by union with other Christian Churches such as the Russian Orthodox Church, and Roman Catholic Church. Assyrians, mainly from the Hakkari area, took refuge in Baquba camp which was established by the British. In addition to this, many Assyrian males served as Iraqi Levi since the Britain promised to give

⁶¹ Baum, op.cit., p.133. Emphasis is mine.

⁶² Ibid., p.135

⁶³ Literally *malik* in Arabic means a king, but for Assyrians it simply means a tribal leader.

⁶⁴ Baum, op.cit

⁶⁵ Shimun, op.cit., p.7. According to Winkler, the number of Assyrians at the beginning of the twentieth century was 150,000. (Baum, op.cit.)

the Assyrian autonomy after the war. Reportedly about seventy percent of all young Assyrian men were in the Levies.⁶⁶

Assyrians began to repatriate to their original home in 1919.⁶⁷ According to Baum, around 6000 Assyrians attempted to return to their former homeland in Hakkari and Urmiyah in 1920.⁶⁸ When the attempt for repatriation failed their leader Agha Petros was exiled to France. But they gradually returned to Hakkari while most remained in Mosul and Kirkuk as refugees.⁶⁹

While many Assyrians hoped to resettle in the Hakkari Mountain, the Council of the League of Nations discussed their settlement plans to be in Syria or even South America. Since Assyrians were seen as allies of foreign powers, Arabs were not hospitable toward them. There was general tension between Assyrians and Arabs in Iraq, which in 1924 led Assyrian soldiers to kill one hundred Muslims.⁷⁰ When the Assyrian assembly in 1931 called for their return to the Hakkari region and the recognition of Assyrians in Iraq as a “*Millet*” under the secular and religious leadership of the Patriarch while maintaining loyalty to King Faisal of Iraq, Iraq made it clear that it wanted a centralized Arab state rather than a federal structure.⁷¹

When Iraq was under the British, the Assyrians were mostly settled in the neighborhoods of Mosul and Kirkuk.⁷² Many were in the Khabur valley and the Ghab region. But the settlement plan faced unexpected financial difficulties as well as obstacles due to the marshland.⁷³ About 800 Assyrian men attempted to cross the border to Syria through Khabur River in 1933. The French mandate power in Syria judged this as an illegal act, so the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.38

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Baum, op.cit., p.141

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Vine, op.cit., p.199.

⁷¹ Baum, op.cit., p.143

⁷² Vine, op.cit., p.199

⁷³ Ibid., p. 203

Assyrians were sent back to Iraq. But on their return, they met shootings from the Iraqi army, though it is uncertain who started the shooting first. About five hundred of them fled back to Syria but the rest were taken and killed. This event was followed by the massacre of Simele, in which the death toll reaches six hundred Assyrians in the villages of Dohuk and Simele. Winkler reports that sixty out of sixty-four villages in the area were destroyed and all males over the age of ten were shot. He gives a bigger figure of total death toll as to be 3,000. Winkler goes on to explain that this event was a reaction on the part of Kurds and Arabs to the rumor that the Assyrians were going to plunder northern Iraq.⁷⁴ Vine evaluates that this rumor was worsened by an Assyrian extremist party headed by *malik* Yaku.⁷⁵ Being responsible for this event of 1933, the patriarch was deprived of his Iraqi citizenship and expelled from Iraq. The patriarch moved to Chicago among Assyrian migrants via Cyprus. Winkler also notes that of the 20,000-30,000 Assyrians remaining in Iraq, nearly all unreservedly wanted to leave.⁷⁶

In accordance with the official solution of the Settlement Committee of the League of the Nations, some 9,000 Assyrians were migrated from Iraq to Jezirah, Syria in 1936. Some others were resettled in Qamishli, Hassake, and Aleppo.⁷⁷ During the 1940s, Assyrians tried to appeal the Assyrian case to the international society, especially emphasizing their alliance with Britain and their past services in the Levi based on the British promise to give them autonomy. But these voices went unheard.⁷⁸ According to the Treaty of Sevres, the Assyrians (and Chaldeans) were guaranteed protection and security inside an autonomous Kurdish

⁷⁴ Baum, op.cit., pp.143-144

⁷⁵ Vine, op.cit., p.201

⁷⁶ The Patriarch was not able to visit Iraq until the seventies. (Baum, op.cit., p.144)

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.145

⁷⁸ See F. David Andrews (ed.), *The Lost Peoples of the Middle East – Documents of the Struggle for Survival and Independence of the Kurds, Assyrians, and other Minority Races in the Middle East*, Documentary Publications, Salisbury, 1982

region. Instead, however, 1969 witnessed plunder of the monastery of Rabban Hormizd.⁷⁹

In the 1950s, the community of Assyrians in Chicago developed through projects such as the foundation of a theological center as well as translations of liturgical books.⁸⁰ However, a patriarchal decree in 1964, which made the adaptation of the Gregorian calendar official, resulted in a new division among Assyrians. Ishaq Nwiya, the leader of the opposition group, became head of the “Ancient Church of the East.” This split also led to another split among Indian church, which was under Assyrian jurisdiction.⁸¹ Assyrians went through further crisis when Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun voluntarily resigned from his position in 1972. He was married in 1973. A synod was held in response to the event discussing the abolition of hereditary succession and the reintroduction of canonical election of the patriarch. In 1975, Mar Eshai Shimun was assassinated by one of his relatives in the name of family honor in San Jose, California.⁸²

In 1976, Mar Dinkha Khnanaya was elected as the 120th patriarch. He established a seminary in Iran and his patriarchal see was situated in Teheran until the Iran-Iraq War. Following the outbreak of war, the patriarchal see was transferred to Chicago once again. With the continuous wars in the Persian Gulf, the livelihoods of the Assyrians as well as other Christians in the region have worsened. Winkler estimates that the number of Christian migrations from Iraq since 1991 as more than 10,000 each year.⁸³

During the war with Iran, the Iraqi government deported thousands of Shi‘its suspected of being sympathizers of Iran.⁸⁴ According to Aprim, many Assyrian families were also

⁷⁹ Baum, op.cit., p.146

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.145

⁸¹ Ibid, p.148

⁸² Ibid, p.149

⁸³ Ibid, p.150, 151

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Iraq*, Middle East Watch, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990, p.6

deported from Iraq under the pretext that they were of Iranian origin.⁸⁵ Also, when Saddam advanced to northern Iraq in 1988 in response to the Kurds' support of Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, many Christian villages, churches and monasteries were also destroyed. This measure left behind a wave of Kurdish and Christian refugees. According to Winkler, the military clashes in northern Iraq went unnoticed because the world's attention was on Kuwait at the time, and the 1991 UN ceasefire resolution made no reference to northern Iraq.⁸⁶ Aprim's report discloses the Assyrian cases of imprisonment, torture, and deportation by Saddam's regime, as well as Kurdish attacks against Assyrians, giving a list of more than 180 Assyrian villages.⁸⁷

According to the Middle East Watch, though the Iraqi regime under Saddam denied any torture in Iraq, the Iraqi government denied its citizens all fundamental rights and freedoms, with the exception of the freedom of worship, which was the only right that the Iraqi government respected even in part.⁸⁸ However, the activities of clergies and their sermons were closely monitored. The teaching of the Assyrian language, even in the churches, was forbidden.⁸⁹ In 1980 and 1981, government schools obliged their children to attend classes in Islamic religion. Later, complaints of Christians brought an end to this practice.⁹⁰ In addition to the aforementioned, the Middle East Watch also reports political killings.⁹¹ Assyrians were among those who frequently fell into a prey to the Iraqi Regime. Among dozens of members of the Assyrian Democratic Movement that were imprisoned in 1984, three were executed. They were accused of "having committed the crime of creating a hostile and separatist movement aimed at threatening the independence and unity of Iraq...They transported

⁸⁵ Fred Aprim (ed.), *Indigenous People in Distress*, USA, 2003, p.4

⁸⁶ Baum, op.cit., p.150

⁸⁷ Aprim, op.cit., pp.86-89

⁸⁸ See Human Rights Watch, op.cit., esp. pp.128, 34

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.35

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.49

weapons and carried out acts of sabotage.”⁹² During and immediately after the Anfal campaign of 1988, some 250 Christians disappeared in addition to destruction of churches and villages.⁹³ Also, during the campaign, many Assyrians, along with Turkomans, were deported to the Kurdish-controlled area due to the policy of Arabization of the area. The number of deported people was estimated to be around 94,000.⁹⁴

However, other Christians and Assyrians who identify themselves as “Arab” faced no particular discrimination. Middle East Watch reports that many Muslim Iraqis consider Christians to be a favored minority under the Baath regime. The only persons known to have been authorized to emigrate from Iraq in those years were a small number of Iraqi Assyrian women, albeit having to pay substantial fees.⁹⁵

On the first Sunday of August 2004, five church buildings of the Chaldean Church and Armenian Church were attacked in Baghdad and Mosul and at least 10 people were killed. This happened as a series of terrorist attacks after the US-led coalition formally handed over sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government in June.⁹⁶ It gives an impression to Christians in Iraq in general that post-Saddam Iraq is not necessarily favorable toward Christian minorities. Discussions on the new Iraq show little interests either Assyrians or other Christians in Iraq.

Despite the political turmoil in Iraq, the relationship between the Assyrian Church and other Christian Churches (WCC) has somewhat improved in terms of mutual theological understanding through the World Council of Churches movement. Within the WCC the Assyrian Church has participated in multilateral dialogue with Catholic, Orthodox, Oriental,

⁹² Ibid., p.58

⁹³ Aprim, op.cit., pp.5-6, quoting Iraq’s Crime of Genocide, 1995, Human Rights Watch, op.cit., p.209

⁹⁴ Aprim, Ibid., p.6, quoting US Department of State Country Report on Iraq 2000, Section 2.c

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch, op.cit., pp.33-35. Considering the widespread denial of freedom of movement in Iraq at the time, this was a great privilege. These were mainly women whose marriages with American Assyrians were arranged. On the other hand, American women married to Iraqis residing in Iraq found themselves and their children deprived of the right to leave Iraq. They were forced to take Iraqi citizenship.

⁹⁶ www.atour.com/news, 1 and 2, Aug. 2004

Anglican, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches.⁹⁷ Mar Dinkha IV sought to gain admission to the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) but this was denied by the Coptic Orthodox Church. In 1995, a joint declaration on Christology with the Coptic Orthodox Church worked out but rejected by the Coptic synod. However, the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church was successful to have resulted in the “Common Christological Declaration” in 1994. Also, reunion with the “Ancient Church of the East” was discussed and the two patriarchs had agreed on in 1984, but it had not yet happened owing to political and tribal reasons.⁹⁸

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Assyrians in diaspora are more active than in homeland. With the recent war and following disturbances in Iraq, Assyrians in Iraq are facing the new page of their history.

⁹⁷ Baum, *op.cit.*, p. 151

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.152-154

Chapter 2. Discourse on the Assyrian Identity

1. Various appellations

Assyrians have many names that designate the group. The fact that a group has more than a name hints at the complexity of its history and identity.

“The Persian Church” is the oldest name for Assyrians and is not commonly used today. As mentioned in the previous chapter,¹ the headship of the Persian Church was established in 410 under Persian King Yazdegerd I’s approval. As the year 410 is earlier than Council of Ephesus (431) at which Christology of Nestorius was officially condemned as heresy, the Persian Church cannot have been separately established based on its different dogma. Rather, it must taken as a Christian church geographically separated from Roman church and also politically separated to avoid suspicion of being co-religionist with Romans. Winkler comments that to call this group “Persian Church” is only partially correct and too narrow both chronologically and geographically.²

The most commonly used name is “the Nestorian Church,” or “Nestorians” for its adherents. But this also has been problematic since the group precedes Nestorianism and so-called ‘Nestorianism’ was not founded by Nestorius. Since Nestorius had already been condemned as heretical at the Council of Ephesus in 431, theological opponents could use this name conveniently.³ Brock sees this appellation as “a lamentable misnomer,”⁴ and

¹ see Ch.1, p.3

² Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar Winkler, *The Church of the East: A concise history*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003, p.3

³ S. Brock, “The ‘Nestorian’ Church: A Lamentable Misnomer”, in J.F.Coakley and K. Parry (eds.), *The Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Volume 78, Number 3, Autumn 1996, p.29. McGuckin further suggests that as soon as Nestorius was inaugurated in Constantinople, he became disliked by or opposed by many influential factions in the city. By compelling several reforms he made the factions his enemies one by one: by banning Arianism he lost military support, as it had Gothic mercenaries who followed Arianism, by banning the circus he lost support from the masses, by forcing the reformation of monasticism to bring it under church hierarchy, he lost the support of the monks who were keen participants in city politics and social life, and by limiting women’s active participation in liturgy and social service, he lost the support of noble ladies including powerful Pulcheria, the sister of the weak Emperor. Pulcheria was a patron of most of those

points out that Nestorius' work was not even translated and introduced to the Church of the East until the sixth century.⁵ According to Atiya while Nestorius was exiled to Lybia, theologians in Edessa was divided into two groups after the second Council of Ephesus (449): one Nestorian, the other Monophysite. The leaders of Nestorian theology fled into Persia. Atiya's view is a church (theology)-centered one which says the followers of Nestorianism migrated en mass and set up Nestorian Church in Persia.⁶ Atiya raised another issue that the appellation 'Nestorian' came to be used in official or semi-official documents of the Church only in the thirteenth century when Mar 'Abd-Isho formulated the 'The Orthodox Creed of the Nestorians' in 1298.⁷ Atiya also notes that the term has much older use by Arab writers but without mentioning how much older.⁸ But Fortescue claims that it has been used since the fifth century.⁹

Winkler suggests the 'pre-Ephesian Church' owing to incorrectness of the term 'Nestorian' in a formal theological sense.¹⁰ Usage of the name "Nestorian Church" is decreasing in modern days due to its implication of heresy. Considering theological and administrative development of this church, the usage of "Persian Church" should be restricted to the church in Persia before 498 in which the complete independence was accomplished and the title "Patriarch of the East" was assumed.¹¹ It seems that the Church of Persia was consisted of different theological trends in the beginning and in the course of time the Nestorians attained

factions. McGuckin attributes this failure to his inexperience [in politics] and inflexibility. He also notes that the venue of the Council was changed from Constantinople to Ephesus, not his home ground, under pressure from Pulcheria. (J.A. McGuckin, "Nestorius and the Political Factions of Fifth-century Byzantium: Factions in His Personal Downfall", in the same *Bulletin*, pp.7-21)

⁴ Ibid., pp.23-35

⁵ Ibid., p.30

⁶ Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, pp.249-252

⁷ Ibid., p.239 footnote

⁸ Ibid., p.246 footnote

⁹ Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy II, The Lesser Eastern Churches*, Georgias Press, Piscataway, 2001. p.7

¹⁰ Baum, op.cit., p.3

¹¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.253. Atiya does not mention the independence of the Church of Persia in 410.

the hegemony among Christians.¹²

Though “Nestorian Church” is the most commonly used both by outsiders and themselves, the official name of this church has been “the Apostolic Church of the East,” or more casually “the Church of the East.” This appellation shows the idea of differentiating its being ‘Eastern’ parallel to the ‘Western’ church in Rome.¹³

“The Assyrian Church of the East” became official name in 1976,¹⁴ or “the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East” in full.¹⁵ “The Assyrian Church” is the most frequently used name since the nineteenth century. But before this name began to be used, its Catholic branch adopted the name “Chaldean/Chaldaean Church.” When it was united in the sixteenth century, a rather ethnic name ‘Chaldaean’ was adopted, according to Atiya, to dodge the obvious contradiction in the use of the words “Catholic Nestorian.”¹⁶ As writings in the West show that in the seventeenth century Pope Paul V used name ‘Chaldaeans’ and Assemani called “Children of the Old Chadaeans,” the Catholic branch was known as Chaldaean in the West. But according to Brentjes, only since the late nineteenth century this Catholics call themselves ‘Chaldaeans.’¹⁷

Scholars see the usage of name ‘the Assyrian Church’ as adopted by Anglican missionaries in the eighteenth century as a reaction to the term ‘Chaldaean.’¹⁸ The logic here is since “the Church of the East” is older than Catholic ‘Chaldaean’ Church, the older name had to be found, hence Assyrian. Archeological findings seemed to suggest that the people living in and

¹² see Atiya, op.cit., pp.252-253

¹³ The concept ‘East’ or ‘West’ here means ‘East or West of Euphrates’, i.e. ‘Eastern Empire which is Persia vs. Western Roman Empire,’ not the present usage of ‘Oriental’ versus ‘European’.

¹⁴ Baum, op.cit., p.3

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_church_of_the_East The Holy, Apostolic and Catholic adjectives were officially added to the name in part to conform generally with the Nicene Creed which declares that “We believe in one and holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

¹⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.279 footnote

¹⁷ Burchard Brentjes, *The Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds – Three Nations, One Fate?*, Rishi Publications, Campbell, 1997, p.53

¹⁸ These days the English terms ‘Chaldaean’ and ‘Aramaean’ are more simply written as ‘Chaldean’ and ‘Aramean’ or ‘Aramaic’ for the language.

around Ninveh and Mosul which was once Assyrian empire were the descendents of ancient Assyrians and supported the usage of the name ‘Assyrian’ for this people. But this appellation seems to have received strong rejection especially by Western Catholics. Fortescue, who used to insist that a name is only a technical label,¹⁹ for example, fiercely resents this name while he comments on various names for this group of people, saying,

The *Nestorians* must be so called. It is the name used universally for them since the fifth century. They do not resent it in the least. ...A fashion is growing up among their Anglican friends of avoiding the word because they do not really hold the heresy associated with Nestorius’ name, nor were they founded by him. ...other name to use...Chaldee will not do. It always used for Uniates. People have tried “the Persian Church”; “the Turkish Church” would be as good. Or the “Eastern Syrian Church”; that is better; but there are so many East Syrian Churches...The favourite name now among their Anglican sympathizers seems to be “the Assyrian Church.” This is the worst of all. They are Assyrians in no possible sense. They live in one corner of what was once the Assyrian Empire.²⁰

The early twentieth century European Catholic-centered Fortescue keeps using double standard on the terms ‘Assyian’ and ‘Chaldaean.’

The only reason for giving the name of a race or a nation to a religious body is that the religion is or has been that of the race or nation. ...And, of course, “Assyrian Church” is emphatically not its old, accepted, or common name. It is a new fad of a handful of Anglicans. ... “Catholic Nestorians” would be too absurd...Chaldee and Chaldaean are the names *always* used. They are not really particularly appropriate, but in this case we have the clinching reason of universal use. They always call themselves so; it is their official name at Rome.²¹

Fortescue’s remarks on ‘Nestorians’ throughout his book shows how this name stigmatized

¹⁹ Fortescue, op.cit., p.7

²⁰ Ibid., p.7, Emphasis is original.

²¹ Ibid., p.8, Emphasis added.

the church and its adherents in Western Church after its excommunication.²² But Fortescue also recognizes the name ‘Nestorian’ is a misnomer. He says, “Nestorius only gave his name to a heresy which existed before his time....His opponents knew this.”²³

Despite all the disputes, a close look to self-appellations is necessary. As shall be dealt in another part,²⁴ first Christians among Aramaic language users developed a ‘Christian’ Aramaic in accordance with the ecclesiastical development. This Christian Aramaic was called ‘Syriac’ while ‘Aramaean’ was associated with non-Christians. The members of the Western group (who use Western Syriac) call themselves *Suriani/Suriyani*, and the Eastern group (who use Eastern Syriac) *Suraye* in Syriac.²⁵ This *Suraye* (people, *Suriyaya* in classic), is an adoption of Greek ‘Suriya’ (empire) which in turn came from the ancient name of empire ‘Atur’ or ‘Assuriya’ with the first ‘a’ omitted.²⁶ According to ‘Abdullah al-Hellow, the right form of the word ‘Syria’ is ‘Surya’ without a vowel on the letter ‘r.’ Since Assyria, among ancient Mesopotamian empires, was the strongest and best known to Greeks, Greeks call the Fertile Crescent area with the name Assyria but without the initial letters of ‘as’ owing to the phonetic reason.²⁷ Anis Freyha presents that the word ‘Suriya’ was used by

²² see Fortescue, *ibid.* He never hesitates to call them ‘animals,’ ‘the oldest schismatic church,’ and ‘unreasonable.’ Ironically enough, when he describes the successful mission stories of ‘Nestorians,’ he changes his attitude and treats them as ‘our Christian brothers.’

²³ *Ibid.*, p.60

²⁴ see Part I and II Ch.4 language sections

²⁵ Brentjes, *op.cit.*, pp.49-50

²⁶ Bishop J.E. Manna, Dr. Raphael J. Bidawid, *Chaldean-Arabic Dictionary*, Babel Center Publications, Beirut, 1975. p.487 footnote. ‘Syria’, the Greek and Latin form of ‘Surya’ was in use long before Christianity and establishment of the Churches. ‘Syria’ was used as the official Roman province name from its beginning in the year 64 with its capital Antioch. (Ross Burns, *Monuments of Syria, An historical guide*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. London, 1992, reprinted in 1995, pp.4-7) It is possible that Christians adopted the foreign form of the name for their groups to distinguish themselves from native non-Christian people and identify themselves with the Western co-religionists.

²⁷ ‘Abdullah al-Hellow, *Haqiqat ta'rikhiyah lughawiyah fi al-asma' al-jughrafiyah al-suriyah* (Historical and linguistic truths of Syrian geographical names), Beisan, Beirut, Lebanon, 1999, pp.23, 25. Rollinger concludes that interchangeable usage between the two terms ‘Syria’ and ‘Assyria’ began in southern Anatolia and northern Syria not through the usage of Greeks or Assyrians, based on the discovery of an inscription from the eighth century B.C. (Robert Rollinger, *The Terms “Assyria” and “Syria” again*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 65 No. 4, 2006, p.286.) ‘Assur’ was originally a name for the capital city of the Assyrian Empire and the name of its patron god but its meaning is now unknown. (Jean Bottero, *Mesopotamia, Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*,

Babylonians in designating west of the Euphrates and then expanded its usage to wider region.²⁸ When modern nationalism arose among this people, the name *Suraye* was already too religious which only meant “Christian,” so nationalists readopt an old name *Atur*, that is Assyria, as an ethnic name. In accordance with the need of the age, people adopted names in different forms to differentiate from others to mean Christian, or to mean ethnic Assyrian.²⁹

Both *Suriyani* and *Suraye*³⁰ were translated into ‘Assyrian’ when immigrants of the Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Christians³¹ and the Church of the East Christians³² first faced the need of translation in their new country.³³ In Arabic, ‘Atur’ is transcribed as ‘Athur,’ ‘Atur,’ or ‘Ashshur.’ ‘Athur’ and ‘Atur’ are transcription from the Syriac words, while ‘Ashshur’ is from the Western form of ancient kingdom name ‘Assyria.’^{34 35}

Since the name of Catholic branch ‘Chaldea’ has ethnic connotation, a compromised forms also found. Among nationalists who are Catholic the term ‘Chaldo-Assyrians’ is used as in the book of Addai Scher,³⁶ but ‘Chaldaeans’ and ‘Assyro-Chaldaeans’ are distinguishably

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992, p.289)

²⁸ Anis Freyha, *A Dictionary of the Names of Towns and Villages in Lebanon*, Libraire du Liban, 1996, the 4th print, p.XIV

²⁹ Ironically, the name ‘Syria’ was adopted to designate the modern country Syria. It is noteworthy that it was used by Christians and adopted by the Ottomans and as the official name under French mandate. This name was not known to Arabic speakers of the time. (Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998, pp.61-62)

³⁰ Suraya is a singular, and Suraye is a plural form.

³¹ who use Western Syriac

³² who use Eastern Syriac

³³ Ulf Bjorklund, *North to Another Country – the Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden*, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, The Swedish Commission on Immigration Research, 1981, pp.57-58. Syrian (or Syriac) Orthodox Church translated its official name until the 1960s as “Assyrian” Church. (Sargon Donabed, *Remnants of Heroes – The Assyrian Experience, The continuity of the Assyrian heritage from Kharput to New England*, Assyrian Academic Society Press, Chicago, 2003, pp.77-81)

³⁴ All with a long vowel ‘u.’ In Hebrew, the Syriac ‘t’ is realized as ‘s’ or ‘sh.’ In the Bible, the ancient kingdom of Assyria appears as ‘Atur’ in Eastern Syriac, ‘Asur’ in Western Syriac.

³⁵ Philologist Shahan sees ‘Ashshur’ or ‘Asshury’ for its adjective as an incorrect transliteration. According to his explanation, in transliteration of Syriac into Arabic, ‘t’ after ‘alif’ with ‘a’ vowel becomes ‘th’. So, ‘Athur’ and ‘Athury’ are the right forms. The initial ‘a’ is taken to mean its inhabitants or people. This people called themselves ‘suraye’ but after Westerners started to call them ‘Assyrian,’ they called themselves ‘Atouraye.’ From a private lecture.

³⁶ See Addai Scher, *Ta’rikh Kaldu wa Athur*, Beyrouth Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1913

used in the laws of Syria and Lebanon.³⁷ During the World War I, ‘Assyro-Chaldean’ was used for their battalion name.³⁸ Simple separated form of ‘Chaldeans and Assyrians’ is also used.³⁹

“The Ancient Church of the East” which bifurcated from the Assyrian Church of the East in the 1960s, however, has not introduced a new name for its followers.

Scholars tend to overlook the importance of naming of a group. Despite his long and passionate dispute over names ‘Assyria’ and ‘Chaldea,’ Fortescue sees name as “only label.”⁴⁰ In spite of his good inquiry, Atiya deals naming and is historical usage only in his footnotes.⁴¹ Naming of a group, however, directly related to its self-identification and perception of a given group by others. The following chapters will show how the appellation ‘Nestorian’ makes people think the group was founded by Nestorius, and ‘Assyrian’ as direct descendents of ancient Assyrian kingdom. Also, how the name ‘Chaldean’ drives people to see themselves as a different ethnic group will be explored.

2. Assyrian identity building in history

History of a group is not necessarily a record of facts and any writing cannot be absolutely objective. The importance of historical events for a group lies on how a certain event or series of events have been imprinted in the group members’ collective memory and what and how much to the group identity building they contribute. This section will examine history of Assyrians as a group identity building process.

³⁷ Brentjes, op.cit., p.53

³⁸ See Austin, H. H. *The Baqubah Refuge Camp - An Account of Work on behalf of the Persecuted Assyrian Christians*, The Faith Press, Manchester, 1920

³⁹ Scher, *Ta'rikh Kaldu wa Athur*, Beyrouth Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1913, The title of his book, and he traces geographical differences of these two ancient cities.

⁴⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.7

⁴¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.279

Church traditions tend to trace the church origin as close to Jesus or his disciples as possible as a proof of its legitimacy. The famous story of the King Abgar V of Urhai and Addai which tells how Christianity was introduced to the people of Mesopotamia relates the origin of Assyrian Church to Jesus. The story of three Magi who visited infant Jesus links even to earlier time. And the tradition of the Apostle Thomas and his disciples also traces the origin of Assyrian Church back to the very beginning of the Christianity. The story of three magis seems less popular and only glimpses possibility of the magis' Urhai or Eddessan origin. Church historian Atiya distinguishes "age of legend" which includes these three traditions and "historic origins" which relates famous schools of Edessa and Nisibis and their theologians. He insists that the King Abgar tradition is a legend with questionable historicity due to its anachronisms.⁴² Winkler also claims that the story is a definite fiction and pure legend whose first version was written in 303 or 312 not during the first century. But this story appears in many early church writings. Eusebius in the fourth century wrote in Greek but the name of Addai is changed into 'Thaddeus,'⁴³ and the fifth and sixth century Mount Sinai scripts also contain this story in Syriac and Arabic. Latin and Armenian versions of the story are also found.⁴⁴

Despite its obscure historicity, importance of the story is, as Winkler pointed out, the defense of an orthodoxy going back to Jesus.⁴⁵ As a Christian church, Christians in Mesopotamia needed to have legitimacy for establishment of the church and its community. The elaboration of such church traditions was an effort more required when the church and a community was in formulation rather than when the Christianity was introduced. Grave of the

⁴² Atiya op.cit., pp.242-252

⁴³ Baum, op.cit., p.13

⁴⁴ Atiya op.cit., p.243

⁴⁵ Baum, op.cit., p.13

Apostle Thomas added the authenticity of the church.⁴⁶ This is what Hobsbawm would call “the invention of tradition” in early days.⁴⁷ Winkler concludes,

Because of the letters from Jesus, the grave of Thomas, and the portrait of Jesus, Edessa was one of early Christianity’s most important sites...This assures not only the apostolic nature of the church but also its directly divine origins.⁴⁸

Origin of the Church of the East in terms of its institutionalization is attributed to the synod of 410 which obtained official recognition of the headship of the Church of the East by the king of Persia and authority to appoint bishop was given to the Catholicos of the Church.⁴⁹ With series of synods in the late fifth century, the Church of the East was institutionalized itself. Rival Monophysites were weakened by massacre which was influenced by Bar Sauma, the leader of the Church of the East. The Synod of 484 condemned all other doctrines of churches in Rome. It legalized the marriage of priests and bishops.⁵⁰ As Zoroastrians in Persia regarded marriage as sacred, abolition of celibacy in the Church of the East can be interpreted as Zoroastrian influence and also as a mean of differentiate itself from the Christianity in the Roman Empire. Also the synod produced canons against misconduct of priests.⁵¹ Church hierarchy with metropolitanates and bishoprics was established. Expulsion of theologians by Roman emperor Zeno in 489, accelerated the institutionalization of the Church of the East, since a prominent theologian of the time, Narsai, founded a theological school in Nisibis which became educational center of the Church of the East. The school is the first theological university on record.⁵² Christology was elaborated through synods in the sixth century, the Syriac Bible was revised, the Syriac version of liturgy was prepared, and

⁴⁶ The bones of Thomas were transferred to Edessa from India at some point.

⁴⁷ See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, Korean translation version, Humanist, Seoul, 2004

⁴⁸ Baum, op.cit., p.14

⁴⁹ A.V. Williams, “Zoroastrians and Christians in Sasanian Iran”, in Coakley (eds.), op.cit., p.41

⁵⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.252

⁵¹ Baum, op.cit., p.28

⁵² Atiya, op.cit., p.253

monasteries in the mount Izala flourished.

But the Christological development of this period was based on the theology of Theodore of Mopsuetia rather than on the Nestorius' as often criticized and condemned. As Atiya pointed out, Christology of the Church of the East was developed separately from that of Churches in the Roman Empire. Rather, since ecumenical councils were held basically for Churches in Roman Empire and their theological controversies, theology of the Church of the East could grow without outside interference.⁵³ While Rome condemned the Church of the East as Nestorian since 430 partly due to linguistic misunderstandings of Syriac⁵⁴ and partly political enmity, his name was not introduced to the Church of the East synod until 612,⁵⁵ and his writing was only translated into Syriac in 539-540.⁵⁶ Nestorius was first mentioned in Narsai's *Homily on the Three Greek Doctors* with Theodore and Deodore. And Nestorius was portrayed simply as a martyr of the Antiochene Christology.⁵⁷

But the Church of the East must have been known as 'Nestorian' among Churches in the Roman Empire without considering its relation with Nestorius or Christology. The relation and appropriateness of the term was dealt with in the previous section. Baum presents Al-Masudi's writing in the tenth century that the adherents of the Church of the East rejected the designation "Nestorian" but preferred to call themselves Ibad, or servants of God.⁵⁸ But in the eleventh century writing, the head of the Church of the East refers themselves as "Nestorians" as saying, "we Nestorians are the friends of the Arabs and pray for their victory."⁵⁹ In the ninth century, a member of the Church of the East, Gabriel obtained

⁵³ Ibid., p.257

⁵⁴ Baum, op.cit., p.39

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.30

⁵⁶ Brock, op.cit., p.30

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.28, Baum, op.cit., p.30

⁵⁸ Baum, Ibid., p.49

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.81

Chaliphal permission to transfer the bone of Nestorius to the church of Kokhe.⁶⁰ In the writing at the end of the thirteenth century, refusal of being called “Nestorians” still found. They are told prefer to refer to themselves as “Nazarantare” or “Nazareni.”⁶¹ Those who refused to be called Nestorian may disliked the appellation due to its designation of the heresy, which is their opponents’ view. However, it seems that the group began to call themselves Nestorian when the naming became prevailing and the group was known with that name. Continuous usage of the name by others may have led them to accept the name and use it toward outsiders. Such usage may have reinforced the group’s Nestorian identity. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts, the term Nestorian was used by the members of the Church of the East showing no objection to it. Attempt to transfer of Nestorian’s bone itself attests the importance of Nestorius to the Church of the East. The church was re-introduced to the West as heretic Nestorian by Crusades.

History of the Church of the East, as like many other churches, is often depicted as a history of persecution. Though there were times of inner division and persecution, the Church of the East successfully institutionalized. History of occasional persecutions and resulted martyrdom in Christian history often serves as contributory factor to inner cohesion and often taken as a glorious group history. So was the Church of the East. And church began to represent itself through the genre of the martyrdom, the mythologized sacred history,⁶² not necessarily with accurate historical information. A pattern of persecution which is a political and religious scapegoat, as Williams mentioned, is generally applicable to all other period of time.⁶³ The Church of the East, a minority religious group, was persecuted when Persia was

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.65

⁶¹ Ibid., p.100

⁶² Williams, op.cit., p.40

⁶³ Ibid., p.44

at war with Rome accusing of supporting the enemy (Rome in this case), or when the majority Zoroastrians became jealous because of increasing converts to Christianity and the ruler wanted to appease them and have political support of majority.⁶⁴ Persecution by Zoroastrians disappeared by the ninth century when they were no threat to each other.⁶⁵ However trivial the persecutions were, they were remembered and recollected clearly in the collective memory.

Another important historical achievement, hence important in collective memory, is the Church of the East's great mission which reached to the Central Asia and China. In Arabia, there was a bishopric already in 410 through Christians who fled from persecution. The mission to Turkestan started at the end of the fifth century when Persian king Kawad I fled temporarily to the region accompanying priests of the Church of the East.⁶⁶ Atiya presents several factors which contributed to the successful mission the Church of the East: geographical condition of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (where patriarchal see was located) as a meeting place for caravans from Arabia, Central Asia, India and China, developed monastic system and established church hierarchy as well as religious commitment, and 'extremely' modern missionary enterprise such as school, library and hospital.⁶⁷ In other words, the institutionalized Church could provide religious education to its adherents and gained committed missionaries in turn. While the religious passion could use the flight as mission opportunities, contribution of geographical and political factor cannot be neglected. Since Persia provided political separation from Rome, the Church of the East could spread its doctrine and jurisdiction in Persia and Arabia which were free from Churches in the Roman Empire. Since Persia was politically settled, merchants from different regions could pass and

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.40

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.53

⁶⁶ Baum, *op.cit.*, p.32

⁶⁷ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.257

meet at Seleucia-Ctesiphon and priests of the Church could travel out through caravan road. And later, since Muslims defeated Rome, the Church of the East could reach to Jerusalem without political hindrance of Rome. While Muslims moved fast westward, the Church of the East moved eastward to the Central Asia and China.⁶⁸

Though this great mission gave the Patriarch of the Church of the East much bigger Church and population under his jurisdiction than the Pope of Rome in the Middle Age, and spread of Syriac and translation of the Bible even to Chinese was carried out, Christianity remained in the regions as ‘foreigners’ religion, the ‘Persian religion.’⁶⁹ Baum further reports not only localization but religious syncretism in the region.⁷⁰ In the eighth century, Christianity (of the Church of the East) in China was known as the “religion of enlightenment,” or “religion of illumination,” that is *Kyung Kyo* in Chinese, of ‘Ta-Tsin’ (East Rome).⁷¹ Marco Polo at the end of the thirteenth century reports churches belong to the Church of the East in China. But they disappeared under persecution of Ming dynasty and finally by Timur. However, territorial nationalism among the twentieth century Assyrians did not attempt to include the Central Asia and China or India as their own territory of the past.

Mar Bawai Soro relates the practical situation of the great missions, which demanded some sort of sign of unity and authenticity, to the development, or introduction, of the Holy Leaven, or *Malka* tradition.⁷² It is a sacrament unique to the Church of the East. It is an addition of the Holy Leaven to the Eucharist bread before baking. And this Holy Leaven is said to be a loaf of bread given to John the Apostle by Jesus at the Last Supper. One tradition says John

⁶⁸ Atiya argues that Central Asia also has a legend of Aggai’s mission there. In China, a mission story of St. Thomas is also found. (Atiya, *ibid.*, pp.259, 261) These stories and the St. Thomas tradition in India can be interpreted as the same kind of effort to legitimate their churches.

⁶⁹ Baum *op.cit.*, p.47, 88

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.75-76, p.88

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.47, 48

⁷² Mar Bawai Soro, *The Sacrament of the Holy Leaven “Malka: in the Church of the East”*, A paper presented at the Fifth Pro Oriente Non-official Consultation on Dialogue within the Churches of the Syriac Tradition: “Sacraments in the Syriac Tradition – Part II”, p.3

preserved the bread and put it into Jesus' side when he was on the cross so that his Blood is mixed. And this bread was given to other disciples including Addai and Mari who came to the East.⁷³ Later tradition becomes more elaborated saying that John the Baptist collected water dropping from Jesus' body after his baptism and gave it to John the Apostle who also later preserved a piece of bread from the Eucharist, again on which he took the blood from Jesus' side on the cross and collected the water from Jesus' side on the cross with the water from his baptism.⁷⁴ As Mar Soro points out, the importance of the tradition is that by celebrating baptism and eucharist Jesus' baptism and the Last Supper are still celebrated.⁷⁵ And later defense on its practice reflects that there were objections from other Christians and the Church of the East tried to keep its own people faithful to their church and its practices.⁷⁶ The *Malka*, the King, tradition functions as Abgar or Thomas traditions to Assyrians but in more theologized form as one of sacraments.

Advent of Islam is often related to Nestorian monk Bahira who prophesied young Mohammad his prophethood.⁷⁷ Churches in the Middle East blame the Church of the East as one who opened the door for Islam. The Coptic Orthodox Church has a liturgical condemnation of it which still hinders ecumenical dialogue between the two churches today. But the validity of the story and question on the name Bahira, either it is a personal name or a word for monk, have been raised. The story is written in Latin, Syriac and Arabic languages but with considerable differences. And the story contains lengthy prophecy on the future, the coming [Islamic] Empires. After a thorough study on three versions of this story, Benedict Landron concludes and asserts that this Apocalypse of Bahira was written with intent to tell

⁷³ Shlemon d-Basra thirteenth century, Ibid., p.5

⁷⁴ Yohanan bar Zo'bee fourteenth century, Ibid., pp.5-6

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.7

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.8

⁷⁷ Some insist that Bahira was a Syriac Orthodox monk. Baum thinks the story may be a legend. (Baum, op.cit., p.42) Fortescue says it is likely. (Fortescue, op.cit., p.92)

Christians not to convert to Islam after all.⁷⁸ Baum also gives a more practical reason of the conflict saying that because the members of the Church of the East often served the Arab government.⁷⁹ In fact, in the beginning of Islamic rule, many from the Church of the East were recruited as civil officers of the government. According to Fortescue, they were the most powerful non-Muslim community and later its head became the representative of whole Christian communities.⁸⁰ During the Umayyads, the number of monasteries increased and Christians of the Church of the East were generally tolerated.⁸¹

However, as Baum pointed out, as the capital of new Abbasids was moved to Baghdad, they became more vulnerable to governmental interference due to the proxy.⁸² Also, the general pattern of persecution is found. War with Byzantine, which was officially Christian kingdom, increased persecution of Christians in Islamic empire. Christians migrate to neighboring Byzantine Empire escaping from persecution and oppress. Their migration increases Muslim's suspicion. In turn, Christians who were left in Persia have more reasons to be persecuted.⁸³ In many cases, persecutions were carried out on the basis of economic reason or personal rivalry.⁸⁴ But, in the memory of a group, persecution is always interpreted as religious. Persecution and the fate largely depended on the relationship of Caliph and the Church as they have depended on personal ruler in Persia in the past. So, when Nestorians welcomed Islamic rule, and when Catholicos Abraham III said that "we Nestorians are the friends of the Arabs and pray for their victory,"⁸⁵ they were to secure their survival under

⁷⁸ Benedict Landron, *Chretiens et Musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam*, Cariscript, Paris, 1994, pp.71-78

⁷⁹ Baum, op.cit., p.59

⁸⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.93

⁸¹ Baum, op.cit., p.44

⁸² Ibid., p.59

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Atiya, op.cit., p.269

⁸⁵ Baum, op.cit., p.81

new rulers by differentiating themselves from the Christians in Byzantine Empire.⁸⁶ Winkler suggests that the correspondence with Muhammad and the Caliph Omar were production of much later which were made in order to show the Muslims the amicable relations between the first catholicos and the prophet himself.⁸⁷ In this light, the twelfth century effort to reconcile with the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the trial to invite Maronites to join them at the end of the eighth century⁸⁸ could be seen as a possible survival strategy of the days.⁸⁹ According to Baum, it was under Buyids and Seljuks when the relations between Christianity and Islam deteriorated.⁹⁰

3. Modern discourse

Modern nationalism among Assyrians is often associated with archeological finding at Nineveh and the usage of name Assyrian for Nestorians by missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century. This excavation was taken as evidence that tells Assyrians were/are the direct descendants of the Ancient Assyrians. While scholars note that it is not strictly true and regard “an imaginative act of labeling,”⁹¹ virtually all Eastern Syriacs, namely Nestorians and Chaldaeans, firmly believe in their being posterity of people of great ancient Assyrian Empire.⁹² Bjorklund explains that contact with the West had exposed this people to nationalistic ideas, along with adopting a written form of the language which was so far spoken with the help of missionaries, in addition to the archeological findings, the boundary

⁸⁶ Fortescue, *op.cit.*, p.91

⁸⁷ Baum, *op.cit.*, p.41

⁸⁸ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.272

⁸⁹ Meanwhile, it is also possible to see these as an arrogant attitude of the Church of the East since it had a large jurisdiction and was in favor with the government.

⁹⁰ Baum, *op.cit.*, p.81

⁹¹ Bjorklund, *op.cit.*, p.22, and see also Fortescue, *op.cit.*, and others

⁹² see materials from Assyrians

between the Christians and the surrounding Kurds became more clearly defined.⁹³

The massacre of Christians in 1915 and 1916 marks the beginning of modern historical memory of Assyrians shared with other Christian communities such of Chaldaeans, Syriac Orthodox Christians and Armenians. This event is the most remarkable historical event which changed not only the fate of those communities but also the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the region. It is called *Saifo*, the years of the sword, among Syriac speakers.⁹⁴ While Armenians focus their resentment on Turks, Syriac speaking Christians tend to pay their attention to Kurds who carried out the massacre. This recallable recent history, comparing to good old days which they cannot often remember, sometimes contributes to an idea among Christians that their relationship with Islamic government had been amicable especially during the first Khalifates but it was only Ottomans who misused the religion and distorted the relationship.⁹⁵ The same logic is also often used among Muslims who do not want to be disturbed by the sore history.

Though it is obvious that the reason of Christian massacre by Ottoman government was its Turanism, Turkish nationalism, pursuing its national advancement including management of natural resources through expulsion of Christians who were not of their own people from its territory, it was religious sentiment that they used in practice. Jihad was proclaimed and mosques were where massacre plan and plot were distributed and elaborated. Kamal Ahmad gives accounts on that.

In numerous areas, on government orders, the mullas, muftis and other clerics aroused the people and incited them publicly to kill the 'heathens'. During the first massacre, the mufti of Palu kept urging the people to kill, asking them not to start with loot and plunder at the beginning. The officials in Erzurum openly encouraged them with shouts of: 'Kill the

⁹³ Bjorklund, op.cit., pp.26, 22

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.23

⁹⁵ Malfono A. N. Qarahbashi, *Damm al-Masfuk* (The Shed Blood), Translated by Arshbishop George Saliba, Mount Lebanon, 2005, p.21, and others.

Christians and fear nothing,’ and ‘Death to the Christians and long live the Muslims.’...simple-minded folk that killing the Armenians was ‘a mission the nation of Muhammad was obliged to fulfill’...Many simple-minded Kurds regarded killing the Armenians as a *jihad* for the glory of God.⁹⁶

He painfully adds,

It must be admitted that thoughtless religious prejudice and cultural backwardness were two of the main reasons why many Kurds strove to earn God’s ‘blessing’ through participating in the liquidation on the ‘infidels’.⁹⁷

From the massacred side, too, it was taken as religious. Theophilos Saliba, the translator of a book on the massacre, in his forward to the book quotes Jesus saying “Whosoever will come after me, let him...take up his cross and follow me”⁹⁸ indicating the death as religious.

Despite Kamal Ahmad tries to acquit Kurds of massacre quoting Wigram who described them as innocent exploited instruments,⁹⁹ once religiously mobilized they were active practitioners of their religious duty on their side.¹⁰⁰ Then, it is clear that the reason of massacre was religious at least between the killing and the killed. And this was how the event was remembered and recollected by Assyrians. Also, it shows a pattern of political use of religion and its potency. As discussed earlier, their death becomes worthy by giving religious meaning and is understood in the context of continuity through recalling previous history of persecution. In turn, the shared experience reinforced group cohesion distinctive from surrounding others which was already settled by millet system. It is noteworthy that social disturbances and increasing conflict between Christians and Muslims was the result of whole change which the new political order brought. Ottoman regime wanted to extend its central

⁹⁶ Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan During the First World War*, Saqi Books, London, 1994, p.157

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.156

⁹⁸ Mark 8:34

⁹⁹ Ahmad, op.cit., p.220

¹⁰⁰ Even their ‘thoughtlessness’ and ‘backwardness’ were reasons, murder cannot be justified even in legal court today.

power to the mountainous areas and from the beginning of the nineteenth century traditional tribal system *'asirto* in which Christians allied to Kurdish aghas was targeted to be dismantled.¹⁰¹ General better off of Christians and the need of traditional Kurdish aghas and sheiks to divert discontent to keep their position helped mutual hatred and differentiation.¹⁰² In addition to that, as Bjorklund pointed out, the weakened Christian groups were no longer attractive to Kurds as they used to be as partners in alliance.¹⁰³ So, it is not accurate to say that the Western missionaries' presence in the region broke the equilibrium.¹⁰⁴ Rather, the whole empire was in transition.¹⁰⁵

Besides the suffering which made Assyrians yearn for escaping from the persecution, presence and availability of the Western power and British promise to give autonomy, more decisively, in exchange to participation in the First World War, led Assyrians develop nationalistic ideas in concrete sense. Collective experiences of massacre, taking refuge in Baqubah, and military service supporting British campaign all accelerated group solidarity. Nationalistic writings increased, Assyrian newspapers and magazines appeared, and Assyrian organizations overseas set up. These organizations and writings largely employed ancient Assyrian legacy in claiming their right to return to their homeland and have an autonomous, if not independent, region.

When Assyrians realized that British promise would not be accomplished, the feeling of betrayal was enormous and began to feel even more insecure in Iraq, a newly formed state. Their feeling on British betrayal can be understood better paradoxically from Assyrians' thanksgiving toward Britain during their stay in Baqubah camp. An account of the camp by Brigadier-General Austin describes how Assyrian children learn English and expressed their

¹⁰¹ Bjorklund, op.cit., p.35

¹⁰² Ibid., p.42, 46

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.47

¹⁰⁴ Baum, op.cit., p.123

¹⁰⁵ Whole world more exactly.

appreciation with a poem. Title of the poem is “Thanksgiving.” One of its verses reads,

The rain that falls in Iraq’s plain

An the great care of the English gentlemen-

These surely could not be in vain,

For it is God’s plan for the Assyrians to remain ¹⁰⁶

Austin’s book ends with an appendix named “Assyrian Thanks to British” which was written by National Assyrian Committee in 1920. It says how British established Baqubah camp for Assyrians, how they helped and introduced sanitary system, orphanage, and hospitals, and how the British influence on the Turkish Empire to protected them. The letter mentions that the Committee writes a thanksgiving letter since Assyrians cannot make repayment by money.¹⁰⁷

But not only Assyrians, but also Iraq itself was in the midst of state formation and consequential identity building at that time. Eric Davis points out that in Iraq there were two competing models of political community, one Iraqist and the other Pan-Arabist.¹⁰⁸ The conflict between these two escalated between 1921 and 1958.¹⁰⁹ He presents that the inability of Iraqis to construct a viable model of political community explains to a large degree the country’s political and social instability.¹¹⁰

Assyrian nationalistic movement and effort to have the autonomy was taken as a threat to Iraq. In this light, the 1933 event has significant meanings both to Assyrians and to Iraq. Both Shi’i revolts in early 1930s and Assyrian event of 1933 touched already fragile Iraqi polity. In these events, according to Davis, sectarian feelings among urban nationalist were intensified

¹⁰⁶ Austin, op.cit., pp.92-93

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.110-118

¹⁰⁸ Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, University of California Press, Berkeley/L.A./London, 2005, p.2

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.55

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.2

by their hostility toward British policies that favored minorities and rural interests. These feelings, he explains, which resulted in violent reactions to the threat especially by the Assyrians underscored the monarchy's failure to address Iraq's ethnic and cultural diversity.¹¹¹ And Davis concludes that the Assyrian crisis politicized the army.¹¹² The violent reaction was drawn from fear of the government and the army that an Assyrian revolt might result in an autonomous region, which in turn would lead to Turkish military occupation of northern Iraq.¹¹³ Davis expresses that "What the Assyrians (and much of the world) viewed as bloodbath, urban Iraqis, especially Sunni Arabs, saw as a triumph for Iraqi political unity."¹¹⁴ Also, the event was interpreted as a British conspiracy to divide Iraq.¹¹⁵ And he points out that the key factors in the conflict were not religion but Assyrian unwillingness to integrate into Iraqi society, their close ties to the British, and the army's desire to demonstrate that it was a force to be reckoned with.¹¹⁶ As he correctly describes, since the onset of World War I, Iraq had been characterized by almost continuous periods of conflict and disorder.¹¹⁷ Assyrian issue was only a small part of its problem.

An account of the 1933 event by Khaldun Husry clearly shows Iraqist view on the event. He says the event has been decidedly the propaganda of the victims.¹¹⁸ Assyrians, according to his explanation, were expelled from their homes because they rose against the Turks in 1915.¹¹⁹ Some romantic Englishmen were Assyriophiles¹²⁰ and encouraged the 'natural' conceit of the Assyrians by their pamperisation.¹²¹ And Iraqi government, he continues,

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.59-60

¹¹² Ibid., p.60

¹¹³ Ibid., p.61

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.61

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.107

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.61-62

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.107

¹¹⁸ Salim Husry, *The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I)*, International Journal of Middle East Studies 5. 1974, p.161

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.161

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.163

¹²¹ Ibid., p.165

discovered a conspiracy to unite all minorities to demand a separation from Iraq in 1931.¹²² He further denies the Shii revolt in 1931 and says that the Elie Kedouri's claim that the government sent the army to the north to divert the Sunni-Shii tension and to unite Muslims is misleading.¹²³ According to Husry, it was the Assyrians who attacked first,¹²⁴ and the Assyrian Patriarch Simon was detained because he would mobilize a revolt.¹²⁵ And he does not forget to put that the British and French were suspected of being behind the attack.¹²⁶ He also agrees that the incident was essentially political.¹²⁷ But he thinks the event especially the death toll was greatly exaggerated. He says that "Assyrians were Christians, and they and their many partisans in England and Europe represented the Iraqi anti-Assyrian action of 1933 as a Muslim Jihad, holy war, waged against a small Christian community."¹²⁸ His conclusion reflects the fear of Iraqis.

If the Assyrians were settled en masse, including ten thousand highly trained armed men, and a spiritual leader claiming temporal power, the step to complete Assyrian independence would be a short one. ...[It] would be followed by similar claims from Kurds, Yazidis, Chaldeans, Shias, even the people of Basra. ...[It] would result in the final extinction of the authority of the Central Government...in defending the integrity of the state, Faysal may have been the authors of some terrible excesses.¹²⁹

Assyrian nationalistic writer Aprem Shapira gives two very significant meanings to the 1933 event: one the end of Assyrian political activity, the other decisive cause for Syrian Orthodox adherents and Chaldeans to distance themselves from Assyrians.¹³⁰ Culminating many

¹²² Ibid., p.164

¹²³ Ibid., p.161, 171

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.171

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.173

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.176

¹²⁷ Salim Husry, *The Assyrian Affair of 1933* (2), International Journal of Middle East Studies 5,1974, p.353

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.359-360

¹³⁰ Aprem Shapira, *'aqidah alkhawf min as-siyash fi al-mujtana 'I al-ashuri, dirasah socio-siyasiyah fi as-suluk al-qawmi al-ashuri*, Ishtar, London, printed by Alpha Graphic, Chicago, 1998, p.44

massacre and difficulties in the past, the event planted defeatism deeply and created what he calls “politicsphobia” among Assyrians.¹³¹ And he claims that the procedure to obtain Iraqi nationality was very difficult for Assyrians. They had to prove that they did not participate in the 1933 event, and had to give evidence that their parents had resided in Iraq. More importantly, if one was Chaldean, he/she was considered as not participated in the 1933 event. This was how they were divided into two different groups by law and administration and debilitated them even to think of themselves as one ethnic group.¹³²

Shapira strongly opposes the idea that Assyrians only means Nestorians or that further limits the implication only to Nestorians from Hakkari mountain area. Rather, he claims, that Assyrian nationalism in cities, hence among Syrian Orthodox and Chaldeans, preceded that of Hakkari mountain Assyrians.¹³³ He gives examples that Syrian Orthodox adherents say, “We who belong to the Assyrian race...” and Chaldeans refer themselves as ‘athuraya,’ or ‘athuriyun.’¹³⁴ And he says the plan of Assyrian nation state in 1919 and 1920 which was inspired by the principle of self-determination of peoples was to include “all Assyrian sects:.”¹³⁵ But after the Simel massacre in 1933, these non-Nestorian Assyrians inclined toward Arabism or Kurdish nationalism in fear of similar incident. Shapira mourns that the nation was torn and set as torn officially and by law.¹³⁶

Aprem Shapira presents general thoughts on Assyrians among Iraqis which were developed during this period: Assyrians have no relation to the ancient Assyrians. It was known so because of British colonialists. They are strangers in Iraq who came from Turkey with British forces. They killed indigenous Iraqis and they are spies. Their goal is to set up

¹³¹ Ibid., pp.40-42

¹³² Aprem Shapira, *Al-Ashuriyun fi alfikr al'iraqi almu'asir – dirasah mas'alah : fi al'qliyah al'iraqiyah tijah alaqaliyat*, Dar Al Saqi, Beirut, 2001, pp.61-62

¹³³ Shapira (1998), op.cit., p.60, 93, 95, Shapira (2001), Ibid., pp.92-94

¹³⁴ Shapira (1998), ibid., pp.96-97

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.95-96

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp.98-101

Assyrian state in northern Iraq with Mosul its capital, envying Jewish state in Palestine and to make Patriach Shimon their king. It is difficult to distinguish their ethnic names and various names of their religious sects. If there are many sects, it means they are not one nation. And so on.¹³⁷ He also traces the origins of such views. First, it is the Millet system which is religious and psychological origin. In Islamic understanding, British presence was a Christian group against Ottoman Muslims. And Nestorians were on British side. Assyrians were Nestorians who has nothing to do with Iraq. So, the 1933 event was a jihad to get rid of *kafir*, or unbelievers, while Kurdish movement was the nationalism against colonialism. Assyrians rebelled against Iraqi state and its law. The second origin is a historical factor that the Ottoman opposed the Britain through persecuting Assyrians. In this sense, Assyrians in Simele were British spies. And this Ottoman logic, Shapira claims, is still in Iraq. The third origin is economic and political factors such as economic crisis in the twenties. And the fourth is internal factor which is the exclusiveness of Nestorians that broadens the difference from other Assyrian sects.¹³⁸

When British force attacked Iraq in 1941, Assyrians participated and fought against Iraqi army. Documents in the forties show that Assyrians have been still made appeals for their autonomy or protection to the international society.¹³⁹ On the other hand, in Iraq ethnic purity was an important political issue in the forties. Arabist in Iraq thought that the Arabs will regain their former glory only if they reunite politically and “cleanse” their culture of its “non-authentic” elements.¹⁴⁰ It is clear that Iraqis’ hostility toward Assyrians increased. An

¹³⁷ Shapira (2001), op.cit, pp.63-64

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp.73-85

¹³⁹ For example, a letter to the Foreign Service of the United States of America in 1945. Its subject is “Assyrian leaders Appeal for the Rights Officially to Present to the United Nations the Case of the Assyrian Nation.” F. David Andrews (ed.), *The Lost Peoples of the Middle East – Documents of the Struggle for Survival and Independence of the Kurds, Assyrians, and other Minority Races in the Middle East*, Documentary Publications, Salisbury, p.26

¹⁴⁰ Davis, op.cit., p.77. Emphases are original.

