

CHURCH HISTORIANS AND MARONITE COMMUNAL
CONSCIOUSNESS:

Agency and Creativity in Writing the History of Mount Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

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The intent of this dissertation is to trace the genealogy of Maronite identity through an examination of the development of the historical tradition that shaped its contemporary manifestation. It examines how the current identity of the Lebanese Maronite community was formed and how its content is claimed by those interpellated by it as a stable and fixed essence, and what the claims of the contemporary nationalists regarding its formation would be. What this study aims to reveal, is how early Maronite historiography's plea for inclusion, as a part of Catholic orthodoxy, was transformed and recast in subsequent centuries into a demand for exclusion and exclusivity. The metahistorical task of Maronite ecclesiastical historiography, the claim of perpetual orthodoxy was recast through employment in different narratives that perform oppositional tasks relevant to each era and each political project. Those include an exclusivist and exclusionary political history with the nineteenth century rise of sectarian politics, as well as a nationalist narrative in the twentieth century that attempted to preserve Maronite privilege and political ascendancy. This study brings evidence to bear on a particular aspect of history writing in Lebanon by presenting a reassessment and re-examination of an existing historiographical debate. It will demonstrate how history writing is one of the main instruments in generating and perpetuating nationalist myths and ideologies and that historians are central agents of nationality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Part I.....	41
The Quest for Orthodoxy: Istifan Al-Duwayhi and the Origins of an Ecclesiastical History.....	41
Contested Claims About the History of the Maronite Church.....	52
The Roots of Authority.....	57
Chain of Transmission.....	59
The Mardaites: Al-Duwayhi’s Adopted Myth of Origin.....	66
The Mardaites in History and Historiography.....	73
Roots of the Mardaite Myth.....	78
The Debate Among Clerical Historians.....	88
Lebanon the Mountain Refuge.....	92
Duwayhi’s influence on Maronite Church Historians: Origins and Development of Clerical Historiography.....	98

Part II.....	105
Moments of Change in History and Historiography.....	105
Rome Reaching Out.....	106
Political Order in the Time of the Imarah.....	109
The Maronite Church as a New Source of Leadership.....	115
Regional Politics and Foreign Intervention.....	126
The Tanzimat Reforms and Integration Into the World Economy.....	130
1860 The Moment of Change.....	133
The Mutasarrifiyyah.....	135
The Emerging Historiography.....	137
The Refuge of the Mutasarrifiyyah.....	149
Yusuf al-Dibs.....	153
HenriLammen.....	160
Redeployment and Regeneration of Authoritativeness.....	164
The Modern Debate About the Mardaites.....	168
Clerical Resistance.....	183

Metahistorical Task and Changing Narratives.....	190
Part III.....	192
Lay and Clerical Historiography in the State of Greater Lebanon.....	192
The Emergence of the Modern Lebanese State.....	192
The Persistent Question of Orthodoxy: Facticity Within a Self-Sufficient Tradition.....	197
Selectiveness and Interpretation in Defending Orthodoxy.....	207
The Mountain Refuge in the Lebanese Republic.....	213
Histories of Syria and Lebanon: Lay Historiography and the Persistence of a Tradition.....	218
Revisionist Historiography: The Debate Over the Mountain Refuge Theory.....	227
From Idea to Hypothesis, the “Mountain Refuge” in the Histories of Today.....	232
The Reemergence of the Mardaites.....	235
The Phoenician Hypothesis: Secular Historiography and the Pre-Christian Past of Greater Lebanon.....	241
Ancient Phoenicia: the People, the Geography and the History.....	245

Archaeology and the Discovery of Phoenicia.....	250
Historical Evolution and Variations on the Hypothesis.....	258
Golden Age and National Rebirth.....	263
Phoenicia in Early Twentieth Century Historiography.....	265
Relation Between Lay and Clerical Historiographies.....	268
Phoenicia in Contemporary Historiography.....	272
Conclusion.....	276
Epilogue.....	281
Topography and Geographic Conditions.....	289
Bibliography.....	290

Introduction

Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating. Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities¹

When addressing the ever evolving conflict over identity in Lebanon one has to remain vigilant in observing the quickly shifting sands of the political field in the country. The one stable fact about the political alignments in Lebanon is their inherent instability. The nebulous and unstable realm of political alliances often force sectarian groups, led by their chief political party, to redefine their communal identity as well as their renewed delineation of the self and the other with the rise of every new crisis. This feature of the system has left its mark on the communal identity of every confessional group in Lebanon as well as on the national identity (or identities) of these groups combined. The natures and definitions of the self, as well as the nation, are both contested territory in Lebanese political culture and in Lebanese political discourse. More often than not, this situation either leads to, or simply justifies, confrontations and violence that almost always take place along sectarian lines that have divided the country since its earliest inception.

¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

The main questions concerning identity in Lebanon have morphed and changed in the years following the end of the civil war (1975-1991), and especially recently. In recent times, the debate, which would be better described as discord, no longer revolves on the issue of belonging to Lebanon the nation state or not. The finality of the Lebanese state as well as the sense of belonging to it seem more solid today than they ever did in the decades since the French granted independence to Lebanon in 1943. What has remained in flux, in principle, however, revolves on what being Lebanese entails. What the various Lebanese political factions and ideological currents are in contest over is precisely this ontological question. Their diverse definitions of Lebanese identity emanate from their alignments within every crisis, a situation that renders a unified vision concerning identity untenable.

What I hope to examine is how the current identity of the Lebanese Maronite community was formed and how its content is claimed by those interpellated by it as a stable and fixed essence, and what the claims of the contemporary nationalists regarding its formation would be. Further light will be shed on where the debate among these nationalists is at present. In this dissertation, I intend to trace the genealogy of Maronite identity through an examination of the development of the historical tradition that shaped its contemporary manifestation.

As a frequently contested territory, Mount Lebanon has an equally contested history, one that is produced, shaped, and revised by as many players as those who molded the Lebanese State since its inception in 1920. The parties who influenced the birth and evolution of this diverse and fragmented political entity made claims on the writing of its history as significant as the claims they advanced on its territory.

The Lebanese Maronite Church has had more at stake in the process of the writing of history than any other group or institution. It is arguably one of the most influential institutions in Lebanese history and definitely the most influential institution in the country at the moment of the state's birth. At the time of the rise of nationalist ideas in Europe, the Maronite Church in Lebanon was the one party that owned a considerable part of the land and had the allegiance of much of the population; it was also the party that had the most well-established relations with European states and power brokers. Thus, the Church played a pivotal role in the spread of nationalist ideas by promulgating the nation-ness of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon. The Church aimed at bringing about a transformation that would render a nation out of its followers, and a nation state out of the lands it controlled. The ultimate objective was a Maronite Christian country with the Maronite Church as the dominant political power.

As the center of a religious community and the main—and for a period of time the sole—educator in the territory that was to become the state of Lebanon, the Maronite Church played an hegemonic role in the process of identity formation. By writing their own history and producing their own myth of origin, certain historians of the Church at a certain point attempted to transform that myth into a national one. The identity produced was one that separated the Church and its followers from their surroundings and isolated the Maronite-inhabited parts of Mount Lebanon from the religious, cultural, and political environments of which they were part. Dissociation from the Arab-Islamic milieu was essential in order to assert a separate identity for the Maronite inhabitants of the Mountain; a process that was meant to insure the emergence of a Lebanese national identity that identified with Christian Europe and produced the Muslim world as its “Other.”

When one examines the process of history-writing that was undertaken by the members and patriarchs of the Maronite Church throughout the last three hundred years, there emerges a chain of historical texts that inform each subsequent rewriting in productive ways. These are manifest in the works of Istfan al-Duwayhi (1630-1704), Nicolas Murad (1796-1862), and later Yusuf al-Dibs (1833-1907), as well as Pierre Dib (1881-1965).² A transformation of the identity of the Church itself seems to have taken place³ and differing versions of its history emerged. The Maronites, in Nicolas Murad's writings, were no longer identified as a religious community in an Islamic East and an Islamic state system. The identity the Church created for itself, and the one

² The works of these authors serve as the backbone of the tradition of historiography for the Maronite community and are primary bibliographic sources for this dissertation. Their historiographic chronology can be ordered as follows: Istfan Al-Duwayhi, *Asl al-Mawarinah*, [Origin of the Maronites], and *Tarikh al-Azminah*, [History of Times]. Next was Nicolas Murad, *Notice historique sur l'origine de la nation Maronite. Nabza tarikhiyyah fi asl al-'umma al-maruniyyah* [Historical Notice on the Origin of the Maronite Nation]. Yusuf al-Dibs followed with three histories: *Al-Jami' al-mufasssal fi tarikh al-mawarinah al-mu'assal* [The Detailed Collection of the True History of the Maronites]; *Ruh al-rudud fi za'm al-khuri Yusuf Dawud*; and *Tarikh suriya* [The History of Syria]. Pierre Dib brought the tradition forward to the twentieth century, with the first edition of his *Histoire des maronites* [History of the Maronites], published in Paris in 1930, and expanded and updated in Beirut in 1962, and expanded again, posthumously, in 1973 and 2001.

³ "Murad [Maronite Bishop Nicolas Murad] himself in many ways embodied the transition from the old-regime politics of notability, in which he began his career teaching the children of local notables, to an emerging sectarian order, in which he became the most eloquent spokesman for a communal vision of Mount Lebanon." Makdisi, Ussama, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 82.

through which it interpellated its followers would, by the early nineteenth century, become an integral part of European history, and the Maronites an integral part of Europe.⁴

Looking back at the tradition of history-writing inside the Maronite Church one finds that certain figures leave a significantly larger mark than others. Starting with the so-called father of Maronite historiography, Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi, and moving forward through time to the writings of Bishop Nicolas Murad, Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs, and Fathers Pierre Dib and Butrus Daw, one will notice that these historians had a more significant impact on the self-identity of the Church during their time. The fact that they play a role different from their contemporaries and similar in nature to each other, as well as the fact that they belong to a specific tradition in Church historiography, are the main reasons why their writings will be at the center of my query.