America officer mentions in his report to the Secretary of State that the Assyrian people in Iraq up to 1941 were not united and had considerably different opinions on Assyrian autonomy but following the 1941, followers of the Church of the East and the Protestants became more closely united and work together.¹⁴¹ Threats from out-group strengthen inner cohesion.

Today's discourse on Assyrian identity is built mainly around two big issues: ethnic continuity with the ancient Assyrians and the boundary of the term Assyrian. Assyrology, the study of the ancient Assyrian Empire, is largely employed to support ethnic continuity. But the boundary debate seems to be related to power struggles between people from different churches. Though Assyrian nationalists, many from the Church of the East side, try to include the adherents of the Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic Churches, and Protestants from such church backgrounds to a bigger notion of the ethnicity, or nation of Assyria, some people from these churches do not want to follow this inclusive nationalism, but rather emphasize the difference. Increasing usage of the expression of "Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people" in Iraq is self-revealing that these terms are used separated designating different people mainly in accordance with church affiliation.

¹⁴¹ Andrews, op.cit., p.28

Chapter 3. Self-expression of the Assyrians

1. Religious hierarchy

The Assyrian, or the Church of the East, Patriarchate was established in the year 410 at the Synod of Isaac in Seleucia-Ctesiphon. Regarding the claim for its later independence in 424, Baum argues that increased Persian suspicion and persecution of Christians in the Persian Empire at that time prevented western bishops from attending the synods of the Persian Church. From this, there grew a need to make its independency clear and the declaration or re-iteration of the decision of the Synod of 410 was made at the Synod of Markabta in 424.¹ But according to Chaldean bishop Addai Sher, much earlier than this, in 220, the Romans captured a cleric named Qamyashu' and accused and killed him as a spy from Persia. As a result, the western Church allowed Christians in Persia to anoint a bishop who would become the head of all the Church of the East, though not as a Patriarch.²

The prosperity of the Christians during the early Caliphates also gave increased political and social importance to the Assyrian patriarch in addition to his religious importance. This importance resulted in competition to obtain the position even to the extent that sometimes the seat became vacant,³ or that bribery was used to obtain the seat.⁴ At the same time, the influence of the caliph on the position increased, too, as twelve out of the total of thirty Catholicoi of the Church of the East were imposed by the Islamic rulers between 650 and

¹ Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar Winkler, *The Church of the East: A concise history*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003 (originally published in German in 2000), pp.19-21. The Synodicon Orientale, minutes of the Synod, says that "...while in the past the Western fathers had been 'supporters and helpers in a shared fatherhood...now persecution and afflictions [prevent] them from caring for us as they did before.'" (Brackets are Winkler's.) This synod also forbade its adherents to appeal to the western patriarchs. Scholars note that mentioning of 'a right of appeal' is interesting that is not found in the Greek and Latin sources.

² Addai Scher, *Ta'rikh Kaldu wa Athur*, Vol. II, Beyrouth Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1913, pp.7-8

³ Aubrey R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches – A Concise history of Nestorian Christianity in Asia from the Persian Schism to the Modern Assyrians*, Independent Press, London, reprinted in 1980, p.107

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.104

1050.⁵ In the middle of the eleventh century, the Assyrian Patriarch was given civil jurisdiction over Christians of all kinds in the Caliphate.⁶

The election of the patriarch became hereditary from uncle to nephew despite this not being in accordance with their canon law.⁷ Yet, scholars disagree when the practice began. Some argue that it began with Mar Timotheus(1318-1328), while others argue for Mar Dinkha(1448-1490).⁸ Patriarch Shimun IV is said to have issued a decree firmly establishing the hereditary succession of the Bar Mama family in 1450. But no related documents have been found.⁹ Atiya thinks that this hereditary system was developed out of their struggle for survival in isolated circumstances in which the leadership of their tribes had been concentrated in a single family which gave rise to patriarch who grew to be their secular as well as religious head.¹⁰ Nephews of patriarchs, who are candidates to be future patriarchs, were brought up specially, abstaining from meat for example. They were called *Natar Kursiya* in Syriac which means “holders of the throne”¹¹ or “the guardian of the throne.”¹² Hereditary succession was also applied to bishops. This survival strategy brought about undesirable results such as mothers or older sisters of the patriarch handling the state affairs of the community,¹³ or boys of twelve years old or less being chosen as bishops.¹⁴ The separation of the Chaldean Church occurred when the people around the Urmiah Lake did not accept the hereditary heir to the throne, Simun Dinkha, in 1552 and chose their own

⁵ Baum, op.cit., p.43

⁶ Vine, op.cit., p.106

⁷ Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy II, The Lesser Eastern Churches*, Georgias Press, Piscataway, 2001 (Originally printed by the Catholic Trust Society in 1913), p.132

⁸ O'Dishoo, *The Book of Marganitha on the Truth of Christianity*, translated by Eshai Shimun XXIII, reprinted by the Literary Committee of the Assyrian Church of the East, Chiacago, 1988, p.116

⁹ Baum, op.cit., p.105

¹⁰ Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968Atiya, p.277

¹¹ Fortescue, op.cit, p.132

¹² Burchard Brentjes, *The Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds – Three Nationas, One Fate?*, Rishi Publications, Campbell, 1997, p.51

¹³ Atiya, op.cit., pp.278, 289

¹⁴ Baum, op.cit., pp.132-133

patriarch.¹⁵

As the Assyrian Patriarch functioned both as religious and secular head, or “a kind of theocratic prince” in Atiya’s expression,¹⁶ the community’s hierarchy became institutionalized including tribal leaders in addition to ecclesiastical ranks. These tribal chiefs were called *maliks*, but without literal meaning of “kings.”¹⁷ Brigadier-General Austin who ran the Baquba Camp during World War I reports that the Assyrians were divided into mountaineers and plainsmen and the *maliks* were the tribal chiefs of the mountaineers. He also states that those *maliks* were exceedingly important and fully represented on the Patriarch’s Council.¹⁸ The Patriarch was called *rai’s* (head) in the sense of national civil leader whom his flock obeyed willingly and with loyalty.¹⁹ This secular authority of the Assyrian Patriarch was further strengthened by the Millet system during the Ottoman rule, which brought all the civil and criminal cases of his flock under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch, unlike the other Millets. Atiya reasons that their dwelling in the mountainous area made any central authority exceptionally difficult to reach.²⁰

As for the Patriarch’s spiritual authority, Fortescue says that though in theory he can only be judged by his “brother Patriarchs”, since there are no other patriarchs who recognize him, no one can judge him. But he must rule the Church according to the canons.²¹ His duty is to oversee the Church of the East. He oversees the consecration of all metropolitans and bishops, and grants letters of confirmation to bishops who are ordained by other metropolitans or

¹⁵ Brentjes, op.cit., pp.51-52. Later in 1672 their union with Rome ended and another line became uniate.

¹⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.277

¹⁷ The origin and development of this tribal system of *'ashira* (tribe or clan) and *malik* (tribal chief) could not be traced from the researcher’s sources.

¹⁸ Austin, H. H. *The Baqubah Refuge Camp - An Account of Work on behalf of the Persecuted Assyrian Christians*, The Faith press, Manchester, 1920, pp.5, 62-63

¹⁹ Fortescue, op.cit., p.129

²⁰ Atiaya, op.cit., p.289

²¹ Fortescue, op.cit., pp.130-131

bishops.²² According to Fortescue, he alone consecrates the holy chrism every seven years and blesses the antimensia.²³ During the Ottoman period, his income was from tax levied on his flock every three years, the first-fruits of his own diocese, a tithe from other bishops, fines, free gifts, and a Turkish subsidy.²⁴

The official title of the Assyrian Patriarch is ‘the Reverend and Honored Father of Fathers and Great Shepherd, Mar Shim‘un (now Mar Dinkha), Patriarch and Catholicos of the East.’ The name Mar Shim‘un served as almost a title rather than a personal name²⁵ until a Dinkha became the present Patriarch. Fortescue says that the patriarchal seal at the beginning of the twentieth century bears in the middle of the inscription: “The lowly Simon, Patriarch of the East,” and around it “Mar Shim‘un, who sits on the throne of the Apostle Addai.”²⁶ The Assyrian Patriarchal seat has been in Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410-780) and Baghdad (780-1281). After this time, it moved frequently from monastery to monastery in accordance with security conditions, until it reached to Kotchannes (1662-1920) in the Hakkari region, then moved and settled in Chicago in 1940.²⁷ The Patriarch’s recent visit to the northern Iraq in 2006 opened the discussion of the possible relocation of his seat to the region.²⁸ Concerning the increasing emigration of Assyrians, Christoph Baumer strongly claims that only the return of the patriarch to Iraq would provide a powerful symbol to persuade them to remain in their own land.²⁹ The emblem of the Assyrian patriarchate consists of mountains, a rising sun and

²² Mar Mari Parish Bible Study, Lesson 49, The nine ranks in the Apostolic Priesthood, <http://marmariparish.org/Bible%20Study/Lesson%2049%20Ranks%20in%20the%20Apostolic%20Priesthood.pdf>

²³ Antimensia is the cloth with relics used by the Church of the East as a portable altar, as it is by other Eastern churches. (Requoted from Fortescue, p.131 footnote.)

²⁴ Ibid., p.131

²⁵ Atiya, op.cit., pp.289-290, Fortescue, ibid., p.131

²⁶ Fortescue, ibid., p.131

²⁷ Baum, op.cit., pp.173-175

²⁸ According to the Bishop of Beirut, related construction work has begun in the region, though the decision will be made later due to the unstable situation there. From an interview with the bishop.

²⁹ Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 2006, p.273

its rays, two rivers, an open Bible, a cross, two keys and a staff. They represent,

...the sun that is symbolic of the East, two rivers indicative of the Tigris and Euphrates of Mesopotamia where the original church was founded, an open Bible bearing the Aramaic inscription “Qimleh Maran” meaning “the Lord has risen,” the cross showing the Christian faith, a triple crown representative of the Trinity, nine circles around the edges of the cross indicating the nine orders of the ministry in the Church of the East, a crossed key symbolic of Jesus Christ’s words to St. Peter “Unto the I give the key of the Kingdom of Heaven”, ...a staff representing Jesus Christ as the “Good Shepherd” ...³⁰

The death of Mar Eshai Shimun brought an end to the hereditary succession of the Assyrian patriarch.³¹ Mar Dinkha IV Khnanaya was chosen as the 120th patriarch of the Church of the East at the Conference held in London in 1976. He was born in 1935 in the province of Arbil. He began his ecclesiastical service as an ordained deacon at the age of fifteen and also served as bishop of Tehran before he became the patriarch.³² His service in Tehran is praised, as it brought many changes to the Assyrians of Iran. He established a seminary and tried to settle his patriarchate in Tehran but had to transfer to Chicago because of the war between Iran and Iraq.³³ In the 1990s, his efforts in the ecumenical movement bore fruit in a Joint Christological Declaration with the Vatican in 1994, an agreement of cooperation with the Chaldean Patriarch in 1996 and the initiation of negotiations with the Syrian Orthodox Church in 1997.³⁴

One of the peculiar characteristics of the Assyrian Church is to have its ecclesiastical hierarchy corresponding to the celestial nine orders of angels. These nine orders are divided

³⁰ <http://churchoftheeastflint.org/id13.html>

³¹ Baum, op.cit., p.150, and Atiya, op.cit., p.289 The function of *maliks* also gradually faded away in the new state of Iraq where all the secular authority was concentrated on its government and also due to relocations and emigration in which traditional institution had no role to play.

³² <http://marmariparish.org/history2.html>

³³ Baum, op.cit., p.150

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Synod_of_the_Assyrian_Church_of_the_East

into three major ranks and then each rank into three again. The three major ranks are the episcopacy, priesthood, and diaconate. The episcopacy includes the Catholicos Patriarch, metropolitan or Archbishop, and bishop ordinary. The priesthood includes the archdeacon, the co-bishop, and the simple priest. And the diaconate includes the full deacon, sub-deacon, and the reader. Each of these corresponds to the nine ranks of angels which are the Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominions, Authorities (Virtue), Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels.³⁵ The *Marganitha*, one of the most important theological works of the Church of the East, gives the rationale that since the earthly church as a congregation which meets and unites in celebration is symbolic of things above, the angelic orders also apply to the earthly church.³⁶ It is also explained that Jesus himself ministered all of these nine ranks during his ministry on the earth.³⁷

Despite its glorious expansion in the Middle Ages with more than 20 Metropolitan Sees,³⁸ the decline of the Church of the East left it with only a single metropolitan for a long time, whose hereditary name was Mar Hananyeshu'. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are three metropolitans.³⁹ A metropolitan, or *Matran* in Syriac, has the right to ordain and assist the Patriarch,⁴⁰ and consecrate ordinary bishops.⁴¹ When an ordinary bishop is consecrated by a metropolitan, he has to receive the Letter of Confirmation from the Patriarch to function legitimately. A bishop elects and ordains readers, deacons, sub-deacons,

³⁵ O'Dishoo, op.cit., p.44. Others translate these nine as the Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Powers, Rulers, Lords, Arcos, Arch-angels and Angels.(Mar Mari Parish Bible Study, op.cit.) This angelology was developed during the middle ages. (*Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of English Language*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996, p.79)

³⁶ Ibid., p.44

³⁷ Mar Mari Parish Bible Study, ibid.

³⁸ Baum, op.cit., pp.98-99. The map of the general view of the Church of the East in the Middle Ages shows 26 Metropolitan Sees including Sana in Arabian Peninsula to the west and Beijing, China to the East.

³⁹ Baumer, op.cit., p.272

⁴⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.132

⁴¹ Mar Mari Parish Bible Study, op.cit.

and priests in his diocese only.⁴²

Among these prelates in addition to the patriarch, the tradition of celibacy has been generally observed. But Atiya reports that there are also records of married bishops.⁴³ Fortescue says that not only bishops had to be celibate but also monks, though there are practically no monks any more.⁴⁴ The tradition of hereditary succession was also practiced for metropolitan and bishops.⁴⁵ Future metropolitan or bishops were also called *natar kursiya* as successors of the bishopric seat. They were chosen while young by the leading clergy and the notables of the diocese and brought up in special way such as abstaining from meat and being trained toward austerity. Then, when ordained, they were presented to the Patriarch, who was Mar Shim'un.⁴⁶ They also used hereditary names.⁴⁷ This hereditary tradition of metropolitan and bishops has also ceased.

Under each bishop is the archdeacon who organizes the services of worship in his Cathedral church.⁴⁸ A cor-bishop visits parishes, investigates and examines whether any heretical teachings penetrated into the churches. He can take a lead in resolving conflicts if found, but cannot ordain.⁴⁹ It seems that he also performs administrative functions for the bishopric to which he belongs.⁵⁰ In the book of Marganitha, the original source book of the nine orders, cor-bishop is translated into "periodeute" which is explained as "a visiting priest acting bishop's representatives in visiting parishes and monasteries."⁵¹ Fortescue translates this as

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Atiya, op.cit., p.290

⁴⁴ Fortescue, op.cit., p.132

⁴⁵ Vine, op.cit., p.185

⁴⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.290, Fortescue, op.cit., p.132

⁴⁷ Vine, op.cit., p.185

⁴⁸ Mar Mari Parish Bible Study, op.cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For example, an official letter from India was issued in the name of cor-bishop.

⁵¹ O'Dishoo, op.cit., p.44

“chorepiscopi”⁵² called *sa ‘aure* in Syriac which means visitors. He says that chorepiscopi are not ordained bishop, but are priests having jurisdiction over a group of country parishes, whose clergy they assemble twice a year for examination and direction.⁵³ Fortescue puts archpriest in the first order of priesthood instead of archdeacon. He explains that the archpriest is merely the chorepiscopus of the city. Then, he describes the archdeacon as unrelated to the order but as a person who takes care of the bishop’s finances and acts as a vicar-general.⁵⁴ Following Fortescue’s classification, Atiya and Vine put archpriest and chorepiscopi instead of archdeacon and co-bishop excluding the archdeacon from the order. Atiya claims that the archpriest is in the city and chorepiscopi in the country to perform the same functions as those who exercise episcopal duties in the absence of a bishop.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Vine says that under each bishop are several chorepiscopi, who act on behalf of the bishop, responsible for a group of villages and a chief among the archpriest.⁵⁶ Both present the archdeacon as a person in charge of diocesan finances and the property of the church as well as performing secretarial duties, who is not in order but an additional functionary.⁵⁷ But, in a more recent book of Christoph Baumer the term “chorepiscopus” is used for only one person, Benjamin, who is acting head of the diocese of Iraq.⁵⁸

It is the simple priest, who is called *qashisha* or *qasha* in Eastern Syriac, who directly contacts and ministers to the faithful playing the specific role of priest. He baptizes the converts, celebrates the Holy Offering, preaches, conducts marriage and funeral services, listens to the confession of the faithful, visits and encourages his congregation, prays for

⁵² Chorepiscopi is a Latin plural form of the word chorepiscopus.

⁵³ Fortescue, op.cit., p.134

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Atiya, op.cit., p.290

⁵⁶ Vine, op.cit., p.184

⁵⁷ Atiya, op.cit., p.290, Vine, op.cit., p.184, Fortescue, op.cit., p.134

⁵⁸ Baumer, op.cit., p.272

people in need, anoints the sick, blesses new homes, and has general oversight of the congregation in all things pertaining educating the young, to maintaining a choir, parish management, and so on.⁵⁹ To be a priest, who functions as a mediator between God and the faithful, one must be older than thirty and married and have an exceptional reputation and high moral standards.⁶⁰ A priest is chosen by the parishioners, then ordained by the bishop by the laying on of hands.⁶¹ Unlike prelates, three ranks in the priesthood may marry and remarry if a wife dies.⁶² Fortescue criticizes the marriages of priests as a Mazdaean influence.⁶³ Atiya reports that priests who have taken monastic vows can obtain a dispensation to secede from monasticism without disgrace or difficulty.⁶⁴ Yet, when an ordained clergyman passes away, his ordination is removed, and he is defrocked, in a church ceremony prior to his burial. This is symbolized by taking his coffin around the church seven times.⁶⁵ In his research on Iraq in the middle of the twentieth century, George Harris reports that religious figures in the village were specially revered by the villagers despite the fact that financially they may be little better off than the lowest peasant.⁶⁶

The diaconate consists of the full deacon, sub-deacon, and the reader. The full deacon, *shamasha* or *dyakna* in Eastern Syriac, serves his parish and the priest, participates in the liturgies, and in the priest's absence, he gives the sermon and conducts part of the funeral liturgy and the evening and morning prayers. The sub-deacon, or *hufadyakna*, makes the physical preparation for the liturgical services such as cleaning the altar and putting candles

⁵⁹ <http://marmariparish.org>

⁶⁰ Baumer, op.cit., p.120

⁶¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.290, Vine, op.cit., p.184

⁶² Vine, op.cit., p.185

⁶³ Fortescue, op.cit., p.134

⁶⁴ Atiya, op.cit., p.290

⁶⁵ Youel, A. Baaba (ed.), *An Assyrian Odyssey*, Alamo, CA, Youel A Baaba Library, 1998, p.30. In the same book p.23, the author describes such a defrocking ceremony of the Church of the East taking place even when an ordained Presbyterian pastor who was Assyrian passed away at the beginning of the twentieth century.

⁶⁶ George L. Harris and others, *Iraq – its people, its society, its culture*, Harf Press, New Haven, 1958, p.73

and other objects in order. The reader, called *karuya* or *amura*, participates in the service by reading assigned passages of the Bible.⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that liturgy in the Church of the East cannot be celebrated without the assistance of a deacon.⁶⁸

Besides these ranks and roles, Fortescue describes another role called the *shahara*, or awakener, a clerk who presides at the night-office, and sometimes at funerals, and who is often a reader or an old priest.⁶⁹

Atiya reports that in the past, Assyrians practiced re-ordination whenever anyone changed office.⁷⁰ According to Fortescue ordination below the rank of deacon is now obsolete. And deacons, priests and bishops are ordained by laying on the right hand. He adds that the Church of the East has the rite of vesting the subject during the ordination but not anointing.⁷¹

The distribution of dioceses has been mainly geographical. In the early history of the Church of the East, there were mobile dioceses among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, as an exception. Fortescue notes that the dioceses in the plain of Urmi at the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, followed the courses of the rivers, so that belonging to a certain river meant belonging to its corresponding diocese.⁷² Today, the Assyrian Church of the East has four archdioceses: the Archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand, the Archdiocese of Lebanon, the Syria and Europe, the Archdiocese of India, and the Archdiocese of Iraq and Russia. There are also individual dioceses such as the diocese of Canada, the diocese of California, the diocese of the Western United States, and the diocese of the Eastern United States. The diocese of the Eastern United States is overseen by the

⁶⁷ <http://marmariparish.org>

⁶⁸ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, Longman Group Limited and Librarie du Liban, London, 1979, p.221 in a footnote

⁶⁹ Fortescue, op.cit., p.134

⁷⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.290

⁷¹ Fortescue, op.cit., p.157

⁷² Ibid., p.132

Patriarch. There are also a single parish in China and another in Moscow.⁷³ The Patriarch, three Metropolitans and six bishops make up the current synod members. The Ancient Church of the East has five archdioceses. They are the Patriarchal Arch diocese of Baghdad which is overseen by the Patriarch Mar Addai II, the Archdiocese of Kirkuk, the Archdiocese of Nineveh, the Archdiocese of Syria and Lebanon, and the Archdiocese of Europe. There are also the Diocese of USA and Canada, the Diocese of California, the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand.⁷⁴

Self-criticism within the church attributes the present decline mainly to the loss of the church's evangelical zeal and its responsibility to the leaders of the church. In this regard, Peter Taliya, an Assyrian clergyman, criticizes poorly educated clergymen and their tendency to rule over people rather than to serve them, and calls for co-operation among the clergy themselves in the first instance.⁷⁵ However, settling in the diaspora for more than seventy years has allowed enough time and the right social conditions in the Church of the East for its reorganization and general improvement. To raise the level of theological education among clergy, for example, is one of four main goals of the present patriarch, with the eventual aim of appointing only theologians with doctorates as bishops.⁷⁶ Candidates for Assyrian clergy positions are educated in different seminaries. The seminary of the Church of the East in Baghdad which was established in 1988 is defunct. There is a seminary for the Church of the East in India but with low enrolment among Assyrians from Iraq or its neighboring countries. Assyrian priests are also educated at the Chaldean Catholic College in Baghdad. For the unmarried deacons and priests, the Catholic universities in Rome are also available.⁷⁷

⁷³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_church_of_the_East

⁷⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_church_of_the_east

⁷⁵ Peter H. Taliya, *Our Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow – History, Dilemma, and Destiny of the Assyrian People*, Covenant Publication, 1980, pp.61, 68-69

⁷⁶ Baumer, op.cit., p.272

⁷⁷ Ibid. Currently, there is an Assyrian seminary under construction in Dohuk at the future Patriarchal seat. Also,

Reunification of the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East is also an issue which the patriarchs are exploring as a matter of grave importance. Already in 1970 when the late patriarch of the Assyrian Church visited Baghdad, he explained the reason and situation behind adoption of the new calendar as the exact date of Jesus' birth is not known and many of his flocks were abroad where the Gregorian calendar was in use.⁷⁸ On the other hand, from the Ancient Church's position, the separation of the Church was not based on theological differences, but was a response to the need for the pastoral care of those who had been left in Iraq without their political and spiritual leader since 1933.⁷⁹ The 2005 Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East decided to suggest an official meeting to deal with the issue to Mar Addai II of the Ancient Church of the East. The response from the Ancient Church was also to have a meeting in 2010. Among the items on the agenda for the Synod of the Ancient Church of the East is the possible adoption of the Gregorian calendar for Christmas as part of the process of reunification.⁸⁰ Baghdadhope, an Internet site on Christians in Iraq, suggests that the Ancient Church would benefit from reunification, with more members and better structures, and the Assyrian Church from links with its Iraqi origins. However, it also points out practical obstacles to reunification: the problem of the two present patriarchs and overlapping jurisdiction of the two churches.⁸¹ More importantly, it seems the reunification needs reconciliation among people of the two churches first.⁸²

there is an attempt to establish an Assyrian seminary in Sydney.

⁷⁸ <http://baghdadhope.blogspot.com/2009/04/ancient-church-of-east-new-calendar-by.html>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ <http://baghdadhope.blogspot.com/2009/05/assyrian-church-of-east-and-ancient.html>

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Some blame the Tyari tribe for the separation and even call the Ancient Church of the East "the Tyari Church the East" pejoratively. www.betnahrain.org/bbs/index.pl/noframes/read/2966

There are also rumors that the bishop of California prohibited his parishioners from associating with people of the Ancient Church of the East. <http://baghdadhope.blogspot.com/2009/04/ancient-church-of-east-new-calendar-by.html> There are also reports of other divisions, if not schisms, in Sydney, Australia, in 1987 and in Modesto, California, in 1992. (Baumer, op.cit., p.273)

2. Liturgy and religious rites

Church historian Aziz Atiya notes that the Church of the East is highly liturgical in its services, and “one cannot help being impressed by the liturgy’s deep spirituality and primitive character.”⁸³ There are three liturgies used in the Assyrian churches; the Anaphora of Theodore of Mopsuetia, the Anaphora of Nestorius, and the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. Though the Assyrian church has long been called Nestorian, the liturgy of Nestorius is used only five times a year.⁸⁴ The liturgy of Theodore is used between the period of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday.⁸⁵ The liturgy of Addai and Mari is most frequently used and is also known as the normal liturgy.⁸⁶ This liturgy is also used in the Chaldean Church with the addition of the words of institution.⁸⁷ Among the Assyrians it is esteemed as apostolic as related to the apostles Addai and Mari.⁸⁸

Though the colophon⁸⁹ of the Anaphora of Theodore says that it was Mar Aba the Catholicos who translated the Anaphora from Greek to Syriac, scholars seem to believe that it was Mar Aba himself who ‘produced’ the anaphora.⁹⁰ Scholars have different ideas on the Anaphora of Nestorius. Some believe it to be a translation of Greek composition written by

⁸³ Atiya, op.cit., p.295

⁸⁴ They are Epiphany, the Friday of John the Baptist, the Memorial of the Greek Doctors, the Wednesday of the Rogation of the Ninevites and Maundy Thursday. (A. Gelston, “The Origin of the Anaphora of Nestorius: Greek or Syriac?”, in J.F. Coakley and K. Parry (eds.), *The Bulletin of the John Rylands University library of Manchester*, Volume 78, Number 3, Autumn 1996, p. 73)

⁸⁵ Christine Chaillot, “The Ancient Oriental Churches”, in Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (eds.), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p.163. She adds that the anaphora of Theodore of Mopsuetia is most probably composed in Greek at first, while the Anaphora of Addai and Mari is an original Syriac composition.

⁸⁶ www.karozota.com/2009/sidor/liturgiyaddaimari.html

⁸⁷ Chaillot, op.cit., p.169 footnote. In 2002, the Chaldean Catholic Church permitted its faithful to receive communion at an Assyrian Eucharist in pastoral care. Atiya says that in the Lamaism of Tibet, the ritual of the Church of the East survives in a debased form: for example in Lamaist monasticism, the use of holy water, incense and similar vestments. He ascribes these traces to the missionary work of the Church of the East before Buddhism arrived in Tibet. (Atiya, op.cit., pp.263-264)

⁸⁸ Scheir, op.cit., Vol.II, p.7

⁸⁹ A colophone is an inscription at the end of a book or manuscript giving the title or subject of the work, its author, the name of the printer or publisher, and the date and place of publication, or a publisher’s or printer’s distinctive emblem used as an identifying device on its books. (*Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, op.cit., p.406)

⁹⁰ Gelston, op.cit., p.75

Nestorius, while others believe it was written in Syriac.⁹¹ Gelston raises the question whether the Anaphora of Nestorius has any connection with Nestorius himself. After examining other scholars' hypotheses, the literary style of the Anaphora in Syriac, the use of biblical quotations and expressions, and comparison with the other Anaphoras, Gelston cautiously suggests, in the same manner as with the case of the Anaphora of Theodore, that the Anaphora of Nestorius was written originally in Syriac.⁹² As for the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, it is said that when Addai came to Edessa, healed the king, converted people to Christianity and established a church there, he composed the liturgy. But there is no earlier document confirming this tradition than the "Doctrine of Addia" which is ascribed to the second half of the third century.⁹³

Atiya comments that the liturgy of the Church of the East is the most interesting feature or tradition of this church due to its distant origin.⁹⁴ Fortescue also notes that the interest of the West in the Assyrian Church lies in this liturgy and that the origin of this rite is much discussed. And he carefully categorizes it as remotely Antiochene claiming that the church calendar of the Church of the East also shows traces of Antiochene arrangement.⁹⁵ Yet, Atiya, though he agrees that the liturgy holds a few Antiochene features, reasons that it might be taken from Jerusalem where the first Christian offices were celebrated.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Christine Chaillot cautiously claims that the East Syrian rite is derived from Edessa, not Antioch. She finds little influence by Hellenism in it, but rather, or thus, sees the Semitic traces. According to her, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, for example, has similarities with

⁹¹ Ibid., p.75

⁹² Ibid. Gelston found many more similarities between the Anaphora of Theodore and the Anaphora of Nestorius, while he sees no common features between the Anaphora of Nestorius and the Anaphora of Addai and Mari.

⁹³ www.karozota.com/2009/sidor/liturgyyaddaimari.html, www.nestorian.org/liturgy_of_addeus_andmaris.html

⁹⁴ Atiya, op.cit., p.295

⁹⁵ Fortescue, op.cit., pp.140-141

⁹⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.295

the Jewish form of table blessing called the *birkat ha-mazon*.⁹⁷ Fortescue adds that some scholars categorize it separately, and Brightman calls it “the Persian rite.” He also cites Renaudot who thinks that, since the Church of the East was not formed of native Syrians but rather of fugitives gathered in Edessa, and later in Persia, from all parts of the empire, the Antiochene rite was not kept. Fortescue concludes that liturgical development is always a gradual modification of an earlier text.⁹⁸ It seems that the liturgy of the Church of the East has not been much translated or studied among theologians.⁹⁹ Also, the dearth of manuscripts hinders the study.¹⁰⁰

The final redaction of the text of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari was done by Patriarch Ishoyahb III in the seventh century, who, with the monk Henanisho, led a liturgical reformation, compiling the hymnal called *hudra*, the liturgical texts *Taksha*, establishing the church year, and reforming the statutes of the school of Nisibis.¹⁰¹ The Church of the East uses more than one liturgical book. *Hudra* is used for Sundays. A hymnal called *The Rogation of the Ninevites*, or *Ba’oth d-Ninwaye* is said to have been composed after a plague in the eighth century which was stopped by fasting and prayers as in the story of Jonah.¹⁰² *Dauida*, the Psalter, is used for the choir. *The Gaza* (the treasury), *the Warda* (rose), *the Kdam wadathar* (before and after) and some other books are for supplementary use.¹⁰³ Fortescue says that the Assyrian liturgical books are many and confused. He, as a Catholic, also criticizes the liturgical books printed by the Anglican mission as incomplete and “a feeble compromise since the Anglicans leave out the names of heretics and obviously heretical

⁹⁷ Chaillot, op.cit., p.161

⁹⁸ Fortescue, op.cit., p.140

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.140, Atiya, op.cit., p.295

¹⁰⁰ Chaillot, op.cit., p.161

¹⁰¹ www.nestorian.org/liturgy_of_addeus_andmaris.html, and Baum, op.cit., pp.43-44

¹⁰² Chaillot, op.cit., p.164

¹⁰³ Fortescue, op.cit., p.143

matter.”¹⁰⁴

The liturgy is conducted in classical Syriac. The Bible used in the Church of the East is Syriac Peshita. But Vine’s observation shows that the Western Bible tends to be accepted and used.¹⁰⁵ The liturgy is called *qurbana*, or sacrificial offering, in Syriac because it recalls the sacrifice of Christ and his salvation.¹⁰⁶ It is divided into two parts. One is the Mass of the catechumens, and the other is the Mass of the faithful. The mass begins with the sign of the cross, then the prayer “Glory to God in the highest,”¹⁰⁷ insisting on the holiness of God.¹⁰⁸ When the first part of the liturgy is over, a deacon asks the catechumens to leave announcing, “Let everyone who is not baptized, depart. Whoever has not been sained with the Sign of Life, let him depart. Watch the doors!”¹⁰⁹ In the anaphora, a typical Assyrian prayer is recited known as *ganatha*, which is derived from the Syriac verb “ghan” meaning to bow. After the distribution of Eucharist and the hymns after the Eucharist, the liturgy ends with the final blessing, or *huttama*, of the priest.¹¹⁰ Some chants during the liturgy are traced back to St. Aprem (4C). Babai of Gabilta in the eighth century reformed the chanting. Triangles and cymbals were used in the liturgy in the remote past.¹¹¹

This liturgy is celebrated in specific spatial settings. The traditional rectangular church building of the Church of the East is said to have great similarity to Sassanian pillar-halls.¹¹² Typically, the Church of the East has a *bema* in the middle of the church. This is an elevated platform where the Gospel is read and preached symbolizing the earthly Jerusalem. On a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.142-143

¹⁰⁵ Vine, op.cit., p.188

¹⁰⁶ Baumer, op.cit., p.122

¹⁰⁷ www.nestorian.org/liturgy_of_addeus_andmaris.html

¹⁰⁸ Chaillot, op.cit., p.162

¹⁰⁹ Trimmingham, op.cit., p.218

¹¹⁰ Chaillot, op.cit., pp.163-164

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.164-165

¹¹² Baumer, op.cit., p.122

table in the center of it, the Gospel book, a cross, and two candles are located. The table symbolizes Golgotha, and the candles the Old and New Testaments. Yet, when the Gospel is read, the candles represent the disciples who are to be the lights of the world. While the first part of the liturgy takes place on *bema*, the second part takes place on the sanctuary which is also an elevated platform. A cross, two candles, and the Gospel are placed on the altar. In the niches in the sanctuary, the paten, the chalice and the oil are located. An extension of the sanctuary toward the nave is called *qestroma* which symbolizes the earthly paradise. The passage between the bema and the sanctuary is called *sheqaqona*, which means a narrow way. The martyrium is located on the north side.¹¹³ According to Fortescue's observation at the beginning of the twentieth century, there is no *bema* any more, but the sanctuary is divided from the nave by a wall which has an arched opening with a curtain.¹¹⁴ This leaves the whole liturgy celebrated in the *qestroma* and choir.¹¹⁵

In the book of Marganitha, Mar O'Disho explains the practice of worshipping toward the east. He describes this practice as an apostolic canon and a requirement to be on watch waiting for Jesus' second coming.¹¹⁶ He also introduces other interesting traditions concerning worship toward the east. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary from the east, which led her to worship toward the east. When Jesus ascended to heaven, his face was turned toward the west to the disciples, which also led them to look and worship toward the east. Moreover, according to his quotation from St. Aprem, the disciples were told by an angel that Jesus would come as they saw, that is from the east. Also, when the world was created, it was done in silence and the angels did not know who their creator was at first. But

¹¹³ Chaillot, op.cit., pp.161-162

¹¹⁴ Fortescue, op.cit., p.145, and Atiya, op.cit., p.189

¹¹⁵ Baumer, op.cit., p.126

¹¹⁶ O'Dishoo, op.cit., p.64. He says the east comes first in the Gospel of Matthew 24:27 where Jesus talks about his coming. It reads, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

when they heard a voice ordering there to be light, they thought the one who made the voice must be their creator and worshipped toward where the voice came from, which was the east.¹¹⁷

There is no place for icons in Assyrian churches since the use of icons and iconography is repudiated by the Assyrian church.¹¹⁸ Atiya attributes this to their poverty and lack of artistic knowledge or interest as well as theological reasons. And he says that there is virtually no art in the Church of the East.¹¹⁹ Yet, Fortescue thinks that this Assyrian abhorrence of icons is a possible Islamic influence, reporting the existence of paintings of saints and angels in Chaldean churches around Mosul which were made long before the union.¹²⁰

On the other hand, the cross is highly venerated among Assyrians.¹²¹ Crosses are found at the entrance of the church and on the altar, and they are kissed by people.¹²² This simple cross is without the crucifix, thus emphasizing the resurrection of Jesus. Mar O'Disho says that through the cross, which is the emblem of salvation, they worship God. He also claims that cross will appear in the sky before Jesus' advent.¹²³ In fact, the cross has been a special motif and symbol in the Assyrian church. The cross whose four ends resembles leaves, with double acanthus leaves which spring from the base of the cross to fill the blank on either side of the shaft, was known as Nestorian cross.¹²⁴

Before the relocation of the Assyrians in the twentieth century, Assyrian churches were

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp.64-66. See Acts 1:11 for the angel's word upon ascension of Jesus. Christoph Baumer adds that the prophet Ezekiel saw the glory of God which came from the East. (See Ezekiel 43:1-4, Baumer, op.cit., pp.122-123)

¹¹⁸ Atiya, op.cit., pp.295, 297

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.297

¹²⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.137

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Fortescue, op.cit., p.145, Atiya, op.cit., p.297

¹²³ O'Dishoo, op.cit., p.67 He interprets "the sign of the son of man" in the Gospel of Matthew 24:30 as cross.

¹²⁴ Trimmingham describes the excavation of churches in Hira which have these Nestorian crosses and Kufic inscriptions, and which all have the same plan. (Trimingham, op.cit., p.114)

built like a little fortresses and refuges.¹²⁵ The door was generally very low and narrow so that one could not enter without bowing. This was not purely to make people humble entering the holy place, but rather more practically for the defense from and prevention of Kurds from driving their cattle in.¹²⁶ The patriarchal church at Qudshanis, for example, had an entrance which was reached by a ladder for defense reasons.¹²⁷ Other churches had a small hole in the roof which was blocked after the faithful come in so that no intruder could enter from above.¹²⁸ Vine claims that the services themselves were intentionally plain to be inconspicuous, and so less likely to attract Muslim attention.¹²⁹ Interestingly, the Church of the East held outdoor services on summer days at the open court, or *beth slutha*, where an altar was prepared.¹³⁰ Yet, Chaillot notes that the fortress-like church construction was found in mountainous areas, and the open yard service was held in the plains.¹³¹ In the course of the modernization and relocations of the Assyrians, churches today are also built in modernized urban style.

The clergies wear the tunic called *Qathina* with a belt called *zunara*. As headgear they wear black turbans and always wear a beard. A stole worn by deacons and subdeacons as well as priests during the liturgy is called *urara*. A garment called a chasuble, or *mapra* in East Syriac, is for priests and bishops. Bishops wear an embroidered amice called *biruna* over the head. They carry a pastoral staff and a small cross.¹³² Mar O'Disho explains that the clerical wearing of the belt is indicative and symbolic of the office of the servants and ministers of

¹²⁵ Chaillot, op.cit., p.161

¹²⁶ Fortescue, op.cit., p.145, Vine, op.cit., p.189, Atiya, op.cit., p.297

¹²⁷ Atiya, op.cit., p.298

¹²⁸ Sargon Donabed, *Remnants of Heroes – The Assyrian Experience, The continuity of the Assyrian heritage from Kharput to New England*, Assyrian Academic Society Press, Chicago, 2003, pp.44-45

¹²⁹ Vine, op.cit., p.189

¹³⁰ Atiya, op.cit., p.298, Chaillot, op.cit., p.161, Fortescue, op.cit., p.145

¹³¹ Chaillot, *ibid.*, p.161

¹³² Fortescue, op.cit., pp.146-147

the kingdom, the Lord's command, and death.¹³³ The choir stands between the sanctuary and the nave,¹³⁴ with different vestments. In the past, the faithful used to take off their shoes on entering the church but retaining their headgear except for the actual time of service.¹³⁵ Baumer adds that in the past people had to leave their weapons as well as their shoes in an anteroom.¹³⁶

The name of an Assyrian church is usually taken from the names of apostles, saints, the Virgin Mary, martyrs or even their hermits or bishops.¹³⁷ Some early churches were converted from pagan temples,¹³⁸ or founded around relics of saints and places known for divine occurrences.¹³⁹

A local church has never been only a place where liturgies are regularly celebrated. It has also been known as a spiritual place where miraculous healings take place and people are connected to divine power.¹⁴⁰ Also, it has been central to community life where people's rites of passages take place officially, people meet and share fellowship, and there is a sense of liturgical continuity. All these day to day practices, or 'banal' practices in Bilig's word,¹⁴¹ contribute to the group cohesion and reinforce their Assyrian identity. This traditional church construction and its natural surroundings together with the liturgical and communal atmosphere often appear as subject of nostalgia.

In Eastern Syriac, the sacrament is called *raza*, which has meaning close to the Greek

¹³³ O'Dishoo, op.cit., pp.75-76

¹³⁴ Vine, op.cit., p.189

¹³⁵ Atiya, op.cit., p.298, Fortescue, op.cit., p.146, Vine, ibid., p.190

¹³⁶ Baumer, op.cit., p.123

¹³⁷ Fortescue, op.cit., p.146, Vine, op.cit., p.190

¹³⁸ Donabed, op.cit., p.44

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.49

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ An expression originally used by Michael Bilig in his book *Banal Nationalism* (1995). It refers to the representation of national identity in everyday life. (Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Korean translation, E-who publication, Seoul, 2008, pp.40-41)

mysterion.¹⁴² It is known that the Church of the East has seven sacraments. But it seems that they are not fixed or clear. In the classical Marganitha, they are the priesthood, baptism, the oil of unction, Eucharist, absolution, the holy leaven, and the sign of the cross. And these are sanctified by a true priest, the word and command of the Lord, and right intention and confirmed faith.¹⁴³ But the patriarch Timothy II (1318-1360) gives a slightly different list. His list of the seven sacraments includes the priesthood (holy orders), the consecration of a church and altar, baptism and confirmation, Eucharist, the blessing of monks, the office for the dead and the office for marriage. These are supplemented by the oil of unction, the holy leave, and the sign of the cross.¹⁴⁴ Fortescue adds that only three sacraments are practically works: baptism, Eucharist, and priesthood.¹⁴⁵

Baptism in the Church of the East does not occur immediately after a child's birth. Rather, at the birth, the child is washed with blessed water by the priest in prayer. Children are immersed three times while facing east, then they are anointed with holy oil all over.¹⁴⁶ The ceremony in which a newborn baby is washed or laved with the blessed water is known as "signing", or "saining", after which a name is given to the child. Fortescue considers this practice as curious imitation of baptism,¹⁴⁷ while Trimingham explains that the lack of priests led delays in baptism which in turn led to a growth of this saining custom, which is the "signing" of life in Christ's name with the cross.¹⁴⁸ As private baptism is not allowed, on Aphrahat's day at Easter, children are baptized in a long and elaborated service.¹⁴⁹

It is known that the Eucharist is not celebrated on every Sunday, but only on major feasts.

¹⁴² Baumer, op.cit., p.119

¹⁴³ O'Dishoo, op.cit., p.45

¹⁴⁴ Fortescue, op.cit., p.138, Vine, op.cit., p.187

¹⁴⁵ Fortescue, ibid., p.138

¹⁴⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.296, Fortescue, op.cit., p.156

¹⁴⁷ Fortescue, ibid., p.157

¹⁴⁸ Trimingham, op.cit., p.221 in a footnote

¹⁴⁹ Baumer, op.cit., p.120. Baumer states that the Church of the East preferred the baptism of young adults and that infant baptism replaced it only at the beginning of the twelfth century.

The faithful who receive the communion should fast from the previous midnight. Fortescue adds that the celebrant and deacon should have taken part in evening prayer the day before, in the night and morning prayer.¹⁵⁰ In the past, confession was also required,¹⁵¹ but not anymore.¹⁵² Mar O'Disho describes the Eucharist, or the Oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ as a service offered up by those below to those above, through material elements, in hope of the forgiveness of sins and of an answer to prayer.¹⁵³ After a prayer called *epiclesis*, or the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the priest holds the Host in his both hands and breaks it into two. He places one of the broken Host on the paten, while he signs the chalice with the other. He dips it into the chalice and signs the other half. He also signs his forehead with his thumb. He kisses the altar. Distinctive characteristics of the Church of the East Eucharist are to cover the paten and chalice with one large veil, the use of incense at the preface, and two fractions of the Host.¹⁵⁴ While the priest distributes the bread into the hands of the celebrants, who can also choose to receive directly into the mouth,¹⁵⁵ the deacon distributes the chalice.¹⁵⁶ An interesting and important feature of the Eucharist of the Church of the East is the use of the holy leaven, which is called *malka*, the king. It is said that John the Baptist collected water from Jesus' body during his baptism, and that later this was mixed with his blood which was shed on the cross. This mixture was put with the bread of the last supper, part of which was continuously kept for the next baking.¹⁵⁷ Though other Christians look down on this tradition as superstition,¹⁵⁸ for the Assyrians it is an apostolic tradition which

¹⁵⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.150

¹⁵¹ O'Dishoo, op.cit., pp.60-61

¹⁵² Atiya, op.cit., p. 295

¹⁵³ O'Dishoo, op.cit., pp.55-57

¹⁵⁴ www.nestorian.org/liturgy_of_addeus_and_maris.html

¹⁵⁵ Chaillot, op.cit., p.163

¹⁵⁶ Vine, op.cit., p.192

¹⁵⁷ See chapter 2 of this part for this tradition.

¹⁵⁸ Fortescue, op.cit., p.159 for example.

only Assyrians have preserved in continuity.¹⁵⁹ Fortescue notes that they begin the liturgy by actually making the bread.¹⁶⁰

At the marriage service the bride and bridegroom are crowned with threads of red, blue and white.¹⁶¹ Priest may add clay or dust to the mixture of wine and water in the chalice and let the couple consume it. The chalice with water and wine symbolizes the union, or *shawtaputa*, of the new couple. And the dust, or *hnana*,¹⁶² symbolizes the mercy of God. Christine Chaillot notes that the marriage rite of the Church of the East preserves Semitic customs such as the blessing of the bridal chamber.¹⁶³

For the funeral service, the body is brought to the church after it is bathed and wrapped in white cloth with salt. Traditionally it stays overnight in the church where the priest prays and chants for the dead with family and friends. The next morning the body is put in a wooden box and taken to be buried.¹⁶⁴ But only men are allowed to go to the cemetery for the burial rite. Women can visit on the third day. Chaillot esteems this regulation as possibly modeled on Jewish practice while leaving open the possibility that it is taken from Gospel account.¹⁶⁵ The funeral mass actually takes place on the third day after the death symbolizing the deceased's participation in the resurrection of Christ through Eucharistic celebration.¹⁶⁶

In the middle of the seventh century, the Patriarch Isho'yab III, while reorganizing the liturgies, arranged the church year into eight groups of more or less seven weeks each. Each

¹⁵⁹ O'Dishoo, op.cit., pp.58-59. Mar O'Disho argues that the claim of apostolic tradition of the Eucharistic bread in the Western Churches is discrepancy, since churches in France use unleavened bread while churches in Greece use leavened one.

¹⁶⁰ Fortescue, op.cit., p.159, Baumer, op.cit., p.121 The dough is consecrated by the bishop on Maundy Thursday, and each church of the diocese receives a piece.

¹⁶¹ Fortescue, ibid., p.158

¹⁶² Baumer, op.cit., p.121. Hnana, or hanana, is a mixture of oil, water and dust from the grave of a saint or martyr.

¹⁶³ Chaillot, op.cit., p.165

¹⁶⁴ Donabed, op.cit., pp.54-55

¹⁶⁵ Chaillot, op.cit., p.165 In the Gospels, women visited Jesus' tomb on the third day.

¹⁶⁶ Baumer, op.cit., p.126

group is called *shabbo'e*. They are Christmas, Epiphany (*Denha*), Lent (*Sawma*), Resurrection (*Qyamta*), the time of the Apostles (*Shlihe*), Summer (*Qayta*), Elijah/Cross/Moses (*Elia-Slowa-Mushe*), the Dedication of the Church.¹⁶⁷ Fortescue and Atiya count Elijah/Cross/Moses as two periods of Elijah and Moses, which make nine periods.¹⁶⁸ As seen earlier, the adoption of the new Gregorian calendar instead of the Julian by the Church of the East in the sixties brought about the division of the church. The issue of the calendar remains an important discussion point for re-unification.

The Divine Offices, or the Canonical Hours, are five times a day. They are *ramsha* (evening prayer), *suba'a* (perfecting), *slitha dlilya* (prayer at night), *shahra* (vigil), and *slutha dsafra* (morning prayer). But only two prayers, morning and evening, are observed these days.¹⁶⁹

There are four major fasts in the Church of the East; Advent (*Subara*), the Fast of the Ninevites, the Great Fast, and the Fast of St. Mary. Fasting during Advent lasts for twenty-five days before Christmas. The Fast of the Ninevites is the commemoration of the penitence of the Ninevites in Jonah's time. It is only found in the Church of the East, the Chaldean Church, and the Syriac Orthodox Church. People fast for three days and three nights during the Rogation of the Ninevites, or *baoutha d'Ninwoye*, which comes three weeks prior to Lent.¹⁷⁰ The Great Fast, or Lent, lasts for forty-nine days before Easter. And the Fast of St. Mary is for first fifteen days of August. These fasts are observed strictly without meat and any animal products including eggs. In addition to these, all Wednesdays and Fridays are days of abstinence.¹⁷¹ Mar O'Disho claims that Christians should not eat meat on Friday, the day on which Jesus died on the cross and on which even carnivorous animals are said to have

¹⁶⁷ Chaillot, op.cit., p.165

¹⁶⁸ Fortescue, op.cit., pp.147-148, Atiya, op.cit., p.296

¹⁶⁹ Fortescue, ibid., pp.140-142

¹⁷⁰ Donabed, op.cit., p.54

¹⁷¹ Fortescue, op.cit., p.148

not eaten meat, and also on Wednesday, the day on which Jesus was captured by the Jews.¹⁷² The memorials of saints and martyrs are celebrated on Fridays.¹⁷³ The two major feasts are Christmas and Easter. Originally, the Epiphany, or manifestation was a celebration of the Baptism of Christ, rather than his birth. It was in the fifth century that the Western churches transferred the celebration into Christmas emphasizing Magi's visit from the East.¹⁷⁴

While the issue of the new Calendar is a major agenda item in the re-unification endeavor between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East, the anathema of St. Cyril the Great of Alexandria in the liturgy on the Church of the East has been a hindering factor in reconciliation with the Coptic Orthodox Church.¹⁷⁵

3. Monasticism – an extinct tradition

Monasticism in Mesopotamia is popularly ascribed to a pearl fisherman at al-Qulzum, near modern Suez, named Augin, or Eugene. In the tradition, he is said to have left for Wadi Natrun, to go to a famous Pachomian monastery to join the monastic life, after long work as a pearl fisherman. He brought to Mesopotamia and Syria the rule of cenobitic life along with seventy companions around the middle of the fourth century. He founded a monastery on Mount Izala, near the city of Nisibis. From that point, Mount Izala became the center of the Church of the East monasticism with 350 monks at its peak.¹⁷⁶

But scholars seem to consider this tradition not credible. Since monasticism was already

¹⁷² O'Dishoo, op.cit., pp.71-72. He also says that the Fall of Adam, Noah's Flood, and Satan's war after Jesus' resurrection happened on Fridays. But he does not give any evidence for these.

¹⁷³ Fortescue, op.cit., p.147

¹⁷⁴ <http://churchoftheeastflint.org/id13.html> The major feasts of the early church were Epiphany, Easter and Pentacost.

¹⁷⁵ Baumer, op.cit., pp.282-283. The Church of the East has not been able to be a member church in the Church Council of the Middle East as the Coptic Church objects. The anathema was repealed in 1997 by the synod. But the Coptic Church wants further condemnation of Nestorius.

¹⁷⁶ Atiya, op.cit., p.291, Fortescue, op.cit., p.110, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mar_Awgin

established in Western Syria, and so naturally spread into the East, and also as there were “sons” and “daughters of the Covenant” in Eastern Syria and Persia, though not organized, Fortescue thinks, there was no need for a special founder.¹⁷⁷ Christoph Baumer explains that early Syrian monasticism was anchoritic in character but there emerged a cenobitic movement around 340, without mentioning who led this movement.¹⁷⁸ He also adds that the excessive Syrian asceticism was criticized by Egyptian and Greek-Byzantine monasticism.¹⁷⁹ Thus, one can conclude that there was a form of unorganized monasticism in Eastern Syria, or Mesopotamia, which went through a transformation into an organized cenobitic monasticism in the fourth century. Trimmingham reports that ‘Awdisho, or ’Abd Yasu, an Arab of Mesene, founded the oldest Nestorian monastery Dair Mar Awdisho in Hira in the same century. A monastery is called *darani* and it was an association of monks.¹⁸⁰ A monk is called in Eastern Syriac *rabbān*.

Concerning the origin of monasticism in general, Baumer notes that it emerged not only out of the ideal of the imitation of Christ as Paul proclaimed, but also because of diluted religiosity resulted from the rapid growth of the Christianity, and this in turn led to the development of a special way of being a Christian.¹⁸¹ These monasteries were usually founded on sites of martyrdom, famous hermits’ caves, mountain slopes or former pagan shrines.¹⁸²

However, the Synod of Beth Lapat presided over by Bar Sauma in the year of 484, decided on the abolition of celibacy regulations among clergy including monks and nuns.¹⁸³ Fortescue strongly avers that monasticism without celibacy is no monasticism at all. In this

¹⁷⁷ Fortescue, op.cit., p.110

¹⁷⁸ Baumer, op.cit., pp.127-128

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.128

¹⁸⁰ Trimmingham, op.cit., pp.171, 189, 280

¹⁸¹ Baumer, op.cit., pp.126-127

¹⁸² Ibid., p.128

¹⁸³ Fortescue, op.cit., p.111, Aziz Atiya, op.cit., p.291

light, for Fortescue, the religious life was nearly extinct in Persia in the fifth century.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Atiya interprets the decision to abolish celibacy rather as a reflection of the decline of monasticism due to circumstances at that time during which the church was divided and torn between two Empires.¹⁸⁵ This decline reached to the extent that there was a monastic settlement as a village in the mountain where monks and nuns lived together and raised families with children.¹⁸⁶

The sixth century is marked as an era of monastic reform in the Church of the East led by Abraham of Kashkar (491-586)¹⁸⁷ who is often called Abraham the Great, the father of the Assyrian monasticism. He is a contemporary of the Patriarch Mar Aba, the reformer of the Church of the East. Both of them were graduates of the School of Nisibis. Abraham served in Hira, then went to Egypt and studied Egyptian monasticism for many years. After his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he came back to Mount Izala with strict monastic rules modified from those of Coptic monks.¹⁸⁸ Thomas of Marga, a ninth century monk who later became Metropolitan of Beth Garmai, left a collection of stories of monks in a book called *the Book of Governors*, or *Historia Monastica*. It contains monks from Abraham of Kashkar down to his own time. Fortescue describes monastic life in Abraham's time based on his accounts as following.

Monks wore a tunic, belt, cloak, hood and sandals. They carried a cross and a stick. The Nestorian monks wore a tonsure formed like a cross, to distinguish them from those of the Jacobites. At first they met seven times a day for common prayer (the canonical hours). Later it was reduced to four times. They worked in the fields; those who could copy books. The

¹⁸⁴ Fortescue, *ibid.*, p.111

¹⁸⁵ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.291

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Atiya's information says he was born either in 491 or 492 and died in 586. In Baumer's, he was born in 491 and died either in 586 or 588. (Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.291. Baumer, *op.cit.*, p.129)

¹⁸⁸ Atiya, *ibid.*, p.292, Vine, *op.cit.*, p.73, Fortescue, *op.cit.*, p.112

abstained from flesh-meat always, ate one meal (of bread and vegetables) a day, at the sixth hour (mid-day). Then they all lay down and slept awhile. After three years of probation a monk could, with the abbot's leave, retire to absolute solitude as a hermit.¹⁸⁹

And the monastic rules set by Abraham of Kashkar in 571 include,

Canon 1: Monks live peacefully in their cells and devote themselves to prayer and study or meditation and handicraft. As the fish dies if it is taken from the water, so does the monk who stays outside his cell.

Canon 4: Monks practice silence and gentleness.

Canon 6: No brother may move from monastery to monastery or from place to place or enter the city [Nisibis] except in an emergency and with the permission of the community.¹⁹⁰

Abraham's successor Dadisho added more rules including punishment and expulsion from monastery if a monk travels to the cities without the abbot's permission, hence wandering monks were forbidden.¹⁹¹ If a monk could not read the Scripture, he was not accepted into the community. And children were not accepted. These rules contributed to raise the educational level of the monks. Also, a monk could build a cell only after he passed the three-year test.¹⁹² So, the cenobitic life was seen as preparation and selection process for anchoritic monasticism for the Church of the East.¹⁹³ Later, Rabban Yussuf Busnaya set another regulation in the selection process. Novices were required to perform hard physical labor for fifty days meekly before they were admitted to the cenobitic life.¹⁹⁴ The rule of celibacy was also strictly applied. The number of monasteries increased in the sixth and seventh centuries.

¹⁸⁹ Fortescue, *ibid.*, p.112

¹⁹⁰ Baumer, *op.cit.*, p.129

¹⁹¹ But Atiya says that these wandering monks without affiliation to a monastery, or a sect of the Msalleiani (al-Musallin in Arabic meaning 'praying men'), did not disappear but existed until at least the twelfth century. (Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.293)

¹⁹² Baumer, *op.cit.*, pp.129-130

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 130, Trimmingham, *op.cit.*, p.294

¹⁹⁴ Baumer, *ibid.*, p.130

Mount Izala near Nisibis and Dorkena near Seleucis became the leading centers of Assyrian monasticism.¹⁹⁵

Each monastery had an abbot. A monastery had to be under the care of a nearby bishop. In addition to this, monastic property was also subject to the bishop's administration. This monastic system strengthened and enriched the church hierarchy.¹⁹⁶ Atiya describes this:

The strict obedience of monks to ecclesiastical authority provided the hierarchy with a powerful army of devotees who strengthened the Church and fearlessly penetrated the vast Asiatic continent in an attempt at large-scale evangelization.¹⁹⁷

He further relates the evangelical success of the Church of the East to its monasticism full of self-denying members.¹⁹⁸ He explains that in addition to geographic benefits such as Seleucia-Ctecephon's being natural cross-road, they combined with their enthusiasm for their faith a monastic system, a hierarchy ready for action and self-sacrifice. Moreover, their methodology was modern. A new bishopric always installed a school with a library and hospital. They combined technical ability and medical skill serving in medical areas and religious work at the same time.¹⁹⁹

Prospering monasticism also contributed to theological development. Mar Dadisho's successor Mar Babai the Great (569-628, 620-628 abbot), for example, left eighty theological works including an important Christological treatise *Book of the Union*. He also led the people of the Church of the East while the patriarchal seat was vacant. Under his leadership, missionaries from the Church of the East reached China.²⁰⁰ The survival of the Church of the

¹⁹⁵ Atiya, op.cit., p.293

¹⁹⁶ Fortescue, op.cit., p.112, Vine, op.cit., p.74

¹⁹⁷ Atiya, op.cit., p.292

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.291

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.257

²⁰⁰ Vine, op.cit., p.75

East at the time of influx of Islam is attributed to its monasticism.²⁰¹ Atiya also evaluates the monasteries highly as a chief solace of the church for survival and sustained expansion.²⁰² There were, of course, examples of deterioration related to politics and wealth.²⁰³

Baumer also describes Eastern Syrian mysticism which sought the ideals of strict asceticism. Famous examples are Isaac of Nineveh, and John of Dalyatha in the eighth century. Baumer claims that this mysticism influenced the Islamic mysticism of al-Hallaj (858-922).²⁰⁴

Unfortunately the monasticism of the Church of the East declined. Atiya reports that concrete data on monastic history after Thomas of Marga's chronicle became increasingly scarce. Nevertheless, from other evidence, he judges that the Church of the East and its monasticism flourished at least during the early Abbasids and until Mongol invasion.²⁰⁵ Fortescue attributes the decline of monasticism after the fourteenth century to prejudice against celibacy in the Church of the East. He points out that monks could retreat from their vows of celibacy with ease from that century onward.²⁰⁶ Fourteenth century Metropolitan Mar O'Disho comments on celibacy that one who makes a vow of celibacy is in fact inferior to a layman because "everyone who battles in the contest frees his mind from everything else."²⁰⁷ Baumer, however, rather thinks the decline was due to continuous Islamization, fanatic Seljuk Turks, and systematic destruction by the Kurds.²⁰⁸

In modern history, monasticism has been reduced to an individual vow of celibacy by

²⁰¹ Fortescue, *op.cit.*, p.112 quoting Labourt.

²⁰² Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.292

²⁰³ Baumer, *op.cit.*, p.131

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.132, 134

²⁰⁵ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.294

²⁰⁶ Fortescue, *op.cit.*, p.135

²⁰⁷ O'Dishoo, *op.cit.*, p.63

²⁰⁸ Baumer, *op.cit.*, pp.131-132

monks and nuns at home.²⁰⁹ The last hermit in the Church of the East was Rabban Yonan who died in 1886. He was highly respected as a calligrapher, clairvoyant and healer. The last monk Rabban Werda died before World War I.²¹⁰

Today, monasteries of the Church of the East are one of the most often mentioned items of Assyrian tradition and cultural heritage, but not as a functioning institution. Atiya describes this: “[t]hroughout modern history their monasteries have always been in ruins.”²¹¹ The remaining monasteries are taken care of by Chaldean or Syrian Orthodox churches. The monasteries in Mount Izala, which is in Turkish territory today, are mostly in ruins. Because many of these monasteries were founded as monasteries belonging to the Church of the East, and also because many people believe that adherents of Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox Churches are Assyrians,²¹² all these monasteries are described as Assyrian. One surviving monastery in Turkey, the monastery of St. Gabriel, which was founded in 397 near Midyat, is under legal dispute with Kurdish village leaders who claim the monastery land and accuse them of conducting illegal missionary activity among Muslim youth.²¹³

The remaining monasteries around Mosul are mainly located in Jabal Maqloub. It is said that many monks fled to the region when the Emperor Julianus persecuted them in 361. The number of monks increased to thousands, which gave the name to the mountain *Tura D'alpayeh*, or the thousands mountain. It seems that these monasteries had libraries and played an important role as educational and religious centers but went through several periods of destruction and restoration. Mongol invasion left them partially destroyed and the Persian ruler Nadir Shah's attack in the years between 1743 and 1790 left most of them

²⁰⁹ Atiya, op.cit., p.294

²¹⁰ Baumer, op.cit., pp.132, 273

²¹¹ Atiya, op.cit., p.294

²¹² See Part II Chapter 2 and Part III Chapter 2.

²¹³ www.wv4report.com/node/6456 reported by the Assyrian International News Agency.

destroyed either wholly or partially. Among those remaining monasteries under other churches' care are the monasteries of Mar Elia, Mar Gewargis, Rabban Hormiz, Mar Mattai, Mar Mikhael, and Mar Oraham. The monastery of Rabban Hormiz, founded in 640, had served as the patriarchal seat of the Church of the East from 1497 to 1804. The valley it overlooks was called *Gali al-Dair*, or the valley of the monastery. It has a library, over forty small caves, and five altars. The monastery of Mar Mattai, founded in the fourth century, is considered to be the most important Assyrian monastery in Iraq. It is located on top of the Jabal Maqloub and believed to have the remains of Mar Mattai and other saints. These monasteries are visiting place for the people of the Church of the East and other Christians in the region, especially on feast days of saints to whom the monasteries are dedicated for celebration and prayer. Monasteries, especially where saints' relics are held are believed to be spiritually powerful for healing, answers to prayers, and giving blessing. But the establishment of a military compound around the monastery of Mar Elia under Sadam Hussein much reduced the number of visitors.²¹⁴

People count the restoration of the monastic tradition as the first thing to be revived for the renewal and progress of the Church of the East. Baumer laments the extinction of monasticism in the Church of the East calling "one of the most tragic signs." Yet, he also reports a few nuns active in Kerala and Baghdad and wants this to be a signal for a monastic renaissance, which in turn would lead to revival of the church on spiritual ground.²¹⁵ Among Assyrian youth, some radicals stake a claim on the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, which is now under Chaldean care, to return to the Assyrian hands. Also, Assyrian articles on the imagined alternative history writing website, IB Wiki, focuses on Assyrian monasticism

²¹⁴ www.aina.org/aol/syriac.htm, www.christiansofiraq.com/monastery.html

²¹⁵ Baumer, op.cit., p.274

reflecting expectations and an awareness of the need to restore monasticism in the Church of the East for the Church's own revival.²¹⁶

4. Languages

The Assyrian language is the liturgical language of the Church of the East and mother tongue of most of its adherents in Iraq and the first generation of their migrants. It is an Aramaic language belonging to the North-West Semitic family. Syriac, the Christian Aramaic language, was developed out of Aramaic, especially based on Edessan dialects, as the establishment of Christianity accompanied the emergence of new needs in language. In the fifth century, it began to diverge into Western and Eastern Syriac in accordance with political, geographical and ecclesiastical divisions.²¹⁷ Western Syriac became the language of the Maronites and today's Syrian Orthodox, while Eastern Syriac became the language of the Church of the East. Consequently, different scripts also emerged, namely Serto for Western Syriac and Nestorian or Chaldean for Eastern Syriac.²¹⁸ The Script of Eastern Syriac was developed from Estrangelo²¹⁹, an earlier form of Syriac script, into square characters and a punctuation system was added.²²⁰

Scholars do not seem to agree one other on how to classify modern [spoken] Aramaic languages. The traditional classification is to divide modern Aramaic into Western and

²¹⁶ An imagined article describes Assyrian monasticism as still prospering. http://ib.fraeth.net/w/index.php?title=Assyrian_Monasticism. Another article imagines an Assyrian monastery at Mount Athos, a famous location for monasticism in Greece. In this imagined Assyrian monastery, monks from different parts of the world where historically the church of the East reached, such as Uygur, Persian, Qazaq, Lebanese, Tajik, Iraqi, Mongolian, Tibetan, Turcoman, Tuvim, and Uzbek, are serving the community in a medical center and communicating among themselves in Syriac. http://ib.fraeth.net/w/index.php?title=Monastery_of_St.Thomas

²¹⁷ Baum, op.cit., p.158

²¹⁸ Peter Daniels, "Aramaic script for Aramaic languages", in Peter T. Daniels and William Bright (ed.), *The World's Writing Systems*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1996, p.500

²¹⁹ From the Greek word 'strogylus' meaning 'round.' (Harry Charles Luke, *Mosul and Its Minorities*, Martin Hopkinson & Company Ltd., London, 1925, p.107)

²²⁰ Baum, op.cit., p.159

Eastern forms, and then into their sub-branches. Efrem Yildiz says that some scholars tend to classify Eastern modern Aramaic into Turoyo which is spoken in Tur'abdin area, Northeastern, and Mandaic.²²¹ Bjorklund also notes three sub-branches of Eastern modern Aramaic, or neo-Aramaic, quoting Yunan's classification: Western, which is called *Turoyo*, or Suryoyo, Central, which is called *Suret* used in the Bohtan area by Chaldeans and people of the Church of the East, and Eastern, which is called *Aturaya* of the Hakkari area. And it was *Aturaya* among these, he continues, that became the written language later through the missionaries.²²² However, Yildiz tries to discard traditional Eastern/Western classification. Rather, he suggests classifying according to period, and for modern Aramaic, to have a separate Central branch under which come Turoyo of Tur'abdin and Mlahso of Diyarbakir Aramaic, not under Eastern Aramaic. In his classification, sub-branches of the Eastern modern Aramaic are Southeastern whose speakers generally correspond to Chaldean Church adherents in Turkey and Iraq, Northeastern for adherents of the Church of the East, and Fareastern which is Mandaic.²²³

Though Eastern Syriac has continuously been the literary language of the Church of the East, it was commonly referred to as the "old language" by Assyrians. And modern [spoken] Aramaic was not written down²²⁴ until 1836 when American Protestant missionaries in Urmi succeeded in persuading people to write modern vernacular dialect in addition to classical Syriac.²²⁵ The orthography of this new modern Assyrian literary language was "deliberately etymological and designed to bridge, as much as possible, the great differences

²²¹ Efrem Yildiz, *The Aramaic Language and its Classification*, JAAS, Vol.14, No.1, 2000, pp.39-41 Mandaic is the spoken and literary language of a Gnostic sect in the south of Mesopotamia.

²²² Bjorklund, *North to Another Country – the Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden*, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, The Swedish Commission on Immigration Research, 198, pp.165-168

²²³ Yildiz, op.cit., pp.26-27, 40 Mandeans are followers of Mandeism, a Gnostic sect in Iraq today.

²²⁴ Baaba, op.cit., pp.13, 16

²²⁵ Baum, op.cit., p.126. Baum states that this vernacular was Fellihi. (Baum, p.130)

among dialects.”²²⁶ The introduction of the printing press in 1840 and published Assyrian materials definitely contributed to the further settlement, development, and spread of the new Aramaic koine.²²⁷ There had been attempts to write modern Aramaic in the Syriac, Hebrew, Cyrillic, and Roman scripts. But only the Syriac script gained widespread usage and became a standard written language.²²⁸ Baum notes that Modern Syriac literature owed its success above all to the American missions at Lake Urmiah.²²⁹ Edward Odisho also argues that no matter what the missionaries’ intentions were, the language has survived thanks to their efforts.²³⁰ Yildiz attributes the survival of the language to the handful of educated Assyrians who studied in the private schools of qasha Yousip, qasha Khando and Rabbi Yaqu which were established after resettlement.²³¹

As the Church of the East centered in Persia separated from other Syriac speaking Christianity, Christian literature in Persian and Sogdian language also emerged in the fifth century. Some works in Syriac were translated into Middle Persian, the language of the time. According to Winkler, there was a debate over which language out of Syriac and Persian ought to be used in the liturgy.²³² In addition to this, expansion of the Church of the East across Asia also accompanied a linguistic influence on East Iranian and Central Asian communities. Christian Sogdian script is a variant of Eastern Syriac, the script used by the Church of the East.²³³ It became a lingua franca in Central Asia through missionary works along the northern Silk Road. Later, in the ninth century, Old Turkish developed out of the

²²⁶ Robert Hoberman, “Modern Aramaic”, in Peter Daniels (ed.), op.cit., p.504

²²⁷ Baum, op.cit., p.126

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., p.164

²³⁰ Edward Odisho, *Assyrian (Aramaic). A Recent Model for its Maintenance and Revitalization*, Melammu paper, p.188

²³¹ Yildiz, op.cit., pp.41-42

²³² Baum, op.cit., p.166

²³³ P. Oktor Skjaervo, “Aramaic Scripts for Iranian Languages”, in Daniels (ed.), op.cit., p.515 Sogdia is the name of a region in East Persia.

Sogdian script.²³⁴ Altaic languages of Uyghur, Mongolian, Manchu and several other languages adopted the Sogdian script.²³⁵ ²³⁶ Also, the Manichean script used by followers of Mani is based on Syriac in its Estrangelo form.²³⁷

Being a Christian language, Syriac literature gained its significance through translations of the Bible, which is called Peshitta, and other Christian literatures such as the *Diatessaron*, the Gospel harmony. The golden age of Syriac literature is between the fourth and seventh centuries. Aphrahat and Ephrem of the fourth century are the most famous and highly esteemed writers by all the Syriac Christian community. After the division of Church and the closure of the school of Edessa by the Emperor in 489, the school of Nisibis took up its role for the Church of the East. Monastic renewal in the sixth and seventh century greatly contributed to Eastern Syriac literature by producing theological and liturgical books. On the other hand, translation from Greek works to Syriac started from the fourth century. Later, during the Abbasids, East Syriac scholars were famous for their translation of Greek books into Syriac and then into Arabic and held significant social positions.²³⁸

However, East Syriac as a literary language began to decline in the tenth and eleventh century giving way to Arabic. The number of literary productions became much less. Winkler claims that “the increase in output of Syriac grammars and lexicons at the time can only be explained by the pressing need for such treatises as a means of preserving the language.”²³⁹ He calls Odisho (Abdisho) bar Brikha, who is the writer of the Book of the Pearl in the fourteenth century, the last great East Syriac writer.²⁴⁰ The general decline of the Church of

²³⁴ Baum, op.cit., pp.166-167, 170

²³⁵ Gyorgy Kara, “Aramaic for Altaic Languages”, in Daniels (ed.), op.cit., pp.536-556

²³⁶ Among twenty-eight hypotheses on the origin of the Korean script, there is a Mongolian origin hypothesis. Hence, there is a probable, very indirect influence on Korean script, too.

²³⁷ Skjaervo, op.cit., pp.530-531

²³⁸ Baum, op.cit., pp. 161-163

²³⁹ Ibid., p.299

²⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.164, 301

the East during the Mongol invasion and afterwards left the language to survive as only a spoken language. Brentjes reports that people did not understand the Bible and the clergy verbally translated it into their dialects during the service in the eighteenth century.²⁴¹ Harris, who anticipated the success of Iraqi nationalism, expected the disappearance of Assyrian language in the 1960s saying that,

The Aramaic dialect of the Assyrians has almost completely given way to Arabic. Classical Syriac continues to be used only by some Eastern-rite Christians of the area as a liturgical language. ... If the idea of Iraqi nationality continues to take hold among the minorities, it will become obvious to them that progress in most walks of life will depend upon the mastery of Arabic; the non-Arabic languages spoken in Iraq, therefore, are likely to disappear in time. Kurdish exception...²⁴²

However, the spoken dialect(s) of Eastern Syriac, as seen above, has been continuously used. It seems that scholars often underestimate the number of people who speak Syriac, or Assyrian, as their mother tongue. Yildiz, bothered by this notion, asserts that this language has never ceased in its usage, it has always been the dominant language of daily communication and the only language of religious services, and it is still the mother tongue of hundreds of thousands of speakers.²⁴³

Nevertheless, the decrease in the number of Assyrian speakers is a reality due to the linguistic influence of other languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, or Persian and due to mass migration. Assyrian leaders and scholars show their fear of the erosion, if not loss, of their language. The Assyrian language is a strong national symbol, the most salient distinctive marker, and directly related to cultural heritage. Peter Talia, while discussing contemporary issues of the Assyrian nation, presents the dilemma of language as first in importance, calling

²⁴¹ Brentjes, op.cit., p.56

²⁴² George L. Harris and others, *Iraq – its people, its society, its culture*, Harf Press, New Haven, 1958, p.37

²⁴³ Yildiz, op.cit., pp.39-41

the situation “a losing battle.”²⁴⁴ For him, as for many other Assyrians, this language is the “most precious cultural heritage” that should not be abandoned. But the language is in danger, he continues, as people mix it with other languages around and the problem is more serious since they have no country of their own where this language could be preserved. He also reports that Assyrian children in the diaspora communicate with each other in Arabic rather than in Assyrian, and that few Assyrians showed interest in learning Assyrian when the Assyrian Language and Culture Classes organized language sessions at Northeastern University, USA.²⁴⁵ Edward Odisho’s observation also proves that the linguistic theory, that the second generations of migration become bilingual and the third generations lose the language of origin, applies to Assyrians. He found that though the third generations are still interested in and identify with the Assyrian language, the language has lost even its ceremonial occasional role of symbolic use among the third generations. He also points out, quoting Romaine, that “identification with a language and positive attitude towards it do not guarantee its maintenance.”²⁴⁶ Talia considers the loss of Assyrian language the elimination of roots.²⁴⁷

Unexpectedly, however, the creation of the Safe Haven zone in northern Iraq after 1991 provided a new opportunity to revitalize the Assyrian language. The local autonomous government of the Kurds recognized Christians who speak Aramaic variations as a specific national and ethnic group and granted the right to use their native language for instructions in schools though under the auspices of Kurdish government. The Assyrian Democratic

²⁴⁴ Peter H. Talia, *Our Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow – History, Dilemma, and Destiny of the Assyrian People*, Covenant Publication, 1980, p.25

²⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.26-29

²⁴⁶ Edward Odisho, *Assyrian Language Maintenance and Erosion in U.S.: A World War I Immigrant Family Case Study*, JAAS, Vol.13, No.1, 1993, p.8

²⁴⁷ Talia, op.cit., p.28

Movement initiated an educational program for teaching the Assyrian language in schools.²⁴⁸ Despite the lack of school buildings, teachers and textbooks, the project started from elementary level in 1993 after running intensive language proficiency courses for teachers and the translation of Arabic textbooks.²⁴⁹ There are two kinds of schools: one, schools that teach the Assyrian language as a language for four to six hours per week, the other, schools in which the administration and teaching of all subjects are in the Assyrian language while Arabic, Kurdish, and English are taught as regional or foreign languages.²⁵⁰ At the turn of the century, there were twelve elementary and three high schools of the first category with 2349 students. As for the second category, there were fifteen elementary and two high schools with 1886 students.²⁵¹ In 1998 after negotiations with the local government, an intermediate school called Nisibin School began to operate with 319 students and dormitory facilities. It is also noteworthy that numbers of male and female students show the same ratio.²⁵²

Due to the variety of dialects and the small number of people, the project pursues a policy of dialect leveling, which is the reduction of differences among all the dialects and promote a koine Assyrian. Edward Odisho finds that dialect leveling has already reached a considerable degree.²⁵³ He praises the methodology of the project juxtaposing it to the Western missionaries' model in the past in terms of dialect leveling. He also adds that this methodology is also consistent with the party's national agenda which "treats language as the

²⁴⁸ Edward Odisho, Symposium Syriacum IX presentation, p.2. This ethnic group recognized by the Kurdish Autonomous Government includes people belonging to the Church of the East, the Chaldean Church, and to the Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Scholars distinguish the dialects of these groups as seen above.

²⁴⁹ Odisho, Melammu paper, op.cit., pp.188-189

²⁵⁰ Odisho, Symposium presentation, pp.2-3

²⁵¹ Odisho, Melammu paper, op.cit., pp.189-190

²⁵² Odisho, Melammu paper, p.190. The local Kurdish government objected to the establishment of an intermediate school operated completely in Assyrian on a legal base. The operation of this school is funded by Assyrian organizations overseas.

²⁵³ Odisho, Symposium presentation, pp.5-6. Yildiz, op.cit., p.43. Editorial notes on Yildiz' article say the dialects are mutually understandable as massive displacement and migration led to the emergence of a common dialect. But, the researcher's personal observations on different occasions such as presentations in conventions found lack of mutual understanding. And the effect of this dialect leveling on Assyrians out of the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq, not to mention in migration, has not been studied yet.

most central pillar of unity and solidarity across all Assyrian language dialects, religious denominations and regional and political inclinations and biases.”²⁵⁴ Further, he divides the history of modern Assyrian language into three periods: first, from the year 1800 to 1918 when the missionaries saved the language; second, from 1918 to 1991 when a common koine of oral communication emerged; and third, from 1991 when the educational project was launched by the Assyrian Democratic Movement. He projects that this new generation will prolong the language up to three future generations.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the future success of the project to raise a generation fully educated in Assyrian language largely depends on the relationship with the Kurds and the regional political and security situation, or unpredictability in Odisho’s word.²⁵⁶

The following survey was conducted in 2008 through 2009 for 46 Iraqi Assyrians. Table 2.1 shows how proficient they are in Assyrian language.

Table 2. 1 Assyrians – Assyrian language

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
I do not know it at all.	0	1 (7.69)	1 (2.17)
I know a few expressions used in liturgy but I don’t know their meaning or how to read it.	0	0	0
I know some expressions used in liturgy and their meaning but do not know how to read it.	0	0	0
I speak it fluently but do not know how to read or write.	12 (36.36)	9 (69.23)	21 (45.65)
I know how to read and speak it as my second language.	6 (18.18)	2 (15.38)	8 (17.39)
I speak it fluently and know how to read and write as my mother tongue.	15 (45.45)	1 (7.69)	16 (34.78)

²⁵⁴ Odisho, Symposium presentation, p.6, Mellammu paper, p.195

²⁵⁵ Odisho, Mellammu paper, pp.194-195 An Assyrian interviewee in the U.S. mentioned that the linguistic level of this newly educated generation enabled them to put the right Assyrian words for the academic terms in her paper.

²⁵⁶ Odisho, Symposium presentation, Ibid. p.7. On the other hand, Ashur Giwargis, an Assyrian researcher in Beirut, argues that since this educational program is under Kurdish control, textbooks contain contents opposed to Assyrian history and feeling in order to show the good relationship of the Assyrians with the Kurds. From a personal conversation.

Total	33 (100)	13 (100)	46 (100)
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* When double answers were given, answers from the highest level were taken.

Out of 46 respondents, 21 persons, or 46 percent, answered that they speak the Assyrian language fluently but do not know how to read or write, meaning they are illiterate. Literacy rates among males and females show a considerable disparity. While twelve out of 33 males, or 36.36 percent, are illiterate, among females nine persons, or about 70 percent, are illiterate in the Assyrian language. Eight persons answered they are literate but the Assyrian language was their second language. Sixteen persons, or 34.78 percent, answered that they speak it fluently and know how to read and write it as their mother tongue. While the number of literate males either as the second language or mother tongue is 21, or 63.63 percent, the number of literate females is three composing only 23.07 percent. This difference is more serious because the average age of male respondents is 43.45, while the females' is 34.23. One person answered that she does not know it at all. She was a Chaldean origin Assyrian whose husband is Assyrian (meaning an adherent of the Church of the East). Two other ladies who became Church of the East followers by marriage answered that they can speak it but do not know how to read and write it. One of them added that she learned Assyrian after her marriage. A research into Assyrians in Lebanon who were mostly refugees from Iraq in the 1980s also shows a similar result: 95 percent of Assyrians answered that they knew and used the Assyrian language in their daily lives.²⁵⁷

Interviewees indicated that they use different languages depending on given situations. For example, most frequently they speak in Assyrian at home and Arabic or Kurdish outside. Or they switch languages according to who they are communicating with. A female interviewee

²⁵⁷ Samir Khalaf and others, *The Assyrians in Lebanon: A Migrant Minority in a Pluralistic Society*, Middle East Council of Churches, Beirut, 1980, p.75

answered that she uses Arabic only in places such as market. While some emphasized they speak in Assyrian with their children, a few others answered that they speak in Arabic with their children.

While learning spoken Assyrian language is carried out at home, learning reading and writing was mainly carried out in churches especially during school vacations. In the interviews, the Assyrian language was often associated with discrimination. Under Saddam Hussein, the use of the Arabic was imposed and the languages of minority groups were prohibited.²⁵⁸ As private schools were closed, Assyrian was taught only in churches. As language education was not allowed in churches, it was taught through different forms such as Bible Study. Assyrian was also referred to by interviewees as “lughat al-masihyah,” or Christian language. One interviewee mentioned that the linguistic situation in the North (Kurdish autonomous area) had become better since 1991 as it had Assyrian schools and therefore, the Assyrian language could be preserved. Also, many showed their determination to teach Assyrian to their children. Interestingly, the responsibility for teaching the language tended to be laid upon wives.²⁵⁹ One mentioned that he was beaten by his mother when he was young if he spoke in Arabic at home.

As mentioned above, the Assyrian language is one of the most salient national markers. Interviews and questionnaire surveys also reflect this. Ten out of 46, or 21.73 percent, answered that the language is the distinctive feature of Assyrians.²⁶⁰ The language could function as a marker for recognizing other Assyrians.²⁶¹ In the interviews, it was more

²⁵⁸ Donabed, op.cit., p.21. Until very recently, Assyrians were unable to teach their language in schools in their ancestral homeland, Iraq.

²⁵⁹ Educational responsibility at home is in general considered more as the responsibility of wives in the Middle East.

²⁶⁰ Two out of four Chaldeans who participated in the questionnaire survey but are not included in the result, also answered that the Assyrian language is the distinctive feature of Assyrians.

²⁶¹ Such cases in diaspora situation are introduced on the Facebook Assyrian group. For example, an Assyrian young man wearing a T-shirt with some Assyrian words written on it was approached by other Assyrian ladies

specifically mentioned as difference from Chaldeans.²⁶² Interviewees said that the Assyrian language is more difficult than Chaldean, and since Chaldean has more Arabic words and expressions Assyrians understand more than Chaldeans do when Assyrians and Chaldeans communicate. Also, it was depicted as a language of civilization.²⁶³ Religiously, it is a language of prestige since it is the language of Jesus’ own time. To be a deacon requires reading and writing skill the in Assyrian language. As the language was linked to Assyrian cultural heritage, linguistic education was seen as directly related to education in Assyrian history. One interviewee expressed his distress saying that “now, we speak in Arabic even when we say ‘we are Assyrian’.”

Table 2. 2 Assyrians – Arabic

	Not at all	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Definitely	Total
Number	0	0	0	0	27	3	16	46
Percentage	0	0	0	0	58.70	6.52	34.78	100

Table 2.2 shows how much Assyrians “think” they are proficient in Arabic language. The given sentence was “I think I am good at Arabic in speaking and writing.” The respondents were to indicate how much they agree with the sentence. No one answered that they are not good at Arabic. Twenty-three people, or 58.70 percent, answered that they agree to say “I am good at Arabic.” Three answered “Strongly agree” and the rest sixteen, or 34.78 percent,

who asked if he knew what the words meant. When they found that each other were Assyrian, they quickly became friends. Also, during the Christian massacre in WWI, recognizing an Assyrian by language could save a life. For example, a victim who had survived a sword cut lying in a pit distinguished Assyrians by hearing their speech and asked help. (See for example, Abd al-Masih Nieman Qarabashy, *Al-Damm Al-Masjuk* (the Shed Blood), *The Syrian Massacres In Mesopotamia*, originally written in Syriac, translation into Arabic by Theophilos George Saliba, Mt. Lebanon, 2005)

²⁶² Interviews with Chaldeans also confirmed that the most salient difference from the Church of the East people is the language.

²⁶³ During interviews, it was mentioned once as a language of civilization in contrast with Arabic.

answered “Definitely agree.” Considering that the mother tongue of Assyrians is not Arabic, it is interesting to have 100 percent positive answers. As the language of education, also as the language of the majority in Iraq, Arabic seems to be more than the second language to the Assyrians. There was a male respondent who needed his wife’s help in reading and understanding questions throughout the survey which was written in Arabic. But, he answered “Agree” without hesitation saying, “I am good in speaking though not in reading.” Also, several female participants either asked for help to understand questions or preferred to listen to the questions and give oral answers. But, all of them gave positive answers. It is said that between the 1930s and 1960s, the Assyrians were known for their distinct accent in Arabic.²⁶⁴

A few interviewees showed their enmity toward the Arabic language. One said that he would never pray in Arabic, rather he would prefer to pray in French or Kurdish, if necessary.²⁶⁵ But, it is noteworthy that though the Assyrian language is the mother tongue of most Assyrians in Iraq, Arabic often functions as their literary language since many do not know how to read and write in Assyrian in addition to the fact that it has been the language of education.

Table 2. 3 Assyrians – other foreign languages

	English	Kurdish	Other	No other languages	No answer	Total*

²⁶⁴ Yildiz, op.cit., p.41

²⁶⁵ Ironically, this interview was conducted in Arabic. One person asked the researcher why I wasted time learning Arabic.

Number	Fluent 2 Good 8 Fair 18 Poor 4 Total 32	Fluent 0 Good 4 Fair 5 Poor 2 Total 11	Arabic (Fluent 2) Kildaniya(Fluent 1) Syriac (Fluent 1, Good 1) Iranian (Poor 1) French (Poor 1) Syrian (No detail 1) Lebanese (No detail 1) Total 9	5	5	62
Percentage	69.57	23.91	19.57	10.87	10	134.78

* Double answers are allowed.

Table 2.3 shows what foreign languages Assyrians speak and their proficiency in them. In general, there are not many foreign languages which are either known by Assyrians or fluently spoken. English was the most frequently appearing answer with 32 persons, or 69.54 percent of the total. But, out of these 32, only two persons said that they are fluent in English. Another eight people answered that they are good at English. Fifty-six percent of those who answered that they speak English, that is 18 persons, answered that their English is fair. The remaining four answered that their English is poor. The next highest frequency was found in Kurdish language with 11 answers. Four answered that they are good at Kurdish. Five others, which is 45 percent of who answered that they speak Kurdish, said their Kurdish is fair. One of them added the detail that he speaks the Bahdinani dialect within the Kurdish language. The remaining two answered that they speak it poorly. Five persons answered that they do not know any languages other than Assyrian and Arabic. One answered that he speaks fluent Chaldean.²⁶⁶ Two answered that they know Syriac, meaning the language mainly spoken by

²⁶⁶ This answer does not come from the Chaldean origin female respondents. Those Chaldean origin ladies did not mention that they speak Chaldean. Only one out of the four Chaldean respondents who participated but not counted in the result mentioned that he speaks fluent Chaldean other than Assyrian. It is possible that these Chaldeans count their language as Assyrian (dialect). Among those four Chaldeans, only one was literate.

Syrian Orthodox Church adherents in the region. One person answered that he is poor in French. Another one answered that she knows poor Persian. Two persons answered that they speak Arabic fluently though the question said “other languages except Arabic and Assyrian.” Interestingly, one person answered that he speaks Syrian and Lebanese, reflecting the perception of different dialects as different languages.²⁶⁷

If the Middle Eastern languages of Kurdish, Syriac, Persian and Arabic dialects are taken as the languages of neighbors, English and French are the only foreign languages the participants answered with. And their fluency is not high. But the percentage of people who learn English (69.5%) is much higher than in research in the early eighties which showed only 28.9 percent of Assyrian refugees in Lebanon had knowledge in English and 16.6 percent in French.²⁶⁸ Concerning this necessity of learning other languages, the late Bishop of Beirut commented that though there are schools operating in the Assyrian language, there is no nation state in which Assyrians can live on only with Assyrian language. They have to learn regional languages such as Arabic and Kurdish and the international language of English.²⁶⁹ In other words, on the one hand, contact with neighboring people in the region is a necessity, and on the other hand, globalization is also touching Assyrians in Iraq.

5. Names

An Assyrian name which is taken from ancient Assyrian history such as Ashur, Sargon, and Ninus is one of the most salient identity markers of the Assyrians like “a badge of cultural identity” as Hanks and Hodges refer.²⁷⁰ Also, the usage of these ancient names is often taken

²⁶⁷ He is an Iraqi refugee in Lebanon, who obviously must have learned the dialects after his flight from Iraq. Lebanese also often call the Lebanese dialect “Lebanese language” contrasting it with formal Arabic, or “Arabic language.”

²⁶⁸ Khalaf, *op.cit.*, p.75

²⁶⁹ From a personal interview with the bishop.

²⁷⁰ Odisho, JAAS paper, *op.cit.*

as proof of Assyrian continuity over thousands years.²⁷¹ But, the naming pattern tends to change over the course of time either voluntarily, or sometimes by force.²⁷² Especially an increase of Assyrian nationalistic names, besides Assyrian religious names, seems to be quite a modern practice along with rise of the Assyrian national movement.²⁷³

Traditionally, Assyrians, especially in the Hakkiari area, were organized in a tribal system. But these tribal names are not easily found as family names.²⁷⁴ Rather, names used as first names also function as family names. Edward Odisho explains the traditional name system as a three generation pattern, in which person's name, father's name, and grandfather's name come in order²⁷⁵ as in Arabic names. But some others see this practice as a result of Arabization which led the Assyrian family names to be lost.²⁷⁶ Even one hundred years old records contain this first-name-as family name pattern. For example, an Assyrian name list during World War II confirms that Assyrians at that time used family names such as Adam, Daniel, Sliwo, Gewargis, Odisho, Elias, Patros, and so on, not the tribal names.²⁷⁷ The entry of Arabic, Persian, or Turkish family names in accordance with geographic locations is regretted by Assyrians not only as discontinuity of Assyrian family names but as the loss of identity.²⁷⁸ Among the respondents, all nine people who identified themselves with their personal names gave their three names, presumably first name, father's name, and

²⁷¹ Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East, A History of Struggle and Self-Expression*, McMarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, 1991, p.157, See also Abdul-Massih Saadi, *Personal Names and the Assyrian Cultural Continuity*, in the *Assyrian Star*, Vol.LV, No.2, 2003 Summer.

²⁷² For example, when many followers of the Church of the East converted to the Russian Orthodox Church expecting Russian protection at the very end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church ordered anyone whose name did not appear in the Russian calendar of saints to adopt a new name. Baum, p.134 Forced use of Arabic names will be discussed later in this section.

²⁷³ Several interviewees mentioned this modern nationalistic trend in naming.

²⁷⁴ No information on how the family name system of Assyrians has been changed is among the researcher's sources.

²⁷⁵ Odisho, JAAS paper, op.cit., 1993

²⁷⁶ John Michael and Sheren Jasim, *Assyrians of Chicago*, <http://www.aina.org/aol/ethnic.htm>

²⁷⁷ Gaby Kiwarkis, *Assyrian Paratroopers in Albania and Greece*, www.assyriatimes.com/engine/modules/news/article.php?storyid=3318 A list of thirty-five names of Assyrian Paratroopers who served in Albania and Greece during the war. Their family names are all possible first names.

²⁷⁸ Michael, op.cit. Donabed reports that Assyrians in Elazig area were forced to take Turkish surnames and since then they were culturally Turkified. (Donabed, op.cit., p.128)

grandfather's name.

The general naming pattern of Assyrians today can be described as below.

Many Assyrians use the names of ancient Assyrian kings, queens, gods, goddesses, and cities. For males, names such as Ashur, Sargon, Nimrod, Ashurbanipal, and Sankheeru are common. For females, names includes Shamiram, Sharokin (also for males), Nineveh, Ashurina, Atur (also for males), and Ishtar. Some are named after early Christian Syriac saints such as Zaia, Hurmiz, Ephraim, and Narsai. Biblical names include Eshoo (Jesus), Maryum (Mary), Yousep (Joseph), Oraham (Abraham), and Yako (Jacob). Western names are not excluded, many Assyrians choose European and American names for their children.²⁷⁹

Due to the unstable security situation in Iraq, and consequent fear of revealing personal information, the questionnaire survey for the Assyrians did not ask their personal names. But about half of the respondents' names were collected while conducting the survey and interviews especially in Lebanon or through answers from a question on self-identity. This lack of data inevitably leads to limited analysis, especially, in the comparison between actual types of personal names and the respondents' perceptions. More names were collected from the names of interviewees and their family members for the study of naming practices among Assyrians.²⁸⁰

In Table 2.4 Assyrian names are categorized into Assyrian nationalistic names, Assyrian religious (Christian) names, Western names, and Others. Assyrian nationalistic names mean here names that are taken from the ancient Assyrian history. Though this categorization is not absolutely clear-cut, it shows a general naming pattern of Assyrians. Out of 71 collected names Ashur and Sargon appeared three times, and Ninos, Khoshaba, Yunan, Yosef, Ishaq, and Rita twice each. This corresponds to the general naming pattern given above. If the

²⁷⁹ Michael, *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ This list only included names of Iraqi interviewees and respondents including refugees in Syria, and Lebanon, but not migrants or their descendants.

female name Atour is added to the frequency, there are four Ashurs among 71, or 5.63 percent of the total. Also, when Abu Sargon is counted as Sargon, it has also a frequency of four. Ashur together with Sargon constitute the most popular names. Among female names, Mary and its variations appear four times, the biggest number, followed by two Ritas, a saint's name, and Eve and its Assyrian form Khawa make a frequency of two.

Table 2. 4 Assyrians – popular names

	Names (meaning or origin – frequency*)	Total (%)
Assyrian nationalistic names	Male : Ashur (Assyrian deity - 3), Sargon (Assyrian king - 3), Abu Sargon, Ninus (possibly Assyrian city Nineveh - 2), Akhiqar (Assyrian philosopher), Dashto (no meaning but popular Assyrian name), Naram (Assyrian king, also as Naram Seen), Senacherib (Assyrian king) Female : Atour (Assyrian deity), Shamiran (Assyrian queen, also as Shamiram), Shamas (uncertain), Wardiyah (flower, Arabic, also Assyrian)	Male : 13 (33.33) Female : 4 (12.5) (14.29)*** Total : 17 (23.94) (25.37)
Assyrian religious (Christian) names	Male : Khoshaba (of Sunday - 2), Yunan (Jonah - 2), Yosef (Joseph - 2), Ishaq (Isaac - 2), Immanuel (God), Andraus (Andrew), Giwargis (George), Ya'qub (Jacob), Sliwa (cross), Dinkha (Shine), Daud (David), Odisho (Servant of Jesus), Oraham (Abraham), Shumail (Ishmael, Samuel), Female : Rita (2), Maryam (Mary), Sarah, Khawa (Eve)****	M : 18 (46.15) F : 5 (15.63) (17.86) Total : 23 (32.39) (34.33)
Western names	Male : Toni (Christian name in Western form), Ivan (Christian name John in Western form), Raymond, Edmond, Emil, Julian, Golden Female : Lidia (Lydia), Karen (related to St. Catherine), Eva (Eve, Christian name in Western form), Mary (Christian name in Western form), Marlyn (Mary + lyn), Mariana (variation of Mary), Janet (originated from female name for John), Margaret (St. name), Anita (Anne, Hanna, Christian originated in Western form), Evelyn, Argentina, Athena, Matilda	M : 7 (17.95) F : 13 (40.63) (46.43) Total : 20 (28.17) (29.85)
Other names	Male : Jamis (taken from James) Female : Julet (taken from Juliet), Rania, Randa, Siham (Arabic), Ruwaida (Arabic), [Wijdan]** (Arabic), [Hiba] (Arabic), [Laila] (Arabic), [Zeina] (Arabic), Midia (Kurdish)	M : 1 (2.56) F : 10(31.25) 6 (21.43) Total : 11 (15.49) 7 (10.45)
		M : 39 (100) F : 32 (100) 28 (100) Tot. : 71 (100) 67 (100)

* If not numbered means appear once.

** Names of ladies who became Assyrian (Church of the East) by marriage.

*** Percentages of second parentheses mean the percentage when by-marriage-Assyrians are excluded.

**** When a name has same pronunciations in Assyrian and in other languages, it was counted as Assyrian.

Thirteen out of 39 male names, or one third of the total males, have Assyrian nationalistic names which are taken from ancient Assyrian history such as the deity and kings' names. Not only Ashur is the prime god of the ancient Assyrians but the ethnic name and its derivations were taken from this very god. Sargon is actually the Akkadian king who unified the ancient world for the first time. But since Mesopotamian civilization is understood as Assyrian, this heroic king's name also is highly celebrated among Assyrians. Other famous kings' names such as Naram Seen and Senacherib are also popular names among today's Assyrians. Other popular Assyrian nationalistic names which do not appear in this list include Ashurbanipal (a king), Akkad (kingdom), Nineveh (city), Nimrod (hero), and so on. Among females, there are four Assyrian nationalistic names on the list. This comprises 12.5 percent of female names. Atour and Shamiran are exemplary Assyrian nationalistic names taken from history. Atour is another form of Ashur. Shamiran is a queen who is also known as Semiramis.²⁸¹ It was written as Shamiram in the past. There is 'Wardiyah' which means "flower" in Assyrian.²⁸² This name can be easily perceived as an Arabic word which means "rosy" or "of rose" in the Arabic speaking Middle East. Also, there is an uncertain name of Shamas. Though the interviewee said it was an Assyrian name, it was not found any other place.²⁸³ Other typical female Assyrian nationalistic names are Ishtar (female deity), and Nineveh (city).

Concerning the increase of nationalistic names in modern times, interviewees said that, "After WWI genocide, new national consciousness arose and number of nationalistic

²⁸¹ Her name is Sammu-rammat meaning "the high heavens". She was the queen of Shamshi-Adad V (823-811 B.C.) Her name is identified with the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis as well as Zakutu queen of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.). (*Ancient Assyrian Names of Women and their Meaning* by Zack Cherry in the *Assyrian Star*, Vol.LV, No.2, Summer 2003, p.17)

²⁸² <http://www.atour.com/~fred/docs/assyriannames.html>

²⁸³ An Assyrian informant who is an Assyrian nationalist and a researcher also said he had never heard of this name.

publications increased. And the practice of giving ancient Assyrian names to babies also began.”²⁸⁴ “Assyrian nationalistic names were popular especially during the fifties and the sixties. In the past, one hundred years ago, for example, in most cases religious names such as Enwiya, Yonadam, Giwargis, and Qoryaqos, were given to the babies. ...People did not know their history or nationalism. And they just inherited religious names. Now, people are being educated more. Also, the authority of the church was stronger in the past. The Church also held temporal power in the past.”²⁸⁵

Eighteen out of 39 males, or 46.15 percent, have Assyrian Christian names. They are biblical names in the Assyrian language such as Oraham, Yunan, Ishaq, Yosep, and Daud or saints’ names in the Assyrian language: Giwargis, for example. Dinkha (shine) and Sliwa (cross) are Assyrian words with Christian meanings. There are also coined Christian names such as Odisho which means ‘a servant of Jesus.’ Among those who had such coined names, Yeshu’yab (Jesus has given) or Yahballah (God has given)²⁸⁶ are famous Assyrian monks in the history. Female Christian names have a lesser frequency of five, which is 15.63 percent. They are Rita (2 persons), Maryam, Sarah, and Khawa. But except Khawa, all these names can be used as Arabic names without any change of pronunciation. Hence, they are not a distinguishable identity marker. Other Christian names are found as Western names. There are three more such names for males, and nine more for females. These names are Toni, Ivan (a Russian form of John), and Mary and its variations, Lidia, Eva, Karen, Janet, Margaret, and Anita. There is also a male name Jamis, which was taken from James. It is not certain whether these names are given in consideration of their religious meanings, or more for fashion. But if these names are counted as Christian names, 21 males, or 53.85 percent, and

²⁸⁴ From an interview with an Assyrian lawyer in the U.S.

²⁸⁵ From an interview with an Assyrian deacon in Lebanon.

²⁸⁶ See also Saadi, *op.cit.*, p.16

14 females, or 43.75 percent, have Christian names. When four Assyrian-by-marriage ladies are excluded, the percentage of religious names among females increases to 50 percent.

Though interviewees thought that religious names were out of date, not fashionable, or too heavy, Christian names are still found in high frequency, especially among males. It is noticeable that female religious names are in more Western form, more in keeping with the trends of the time. Religious names are also found among young people. Names of an interviewee's children show the tendency of giving more religious names to boys. The names of his children are Midia, Marina, and Matilda, all non-religious non-Assyrian names. Marina and Matilda are Western names while Midia, the firstborn's name, is Kurdish. But their brother, though the youngest, is given a religious name 'Immanuel,' but using the same syllable 'Ma,' not breaking the rule of series. Evidence of the domination of religious names is also found from the World War II document. Thirty-one among the thirty-five Assyrian Paratroopers during World War II had religious names, not even a single nationalistic name popular today. The thirty five names are Odisho ('servant of Jesus', 4 persons), Hormis (saint's name, 4), Gewergis (George, 3), Youkhana (John, 3), Lazar (Lazarus, 2), Pithyou (Assyrian monk, originally Pithyoun), Oraham (Abraham), Dawid (David), Ishaq (Isaac), Mati (Mattai), Paulos (Paul), Zaia (saint's name), Sliwo (cross), Slimon (Solomon), Gabro (Gabriel), Dinkha (shine), Benyamin (Benjamin), Enwia (prophet), Chaba (Sunday, same with Khoshaba), Hanna (Hanna), Noona (no meaning, pronounced as Nona), Menas (Arab tribal name, 2), and Warda (flower).²⁸⁷

However, ironically, neither these Assyrian Paratroopers which were given nearly a century ago, nor the contemporary Assyrians in this survey have the names of Nestorius, Addai, and Mari, the venerable founders of the Church of the East. Not even among the names of

²⁸⁷ Kiwarkis, op.cit. The origins and meanings of these names are taken from Assyrian Names Project, <http://www.atour.com/~fred/docs/assyriannames.html> and personal consultation with Ashur Giwargis.

Patriarchs of the Church of the East in their history.²⁸⁸ Vasili Shoumanov reports that the name Nestorius is hardly found among Assyrians though he knows an exceptional case of a Reverend Nestorius Malech.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Yunan (Jonah) who is directly related to the Nineveh Fast, one of the most distinguishable Assyrian feasts, gave his name to the Assyrians. So did Hormizd (also, as Hormiz, or Hormis), Pithyoun, and Qoryaqos, famous monks (saints) in the early history of the Church of the East.

Western names are much found among females. Table 2.4 shows a big difference between male and female Western name frequencies. While Western names among males are seven out of 39, or 17.95 percent, females have 13 out of 32, or 40.63 percent, western names. This number even goes up to 46.43 percent, when the Assyrian-by-marriage ladies are excluded. Two of the male western names have Christian origins, while the rest of the names are mainly French names of Raymond, Edmond, Emil, and Julian. There is an English adjectival name, 'Golden' which is not often used as a personal name in the west. For female names, nine out of 13 western names are taken from biblical names or saints' names. Interesting western names are Argentina and Athena in this category. Other interesting cases are Jamis and Julet. These names are Arabic transliterations of Western names James and Juliet, then pronounced as written in Arabic, a kind of *ta'rib*, or Arabicization. They are siblings.

Other names are mostly Arabic names, especially among females. The percentage of this category is quite high, that is 31.25 percent, among female names. All of the four ladies who became followers of the Church of the East by marriage have Arabic names. They were originally two Chaldeans and two Syrian Orthodox followers. This also confirms the interviewees' witness about the naming difference between followers of the Church of the East and the Chaldeans. The high percentage of Arabic names among Chaldeans along with

²⁸⁸ Baum, op.cit., pp.173-175

²⁸⁹ Vasili Shoumanov, *Images of American Assyrians in Chicago*, Arcadia Publishing, Chicago, 2001, p.21

their Arabic usage is negatively perceived among Assyrians in relation to general Arabicization. An interviewee mentioned that 90 percent of Chaldeans may have Arabic names even including Ali and Hussein, while people from the Church of the East never give Arabic names to their children. For them, Western names seem to be preferable to Arabic ones.²⁹⁰ This may be related to religious connotations pertaining to those names. Also, as a couple of interviewees mentioned, it is considered more fashionable and popular today.

Restriction on naming under Saddam Hussein is remembered by Assyrians as an obvious discriminational measure. Western names for babies and for shops were forbidden in the last years of the nineties. Also, any national names besides Arabic and Kurdish were also prohibited. This policy is interpreted as governmental disapproval of other ethnicity in Iraq. A governmental decree in 2001 recommended a nationality change on identity cards. It reads that, “It is right of any Iraqi 18 years of age or older to change his identity to Arabic nationality...”²⁹¹ But it seems the Arabicization of personal names forced by government is an older practice. Interviewees reported that civil officers wrote their names in Arabic. An interviewee named Khoshaba, aged 41, admitted that his name is written as ‘Abdul Ahad,’ a translation into Arabic, on his identity card. This makes his original name function as a baptismal name.²⁹² An Assyrian migrant in the U.S. remembered how he was bullied in school in Iraq because of his distinguishable Assyrian name when he was young.²⁹³ Assyrians also face a more practical problem in their names. Because Assyrian and Arabic have different phonemes, not to mention transcript in Roman script, exact transliteration from

²⁹⁰ This interviewee added that Chaldeans live in mixed areas such as Baghdad, which make them more exposed to the Arabs, which in turn leads to more Arabicization in naming and language.

²⁹¹ Aprem Shapira, *Assyrians and the Insanity of Arabization*,
<http://www.atour.com/news/assyria/20011024a.thmal>

²⁹² He also added that he knows some others – maybe his brothers – whose names are different on their identity cards: ‘Daud’ into ‘Robert’ and ‘Mati’ into ‘Steven.’ It is not clear how those western names were allowed. Possibly because of their non-religiousness compared to original names?

²⁹³ He added that, as children, he and his Christian friends thought that they may go to the hell in reward.

Assyrian names into Arabic inevitably accompanies a distortion of the pronunciation of the names.

An interesting observation from the collected names above is that 19 out of 32 collected female names, or 59.38 percent, end with an ‘a’ sound. They are Rita, Randa, Rania, Eva, Sarah, Anita, Midia, Argentina, Athena and so on. This ending ‘a’ sound seems to give a cute image to the names. Among them, ‘Sarah,’ ‘Rita,’ and ‘Khawa’ are also religious at the same time. Also, linguistically this corresponds to the derivation pattern for female words in the Semitic languages. The rest ends with ‘et’ or ‘in’ which also play similar roles.

Table 2. 5 Assyrian names – perceived

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Assyrian	11 (33.33%)	2 (15.38%)	13 (28.26%)
Christian	9 (27.27%)	4 (30.76%)	13 (28.26%)
Shared	1 (3.03%)	5 (38.46%)	6 (13.04%)
Western	7 (21.21%)	3 (23.07%)	10 (21.74%)
Other	3 (9.09%)	0 (0%)	3 (6.52%)
No answer	2 (6.06%)	0	2 (4.34%)
Total	33 (100%)	14 (107.69%)*	47 (102.17%)

* One person gave a double answer.

Table 2.5 shows how Assyrians perceive their names. However, comparison between their perception and reality is very limited because not all the names are revealed, as mentioned above. Eleven out of 33 male respondents, or one third, answered that they have Assyrian names. Another nine people, or 27.27 percent, answered that their names are Christian. There are two Khoshabas among those who gave their names. While one of them answered that his name is Assyrian, the other answered that it is Christian. This name is Assyrian and Christian

at the same time. A respondent called Odisho, an Assyrian religious name, answered that his name is Assyrian. In the same fashion, Toni and Ivan are Western names with Christian origins. While Toni answered that his name is Christian, Ivan answered that his is Western. Seven people, or 21.21 percent, answered that their names are Western. There was only one male respondent who answered that his name is shared with Muslims. Among three males who answered to “Other,” two, in fact, have typical Assyrian names: Dashto and Ninus. The other name is not given. The number of male respondents who answered that their names are either Assyrian or Christian comprises 20, or 60 percent.

Among female respondents only two, that is 15.38 percent, answered that their names are Assyrian. One of them is Atour. Another four, or 30.76 percent, answered that their names are Christian. Three among them are Laila, Rita and Atour. While Rita is a Christian name, Laila is a shared name taken from Arabic, and Atour is a variation of Ashur, one of the names which hold the strongest national sense. Respondent Atour gave a double answer: “Assyrian” and also “Christian.” Considering all Assyrians are Christian, at least in terms of belonging, one can interpret that it is taken for granted that a typical Assyrian name could be perceived as Christian. Five female respondents answered that their names are shared with Muslims. Five persons, or 38.46 percent, is the biggest frequency. However, this includes two ladies who became the Church of the East followers by marriage. Another person is Evelyn which is a Western name. It possibly reflects a notion that Western names can be taken both by Christians and Muslims.

There are three female respondents who are Assyrian-by-marriage ladies. Two of them are from the Chaldean Church, and the other from the Syrian Orthodox Church. All of them have Arabic names: Laila, Wijdan, and Zeina. All the four Chaldeans who participated in the survey but are not included in the result also have Arabic names: Ibtisam, Noura, Farid and

one unknown but who answered that he has a shared name. This confirms what many interviewees reported about the difference in naming between Assyrians (from the Church of the East) and Chaldeans. The remaining three female respondents answered that their names are Western. Two of them are Marilyn and Eva. Both names are Western and Christian at the same time.

Concerning the function of Assyrian names as identity markers, a respondent described this as a special feature of Assyrians compared to other people groups. He wrote that “the Assyrian is the only person in the world that do not need a [written] nationality on paper, because his name is his nationality, identity and the country to which he belongs to.”

Table 2. 6 Assyrian naming

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Grandparents	4 (12.12%)	0	4 (8.69%)
Relatives	4 (12.12%)	4 (30.77%)	8 (17.39%)
Famous Assyrian	7 (21.21%)	2 (15.38%)	9 (19.57%)
Famous artists	1 (3.03%)	1 (7.69%)	2 (4.35%)
Other	10 (30.30%)	6 (46.15%)	16 (34.78%)
No answer	7 (21.21%)	0	7 (15.22%)
Total	33 (100%)	13 (100%)	46 (100%)

Table 2.6 shows how Assyrians give names to their babies. The biggest frequency among male respondents, with the exception of ‘Other’, is to take a famous Assyrian’s name. Seven, or 21.21 percent, answered to this ‘famous Assyrian’ category. Four answered that their names are taken from their grandfathers’ names, and another four from their relatives’ names. Answers to these three categories comprise 45.55 percent. This means that half of the naming is taken from an already existing name pool. Among those who answered that their names are

taken by other means, five gave the details. A respondent named ‘Golden’ explained that his grandfather chose his name which is Western while all his brothers have Arabic names. One ‘Khosha’ answered that he was born on Sunday and given a name which means Sunday. Another one answered that his name was taken after a Western military leader’s name. Another one said his was taken after a famous writer’s name. A respondent named ‘Edmond’ gave an interesting answer saying that his name is related to our [humankind] father, Adam. In fact, it originates from the Old English, meaning ‘happy protection’²⁹⁴ not from ‘Adam,’ despite of its consonantal similarity.

Among female respondents, four people, or 30.77 percent, answered that their names are taken from their relatives’ names. Two answered that theirs are taken from famous Assyrians’ names. Another one answered that her name was taken after a famous artist. Six answered to “Other.” One of them explained that her name was taken after her father’s friend’s name. Another one, named ‘Rita,’ said that her name is a saint’s name.

An émigré interviewee named Alphonse said his name was given by his elder brother who is 24 years older than he is and who loved Alphonse, a poet, after he learned French in school. Another émigré interviewee named Fred said his father named him Fred, a German name, because he liked Germany, and partly in opposition to the British intention to stay in Iraq at that time.

Fortescue informs us that a child’s name is given at the rite of “signing.”²⁹⁵ Yoab Benjamin says that the name is generally the father’s decision. He also reported that the paternal grandfather’s or grandmother’s name is usually preferred.²⁹⁶ But the research does not confirm this tradition. He adds, however, that babies are never named after older living

²⁹⁴ Jacqueline Harrod and Andre Page, *The Bumper Book of Babies’ Names*, Clarion, No publishing year, p.53

²⁹⁵ Fortescue, op.cit., p.157

²⁹⁶ Yoab Benjamin, *Assyrian Rituals of Life-Cycle Events*, <http://www.aina.org/yoab.htm>

relatives, or after a brother or sister who died in childhood or early youth. He also confirms that the increase in names taken from ancient Assyrian history, replacing biblical and saints' names, is modern and he calls those names "truly Assyrian."²⁹⁷ It seems that traditionally popular names differ from village to village, and sect to sect.²⁹⁸ Then, an Assyrian name can be an indicator which shows the bearer's sectarian belonging - and to a certain extent his village in the past – not only ethnic belonging.

The names of siblings are often given in series. Since Sargon and Ashur are most popular Assyrian nationalistic names, a 'Sargon' has a high probability to have a brother 'Ashur,' not to mention that a village can have several Sargons and Ashurs. An interviewee named 'Ashur' said that the family of his wife also has their 'Ashur' and 'Sargon.' Even his nephew who married a Japanese woman named his children 'Ashur' and 'Sargon.' On the other hand, a female name series tends to be more concerned with phonetic agreement such as Rita, Anita, and Randa, or Lidia, Wardiya, and Athena sisters. There are also found interesting shifts in serial naming – as the completion of a set could take a considerable time span. A shift from a series of Assyrian saints' names to nationalistic ones can be seen for example in the series: Ishaq, Oraham, Ya'qub, Yosep, Sargon, and Shamiram. Another shift is from Assyrian names to Western names: Slewa, Dinkha, Khawa, Shumail, Janet, Julet, and Jamis.²⁹⁹

This interest of Assyrian nationalism in the glorious ancient Assyrian history (re)introduces many ancient personal names for modern Assyrians. Raman Bet Shimun published a booklet

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Donabed, op.cit., p.66. He reports that the name Donabed was quite popular in Kharput, as Shabo in the Gazertho, and Nisan in Hakkari. Only Hakkari among these villages was of the Church of the East. Also, differences in the saints celebrated in different churches leads to different popular names. Behnam and Ishaq for the Syrian Orthodox, for example.

²⁹⁹ This sibling has a brother called Ishaq, but the researcher is not sure where he comes in the family.

giving names and their meanings in 1979.³⁰⁰ Out of 171 male names 95, or 55.56 percent, are either names of gods or related to them. Such gods are Eil, Ashur, Seen, Mardock, Seen, and other gods of ancient Assyria or Babylon. Also the names of famous kings such as Naramseen, Sennacherib, Pol, and Shalmanisar have significant entries. But the most popular male name ‘Sargon’ is not on the list, maybe because he was a king of Akkad not Assyria. Popular Christian Assyrian names such as Odisho (servant of Jesus), Khoshaba (of Sunday), Sliwa (cross), Oraham (Abraham), and other Biblical names are not on the list, with the exception of Khnanyasho‘ (mercy of Jesus). This gives the impression that when ‘Assyria’ is referred, only ancient Assyrian Empire and its glory are valued.

On the other hand, female names are taken from city names, goddesses, or related to gods. They differ from males, who have the image of dominant, heroic, and large scale names. Goddesses are often consorts of gods. A city name in Semitic languages is also generally feminine. Shamiram (or Shamiran), a name of a queen could be an exception. Goddesses or female forms of gods’ names are Ishtar, Baileet, Baila, Eilina, Brateil, and Bratbail, for example. Such city names are Nineveh, Nasibin, Ur, Achadina, and Larsa. Interestingly, female names tend to be more related to a description of virtue of women. For example, there are names Emmita (sweet mother), Khannah (a merciful woman), Wardiyah or Wardina (flower), Yayota (beauty), Shamura (diamond), Shimta (all the time) and so on. However, among these ancient-related names only Shamiram and Nineveh seem to have attained popularity.

These ancient names are also taken as the names for the Assyrian organizations, clubs, shops, magazines, and so on. Glorious names help name bearers, and the community in general, to have a positive self-image and play a role in differentiating self-expression which

³⁰⁰ <http://www.atour.com/~fred/docs/assyriannames.html> Assyrian Names Project originally by Raman Bet Shimun in 1979.

often accompany marginalization.³⁰¹ George Habash calls for the renaming of all Assyrian village and town names as a part of the Assyrianization of the Assyrian Autonomous Region, should it be granted. He also criticizes the personal name changes into Arabic in addition to the language lost in relation with national identity resulting from the tide of Islamic-led secular nationalism – meaning Iraqi nationalism - after decolonization.³⁰² On the other hand, Edward Odisho deals with name changes in migration among different generations in relation with language erosion. According to his observation first generation émigré Assyrians tend to have their Assyrian names changed and Americanized. For example, Eliyyah is changed into Eli, Shumimshum into Samson, Khisqiyyel into Ezekiel, Youkhannan into John and Khanna into Hanna. But when this reaches the third or fourth generation, the name turns out to be totally Anglo-Saxon which even goes along with a middle name that has nothing to do with father or grandfather's names.³⁰³

In the course of their long history, the naming patterns of Assyrians have been changed. Abdul-Massih Saadi argues that ancient Assyrian personal names which are related to pagan gods were continuously used after the Christianization of the nation at least for the first five centuries. According to Saadi, the transition of Assyrians to the use of Christian names and Christian culture in general was smooth. Christian names were taken from the Bible or coined in the Assyrian language.³⁰⁴ It seems these Christian names became dominant and were used for many centuries. But geographical proximity and its consequent contacts also made

³⁰¹ This interest and pride in the ancient Assyrian history also lead Assyrians to feel proud whenever items related to ancient Assyrian history are introduced by others. For example, a news article introducing a sports drink which named after an Assyrian god was gladly presented on Assyrian webs.

http://theonion.com/content/news/forgotten_assyrian_god_revived_to

³⁰² George Habash, *What do the Assyrian people want?*, <http://www.aina.org/habash.htm>

³⁰³ Odisho, Assyrian JAAS paper, op.cit., p. 9. But interestingly first generation female names usually remained unchanged. Odisho thinks this was either because their names did not sound particularly strange, or because they were mostly housewives staying home with much less social contact.

³⁰⁴ Saadi, op.cit., pp.13-16

Assyrians vulnerable to Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish names. When Assyrian nationalism gained popularity among the Assyrians in modern times, the ancient Assyrian names were also re-introduced and became popular. In turn, growing exposure to Western culture has also brought Western names to the Assyrians in these days. When the same biblical names are found both in Assyrian and Western forms, it seems that the Western names considered modern and fashionable. Christian names in Western form allow the Assyrians to differentiate themselves from Arab-Islamic name holders as Assyrian names have done. At the same time, Western names equip their name holders more readily to associate with others in diaspora situations.

6. Folklore and national symbols

Assyrians celebrate their own holidays in addition to common Christian feasts. Some of these celebrations trace their origins back to ancient Assyria, in either revived or evolved forms. Moreover, Assyrian folk music and traditional costume, along with other emblems, play the role of national symbols and identity markers that distinguish them from other groups.

The New Year celebration on the first day of April is the most representative among these holidays. It is called *Akitu* following the Sumerian and Akkadian appellation, or *Kha b'Nisan* in modern Assyrian, which means the first of April. By the 1950s, archeological findings and published articles relevant to the subject made people believe that ancient Assyria was founded in Uruk in 4750 B.C., resulting in an Assyrian calendar, which starts from that year.³⁰⁵ Also, clay tablets written in cuneiform revealed the ceremonies of the ancient New Year celebration in detail. It was called *Rish-Sateen*, or the beginning of the New Year in

³⁰⁵ Wilfred Alkhas, *Assyrian Calendar*, <http://atour.com/education/20010517a.html>

Assyrian. The New Year festival was celebrated for twelve days from the spring equinox. During the feast, Enuma Elish, the Sumerian creation story, was recited and the king's reign was restored symbolically through elaborate ritual in which the high priest represented the highest god. Also, the sacred marriage of the god Ashur, played by the king, and the goddess Ishtar was an important part of the feast followed by a joyous procession of gods, in their images, and people.³⁰⁶ All these rituals were to celebrate the start of spring that revives nature and restores the universal order, as common in myths.

It seems this festival had been much reduced as time passed, especially after the introduction of Christianity. But the practice of gathering flowers and grass and putting them on the lintel or under the house roof remained. The bunch of flowers and grass is called *Deqna d'Nisan*, or Nisan's beard, which expresses joy and an expectation of fertility and prosperity in the New Year.³⁰⁷

In the 1970s, when the Assyrian national consciousness was at its peak, the ancient New Year celebrations were restored.³⁰⁸ The New Year celebration usually includes processions, folk music concerts, and festivals. The Assyrian diaspora also celebrates with an annual parade, as well as folk song concerts. In Chicago, for example, the diaspora started to celebrate the Assyrian New Year in 1989 with a parade in which all Assyrian organizations, including the church, were represented.³⁰⁹ In Syria, a New Year celebration and the Wedding Festivities were organized by the Assyrian Welfare Association of Syria in 2002, on the Assyrian year 6752, and attracted more than 25,000 people. It included a mass wedding of sixteen couples, a mock parade of the ancient Assyrian Royal Guard, and folk music and

³⁰⁶ For detail of the ancient Assyrian New Year celebration see, Emanuel Y. Kamber, *Kha B'Nesan – Akitu – Assyrian New Year*, <http://www.atour.com/education/20010329a.html> and Ashor Giwargis, *April First, The Assyrian New Year*, <http://www.assyriangc.com/ashur3/html>

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Aprim Shapera, *7th of August, Assyrian Martyrs Day*, <http://www.atour.com/education/20010806a.html>

³⁰⁹ Shoumanov, op.cit., pp.79-80

dance.³¹⁰ However, in Iraq, during Saddam Hussein's rule, the Assyrian New Year celebration was banned because it was considered a form of ethnic expression. Even after Saddam, according to an interviewee, the scale of celebration has become much smaller in Baghdad, with only a few parties. In the North, on the other hand, the Assyrian Democratic Movement leads a full-scale celebration. It includes processions full of violet color, which is considered the national color for the Assyrians, Assyrian music played by famous Assyrian musicians from abroad, and parties.

One can imagine how national pride and a sense of continuity and solidarity are reinforced through the New Year celebration. Ashor Giwargis not only argues for a continuous connection between the ancient celebration and the revived modern one, but also claims theological similarities between the ancient Assyrian religion and Judaism.³¹¹ But the celebration of New Year during the spring equinox, is also found among Kurds and Persians with the name of Newruz, or Nuroz, though with some disparities. Fred Aprim and William Warda criticize Kurds who claim that the celebration of Newruz originated from the celebration of the liberation of the people from a cruel Assyrian king by a Kurdish blacksmith. According to Aprim and Warda, Newruz probably originates from Assyrian influence, and fabricating such a story only promotes Kurdish hatred toward Assyrians.³¹²

Nusardil, the water holiday dating back to ancient Assyria, was also celebrated symbolically during the Akitu. But, its original celebration is in July, or Tammuz in Arabic and Assyrian, referring to the god Tammuz. Tammuz, the god of vegetation, is also called Dimuzi in Assyrian. The feast falls on the autumn equinox celebrating the return of the god

³¹⁰ <http://www.atour.com/news/assyria/20020402a.html> In this celebration, Assyrians from the Church of the East, Chaldean Church, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic Churches participated.

³¹¹ Giwargis, op.cit.

³¹² Fred Aprim, *Akitu (the New Year Festival) and Newruz (Nuroz)*, <http://www.atour.com/education/20040503a.html> and William Warda, *Assyrians and the Kurdis New Year of Newroz*, <http://www.atour.com/education/20040525a.html>

Tammuz who was seized in the netherworld and saved by his lover goddess Ishtar.³¹³ ³¹⁴ On Nusardil people splash water on each other. Michael Pius notes that sprinkling of water on the procession of gods was one of the expressions of reverence, loyalty and joy in ancient times.³¹⁵ After the Christianization of the Assyrians, the feast also acquired a Christian meaning associated with baptism. While Donabed thinks it signifies the baptism ceremonies during Pentecost,³¹⁶ Pius thinks it originates from Saint Thomas' mass baptisms of a great number of converts at that time.³¹⁷ Nusardil is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, or on the nearest Sunday to 100 days after Easter. After the liturgy, the priest sprinkles blessed water on people's heads. And people, especially children, start playing with water. Some knock on doors of neighbors and splash water on them when they open them. Children make water balloons and throw them at each other or at passer-bys. Nowadays, water guns are also used during this holiday. Sometimes, their non-Assyrian neighbors also participate.³¹⁸ Within the diaspora, this widely celebrated holiday is often accompanied by picnics.

There is an Assyrian feast with complex origins called *Kalu Sullaq*a, or *Kalu d'Sullaq*a, which means the "Bride of the Ascension." The feast falls on the fortieth day after Easter in commemoration of Christ's ascension to heaven. On this day, young girls, who are dressed in

³¹³ Some claim that Nusardil was originally a celebration of the return, or resurrection, of Tammuz from the underworld and his return was associated with the revival of vegetation through rain. On the other hand, others like Donabed argue that people were praying for Tammuz's quick return and the advent of spring at the onset of winter. (Donabed, op.cit., p.21). In other Mediterranean mythologies, the return of Tammuz, associated with the revival of vegetation, is celebrated during the Spring Festival.

³¹⁴ Zinda Magazine states that the celebration was semi-annual and was celebrated during the ritual of Taklimtu, but without further explanation. In the editor's note for the Michael K. Pius's article *Nusardil: the Assyria Water Festival*, Zinda Magazine, Volume XI, July, 2005

³¹⁵ Michael K. Pius, *Nusardil: the Assyria Water Festival*, Zinda Magazine, Volume XI, July, 2005

³¹⁶ Donabed, op.cit., p.22

³¹⁷ Pius, op.cit.

³¹⁸ Nicholas Al-Jeloo reports that Armenians also celebrate the water festival which is called Vartivar or Navasard. Nicholas Al-Jeloo, *Armenians and Assyrians: Shared Experiences through the Ages*,

<http://christiansofiraq.com/Armenianandassyrian-sharedexperiences.html>

traditional wedding costumes and visit from home to home until night falls, are treated with sweets or dried fruits, which they share and eat together. Emanuel Kamber relates the origin of the *Kalu Sullāqa* to the sacred marriage of Ashur and Ishtar in the ancient New Year celebration. He claims that on the tenth day of the celebration, a large number of couples used to get married in many cities. Since each couple could not have their own ceremony they opted for brides' visitations in the village instead.³¹⁹ Ashor Giwargis also notes the practice of bridal visitation, in pairs of bride and groom in this case, as part of the New Year celebration, not as part of Ascension Day.³²⁰ Nevertheless, John Alkhas finds a connection between the *Kalu Sullāqa* and the feast of the goddess Bailit which was in May. According to him, all the weddings took place during a feast at the temples. Afterwards, couples would visit homes to announce their marriage and receive gifts. After the introduction of Christianity, as Ascension Day also falls in May, the celebration was Christianized and would remain.³²¹ Another story of the origin is to see the feast solely as a Christian celebration. In this interpretation, the girls are symbolic representations of the Church and are considered the brides of Christ. And the holiday is meant to commemorate the departure of Christ from his bride when he ascended to heaven.³²² According to Michael Pius, the brides' act of visitation commemorates the missionary work of Jesus' disciples, while donations made by people symbolize their support to the Church.³²³

However, Assyrian historian Mnash Amira links the Assyrian feast of *Kalu Sullāqa* to the story of Malik Shalita who fought with Tamerlane in 1401. Malik Shalita was the ruler of Nineveh and a learned, rather than a militarily trained man. Facing Tamerlane's fierce

³¹⁹ Kamber, op.cit.

³²⁰ Giwargis, op.cit.

³²¹ Mnash S. Amira, translated and edited by George V. Yana, *10,000 Assyrian "Brides" Chose Martyrdom to Help Save the Nation...The Story of Malik Shalita*, Nineveh magazine, Volume 22, No.3, 1999, p.8

³²² Michael, op.cit.

³²³ Amira, op. cit.

advance, Malik Shalita prepared to fight, although Mar Abdesho, the Patriarch of the Church of the East at that time, forbade people from defending themselves. As the battle became fierce, Assyrian women also helped the war by offering themselves as targets so that the Assyrian army could have a chance to strike. Malik Shalita's beautiful wife organized 10,000 young maidens along with her only daughter dressed in white wedding costumes. They visited house to house collecting provisions for the fighters and went to the battlefield with pots of milk pottage to feed the fighters chanting the Song of Sacrifice. Most of these young girls were killed including Malik Shalita's wife and his daughter. Malik Shalita was also killed. Since then, the *Kalu Sullaga* has been celebrated.³²⁴ According to historian Benjamin Arsanous, "The young boys and girls represent the dead young men and women who also ascended to heaven because they had died for the cause of Christianity."³²⁵ He also reports that in Hakkari, before the First World War, the girls in each village would select the most beautiful one as the *Kalu d'sullaga*, or Bride of the Ascension, of that year. Then they would dress her in a wedding costume and parade singing and asking for raisins or walnuts, which they would share and cook in the field later during the day.³²⁶ Today, the holiday does not seem to be celebrated widely.

Somikah is also another disappearing celebration. Somikah nights are celebrated before each of the two major fasts begins: twenty-five days before Christmas and fifty days before Easter. The evening before the fast begins, a group of young men dressed in costumes and wearing masks, similar to in Halloween in the West, visit door to door scaring children into fasting. Parents would warn their children that if they break their fast, Somikah would come

³²⁴ Ibid., p.7, and David Chibo, *Kalu Sullaga*, Nakosha, Issue No. 29, June, 2000, p.7. According to Amira, the Assyrians fought against Tamerlane once in 1401 and were defeated, while according to Chibo they fought twice in 1393 and 1401 and defeated Tamerlane at first but were defeated the second time.

³²⁵ Chibo, *ibid.*

³²⁶ Ibid. There is also a report that in Hakkari people used to tie ropes on a big branch of the biggest tree in the village and all would attempt to climb it. Whoever reached the end of the rope and the branch would have the best luck for the coming year. http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Assyrian_culture

and punish them. The group would present a mini-play related to fasting and traditional songs. The group used to be rewarded by money, but the reward was food in earlier times. Mikhael Pius calls *Somikah* the Assyrians' Holy Halloween which looks similar to Halloween but with an entirely different meaning. He stresses that the purpose of *Somikah* is to motivate and discipline Assyrian children to fast and raise children to grow up into God-fearing and upright adults. He also describes a different Assyrian custom related to Lent, or *Soma Goura*, in the Urmia area. The head of the family would put seven feathers, which represent seven weeks of fasting, into a large onion. Then the onion would be hung on the ceiling of the living room with a string so that it could spin whenever the door was opened. This reminded children of the fast. On each Sunday, one of the feathers was to be removed so that all of them would be gone by Easter.³²⁷

Another folk religious practice related to the Christian feast is “pokhin” during the Nineveh Fast.³²⁸ During the fast, Assyrians do not eat anything for three whole days. Persons who wish to marry pray specially for the matter during this time. Mothers or aged women prepare *pokhin*, a special food made of the ground powder of seven different cereals and pulses. It is served as the breakfast after the fast. When the fast is over, people can eat food cooked with oil in the evening. Then a young girl or boy who wishes to marry, even without fasting, takes seven teaspoons of *pokhin* and goes to bed without drinking water. He or she is expected to dream of a person of the opposite sex who will bring water and who would eventually be the lover.³²⁹ Interviewees reported that this tradition usually applies to girls. They said that the *pokhin* is to be taken by the thumb nail of the right hand seven times and put under the tongue. Because this powder causes thirst, one would dream of a prince

³²⁷ Mikhael K. Pius, *Somikka: The Assyrians' Holy Holloween*, in Zinda Magazine, March 8, 2006
http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2006/03.08.06/imdex_wed.php

³²⁸ For the Nineveh Fast, see the section 2. Liturgy of this chapter.

³²⁹ <http://www.christianofiraq.com/assyriansinsyria-celebratetheanniversaryofthe-historicfastofnineveh.html>

charming, who would offer water. In fact, one female interviewee spoke that she married a man who appeared in her dream and offered a drink, Pepsi in her case, after she had *pokhin*. She fasted in February and married in June.

Unlike the above mentioned feasts which are deeply-rooted in history and tradition, the Assyrian Martyrs' Day, or *Shawwa b'Tabakh*, on the seventh day of August was designated officially in 1970 by the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA).³³⁰ Despite being observed only recently, it has gained widespread acceptance among the Assyrians, and observance of this holiday is considered a national duty along with the Akitu celebration. *Shawwa b'Tabakh* was originally designated to commemorate the Simele massacre in 1933, but the commemoration gradually expanded to include all the martyrs of Assyrian history. It helps in depicting their history as a history of persecution. Assyrian political organizations often expect stronger solidarity through such commemorations.³³¹ Aprim Shapera regards the Martyrs' Day as the symbol of the nation's immortality. Concerning the background and meaning of the designation of the memorial day, he notes that it expresses the maturity of Assyrian national and political awareness. By commemorating a recent event whose eyewitnesses are still surviving, people relate themselves to the event more effectively. Newly established Assyrian political parties demanded heroism and the example of sacrifice to strengthen the Assyrian cause. And lots of publications on the massacres served to increase awareness and fuel the national movement, apart from religious considerations, for the first time.³³² During the commemoration, the people who were killed are described not as passive victims but heroes, who "stood up against their oppressors and refused to give up their religion, language, or

³³⁰ Shapira, *7th of August*, op.cit.

³³¹ <http://www.betnahrain.org/Events/7thaugust.htm>

³³² Shapira, *7th of August*, op.cit

national existence...” They are examples of self-sacrifice, which is seen as a sacred obligation, to follow.³³³ In 1989, the Ashurbanipal Library Committee produced a list of historical events in which Assyrians were persecuted, dating from the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., the attack of Parthian King Xosroes, the persecution under Shapur for forty years, to the massacre of 1800s, the First World War, the murder of Mar Benyamin Shimun in 1918, the Simele massacre in 1933, Saddam Hussein’s war against Iran, to the recent killings of Assyrians since the war in 2003, to name but a few. The document concludes that there is on average, a massacre of Assyrians every fifty years.³³⁴ On Martyrs’ Day, people gather in local clubs and recite poems about massacres. The local branches of political organizations often lead the celebration. The result of the questionnaire survey of this research also illustrates the high degree of awareness of the tragic incidents. Thirty-three out of 46 respondents, or 71.74 percent, mentioned the Simele massacre in 1933 to an open question asking major events in Assyrian history.

Traditional clothes immediately distinguish Assyrians from their neighbors. Archeological findings often help Assyrian themselves realize the continuity between their costume and that of ancient Assyrians. Interestingly, archeologist Henry Rayard, while unearthing an ancient Assyrian site in 1845, noticed that Assyrian workers who had been helping him wore conical hats similar to the helmets that the ancient Assyrian soldiers were wearing in the relief that he had discovered. He left a sketch of the Assyrian workers.³³⁵ Nowadays, visual comparisons between ancient Assyrians in reliefs and modern Assyrians in their traditional costumes can easily be found on Internet sites.³³⁶ But the traditional Assyrian costume also differs slightly

³³³ <http://www.betnahrain.org/Events/7thaugust.htm>

³³⁴ *Genocides against the Assyrian Nation*, <http://www.aina.org/martyr.html>

³³⁵ <http://www.christiansofiraq.com/pict.html>

³³⁶ *Ibid.* for example.

from one tribe to another. In Brigadier-General Austin's account during the First World War, he says that it would take tens of years for an outsider to distinguish such differences. He gives a lengthy description on the dress of Assyrians in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The Tiari men, for example, perhaps the most warlike of all were these mountaineers...Fine upstanding fellows they are, with rope-soled home-made shoes on their feet, their legs encased in long loose baggy trousers of a greyish-hue originally, but so patched all over with bits of blue, red, green, and other colours that their pants are veritable patchwork. A broad cloth "kammarband," or waistband, is folded several times round the trunk of the body, and a short cut-away jacket of amazing colours worn over a thin cotton variegated shirt. The head-dress consists of conical felt cap as depicted in frescoes of Assyrians of thousands of years ago, and which has survived to this day.³³⁷

He also describes Assyrian women's dress.

They [Assyrian women], too, affect the most daring combinations of colours in their loose baggy trousers caught in above the ankles. Over this they wear a species of overall or apron, a broad "kammarband" about the waist, and a gaudy skirt or jacket with long sleeves tucked into it; and the whole surmounted on gala occasions by a small velvet zouave coat of any colour the wearer may have a special *penchant* for. On their heads they wear small turban-shaped caps wound tastefully round with some coloured scarf or veiling. ...from head to feet in gowns of velvet, in blue, green, yellow, purple, brown, and other colours, with huge silver belts round their waists, and their breasts literally smothered with handsome necklaces of silver and gold coins, or other silver ornaments; and circlets of silver sequins falling all round their heads from their head-dresses to which they were attached. ...³³⁸

He adds that during their flight, Assyrian women wore at least five dresses one on top of the other.³³⁹

Interviewees and respondents also spoke positively about traditional Assyrian dress. Five

³³⁷ Austin, op.cit., p.64

³³⁸ Ibid. p.65

³³⁹ Ibid.

respondents counted the Assyrian wedding costume as one of the special features of Assyrians. Four of them were female. Interviewees, especially among females, reported that they wear their traditional clothes only for weddings these days, though some of older generations in northern Iraq wear them, without feathers in this case, as everyday clothing. Though it is quite expensive, almost everyone owns a traditional costume even in countries where they are refugees. The costume is made of wool, fitting for living in cold mountainous areas. Men put a long peacock feather in their cap. Originally, only men wore the feather, but nowadays, women also imitate this with smaller ones. The feather is called *perra*, and its colors vary. Because Assyrians are distinguished by this feather, they are nicknamed *abu rish*, or *abu perra*, which literally means “father of feather.” The women’s broad hair band made of silver is called *tatiyah*, and the silver waist belt, *hayasah*. According to an interviewee, the Tyari tribe calls their cap *kushiyah* for women and *kushisha* for men. The cap is made of densely knit wool, and can sometimes take up to a year to make. While traveling, it could also be used for drinking water. Another interviewee called the cap *serghelah*. As for the sleeves, they have long decorative embroidered extensions called *rawandiyeh*. The shoes are called *zarguleh*.

Assyrian folk music and dance hold an important place in the lives of Assyrians. They have developed several types of folk music and dance besides liturgical church music. These include a peculiar story-telling type of chanting called *Rawe*, another type of song for social gatherings called *Diwani*, the wedding song *Liliana*, and dance music *Dowlah* and *Zordah*, which have survived until this day.³⁴⁰ They are played at festivals, weddings, and celebrations. The national holiday feasts and parties are never celebrated without such

³⁴⁰ http://en.allexperts.com/e/a/as/assyrian_music.htm

folkloric music and dances. As Donabed notes, folk songs, which are played in their native language and instruments, mostly in groups, are an expression of identity,³⁴¹ as well as a mechanism to boost a sense of national belonging. Exposure to Western music during the First World War also influenced traditional Assyrian folk music. For example, musicians began to use Western musical instruments for Assyrian music.³⁴² The growth of nationalism, which encouraged love for their heritage and traditions also resulted in the (re)introduction of Assyrian folklore and folk dances by newly organized associations.³⁴³ The ever-growing field of Assyrian folk music has already produced famous folk singers such as Evin Agassi, Ashur Bet-Sargis, and Linda George along with folk music bands and folk dance teams. The Assyrian music market has also grown, despite the Assyrians being scattered. These musicians actively produce albums and are invited to Assyrian festivals around the world.³⁴⁴ Abboud Zeitoune of Germany published a book entitled, “Music Pearls of Beth-Nahrin,” which provides a complete set of resources on Assyrian music, musicians and their publications.³⁴⁵ About half of the book is dedicated to folkloric music reflecting the latter’s importance.³⁴⁶ Political organizations and associations tend to have their own anthems in Assyrian. The Assyrian Universal Alliance chose “Qa roomrama” as the national anthem in the 1970s, though there is no Assyrian state. It was composed by Nebu Issabey, an Assyrian violinist and conductor, to lyrics written by Yosip Bet Yosip, an Assyrian poet.³⁴⁷ Its verse begins, “qa roomrama d’shima rama,” which means “For the honor and advancement of our

³⁴¹ Donabed, op.cit., p.18

³⁴² http://en.allexperts.com/e/a/as/assyrian_music.htm

³⁴³ Bjorklund, op.cit., pp.151-152

³⁴⁴ While there are plenty of websites that provide Assyrian music, <http://www.qeenatha.com> in particular deals exclusively with and sells contemporary Assyrian music albums.

³⁴⁵ <http://www.musicpearls.net/6.html>

³⁴⁶ <http://www.assyrianmarket2.com/images/tableofcontents.pdf>

³⁴⁷ <http://www.obieyadgar.com/blogs/obie/roomrama-assyrian-national-anthem-%E2%80%94-issabeyyosip>

great nation Assyria.”³⁴⁸

Assyrian dances are all performed in lines, like the popular Middle Eastern dance *dabkeh*, except the Sabre Dance, a trio dance. There is no limit to the number of people in the lined dances, and while the line has no formal shape, people in the line hold each other’s hands upward (W arm hold) most frequently or sometimes, downward (V arm hold).³⁴⁹ A unique feature of the dance is that each dancer holds a small colorful scarf while dancing. There are tens of different Assyrian dances showing regional variations. BetBasoo notes that Assyrian dances are learned at a young age mostly by imitation and most Assyrians know at least seven or eight dances. Popular dances include, *Khigga*, *Sheikhani*, *Toulama*, and *Khloola*, to name but a few.³⁵⁰

One of the most salient Assyrian national symbols is the Assyrian flag. It was adopted by the Assyrian Universal Alliance in 1974, and approved by the Congress in that year, after a long endeavor to have an official national flag. It was designed by George Bit-Atnus, an Assyrian artist. The flag has a white background on which waving stripes emerge from each corner to the center where a star encompasses a golden circle representing Shamash, the Sun god. The four wedges of the star in blue represent tranquility. The waving stripes which have wider ends at the corners symbolize three rivers in Mesopotamia: the Euphrates in blue denotes abundance, the Zab in white portrays peace, and the Tigris in red represents national pride. The stripes also symbolize the dispersion of Assyrians around the world, as well as the eventual return of Assyrians to their homeland. Over the star, the image of God Ashur, the supreme god of the ancient Assyrians, is standing in a circle with two eagle’s wings extended

³⁴⁸ <http://www.atour.com/education/20000602b.html> According to an anecdote, an Assyrian football team in Europe won the final match. Many supporters cried while they sang the Roomrama, the seldom-heard national anthem. From the Inside Assyria Discussion Forum,

http://www.insideassyria.com/rkvsf/wwwboard/msgs/Oa_Roomrama_D_shima_Rama-Koyo.html

³⁴⁹ Peter Pnuel BetBasoo, *Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances*, www.aina.org/articles/tafd.pdf, pp.2-3

³⁵⁰ Ibid. p.1

to their full length. He has a bow and an arrow ready to fly, guarding the country. On top of the flag staff are the royal insignia of the King Sargon II, which signify the might and the great civilization achieved by the Assyrians.³⁵¹ The Assyrian flag is widely used in festive processions, gatherings, and even on wedding invitations.³⁵²

Another popular frequently used Assyrian symbol is *Lamassu*, the human-headed winged bull. In ancient Assyria, it served in protecting Assyrian palaces. It has five legs from the side, but shows four from the front. This deceives the enemy by creating an illusion, as if the Lamassu is moving.³⁵³

Assyrian national holidays and their celebration, reintroduced or incorporated into Christianity in the course of history, play the role of national symbols reminding Assyrians of their identity and historical continuity. Despite Christianity being firmly established among Assyrians, there has always been room for folk religion whose practice has also often been regarded as part of the cultural heritage and tradition to keep. This wide spread nationalism and its popular acceptance among Assyrians also brought the English word “folklore” into their vocabulary.³⁵⁴ In the Assyrian autonomous region that George Habash dreams of, the Christian faith and Assyrian nationalism would be intertwined and Christian feasts and national holidays such as Akitu would be observed as official holidays.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ www.atour.com

³⁵² Donabed, op.cit., p.148

³⁵³ <http://www.atour.com/education/20010122a.html>

³⁵⁴ Frequent usage of the word is found in publications on Assyrians and in interviews.

³⁵⁵ Habashi, op.cit.

7. Everyday life

A. Family

Assyrians in the mountainous areas used mud and stone to build their houses. Sometimes the roof of a house could be used as a terrace for the neighbor, for example, in villages located on mountain slopes. On the other hand, Assyrian houses in towns in the plain used to have a central court surrounded by rooms. Windows in the walls were not used in either the villages or towns. An Anglican missionary's account of village schools in the mountainous area of Kochanes in the 1910s describes the house having no windows, but a hole on the roof for light and ventilation. The priests' residences were usually used as the venues of these schools at that time. It also says that women cooked in a corner of the room and domestic animals were around the house.³⁵⁶ The city of Mosul in the 1920s is compared to Italy while retaining its Assyrian character. Harry Luke describes Mosul architecture;

The typical Mosul street is a long winding lane bounded by walls of *jess* (The Mosul building material of rubble and lime cement), walls unpierced by windows but faced, as a rule, with the speckled grey alabastrine or gypsum marble which is a speciality of Mosul. Only the sculptured portal – often very beautiful – breaks the monotony of the exterior, but the great expanses of blank wall conceal interiors... The houses of Mosul, almost without exception, are built round a double-storied *patio*, carried, by means of arches suggestive of the Italian Renaissance, on pillars of alabaster. Everything is paved with alabaster... On the side of the cloister there is generally an elaborate arched recess, where the family take their *keif* during the hot weather. In the richer houses a fountain occupies the middle of the court, and the overflow is carried through it in runnels of the ubiquitous alabaster, watering in its course beds of iris, violets and roses. The rooms are large and lofty and barrel-vaulted...³⁵⁷

He explains that this type of construction, witnessed by excavations of Nineveh, Nimrod,

³⁵⁶ J.F.Coakley, *The Church of the East and the Church of England, A history of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, p.329

³⁵⁷ Luke, op.cit., pp. 19-20

and Khorsabad, goes back to the time of the ancient Assyrians.³⁵⁸

But Assyrians in twenty first century Iraq generally live in modernized houses built with brick and cement. Apartments are common in newly developed areas and such modern construction facilitates electricity, water mains, telephone lines, and sometimes Internet. Electricity has been introduced even in the mountainous areas, though many Assyrian villages have disappeared. Unlike traditional housing and family life in which an extended family lived in the court-centered house, nowadays children live separately when they marry.

Encounters with Western culture, especially through missionaries, also brought changes in many aspects of Assyrian life including education, even for girls, and, though slowly, clothes. George Harris reports about this, that in Iraq, in the 1950s, it was still possible to identify the ethnic, religious, or occupational background of many Iraqis by their dress. He also notes that people who have spent some time in the towns have widely adopted European style dress and that the trend was particularly noticeable among Christians in the North, many of whom have visited or worked in the towns from there.³⁵⁹ A female respondent in the questionnaire survey said that Assyrians in Iraq are distinguishable by their Western clothing, which they wear more beautifully than other groups in Iraq. For a short time during the 1980s, Assyrian girls were instructed by the government to wear the *hijab* at school, but the measure met with strong opposition and complaints from Assyrians and was soon retracted. However, recent turmoil and violence by radical Islamist groups have sometimes made Christian women feel more secure in long sleeves and the *hijab*.³⁶⁰

The Assyrian diet is primarily a Middle Eastern one with regional differences. The most

³⁵⁸ Ibid. p.20

³⁵⁹ Harries, op.cit., p.47

³⁶⁰ An informant in Baghdad provided a copy of the warning paper from an Islamist group called Harakat Abu Khutab al-Jihadiyah. The paper calls for wearing *hijab* and dresses as regulated in *Sharia* for both Muslim women and non-Muslim women from the age of 10 from the date of November 13, 2004. The paper threatens death for those who do not conform. According to the informant this was delivered in 2005 but it became much safer and nobody forces Christians to wear *hijab* any more.

typical Assyrian cuisines are *dolma*, or stuffed vegetables, *bushala*, *kipte*, *rizza-shirwa*, *mashi*, *tuyati*, and so on. A female interviewee who became Assyrian (the Church of the East) by marriage from a Chaldean background distinguished Assyrian food from her own food, which is supposed to be quite similar. She added that she has learned how to cook “Assyrian food” from her mother-in-law. Edward Odisho points out that it is the food, among other cultural elements that can relate younger generations in migration to their native culture and ethnic ancestry. Wives from different ethnic backgrounds, even from non-Middle Eastern origin, usually learn Assyrian cuisine, so that this important part of Assyrian culture can be handed down to the next generation.³⁶¹

During the First World War, Brigadier-General Austin found that Assyrians from mountainous areas and those from plains differ from each other in many aspects. While the mountaineers were “hardy and warlike” people organized into tribes or clans under chiefs called the Malik, the plainsmen were far from having a martial spirit.³⁶² While mountaineers lived off their livestock, the plainsmen mainly devoted themselves to agriculture and were better educated due to the work of American Missions. According to Austin’s account, livestock was especially important to the Tyari tribe. It was important to them to the extent that they would yield their blankets to their animals in the winter in the refugee camps. Tyaris not only benefited from dairy products, but they used to barter them for other grocery items or commodities with Arabs. The Jiloo tribe was especially known for their spirit of traveling and bartering. Many of them traveled to America and Europe to fundraise for the Assyrian

³⁶¹ Odisho, JAAS paper, pp.11-12

³⁶² Austin, op.cit., p.5, Joseph Naayem, *Shall This Nation Die?*, Chaldean Rescue, New York, 1920, p.261. The author explains that due to the surrounding Kurds, Assyrians in mountains were compelled to carry arms not only to impose respect, but for their very survival. On the other hand, Assyrians living in the plains were more exposed to persecution.

cause.³⁶³ Representative tribal names are the Upper Tiari, Lower Tiari, Tkhuma, Baz, Diz, Darwar, Bhotan, Mar Bishu, Jelu, Shamasdin, Tagawar, and Margawar.³⁶⁴

Under the Ottoman Millet system, the secular authorities dealt with civil and criminal cases while spiritual authority and personal status were under the patriarch's jurisdiction. But in the case of the Church of the East, practically all cases came under the patriarch. This was because their location in the mountainous area hindered communication with the central authority.³⁶⁵ However, the establishment of the state of Iraq deprived the patriarch of his temporal power over his flock. Thereafter, Assyrian Christians came under the Personal Status Law of 1959, which is essentially based on Islamic Sharia, rather than church law.³⁶⁶

A 1980 study on Assyrians reveals that 37 percent of Assyrian families had more than five children at the time.³⁶⁷ But the interviewees of this research informed that nowadays Assyrians usually have three or four children and rarely one or two, though they had more in the past. Also, a female interviewee, who had only one child, added that the difficult situation in Iraq and her refugee status inhibits her, as well as others, from having more children. Parents call their son *broni*, which means my son, a daughter *brati*, my daughter. Sometimes children are summoned by their names. Children call their mother *yimma*, or *yimmi*, and their father *baba* or *babi*. A husband is presented to others as *gori* by his wife and a wife as *bakhti*. However, a husband and a wife call each other quite often by their names.

In traditional Assyrian society, aged ladies in the village would function as midwives. The newborn baby was wiped with salt and wrapped in tightly-bound cloth. A cotton cloth folded

³⁶³ Austin, *ibid.*, pp.5, 87-88

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.63

³⁶⁵ Atiya, *op.cit.*, p.289

³⁶⁶ Article 1. 2 of this Personal Status Law, for example, states that "If there is no applicable legislative text, the judgment shall be adjudicated in accordance with the Islamic Shari'a principles that are most relevant to this law."

³⁶⁷ Khalaf (1980), *op.cit.*, p.51. This research deals with Assyrian refugees in Lebanon including Chaldeans and Syrian Orthodox adherents in addition to the Church of the East followers.

into a triangular shape was used to cover the baby's head. Yoab Benjamin admits that fathers preferred sons over daughters in the past. He also introduces interesting customs related to childbirth. A newborn baby was put in a cradle which had a hole in the middle. And the baby's urine would flow down to a jar underneath through a wooden tube which was supposedly put between the baby's legs. The mother had to be secluded without bathing for forty days when she gave a birth to a baby boy, and sixty days for a baby girl.³⁶⁸ When a baby became three-days-old, he or she was taken to church to be blessed by the priest's prayer. However, there were also religious elements in customs related to birth and babies. For example, according to Benjamin, during the seclusion, the mother would keep an iron tool under her pillow to protect herself (and the baby) against evil spirits and carry it to repel the evil influence of the monster Lilith when she moved around the house. Also, parents would burn incense in the baby's room to ward off evil spirits and put the New Testament under the baby's pillow as a charm. Some parents would keep their boys dirty or dress them as girls until the age of seven, to reduce the risk of exposing them to the evil eye.³⁶⁹ In the twenty first century, Assyrian women usually give birth in hospitals.

Among Assyrians, arranging the marriage of their children has been regarded as one of the primary parental duties. Early marriage was common and favored especially for girls, because they were considered to have little future value to the family. Traditionally, a spouse would be found among the same tribe, but one cannot marry a close kin such as a first or second cousin. According to Yoab Benjamin, firstly, the father of the future groom, along with his elderly relatives, visits the bride's house to formally request "the hand of their

³⁶⁸ A similar seclusion regulation for the mother is also found in the Old Testament. She was considered unclean for seven days when she gave a birth to a baby boy and fourteen days in the case of a girl. She was required to have a purification ceremony after forty days from the childbirth for a boy and eighty days for a girl. Leviticus 12:2-8

³⁶⁹ Benjamin, op.cit.

daughter.” The host of the bride’s house would conventionally act as if the purpose of the visit was a complete surprise to him. If the host accepts the marriage, he and the father of the groom set the betrothal date.³⁷⁰ On the day of the betrothal, the two fathers and sponsors from each side are present at the bride’s house, as well as a priest. The bride does not appear in the gathering, but stays in a separate room and two female witnesses bring a ring to her that is offered by the groom and ask if she accepts. Her acceptance is not necessarily verbal. When she has accepted, the priest prays and conducts the betrothal ceremony. Then, the two sides immediately discuss and contract the dowry, or *niqda*, which signifies the social status of the groom’s family. The contract is written down and all the attendants sign it, according to the Synodical Law of the Church of the East.³⁷¹ The groom’s side presents gifts, including a silver waist belt called *hayyasa* or *kamarra*, other ornaments for the bride, and other articles for the bride’s eldest brother and her mother’s brother. Afterwards, everyone celebrates the official betrothal while sharing the meal, which Yoab Benjamin calls the rice feast and the climax of the day.³⁷²

The wedding takes place a few months after the betrothal. Everyone in the village is invited. A typical Assyrian wedding feast lasts for seven days. Assisted by his male relatives or neighbors, the groom must be cleansed in a ceremonial bath. The bath is usually carried out in the late afternoon on a Saturday and is considered a ritual that renders the groom spiritually ready and clean. And he puts on the traditional wedding costume and a white conical cap with feathers. Then he processes to the bride’s house accompanied by his relatives and neighbors, who also adorn themselves in traditional costumes. The bride also prepares for the wedding, by washing and dressing with help of other female relatives. Her

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Surma D’Bait Mar Shimun, *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*, 1920, p.30

³⁷² Benjamin, op.cit.

hair is usually put down in two braids at the back and covered with a headdress and veil. She stays inside and meets her mother-in-law and other female relatives, who praise her virtues. When the groom's party arrives they face the bride's male relatives, who show no pleasure, but rather offer an unwilling look.³⁷³ Lady Surma notes that the Assyrians in the mountains and those in the plain have different wedding customs. In the plains, many customs originated from the days when the bride was captured by force from her family. When the groom arrives with his party of young men, the wedding ring is handed to the bride through an old woman. The bride is supposed to show her unwillingness, but answers, "Well, my father and my mother wish it, and so do all my brothers, so what can a poor girl do?" Then the groom takes her on a horse while his friends fire guns.³⁷⁴ Even today, when the groom's party arrives, the brother of the bride blocks the door until a ransom is paid to let her go out.³⁷⁵ There is continuous music and dancing, as well as a big festive meal.

A marriage service at the church begins on Sunday early in the morning, ideally four AM. It is a long liturgy, which takes more than two hours. The groom and the bride wear crowns of red and white silk cord. Lady Surma says that there are several times during the liturgy when the couple hold hands.³⁷⁶ The wedding rings are put in the cup of wine from which they both drink after the marriage oath. This wine can be sprinkled with holy dust, or *hnana*. The priest asks them whether the marriage is of their free will. Interesting folk practices to ward off evil spirits are carried out during the liturgy. These practices seem to differ from tribe to tribe. Tyaris, for example, let the groom's male relatives stand guard outside the door, while a female relative stands behind the bridal pair, continuously motioning as if cutting with scissors, during the ceremony. They also make cross-shaped needles and stitch them into

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ D'Bait Mar Shimun, op.cit.

³⁷⁵ http://azadoota.com/downloads/Azadoota_Teacher_Resources_09.pdf

³⁷⁶ D'Bait Mar Shimun, op.cit.

the back of the groom's garment. People of the Baz tribe prick the bride, as well as the shoulders of the churchmen, with needles.³⁷⁷ When the benediction of the priest is over after the vows, the mother of the groom throws raisins, dried figs and walnuts, coins, and so on. Then the procession to the groom's house starts.

When the procession arrives at the groom's house, the groom climbs up to the roof and treads on it and throws pomegranates or raisins to the bride.³⁷⁸ His mother also throws dried fruits or rice symbolizing the fertility of the newly wedded couple. The bridal chamber, or *Baith Gnuna*, is prepared by the blessing of the priest in advance.³⁷⁹ A blanket called *gnuna*³⁸⁰ is hung behind a throne for the couple, symbolizing the home established through marriage. Also, a tree called the "Royal Tree," or *liana d-khitna*, is set up with fruits hanging on it. The tree and fruits are considered symbols of prosperity. The couple have to stay on the throne during the seven days feasting. According to Yoab Benjamin, the bride and groom were not permitted to sleep alone but separately in the chamber with their best man and the matron during the feast days.³⁸¹ The feasts include special food, dancing, and also a charm competition among the participants. On the following Sunday, the couple visit the bride's family to acknowledge the groom's gratitude and get showered with raisins, figs and walnuts again.³⁸² But Lady Surma says that the marriage lasts for three days and the mother of the bride invites the couple one month after the wedding. The couple stay one or two weeks with her family.³⁸³ Furthermore, according to Lady Surma's account, the second Sunday of Lent is

³⁷⁷ Benjamin, op.cit. It could be also to ensure they are awake during the ceremony which is conducted in the early morning after a long day of celebration without sleeping.

³⁷⁸ In Mikhael Pius's account, the groom throws the apple toward the bride. NINEVEH, Volume 22, No.1&2, 1999, p.15

³⁷⁹ D'Bait Mar Shimun, op.cit.

³⁸⁰ It is also said that the women of the bride's family and her neighbors make a large blanket ensuring everyone takes part in sewing it. http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Assyrian_culture

³⁸¹ It is said that this is to help the groom and bride become familiar with each other since they could have met for the first time at the liturgy of matrimony.

³⁸² Benjamin, op.cit.

³⁸³ D'Bait Mar Shimun, op.cit.

“the Sunday of the daughters,” or “Mothering Sunday,” on which mothers invite their daughters and give presents. The following Sunday, on the other hand, is “the Sunday of the Sponsors” on which people invite or visit people who have sponsored them in marriage.³⁸⁴

As marriage is considered a permanent union between man and woman, divorce is not permitted except in rare cases of adultery and is considered a disgrace. Matches are traditionally made by parents or relatives and obeyed by their children. Boys and girls are not supposed to keep each other company, not to mention having pre-marital affairs.³⁸⁵ Showing affection between husband and wife in public is also considered improper. Also, marrying against parental will, elopement, or abduction were considered not only improper, but a great disgrace. Nevertheless, these practices were not unknown, especially among mountaineers, who sometimes abducted brides.³⁸⁶ Punishment for bigamy and adultery at the time of the First World War, as observed by Austin, under the temporal power of the Patriarch of the Church of the East was gravely humiliating. Such a man would be shaved of his hair, put his head toward the ass of a donkey on which he would be publicly paraded through the village before put in prison for a certain amount of time at the discretion of the patriarch. Austine reports that there were three such cases of women, who had not known that their husbands were still alive, during his service in the Baquba camp.³⁸⁷

Today, love marriage has by and large replaced the traditional arranged marriage. Interviewees said that they had met their spouse at church, at parties, by chance, through common friends, or by kin relations or by living in the same village. But all of them affirmed that the husband proposed first as a matter of course, “as Eastern people.” It seems that dating for Assyrians neither means intimacy in the Western sense, nor a frequent change in the

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Baaba, op.cit., p.82

³⁸⁶ <http://www.shlama.be/shlama/content/view/11/12/>

³⁸⁷ Austin, op.cit., p.74

partners. Especially for girls, it is often still a matter to hide if possible. A female interviewee confessed that her father did not know that she was dating with her boy friend, who is now her husband, for five years, while she shared the secret only with her mother.

Concerning the duration of the wedding feast, an interviewee said that he had even experienced a fifteen-day-feast in 1978. According to another interviewee, her uncle on the maternal side had a seven-day-feast as a usual wedding during which the relatives slept over at his house and the bride's family was also invited. She considered three days as common for the duration of a wedding feast, though she had only one day because her husband is Chaldean. An émigré Assyrian expressed his disappointment that the wedding has been reduced to "only three days." On the other hand, interviewees related the decrease of the feast's duration to the deteriorating economic and war-torn situation in Iraq since the 1980s. One interviewee even associated the Royal Tree with the general lack of food in the past. He said that homemade alcohol called *innita* was served for three days during the feast.³⁸⁸

An engaged couple wear their wedding rings on the fourth fingers of their right hands and transfer them to the left hands when they get married. The bride and groom nowadays wear Western wedding costumes, but they still wear traditional costumes on the third day of the celebration. Up to the present day, the newly wedded couple usually stays at the groom's house for a week and at the bride's for the next week. A female interviewee mentioned that though the Assyrians present themselves in their traditional costume at the wedding, in their situation as refugees, they wear the costume only at close relatives' weddings.

Assyrians sometimes marry a person from different Christian sects than their own. In such cases, the wife usually changes her sect to the husband's and their children belong to the

³⁸⁸ Unfortunately, more information about *innita* was not given. In other published accounts mention that *araq*, the distilled alcohol made from grapes common for Christians in the Middle East, was often consumed during wedding celebrations.

father's sect. Thirteen out of 46 respondents, or 28.26 percent, answered "Yes" to the question "Are there any non-Assyrians among your relatives?" This question is a bit tricky because many think the term includes adherents of the Chaldean Church, Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Church, while others do not. The respondents were asked to give the sects of those non-Assyrian relatives.³⁸⁹ There could be more cases in reality due to the obscurity of the definition of an Assyrian, or due to negligence in some cases. The most frequently mentioned non-Assyrian was Chaldean. Five answered that their wives were non-Assyrian: four Chaldeans and one Protestant. One said her husband was Chaldean. Three female respondents became Assyrian by marriage which leaves their families non-Assyrian (the Church of the East). They are two of Chaldean origins and one of Syrian Catholic origin. Others answered that their brothers have non-Assyrians wives or that their sisters have non-Assyrian husbands. One respondent said that his mother was originally Syrian Orthodox but became Assyrian by marriage, his wife was Chaldean who also became Assyrian by marriage, and his sister became Syrian Orthodox by marriage. Among Assyrians, women are vulnerable and open to switch or convert to another sect while men keep the continuity of the sect of the family in a society where religious conversion even among Christian sects is rigid.

Assyrians prefer endogamy with members of their own tribes, but who are more distant than cousins. Nevertheless, Christian intersectarian marriage is generally accepted. Inter-marriage between Assyrians from the Church of the East and adherents of the Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox, and Syrian Catholic Churches is common and widely accepted. In addition, inter-marriage between Assyrians and Armenians, especially in the regions of Urmia and Salmas, was and still is quite often observed.³⁹⁰ But for the *unsuriyun*, or fanatic Assyrians, even inter-marriage with Chaldeans is seen as undesirable. An interviewee said that such

³⁸⁹ For the boundary of the term, see the Part III, Chapter 2.

³⁹⁰ Baaba, op.cit., p.127

intermarriage between Assyrians and Chaldeans occurs more often in the cities. Research on the Assyrian refugees in Lebanon in 1980 found that the degree to which Assyrians favor or disapprove intermarriage with other communities and groups is generally consistent with the attitudes that Assyrians hold towards other groups. In this research, while intermarriages with Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox or Catholic Church adherents are mostly accepted, 26 to 28 percent showed refusal or hesitation toward Protestants or Armenians.³⁹¹

Though rare and considered strongly undesirable, marriage between an Assyrian Christian and a Muslim is not unheard of. Under the Sharia, marriage between a Muslim woman and a Christian man is forbidden, while the reverse is permissible.³⁹² When an Assyrian woman marries a Muslim man, she usually faces a socially inhospitable atmosphere. An interviewee says that people will not talk to an Assyrian girl if she marries a Muslim and abandons her own religion. Two interviewees separately reported that they heard of a kind of honor killing upon an Assyrian woman's conversion to Islam following marriage, in the past. However, neither account comes from direct observation, but rather from hearsay.³⁹³ In the case of the reverse conversion, though much rarer, is, of course, welcomed and positively accepted by the interviewees.

Exogamy of Assyrians in Iraq to foreigners was not very common. To the question "Are there any non-Iraqis among your relatives?" one respondent answered that his maternal aunt was married to a Lebanese. Another person answered her mother is from a Greek sect from Lebanon.³⁹⁴ Except for the other two respondents who did not answer the question, the rest answered that they do not have any non-Iraqi relatives. But one interviewee mentioned that

³⁹¹ Khalaf, *op.cit.*, pp.80-83

³⁹² This is also clearly stated in the Personal Status Law of Iraq issued in 1959.

³⁹³ One of them recalled that he heard from his mother that a Christian family had killed their daughter and buried her underneath the house when she married a Muslim about fifty years ago.

³⁹⁴ Though she was originally Chaldean, she did not mention other members of her family in answer to the earlier question asking if there are non-Assyrians in the family.

one of her relatives had married a Japanese woman. It seems there would be a higher rate of foreign marriages if Assyrians in emigration were counted. Assyrian emigrants who migrated before the Second World War married foreigners more often than new arrivals after the 1970s, due to the reduced population of the community, with fewer young girls and boys. Those who arrived after the 1970s have a less than ten percent intermarriage rate, and even with intermarriage, they would keep close links to the community.³⁹⁵

Maintaining racial purity has been a compulsive force, even though the expression is never used. During the First World War, rumors of the violation of Assyrian girls by Kurds and Turks were widespread. Following the arrival of Assyrians to the Baquba Camp, the number of childbirths was higher than usual. But, because of rape, in many cases, the mothers laid their children on their faces on purpose soon after birth to lessen their chance of survival.³⁹⁶ The endogamy rule among Assyrians, despite being implicit, must constraint young Assyrians in the diaspora. An émigré interviewee mentioned intermarriage negatively, which is far from the practice of his own generation. Two young female émigré interviewees said, sadly, that they were not married because they had not met the right “Assyrians” yet. One of them explained, “Just like in any other place, the possibility gets smaller and smaller for an educated female. Moreover, as an Assyrian I have an idea that I should marry an Assyrian. Even when I see a good person, if he is not Assyrian, I think ‘He is not Assyrian. I will not marry him in the end. If I do not marry, why should I date him?’ My family also thinks in this way. I still hesitate to marry a non-Assyrian man. But, how can we still think an Assyrian must marry an Assyrian and should not have any pre-marital relationships? How is it possible?” The other interviewee claimed that the endogamy of Assyrians protected them from assimilation. She added that the fact that mixed marriages are increasing is problematic.

³⁹⁵ Odisho (1993), *op.cit.*, p.10 and Michael, *op.cit.*

³⁹⁶ Austin, *op.cit.*, pp.75-76

Mourning over death is especially passionate among Assyrians. Bereaved women stop wearing colored clothing or ornaments. The bereaved family do not shave or comb their hair for the first days of mourning. But the burial of the dead is quick, on the same day or the next day. Before the funeral liturgy is conducted at church, relatives gather first for a farewell. Yoab Benjamin describes the mourning scene.

The bereaved Assyrian family sit down on mats or rugs on the floor. Although they try to hold back their emotions, the men sob loudly, while the women weep, singing laments and wailing while beating themselves on the face and breast. If a husband, son or brother dies, it is considered an even worse family tragedy. In these instances, bereaved women may sprinkle dust or ashes on their heads, pull out their hair or tear their clothes and flesh with their nails. He explains that these unusual rituals are borrowed from their Muslim neighbors.³⁹⁷ For the burial, the body is washed with warm water and soap, according to the regulated order, then, clothed in the everyday costume covered in a linen shroud and put in a casket. Only men can proceed to the burial site where another liturgy is to be conducted by a priest. Upon arrival at the house of the deceased, water from a jar is poured on the men's hands. Coffee, tea, and cigarettes are served continuously.³⁹⁸ Funeral visitations are called *Basamta d'Risha*, or healing the head, because it is conventional for visitors to comfort the bereaved family with the words, "May your head be healed." Symbolizing Christ's resurrection on the third day after his death, the Assyrians commemorate the deceased on the third day after burial in a mass followed by a visitation to the grave. The seventh and fortieth days, and anniversary are also commemorated.³⁹⁹ Meanwhile, Lady Surma also notes the continuity in practices related

³⁹⁷ Benjamin, op.cit.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Michael, op.cit.

to funeral from the ancient Assyrian custom such as putting food and light on the graves. The ancient Assyrians did the same for the after-life of the deceased.⁴⁰⁰

B. Religiosity

In traditional Assyrian villages and families, the life cycle of a person was largely related to the church and the church calendar. Easter and Christmas have been the biggest feasts called the Great Feast (Eida Gura) and the Lesser Feast (Eida Sura) respectively. Until the new Julian calendar was introduced to the Church of the East in the 1960s, the feasts followed the old Gregorian dates in which Christmas falls in January. With the separation of the Ancient Church of the East, the church celebrations are also observed on different dates.⁴⁰¹ Other Christian festivities which have incorporated folk religious practices are also celebrated as already seen in the previous section.

But, as aforementioned, the religiosity of ordinary Assyrians does not and cannot always correspond to official church doctrines or regulations. Even in the case of the Doctrine of Mary for example, though it is the most significantly distinctive theological point of the Church of the East, Assyrians are exposed to other neighboring Christians' veneration practices and follow them, albeit to a lesser degree. Icons are forbidden in the Church, but some Assyrian families put up Mary's and other saints' pictures on their wall. Related theology can also be developed and elaborated when the needs and interests of people arise concerning specific topics. For example, an Assyrian church bible study class explains saint veneration as "the unity between the earthly church and the heavenly church" that invites the saints "to carry and purify petitions and to present them" to God. Also, this Church of the

⁴⁰⁰ <http://www.christiansofiraq.com/pict.html>

⁴⁰¹ Dialogue between the two Assyrian Churches is going on concerning the reunification of the feasts, especially Christmas.

East prayer invokes Mary and other saints.

“May the Prayer, O my Lord, of the Holy Virgin, the request of the blessed Mother, and the beseeching and entreating of her who is full of grace, St. Mary the blessed, and the great power of the conquering Cross, and the divine help, and the request of St. John the Baptist be with us continually, at all seasons and times, O Lord of all, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit forever: Amen.”⁴⁰²

Table 2. 7 Assyrians - self-perceived religiosity

	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total (%)
Not at all	1(3.03%)	0	1(2.17%)
Strongly disagree	0	0	0
Disagree	5(15.15%)	1(7.69%)	6(13.04%)
Neutral	0	1(7.69%)	1(2.17%)
Agree	19(57.58%)	8(61.54%)	27(58.70%)
Strongly agree	2(6.06%)	0	2(4.35%)
Definitely	6(18.18%)	3(23.08%)	9(19.57%)
Total	33(100%)	13(100%)	46(100%)

Table 2.7 shows self-perceived religiosity of the Assyrians. The question requires marking the degree to which each respondent feels that “I think I am religious.” Twenty-seven people, or 58.70 percent, agreed. Two persons, or 4.35 percent, answered they strongly agree and nine persons, or 19.57 percent, answered they definitely agree. This makes 38 respondents out of 46, or 82.6 percent, think they are religious. One person answered that he is not religious at all. Another six persons, or 13.04 percent, answered that they disagree with the statement. If the numerical values are given to the answers: -3 not at all, -2 strongly disagree, -1 disagree, 0 neutral, 1 agree, 2 strongly agree, and 3 definitely, the average is 1 for male respondents,

⁴⁰² <http://marmariparish.org>

1.23 for female respondents, and total 1.07, or close to the answer “Agree.” Two respondents questioned the term “religious” itself. One stated that he loves Christ very much but he does not know what the term connotes. The other said that he is Christian but not sure what the term exactly means. Also, there were gender differences. More female respondents answered they agree or definitely agree while male respondents answered more to “Disagree” and less to “Agree” or “Definitely.”

Table 2. 8 Assyrians - church going

	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total (%)
Not at all	1(3.03%)	0	1(2.17%)
Less than 5 times a year	6(18.18%)	1(7.69%)	7(15.22%)
Less than once a month	2(6.06%)	2(15.38%)	4(8.70%)
Once or twice a month	4(12.12%)	2(15.38%)	6(13.04%)
Almost every week	6(18.18%)	3(23.08%)	9(19.57%)
Once every week	4(12.12%)	1(7.69%)	5(10.87%)
More than once a week	10(30.30%)	4(30.77%)	14(30.43%)
Total	33(100%)	13(100%)	46(100%)

Table 2.8 is the frequency of church attendance of Assyrians. The question was, “How many times do you go do church? (except for occasions such as weddings, funeral and baptisms)” Fourteen respondents, or 30.43 percent, answered “More than once a week.” Five persons, or 10.87 percent, answered that they go to church once every week, and another nine people, or 19.57 percent, answered that they go to church almost every week. There was one person who said that he never goes to church. Seven people answered that they go to church less than five times a year, probably meaning they attend important feasts such as Easter and Christmas. Four respondents answered “Less than once a month” and another six “Once or

twice a month.” When numerical values are given to the answers from 1 to 7 from “Not at all” up to “More than once a week” each, the average is 4.82 for male respondents, 5 for female respondents, and total 4.87, which is close to “Almost every week.” The respondents who answered that he is not religious at all also answered that he does not go to church at all. Also, there was a higher female church attendance. Two respondents added that they cannot go to church as frequently as in Iraq as refugees. On the other hand, the 1980 research shows that 25.47 percent thought their relationship with church was strong, 40 percent moderate and close, and 12 percent weak or non-existent.⁴⁰³

Table 2. 9 Assyrians - fasting

	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total (%)
No	17(51.51%)	5(38.46%)	22(47.83%)
I fasted from the beginning but later quit.(fasted less than half the period)	4(12.12%)	1(7.69%)	5(10.87%)
I did not fast from the beginning but later participated.(fasted less than a half the period)	1(3.03%)	0	1(2.17%)
I fasted for more than half the period	1(3.03%)	2(15.38%)	3(6.52%)
Yes, I fasted for the full period	9(27.27%)	4(30.77%)	13(28.26%)
No answer	1(3.03%)	1(7.69%)	2(4.35%)
Total	33(100%)	13(100%)	46(100%)

Table 2.9 shows the Assyrians’ observance of the Great Fast in 2008. Out of 46 respondents, 22 persons, or 47.83 percent, answered they did not fast at all. That is almost half of the total. Five persons started but ended less than half way through the fasting period. Another one did not start but later joined for less than half. Three people, or 6.52 percent, fasted more than

⁴⁰³ Khalaf, op.cit., p.77

half of the period but did not complete the fast. Thirteen persons, or 8.26 percent, fasted for the full period. The result shows that 22 persons, or 47.83 percent, fasted, whether partially or completely. A female respondent mentioned that she started but had to quit because of her marriage. This is contrary to church law which traditionally does not allow marriage during the fast. Another person added that he offers the fast to God as a gift, because God gives us gifts. But in general, the observance of fasting among the Assyrians does not match the late nineteenth century accounts which claim that the observance of fasting was the most strictly observed old custom.⁴⁰⁴

Table 2. 10 Assyrians - prayer

	Male (%)	Female(%)	Total (%)
Not at all	4 (12.12)	0	4 (8.70)
Less than once a month	1 (3.03)	1 (7.69)	2 (4.35)
Less than once a week	2 (6.06)	0	2 (4.35)
Once every week	4 (12.12)	1 (7.69)	5 (10.87)
Almost every day	10 (30.30)	6 (46.15)	16 (34.78)
Once every day	6 (18.18)	3 (23.08)	9 (19.57)
More than once a day	6 (18.18)	2 (15.38)	8 (17.39)
Total	33 (100)	13 (100)	46 (100)

Table 2.10 shows how many times the Assyrians pray. The largest number, 16, or 34.87 percent, said “Almost every day.” Nine persons, or 19.57 percent, answered that they pray once every day. And nine persons, or 19.57 percent, said they pray more than once a day. Meanwhile, four respondents, or 8.70 percent, answered that they do not pray at all. Two

⁴⁰⁴ Athelstan Riley, Narrative of a Visit to the Assyrian Christians in Kurdistan: Undertaken at the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Autumn of 1884, <http://anglicanhistory.org/england/reley/narrative1884.html>, p.14

answered less than once a month, and another two, less than once a week. One respondent added that he prays once in five years. Those who pray less than once a week are mostly male respondents showing another a gender divide in religious practices. If the numerical values from 1 to 7 are given to the answers from “Not at all” to “More than once a day,” the average is 4.73 for the male respondents, 5.23 for the female respondents, and 4.87 for total, which is a bit less than “Almost every day.”

8. Migration

The emigration of Assyrians is a phenomenon described in most cases as associated with massacres and forced uprooting during the First World War and afterwards. In this sense, the term ‘Diaspora’ is applicable to Assyrians living abroad. But emigration to the Caucasian regions goes back to the eighteenth century. An official letter written in 1770 by the Patriarch of the Church of the East to the king of Georgia was found. The letter requested permission for the Assyrians to settle in the latter’s kingdom. The permission was granted and Assyrians from Urmia and Hakkiari began to settle in Georgia where their missionary forefathers once founded churches and monasteries in the fifth and sixth centuries. Later in the nineteenth century Russia relocated them *en masse* to the disputed Russian border area.⁴⁰⁵ As rivalry between Russia and Britain intensified, Russia showed interest in this Christian group which it could use as pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of Persia and could also use in military campaigns. When Russia occupied Armenia which was under Persia at the time, the Assyrians were on the Russian side, and later, many moved to Armenia. In this way, Assyrian villages began to be formed in the 1830s in Caucasus. Those who settled during this period

⁴⁰⁵ Daniel Sarkisov, *Assyrian Settlements in Caucasia*, NINEVEH, Volume 22, No.1&2, 1999, p.4. Russia annexed Georgia in 1801.

learned the Russian language and were mostly employed in agriculture.⁴⁰⁶ In the second half of the nineteenth century, Assyrian migration to Caucasus was in search of seasonal employment. Only men migrated for work by foot to Julfa, then by train to Tbilisi and its surrounding area. Concerning the reasons for migration, Eden Naby claims that Assyrians, as Christians, could not engage in trade among Muslims, not because of governmental restriction but due to local culture in which Muslims would not trade with Christian butchers, bakers, or food merchants.⁴⁰⁷ Most of the Assyrians in Georgia obtained Georgian citizenship. Many worked as bricklayers or painters. Some of them improved their status after a while and became professionals. Also, intellectuals emerged who worked in Assyrian educational and cultural activities until the Soviet repression of the 1930s.⁴⁰⁸ Nevertheless, an Assyrian village Samavat, which became Russian territory in 1878, returned to Turkey in 1921 resulting in the scattering of Assyrians in the village to Georgia and Russia.⁴⁰⁹

Since the 1850s, the Assyrians have turned their eyes to North America when connections were established and employment opportunity was found. They sailed to Canada and the US at Libava, Latvia. Some returned but the number of people who returned decreased as they settled with their families. Naby points out that the most direct influence on migration was better employment opportunities, not the missionaries' sending bright students abroad.⁴¹⁰ Some Assyrians in Tbilisi, after much toil during the First World War also left for the United States, others for Syria, and a larger number returned to Persia and Turkey after the Russian

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. pp.4-5. Six out of those seven villages converted to the Russian Orthodoxy. The other one which was formed the latest was Chaldean.

⁴⁰⁷ Eden Naby, *The Assyrians of Iran: Reunification of a "Millat," 1906-1914*, International Journal of Middle East Studies, No. 8, 1977, p.247 The non-engagement of Muslims with Christian traders especially in food related items, is based on the concept of Najes, or impurity, especially in Shiite theology.

⁴⁰⁸ Sarkisov, op.cit., p.5

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. p.6

⁴¹⁰ Naby, op.cit., p.247

Revolution.⁴¹¹

The dispersion of Assyrians in the Middle East region and further emigration of Assyrians came as an aftermath to the War and Turkish nationalism that called for pure Turkish ethnicity within its territory. In the Ottoman territories, Christians were forced to leave by public orders. In Kharput, for example, on June 28th, 1915, it was publicly announced that all Armenians and Assyrians were to leave within five days.⁴¹² Some of them headed for Urfa only to face another order from the governor to leave in August. Rev. Joseph Naayem reports that there was a kind of militia called Tchettas especially organized by the Party of Union and Progress for carrying out the deportations and massacres.⁴¹³ On the other hand, Assyrians in the Persian territory aligned with Russia, hoping for autonomy in return. Though the Russians recognized them as a distinct unit and the Assyrians defeated the Kurds and Turks in fourteen battles, when the Russians left in 1915 and again in 1918, the Assyrians had to either flee to Russia or to head for the British refugee camp in fear of being massacred.⁴¹⁴

Unfortunately, Assyrian dispersion was not an event that happened once and was settled. In a 1980 study, Samir Khalaf and his colleagues describe the situation as follows.

It is almost a recurrent and predictable pattern of uprootedness, resettlement, only to be uprooted or displaced again. ...First, in Turkey during World War I disruptive events of the war and subsequent persecution led many members of the community to migrate to Iran. In 1918, religious repressions in Iran generated another wave of migration to Iraq. Once again, in 1933 and because of religious massacres they were compelled to leave Iraq and resettle in Syria. The flow from Syria into Lebanon, though not prompted or induced by any form of religious persecution or discrimination, has persisted throughout the past three decades [50s-

⁴¹¹ Sarkisov, op.cit., p.7

⁴¹² Donabed, op.cit., p.60

⁴¹³ Naayem, op.cit. pp.39, 146. See Part II, Chapter 1 for massacres.

⁴¹⁴ Sarkisov, op.cit. p.6, and Robert DeKelaita, Robert DeKelaita, *The Origins and Development of Assyrian Nationalism*, MA Thesis, University of Chicago, p.20 (www.aina.org)

70s].⁴¹⁵

Samir Khalaf's research found that nearly one third of its respondents were uprooted at least four times, that is, in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria before they came to Lebanon.⁴¹⁶ According to the research, religious factors such as fear of persecution, repression or discrimination, and massacre, were the main reasons for emigrating, until the 1930s, while Assyrians migrated between the 50s and 70s more for economic reasons.⁴¹⁷ Though many Assyrians in Lebanon obtained citizenship during president Chamoun's administration (1952-58), many still had the desire to emigrate from Lebanon for a better and securer country.⁴¹⁸ The Lebanese civil war also accelerated their flight to the West. Since the Gulf war and following sanctions on Iraq, countries that bordered Iraq, such as Syria and Jordan, in addition to adjacent Lebanon, have been functioning as stepping stones for Assyrian refugees, and for Iraqis in general, to emigrate to the West.

Assyrians began to arrive to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, some as students in seminaries and medical schools, others in search of job opportunities.⁴¹⁹ Many worked in factories or worked in hotels and restaurants, while others worked as carpenters, masons, painters, and tailors – occupations that recent immigrants can take up with relative ease. At first, the Assyrians were dispersed all over the country looking for jobs. Gradually Chicago became the center of Assyrian immigration in the United States. After years of hard work, some opened their own businesses.⁴²⁰ As the initial purpose of Assyrian migration to the United States was to earn

⁴¹⁵ Khalaf, *op.cit.*, p.67

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.68

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.69-70

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp.70-73

⁴¹⁹ According to the Encyclopedia of Chicago, some key missionaries in Iran were from Chicago. That would be a natural reason for Assyrian settlement around Chicago.

<http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/86.html>

⁴²⁰ Shoumanov, *op.cit.*, p.10, Donabed, *op.cit.*, p.70

some money to support their families back home, numbers of male Assyrians far exceeded that of females, especially among the young. In Chicago in 1909, for example, there were thirty Assyrian families and 600 young men.⁴²¹ Donabed reports that Assyrians began meetings and societies prior to the formation of an Assyrian church, and picnics were crucial part of early interaction among them.⁴²² The wave of Assyrian migration continued whenever regional instability arose in the Middle East, including the recent war in Iraq. While early migrants had low education back home, Assyrian emigrants since the 1970s are mostly college educated and professionals, though sometimes, they work temporarily in menial jobs until their legal papers are complete.⁴²³ Assyrians prefer to move into communities where other Assyrians already reside. Also, they have a tendency to keep close contact, including visitation, with families and relatives back home.

The emigration of Assyrians to Europe began in the early 1960s, when Germany decided to receive guest workers from Turkey. There was a small number of Assyrians among these Turkish workers. But the massive emigration to Western Europe happened only in the 1970s. These Assyrians emigrants initially went to Germany but spread into other European countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Sweden. Also, they began to change their status to asylum seekers.⁴²⁴ In 1966, the Swedish government decided to receive 200 Christians from Lebanon as quota for refugees initiated by the World Council of Churches and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Mainly young couples were selected among applicants. A larger part of the selected refugees belonged to the Syrian Orthodox Church from Turkey, with a lesser number of people from the Church of the East and the Chaldean

⁴²¹ Ibid. Assyrians in this information includes not only those from the Church of the East, but also Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholics.

⁴²² Donabed, op.cit., p.69

⁴²³ Michael, op.cit.

⁴²⁴ Bjorklund, op.cit., pp.49-54

Church.⁴²⁵

Earlier Assyrian emigrants in Europe used to return for vacations or weddings, and came back to Europe. Though some sent money home and built new houses in their hometown, many others brought their families to Europe with them. Assyrians continued to migrate to Europe as guest workers or tourists who would eventually settle there.⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, especially among the Assyrian refugees discontent arose in Sweden due to the gap between expectations and reality. There was even a protest led by Simon Badawi who later returned to Beirut. The Swedish government's policy to separate Assyrian emigrants from each other and put them among different communities was confronted by Assyrians, who tend to live close to each other.⁴²⁷ Ulf Bjorklund claims that the emigration of Assyrians is a social process in which the individual is subjected to social principles of organization and solidarity unlike the emigration of ordinary (Western-type) individuals or nuclear families.⁴²⁸ Many organizations emerged largely based on kinship networks which also witnessed rivalry between different kin groups.⁴²⁹ Sodertalje, Sweden, became the center of Assyrians in Europe and accommodates the professional Assyrian football team, called Assyriska and Suroyo TV.

The first Assyrians arrived in Australia in the 1930s, but larger scale migration to Australia began in the mid-1950s. Assyrians in Australia formed their community in the Fairfield area. During the 1980s and from the late 1990s onwards, Assyrian immigration increased under family reunion, refugee and humanitarian programs.⁴³⁰ Stavros Stavridis cites documents related to Assyrian migration to Australia, namely, the correspondence between Assyrian Youaw Kanna and senior officials of the Australian Department of Immigration from 1964 to

⁴²⁵ Ibid., pp.57-58

⁴²⁶ Ibid. pp.55-56

⁴²⁷ Ibid. pp.58-60

⁴²⁸ Ibid. pp.49-50

⁴²⁹ Ibid. p.63 and p.131

⁴³⁰ <http://www.assyrianrc.com> and <http://www.assyrianrc.com/AboutUs.htm>

1969. According to Stavridis' research, Kanna tried to assist his fellow Assyrians in Iraq and attempted to convince Australian officials that his people would have something positive to offer Australia. Kanna told the Australian officials that sixty percent of Assyrians were able to read and write English, while thirty percent had served in the British army as Assyrian Levies. In 1964, the Australian government established a migration office in Beirut to process the immigration of Assyrians.⁴³¹

At the very beginning of the twenty first century, Assyrians find themselves in Syria, Lebanon, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Greece, France, England, Austria, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Swiss, Italy, Brazil, Canada, USA, and other countries, in addition to their homeland in today's Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.⁴³² Emigration certainly has improved the social and economic situation for the Assyrian emigrants. But the Assyrian community itself back in the homeland lost its most well-educated people. Early émigré Assyrians at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, were leaders in education, foreign trade and banking, who were educated in institutions built by Western missions.⁴³³ Furthermore, later massive emigration contributed to weakening the Assyrians' position in villages and countries in the original Assyrian homeland.⁴³⁴

In fact, dispersion within the Middle East, in many cases, disappointed Assyrians due to the perceived lack of hospitality of host countries, as well as the latter's domestic problems.⁴³⁵ Even in Lebanon, a country with a significant Christian population, Assyrians

⁴³¹ Stavros T. Stavridis, *Y.T. Kanna: A Man on a Mission, Assyrian Migration to Australia*, <http://www.helleniccomserve.com/stavridiskanna.html>

⁴³² AINA 2002 statistics.

⁴³³ Naby, op.cit., p.247

⁴³⁴ Bjorklund, op.cit., p.51

⁴³⁵ Khalaf, op.cit., p.101

have felt that the authorities have been negligent in dealing with them and wanted to migrate once more to change their status and welfare conditions.⁴³⁶ Also, as a marginal and refugee community, Assyrians in Lebanon in 1980 formed the least privileged class in terms of economics with low income, no property ownership, deficiency in occupational skills, unemployment and job instability.⁴³⁷ Recent refugees from Iraq also usually suffer from legal issues in staying and working in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Sometimes negative stereotypes of the Assyrians in Europe have incited hatred toward them. In Sweden, Assyrians were stereotyped as “aggressive, rowdy, walk about with their noses in the air, think they own the whole town, make a filthy mess everywhere, crowd together and shout, run after Swedish girls, they receive vast amount of money from the welfare authorities, and so on.”⁴³⁸ The hostility came to a climax in a racist riot, in which Assyrians were attacked in Sodertalje in 1977.⁴³⁹ According to research following the riot, the Assyrians thought that they were wrongly perceived as problematic because they share their residential areas with Swedish and Finnish alcoholics and rowdy people. The Assyrians also learned, according to the research, that some Swedes were annoyed by the Assyrian life style and that they would avoid mentioning such cultural differences, which often led to confrontation and disadvantage.⁴⁴⁰ Contrary to the common bias, Assyrians turned out to be enterprising, clever and innovative, rapidly establishing their private businesses.⁴⁴¹

Another image-related problem that Assyrian emigrants face is Westerners’ frequent confusion, thinking of Assyrians as Arab, and therefore, Muslim. Despite the fact that they migrated to the West due to religious and ethnic discrimination, they are often considered

⁴³⁶ Ibid. pp.87, 98. In this 1980 research 85% of Assyrians in Lebanon revealed their hope to emigrate.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. p.60. According to the same study, about one third made below the minimum wage set by the Lebanese government at the time.

⁴³⁸ Bjorklund, op.cit, p.116

⁴³⁹ Ibid. p.1

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. pp.120-121

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. pp.130-131

Arabs due to their Middle Eastern background. This misconception has been harmful especially after September 11, 2001. They have sometimes become the target of hate crimes, including threats and the burning down of churches. On the other hand, Assyrians are not recognized as a distinct ethnic group or nation in most Middle Eastern countries. In many cases, they are called either Turkish or Arab Christians. In Northern Iraq, they began to be referred as Christian Kurds. AINA (Assyrian International News Agency) describes this phenomenon: “Arabization policy follows Assyrians into the West” and strongly criticizes, the Arab American Institute which has continuously presented Assyrians as Arab Christian.⁴⁴² In relation to this, categorizing Assyrians in the census of the United States has been quite an issue. Because Assyrian emigrants have different countries of origin, there could not be an official entry on the census. There was more than one category in the U.S. census in which Assyrians could be counted. People could claim to be ethnic Assyrian from the Church of the East, Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox and Catholic, and protestant Churches, and had to choose from categories of Aramean, Assyrian, Chaldean, Chaldo, Jacobite, Kaldany, Kaldu, Kasddem, Kasdu, Nestorian, and Telkeffee. After much effort and discussions, representatives from different churches and their communities agreed to propose an “Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac” classification to be recognized as a separate ethnicity in 1999 and signed the census petition in 2003.⁴⁴³

It was also within the diaspora that the issue of the term “Assyria(n)” and its boundary emerged. In the U.S., Syrian Orthodox churches changed their names from “Assyrian” to “Syrian” in 1960s causing less interaction between people from the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church.⁴⁴⁴ When the Swedish government received Christian refugees,

⁴⁴² <http://www.aina.org/releases/2001/arabization.htm>

⁴⁴³ Michael, op.cit.

⁴⁴⁴ Donabed, op.cit., pp.77-81. See PartIII. Chapter 2 for the issue of boundary.

it called the whole group “Assyrians,” without knowing that there was more than one Christian sect and that the majority of the received refugees were from the Syrian Orthodox Church, some of whom do not want to call themselves Assyrian.⁴⁴⁵ The confrontation over the term and its boundary is contingent upon the relationship between the position of the churches and secular nationalism.

Nevertheless, the tension between the need for integration to the host society and the desire to preserve a distinctive Assyrian identity is the biggest concern among Assyrian emigrants. Samir Khalaf and his colleagues also point out that the Assyrian community in Lebanon in the 1970s was eager to be integrated but, at the same time, did not want to melt away.⁴⁴⁶ While some naturalized Assyrians became fully integrated into Lebanese society, others and later arrivals visibly try to preserve their ethnicity by sending their children to schools run by the church that use the Assyrian language everyday, keeping social distance from and attitude toward other groups, and strongly leaning toward endogamy.⁴⁴⁷ In Europe, Assyrians also tried hard to be integrated and regarded themselves as different from others whose reason for immigration is to make money and go back, while they immigrated to stay and therefore follow a policy of assimilation.⁴⁴⁸ In the United States, Assyrians are praised for being good citizens with patriotism and loyalty.⁴⁴⁹ However, it is often a matter for criticism within the Assyrian community that without immediate physical threat in diaspora societies, Assyrians are exposed to and assimilate to Western values, ideas, and habits at the risk of losing the Assyrian language, heritage, identity, and Christianity. Apram Shapira voices his concern that the phobia among Assyrians in the homeland is also affecting the Assyrian emigrants in the

⁴⁴⁵ Bjorklund, *op.cit.*, pp.57-58

⁴⁴⁶ Khalaf, *op.cit.*, p.74

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp.100-104

⁴⁴⁸ Bjorklund, *op.cit.*, pp.118-200

⁴⁴⁹ Shoumanov, *op.cit.*, p.80. One interviewee said that he volunteered and served in the U.S. army in order to obtain citizenship and to be better integrated into American society.

countries of emigration whose social conditions are different and democratic.⁴⁵⁰ Donabed claims that the first generation did their best to preserve their identity.⁴⁵¹ But he also sees a positive interest in their roots among the third generation⁴⁵² and argues the advantage of living in the diaspora, as Assyrians abroad are able to produce nationalistic literature and establish networks.⁴⁵³

Twenty-four out of forty-six, or 52.17 percent of the respondents to the questionnaire survey believed that immigration and dispersion is the weakness of Assyrians today. Sixteen among them mentioned it as their sole answer to the question “If there are weaknesses to the Assyrians, what are they?” Four of them related immigration to the non-existence of an Assyrian nation-state. Three expressed migration as “forced.” One answered that their weakness is “their dispersion and never-ending immigration.” Others answered “Originally no weakness, [but now] immigration.”, “They are lost in the West.”, and they are “wandering all over the world.” A respondent wrote that their weakness is “outside Iraq” while the strong point lies “in Iraq.” Eight respondents, or 17.39 percent, six overlapping with the former 24, mentioned immigration in their answers on Assyrian history. Three of them also noted recent emigration since 2003. One respondent answered “Immigration, murder, and slaughter” as the sole answer for the history. Four mentioned migration to an open question, “Do you have anything else to add concerning Assyrians?” Two of them said that they want a country rather than being dispersed. One claimed that the country of emigration should not be taken as their alternative country. Words used to describe immigration were “dispersion,” “immigration,”

⁴⁵⁰ Apram Shapira, *'Aqidah al-Khawf min al-Siyasah fi al-Mujtama' al-Ashury*, Ishtar Press, London, 1998, p.91

⁴⁵¹ Donabed, op.cit., p.149

⁴⁵² Assyrian organizations organize trips to the homeland and several individuals and families have re-settled in Hakkari region, Turkey.

⁴⁵³ Donabed, op.cit., pp.149-150 and p.21

“forced migration,” “emigration,” and “displacement.”

As the questionnaire survey was mainly conducted among Assyrian refugees in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon due to the security situation in Iraq, apparently all the respondents have overseas experience except two who answered no and reside in Iraq presently. But in addition to these two, sixteen clarified that they had no overseas experience except for their refugee situation. The number of countries where they had stayed was also very limited. When Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon are excluded, the only countries where the respondents had been were the United States and Germany. Also, the survey was organized to be distributed among refugees as recently arrived as possible. Three respondents in Iraq answered that they had stayed outside Iraq. One had stayed in Germany between six months and one year. Another had stayed between one year and five years, and another had stayed for more than 10 years in Jordan and come back. Some respondents revealed that they passed through Jordan before arriving to Syria, or passed through Syria before Lebanon, or Jordan before Lebanon. According to interviewees recent arrivals prefer to use airplanes, now available, that fly directly out of Northern Iraq.

The next questionnaire survey question was, “Do any of your family members live abroad now? If yes, what is their relationship to you? Which country do they live?” Out of 46 respondents, 34, or 73.91 percent, answered “Yes,” 11 answered “No” and one did not give any answer. But, the respondents who answered yes did not give much detail. One answered that her husband’s brother is in Canada, another said that his brothers are in Syria and Canada, and another answered that her relatives are in Australia. An informant in Iraq earlier advised against asking for personal information or about relatives abroad because many would not reveal such information for fear of possible trouble.

The ongoing emigration of Assyrians due to the instability in Iraq is rapidly decreasing the

Christian presence in the country and altering the country's demography.

9. Network and Mass media

Under the Ottoman Millet system, the Assyrian Patriarch was the head of the Assyrian community in both religious and secular matters. Tribal chiefs who were often military leaders constituted the national political body assisting the patriarch in secular matters, separate from the religious hierarchy. In the case of the Assyrian community, the collapse of traditional society and its structure did not come from the emergence of a modern educated elite or capitalists who would form a new class and mobilize the populace. Rather, the First World War and general displacement of the whole community was the fatal blow. Assyrians in the diaspora organized various aid societies for the Assyrians devastated by war.⁴⁵⁴ Also, political organizations began to appear for the Assyrian cause. In the modern state of Iraq, Assyrian political parties emerged.

The Assyrian Democratic Movement (ADM) is an Iraqi political party known as *Zowaa* after its name in Assyrian. It was founded in 1979 after nearly two years of preparation but in secrecy due to the oppressive political environment at the time. The party originated from the belief that the Assyrian people have continuously suffered and that the regime has been denying their national and cultural identity. The ADM claims to be non-sectarian, meaning it includes all the Syriac-speaking people, and stands for the legitimate rights and equal citizenship of Assyrians in Iraq. The party participated in armed struggles against the regime with other groups from 1982 onwards. Its members were attacked in the Anfal operation, along with Kurds. It also participated in the uprising of 1991. It has parliamentary and ministerial seats in Northern Iraq, known as Kurdistan, led by its president, Yonadam

⁴⁵⁴ Members of the American Persian Relief Commission, for example, helped Assyrian refugees in Baquba camp by employing women and children. (Austin, op.cit., p.38)

Kanna.⁴⁵⁵ It is probably the most popular and active Assyrian political party in Iraq. Interviewees often called the party “our party.” The party has been producing its magazine Bahira since 1982 and runs Ashur TV, a satellite channel based in San Jose, California.

The Bet-Nahrain Democratic Party (BNDP), founded in 1974, was headed by Romeo Hakkari. It was registered in the United States in 1979 as a non-profit educational and cultural organization, the Assyrian Cultural Center of Bet-Nahrain, California. The party has been producing its magazine since 1974 and has been running the Assyria Sat (KBSV TV), the first Assyrian television broadcasting station, since 1996.⁴⁵⁶ It also runs a radio station, KBES. It has allied itself with Masoud Barzani’s Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and won a seat through the parliamentary election of Northern Iraq in 2005. It also participated in the Iraqi election in 2009 allied with KDP. Sargon Dadisho is the president of the party.

The Assyrian Patriotic Party, or the Atranaya, is another Assyrian party founded in 1973 in Baghdad and led by Nimrod Baitu. It allied itself with the Assyrian Democratic Movement in 1991, but the tie was soon broken. Its offices were forced to close for four days in 1999 by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). It is based in Dohuk, Northern Iraq. It also participated in the Iraqi legislative election in 2005, allied with KDP.⁴⁵⁷

According to *Zinda Magazine*, these three Assyrian parties and the Chaldean Democratic Union were the only licensed Christian political parties under the Kurdish Regional Government in the year 2008.⁴⁵⁸ Nevertheless, there are more Assyrian parties and political organizations inside and outside Iraq. The Assyrian Democratic Organization, which is known as *Mtakasto*, was founded in Qamishli, Syria, in 1957. This makes it the first Assyrian political organization of modern times in the Middle East. It strives for the awakening of the

⁴⁵⁵ http://www.admzowaa.com/?page_id=4

⁴⁵⁶ <http://www.betnahrain.org/us.htm> It does not offer information on the party but on the organization in U.S.

⁴⁵⁷ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/app.htm>

and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Patriotic_Party

⁴⁵⁸ http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2008/06.06.08/index_6.php

Assyrian people and the constitutional recognition of the Assyrians.⁴⁵⁹ It is one of the most active and largest Assyrian organizations. The *Shuraya* Party is an Assyrian party founded in Lebanon in 1978, and working with the Lebanese Forces during the civil war. It also supports Assyrians in Iraq. Ghasan Yunan is the head of its political office.⁴⁶⁰

The Assyrian Progressive Nationalist Party (APNP) was founded in 1989 by Ashur Beth-Shlimon. The party's goal is to restore the historical territories of ancient Assyria, with extreme nationalism.⁴⁶¹ The Assyria Liberation Party (*Gabo d'Furqono d'Athur*, GFA) is also known as *Furqono* after its name in Syriac. It was founded in 1995 and pursues the creation of an independent Assyrian state incorporating part of southern Turkey, northeastern Syria and northern Iraq.⁴⁶² In 2002, a group of people who called themselves "Assyrian workers" organized the Assyrian Socialist Party (*Gaba Shawtapaya Aturaya*, GSA), claiming to be the re-establishment of the Assyrian Socialist Party led by Freydon Aturaya in 1917. The original party in 1917 was founded after the Russian Revolution in Georgia, and was the first Assyrian political party. The new party is committed to a unified Mesopotamia, that is, the establishment of an independent state.⁴⁶³

The Assyrian General Conference was organized in 2005 in Baghdad to pursue an Assyrian territory within existing political frameworks in Iraq, imbued with Iraqi patriotism.⁴⁶⁴ In 2007, the Popular Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Council (PCSAC) was formed as a kind of coalition between existing parties and individuals affiliated with the Massoud Barzani's KDP.

⁴⁵⁹ <http://en.ado-world.org/press-releases/article/statement-on-the-occasions-of-the-1282>

⁴⁶⁰ <http://www.furkono.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8934&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>
And http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuraya_Party

⁴⁶¹ <http://www.betnahrain.org/bbs/index.pl/noframes/read/6> It is not clear to what extent people support this party.

⁴⁶² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyria_Liberation_Party

The party's official website is www.furkono.com but it does not offer information on the party itself.

⁴⁶³ <http://asp2.no.sapo.pt>, official homepage of the party.

And http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_Socialist_Party

⁴⁶⁴ <http://www.assyriangc.com/english.html>

It advocates the unity of the people and the establishment of an autonomous region in the Nineveh Plain.⁴⁶⁵ The Council has its head quarters in Dohuk and runs the Ishtar TV.

The most active international Assyrian political organization is the Assyrian Universal Alliance, or *Khuyada Teeweelaya*, founded in 1968. It was initiated by the Assyrian Youth Cultural Society (AYCS) in Iran which raised the issue of the Baath regime's denial of an Assyrian nation.⁴⁶⁶ It held its first congress in 1968. It is not a political body but a collective of Assyrian organizations.⁴⁶⁷ It has branches in five regions including America, Europe, Australia, Asia and the homeland. It serves Assyrian emigrants and lobbies internationally for the Assyrian cause.

These parties and organizations have their regional branches in the homeland area and diaspora countries. All of the organizations claim to have a non-sectarian policy, meaning they reject the idea classifying people according to their different Church belonging, and at the same time, they do not reject their identity as Christian.⁴⁶⁸ Like any other political parties and organizations, each Assyrian party and organization adopts a flag, colors, emblems, and sometimes anthems. Their flags largely employ ancient Assyrian symbols or the Assyrian flag. The flag of the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party has the god Ashur with his fully drawn bow. In the case of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, its flag has Ashur in simplified design of eagle wings at whose center is the Assyrian star with four edges and symbols of three rivers

⁴⁶⁵ <http://usmotwa.com/index.htm> The political parties that have joined the council are Bet Nahrain National Party, Beth Nahrain Democratic Party, The Chaldean Democratic Manbar, The Syriac Gathering Independent Movement, The Chaldean National Council, The Assyrian National Party, and The Chaldean Culture Society. The Assyrian National Party was closed by the Kurdish Regional Government in 2008. (http://www.zindamagazine.com/html/archives/2008/06.06.08/index_6.php)

The Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council was accused of intimidating and bribing Christians in 2009 election. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaldean_Syriac_Assyriac_Popular_Council)

⁴⁶⁶ <http://aua.net/history.htm>

⁴⁶⁷ <http://aua.net/aua/ideology.htm>

⁴⁶⁸ The call for the non-sectarian or non-denominational unity of the Assyrians is always stronger for the people of the Church of the East, while some Chaldeans and people belonging to the Syriac Church want to separate themselves from people of the Church of the East.

that appear in the Assyrian national flag.⁴⁶⁹ The flag of the Assyrian Liberation Party also has the god Ashur and symbols of the rivers above Ashur. The Popular Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Council also uses the Assyrian flag design for its logo, in the form of the national flag surrounded by three hands which make a circle symbolizing the united three peoples: Chaldean, Syriac, and Assyrians. The Assyrian General Conference employs the five-legged winged bull, depicted on the map of Iraq, representing its ethnic identity, traced back to ancient Assyria, and its patriotism towards the state of Iraq at the same time. The Assyrian Democratic Organization and the Assyrian Universal Alliance use the Assyrian flag. The flags are the most frequently used item for mobilization.

Table 2. 11 Assyrians - association membership

Answer	No	Religious	Cultural	Social	Political	No answer	Other	Total*
Number	30	5	9	7	4	1	3	59
(%)	(62.22)	(10.87)	(19.57)	(15.22)	(8.70)	(2.17)	(6.52)	(125.27)

* Multiple answers allowed.

Table 2.11 displays the answers to the survey question “Are you a member of any Assyrian association, club or political party? If yes, what is the characteristic of the association?” The respondents were allowed to give more than one category from “Religious, Cultural, Social, Political, and Other.” The result shows the highest membership in cultural associations followed by social ones. This reflects the social conditions under the Baath regime, which restricted the formation of any political or ethnic organizations. Under such regulation, organizations had to characterize themselves as cultural, social, or religious. All the seven multiple answers included the “cultural” characteristic followed by five “social,” and four

⁴⁶⁹ For the Assyrian national flag, see Section 6 of this chapter.

“religious.” Three respondents answered that their association has other characteristics but did not give further details. One respondent-interviewee proudly presented his membership card. Overall results showed that 32.60 percent of the respondents were members of some Assyrian association.

Samir Khalaf and his colleagues found a higher level of Assyrian membership in ethnic associations, rather than in religious or secular associations. However, they found that the predisposition of Assyrians to organize and participate in such associations was very low among the Assyrians in Lebanon in 1980.⁴⁷⁰

The introduction of modern mass media such as publications, radio and television broadcasting has greatly contributed to the communication, mobilization, and group consciousness of Assyrians. As seen above, some Assyrian political parties run TV stations. The Assyrian Democratic Movement runs the Ashur TV, a satellite television channel based in California, the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party has been running the *AssyriaSat* (KBSV) since 1996, also based in California, the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Council operates the Ishtar TV, which was launched in 2005 in northern Iraq, and the Save Assyria Front runs the AshurSat in Sydney. There are also Suroyo TV based in Sodertalje, Sweden, and Suryoyo TV which are counted as Assyrian television channels. But they are rather channels for the Syrian Orthodox followers. As the Television stations are affiliated to political parties, they inevitably serve and promote the policies of the parties. An informant noted that all these stations are financially weak except the Ishtar TV, which is funded by the Kurdish Regional Government. The Ishtar TV operates in modern Assyrian, Arabic, and Kurdish languages.⁴⁷¹

Despite criticism of the television channels' affiliation to political parties rather than being

⁴⁷⁰ Khalaf, op.cit., p.78

⁴⁷¹ <http://www.ishtartv.com.about.html>

national, the channels function as a link between the diaspora Assyrians and their homeland, in addition to providing entertainment to Assyrians in Iraq. Assyrian interviewees who have been refugees have often paid for access to Assyrian TV channels, not as a luxury item, but as a crucial source for following up the situation in Iraq, as well as the conditions of their people in Iraq and around the world.

As for Assyrian radio, there are many channels or programs, especially abroad, thanks to its easier availability. In Chicago in the 1990s, for example, there were several local radio programs such as “Assyrian Night Star,” “Voice of Urmia,” “Voice of AUA,” “Voice of Freedom,” and so on.⁴⁷² The Bet Nahrain party has been operating KBES-FM in California since 1977. The Assyrian Babylonian Youth Union in Denmark runs the Assyrian Babylon Radio. In Australia, the SBS Radio has Assyrian programs. “Voice of Nineveh” and “Voice of Atour” are radio programs run in New Zealand.⁴⁷³

However, for Assyrians in Iraq, running and listening to radio programs in Assyrian has not always been as convenient as for the diaspora. Once there were radio programs operated in Assyrian or Chaldean for a couple of hours per day, but they were banned by the Baathist government. Ashur Radio was launched in 2000 by the Assyrian Democratic Movement.⁴⁷⁴ It seems this is the only Assyrian radio station currently operating in Iraq.

The printing press, which was the first form of mass media, was introduced to the Assyrians by the American Mission in Urmia in 1840. It began to publish the first Assyrian language newspaper *Zahrira d’Bahra* (Ray of Light) from 1848. Its contents were mainly religious

⁴⁷² Shoumanov, op.cit., p.79

⁴⁷³ <http://www.atour.com/links/News-Media/Radio/> There are also Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox radio programs and stations, such as Chaldean Voice, Qolo, and Qolo Suryoyo.(<http://www.atour.com/~tvradio/>)

⁴⁷⁴ <http://www.ostamyy.com/TV-radio-channels/Iraq.htm>

essays and world news features.⁴⁷⁵ Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox missions also began to publish periodicals. The Anglican Mission opened its printing press in 1889 and printed most of the liturgical books for the Church of the East.⁴⁷⁶ During this period, secular nationalistic messages were spread through periodicals, especially through the biweekly newspaper *Kukhwa* (the Star). Eden Naby describes it as the first and only non-sectarian Assyrian language newspaper.⁴⁷⁷ It dealt with news from Assyrians in the diaspora, history lessons, and essays on national identity, while advocating separation between the church and the state.⁴⁷⁸ As for church publications, the Anglican Mission press ceased after World War I. It was the Church of the East in India that opened the first Syriac press called the *Mar Narsai* Press in 1926. Deacon Joseph de Kelaita, who helped establish the Mar Narsai Press, founded the Assyrian Press in Mosul. Later, printing presses were founded in Baghdad and Chicago.⁴⁷⁹ While Robert DeKelaita claims that the first publications in Urmia greatly contributed to the promotion of Assyrian nationalism, Eden Naby argues that most of the publications were too sectarian and influenced from the Western missions and that they eventually divided the Assyrian community.⁴⁸⁰

Father Lewis Sako informs us that in 2001 there were seven Christian magazines in Iraq which mostly dealt with ethnic heritage, history and culture. Four out of these seven periodicals were Chaldean. The Ancient Church of the East in Baghdad published *Al-Afaq* from 1997, but sanctions brought an end to its publication. The publication dealt with various religious, cultural, social, and historical topics in Arabic and some Syriac and English. As for

⁴⁷⁵ DeKelaita, op.cit., p.17. According to Enden Naby, the newspaper ran between 1850-1914. (Naby, op.cit., p.241)

⁴⁷⁶ Mar Aprem, "Mar Narsai Press", in J.F. Coakley and K. Parry (eds.), *The Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Volume 78, Number 3, Autumn 1996, p.171

⁴⁷⁷ Naby, op.cit., p.238

⁴⁷⁸ DeKelaita, op.cit., p.17

⁴⁷⁹ Mar Aprem, op.cit. pp.171-172. The Mar Narsai Press of the Metropolitan Mar Thoma Darmo later used the press to attack Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun and became the Old Calendarian. (Same book, pp.175-176)

⁴⁸⁰ Naby, op.cit.

the Church of the East, the so-called new calendarians began to publish *Qitharah al-ruhi* in 1999.⁴⁸¹ Assyrian political parties and organizations within and without Iraq also publish their own periodical publications. The Assyrian Democratic Movement, for example, has been publishing its magazine *Bahra* since 1882. And the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party has the *Bet Nahrain Magazine*.

For Assyrians, networking and publication could not but be more active among migrants. Donabed informs us that Assyrian emigrants began their meetings and societies before they formed churches and that picnics were the most crucial part of early interaction.⁴⁸² Even today, Assyrian clubs and churches among the diaspora often organize picnics on occasions such as Nusardil celebrations. The “Assyrian-American Herald,” the first Assyrian newspaper in Chicago and founded by Paul Newey, published its first issue in 1915. Newey also established the Assyrian Press.⁴⁸³ In 1933, troubled by the massacre of Assyrians in Iraq, the Assyrian American National Federation was founded with Alex Ameer as its first president. Already existing Assyrian associations participated in the convention. They included the Assyrian National Union of Massachusetts, the Assyrian National Association of Yonkers, the Assyrian National Association of Connecticut, the Assyrian Christian Aid Society of Philadelphia, the Newark Branch of New Jersey and the Emergency Committee of West New York, New Jersey.⁴⁸⁴ Various Assyrian academic societies, civic clubs and social clubs were also established in different regions and countries. In 1986, the Ashurbanipal Library was founded by a student group and serves as the largest Assyrian research and reference library in the world. The Assyrian Heritage Museum was founded also in Chicago.⁴⁸⁵ Concerning

⁴⁸¹ Father Dr. Lewis Sako, *Al-I'lam al-Masihi fi al-Sharq al-Awsat 'ala 'Atbah al-Alf al-Thalith*, The Middle East Council of Churches, 2001, pp.55, 58, 60.

⁴⁸² Donabed, op.cit., p.69

⁴⁸³ Shoumanov, op.cit., p.11

⁴⁸⁴ <http://www.aanf.org/about>

⁴⁸⁵ Shoumanov, op.cit., pp.64, 79. For a list of Assyrian organizations, see the Assyrian Information Medium

organizing behavior among the Assyrians Samir Khalaf and his colleagues claim that,

Migrant minorities, more than other ordinary social groups, feel a pressing need to organize and participate in voluntary associations, that could satisfy some of their unmet needs for welfare, relief, or recreation. Benevolent and welfare associations, even cultural and recreational clubs do not only provide vital social and psychological functions. More important, they serve as agents for communal support and ethnic solidarity – both of which are vital for coping with some of the private troubles and social tensions of an itinerant community.⁴⁸⁶

The introduction of the Internet greatly facilitated networking among Assyrians all over the world. Assyrian Churches, organizations, political parties, news agencies, and individuals are connected through their official web pages, personal homepages, individual blogs, cafés and twitter accounts. Not only are organizations well-connected, but most of the above mentioned periodicals and radio, some TV programs, are available on the Internet. There are Assyrian online markets⁴⁸⁷ and even an Assyrian matchmaking site.⁴⁸⁸ The Assyrian International News Agency (AINA)⁴⁸⁹ and AssyriaTimes⁴⁹⁰ are dedicated to offering the most up to date news relating to Assyrians. Atour.com virtualizes the State of Assyria in cyberspace.⁴⁹¹ Assyria Online provides discussion forums in addition to information and educational resources.⁴⁹² Nineveh Online claims to be the first registered Assyrian domain on the World Wide Web.⁴⁹³

Sener Akturk introduces the concept of Richmond's *Verbindungsnetzschafft*, or the transnational information network. Akturk views the Assyrians' widespread use of and

Exchange, for example. <http://www.edessa.com/assyorgs.htm>

⁴⁸⁶ Khalaf, op.cit., p.78

⁴⁸⁷ www.ninevehmarket.com and <http://assyrianmarket.com>

⁴⁸⁸ www.assyrianmatch.com

⁴⁸⁹ www.aina.org

⁴⁹⁰ www.assyriatimes.com

⁴⁹¹ www.atour.com

⁴⁹² www.aina.org/aol

⁴⁹³ www.nineveh.com It was founded in 1995.

incorporation into such a network as an Assyrian nation-state, pointing out that Assyrians all over the world are already accommodating the cyber-world to a great extent in order to retain their cultural and linguistic identity.⁴⁹⁴

In Part II, the Assyrian experience was examined: how the Assyrian group was formed and developed, how group identity discourse has evolved, and how a differentiated identity has found its expression in culture. Theologians who fled from the Roman Empire to Persia in the fifth century, together with native Christians, formed a community and developed their own theology separate from the debate in the Roman Empire. The Church of the East spread to reach India, Central Asia, and China covering the largest jurisdiction among Christian sects. However, the group decreased, especially after the Mongol invasion, and retreated to and became isolated in mountainous areas in today's northern Iraq, southern Turkey, and north-western Iran. The various appellations of the church and its people reflect the uneven history of this group. As a church, it started as the Persian Church, became the Church of the East, and changed its official name to the Assyrian Church of the East in modern times. It has long been known as the Nestorian Church, but scholars consider this a misnomer. The separation of the Chaldean Church from it affected its identity discourse. Accordingly, the name of the people has been the focal point of modern identity discourse. Though followers of the Church of the East use the term Assyrian as the ethnic name which includes followers of the Chaldean Church, Syrian Orthodox Church, and Syrian Catholic Church, some from the latter Churches prefer to use Chaldo-Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, Chaldean Assyrian Syriac, or Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people instead.

The Assyrians went through a severe ordeal during the WWI and its aftermath. A larger

⁴⁹⁴ Sener Akturk, *Perspectives on Assyrian Nationalism*. Originally written for the Turfs University Journal of International Affairs, 2002, www.aina.org/articles/poan.pdf

part of the group's population was lost through the war and expulsion. The Assyrians' collaboration with Britain provoked others to hatred in the early period of the nation building of Iraq, which resulted in the expulsion of the Assyrian Patriarch from Iraq in 1933. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Assyrian population in diaspora exceeds that in Iraq, their homeland, and those who are in Iraq also continuously follow their coreligionists into emigration. This painful history forms the collective memory, and group identity.

As a Christian Church, the Church of the East institutionalized itself with hierarchical system, and doctrinal and liturgical traditions. The hardships it went through in the history destroyed its monasticism and the hereditary hierarchy, which came to an end in the 1970s. But the Eastern Syriac language is still used not only in liturgy but also spoken as a mother tongue among its adherents functioning as a differentiating marker. Personal names often reveal ethnicity and religiosity. Male names tend to be more traditional than those of females though Western names which are considered modern and fashionable are found among both genders. Some pre-Christian cultural and religious practices are incorporated into Christian practices with new meanings forming distinctive national Christian holidays. Village churches, which conducted rites of passages in addition to acting as spiritual guides played a central role in traditional Assyrian community. A great majority of the Assyrian respondents considered that they are religious. A strong tendency to endogamy is also found though intermarriages with people from the Chaldean or Syrian Churches are carried out. Forced and voluntary emigration left little number of Assyrians in Iraq today. The Patriarch himself is in diaspora. Among scattered Assyrians aid society and associations emerged. Within Iraq under the Baath regime Assyrian associations were established in the form of cultural society since any ethnic or political movement was strictly banned. The Assyrian language and ethnic names also underwent difficulties. Assyrian political movements and parties in and out of

Iraq are often found working with people of the Chaldean and Syrian churches. Today, Assyrians are encountering new challenges for their revival and survival in the transnational current and newly developing Iraq.

Part III

A cultural comparison

between Maronites and Assyrians

Chapter 1. A comparison in socio-historical background, identity discourse, and their self-expressions

1. History and identity discourse

Despite the geographical distance between Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq, and despite the difference in their current social and political positions within their countries, their history shows striking similarities. They have shared the ebb and flow of unfolding history of the Middle Eastern region in general. Local consequences of those regional conditions form the history of the groups. In the big picture, both have gone through periods of group formation, institutionalization, development and reform of theology, times of persecution and oppression, modernization and nationalist movement intertwined with the state building of Lebanon and Iraq.

Church histories present the two groups as migrants from Syria to Lebanon and from Byzantine to Persia respectively in around the fifth century, both without specific group names at first. While Maronites moved following their leader St. Maroun, a leader of a monastic movement, Assyrian theologians who refused diophysite Christology moved to Persia. Assyrians have a church foundation tradition traced back to Jesus himself, who, according to the tradition, sent a letter to the King Abgar V of Urhai, and sent his disciples. Lebanon also has history of evangelization by Jesus himself though the Maronites do not claim it as part of their history. It seems that Church history prefers to single out certain figures as the ones who evangelized the region and founded churches. According to this view, both groups consisted of leaders who migrated, and the natives were Christianized by those leaders. However, the introduction of Christianity to the region for both groups seems to precede those founders. It is rather that those leaders joined the already Christianized natives,

and guided them and converted others to Christianity with their doctrines.¹ Though migrants, both groups developed a special attachment to the land in which they settled. This was especially so among the faithful who were mostly farmers.

The Church of the East, the Persian Church at that time, was formally recognized by the Persian Empire in the year 410 and its head attained the title “Patriarch of the East” in 498.² The patriarchate of the Maronite Church was established in 685. Church history depicts the establishment of separate churches as solely based on doctrinal differences. But some scholars interpret the separation in terms of their desire to get rid of Byzantine influence in either cultural or religious domains. Kamal Salibi, for example, claims that the Maronite Church did not separate because of its Monothelitism, or ‘one will’ theology, but the separation between Maronite farmers and Hellenized townspeople was the real cause of the split.³ Luke sees the separation of the Church of the East as a form of the nationalism of the time that rejected Byzantine dominance.⁴ It should be also noted that doctrinal differences were not what ordinary lay people personally chose but what their leaders chose and developed.

But once the doctrinal stance of the group was firmly established, it has functioned as a boundary marker. Assyrians under Persian rule and Maronites under the first Islamic rule obtained the rulers’ tolerance by distancing and differentiating themselves from Byzantine Christianity. This was an especially necessary measure for the Church of the East to survive in Persia which was in a constant state of war with the Byzantine Empire. As seen earlier, the Church of the East also adopted the culture of the majority and abolished the celibacy rule

¹ See Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar Winkler, *The Church of the East: A concise history*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003 (originally published in German in 2000), p.1 for Assyrians.

² Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity*, Methuen and Co Ltd., London, 1968, p.253

³ Kamal Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Mediaeval Lebanon*, Naufal Group, Beirut/Paris, 1991 (second edition), pp.13-14

⁴ Harry Charles Luke, *Mosul and its minorities*, Martin Hopkinson & Company Ltd., London, 1925, p.48

among monks.⁵ Maronites also stood on the Islamic side against Byzantine military campaigns. Despite this differentiation, both groups have often fallen victims to religious persecution producing martyrologies. However, the experience of difficulties due to religious or sectarian difference, no matter what the real motives were, enhanced the group cohesion. Going through such doctrinal debate and persecution, both churches institutionalized themselves and equipped themselves with their own theology defending their separation, religious hierarchy and liturgical rites rooted in the apostolic traditions as well as in the early history of martyrdom. All these distinctive features consolidated the followers of each church and served as group markers. The followers of St. Maroun took the trade route when migrating to Lebanon.⁶ Also, the Assyrian forefathers expanded their Christianity into Central Asia, India and China through the trade route.

The Islamic Abbasid Empire controlled territories covering Mount Lebanon where the Maronites were concentrated and today's Iraq where the so-called Nestorians resided. The empire faced the Crusaders' campaign on its western coastal border in the twelfth century and faced Mongol invasion from the eastern border in the thirteenth century. Though the Crusaders did not recognize the presence of native Christians in the region at first, the Maronites provided military assistance to them and were generally on good terms with them. On the other hand, the Mongols did not show mercy while destroying the region on a scale unseen there before. Though they suffered with the others, the followers of the Church of the East found a favorable position shortly afterwards. The Maronites' collaboration with the Crusades and Assyrian collaboration with the Mongol invaders were not only because the invaders were their coreligionists but also because they were perceived as the "enemy of their enemy," or of the oppressors, at that time. However, the Maronites, after the withdrawal

⁵ The Church of the East also tended to contextualize while evangelizing in the Central Asia and China.

⁶ Wadih Peter Tayah, *The Maronites – Roots and Identity*, Bet Maroon Publishers, 1987, p.31

of the Crusades, and the Church of the East, after the conversion of Mongol Khan to Islam, had to pay the price for their cooperation with the invaders. As in the Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude's typology of persecution under Islam, traffic with enemy was one of the most common reasons to be persecuted.⁷ While the Crusaders did not appreciate local Christians much, for the Maronites, the encounter with the Crusades marks the turning point in their history which led to their union with the Roman Catholic Church and consequent revival. On the other hand, after Timur Lane's destruction at the end of the fourteenth century, the Church of the East began to decline into a small community concentrated especially in the mountains in today's northern Iraq. While the Maronites enriched themselves through contact with the West and experienced liturgical reform and the establishment of the monastic order afterwards, the Assyrians isolated themselves and their religious hierarchy became hereditary.

The intellectual contribution of the two groups to human civilization is also notable. Nestorian scholars were a valuable human resource of the early Abbasid Empire especially among translators and physicians. On the other hand, the Maronite scholars who studied in Rome from the sixteenth century opened the new academic field of oriental studies in Europe by introducing the theology and languages of Eastern Christianity. Hunayn Ibn Ishaq (803-873) can be considered to be the most representative of the Assyrian translators, and Yusif Sim'an Asem'ani (1687-1768) can be considered the most representative among the Maronite scholars.

Locating themselves in rugged mountains, both Maronites and Assyrians could enjoy relative autonomy detached from central government. During the Ottoman Empire which dealt with the administration of non-Muslim population subjects through the Millet system, the Maronites were not recognized as a separate millet while the Church of the East was.

⁷ Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christianity and Jews in the Ottoman Empire – The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Vol. I. II., Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York, London, 1982, pp.6-8

While the Maronites interpret this as a proof of their autonomous status free from interference by the central government, the Assyrians interpret it as a proof of their autonomy, as legally recognized by the government. In fact, the Maronites had had *muqaddam* in the Middle Ages and feudal lords until the nineteenth century as their secular leaders besides the church hierarchy. As for the Assyrians, tribal chiefs called “*malik*” led the community until they scattered in 1930s. Meanwhile, since a community could not survive in isolation, both groups inevitably interacted and traded with their neighboring communities. Particularly in the nineteenth century, it was the Druze community that the Maronites closely interacted with and whose feudal lords they served. As for the Assyrians, it was Kurds in the mountains that they formed confederations with for economic benefits and security reasons.

However, this local autonomy began to be disturbed when the Ottoman government initiated a series of reforms from the 1830s onwards to turn the Empire into a centralized state by abolishing feudalism.⁸ This was the reaction of the Ottoman Empire to the rapidly changing economic, social and political situations due to increasing European influence. Those reforms, especially Hatti Humayun in 1856, called for equal citizenship for its former Muslim and non-Muslim subjects and tried to develop a common secular sense of political belonging to the Empire. But the reforms not only undermined the Millet’s autonomy⁹ and the authority of religious institutions, but also caused resentment among Muslims. Intertwined with complex local situations, the relationship between Maronites and Druze, and between Assyrians and Kurds deteriorated. The conflict between Maronites and Druze in 1840 escalated into the civil war in 1860, during which the Maronites were massacred. Occasional Kurdish attacks on Assyrians in the 1830s also developed into a massacre in 1842

⁸ A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World*, Oxford University Press, London, 1947, p.27

⁹ Kemal Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era”, in Braude (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.162-163

and disturbances afterwards. European powers claimed to be the protectors of Christians in the Ottoman Empire based on the Capitulation, or treaties between European powers and the Ottoman Empire. Whenever local conflicts arose between different religious groups, European powers intervened on behalf of the Christians. In turn, this provoked Muslim hatred toward their Christian neighbors since Muslims regarded them as potential traitors, sources of weakness and instruments of European policy,¹⁰ which formed a vicious circle.

Increasing Muslim resentment toward Christians in that period is also related to the comparative economic prosperity of Christians due to their trade with Europe. For both Maronite and Assyrian groups, the modernization process was associated with missionary work. Maronites contacted with the West much earlier than all other groups in the Middle East did. After their union with the Roman Church and the establishment of the Maronite College in Rome in the sixteenth century, they were exposed to voluntary and imposed westernization which helped them take advantage of trade with Europe and higher education, which in turn improved their economic and social status. The work of missionaries in Lebanon in the nineteenth and twentieth century further led them to be the most modernized community in the whole Middle East. On the other hand, Western missions worked more intensively among the Assyrians in the Urmia Plain rather than among the Assyrians in the mountains producing traders and other professionals. But the work of Western missionaries among the Assyrians is often criticized as the initiator of sectarian division among the people.¹¹

The development of nationalism, especially nationalism among Assyrians, is often attributed to missionary work as well. But, in fact, it was the pre-existing group consciousness of the two groups that reacted to nationalism and began to be expressed in the

¹⁰ Hourani, *op.cit.*, p.24

¹¹ See Eden Naby, for example.

language of the age, namely nationalism. Archeological findings in the second half of the nineteenth century on the Lebanese coast and the Nineveh plain also supported such nationalistic ideas. While Jesuit father Henri Lamens became a reference for the ancient history of Lebanon preceding Islam for the Maronites, archeologist Henri Layard and his discoveries represented evidence of the ancient Assyrian civilization. Nationalism among both Maronites and Assyrians was developed against claims of Arabism and both groups made claims for autonomy. Also, both nationalisms were led by non-clerical elites.

Both groups paid a price for the effects of European colonialism in the region. Assyrians suffered along with Armenians and other Christians during the First World War, going through expulsion and mass killing. Indeed, they were said to have lost two thirds of their population. Also, they lost their patriarch in a treacherous act of murder by the Kurds. For the Maronites, who suffered relatively less than the Assyrians, starvation was major concern at that time. Interestingly, relocation of the whole population was suggested for both groups; the Maronites to French Algeria,¹² and the Assyrians to Brazil though neither plan worked out. But the difference between the situation of the two groups is clearly shown in the treatment of their delegation to the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920). While the Maronite Patriarch Howayek who led the Lebanese delegation was received and treated as a national guest in Paris, Lady Surma, the sister of the assassinated patriarch, who led the Assyrian delegation, was forced to stay in Britain until the Conference ended.

The Maronites not only participated but also played a leading role in building the state of Lebanon and had a concept of Lebanon as a Maronite state.¹³ On the other hand, the Assyrians were deserted by the Western powers, who had taken advantage of Assyrian

¹² Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for an Identity in Lebanon*, Doctoral dissertation, A Bell & Howell Company, Ann Arbor, 2000, p.52

¹³ Eyal Zisser, "Lebanon: State, Diaspora and the Question of Political Stability", in Moshe Ma'oz, and Gabriel Sheffer (eds.), *Middle Eastern Minorities and Diasporas*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton/Portland, 2002, p.235, Taya, op.cit., p. 228

military man-power during the war by promising the establishment of an autonomous state. In the confessional system of Lebanon, the Maronite Church hierarchy had its own place from which to exercise its traditional authority over its flock through religious courts in addition to its symbolic leadership. Traditional feudal lords together with newly emerging elites also re-positioned themselves as community leaders, or *za'im* (*zu'ama'* in plural). On the other hand, the Assyrian Church hierarchy was totally deprived of its traditionally held authority in the newly established secular state of Iraq. This grave difference in acceptance of Church authority in the two states was not only caused by significant difference between demographics of the two groups. But also it reflects the fact that while the Maronites had already established interdependent economic relationship with their Muslim neighbors, the Assyrians had been at enmity with Kurds and were not much engaged with other groups. This difference in participation in the two states, in turn, has led to the present considerable difference in the social positions of two groups in the two countries of Lebanon and Iraq.

However, the confessional system of Lebanon was never stable, either. The continuous struggle between Lebanism and Arabism leaned toward Arabism's favor in the Taif Agreement. Now, the battle is no longer between Lebanism and Arabism or Maronites and Muslims. Rather, demographic change in Lebanon has moved its focus of national discourse toward contest between Sunni and Shiite groups, while the Maronite community is divided into two political blocs. The situation in Iraq has also disfavored Assyrians. Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq both face the same kind of problems in the beginning of the twenty-first century. They are losing ground by emigration. The only difference might be the rapidity of the process. Also, the age of nationalism is over and new trans-national global cultures, and hence new challenges have emerged.

As Lebanese historian Kemal Salibi points out, reading history is like a house with many mansions.¹⁴ A single event or phenomenon can be interpreted in many different ways according to different positions and emphasis. A certain group's discourse on their own history, self-identity, and its legitimacy particularly shows this subjective tendency in the understanding of history. Concerning this subjectivity, Teresa Berger posits:

History writing never simply was about “what really was” although the nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke did shape generations of historians with that claim. Rather, the activity of making history is a situated and interested mode of knowing that selects, orders, and interprets. The role of the narrator of the past is crucial for the making of any history.Tradition, here, is not a fixed and unified bloc of material, which is merely passed on and received; rather, tradition is seen as constructed in the here and now in an ongoing struggle over a diversity of practices and interpretations. What comes to be designated as tradition is, first, highly selective, but second, rather unstable, open to redesignation.¹⁵

Maronite and Assyrian discourses on self-identity have been in a constant process of defining and re-defining the self and others, as the social conditions in which they lived has been ceaselessly changing in the course of history. Major themes of the discourse on their own communities represent the reaction of the groups to the needs of particular times. Generally, the identity discourse of both Maronites and Assyrians concentrates largely on the origins of their groups, their orthodoxy in Christian faith, and their sacrifices for the defense of the faith. But this kind of discourse for defending the groups' legitimacy came much later, after the churches' institutionalization. Rather, the first and the foremost need as a Christian group at the time of separation was an elaboration of the theology, especially Christological doctrines, which gave the church its *raison d'être*. But, in modern discourse of nationalism, the focus of legitimacy shows a shift from the religious one to the territorial one, which emphasizes the

¹⁴ Kemal Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*, I.B.Tauris, London/New York, 2003

¹⁵ Teresa Berger, “Women in Worship”, in Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (eds.), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p.765

continuity of people in a given territory and, hence, the people's ownership over the territory.

Despite the general perception, the theology of the Nestorian Church, or the Church of the East, was not based on the teachings of Nestorius nor did he himself separate the church. Rather, so-called Nestorian Christology was based on the theology of Theodore of Mopsuetia and Diodore of Tarsus which gained wide acceptance in Mesopotamia. Nestorius was a disciple of Theodore and an advocate of such theology. This theology was handed down through theologians who fled from the Byzantine Empire due to persecution. Though the name Nestorius was not even introduced to the Church of the East until 612, the Church of the East does not refute his teaching but reveres him as a martyr. It also celebrates a liturgy with the Anaphora of Nestorius five times a year. But no specific tradition relating him with the Church of the East is found.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Church of the East has been long known as the Nestorian Church, and the Church has not stood against the appellation.

On the other hand, isolated in the mountains, the monastic community of Saint Maroun seems to have adopted the proposal of Monotheletism considering it to be the official position of the whole Empire. But no pejorative name was ever developed for the Maronite Church in relation to it.¹⁷ It was only after the Maronite Church's union with the Roman Catholic Church, when they needed to prove their adherence to the Chalcedonian faith from the beginning and martyrdom in its defense, that this became the focal point of the identity discourse. The orthodoxy claim now seems successfully established among the Maronite adherents.

However, religious conversion or the decision to follow a certain theology among the lay Christians can not have been based on individual and personal choice based on a thoughtful

¹⁶ Though his feast is October 25th, calendars of the Church of the East do not mention.

¹⁷ Maybe because there was no prominent figure who advocated it, and hence no great political significance?

comparison between doctrines. Theological debates were for prelates, and the laity followed their tribal leader or head of family. Moreover, the next generations were born Christians who did not have to choose their doctrinal stances. Later conversions also show such patterns of family conversion. The Chaldean Church was separated from the Church of the East following a family line. The Ancient Church of the East was also divided along family lines. Western missionaries witnessed such family conversions, not based on doctrinal choice but on personal conflict with their churches, among Maronites. Both Maronites and Assyrians, at the time when their patriarchates were established, already had existing Christian communities. The independency of these churches went hand in hand with cultural and political resistance to Byzantine influence, while the Churches sought religious justification by developing the theological debates of the time.¹⁸ Distinctive theologies became each group's identity that had to be protected, that felt right and that they were proud of, and had to be continuously re-asserted. Thence, all the difficulties faced by the group began to be interpreted as persecution and sacrifice for defending their faith.

The debate on the historicity of the group's origin and founders also occupies an important place in the identity discourse. Among Maronites, Saint Maroun, the fourth century hermit, is believed to be the historical founder of the Maronite Church, though not as the founder of institutionalized one. Among Assyrians, Mari and Addai, disciples of Saint Thomas, not Nestorius, are believed to be such. The Mar Mari and Addai tradition is also connected to King Abgar who is claimed to have had personal correspondence with Jesus himself. Saint Maroun of the fourth century appears in the writing of his contemporary Theodoretus. Stories of King Abgar and Apostles Mari and Addai are found in sources written in the fourth

¹⁸ Of course, those church fathers devoted themselves to the debate out of their religious piety though political reasons were often behind it.

century.¹⁹ Though historians consider that the sources of these accounts are not enough to prove their historicity, the traditions of the founders of the groups are deeply cherished and accepted with no doubt among the followers. As for the group name 'Maronite' which was given after its founder, this must be a rare example of a founder-related sect name that does not have pejorative meaning.²⁰ The name of a group is often given by others while the group is still in process of formation. And the name given by others also in many cases is not identical with the self-appellation, though the given name becomes generally accepted after a normalizing process. Concerning the importance and meaning of naming in the ancient Middle East, Antoine Harb notes that

According to the mentality of ancient Eastern peoples, name is existence itself. Nothing exists without a name. It affirms the presence of the thing denominated. Since these peoples were not able to distinguish between 'ego' and 'name', they occasionally had recourse to deforming some word-names or changing them in order to belittle the status of their foes, to weaken them, distort their values and symbols and disparage them,.... "The Sumerians considered that naming a thing is an act of creation...."²¹

Debate on the historicity of the Church's origin and founders is a debate about legitimacy. As a Christian Church, there is no more venerable legitimacy than the connection of its origin to Jesus himself and his disciples. As a relatively later emergence, the Maronite Church diligently seeks its legitimacy in connection to the Roman Church and adherence to its doctrines from the beginning. The Roman Catholic Church, in turn, connects its origin to Jesus' prophecy to his disciple Peter that he will be the rock on which his church will be built. Also, the Holy Leaven, or *malka* tradition in the Church of the East, which is said to be the

¹⁹ Atiya, op.cit., p.243

²⁰ Jacobite for the Syrian Orthodox, Nestorian for the Church of the East, and Melkite, though not a personal name, for the Greek Orthodox (later for Greek Catholic), were originally created with the intention of belittling their followers.

²¹ Antoine Khoury Harb, *Lebanon: a name through 4000 years, Entity and identity*, Lebanese Heritage Foundation publication, 2003, p.20

transmission of the bread of the Last Supper mixed with Jesus' baptismal water and blood on the cross, though created much later, plays the same role of enhancing group unity and authenticity. Religious legitimacy is a source of pride and a positive self-image.

When Islam prevailed in the region, Islam became a newly defined "other" against which Churches had to stand. In the meantime, the Church of the East faced criticism by other Christian Churches, especially by the Coptic Church, as having opened the region to Muslims. It is said that a certain Nestorian monk Bahira prophesied to Muhammad his prophethood and the Church of the East is often hastily criticized because of this legend. But the legend has more complexity. Not only is the name Bahira problematic, Benedicte Landron asserts that the source was written with the intent to tell Christians not to convert to Islam after all.²² The *Chronicle of Siirt* of the Church of the East describes the Covenant of Umar by which Christians were to be given protection on condition of various detailed restrictions. The Church of the East was said to have held the original copy of the Covenant bearing Khalif Umar's signature. But it seems the work was made up out of need.²³ A document that is traced its origin to the early Khalif may have been used by the Church as the basis for its demand to guarantee its protection from Muslims. On the other hand, in the Maronite Church, the claim of its Marada origin was presented by the Patriarch Duwaihi. According to this claim, Marada was a unit of the Byzantine army which fought against Islamic expansion. With the sparse support of historic sources, this claim was used to promote the spirit of the Maronites against Muslims.

In the nationalist discourse, people began to seek identity and continuity with traditions much older than their actual religious origins. At first against Ottomanism then against

²² Benedicte Landron, *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Irak: Attitudes Nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'Islam*, Cariscript, Paris, 1994, pp.71-78

²³ Braude, op.cit., pp.45-46

Arabism, both groups developed claims that emphasize a different and older ethnicity: Phoenicianism and Assyrianism. The focal point of both nationalisms was differentiation from their Arab neighbors. Emphasizing differences in civilization, history and culture, nationalistic claims were most of all territorial unlike religious claims. The development of both nationalisms took place first in the cities. Also, nationalism in the cities was more inclusive. While inclusive Phoenician Lebanonism tried to apply Phoenician attributes to followers of other religious sects and claimed the establishment of the Greater Lebanon, advocates of the smaller Lebanon wanted to restrict their boundary to the Maronites, to secure their primacy. On the other hand, Assyrianists tried to overcome sectarian differences and claimed common Assyrian ethnicity of Christian people. However, especially after the 1933 event, large portions of the Chaldeans and Syrian Orthodox adherents distanced themselves from Assyrianism and began to accept their Arabness. Also, while the Maronites have been experiencing the long civil war and much debate on their “Arab face”, their distinctive ethnic claim has been shrunk.

In both nationalisms, though religious leaders participated, the Church as an institution had difficulty in advocating their pagan past. Non-clerical elites emerged as major promoters of the nationalism. Reconciliation between the pagan past and Christian identity was a subtle issue. For some, it was an issue to ignore or skip. Some emphasized the process of Christianization while others emphasized continuity with the ancient religion after Christianization. Concerning the destructive image of the ancient Assyrians in the Bible, Ashor Giwargis claims that this was a Jewish distortion of history, that presents the Assyrians as an impious and non favored people.²⁴ To include more factions, both nationalisms naturally de-emphasized their religious identity. Phoenicianism focused on the quality of the

²⁴ Ashor Giwargis, *April First, The Assyrian New Year*, <http://www.assyriangc.com/ashur3/html>

ancient Phoenicians as outstanding traders with no detailed history. Though much reduced, this has left a legacy among Lebanese in the acceptance of their trader's instinct. On the other hand, a large amount of historical documents and archeological findings provided the glorious history in detail but the personal traits of the ancient Assyrians were not connected to the modern Assyrians, with the exception of some physical traits.

For both Maronites and Assyrians, continuity, either territorial or cultural, was the source of legitimacy for their claims. Antoine Harb, advocating Lebanism against Phoenicianism, claims that Lebanon is the oldest country name that has been continuously used.²⁵ Simo Parpola asserts the existence of an archetypal Assyrian nationalism based on the concept of citizenship.²⁶ Subjected to the Lebanese nationalism, that was considered Maronite, Maronite identity gave way to Lebanese identity in its saliency and the word 'Maronite' now pertains only sectarian meaning. Though established as an ethnic name, Assyrian nationalism faces the issue of obscure boundaries. Though the Assyrianists from the Church of the East strongly argue that Assyrian ethnicity includes Chaldeans, Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic Churches followers, it seems that others do not always agree. Despite heated debated on the term Assyrian and its boundary, the recently increasing usage of the expression "Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people" is self-revealing of the fact that Chaldeans and followers of Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Churches see themselves non-Assyrian.

Selectivity in the discourses is also noteworthy. For example, the name "Phoenicia" is basically a translation of the older Semitic word "Canaan", but Maronites and Lebanese nationalists did not use Canaan but advocated the term, Phoenicia. While the name "Phoenicia" was used as the name of Roman administrative units, the name "Canaan" has been used to refer to the Promised Land of the Israelites and is frequently associated with the

²⁵ See Antoine Harb (2003), *op.cit.*

²⁶ See Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today*, www.aina.org

pagan image of Baal worship which Bible denounces so much.²⁷ There has never been any attempt, of course, to empty the name “Palestine” which geographically overlaps with Canaan, and was taken by Palestinians. Bernard Lewis also points out such selectivity saying,

Had the Jews disappeared like most of the peoples of antiquity, the Palestinians might have claimed to be the heirs of ancient Israel...therefore sought their legitimacy in the pre-Islamic inhabitants of Palestine, the Canaanites.²⁸

Also, though Phoenicianists praise the Phoenician invention of the first phonetic alphabets, no mention about the Punic language which is an offshoot of the ancient Phoenician language in North Africa is found in the Phoenician discourse. While Maronites tried to build the historicity of their connection to Europe through the Crusades and generally assert that they are of mixed race with Europeans especially during the Crusade era, “Pullani”, which is a term denoting descendants of Crusaders and their local spouses, is not heard in the related discourse. Pullani had a generally negative image in Europe.

Such selective emphasis on certain identities is also found in the Assyrian discourse. The Church of the East has changed its official name into the ‘Assyrian’ Church of the East to emphasize its ethnicity. The name also supports its antiquity against the Catholic Chaldean Church. On the other hand, the Syrian Orthodox Church decided on the disuse of the word Assyrian in their church names in English. Pre-Islamic identities rooted in Aramean or Syriac also have not received much support from either Maronites or Assyrians. Not only do these identities make their history shorter, but they are also more inclusive than belongings based on Church affiliations. Moreover, the Aramean identity has pagan connotations while the word Syriac, or *Suryan* in Arabic, came to denote more narrowly the Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The term *Suryan*, at first, was selected against ‘Aram’ to differentiate

²⁷ But “Canaan” is found among Lebanese family names.

²⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998, p.74

Christians from their pagan neighbors in the region. But it became too religious a connotation and nationalism became the spirit of the age. The recent establishment of the Assyrian Martyr's day which commemorates the Simele massacre in 1933 is an example of such selective practice. Gabriel Yonan raises the question why the Assyrians chose the Simele massacre, not the massacres between 1914 and 1918 in which two thirds of their population perished.²⁹ Maybe, it is because the Simele massacre is exclusively Assyrian while the massacres of the World War I is commonly known as Armenian. Also, emphasising the more recent difficulties in Iraq caused by the Arabs may serve to highlight the current difficulties in Iraq more than the relatively remote history that was carried out by Turks and Kurds. In addition to this, though the Kurds were the enemy in the massacres during WWI, today they are the closest neighbors with whom Assyrians live and have allied themselves, and the Assyrians do not want to invoke past enmity.

The significant other constantly changes. And the focal points of identity discourse also shift to define and re-define the group and the others.

2. Self-expressions

For any religious group, differentiated theology, institutions, religious practices in everyday life and people's relation to their church and with each other shape the culture of the group. Then, the culture of a group is the expression of its differentiated identity toward others and has a normative function for its members at the same time. About the function of differentiation from others Tajfel explains that,

The 'differentiation from others'...can be understood as fulfilling two main functions, one for the group as a whole and one for its individual members. For the groups as a whole, it

²⁹ Gabriel Yonan, *Holy War Made in Germany : New Light on the Holocaust Against the Christian Assyrians during World War I*, <http://www.nineveh.com/Holy%20War%20Made%20in%20Germany.html>

‘strengthens the folkways’, i.e. it contributes to the *continuation* [emphasis added] of the group as an articulate social entity. For individual members of the group, positively-valued differentiations from others contribute favourably to their self-image and boost self-respect. ‘We are what we are because *they* are not what we are.’³⁰

He also claims that an individual has a need for positive social identity and “any characteristic which defines the ingroup as different group, other groups will tend to evaluate positively, and so it will be transformed into a social norm which members strive to enact.”³¹

Both groups which originate from the Syriac tradition, the Maronite Church and the Church of the East, share common Christian features. The Church of the East uses Eastern Syriac in the liturgy while the Maronite Church uses Western Syriac, though the Arabic language has grown to take a larger part in modern Maronite liturgy. Though following Antiochene rites, Maronite anaphora Sharrar also has many common elements with the Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari which is the most frequently used liturgy in the Church of the East and its offshoot Chaldean Church. They also share common hymns.³² Both revere the first Church fathers and saints of Syriac tradition such as Mar Ephrem. The early Church architecture of the two churches also share the common feature of *bema*, an elevated platform in the middle of the church, which was distinctive for the Syriac churches. Both churches do not have *bema* any more. The spatial arrangement of a church has highly symbolic meaning. Baumer’s account on such symbolism in the Church of the East is also applicable to the Maronite Church.

Church architecture reflects the cosmic axis from earth to paradise; along with the axis of time, the liturgy brings to life chronologically the whole of salvation history, from creation to

³⁰ Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, p.323

³¹ Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Paris, 1982, Ibid., pp.33-35

³² Lucas Van Rompay, “Excursus: The Maronites”, in Wainwright (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.172

incarnation to baptism, crucifixion and resurrection. In Syriac, the liturgy is called *qurbana*, sacrificial offerings, because it recalls the sacrifice of Christ and his work of salvation.³³

In the beginning, churches were built around relics of saints or on the site of pagan temples. The Church has been considered a place where divine occurrences take place, such as miraculous healings. Through regular liturgical celebrations in a church specially set apart for the solemn purpose, a community encounters the sacred experiences collectively. Also, by celebrating the same liturgy that was celebrated by the ancestors, the congregation completes the continuity with their forefathers transcending the barriers of time and space between them. Moreover, the church has been a central place for the community life of Maronites and Assyrians, inseparable from an individual's life from birth to death. It was at the church where all the rites of passages took place from baptism, betrothal, weddings and funerals. By combining individual religiosity, institutionalized religiosity (rites), continuity of community, and social life around religious fellowship, liturgical celebration becomes a shared experience for the group enhancing group cohesion.

In both churches, the sacraments are called mysteries, or *razo* in Western Syriac and *raza* in Eastern Syriac. Besides the Christological differences, the Mariology of the two churches became a distinctive characteristic of each church. Maronites revere Mary with great veneration as the mother of God. On the other hand, for the Assyrians, the denial of Mary's position of *theotokos*, or mother of God, is one of the most basic doctrines. It is interesting that while Maronites celebrate the fifteenth of August as the feast of Mary's Assumption, or ascension to heaven, Assyrians commemorate the same day as the feast of Mary's Dormition. While saint veneration is peculiar to, and very popular for the Maronites alongside the adoration of Mary and hence has produced related religious art such as icons and status, for

³³ Christoph Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 2006, p.122

the Church of the East followers such religious figurines and artifacts are not common at all with the exception of the cross without the crucifix. On the other hand, while the monastic tradition of the Maronite Church is still the center of Maronite spirituality, it has become extinct in the Church of the East.

Newborn babies are sained in the Church of the East or Christened in the Maronite Church by washing with holy water before baptism.³⁴ Both are a kind of imitation of baptism and have become traditional. It seems that the practices began to be carried out when a priest was too far away or unavailable for immediate baptism and when the parents wanted their baby to go through a Christian rite as soon as possible to ensure their protection from evil spirits.

As for the church hierarchy, both churches have ecclesiastical orders consisting of Patriarch, Metropolitans, bishops, and deacons with designated duties and authorities. But in both churches, as in other Eastern Churches, women are excluded from the hierarchy. In the monastic life of the Maronite Church, women constitute a bigger body than male monks. According to Teresa Berger, women played a greater role in the early churches even in liturgies. But they were marginalized, deprived of their roles and subjected to increased regulations on women's bodies after Christianity became official.³⁵ The discussion of women's role does not seem to be a topic in either church.

Though scholars agree that the early Christians developed their Aramaic to suit the needs of the new religion, and called it Syriac to avoid the pagan association that Aramaic had, it seems the origin of Syriac script is not clear. Also, it was divided into Western and Eastern Syriac in accordance with the separation of the Church. The division of the church accompanied the separate development of the scripts, too.³⁶ Western Syriac in the Maronite

³⁴ The Maronite Church prohibited non-clerics from performing such rites.

³⁵ Christine Chaillot, p.165, Teresa Berger, p. 759 in Wainwright (eds.), op.cit.

³⁶ Peter T. Daniels, "Aramaic Scripts for Aramaic Languages", in Peter T. Daniels and William Bright (ed.), *The World's Writing Systems*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1996, p.499

Church and community declined into a liturgical language that is only used in part in the liturgical worship. Most of the congregation does not fully understand even the expressions and phrases used in liturgy not to mention its usage in daily life. Arabic took the place of Syriac as the mother tongue of the Maronites, but this was not the classical form of Arabic language which is perceived by Maronites as the language of Muslims, but colloquial Lebanese Arabic. Though it is very common for Maronites to speak more than two languages and though Western Syriac has symbolic meaning, which connects them to their Antiochene origin, Maronites are not interested in learning Syriac or clinging to their roots through the language.

On the other hand, Eastern Syriac has survived until today not only as the liturgical language but also as the mother tongue of Assyrians. But Eastern Syriac is not well known in the West. Even the classification of modern Syriac languages is not agreed among scholars. Moreover, scholars tend to underestimate the number of people who use the Syriac language, including Western Syriac,³⁷ as their mother language and report it as used only in a few villages in remote areas and classify it as dead language.³⁸ Especially among those who anticipated the success of Iraqi nationalism, the disappearance of the minority languages and their assimilation to Arab culture was forecast.³⁹ Modern Eastern Syriac, called Assyrian, is one of the most cherished and distinct cultural heritages among Assyrians. The Arabic language is also associated with Islam among the Assyrians, while their Syriac is referred to as a Christian language.

As Christian groups, both Maronites and Assyrians feel very proud to have Syriac, or neo-Aramaic, as their own since it was spoken by Christ himself. But as the number of émigrés

³⁷ Though Maronites do not use Western Syriac as their mother language, there are thousands of Syrian Orthodox people in northern Syria, Iraq, and southern Turkey, or the traditional Assyrian homeland, who speak it as their mother tongue though the number is decreasing nowadays.

³⁸ Efreem Yildiz, *The Aramaic Language and its Classification*, JAAS, Vol.14, No.1, 2000, p.39

³⁹ See Harris and Smith, for example.

increases, the loss of this prestigious language, either as a liturgical language among the Maronites or as a mother tongue, has become a grave concern for both groups. Despite their dislike of the Arabic language, it is the mother tongue of Maronites, and for the Assyrians it is the language of the majority and a necessary tool for everyday communication. It is interesting to see the self-evaluation of Arabic language proficiency among Maronites and Assyrians. Assyrian respondents showed generally higher evaluation than Maronite respondents.⁴⁰

A personal name is much more than a word used for identifying and calling a certain person. In the Middle East, it not only pertains to the parents' wishes for their newborn baby as to what kind of a person the baby will be, but also very often reveals religious and ethnic belonging. In addition to this, a name also reflects the parents' religious, cultural and nationalistic attitudes. Lieberson and Bell summarize this significance of naming as follow.

The naming activity is ultimately a social process, and the resulting pattern of name usage reflects the combined influence of the imagery associated with each name, the notions parents have about the future characteristics of their children, estimates of the response of others to the name, the awareness and knowledge of names through the mass media and other sources, parents' beliefs about what are appropriate children's names for persons of their status, and institutionalized norms and pressures.⁴¹

In terms of psychology, the name serves "as an important cultural device ...for the internal awareness and the external expression of personhood."⁴² For the parents, the act of naming a child marks the first meaningful personal encounter with the new being. According to the Bible, the first act that the first human being carried out was to give names to things around

⁴⁰ See Part I. Chapter 3. Section 5 for the Maronites' self-evaluation, and Part II. Chapter 3. Section 4 for the Assyrians'.

⁴¹ Stanley Lieberson and Eleanor O. Bell, *Children's First Names: An Empirical Study of Social Taste*, American Journal of Sociology, Vol.98, No.3, Nov.1992, p.514

⁴² Mthobeli Guma, *The Cultural Meaning of Names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis*, Nordic Journal of African Studies 10 (3), 2001, p.277

him.⁴³ Changes in naming patterns also represent the cultural changes of a society in general. For the first Maronites and the Church of the East adherents, theophoric, or god-related, names were most common. While Biblical names or newly composed names with Christian meanings were spreading, old pagan names were in use at the same time. In the meantime, when some Christian saints or Church fathers who had such pagan theophoric names became known and respected, such names also acquired new Christian meaning and remained in continuous use. For example, the famous Maronite saint's name Sharbil means "the king/principal is Bel." And Addai, the apostle of the Church of the East, means "Adda is my deity."⁴⁴ In addition to general Christian names, some particularly Maronite names such as Maroun and Sharbil have served as group markers. As for the Assyrians, Christian names in their own language which differed from their neighbors' clearly marked the group boundary. To give a Christian name to the newborn baby of a Christian family seems to be an active and voluntary expression of religious belonging and religiosity. However, Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis report that "Christians and Jews were *forbidden* [emphasis added] to give their children distinctively Muslim names and, by Ottoman times, even these names which were shared by the religions, such as Joseph or David, were spelled differently for the three." It was a discriminational measure at the same time!⁴⁵

Naming patterns show cultural change and cultural continuity at the same time. For example, Maronites, by changing their Christian names into Western forms, reflect the cultural change of Westernization while maintaining the same religious meanings. Assyrian names also witness the entry of Western names perceived as Christian and fashionable at the same time. Increased nationalistic awareness among the Assyrians also led to an increase in

⁴³ Genesis 2:19-20

⁴⁴ Abdul-Massih Saadi, *Personal Names and the Assyrian Cultural Continuity*, Assyrian Star, Vol. LV, No. 2, Summer 2003, pp.15-16

⁴⁵ Braude (eds.), op.cit., p.9

ancient Assyrian names. In particular, religious Maronite and Assyrian names are perceived by the respondents as out of date and too heavy to bear. In both groups, male names show more conservativeness in pertaining to the group's characteristics; religiousness among Maronites and ethnic awareness among Assyrians. On the other hand, female names are freer in form, less religious, more related to personal characteristics, and more sensitive to aesthetic elements such as sound. As like in other groups, siblings tend to be given names in series with either the same rhythm or rhyme. Naming a child after relatives is common for both groups. Guma reports that such a child develops closer relationship with the relative that his or her name takes after.⁴⁶ Also, naming after a prominent or famous person serves as an ideal to the individual to promote a positive self-image.⁴⁷

The traditional life style of the Maronites and Assyrians, in which the church was at the center, began to be changed with the process of modernization. Modern professions such as trade and banking were less involved with land or the church hierarchy. Christians in the Middle East in general adopted Western culture quicker than their compatriots. They began to wear Western clothes, to send their children to schools, and also to adopt Western gadgets. Modern architect began to change the whole spatial settings of both households and churches. The size of a household also began to decrease. Though modernization of the Maronite community was slow and continuous from the earlier contact with the West, a final blow to the traditional social system of the Assyrians came with the catastrophe in 1933 which deprived them of the head of their church and tribal leaders. For both groups, the courageous, or rather audacious, mountaineer is perceived as typical of their group.

One of the biggest changes in family life must be in marriage which changed from the

⁴⁶ Guma, *op.cit.*, p.267. However, in the Confucian culture, to give a child even a syllable from the immediate older generations is considered a violation of respect, close to blasphemy.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.268

traditional arranged marriage between two families into free marriage by love. While free dating is common among urban Maronites, for more conservative Maronites in villages and Assyrians dating and marriage by love has limited meaning. Maronites are under jurisdiction of the Maronite Church's religious court for matters of personal status while Assyrians are answerable to the civil court. Weddings and other celebrations for both groups decreased in size and duration in modern times. In both groups, folk religious elements are found, especially related to the spring feast manifesting cultural continuity. The Assyrians developed their ancient religious feasts into their own national Christian feasts by giving Christian meanings to them. The Maronites also developed saint veneration out of ancient polytheism. While the residue of the Canaanite spring festival was observed in certain Lebanese villages in the Bekaa valley until 1980s, Assyrian religion also persisted in Harran at least until the tenth century and in Mardin until the eighteenth century.⁴⁸

The Assyrians perceive themselves more religious than Maronites do and show higher degree of church attendance in general. Female respondents of both groups perceive themselves more religious than males as if confirming the general statement that women are more religiously sensitive. This might be because males are engaged with employment and so are less free than females for religious observation. Or, it may be possible for females to think that they are more religious, simply because their religious observation is higher. However, in case of Maronites, religious observation is slightly higher among male respondents. As mentioned earlier, measuring one's religiousness or religiosity is by no means simple.

Although the history of these groups, either Church or secular, has been written by males about male achievements and both groups are patriarchal in culture, females have played the role of tradition keepers who hand down the culture of the community to next generation.

⁴⁸ Parpola, op.cit., p.17

They teach the language and norm of the group to children. They learn and practice practical details of customs including clothing and cooking, even in case of females of outgroup origin. However, females are vulnerable to a change of belonging through marriage, since the female follows the male's religious affiliation in most cases in the Middle East.

In the nineteenth century, educated Maronites moved to Egypt and served in Egyptian administration. Assyrians in the Urmia Plain moved to Caucasus, searching for seasonal jobs. But at the same time, Maronites and Assyrians also began to immigrate to countries outside the Middle East. Their expanded contact with the West through missionaries helped the move, but better job opportunities were major attraction in addition to the prospect of avoiding conflicts with Muslims neighbors. While among Maronites, people from villages in Mount Lebanon preceded city dwellers in emigration due to overpopulation in the mountain, among Assyrians townsmen in the plain led the process, causing a loss of skilled professionals. News from the émigrés led to chain migration in which whole families or people from the same village left for the new destination. Disturbances in the homeland caused mass migrations of both groups. In particular, the Assyrians, in the 1930s, dispersed en masse as a stateless diaspora within the Middle East and to the West. On the other hand, Maronite mass emigration was especially high during the 1980s when the Lebanese Civil War turned into a war between Christians.

Early Maronite émigrés have been especially successful in their new surroundings making significant fortunes in the second generation. Assyrians also quickly settled down. While Maronites tried to disperse for economic reasons despite the chain migration, Assyrians preferred to gather together in the same area. There has always been tension between assimilation to the host society's culture and desire to preserve their distinct identity and culture. In both groups, later arrivals tend to keep more contact with their homeland including

occasional visitations. Dual or divided loyalties are at the core of identity crises among diaspora Maronites and Assyrians. The loss of population and consequent demographic alteration in the homeland due to emigration has already emerged as a crucial issue among both Maronites and Assyrians. Both groups in diaspora also face similar concerns about losing language, religiousness, and national awareness. Especially, Maronite Church, being Catholic, faces the dilemma of defining itself as an Oriental national church or a universal Catholic Church. Concerns about the increase in mixed marriages and consequent blurring of ingroup boundaries are also heard.

On the other hand, for both groups, the diaspora communities actively organized themselves and related themselves to the homeland affairs, including financial and political input. Aid Societies raised funds for relief work during the World Wars. Assyrian international networking is led by diaspora societies. But Gabriel Sheffer points out that diaspora solidarity is not solely based on ties to the homeland; rather, solidarity emerges in the host country and in accordance with conditions there.⁴⁹ He also points out that most members of the Middle Eastern diasporic communities who permanently reside in host countries behave like all other diasporas.

They try to maintain their ethnic identity, pursue moderate policies, attempt to integrate into their host economic and political systems, and create and maintain elaborate networks of voluntary organizations and associations, complementing host state institutions in catering for diaspora members.⁵⁰

On the other hand, Maronite emigrants, more than others, remit money to their families in Lebanon and also invest in the homeland. Identifying with the state of Lebanon more than other Lebanese émigrés from other sectarian communities, Eyal Zisser claims that Maronite

⁴⁹ Gabriel Sheffer, "Middle Eastern Diasporas – Overview", in Ma'oz (eds.), op.cit., p.202

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.210

emigrants help in preserving the system of intercommunal balance.⁵¹ Also, as emigrants and their descendants have experiences in more than one culture and have more opportunities in education, their contribution as the forerunner to the future global political arrangements is expected.⁵²

Various communication technologies in the age of information, including the introduction of the Internet, have changed the entire mechanism of personal and mass communication. Maronites and Assyrians are no exception. In fact, the Assyrians take full advantage of these modern technologies in promoting and mobilizing national awareness among themselves as well as presenting themselves to the international society. They also merge traditional media such as magazines and newspapers with the Internet. As the Internet allows interaction among its users, personal contact is also built up by overcoming the one-way communication of traditional mass media. Cyberspace is becoming a virtual homeland for Assyrians. It is interesting that broadcasting stations are run by the political parties and are their major devices for mobilizing both Maronites and Assyrians. Renowned social scientist Robert Putnam acknowledges that television can sometimes reinforce a wider sense of community by communicating a common experience to the entire nation.⁵³ The political organizations of both Maronites and Assyrians follow the general rule of politics; alliance and separation in accordance with needs of the times. In overly politicized Lebanon, demographic changes result in changes in the intercommunal relationship, and hence in changes in alliance. Divided into two groups, the Maronite political factions ally themselves with different former enemies. The Assyrians, also, under the influence of realistic political calculation collaborate with the Kurds, their former enemy.

⁵¹ Zisser, op.cit., pp.242-244

⁵² Sheffer, op.cit., p.217

⁵³ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Simon & Schuster paperbacks, Rockefeller, New York, 2000, p.243

Chapter 2. A Comparison in the self-identification today

Major themes of the Maronite and Assyrian identity discourses were dealt with in the previous chapters. Present-day individuals of each group may or may not hold the same view as the people in the past or present leaders. Individuals may also have different ideas and debates among themselves. In this chapter, how Maronites and Assyrians today identify and perceive themselves and how they think about their groups will be examined. The following results are taken from the questionnaire surveys conducted in 2008 among 220 Maronites in different locations of Lebanon and 46 Assyrians in Iraq, and recent Iraqi Assyrian refugees in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. When double answers are found for a question, the answer close to Neutral was taken.

Table 3. 1 Maronite self-identification

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Definitely (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Asian	M 13 (10.66)	M 6 (4.92)	M 25 (20.49)	M 38 (31.15)	M 30 (24.59)	M 1 (0.82)	M 9 (7.38)	M 0	M 122 (100)
	F 12 (13.48)	F 1 (1.12)	F 26 (29.21)	F 17 (19.10)	F 24 (26.97)	F 2 (2.25)	F 5 (5.62)	F 2 (2.25)	F 89 (100)
	N 2 (22.22)	N 0	N 3 (33.33)	N 1 (11.11)	N 2 (22.22)	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 27 (12.27)	T 7 (3.18)	T 54 (24.55)	T 56 (25.45)	T 56 (25.45)	T 3 (1.36)	T 15 (6.82)	T 2 (0.91)	T 220 (100)
	88 (40)			56 (25.45)	74 (33.64)				Mean* - 1.19
White race	M 2 (1.64)	M 2 (1.64)	M 11 (9.02)	M 30 (24.59)	M 48 (39.34)	M 6 (4.92)	M 18 (14.75)	M 5 (4.10)	M 122 (100)
	F 1 (1.12)	F 1 (1.12)	F 5 (5.62)	F 19 (21.35)	F 45 (50.56)	F 7 (7.87)	F 10 (11.24)	F 1 (1.12)	F 89 (100)
	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 0	N 2 (22.22)	N 1 (11.11)	N 4 (44.44)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 4 (1.82)	T 3 (1.36)	T 16 (7.27)	T 51 (23.18)	T 94 (42.73)	T 17 (7.73)	T 29 (13.18)	T 6 (2.73)	T 220 (100)
	23 (10.45)			51 (23.18)	140 (63.64)				Mean 0.85
Yellow race	M 24 (19.67)	M 3 (2.46)	M 62 (50.82)	M 26 (21.31)	M 3 (2.46)	M 0	M 0	M 4 (3.28)	M 122 (100)
	F 18 (20.22)	F 3 (3.37)	F 47 (52.81)	F 14 (15.73)	F 3 (3.37)	F 1 (1.12)	F 0	F 3 (3.37)	F 89 (100)
	N 1 (11.11)	N 1 (11.11)	N 7 (77.78)	N 0	N 0	N 0	N 0	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 43 (19.55)	T 7 (3.18)	T 116 (52.73)	T 40 (18.18)	T 6 (2.73)	T 1 (0.45)	T 0	T 7 (3.18)	T 220 (100)

	166 (75.45)			40 (18.18)	7 (3.18)				Mean -1.18
Middle Eastern	M 3 (2.46)	M 1 (0.82)	M 8 (6.56)	M 25 (20.49)	M 60 (49.18)	M 14 (11.48)	M 10 (8.20)	M 1 (0.82)	M 122 (100)
	F 2 (2.25)	F 0	F 11 (12.36)	F 16 (17.98)	F 38 (42.70)	F 4 (4.49)	F 15 (16.85)	F 3 (3.37)	F 89 (100)
	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 4 (44.44)	N 2 (22.22)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 6 (2.73)	T 1 (0.45)	T 19 (8.64)	T 42 (19.09)	T 102 (46.36)	T 20 (9.09)	T 26 (11.82)	T 4 (1.82)	T 220 (100)
	26 (11.82)			42 (19.09)	148 (67.27)				Mean 0.84
Arab	M 7 (5.74)	M 5 (4.10)	M 24 (19.67)	M 22 (18.03)	M 47 (38.52)	M 8 (6.56)	M 8 (6.56)	M 1 (0.82)	M 122 (100)
	F 3 (3.37)	F 2 (2.25)	F 19 (21.35)	F 11 (12.36)	F 33 (37.08)	F 6 (6.74)	F 13 (14.61)	F 2 (2.25)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 2 (22.22)	N 0	N 3 (33.33)	N 2 (22.22)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 10 (4.55)	T 8 (3.64)	T 45 (20.45)	T 33 (15.00)	T 83 (37.73)	T 16 (7.27)	T 22 (10.00)	T 3 (1.36)	T 220 (100)
	63 (28.64)			33 (15.00)	121 (55.00)				Mean 0.41
Lebanese	M 0	M 0	M 0	M 2 (1.64)	M 32 (26.23)	M 18 (14.75)	M 67 (54.92)	M 3 (2.46)	M 122 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 2 (2.25)	F 4 (4.49)	F 21 (23.60)	F 15 (16.85)	F 47 (52.81)	F 0	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 4 (44.44)	N 3 (33.33)T	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 0	T 0	T 3 (1.36)	T 6 (2.73)	T 54 (24.55)	T 37 (16.82)	T 117 (53.18)	T 3 (1.36)	T 220 (100)
	3 (1.36)			6 (2.73)	208 (94.55)				Mean 2.19
Aramaean	M 15 (12.30)	M 7 (5.74)	M 61 (50.00)	M 24 (19.67)	M 9 (7.38)	M 0	M 1 (0.82)	M 5 (4.10)	M 122 (100)
	F 13 (14.61)	F 6 (6.74)	F 53 (59.55)	F 8 (8.99)	F 4 (4.49)	F 0	F 1 (1.12)	F 4 (4.49)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 0	N 6 (66.67)	N 1 (11.11)	N 2 (22.22)	N 0	N 0	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 28 (12.73)	T 13 (5.91)	T 120 (55.55)	T 33 (15.00)	T 15 (6.82)	T 0	T 2 (0.91)	T 9 (4.09)	T 220 (100)
	161 (73.18)			33. (15.00)	17 (7.73)				Mean -0.99
Syriac (Suryani)	M 16 (13.11)	M 8 (6.56)	M 63 (51.64)	M 21 (17.31)	M 5 (4.10)	M 2 (1.64)	M 4 (3.28)	M 3 (2.46)	M 122 (100)
	F 13 (14.61)	F 6 (6.74)	F 53 (59.55)	F 7 (7.87)	F 4 (4.49)	F 0	F 2 (2.25)	F 4 (4.49)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 5 (55.56)	N 1 (11.11)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 29 (13.18)	T 15 (6.82)	T 121 (55.00)	T 29 (13.18)	T 10 (4.55)	T 2 (0.91)	T 7 (3.18)	T 7 (3.18)	T 220 (100)
	165 (75)			29 (13.18)	19 (8.64)				Mean -0.95
Assyrian	M 24 (19.67)	M 6 (4.92)	M 70 (57.38)	M 17 (13.93)	M 1 (0.82)	M 0	M 0	M 4 (3.28)	M 122 (100)
	F 15 (16.85)	F 8 (8.99)	F 52 (58.43)	F 7 (7.87)	F 1 (1.12)	F 0	F 0	F 6 (6.74)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 0	N 7 (77.78)	N 1 (11.11)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 0	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 39 (17.73)	T 14 (6.36)	T 129 (58.64)	T 25 (11.36)	T 3 (1.36)	T 0	T 0	T 10 (4.55)	T 220 (100)
	182 (82.73)			25 (11.36)	3 (1.36)				Mean -1.29
Phoenician	M 5 (4.10)	M 3 (2.46)	M 17 (13.93)	M 24 (19.67)	M 49 (40.16)	M 10 (8.20)	M 12 (9.84)	M 2 (1.64)	M 122 (100)

	F 5 (5.62) N 0 T 10 (4.55)	F 1 (1.12) N 1 T 5 (2.27)	F 15 (16.85) N 2 T 34 (15.45)	F 12 (13.48) N 1 T 37 (16.82)	F 38 (42.70) N 4 T 91 (41.36)	F 5 (5.62) N 1 T 16 (7.27)	F 9 (10.11) N 0 T 21 (9.55)	F 4 (4.49) N 0 T 6 (2.73)	F 89 (100) N 9 (100) T 220 (100)
	49 (22.27)			37 (16.82)	126 (57.27))				Mean 0.52
Canaanite	M 15 (12.30) F 13 (14.61) N 0 T 28 (12.73)	M 5 (4.10) F 2 (2.25) N 0 T 7 (3.18)	M 58 (47.54) F 49 (55.06) N 7 (77.78) T 114 (51.82)	M 19 (15.57) F 11 (12.36) N 0 T 30 (13.64)	M 19 (15.57) F 7 (7.87) N 0 T 26 (11.82)	M 1 (0.82) F 0 N 1 (11.11) T 2 (0.91)	M 4 (3.28) F 2 (2.25) N 1 (11.11) T 7 (3.18)	M 1 (0.82) F 5 (5.62) N 0 T 6 (2.73)	M 122 (100) F 89 (100) N 9 (100) T 220 (100)
	149 (67.73)			30 (13.64)	35 (15.91)				Mean -0.75
Maronite	M 2 (1.64) F 3 (3.37) N 0 T 5 (2.27)	M 0 F 0 N 1 (11.11) T 1 (0.45)	M 9 (7.38) F 4 (4.49) N 1 (11.11) T 14 (6.36)	M 12 (9.84) F 5 (5.62) N 0 T 17 (7.73)	M 26 (21.31) F 28 (31.46) N 3 (33.33) T 57 (25.91)	M 10 (8.20) F 13 (14.61) N 3 (33.33) T 26 (11.82)	M 61 (50.00) F 35 (39.33) N 1 (11.11) T 97 (44.09)	M 2 (1.64) F 1 (1.12) N 0 T 3 (1.36)	M 122 (100) F 89 (100) N 9 (100) T 220 (100)
	20 (9.09)			17 (7.73)	180 (81.82)				Mean 1.70
Christian	M 1 (0.82) F 0 N 0 T 1 (0.45)	M 1 (0.82) F 0 N 0 T 1 (0.45)	M 1 (0.82) F 0 N 0 T 1 (0.45)	M 10 (8.20) F 5 (5.62) N 0 T 15 (6.82)	M 23 (18.85) F 20 (22.47) N 2 (22.22) T 45 (20.45)	M 17 (13.93) F 14 (15.73) N 5 (55.56) T 36 (16.36)	M 69 (56.56) F 49 (55.06) N 2 (22.22) T 120 (54.55)	M 0 F 1 (1.12) N 0 T 1 (0.45)	M 122 (100) F 89 (100) N 9 (100) T 220 (100)
	3 (1.36)			15 (6.82)	201 (91.36)				2.15
Minority	M 18 (14.75) F 12 (13.48) N 0 T 30 (13.64)	M 4 (3.28) F 5 (5.62) N 2 (22.22) T 11 (5.00)	M 43 (35.25) F 40 (44.94) N 3 (33.33) T 86 (39.09)	M 14 (11.48) F 6 (6.74) N 0 T 20 (9.09)	M 29 (23.77) F 19 (21.35) N 1 (11.11) T 49 (22.27)	M 7 (5.74) F 4 (4.49) N 2 (22.22) T 13 (5.91)	M 6 (4.92) F 2 (2.25) N 0 T 8 (3.64)	M 1 (0.82) F 1 (1.12) N 1 (11.11) T 3 (1.36)	M 122 (100) F 89 (100) N 9 (100) T 220 (100)
	127 (57.73)			20 (9.09)	70 (31.82)				Mean -0.46

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3.1 shows what Maronites *feel* are their identities. Respondents were asked to mark how much they agree or disagree on given sentences. The scale of answers ranged between “Not at all, Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree, and Definitely.” “Neutral” means either “I do not care.” or “I do not know.” In general, extreme answers of

“Not at all” and “Definitely” were not frequently given.

The sentences in the survey were given in the pattern of “I feel that I am Maronite.” Fourteen categories which have relevance to the Maronite identity and identity discourse were chosen. They are “Asian, White race, Yellow race, Middle Eastern, Arab, Lebanese, Aramaean, Syriac (Suryan), Assyrian, Phoenician, Canaanite, Maronite, Christian, and Minority.”

The biggest number for the answer “Definitely” is found in “I feel that I am Christian.” (120 out of 220 persons, or 54.55 percent) followed by Lebanese (117 persons), then Maronite (97 persons). But in terms of the sum of agreement, the category of Lebanese (208 persons) is slightly bigger than the category of Christian (201 persons). Next biggest numbers in agreement are found in Maronite (180 persons), Middle Eastern (148 persons), Phoenician (126 persons) and Arab (121 persons). The number of respondents who gave agreement to the Phoenician identity and the Arab identity are close to each other comprising 57.27 percent and 55 percent each, respectively. Despite the fact that in modern identity discourse in Lebanon the Phoenician claim was elaborated against Arabism, which leads one to expect a strong negative correlation between those two identities, the research result does not appear in that way. Out of 220 respondents, 69 persons, or 31.36 percent, answered that they feel they are both Phoenician and Arab, while nine persons, or 4.09 percent, answered they do not feel either Phoenician nor Arab, and another ten persons, or 4.55 percent, answered they feel neutral to both identities. They comprise 40 percent of all. Only 76 respondents, or 34.55 percent, gave different answers to the two questions about Phoenician and Arab identity, claiming one but rejecting the other.¹ It seems that a majority of Maronites hold the Phoenician legacy, while accepting Arab identity at the same time. But The number of

¹ All these lead to a correlation between the feelings of Phoenician and the Arab identities insignificant. The correlation is -0.001.

general disagreement was found a bit stronger in the Arab category (Arab 63, Phoenician 49) meaning nearly thirty percent of the Maronites surveyed still oppose the Arab identity, a fact that could be a source of potential conflict.²

On the other hand, the highest disagreement in sum is in the category of Assyrian identity (182 persons, or 82.73 percent) with only three agreed persons. But the biggest number of the answer Not at all is to the Yellow race (43 persons to Not at all). The sum of disagreement is 166 persons, or 75.45 percent. Accordingly, the number of respondents who answered that they feel they are of White race showed the reverse tendency; 23 disagreements versus 140 agreements³ with a resonance of considering themselves related to white Europeans. Though the state of Lebanon is located in the Continent of Asia, their being Asian is not meaningful for the Maronites who rather deliberately tried to develop connections with Europe as much as possible. Numbers are quite evenly distributed among Disagree, Neutral, and Agree to the Asian identity with a little bit higher number in general disagreement. This odd question may have even perplexed some respondents. Two respondents changed their answers to more negative ones for this question, expressing such identity has not been meditated before.

Though the Maronite Synod emphasizes the Maronites' Syriac root,⁴ the Suryan identity was the second strongly negated identity among the respondents. Twenty-nine persons answered they do not feel Syriac at all. The number of people who disagree to the Syriac identity reaches 165, or 75 percent of all. The numerical average of the priest group which consists of priests and seminary students is, though located on the opposite side of Neutral, is only 0.25 closer to Neutral than to Agree. Almost the same tendency was found for the

² However, any significant correlation between age and Phoenicianism or Arabism is not demonstrated by this research result. The correlation between age and Phoenician identity is 0.097 and between age and Arab identity is 0.113.

³ The number of respondents who answered Neutral to both White race and Yellow race is 24. 17 persons showed disagreement to both, while 2 agreed to both. The correlation of these two identities is -0.163 significant at the 0.05 level which is much lower than expected.

⁴ See Part I, Chapter 3, section 1 Religious hierarchy.

Aramaean identity. The sums of negation of these identities are: Suryan (165 persons, or 75 percent) and Aramaean (161 persons, or 73.18 percent) identities.

While a little bit more than a half of the respondents agreed to their Phoenician identity, the Canaanite identity, which is originally the Semitic name of Phoenicia, was rejected by the majority. 149 persons, or 67.73 percent, disagreed while 35 persons, or 15.91 percent, agreed to it. The logic behind the rejection is because the word “Canaan” is related to Israeli history, appropriated as a Western and Israeli term. It shows the selective characteristics of historiography and identity.⁵

The next strongly negative term is the “Minority” category with 127 in disagreement and 70 in agreement. As will be seen later, Maronites see their community as being politically privileged in Lebanon and numerically biggest among the Christians in Lebanon. But 70 persons out of 220 in total, that is slightly more than 30 percent, consider themselves minority due to numerical inferiority against the total population and consequent decreasing privileges. An interviewee mentioned that one of problems of the Maronites is that they do not realize their numerically minority status within Lebanon and in the Middle East.

In general, it seems that the Maronites have no clear ethnic or racial identity fixed while the Middle Eastern identity is accepted as their geographical identity.

Table 3. 2 Assyrian self-identification

	Not at all	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Definitely	NA	Total
Asian	M 2 (6.06)	M 0	M 4 (12.12)	M 9 (27.27)	M 14 (42.42)	M 0	M 3 (9.09)	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 0	F 4 (30.77)	F 4 (30.77)	F 1 (7.69)	F 3 (23.08)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 3 (6.52)	T 0	T 4 (8.70)	T 13 (28.26)	T 18 (39.13)	T 1 (2.17)	T 6 (13.04)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	7 (1.52)			13 (28.26)	25 (54.35)				Mean* 0.56

⁵ See Part I, Chapter 2, section 1 and Chapter 1 of this Part for the issue.

White race	M 1 (3.03)	M 0	M 3 (9.09)	M 15 (45.45)	M 10 (30.30)	M 0	M 3 (9.09)	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 2 (15.38)	F 7 (53.85)	F 2 (15.38)	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 13 (100)
	T 1 (2.17)	T 0	T 5 (10.87)	T 22 (47.83)	T 12 (26.09)	T 1 (2.17)	T 3 (6.52)	T 2 (4.35)	T 46 (100)
	6 (13.04)			22 (47.83)	16 (34.78)				Mean 0.34
Yellow race	M 7 (21.21)	M 1 (3.03)	M 18 (54.55)	M 6 (18.18)	M 0	M 0	M 0	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 1 (7.69)	F 1 (7.69)	F 6 (46.15)	F 5 (38.46)	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 8 (17.39)	T 2 (4.35)	T 24 (52.17)	T 11 (23.91)	T 0	T 0	T 0	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	34 (73.91)			11 (23.91)	0				Mean -1.16
Middle Eastern	M 1 (3.03)	M 0	M 2 (6.06)	M 7 (21.21)	M 18 (54.55)	M 0	M 4 (12.12)	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 3 (23.08)	F 3 (23.08)	F 4 (30.77)	F 1 (7.69)	F 2 (15.38)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 1 (2.17)	T 0	T 5 (8.70)	T 10 (21.74)	T 22 (47.83)	T 1 (2.17)	T 6 (13.04)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	6 (13.04)			10 (21.74)	29 (13.18)				Mean -0.76
Arab	M 11 (33.33)	M 3 (9.09)	M 11 (33.33)	M 3 (9.09)	M 4 (12.12)	M 0	M 0	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 2 (15.38)	F 1 (7.69)	F 5 (38.46)	F 2 (15.38)	F 2 (15.38)	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 13 (28.26)	T 4 (8.70)	T 16 (34.78)	T 5 (10.87)	T 6 (13.04)	T 0	T 1 (2.17)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	33 (71.74)			5 (10.87)	7 (15.22)				Mean -1.2
Iraqi	M 1 (3.03)	M 0	M 0	M 3 (9.09)	M 10 (30.30)	M 3 (9.09)	M 16 (48.48)	M 0	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 4 (30.77)	F 1 (7.69)	F 7 (53.85)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 1 (2.17)	T 0	T 0	T 4 (8.70)	T 14 (30.43)	T 4 (8.70)	T 23 (50)	T 0	T 46 (100)
	1 (2.17)			4 (8.70)	41 (89.13)				Mean 1.91
Aramaean	M 2 (6.06)	M 2 (6.06)	M 16 (48.48)	M 3 (9.09)	M 4 (12.12)	M 0	M 3 (9.09)	M 3 (9.09)	M 33 (100)
	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 9 (69.23)	F 2 (15.38)	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 3 (6.52)	T 2 (4.35)	T 25 (54.35)	T 5 (10.87)	T 5 (10.87)	T 0	T 3 (6.52)	T 3 (6.52)	T 46 (100)
	30 (65.22)			5 (10.87)	8 (17.39)				Mean -0.56
Syriac (Suryani)	M 3 (9.09)	M 1 (3.03)	M 14 (42.42)	M 6 (18.18)	M 4 (12.12)	M 0	M 2 (6.06)	M 3 (9.09)	M 33 (100)
	F 2 (15.38)	F 0	F 6 (46.15)	F 4 (30.77)	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 13 (100)
	T 5 (10.87)	T 1 (2.17)	T 20 (43.48)	T 10 (21.74)	T 4 (8.70)	T 0	T 2 (4.35)	T 4 (8.70)	T 46 (100)
	26 (56.52)			10 (21.74)	6 (13.04)				Mean -0.64
Assyrian	M 0	M 0	M 0	M 0	M 6 (18.18)	M 3 (9.09)	M 24 (72.73)	M 0	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 3 (23.08)	F 1 (7.69)	F 9 (69.23)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 0	T 0	T 0	T 0	T 9 (19.57)	T 4 (8.70)	T 33 (71.74)	T 0	T 46 (100)
	0			0	46 (100)				2.52
Chaldean	M 8	M 4	M 9	M 8	M 2	M 0	M 0	M 2	M 33

	(24.24) F 4 (30.77) T 12 (26.09)	(12.12) F 0 (8.70)	(27.27) F 4 (30.77) T 13 (28.26)	(24.24) F 3 (23.08) T 11 (23.91)	(6.06) F 2 (15.38) T 4 (8.70)	F 0 (8.70)	F 0 (8.70)	(6.06) F 0 (4.35) T 2 (4.35)	(100) F 13 (100) T 46 (100)
	29 (63.04)			11 (23.91)	4 (8.70)				Mean -1.20
Nestorian	M 3 (9.09) F 0 (6.52) T 3 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 6 (18.18) F 3 (23.08) T 9 (19.57)	M 10 (30.30) F 8 (61.54) T 18 (39.13)	M 9 (27.27) F 0 (19.57) T 9 (19.57)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 4 (12.12) F 2 (15.38) T 6 (13.04)	M 1 (3.03) F 0 (2.17) T 1 (2.17)	M 33 (100) F 13 (100) T 46 (100)
	12 (26.09)			18 (39.13)	15 (32.61)				Mean 0.2
Mesopotamian	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 1 (7.69) T 1 (2.17)	M 9 (27.27) F 3 (23.08) T 12 (26.09)	M 4 (12.12) F 1 (7.69) T 5 (10.87)	M 20 (60.60) F 8 (61.54) T 28 (60.87)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 33 (100) F 13 (100) T 46 (100)
	0			1 (2.17)	45 (97.83)				Mean 2.30
Christian	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 8 (24.24) F 4 (30.77) T 12 (26.09)	M 4 (12.12) F 0 (6.52) T 4 (8.70)	M 21 (63.64) F 9 (69.23) T 30 (65.22)	M 0 (6.06) F 0 (6.52) T 0 (6.52)	M 33 (100) F 13 (100) T 46 (100)
	0			0	46 (100)				Mean 2.39
Minority	M 5 (15.15) F 2 (15.38) T 7 (15.22)	M 2 (6.06) F 1 (7.69) T 3 (6.52)	M 7 (21.21) F 4 (30.77) T 11 (23.91)	M 0 (6.06) F 2 (15.38) T 2 (4.35)	M 13 (39.39) F 3 (23.08) T 16 (34.78)	M 2 (6.06) F 1 (7.69) T 3 (6.52)	M 3 (9.09) F 0 (6.52) T 3 (6.52)	M 1 (3.03) F 0 (2.17) T 1 (2.17)	M 33 (100) F 13 (100) T 46 (100)
	21 (45.65)			2 (4.35)	22 (47.83)				Mean -0.16

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3.2 is the self-identification of the Assyrians. Respondents were asked to mark how much they *feel* the given identities, similar to the survey of the Maronites. Fourteen categories relevant to the Assyrian identity discourses were given. They are: “Asias, White race, Yellow race, Middle Eastern, Arab, Iraqi, Aramaean, Syriac (Suryan), Assyrian, Chaldean, Nestorian, Mesopotamian, Christian, and Minority.” The answer Neutral was taken to mean either “I do not care.” or “I do not know.” The Neutral tendency was generally higher among females except when it came to Iraqi and Chaldean identities.

The category for which the highest number of respondents answered “Definitely Agree” was Assyrian (33 persons, 71.74 percent) followed by Christian (30 persons, 65.22 percent) and Mesopotamian (28 persons, 60.87 percent). Interestingly, nobody dared to answer even “Neutral”, not to mention “Disagree”, for the Assyrian and Christian identities. For the Mesopotamian identity also, all the respondents answered they feel they are Mesopotamian, known as *Bet Nahrain*, except one person who answered Neutral. Iraqi identity also shows high agreement. One half of the respondents answered they definitely feel they are Iraqis. Four answered Neutral and one Not at all. A respondent who answered he does not feel Iraqi at all added that though he accepts his Iraqi nationality but it does not bear any importance to him.

On the other hand, the strongest objection was found to the Yellow race (34 persons, 73.91 percent). Though one half of the Assyrians agreed that they were Asian (25 persons, 54.35 percent), no one agreed that they belonged to the Yellow race. A respondent did not understand what “Asian” means. Another respondent answered Neutral and added that he is “Eastern,” a frequently used cultural identity against “Western” among the Middle Easterners. As for the White race, almost a half of the respondents answered Neutral.⁶ A respondent clarified that he is of “brown” race, or *Asmar* in Arabic.

The next strongest disagreement was to the Arab identity. The number of respondents who negated Arab identity was 33, or 71.74 percent of total. Thirteen among them, or 28.26 percent, answered they did not feel Arab “at all.” Seven persons answered “Agree” and five persons answered “Neutral.” Also, Assyrians rejected Aramaean, Chaldean, and Syriac identities. Though modern Assyrian language is the Eastern branch of Syriac and Chaldeans are claimed to be Assyrians as well, both terms “Syriac” and “Chaldean” seem to be firmly

⁶ Nine persons answered Neutral for both, another 5 disagreement for both which make their correlation illogic, 0.239.

settled as terms related to specific church affiliations. Those who belonged to the Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, or Chaldean churches may answer they are Assyrian, but not vice versa. Of the three respondents who answered “Agreed” for Chaldean identity, one revealed that she had originally belonged to the Chaldean Church and became Assyrian by marriage, another that she has a mother from a Chaldean background, and the other that he is married to a Chaldean.

An interesting observation is on the perception of Nestorian identity. The Church of the East has long been known as the Nestorian Church and published materials on them in the previous century affirmed the Assyrians’ agreement to the Nestorian identity.⁷ The Assyrian respondents for the survey showed reluctance to agree or disagree to a Nestorian identity. About forty percent of them answered “Neutral.” The frequency of the answer “Neutral” was especially high among female respondents (8 out of 13, or 61.54 percent). Also, the numbers of respondents who disagreed (12 persons) and agreed (15 persons) were not distant from each other, showing the general ambivalence of the Assyrians in regard to embracing a Nestorian identity.

Despite their being a minority both in numerical and political sense, the minority identity also shows a quite even distribution of answers ranging from agreement (22 persons, 47.83 percent) to disagreement (21 persons, 45.65 percent) with an average slightly smaller than zero. While male respondents tended to agree rather than disagree to a “Minority” identity (57.58 percent of the male total), female respondents tended to disagree to it (53.85 percent of the female total). As everyday life for female Assyrians is generally less relevant to social and political conditions than for their male counterparts, they may feel and embrace a minority status less than male Assyrians.

⁷ See Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches Trilogy II, The Lesser Eastern Churches*, Georgias Press, Piscataway, 2001 (Originally printed by the Catholic Trust Society in 1913), for example.

As seen earlier, Assyrian identity for the Maronites never seems to have appealed any one though a few Assyrian activists and few Maronites want to include Maronites into the Assyrian family. Numerical average of the Assyrian identity among the Maronites is the lowest (-1.29 meaning negate stronger than disagree) among all fourteen given identities. Both groups showed very strong agreement to their Christian identity (Maronite average 2.15, Assyrian 2.39). Also, respondents from both groups highly identify themselves with their nationalities (Maronite average 2.19, Assyrian 1.91). It seems the strong ethnic sense of the Assyrians does not restrain them from identifying themselves with the state of Iraq. Rather, they consider themselves as the indigenous people of Iraq. The result supports Bernard Lewis' statement that the Middle Eastern states "established themselves more firmly and defined."⁸ In fact, for the Maronite respondents, Lebanese identity is the strongest identity both in number of respondents in agreement and the numerical average. While the Assyrian identity is the most salient identity among the Assyrians, the Maronite identity among the Maronites takes the third place. Theodore Hanf's research in 2002 also reveals that community loyalty among the Maronites is lower than average.⁹ Also, both groups show similar degrees of agreement to the Middle Eastern identity (Maronite average 0.84, Assyrian 0.76). However, while about 55 percent of Maronites agreed to their Arab identity, more than 70 percent of Assyrians rejected it due to its ethnic connotation of being contradictory to Assyrian.¹⁰ Racial identity is obscure among both groups though Maronites tend to see themselves as

⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998, p.140

⁹ Theodor Hanf, "The Sceptical Nation. Opinions and Attitudes Twelve Years after the End of the War", in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam(eds.), *Lebanon in Limbo*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003, p.207. Among Lebanese confessional groups extreme community loyalty is higher than average among Armenians (67%) and Druze (46%) and lower than average among the Greek Orthodox (21%) and Maronites (29%).

¹⁰ The correlation between Arab and Assyrian identities among the Assyrian respondents is -0.23.

belonging to the White race.¹¹

Table 3. 3 Maronite self-identity

Identity	1 st place (%)	2 nd place (%)	3rd place (%)	4 th place	Total
Lebanese	96 (43.36)	29 (13.18)	16 (7.27)	1 (0.45)	142 (64.55)
Christian	23 (10.45)	49 (22.27)	15 (6.82)	1 (0.45)	88 (40.00)
Maronite	10 (4.55)	19 (8.64)	21 (9.55)	5 (2.27)	55 (25.00)
Arab	0	5 (2.27) Not Arab 2 (0.90)	1 (0.45)	-	6 (2.73) 2 (0.90)
Phoenician	0	1 (0.45)	5 (2.27)	1 (0.45)	7 (3.18)
Name	32 (14.55)	1 (0.45)	2 (0.90)	1 (0.45)	36 (16.36)
Personal Characteristics	23 (10.45)	8 (3.64)	1 (0.45)	4 (1.82)	36 (16.36)
Human being	13 (5.91)	-	-	-	13 (5.91)
Citizen	4 (1.82)	3 (1.36)			7 (3.18)
Other	8 (3.64)	2 (0.90)	-	2 (0.90)	12 (5.45)
No answer	11 (5.00)	-	-	-	-
Total	220 (100%)	119 (54.09)	61 (27.73)	15 (6.82)	-

Table 3.3 shows how Maronites identify themselves. The given question was “How do you identity yourself? I am _____.” The most frequent answer was “Lebanese” which was mentioned by 142 persons, or 64.55 percent of total. It also shows the highest frequency among the identities presented in the first place (96 persons, or 43.36 percent). It generally corresponds to the general Lebanese self-identity tendency in Hanf’s research in 2002.¹² The next highest frequency is Christian identity (88 persons in total).¹³ It takes the biggest

¹¹ This also involves the researcher’s bias on race which excluded other options other than White and Yellow. The correlation between Asian and Yellow identities among Maronites is, 0.304 (significant at the 0.01 level). But the correlation between Asian and White is 0.247, a positive number! Among the Assyrians the correlation of Asian and Yellow identities is 0.499 (significant at the 0.01 level). The correlation of Asian and White is also a positive number. It means for both Maronites and Assyrians “White race” and “Yellow race” are not mutually exclusive. They also had many answers of Neutral.

¹² Hanf, op.cit., p.210. The percentage of persons who chose Lebanese identity in the first place is 41 in his research among Lebanese youth.

¹³ A religious statement such as “I am disciple of Jesus.” was counted as Christian identity.

number among the second place identities (41.18 percent of the total second place identity.) The next high frequencies are Maronite identity followed by personal name and personal characters.

First place identity is Lebanese followed by names, personal characteristics, and “Christian” as primary identities. The number of people who chose “Maronite” as their primary identity was only 10 which is less than 5 percent. Personal characteristics as the primary identity include descriptions of gender, profession, and age (young, boy, and girl). When the numbers of names and personal characters are combined, it holds the second biggest number among the primary identities. It means a quarter of Maronites identify themselves with their personal information echoing the general statement that Maronites are individualistic. Respondents who answered they are “Human being,” or “a citizen” usually put it as “an ordinary human being” or “an ordinary citizen.” One person wrote that he is a special human being. Eight respondents put other answers. Two of them put “I am myself.”, or *Ana ana* in Arabic. Two other persons arrayed all their agreed identities from the given identities for the previous questions. One person wrote that “I do not identify myself in a direct way.” Another two related their cultural identity.

For the secondary identity, “Christian,” “Lebanese,” and “Maronite” frequently appeared. Six out of eight who gave personal characteristics in as secondary identities wrote in their names for the primary identity. Personal characteristics in the secondary identity include “mother,” “housewife,” and descriptions of place of birth, place of living, education, and age. Interestingly, both Arab and *non-Arab* identities appeared as secondary identities. To identify oneself by negating the other is quite a universal phenomenon.¹⁴ One respondent emphasized that he is Lebanese before being Arab. Phoenician identity also appears in the second and the

¹⁴ See Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1981, p.323 for example. “We are what we are because they are not what we are.”

third places but mostly as “of Phoenician origin.” Twelve respondents gave sentences in the form of “I love something.” They include: “I love life,” “I love my country,” “I love my work,” “I love my Church,” “I love my Christianity,” “I love people,” and so on. Five respondents added they are proud of their identity. A few respondents answered they are “of the minority.” One of them expressed that he belongs to a minority with honor. And other positive remarks such as “open,” “beautiful,” or “learning” were added.

Table 3.3- 1 Maronite self-identity pattern

Lebanese (Lebanese only* 36 persons)
Lebanese Christian pattern 37 persons (Lebanese Christian only 17 persons)
Lebanese Christian Maronite 18 persons
Lebanese Maronite 11 persons (Lebanese Maronite only 6 persons)
Lebanese Arab 4 persons (Lebanese Arab only 3 persons)
Name (only 13 persons)
Name Lebanese 8 persons
Name Personal characteristics 6 persons
Personal characteristics (only 10 persons)
Personal characteristics Lebanese 3 persons
Christian (only 10 persons)
Christian Lebanese 10 persons (Christian Lebanese only 5 persons)
Human being (only 8 persons)
Human being Christian 4 persons
Maronite (only 3 persons)
Maronite Lebanese 4 persons (Maronite Lebanese only 3 persons)

* respondents who wrote this identity or array of identities only.

Thirty-six respondents presented “Lebanese” as their sole identity, while thirteen others identified themselves with only their names. The most frequent pattern of three identities is “Lebanese Christian Maronite (18 persons, 8.18 percent).” This pattern can be a general Lebanist’s view while the “Maronite Christian Lebanese” pattern can be taken as the Maronist’s view. Lebanese identity was the strongest felt and most frequently volunteered

identity among the respondents. Young respondents tended to present their youth as the primary identity by presenting themselves as young Lebanese (6 persons), young Lebanese Christian, a learning girl, a funny boy, and so on while no elderly person presented themselves with their elderliness. Also, while female respondents tended to present themselves as female, mother, or wife, only one male respondent put his being male in the first place identity reflecting gender identity is important among females.

Table 3. 4 Assyrian self-identity

Identity	1st place (%)	2nd place (%)	3d place (%)	4th place (%)	Total (%)
Assyrian	17 (36.96)	12 (26.09)	4 (8.70) *A husband 1 (2.17)	0 A husband 1 (2.17)	33 (71.74) 2 (4.35)
Christian	5 (10.87)	7 (15.22)	6 (13.04)	1 (2.17)	18 (39.13)
Iraqi	5 (10.87)	3 (6.52)	7 (15.22)	3 (6.52)	18 (39.13)
Name	10 (21.74)	-	-	-	10 (21.74)
Personal characteristics	2 (4.35)	5 (10.87)	2 (4.35)	2 (4.35)	11 (23.91)
Human being	1 (2.17)	-	-	-	1 (2.17)
Other	1 (2.17)	1 (2.17)	1 (2.17)	1 (2.17)	5 (10.87)
No answer	5 (10.87)	-	-	-	5 (10.87)
Total	46 (100%)	28 (60.86)	21 (45.65)	8 (17.39)	

* who wrote her husband is Assyrian

Table 3.4 shows how Assyrians identify themselves. The same open question was given to the respondents. “How do you identify yourself? I am _____.” The most frequently appearing identity was “Assyrian (33 persons in total, 71.74 percent).” It was also the most frequently appearing secondary identity (12 persons). The next biggest number among primary identities was for “Christian”¹⁵ and “Iraqi (18 persons each in total, 39.13 percent).” They show the same number in the first place identity while the Christian identity occupies more importance

¹⁵ A religious statement of “I am one of sons of the Lord Jesus.” was counted as Christian.

in the second place identity. Ten persons presented their names, full names in many cases, as their first place identity. Two respondents gave their personal characteristics as their first place identity. One answered she is “a girl,” the other “a married woman.” One person answered that she is “an ordinary human being.” Another respondent answered he is “a son of Mesopotamia.”

For the second place identity, Christianity marked the biggest number except the Assyrian identity. Female respondents who became Assyrian (the Church of the East affiliation) through marriage tended to reveal their original religious affiliations in the secondary identities. Two of them chose to express their husbands are Assyrian rather than revealing their origins (in the third and fourth place identity each). A few respondents presented their village names and tribal name (Tyari in this case) in the second and third place identities. Three respondents added they are “believers” emphasizing their religiosity while another three emphasized their pure and original Assyrian belonging by using the Arabic word *asil*. All of those were male respondents. One person wrote she is “an ordinary citizen” in her second place identity. One person wrote in “Nestorian” as his secondary identity. He presented himself as “Iraqi Assyrian Christian Nestorian *madhhab* (religious sect).” Assyrians also added remarks on their identity such as “I love my religion and church.” “I am happy to be Christian.” “I am proud of my Assyrianness.” Three persons used the expression “proud” for their identity. They also added positive remarks such as “Christianity is a great religion,” “Mesopotamia is the origin [*Sahib* in Arabic, literally meaning owner] of a great civilization,” and so on. Three respondents clarified that “Assyrian” as ethnicity, “Christian” as the religion, and “Iraqi” as the nationality.

Table 3.4- 1 Assyrian self-identity pattern

Assyrian (only* 9 persons)

Assyrian Christian Iraqi 5 persons Assyrian Iraqi 3 persons
Name Assyrian (only 5 persons) Name Christian (only 1 person) Name Assyrian Christian Iraqi 1 person, Name Christian Assyrian Iraqi 1 person
Iraqi Assyrian Christian 3 persons Iraqi Assyrian 1 person, Iraqi Christian Assyrian 1 person
Christian (only 3 persons) Christian Assyrian Iraqi 2 persons

* respondents who wrote this identity or array of identities only.

Nine out of 46 respondents, or 19.57 percent, identified themselves only as being “Assyrian.” One person strongly emphasized his Assyrian identity by presenting himself as “Assyrian, Assyrian, Assyrian, original.” While three respondents presented their Christianity as their sole identity, there was no one who presented Iraqi identity or their names as their sole identity. Though a very strong agreement was shown to the Mesopotamian identity when it was already given among the questions, it was not mentioned voluntarily as an identity except by one respondent. Two respondents presented themselves as “somebody belong to an Assyrian family” reflecting the traditional way of identifying oneself.

In both groups, the degree of agreement to given identities and frequency of voluntary identities are generally coherent. If a given identity was frequently agreed upon and had a high numerical value in the scale of agreement, the more it appeared in the open question of self-identity; such as “Lebanese-Christian-Maronite” among the Maronites and “Assyrian-Christian-Iraqi” among the Assyrians. While some Assyrians clarified that Assyrian is their ethnicity, *qawm* in Arabic, Maronites never used the term. On the other hand, none of the respondents presented themselves as Arab in the open question on self-identity though a few Assyrians agreed that they feel they are Arab for the earlier given identities. Gender identities

such as female, mother, wife, and girl appeared important for females in both groups. Nevertheless, female respondents who became Maronites through marriage did not identify themselves as wives of Maronites. Rather, some of them were not even aware that their Maronite identity was obtained and not given by birth. Also, being young appeared to be a considerable property for the identity. In general, extreme answers were more frequently found among the Assyrian respondents.

Table 3. 5 Maronites - perceived difference

	Not at all	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Definitely	NA	Total
Other Christians	M 7 (5.74)	M 0	M 32 (26.23)	M 31 (25.41)	M 35 (28.69)	M 7 (5.74)	M 7 (5.74)	M 3 (2.46)	M 122 (100)
	F 5 (5.62)	F 3 (3.37)	F 28 (31.46)	F 19 (21.35)	F 24 (26.97)	F 3 (3.37)	F 6 (6.74)	F 1 (1.12)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 3 (33.33)	N 1 (11.11)	N 3 (33.33)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 12 (5.45)	T 4 (1.82)	T 63 (28.64)	T 51 (23.18)	T 62 (28.18)	T 11 (5.00)	T 13 (5.91)	T 4 (1.82)	T 220 (100)
	79 (35.91)				51 (23.18)	86 (39.09)			Mean* 0.07
Non-Christians	M 2 (1.64)	M 1 (1.64)	M 18 (14.75)	M 19 (15.57)	M 50 (40.98)	M 10 (8.20)	M 19 (15.57)	M 3 (2.46)	M 122 (100)
	F 2 (2.25)	F 0	F 13 (14.61)	F 9 (10.11)	F 34 (38.20)	F 14 (15.73)	F 16 (17.98)	F 1 (1.12)	F 89 (100)
	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 3 (33.33)	N 1 (11.11)	N 3 (33.33)	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 0	N 9 (100)
	T 4 (1.82)	T 2 (0.91)	T 34 (15.45)	T 29 (13.18)	T 87 (39.55)	T 25 (11.36)	T 35 (15.91)	T 4 (1.82)	T 220 (100)
	40 (18.18)				29 (13.18)	147 (66.82)			Mean* 0.89

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3. 6 Assyrians - perceived difference

	Not at all	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Definitely	NA	Total
Chaldeans	M 3 (9.09)	M 1 (3.03)	M 5 (15.15)	M 8 (24.24)	M 13 (39.39)	M 1 (3.03)	M 1 (3.03)	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 2 (15.38)	F 4 (30.77)	F 4 (30.77)	F 2 (15.38)	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 3 (6.52)	T 1 (2.17)	T 7 (15.22)	T 12 (26.09)	T 17 (36.96)	T 3 (6.52)	T 2 (4.35)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	11 (23.91)				12 (26.09)	22 (10.00)			Mean* 0.24
Other Christians	M 2 (6.06)	M 1 (3.03)	M 3 (9.09)	M 8 (24.24)	M 15 (45.45)	M 1 (3.03)	M 3 (9.09)	M 0	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 2 (15.38)	F 4 (30.77)	F 5 (38.46)	F 1 (7.69)	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 13 (100)

	T 2 (4.35)	T 1 (2.17)	T 5 (10.87)	T 12 (26.09)	T 20 (43.48)	T 2 (4.35)	T 4 (8.70)	T 0	T 46 (100)
	8 (17.39)			12 (26.09)	26 (56.52)				Mean* 0.5
Non-Christians	M 0	M 0	M 2 (6.06)	M 2 (6.06)	M 17 (51.52)	M 4 (12.12)	M 8 (24.24)	M 0	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 5 (38.46)	F 2 (15.38)	F 4 (30.77)	F 1 (7.69)	F 13 (100)
	T 0	T 0	T 2 (4.35)	T 3 (6.52)	T 22 (47.83)	T 6 (13.04)	T 12 (26.09)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	2 (4.35)			3 (6.52)	40 (86.96)				Mean* 1.51

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3.5 and 3.6 show how different Maronites and Assyrians think they are from other groups in their countries. Opinions are evenly distributed among the Maronites concerning their difference from other Christians in Lebanon. But concerning the difference from non-Christians, the majority (147 persons, 66.82 percent) felt that they have some kind of a difference from them with a numerical mean close to 1 meaning general agreement. Among the Assyrians, difference from other Christians (mean 0.5) was felt twice stronger than difference from Chaldeans (mean 0.24). Concerning the difference from non-Christians in Iraq, negation of difference was exceptions (40 persons, or 86.96 percent agreed). A female Assyrian respondent mentioned difference in clothing among Muslim woman as they wear *hijab* and *abaya* in Iraq. Two respondents expressed their resentment toward Muslims. Interviewees from both groups answered that their difference from other Christians is only a “church and liturgical” one.

Table 3. 7 Maronites - special characteristics

	Number (%)	Description
More religious	29 (13.18)	Strong faith, committed, more forgiving and loving
Saints	5 (2.27)	Maronite saints
Religious rites	18 (8.82)	Only differ in religious rites. Shorter mass.
Better qualities	39 (17.73)	More advanced, more educated, civilized, openness, democratic, freedom, open-handed, not fanatic, cleaner, more beautiful, faithful to each other,

		united, love of life, elite, live in peace....
Attachment to Lebanon	20 (9.09)	Cling to the land, connected to Lebanon, indigenous inhabitants, Lebanese, Lebanists
History	12 (5.45)	Traditions, rooted in history, heritage
Survival	8 (3.64)	Continuous struggle and fight to maintain the existence, persecuted but not surrender, minority but continuing
Way of life	14 (6.36)	Way of thinking, way of life, eating and clothing...
President	6 (2.73)	Presidency, political privileges
Conflict	12 (5.45)	Political rivalry, confessional, selfishness, Fanaticism, don't love each other
No difference	36 (16.36)	No difference. Not special in anything. No distinction.
I don't know	3 (1.36)	Don't know
Other	2 (0.91)	Celebrations that belong to the West, not readable
No answer	31 (14.09)	-

Table 3.7 shows answers of the Maronite respondents to an open question “What are the special features or characteristics of Maronites compared to other human groups?” Answers are categorized for the convenience of the analysis only but not always clear-cut as answers often contain couple of qualities in one sentence. Thirty-nine out of 149 respondents who answered the question, or 26.17 percent, mentioned better qualities of Maronites such as “advanced,” “educated,” and “open-minded.” Thirty-six persons answered Maronites are not especially different from others. Two of them mentioned that they have no difference from other Christians. Eighteen respondents answered the only difference is a liturgical one. Three of them mentioned that their mass is short. Twenty-nine persons mentioned that Maronites are more religious than others. Twenty persons mentioned attachment to Lebanon as a special feature of Maronites. Twenty others mentioned deep-rooted history or struggling for survival often overlapping with the attachment to Lebanon category. Such an example is, “[Maronites are a] Civilized group of people and have deep faith coming from the roots.” Several mentioned the Maronite presidential seat and Maronite saints as special features of Maronites.

There were eleven negative comments but all related to politics while many positive

comments (68 total) were related to religion and religiosity. The most frequently appearing quality was “open” (19 times total). They were found in expressions such as “open to other religions” or “open to the world” numbering 12 times, “open to the West” or “open to Western culture” numbering twice, and “open-handed” meaning generous numbering five times.

Table 3. 8 Assyrians - special characteristics

	Number (%)	Description
History	19 (41.30)	First civilization, owner of civilization, owner of land, indigenous people, deep-rooted
Patriotism	8 (17.39)	Love of country
Ethnicity	5 (10.87)	Belonging to the Assyrian ethnicity
Language	12 (26.09)	Language, language of Jesus
Clothing	5 (10.87)	Beautiful party costume
Tradition	8 (17.39)	Traditional customs
Better qualities	8 (17.39)	More caring, loving family, interested in education, love of peace
More religious	5 (10.87)	Commitment to religion, belonging to Church
Religious rite	4 (8.70)	Ecclesiastic rite
No difference	3 (6.52)	Not different from others, little difference
Political claims	2 (4.35)	Demanding of recognition, self-governance
No answer	3 (6.52)	-

The same question “What are the special features or characteristics of Assyrians compared to other human groups?” was asked to the Assyrian respondents. Nineteen respondents mentioned history related to the ancient Assyrian Empire and the Assyrians’ indigenusness in Iraq in relation to it. Expression such as *Sahib al-hadara* (holder of the civilization), and *Ashab al-ard* (holders of the land) are used to explain their history. As considering their great ancient empire lost its significance especially the relation with modern Assyrians, a respondent expressed his hurt feeling as “What distinguishes the Assyrians of Iraq is that they are a very old ethnicity, and are considered the first empire in the world. And it is considered

the first human civilization who knew God and the social affairs. And now it is considered the oldest civilization and but the other populations don't consider it as still extant and it has no importance [today]." One of them put it as "The Assyrians have an ethnic and deep-rooted feeling and they have a history of resistance and history that doesn't exist in other human groups." Among the Assyrian tradition and cultural heritage, modern Assyrian language and traditional costume which is worn on special occasions such as weddings are specifically noted as their special feature. The language was also proudly presented as a special characteristic and the language Jesus himself spoke. The word civilization appeared 11 times, tradition 8 times, ethnicity 8 times, and custom 5 times. Their distinctive ethnicity and their political claims were also mentioned. Compared to the Maronite respondents, Assyrians mentioned their religiosity less frequently as their special feature.¹⁶

There was only one negative comment; "Biased to each other, and proud of their ethnicity." Five respondents expressed they are proud of being Assyrian or being Christian. While several Assyrian interviewees described they are fanatics, or *muta 'asibin* in Arabic, no respondents mentioned it.

In general, while Maronites consider themselves not very distinct from others, Assyrians felt they are distinctive. And the base of this distinctiveness mostly lay in perceptions of their ancient civilization of the Assyrian Empire and their ethnicity. It seems the relationship to the land for both groups give them legitimacy. Both consider themselves "sons of the soil." Interestingly, a few respondents and interviewees from both groups mentioned that they are cleaner and whiter than their compatriots.¹⁷

¹⁶ 29 out of 149 Maronite respondents, or 19.46 percent, mentioned that Maronites are more religious than others, while among the Assyrians 5 out of 43 respondents, or 11.63 percent, mentioned it.

¹⁷ Brigadier General Austin who served in the Baqubah Camp observed that Assyrian wives used to give their husband a thorough tub bath especially on Saturdays in preparation for Sunday. He considers Assyrians very

Table 3. 9 Maronites - perceived strength

	Number (%)	Description
United	57 (25.91)	Unity, support each other, accordance, when united, completing each other, gatherings
Religiousness	53 (24.09)	Faith, praying, prayer, faith in God, closeness to the Creator, believe in Jesus-Christ, spiritual education, fasting and austere life
Religious institution	14 (6.36)	Head of the church, patriarchate, saints, mass, Eucharist, monks and priests
Better qualities	28 (12.73)	Civilized, cultural diversity, education, family, wisdom, loving, forgiveness, open-handedness, individualism, love for life, love others, compromise, [better] way of life, strong in crisis, courage
Openness	15 (6.82)	Open to all the religious sects, open to the world, open to the Western culture, melting with strangers
Lebanese	16 (7.27)	Attachment to Lebanon, attachment to the land, faith in Lebanon, being Lebanese, love and sacrifice for Lebanon, existence in Lebanon, rooted in Lebanon, no other country than Lebanon, patriotism, sacrifice and love for Lebanon, achieved Lebanese independence
History	10 (4.55)	Deep rootedness, history, roots and attachment to the land, preserving the roots, history of struggle and survival, Aramaic and Arab roots
Nation	4 (1.82)	Awareness of identity, belonging, preservation of religious and national identity
Politics	9 (4.09)	President of the Republic, presidential chair, majority Christians in Lebanon, leadership, role of the leaders, policies
Migration	4 (1.82)	Many immigrant communities, presence in all countries, supported from the West
No strength	6 (2.72)	No power presently, nothing, no strength, lost strength
Other	12 (5.45)	No difference, weakness, division, Kisrwan, Europe, supported from the West
All	2 (0.90)	Everywhere
Don't know	4 (1.82)	Don't know
No answer	38 (17.27)	-
Total	272 (123.64)*	

* Double and multiple answers were given.

Table 3.9 shows the answers to an open question “What is strength of the Maronites?”

cleanly people by nature. (H. H. Austin *The Baqubah Refuge Camp - An Account of Work on behalf of the Persecuted Assyrian Christians*, The Faith press, Manchester, 1920, p.35) However, Assyrian interviewees said they had never heard of such bathing custom and were rather shocked by the idea.

Answers in word(s) and sentences are categorized by topic for the convenience. Some answered qualities that they think of as real and constant strengths of the Maronites such as unity, certain institutions, or history. Others gave answers that are not always existing but conditional or wishful such as “when united” or “if religious.” Fifty-seven out of 182 respondents, or 31.32 percent, which is about a third of the respondents, considered “unity” as the strength of the Maronites. Among those 57 respondents, 41 gave “unity” as their sole answer. The next most frequent answer was “religiosity (53 persons).” Fourteen mentioned the religious system or institution. But sometimes the line between religiousness and religious institution is not clear cut.¹⁸ Also, better qualities which were mentioned as special features or characteristics of the Maronites also counted as their strength. Among those better qualities, “openness” was singled out by 15 persons. Seven among those 15 respondents gave “openness” as their sole answer for the Maronite strength. “Openness” can be called a keyword of self-perception of the Maronite culture with a scent of the Phoenician legacy. Positive qualities also include religious virtue such as “loving” and “forgiving.” When the other positive qualities and openness are added, the total is about 43 persons (19.55 percent of total, 23.63 percent out of 182 who gave answer.)

Being Lebanese and the attachment to Lebanon is also perceived as the strength as well as source of the legitimacy. A respondent mentioned, “they achieved Lebanese independence” meaning that fact reflects the Maronites’ strength. Often times being “Lebanese” and the history of the Maronites are inter-mingled in answers such as “Lebanon based rootedness,” “by the roots and the attachment to the land of the forefathers.” A respondent exceptionally counted Aramaic and Arab roots as the strength of the Maronites. Three persons answered the Maronites’ occupation of the Lebanese presidential seat as the strength. While many consider

¹⁸ Such institutionalized religious systems or rites may indicate strength as the established institution or religiosity as the source of spiritual power. Patriarchate could also signify political power.

Maronite migration as their weakness, four respondents thought of it as strength.

Interestingly, four respondents wrote their weakness is their strength. While six persons answered Maronites have no power or strength, two answered they are strong everywhere. One respondent answered their strength is in Kisrwan, the traditional Maronite stronghold and two others answered that it is in or comes from Europe.¹⁹ One person wrote, “If they belonged to their Arabism.”

Table 3. 10 Maronites - perceived weakness

	Number (%)	Description
Disunity	70 (31.82)	Lack of unity, not united, divisions, divisions among themselves, divided, too many leaders, don't listen to each other, not supporting (each other), war among themselves, competition, their fight, disagreement, schism, rivalry, not cooperating, conflict
Politics	39 (17.73)	Politics, political division, competition for political position, power-greed, power-oriented, aiming to power, politicians, perception of power, political schism, divided in political parties, continuous struggle for power, wanting presidential chair
Bad morals	33 (15.00)	Selfishness, personal interest, individualism, negligence of the needy people, not caring for the poor, pride, fanaticism, lack of trust among themselves, greed, hatred
Not religious	12 (5.45)	Lack of faith, losing faith, not attending mass, not praying
No awareness	6 (2.73)	Wrong understanding of history, forgetting history, not belonging, not referring founded values
Persecution	6 (2.73)	Persecution, persecution since the beginning, wars
No weakness	3 (1.36)	No weakness, not weak in anything, no special weakness [in comparison to other sects]
Religious institution	4 (1.82)	Patriarch, head of the church, weak status and power of the patriarch, no visionary religious leaders
Migration	3 (1.36)	Migration
Don't know	4 (1.82)	Don't know
Other	21 (9.55)	Middle East, West Dahiyeh, Vatican, became a minority, alarmed by the Muslims, no call for violence, all things, live in glory
No answer	43 (19.55)	-

¹⁹ In Arabic the question was translated as “*Where* does the strength of the Maronite reside?”

Total	245 (111.36)*	
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* Double and multiple answers were given.

As for the weakness of the Maronites, 70 respondents listed lack of unity. It is about 40 percent of the 177 total respondents who gave answer to this question (39.55 percent). Out of these 70 respondents 57 persons presented the lack of unity or division as their sole answer for the weakness of the Maronites. Disunity could be interpreted as having political connotation. The next frequently mentioned answer was politics and political competition (39 persons, 17.73 percent). Reflecting on the situation one answered, “The Maronites are weak when the presidential elections are close.” Twelve persons just gave a single word “politics” as their sole answer. One person answered “politicians” are the weakness and another person just named politicians Samir Gaegae and Michel Oun as his sole answer. Bad morals also sometimes related to political behavior such as greed for power or political position. Then, political division due to politicians’ desire for certain positions and their selfishness is perceived as gravely providing the base of the weakness of the Maronites (more than 110 respondents).

As for the bad morals, respondents pointed out fanaticism (4 persons), selfishness (4 persons but more in meaning), negligence of the poor (3 persons) and so on. One respondent also mentioned sexual discrimination. Twelve respondents interpreted their weakness as the result of their lack of religiosity. More than three persons mentioned their becoming minority and losing power. In relation to this, one respondent put that they are alarmed by the Muslims’ majority status. One respondent, who answered that the strength of the Maronites is in Kisrwan, answered that the weakness of the Maronites lies in West Dahiye. Another one, who answered that the strength is in Europe, answered that the weakness lies in the Middle East.

Table 3. 11 Assyrians - perceived strength

	Number (%)	Description
Unity	24 (52.17)	Unity with each other, oneness, love of each other, closeness to each other
Consciousness	15 (32.61)	Ethnic and political consciousness, sense of belonging, ethnic and religious belonging, deprived rights
Religiousness	4 (8.70)	Faith
Culture	4 (8.70)	Culture, traditions, heritage and customs
Other	5 (10.87)	Physical power, ADM (Assyrian Democratic Movement), in Iraq, need who assist, don't know
No strength	1 (2.17)	No strength currently
No answer	3 (6.52)	-
Total	56 (121.74)*	

* Double and multiple answers were given.

Table 3.11 shows Assyrians' self-perception of their strength. Unlike the Maronite respondents, more Assyrians gave answers in sentences rather than short answers. About one half of the respondents presented the unity as their strength (24 persons, 52.17 percent). But as like in the Maronite case, it does not always mean constantly existing unity. Rather, in many cases it is a wishful thinking of "when united Assyrians [will] have power." Fifteen among these 24 respondents gave unity as their sole answer. Unity also includes unity among political parties and churches. The next biggest number was their awareness of belonging (15 persons, 32.61 percent). Then their history and its heritage were mentioned as their strength meaning their culture is an important property for the Assyrians. On the other hand, their religion and religiosity were less frequently presented as strength than in Maronites.

Among other answers, one mentioned the Assyrians have lots of lost rights and need assistance in regaining them. Interestingly, one respondent showed his fist saying Assyrians have been strong physically especially in the past. One person named a political party ADM (Assyrian Democratic Movement) and another said their strength lies in Iraq. One respondent

said the Assyrians have no strength now. He accused evangelicals for this weakness that they sold their Assyrian identity for material gain.

Table 3. 12 Assyrians - perceived weakness

	Number (%)	Description
Migration	29 (63.04)	Emigration, forced emigration, dispersion, scattered in the world, forced to leave, no country
Division	13 (28.26)	Being divided, confessional division, divided churches
Unconsciousness	2 (4.35)	Lack of knowledge, not learning language
No leader	2 (4.35)	No wise leaders, no leadership
Characteristics	2 (4.35)	Stubbornness, racist, arrogant, careless
No weakness	3 (6.52)	No weakness
Don't know	2 (4.35)	Don't know
Other	6 (13.04)	Outside Iraq, too quick to trust others, unrealistic political party
No answer	3 (6.52)	-

As for the weakness, Assyrians mentioned emigration and dispersion most frequently (29 persons, 63.04 percent) reflecting their scattered situation. One respondent put it as “no place, no country.” Disunity was next frequently mentioned item (13 persons, 28.26 percent). Confessional division was especially pointed out. Lack of ethnic consciousness was also related to the emigration. Nine respondents listed migration and division at the same time. It is expressed as “[the weakness lies] in their dispersion and division (tashatut wa tafriqa).”

Three respondents answered that Assyrians have no weakness but two of them added emigration and not enough passion as little problems. Two respondents mentioned they trust others too quickly without learning from the past experience echoing their betrayal by the British. Both added that it is because Assyrians are emotional, or *'atifi* in Arabic. One who answered the strength is in Iraq answered the weakness lies outside Iraq. A respondent pointed out that “The parties and groupings that are far from the reality in bet Nahrein the

national (watan) land” are weakness. Another person answered that the current unstable situation in Iraq is their weakness.

Table 3. 13 Maronites - perceived authenticity

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Definitely (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Maronite	M 5 (4.10)	M 1 (0.82)	M 7 (5.74)	M 23 (18.85)	M 41 (33.61)	M 13 (10.66)	M 31 (25.41)	M 1 (0.82)	M 122 (100)
	F 2 (2.25)	F 0 (0)	F 3 (3.37)	F 12 (13.48)	F 35 (39.33)	F 13 (14.61)	F 23 (25.84)	F 1 (1.12)	F 89 (100)
	N 1 (11.11)	N 0 (0)	N 2 (22.22)	N 0 (0)	N 2 (22.22)	N 0 (0)	N 2 (22.22)	N 2 (22.22)	N 9 (100)
	T 8 (3.64)	T 1 (0.45)	T 12 (5.45)	T 35 (15.91)	T 78 (35.45)	T 26 (11.82)	T 56 (25.45)	T 4 (1.82)	T 220 (100)
	21 (9.55)			35 (15.91)	160 (72.73)				Mean* 1.20

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3. 14 Assyrians - perceived authenticity

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Definitely (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Assyrian	M 0	M 0	M 0	M 1 (3.03)	M 6 (18.18)	M 5 (15.15)	M 22 (66.67)	M 0	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 1 (7.69)	F 1 (7.69)	F 2 (15.38)	F 1 (7.69)	F 8 (61.54)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 0	T 0	T 1 (2.17)	T 2 (4.35)	T 8 (17.39)	T 5 (10.87)	T 30 (65.22)	T 0	T 46 (100)
	1 (2.17)			2 (4.35)	43 (93.48)				Mean* 2.33

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Respondents were asked to mark how much agree to a given sentence “I feel I am an authentic Maronite.” and “I feel I am an authentic Assyrian.” The Arabic word *asil* was used in place of “authentic” in the questionnaire. While a quarter of the Maronite respondents answered they feel they are authentic Maronites, 65.22 percent of the Assyrian respondents expressed they “definitely” feel that they are authentic Assyrians. Maronite interviewees often thought they are not typical Maronites since, in their view, typical or authentic Maronites are Maronites who live in the mountains for most of their lives. Though mountain

Maronites could be traditionally normative ideal or stereotype, such a description is no longer accurate for the majority of Maronites. Rather, it became very common for the Maronites to think that they do not represent “the Maronite” mainly due to their overseas experience. On the other hand, as seen above, the word *asil* is one of key words for the Assyrians’ self-perception representing their claim to be the indigenous people of Iraq. A respondent who answered to “Agree” added that it is because Christian identity is more cherished for her as if giving a low degree agreement merits some explanation. The only respondent who negated the authenticity was a woman of Chaldean origin who became Assyrian (Church of the East) through marriage.

Table 3. 15 Maronites - perception of history

	Number (%)	Description
Syrian origin	15 (6.82)	Came from Syria, ran away from Syria, started in Syria
Move to Lebanon	20 (9.09)	Came to Lebanon, moved to Qannubin, settled in Wadi Qadisha, forced migration
St. Maroun	16 (7.27)	St. Maroun, started with Mt. Maroun, St. Maroun’s work and life, his monastery and disciples, establishment of patriarchy, Maronite taken its name from St. Maroun
Christianization	4 (1.82)	Christianization of Lebanese coast, Christian ministry
Persecution	62 (28.18)	Persecution, persecuted in Syria, Ottoman persecution, persecution from the beginning, Ottoman and Mameluke persecution, persecution by Turks, perpetual persecution, persecution by Byzantine, Druze persecution
Struggle	45 (20.45)	War, wars, marginalization, continuous fighting, civil wars, struggle for survival, struggle against oppression, hurtful events, effort to overcome difficulties, Roman marginalization
1840-1860	15 (6.82)	Massacres of 1860, bloody events between Druze and Maronites, events of 1840 and 1860
Imara	5 (2.27)	Political and economic open-mindedness under imaras of Maan and Shihab, Imara system, mutasarrifiyeh
WWI	3 (1.36)	World War I
Lebanese Independence	17 (7.73)	Foundation of Lebanon, Patriarch Howayek’s call for “Greater Lebanon”, independence of Lebanon, foundation of Lebanon, participation in politics and the foundation of the state

1958	3 (1.36)	War of 1958, events in 1958, protecting Lebanon from the Nasserite invasion
Civil war	32 (14.55)	Civil war in 1975, 1975-1990 civil war, Lebanese war, war between Aoun and the Lebanese Forces, death of Bachir Gemayel, War of Elimination, Al-Jabal War, Palestinian-Lebanese war, clashes in Chouf, Kfarshima War, internal fighting for power, Taif Agreement
Taif agreement	4 (1.82)	Taif agreement, post Taif
Syrian occupation	7 (3.18)	Syrian occupation after the war, war with Syria, problem with Syrians,
Saints	15 (6.82)	Saints, canonization of St. Charbil, St. Rafqa, St. Hardini, Sainthood of Charbil, Rafqa, Hardini, Beatification of Lebanese saints, declaration of sainthood
Don't know	14 (6.36)	Don't know, don't know the events, don't know much, not informed
Other	26 (11.82)	Roman recognition, Maronite college in Rome, Cedar revolution, recent revolution, assassination of Kamal Jumblat, foundation of orders, election of Doueïhi, foundation of schools and universities, cohabitation with Muslims, Marada,
No answer	83 (37.73)	-
Total	289 events*	

* Number of respondents who answered they don't know and no answer was excluded.

Table 3.15 shows the frequency of events in Maronite history the Maronite respondents presented as their history. Respondents were asked not to give details but to name events. The number of respondents who wrote any answer is 137. They presented about two events in average. No one related Phoenicia or Christianization to their history. The closest one was “spread of Maronite spirituality in Lebanese coast,” an answer given by a priest. One person mentioned the legendary Marada. As the table shows, the history begins with the religious origin and jumps to the nineteenth century and thereafter. If the frequently mentioned events are connected, a general history of the Maronites can be built in accordance with events that Maronites think important in their collective memory. In this history, Maronites came from Syria following St. Maroun because of persecution and settled in Lebanese mountains. They went through much persecutions and oppression and faced massacre in 1860. They contributed to the independence of the modern state of Lebanon. They had civil war from

1975 during which their leaders fought each other. But they produced canonized saints.

In describing their move to Lebanon, six respondents used expression of “forced immigration.” History between the origin and the nineteenth century was vaguely generalized as persecuted and struggling for survival. The word persecution itself directly used by 56 respondents, or 40.88 percent out of 137 answered persons. Fifteen among them presented persecution as their sole answer (10.95 percent out of answered respondents). Persecution was most frequently associated with Ottoman (15 times), then Mameluke (4 times). The word war was used by 41 respondents, or 29.93 percent of the answered. Description of events since the nineteenth century is more detailed providing more years of specific events. However, those modern events were also mainly wars except independence of Lebanon and canonization of the Lebanese saints. Then, history of Maronites is remembered by the Maronites as series of persecution and war.

Also, respondents mentioned the role of the Maronite Church such as taking care of people during World War I. One respondent put it as “[the Church’s] taking the cross as a hostage for the people,”²⁰ and another one as “taking care of people when the state is still missing.” Concerning the Church’s contribution to the independence of Lebanon, Patriarch Hoyek at that time was specially mentioned (3 persons). For some respondents, the canonization of Lebanese saints was the most important event in the history. Three respondents gave the event as their sole answer with emphasis of its importance. Priests and seminary students also mentioned recognition of the Church by the Roman Catholic Church, establishment of the Lebanese Maronite Order, and establishment of the Maronite College in Rome.

Besides religious figures, Fakhr Eddin (4 persons), Bachir Gumayl (2 persons), Pierre Gumayl were mentioned by name. One person included the death of Kamal Jumblat, the Druz

²⁰ Meaning that the Church pledged its property including the prelate’s cross pendant made of precious stones to France in order to save the people from starvation.

leader, in the Maronite history. Recent Lebanese history such as the withdrawal of Syrian forces and the Cedar Revolution are also found in the list. Answers sometimes included incorrect information such as the establishment of the patriarchate occurred in Syria rather than in Lebanon.

Table 3. 16 Assyrians - perception of history

	Number (%)	Description
Ancient Empire	8 (17.39)	Greatness of the ancient Assyrian Empire, its expansion, first civilization
Fall of Nineveh	17 (36.96)	Fall of the Assyrian empire, fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.
Persecution	6 (13.04)	Continuous struggling, massacres, wars
Badrkhan	8 (17.39)	Massacre by Badrkhan Beik in 1842
WWI	6 (13.04)	Massacre by Turks in 1915, expulsion from Hakkari, Western sympathy
Simko	10 (21.73)	Simko event, murder of the patriarch by Simko in 1918, death of patriarch Benyamin Simeon by Simko
Simele	32 (69.57)	Simele massacre in 1933, Simele event
Emigration	9 (19.57)	Dispersion, forced emigration
2003	4 (8.70)	Emigration since 2003, expulsion from Nineveh in 2008
Don't know	4 (8.70)	I don't know, my father and mother know, they have history but I don't know.
Other	4. (8.70)	Personal history of emigration, Hulagu invasion, Bible mentioned Assyria and Jonah
No answer	2 (4.35)	-
Total	104 events*	

* Number of respondents who answered they don't know and no answer was excluded.

Assyrians narration of their history begins with the greatness of the ancient Assyrian Empire. Interestingly, number of respondents who mentioned the fall of the empire was twice as big as the number of people who mentioned the empire's glory. These two categories related to the ancient empire together counts 25 persons, or 54.35 percent of total 46 respondents. The history jumps to the nineteenth century with vague generalization of the period in between as continuous struggle for survival. Concerning the World War I, Assyrians' deportation from

Hakkari to Baquba refugee camp, their alliance with Britain and Russia were also mentioned.

The biggest number presented the Simele event in 1933 as representative of Assyrian history (32 persons, 69.57 percent). It is expressed as massacre using word such as *madhbahah* (massacre or slaughtering), *madhabih* (plural form of *madhbahah*), *majazir* (buchering), *majazirah* (single form of *majazir*), *dhabh* (slaughtering), *qatl* (killing) in Arabic, and *farman* in Assyrian while some respondents called it the 1933 event or the Simele event. Among those 32 respondents, six persons named the event as their sole answer. Another six persons put Simele massacre and Simko's killing of the patriarch as their sole answer. After the Simele event and dispersion as its result, history jumps again to the recent emigration since 2003.

Interestingly, there is no mention of the Christianization of the Assyrians. Only one person related the ancient Assyria to the Bible along with the prophet Jonah. One person mentioned the massacre as sectarian. Also, there is no mention of the Assyrian Church except the murder of Patriarch Benyamin Simeon. Even in description of Simele massacre in 1933, no one mentioned forced move of the Patriarchal seat from Iraq. Events tend to be remembered with names of opponents such as Badhkhan event and Simko event. A female respondent who became Assyrian through marriage wrote her husband's family history putting "My husband's family left the city of Hit long time ago, about fifty years ago, for the city of Telkeif." One person mentioned the Mongol invasion led by Hulagu. Answers also contain wrong information in a couple of cases such as the fall of Nineveh due to inner division and betrayal.

Generally Assyrian respondents provided answers in sentences rather than a few words. Also respondents provided years for specific events such as the fall of Nineveh, Badhrkhan, Simko, and Simele incidents. Assyrian history is largely perceived as the history of persecution and history of massacre. One respondent expressed it as history of "immigration,

murder, and slaughter.” The most frequently used word is massacre in slightly different words mentioned above (30 persons).

Both Maronites and Assyrians, in describing their histories, tended to jump from their origin, either the establishment of the Church in the Maronite case or ancient ethnic origins in the Assyrian case, to the nineteenth century disturbances with a generalization of the period in between as persecuted and struggled. Both groups see their history as a history of persecution and struggle for survival. It is noteworthy that respondents count recent events such as the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 and forced emigration from Nineveh in 2008 as their history. The most notable difference of two groups in their perception of history, which in turn comes from their self-perception on group identity, lies in their origin. While Maronites described their origins as the forming of a religious group, Assyrians tended to describe their history as the history of an ethnic group.

Table 3. 17 Conversion to the Maronite Church

Original sect	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Answer (%)	Total (%)
Other Middle Eastern Christian	159 (72.27)	45 (20.45)	16 (7.27)	220 (100)
Non-Christian Middle Eastern	115 (52.27)	78 (35.45)	27 (12.27)	220 (100)
Non-Middle Eastern Christian	136 (61.82)	54 (24.55)	30 (13.64)	220 (100)
Non-Middle Eastern non-Christian	108 (49.09)	82 (37.27)	30 (13.64)	220 (100)

Question. If a non-Maronite converts to the Maronite Church, do you consider him/her Maronite?

Table 3. 18 Maronite conversion to another sect

	Number (%)
Yes, in any case	83 (37.73)
If he/she goes to one of the Eastern Churches yes, otherwise no.	21 (9.55)
If he/she goes to any of Christian Churches yes, otherwise no.	42 (19.09)
No, in any case	59 (26.82)
Other	3 (1.36)
No answer	12 (5.45)

Total	220 (100)
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Question. If a Maronite converts to another religious sect, do you still consider him/her Maronite?

Table 3. 19 Conversion to the Assyrian Church

Original sect	Yes (%)	No (%)	No Answer (%)	Total %
Chaldean	22 (47.83)	17 (36.96)	7 (15.22)	46 (100)
Other Middle Eastern Christian	25 (54.35)	15 (32.61)	6 (13.04)	46 (100)
Non-Christian Middle Eastern	12 (26.09)	27 (58.70)	7 (15.22)	46 (100)
Non-Middle Eastern Christian	9 (19.57)	29 (63.04)	8 (17.39)	46 (100)
Non-Middle Eastern non-Christian	7 (15.22)	30 (65.22)	9 (19.57)	46 (100)

Question. If a non-Assyrian converts to the Assyrian Church, do you consider him/her Assyrian?

Table 3. 20 Assyrian conversion to another sect

	Number (%)
Yes, in any case	34 (73.91)
If he/she goes to the Chaldean Church yes, otherwise no.	0
If he/she goes to one of the Eastern Churches yes, otherwise no.	4 (8.70)
If he/she goes to any of Christian Churches yes, otherwise no.	2 (4.35)
No, in any case	3 (6.52)
NA	3 (6.52)
Total	46 (100)

Question. If an Assyrian converts to another religious sect, do you still consider him/her Assyrian?

Tables from 3.17 to 3.20 show the attitude of Maronites and Assyrians toward conversions to and from their religious sect. In general, Maronites showed more fluidity toward both conversions to and from the Maronite Church. Converts from other Middle Eastern Christian sects were most accepted (72.27 percent). Converts from non-Middle Eastern Christian churches were more accepted (61.82 percent) than those from the Middle East of non-Christian background (52.27 percent). About a quarter of respondents answered that if Maronites convert to another religious sect they are no longer Maronites. Three showed their indifference to the subject. Assyrians showed more rigidity or stronger boundaries in defining their group than the Maronites. Despite the fact that the Chaldean Church was bifurcated

from the Church of the East, converts from the Chaldean Church were less accepted than ones from other Middle Eastern Churches reflecting the separate Chaldean identity is quite firmly settled. Thirty-three Assyrian respondents, 73.91 percent, answered that even when Assyrians convert to another religious sect including non-Christian ones they remain Assyrian. For them, religious conversion does not result in becoming Assyrian or non-Assyrian connoting that “Assyrian” is an ascriptive identity.

Table 3. 21 Assyrian boundary inclusion

Sects	Total (%)
Protestant Assyrians	37 (80.43)
Chaldeans	26 (56.52)
Syrian Orthodox	22 (47.83)
Syrian Catholic	21 (45.65)
Thomas Christians in India	7 (15.22)
Maronites	20 (43.48)
None above	4 (8.70)
Other	1 (2.17)
Total	138 (300)*

* Double and multiple answers are given.

Q) Whom among the below sects do you consider as Assyrian nation?

On the other hand, table 3.21 shows how Assyrians consider their ethnic or national boundary. The given question was “Whom among the below sects do you consider as Assyrian nation?” Though Assyrian activists claim that “Assyrian” is an ethnicity including adherents of the Church of the East, the Chaldean Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Catholic Church, the opinion of the respondents was divided except about the Assyrian Protestants. Perplexed by the question, a respondent mentioned that Syrian Orthodox adherents are not Assyrian because they are Jacobites and Chaldeans are Chaldean, not

Assyrian.²¹ Another respondent said, “I don’t know about Assyrian Protestants, Syrian Catholics, Thomas Christians in India or Maronites. But Chaldeans and Syrian Orthodox Church adherents are not Assyrian.” A respondent revealed that he did not know the Thomas Christians in India. One respondent added that all above mentioned sects are originally Assyrian. But he marked the answer “non above.”

Interestingly, as seen earlier in this chapter, though Maronites do not consider themselves a part of the Assyrian nation, twenty Assyrian respondents, or 43.48 percent, said the Maronites are a part of the Assyrian nation. While Chaldean Babylon becomes a part of the Maronite forefathers’ territory in Maronite expansionist’s discourse,²² Lebanon become a part of Assyrian territory in the Assyrian discourse.²³ Expansionist Assyrian activists also try to expand their boundary to include the Yazidi community in Iraq.²⁴

Table 3. 22 Maronite term connotation

	Male (%)	Female (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Religion	81 (66.39)	69 (77.53)	4 (44.44)	154 (70.00)
Extended family	12 (9.84)	15 (16.85)	0	27 (12.27)
Community	37 (30.33)	28 (31.46)	1 (11.11)	66 (30.00)
Political belonging	6 (4.92)	4 (4.49)	0	10 (4.55)
Ethnicity	5 (4.10)	0	0	5 (2.27)
Nationality	8 (6.56)	5 (5.62)	1 (11.11)	14 (6.36)
Other	2 (1.64)	2 (2.25)	0	4 (1.82)
NA	5 (4.10)	5 (5.62)	3 (33.33)	13 (5.91)
Total*	156 (127.87)	128 (143.82)	9 (100)	293 (133.18)

* Double and multiple answers allowed.

²¹ She was a Syrian Catholic Church background Assyrian, who became Assyrian by marriage. She answered that only Syrian Catholics are included to the Assyrian nation.

²² Butrous Dau, *Religious, Cultural and Political History of the MARONITES*, No Publisher, Lebanon, 1984, p.65

²³ This gives rise to the idea that Assyrians in Lebanon today are living in their ancestral territory because ancient Assyria conquered today’s Lebanon and even left evidence such as steles in Nahr al-Kalb. *Tawaif al-Lubnan*, NBN CD for example.

²⁴ <http://www.furkono.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=9214>.... The Assyria Liberation Party (GFA) invited Anwar Muawiya, the Prince of the Yezidi nation to demonstrate that the Yezidi and Assyrian people come from the same race and ancestry.

Table 3. 23 Assyrian term connotation

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Religion	3(9.09)	1(7.69)	4(8.70)
Extended family	4(12.12)	2(15.38)	6(13.04)
Community	9(27.27)	5(38.46)	14(30.43)
Political belonging	2(6.06)	1(7.69)	3(6.52)
Ethnicity	28(84.85)	10(76.92)	38(82.61)
Nationality	6(18.18)	2(15.38)	8(17.39)
Other	2(6.06)	1(7.69)	3(6.52)
Total*	54(163.64)	22(169.23)	76(165.22)

* Double and multiple answers allowed.

Table 3.22 and Table 3.23 show how Maronites and Assyrians define their groups. The given question was “What does ‘Maronite’ mean to you?” to Maronite respondents and “What does ‘Assyrian’ mean to you?” to Assyrian respondents. The result is generally coherent with results of the previous questions. The largest number of Maronites interpreted the term ‘Maronite’ as “religion” (70 percent) while Assyrians tended to regard the term ‘Assyrian’ as “ethnicity” (82.61 percent). All three Assyrian respondents who answered “Other” clarified that the term means ‘*qawm*’ to them. The term means ethnicity in Arabic. The Arabic word *Ethniya (ummah)* was used in the questionnaire. When these three answers are added to the Ethnicity category, it makes 89.13 percent of the total. Nineteen out of 41 respondents who answered that the term means ethnicity chose ethnicity as their sole answer (41.30 percent). Out of 154 Maronite respondents who answered that the term means religion to them, 104 persons gave ethnicity as their sole answer. For both groups, extended family and community were felt in similar degrees. Twenty one Maronite respondents answered that the term means only religion and community to them (9.55 percent). On the other hand, ten Assyrian respondents answered that the term means only community and ethnicity (21.74 percent). Maronite respondents who answered the term means “other” answered that the term means “belonging,” “*taifa*,” “stagnant Church,” and “nothing.” One who answered that the term

Maronite means ethnicity added that though it means ethnicity to him but “he does not feel Phoenician but Lebanese” implying the term connotes Lebanon in itself. For Maronites who regard the term Maronite as a religious marker only, if they themselves are not religion, they may also feel less that they are Maronite. For example, one Maronite respondent answered that he considers the term solely with religious meaning and that he does not feel Maronite or religious at all and does not attend church at all.

Table 3. 24 Maronites - perceived future

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Definitely (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Future will be positive	M 1 (0.82)	M 1 (0.82)	M 29 (23.77)	M 14 (11.48)	M 46 (37.70)	M 12 (9.84)	M 16 (13.11)	M 3 (2.46)	M 122 (100)
	F 0	F 2 (2.25)	F 11 (12.36)	F 12 (13.48)	F 39 (43.82)	F 9 (10.11)	F 14 (15.73)	F 2 (2.25)	F 89 (100)
	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 1 (11.11)	N 0	N 2 (22.22)	N 2 (22.22)	N 1 (11.11)	N 2 (22.22)	N 9 (100)
	T 2 (0.91)	T 3 (1.36)	T 41 (18.64)	T 26 (11.82)	T 87 (39.55)	T 23 (10.45)	T 31 (14.09)	T 7 (3.18)	T 220 (100)
	46 (20.91)				26 (11.82)	141 (64.09)			Mean* 0.81

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3. 25 Assyrians - perceived future

	Not at all (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Definitely (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Future will be positive	M 1 (3.03)	M 1 (3.03)	M 6 (18.18)	M 1 (3.03)	M 12 (36.36)	M 0	M 11 (33.33)	M 1 (3.03)	M 33 (100)
	F 0	F 0	F 3 (23.08)	F 1 (7.69)	F 5 (38.46)	F 3 (23.08)	F 1 (7.69)	F 0	F 13 (100)
	T 1 (2.17)	T 1 (2.17)	T 9 (19.57)	T 2 (4.35)	T 17 (36.96)	T 3 (6.52)	T 12 (26.09)	T 1 (2.17)	T 46 (100)
	11 (23.91)				2 (4.35)	32 (69.57)			Mean* 1

* The Mean is an average of the numerical values of each answer : Not at all -3, Strongly disagree -2, Disagree -1, Neutral 0, Agree 1, Strongly agree 2, Definitely 3. There was no numerical value assigned to “no answer” and it was excluded in the calculation of the Mean.

Table 3.24 and 3.25 show how much Maronites and Assyrians think their futures will be positive. Respondents were asked to mark how much they agree to the given sentences. The given sentences are “I think the future of the Maronites is positive.” and “I think the future of the Assyrians is positive.” each. Despite the current unstable political situation in Iraq,

Assyrian respondents showed a slightly higher degree of agreement (69.57 percent) than the Maronites (64.09 percent). A Maronite respondent who answered neutral added that the future is connected with the rest of the sects.

Table 3. 26 Maronites - additional comments

	Number (%)	Description
Advice to the community	13 (5.91)	If they had a project for group such as party or system, should unite, should consider Lebanese first, should refer history, wish Bkeki have lay experts, have children and grow in your land, love each other and belong to your native country
Good quality	6 (2.72)	Capable of living with our entourage but will defend for freedom land and life, not strict as Orthodox, sect of genuineness, faith, peaceful people, pioneers
Contribution and history	5 (2.27)	Always protected independence, preserved Lebanese identity, model to all Christianity, they are foundation of the Christianity
Importance	3 (1.36)	Maronites count 6 million, indivisible part of Lebanon,
Proud	5 (2.27)	Proud to be a Maronite, proud to belong to the Maronite religion
Religious wish	3 (1.36)	God protect them in this country,
Bad quality	3 (1.36)	Not applying their religion, belong to politics,
Other	4 (1.82)	Confessionalism is what differentiate us, [point not understandable], want to know about their customs
Total	42 (19.09)	

Table 3. 27 Assyrians - additional comments

	Number (%)	Description
Past glory	6 (13.04)	Holders of culture, art, contribution to science, civilization holders,

Current situation	6 (13.04)	Going through difficult situation, losing position by Kurds, weakening Assyrians because of treason, no place no country
Good quality	5 (10.87)	Trust-worthy, help others, care and support, lovers of peace, conscious intellectuals,
Political claims	7 (15.22)	Want autonomy, wish restoration of the past
Advice to the community	6 (13.04)	Unification of religious branches, forget the dispute and overcome [division of] parties, suggest to form institutions for protection of the Assyrians from extinction, unite and organize
Other	2 (4.35)	All the Assyrians be saved, please help us
Total	31 (67.39)	

Forty-two Maronite respondents and thirty Assyrian respondents wrote additional comments on their groups. Respondents of both groups suggested what the community needs to be better. Assyrian respondents explained that they are in a difficult situation. An Assyrian respondent added “Please help us. We want to leave here because of difficulty.” reflecting the difficult current situation. Respondents from both groups listed the contributions their community made, how important their communities are, and what good qualities they possess. By emphasizing such importance, respondents are emitting a strong message of “We are worthy.” It is also a message, when passive, of “Don’t harm us.” In general, Assyrians gave answers with more detail and care. As Theodor Hanf points out concerning Lebanese respondents for his research, the Maronites tended to take the chance to express themselves as much as possible by answering more questions during the war,²⁵ the Assyrian respondents and interviewees eagerly answered and explained about themselves during these more turbulent times.

²⁵ Hanf, op.cit., p.197

All in all, the questionnaire survey results confirm that the word “Maronite” means religion to the Maronites while the word “Assyrian” means ethnicity to the Assyrians. Key words of their self-perception are “openness” for the Maronites and “holders of civilization” for the Assyrians. Both expressed pride in being Maronites and Assyrians.

Part III compared the Maronite and Assyrian experiences. In summary, Maronites and Assyrians share the Syriac origin which left traces in liturgy and hymns. The Syriac language emerged out of Aramaic language during the early stage of Christianity differentiating Christians from their pagan neighbors. Both groups use the Syriac, the Western and Eastern branches respectively. Both Maronite Church and the Church of the East were formed and established in the midst of Christological debate which produced various Christian sects in the region. Development of specific doctrines and differentiation through them justified the existence of different churches. Institutionalization of the Church of the East precedes that of the Maronite Church. And the two Churches in their formation were under different Empires and different political situations. While the Church of the East carried out its missionary works to India, Central Asia and China, the Maronite Church stayed in Mount Lebanon. However, Maronites began to prosper and be modernized since their contact with the Crusades partly in the price of Latinization. On the other hand, Assyrians decreased into an isolated community since Mongolian invasion though the reason is unclear either gradually or as a direct result of the invasion. They were weakened both homeland and mission field in China due to its persecutive policy.

In both groups, the first discourse on their identity was about their doctrinal stances. It was their different doctrines that provide them the *raison d’être* as separate churches though the

separation was interpreted in association with different culture or as nationalisms in early times. Once group formations were completed with religious discontinuity, discourses on their group identities focused on legitimacy and continuity such as defense of the orthodoxy and historicity of the founder(s). In modern times, nationalism occupied the whole group identity discourse re-writing people's history connecting their origin to the ancient ethnic forefathers. In both groups, new non-clerical elites emerged advocating nationalism.

Similarities of the Maronites and Assyrians in terms of religious phenomenology were also discussed. On the institutional level, both developed their distinctive theologies, liturgies, and hierarchies. And in both churches, monasticism has functioned as the spiritual source though it became only part of the past history for Assyrians. On the community level, a village church has traditionally played a central role in everyday life of both Maronites and Assyrians. Besides official doctrines and religious practices, folk religious factors are part of community culture. On the individual level, though their religious belonging is given not voluntarily acquired, members of both groups largely agreed that they are religious. Individual members manifest their belonging in personal names, by carrying religious ornaments, or by using different languages. Within modern states of Lebanon and Iraq, logics of politics are applied to these religiously originated groups without exception.

The survey results in Chapter 2 of this part show that Maronites prefer to identify themselves as Lebanese, Christian, and Maronite and less favor to identify as Phoenician. The survey shows that Assyrians identify themselves as Assyrian foremost followed by Christian and Iraqi while Nestorian identity does not have much support. Assyrians also tend to think they are different from other groups more than Maronites do. People from both groups tend to estimate their groups positively and feel proud to belong. Also, the survey found that hardships in history, especially recent ones, are strongly remained in and formed

the collective memory. All in all, the survey proves that group identity is an on-going process, not static label.

Conclusion

The salience of religious identities in the Middle East is part of a culture unique to the region. Members of different religious sects share common regional culture while keeping their distinct identity intact. But the prevalence of Arab Muslims in the region more often than not drives non-Arabs or non-Muslims to be overlooked. Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq are such groups. In terms of religious origin, both groups stem from the Syriac Church tradition. But while Maronites enjoy relative social privileges in Lebanon and are recognized internationally, Assyrians are one of the least privileged in their homeland and least known even in the Middle East. The two groups' socio-historical backgrounds, development of their identities, and various self-expressions which form their culture are examined throughout the previous chapters.

1. Summary of findings

Both groups went through periods of group formation, institutionalization, theological reforms, persecution and oppression, modernization and nationalist movements, intertwined with state-buildings. The focal point of defining and redefining their identity has continuously changed, in accordance with ever-changing circumstances and changes in significant others. It is ironic that Maronites who had lived in isolation in the mountains became the most visible Christian group in the Middle East while Assyrians whose church expanded to India, Central Asia, and China covering the largest Church jurisdiction became one of the smallest. Maronites have their origin as a Christian sect, developed into a community similar to the Western concept of nation with considerable autonomy, and became one of many confessional groups in Lebanon. On the other hand, Assyrians, or the followers

of the Church of the East, though started as a Christian sect and transformed into a community similar to the nation with relative autonomy and tribal system, they became part of a broader ethnic group of Assyria. Parallel to these shifts, the Lebanese nationality is the primary identity for contemporary Maronites, while it is Assyrian ethnicity for the contemporary Assyrians. In other words, the Maronites' identity discourse is carried out in relation with, or more precisely *within*, the definition of the state of Lebanon, while the Assyrians' identity discourse moved beyond the definitions of the Church of the East or the state of Iraq. Nevertheless, gravity and salience of nationality as identity was also found among Assyrians. At the same time, the tendency to present oneself with personal names and traits, observed among both Maronites and Assyrians, shows the increasing importance of individuality in a Middle Eastern culture where belonging has been the identifier of a person.

However, identity, despite its fluidity and conditionality, always involves preserving legitimacy and continuity. Though Christianity tried to sever pagan practices and identities, they survived in popular practices, often incorporated into Christian rituals, while acquiring new meanings. While the Maronite Church maintains its religious legitimacy through identifying with the Catholic Church, the Church of the East's apostolic origin and the *Malka*, or holy leaven, tradition provide its religious legitimacy. Attachment to the land gives a sense of indigenusness and territorial continuity. While the proof of ethnic connection of the Maronites to ancient Phoenicians became hazy, ethnic continuity from the ancient Assyrian people to the contemporary Assyrians became truth for the Assyrians.

Once Maronites and Assyrians came under the governance of the Islamic Empire, they came to share a common history of the region. Local consequences of the regional conditions became history for the two groups. Maronites and Assyrians alike tended to see their history as a history of persecution and oppression. Besides their origins, relatively recent events, such

as massacres and wars, were the most important events remembered by the Maronites and the Assyrians: massacre of Maronites in 1860 and massacres of Assyrians during World War I and in 1933 respectively. Both groups underwent modernization, in which the traditional social system was destroyed, as well as the rise of nationalism, whose ultimate aim was to acquire territorial autonomy. While Maronites obtained territorial autonomy in cooperation with other religious sects in Lebanon, Assyrians were scattered in different countries.

The differentiated identities of Maronites and Assyrians were manifested in differentiated way. Sharing banal experiences of everyday life among members of a group constitutes distinctive expression of identity. Attending and participating in distinctive liturgy of the Maronite Church and the Assyrian Church is part of such collective experiences occurring in a specially arranged time sets. Characteristics of folk religion appeared most in the saint veneration among Maronites and in folkloric feasts among Assyrians. Personal names are an abundant source of cultural information, such as religious tendency, cultural change, and identity shift and continuity. People may conceal their - in fact, it is their child's - religious affiliation by choosing religiously neutral names, or on the contrary, may express it more visibly by choosing distinct names. Among Maronites, Christian names in westernized form serve as their group marker. As for Assyrians, names related to ancient Assyria or distinctive religious names are one of the most prominent group markers. Emigration in both groups is an important issue. Constant emigration may weaken a community in the homeland, or may enable new opportunities to restore it. Though traditional social systems gave their way to modern institutions and states, Maronites and Assyrians adjusted to express themselves within and by these new systems. Increasing accessibility to modern mass media, especially the Internet provides Maronites and Assyrians a new means to identify themselves with other members and continue their identity (re)defining process.

Maronites and Assyrians alike consider their group unity as their strength. In this study, disunity and political competition are considered weaknesses of Maronites, and migration for the Assyrians. Keywords in the self-perceptions of Maronites and Assyrians were “openness” for Maronites, and “owner of the civilization” for Assyrians. Strengths may become weaknesses at the same time. Openness of the Maronites may dilute their distinctiveness, while holding a rigid group boundary among the Assyrians may isolate them.

2. A cultural model to approach the Middle Eastern groups

To understand the Middle East as a region consisting of various religious and ethnic groups, employing Western-centric viewpoints and Arabist narratives seems deficient. Rather, the study suggests a view of the region in terms of group dynamics.

First, understanding the Middle East with Western concepts has always been problematic. Nationalism is also such a topic. Theories on nationalism have developed based on European historical experiences. Though the development of nationalism in the Middle East was generally influenced by Western nationalism, applying its concepts and terminologies bears inherent limits. Also, the very concept of ‘nation’ is problematic. Walker Connor titled his article “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...”¹ reflecting such conceptual problems. Bernard Lewis also points out that “Nation, people, country, community, and state are old words, but they are words of unstable and therefore explosive content.”² Asher Kaufman also argues that the application of the theory of nationalism in the Middle East is difficult.³ There is a tendency in applying theories of nationalism in the

¹ Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...”, in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1994, pp. 36-46 (Originally published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1/4, 1978, pp.379-388)

² Bernard Lewis, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Schocken Books, New York, 1998, p.10

³ Asher Kaufman, *Phoenicianism : The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920*, *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Jan. 2001, p. 26

Middle East to evaluate groups under the premise that they are either qualified to be called a nation or ethnic or neither. But, the existence of groups preceded discourses on nationalism. Groups should therefore be treated as entities equipped with their own agencies in defining themselves. Questions to approach such groups would be “How does a group identify and differentiate itself from other groups?”, “What provides the basis of its legitimacy and continuity?”, and “What terms do the group and others use in differentiating?” How such group identity has continuously transformed matters as a sense of a people existed even among ancient Middle Easterners.⁴ Ancient Phoenicians had a sense of a people.⁵ Ancient Assyrians are said to have prototype nationalism based Assyrian citizenship.⁶ As seen in earlier chapters, the establishment of different patriarchates is explained as a form of nationalism at the time. Maronites utilized the term ‘nation’ since the beginning of the nineteenth century meaning ‘people’ or ‘ethnic group.’⁷

Bernard Lewis presents terms related to nationalism and their development of meaning. ‘*Asabiyya* has been a positive term for tribal or ethnic solidarity, though it is associated with a narrow tribalism today. *Sha‘b* which means “people,” has acquired recent meaning of the mass of the common people while *shu‘ubiyya*, a derivative of *sh‘ub*, which is the plural of *sha‘b*, has always had negative connotations with populist content. Though *qawmiyyah*, or nationalism, was first coined by Turkish anti-nationalists with a negative sense of tribal or factional loyalties, it has come to have a positive connotation in modern Arabic. *Umma* is also used in ethnic sense, though with Islamic religious connotation. *Milla*, which has been used to denote different religious sects in the Ottoman Empire, is not used any more in

⁴ For example, Israelites used the terms *leom*, *umma*, ‘*am*, and *goy* (plural *goyim*) to denote different peoples. They may be translated as “nation” or “people.” (Lewis, op.cit., p.81) Also, in the ancient Middle East, city states were differentiated according to their major deities.

⁵ Kaufman, op.cit., p.8

⁶ Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Identity in Ancient Times and Today*, www.aina.org

⁷ Claude Boueiz Kanaan, *Lebanon 1860-1960: A Century of Myth and Politics*, Saqi, London, 2005, p.65

Arabic.⁸ Lewis also points out that though the *watan* is generally used to denote country, it is a town or a neighborhood, a province, or a village in classical literature.⁹ As people in the Middle East have been subjects of different empires, rather than citizens, there has not been an equivalent term for citizen until recently. The tax-paying population in the Ottoman Empire was called *ra'iyya*, whose usage limited to refer non-Muslim Christian subjects from the late eighteenth century.¹⁰ As *watan* came to denote country, *muwatin*, a derived noun from *watan*, also consequently acquired the meaning of citizenship. Harvey Smith noted that while the words *umma* and *watan* have been used as rough synonyms for nation, *watan* acquired the meaning of people and land, and became parallel to the Western notion of nation among the educated.¹¹ Today, *watan* is used as a country and *muwatin* a citizen.

Understanding the concept of religion may be more problematic. Religion is understood generally as a faith system. But it is much more than a faith system or personal faith. Also, the word religion is understood differently in different societies. While membership to a religious group is a secondary belonging, or an acquired status, in secularized societies, it is an ascriptive status in others, like the Middle Eastern ones, for example.¹² Certain religions have become a state religion which is legally institutionalized in some countries. In other countries, religion has shrunk into the private realm, while leaving its traces in moral values. Religion can be understood as faith,¹³ belonging, and culture. Though any religion has all three aspects, one aspect may be stronger than others depending on circumstances. For example in Korea, it is the aspect of personal faith, chosen by individual conviction. The

⁸ Lewis, op.cit., pp.82-85. The term '*Asabiyya*' is originally presented by Ibn Khaldun.

⁹ Ibid., p.57

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.18-19

¹¹ Harvey H. Smith and others, *Area Handbook for Iraq*, The American University, Washington, D.C., 1971, p.238

¹² Social science textbooks in different societies also describe the situation in these ways.

¹³ What defines religious faith is a separate topic. An analogous understanding of religions based on concepts of Christianity such as God and salvation, has been topic of much debate and criticism in the study of religion.

validity of personal faith decides whether a person belongs to a religion or not. Once individuals change their conviction and decide to leave or accept a certain religion, they no longer consider themselves or are considered by others members of the former religion. One may decide to live without religion. Each member of a family can have different religions.¹⁴ On the other hand, in secularized Europe, Christianity functions as culture. Confucianism in the Far East also became culture. Even those who do not believe in Christianity or Confucianism, accept their moral values as the base of social norm. In the Middle East, religious affiliation has been ascriptive. Conversion, especially from Islam to another religion, is very rare and may even imply risks to one's life. A religion which functions as belonging is a "masculine religion" in Leon Podle's expression.¹⁵

Problems arise when people project their own understanding of religion to religions in other societies. Conflicts in the Middle East are often portrayed as religious. Those conflicts break out between communities of different religions or sects. In such conflicts, one's religion becomes a group marker, which marks the "we/other" line. It is a religious conflict for the Middle Easterners, meaning a conflict between two communities or countries that belong to different religions. Religion, in this case, is belonging. But for outsiders, such conflicts will be understood as a conflict to defend their faith, or a clash between different theologies. In relation to this, some scholars suggest seeing the Lebanese Civil War as a class struggle, emphasizing economic aspect, rather than a religious conflict.¹⁶ However, one should not overlook the fact that in Lebanon, the distribution of power and resources, as well as struggles over them, are acquired and expressed *through* sectarian belonging within the

¹⁴ As the history of Christianity in Korea started about 200 years ago, a new generation born into Christianity has appeared. It is on the verge of transforming religion, especially Christianity, into a basis of belonging.

¹⁵ See Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*, Spence Publishing Company, Dallas, 1999. According to Podles, while Christianity in the West has been generally feminized, that is, retreated into the private and domestic realm, Islam in the Middle East and Christianity in Ireland hold masculine characteristics.

¹⁶ See, for example, B.J. Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, Zed Books, London, 1985

social structure. It must be more so if certain occupations belong to certain religious communities as they did in the Ottoman Empire, and consequently form a kind of class that becomes more or so ascriptive. Moreover, there are cases that a religious sect overlaps with an ethnicity, which is the case for Assyrians and Armenians. Then, class or ethnic struggle cannot but be expressed in the form of sectarian or religious conflict. On the other hand, Middle Easterners would interpret any actions performed by Western governments as Christian based on religious purpose and interpretation, and equalize the West to Christendom. Middle Eastern Christians are not the exception from such Occidentalism. Russia and Britain during World War I were regarded as Christian countries which would help their co-religionists in the Orient.¹⁷ Middle Eastern Christian migrants in Sweden could not understand how a Christian country like Sweden can admit Muslim migrants.¹⁸

Secondly, one should reconsider the narrative of prevailing Arabism. Understanding the Middle East through the viewpoint of Arabism causes several important conceptual distortions.

- 1) A view that equalizes the Middle East with Islam. This view tries to interpret all phenomena which happen in the Middle East in relation to Islam based on the saliency of Islam in the region and its emphasis in the Arabism. It deals with Islam as the most peculiar characteristic of the region and tries to know Islam to understand the region. As noticed above, a religion neither solely means faith nor does faith equal to official theology. And of course, there are more than one interpretations of Islam. Moreover, theology and popular religious practices are not always coherent, which implies that

¹⁷ But at the same time, one cannot rule out the fact that Western powers from the end of the nineteenth century presented themselves as protectors of Christians in the Ottoman Empire for political ends.

¹⁸ Ulf Bjorklund, *North to Another Country – the Formation of a Suryoyo Community in Sweden*, Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, The Swedish Commission on Immigration Research, 1981, p.118

knowledge in Islamic theology does not provide a complete tool, but rather a partial one, for understanding the region. More importantly, it prohibits from seeing the Middle East as a normal society inhabited by normal human beings. It excludes all other aspects of the ordinary lives of individuals and society, but highlights only the religious aspect. It reduces the Middle Easterners as people who act solely on the basis of religious teachings - a reductionism renders them one-dimensional. A supposition that all actions performed by an individual or a community in the Middle East must be out of religious piety based on teachings of official Islamic theology distorts the understanding of human behavior in general.¹⁹ But, it is not to propose to overlook the salience and importance of religion, especially Islam, in the region.

- 2) A view that equalizes the Middle East with Arabs who are Muslims.²⁰ There is a considerable body of the population in the region who are neither Arab nor Muslims. The existence of non-Arab Muslims such as Berbers and Kurds, as well as non-Muslims, such as Christians and Yazidis, and lack of their autonomy have been a consistent destabilizing factor in the region, especially after the rise of modern states. The meaning of the word Arab itself has its origins in a term designating nomadic sheep herders and lesser tribes²¹ in the Arabian Peninsula. In the late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries, the term denoted the nomadic, as opposed to the sedentary population.²² A distinction between Arab Muslims and non-Arab converts was made during the early Islamic period, which also caused grievances of the non-Arab Muslims. In the process, the term acquired ethnic meaning.

¹⁹ Of course, any human action can be interpreted as having religious meaning. The point here is that universal human behaviors such as pursuit of economic interest and political power should be applied to the Middle Easterners.

²⁰ Turkey, Iran and Israel are exceptions in this view.

²¹ Shiley Kay, *The Bedouin*, C, Russak & Companyrane, 1978, p.7 In comparison to Arab tribes, noble camel herding tribes were called Bedouin.

²² Lewis, op.cit., pp.86-87

3) A view that sees the Middle East as a single society united by an Islamic and Arab identity. This view leads to the fallacy of generalization. Though the region share cultural commonalities including language and historic legacy of the early Islamic Empire and the Ottoman Empire, there always have been diverse local cultures as well as different Islamic sects and legal schools. Moreover, it has been more than half a century since the establishment of independent states in the Middle East. During this period, each country developed their own economic, political, social and legal structures binding their citizens. Each country has gone through nation-building processes accompanied by national identity building. As an established political entity, each state behaves first and foremost on behalf of its own interest and stability, not for the interest of universal Islam or Arabs. Ulamas in each state often support the legitimacy of the government by providing theological justification for official policies. Limits in Arabism should be transcended. Accepting the narrative of Arab nationalism means to embrace its limits at the same time. Like any other nationalisms, Arabism portrays its golden ages during early Islam as the ideal society. In such an ideal society in the discourse, there is no room for social problems such as minority and gender issues. The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights also points out that Islamic discourse is normative because it is utopian.²³ In such discourse, unorthodox religious practice is more often than not negated, while the region's pre-Islamic history, especially outside the Peninsula, is buried, raising the issue of historical discontinuity. Arabism's domination of discourse marginalizes other nationalisms and discourses. Domination of discourse itself is a form of oppression. In addition to this, there is a problem of Occidentalism. Moreover, the age of nationalism is heading toward its end. The Middle East is also exposed to transnational movements.

²³ Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Islam and Equality – debating the Future of Women's and Minority Rights in the Middle East and North Africa*, Lawyers Committee for human Rights, 1999, p.109

Thirdly, the study recommends an understanding of people groups in the Middle East, whether a majority or minority, in terms of group dynamics. Groups, once formed, consistently define and redefine their identity. But the process of redefining is a process of pursuing continuity rather than severing the existing collective identity. Even the endeavor to discontinue a certain identity presumes a previous identity to restore as the correct one. This perpetual process of identity redefining occurs as reactions to ever changing circumstances and increasing encounters with the others. The process can be displayed as a diagram.

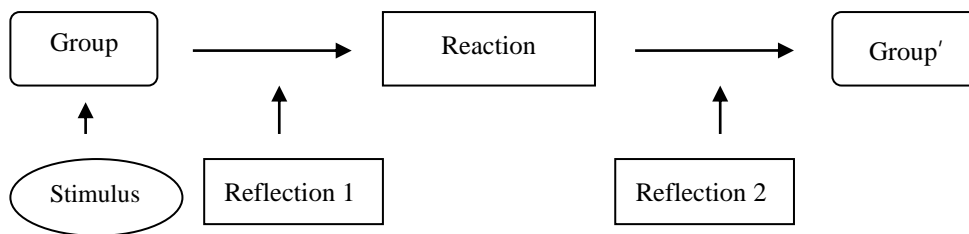


Diagram 1. Identity redefining process

When a group faces any external or internal problem (Stimulus) which is felt as a threat to the group, it reacts. A reaction comes prompt in a direction to secure group survival. Though prompt, such reaction is based on the group's cultural reservoir which has been accumulated from the past experiences, social norms, and collective identity (Reflection 1). The efficiency of the reaction may be determined by what Robert Putnam calls social capital.²⁴ Once there is a reaction, the group reflects over it, justifies it, and makes it a new entry to the cultural reservoir (Reflection 2). Repeating through this process allows a group to redefine its collective identity while maintaining its continuity (Group'). This newly defined group identity is taught and used for mobilization. Similar threats in the future should be detected and alarm people. External threat enhances group cohesion and awareness on the collective

²⁴ See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Simon & Schuster paperbacks, Rockefeller, New York, 2000

identity, as well as reinforcing this identity. On the contrary, absence of an external enemy encourages internal disunity.²⁵ Meanwhile, a positive input which supports and inspires pride to the group, such as archeological findings, may also function as stimulus. This process is circular and persists until the group disappears.

Karl Deutsch made a similar observation in national identities. He regards a people as a community of social communication. He claims that processes of communication are the basis of the coherence of societies, cultures and even of the personalities of individuals.²⁶ His analysis of information flow in social communication explains the above diagram.

...people...receive at least three streams of information: the standardized stream of experiences from social and economic life; second, the peculiar stream of information from the past within his own community and from such present peculiar messages as may originate within it; and third, the feedback stream of information about the result of his own peculiar responses which he made in the light of the interplay of all three streams.²⁷

He notes that the result of a group's own actions becomes part of the "experiences," by which a group guides itself for further action, while modifying the very inner structure of the group's preferences, goals, and patterns of behavior.²⁸

The above formulation of the identity redefining process can be applied to Jeffrey Alexander's understanding of cultural trauma and collective identity.²⁹ Cultural trauma can be seen as a stimulus in the formulation. When a collective identity is felt to dislodge a group's stability in meaning, it is considered cultural trauma (Stimulus). The group becomes

²⁵ Samuel Huntington, *Who are we?: America's Great Debate*, The Free Press, Sydney, 2005, p.264

²⁶ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, NY, 1953, p.61

²⁷ Ibid. p.91

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Meaning of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p.85 Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

unconsciously defensive and makes unmediated common sense reactions in response (Reaction). This “unmediated common sense action” is the prompt reaction based on the group’s cultural reservoir (Reflection 1 and Reaction). Then the group tries to resolve the trauma by settings right in the self, while retaining symbolic residues in the process. The trauma resolving process is carried out to restore an objective reality, mainly through memorialization. The group formulates a justification for defensive actions (Reflection 2). When the trauma is resolved, continuity in the group identity is restored to a new collective identity in which the experience of trauma becomes another cultural reference (Group’). Alexander claims that when this trauma resolving process fails, that is, meaning failing in making the experience into a shared collective experience of pain, there is no change in group solidarity or identity.³⁰

Actions taken by individuals or groups under threat or boosted identity undergo the process of reflection that interprets the actions and gives meaning to them. This reading of an event may differ, more often than not, from outsiders’ interpretations. Restored objective reality which is obtained through objectification of actions is a subjective objectivity. Outsiders, especially when involved in external stimulus, must have their own interpretation of actions that are meaningful to themselves. In addition to this, scholars try to explain such actions and their consequences taking into consideration underlying factors such as economic and political causes. The massacres of Assyrians during World War I and in 1933, for example, have many different understandings. For the victims, they were obvious religious persecution and martyrdom. For those who carried out the massacres in the field, they were executing religious duties, which promise paradise. For those who ordered the massacres, they were ensuring the homogeneity of the society. For Assyrian nationalist leaders, it happened

³⁰ Ibid. pp.85-107

because of the betrayal of the British. For some scholars, the underlying causes were related to political and economic gains. The interpretation of events and group history requires a multi-dimensional understanding, including a religious dimension. To give a religious interpretation and meaning of such events is an intrinsic function of religion. Individual members of a religious group internalize the religious meaning and redefine themselves. Individual actions acquire meaning and become religious practice.

Going back to personal identities, members of a group presume a collective identity and defend it. Since a group is an extension of the ego, members feel their own identity threatened when group identity is threatened. An individual is born to layers of belongings, though not always gradually or completely and inclusively. In the Middle East, religious affiliation is an ascriptive status. Noting layers of ascriptive identities in the Middle East, John Gulick generalizes the orders of social units which consists of layers of identities as family, lineage, village (or nomadic band), nation, sect, linguistic group, and Arab world. He points out that all the layers are in-groups, *but all do not function as such simultaneously*.³¹ Concerning the situational characteristic of identity, he presents the Lebanese village axiom: “I am against my brother; my brother and I are against my cousin; my cousin, my brother, and I are against the stranger.”³² This axiom can be expanded to the outer layers of identities. The desire to differentiate oneself in relation to an outer layer and to identify with an inner layer, depending on the circumstances, is an ambivalent human nature. It applies to individuals and groups in the same way. It is a pursuit of meanings.

³¹ John Gulick, *Social Structure and Culture Change in a Lebanese Village*, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. New York, 1955, pp.161-162. He admits that the order is not universally applicable. The layers of nation, sect, linguistic group, and Arab world have many exceptional cases. In his generalization nation means nationality. The outermost sphere is better called the Middle East rather than the Arab world. (See the same book pp.156-173 for his generalization)

³² Ibid. p.159

In the introduction, objectives of this research and relevant questions were raised. The objectives were fulfilled and the questions were answered by examining Maronite and Assyrian histories, development of identity discourses, self-expressions, and self-identification tendency of members of two groups today. The fourth objective and question, which was to explore the underlying causes of differences in current social privileges of the two groups, was revealed throughout the dissertation to some degree. It seems progress and prosperity of a group much depends on political conditions. Social status of a group in any given moment is related to situation of the past and is a result of accumulated relationship with other groups. Nevertheless, a critical moment that resulted in currently different situations between Maronites in Lebanon and Assyrians in Iraq is found in different political systems of two countries in recognition of religious authority when the states were established.

Proposed working hypotheses were also answered through the survey results.

- Hypothesis: Considering the salience of religious belonging in the Middle East, Maronite identity and Assyrian identity must be the primary identities among members of the Maronite and Assyrian groups.

Result: It was true to Assyrians but not to Maronites. For Maronites, Lebanese identity followed by Christian identity was much often prior to Maronite identity.

- Hypothesis: Considering that identity is a process rather than a static label, Maronite and Assyrian identities must have gone through shifts in their connotations.

Result: It was true. The shift of focal point of identity discourses and connotations of group names have been examined.

- Hypothesis: Considering the widespread usage of the term "Assyrian" in relation to

ethnicity, Assyrians must have the need to deny Arab identity, which contains an ethnic meaning, more than Maronites do.

Result: It was true. While 71.74 percent Assyrian respondents denied their Arab identity, only 28.64 percent Maronite respondents denied it.

- Hypothesis: Considering current differences in social status of Maronites and Assyrians, Assyrians must feel their minority identity more strongly than Maronites do.

Result: It was true but not with grave difference. While 31.82 percent Maronite respondents felt they are minority, 47.83 percent Assyrian respondents did.

- Hypothesis: Considering development and prevalence of nationalism in the Middle East, Maronites must identify themselves as descendents of Phoenicians, and Assyrians must identify themselves as descendents of ancient Assyrians.

Result: It was truer among Assyrians. While 57.27 percent Maronite respondents identified themselves as descendents of Phoenicians, 100 percent Assyrian respondents identified themselves as descendents of ancient Assyrians.

3. Areas for future study

The emergence of modern states in the Middle East caused the separation of members of the same confessional groups into different countries. Despite the bond of the same religious hierarchy, theology, and past experiences, nationality became a salient identity. To see different developments of identity among members of the same confessional group in different countries may lead to a general understanding of the identity development process. A comparative study of the Assyrian (Church of the East) and Chaldean identity would more clearly show the understanding of the bifurcation of identity. Examining the development of identity discourses among all the Churches with a Syriac tradition would also shed light on

the understanding of the identity process. Itemized comparisons of self-expressions in different sects will be an area of interest to further explore. To compare self-perception of a group and others' view on the group, majority's view on certain group and its changes throughout history are also interesting topics to study which would help understanding of inter-group relationship. Understanding Arab identity in terms of majority-minority relation may give hints for conflict resolution in the Middle East. Globalization and identity of Middle Eastern groups and individuals should be explored with more concrete cases.

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<http://www.maronite-league.org.lb> The Maronite League Website

<http://www.maronitesynod.com> Maronite Patriarchal Synod

<http://www.musicpearls.net> website of the book "Music Pearls of Beth-Nahrin – An Assyrian/Syriac Discography"

<http://www.nestorian.org> the Unofficial Web Site of the Nestorian Church

<http://www.nineveh.com> Nineveh On Line

<http://www.ninevehmarket.com> Nineveh Market, Assyrian Online Shopping

<http://www.obieyadgar.com> Obie Tadgar Communications

<http://www.oed.com> Oxford English Dictionary Online

<http://www.omm.org.lb> Ordo Maronita Beatae Mariae Virginis

<http://www.ostamyy.com> (OstaMyy.Com – Advertise free column)

<http://www.qeenatha.com> Qeenatha.com – Where Assyrian Music Starts

<http://www.radiocharity.org> Radio Charity – The First Christian Radio in the Middle East

<http://www.shlama.be> The Assyrian-Chaldean Community Mechelen, Belgium, web site

<http://www.stmaron.org> Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn

<http://www.suggestbabynames.com> Suggest Baby Names, meanings and details

<http://www.tayyar.org> The official site of Free Patriotic Movement

<http://www.ummah.net/family> or <http://www.ummah.com/family> The Family Page

<http://www.vatican.va> The Holy See of Vatican web site

<http://www.ww4report.com> World War 4 Report, Deconstructing the War on Terrorism

<http://www.zindamagazine.com> Zinda Magazine web site