The historians and the historical writings that I focus on have been examined in contemporary scholarship before. I approach these works as forming an unbroken tradition of sorts dating back to the seventeenth century. Some of the topics that I write about appear in previous writings, and my assessment of some of the Maronite Church historians owes a great deal to the contemporary secular historians whose books I mention above. But the space that I hope to fill in the debate concerning Lebanese history and historiography is in my focus on and analysis of this tradition, on the level of claims, but especially on the level of the form of each narrative and the oppositional task it performed at key moments in Maronite History.

⁴ “...Bien que L’histoire de L’indépendance soit, chez Daw, celle de sa défense permanente contre les convoitises arabes et musulmanes ... –the history of independence for Daw was one of constant defense against Muslim and Arab encroachment–“ Baydoun, Ahmad, *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez*, (Beirut: Université libanaise: Distribution, Librairie Orientale, 1984), 277.

I will delineate a tradition in history-writing that emerges from within the Church and that is perpetuated over time despite its undergoing certain changes due to the major developments that the Maronite Church experienced. My focus will be on the tradition itself and on the *Musallamat* –absolutes, givens—of the Church that church historians have maintained and defended, but also recast and redeployed for different and evolving purposes. I will also focus on the way this process has influenced the writings of Lebanese lay historians in the past and continues to influence them in the present.

What I aim to reveal, is how early Maronite historiography’s plea for inclusion, as a part of Catholic orthodoxy, was transformed and recast in subsequent centuries into a demand for exclusion and exclusivity. I argue that the Metahistorical task of Maronite ecclesiastical historiography, the claim of perpetual orthodoxy, remained a powerful presence and it might remain so for as long as the Maronites are a religious community and the Maronite Church belongs to Roman Catholicism. What did change, however, was the “other” against which Maronite identity was defined. This “other” changed with the changing sociopolitical conditions of Mount Lebanon and the Eastern Mediterranean. Its changes coincided with the changing threats that the Maronite Church and community were faced with over time. Defining the self through this changing “other” involved a recasting of history and historiography. I argue that the avowed purpose of history-writing changed with the political and social changes that took place. History-writing acquired a new purpose. The function of the historian evolved with the transformation of the community and the environment at the exact moment when political claims and not just religious ones, came within the grasp of Maronite Church leaders. I argue that these changes were most prominent on the level of the form of Maronite historiography. When the

objectives of the historians and the function they performed changed, the oppositional task of the narrative became different as well. What remained were the building blocks of Maronite historiography. The accumulation of Maronite histories became the raw material for Maronite historians. These were redeployed and recast with every era, creating a continuity that may not have shared the same purpose or objective but formed a body of historiography with interconnected authority and an internally generated cult of facticity and absolutes that could be referred to as a tradition among Maronite historians.

In my inquiry, I will juxtapose the writings of Maronite Church historians with the debates that dominated historiography from the 19th century to the present. Among the different views of history, I will be pointing to commonalities that occur across all of them. My task will be to scrutinize Maronite Church historiography according to the standards that govern modern scholarship.

In the 19th and 20th centuries the debates over European histories put into question the role of the historian and history-writing as well as the dichotomy of facts and interpretation, but all the different views agree on a set of basic rules. History-writing in all its forms stipulates that the raw materials of the historian, the facts about the past that the historian evokes, must meet standards of reliability in order to be used as sources. The complexities of what constitutes reliability and why one source may be considered to be less or more reliable than another do not negate the fact that there is a minimum requirement to be met according to the standard accepted historiographical method.

I will demonstrate that when evaluated by the wide spectrum of modern methodological criteria, Maronite Church historiography, when dealing with specific sensitive elements of Church history, adopts approaches that produce accounts of history that would be considered ideological and fictive by all philosophies of history.

In trying to find a turning point for history-writing in the nineteenth century the contributions of Leopold von Ranke take a primary position. As one of the earliest and most influential historians to promote reliance on primary sources he set the tone for much of later historical writing in the empiricist tradition.

In his depiction of the role of the historian, Ranke stated in his earliest work *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations (1494-1514)*⁵ published in 1824, that his work aspires to show what actually happened and that history should revolve around the notion of how “things actually were”. When commenting on this approach Peter Gay stated that “it was the modest pronouncement of a scientist intent on doing his work, and on concentrating on what could be reliably known.”⁶ This complements Gay’s depiction of the historiographical method put forward by Ranke. When defining Ranke’s scientific method Gay stated that “it is clear that whatever its principal impulses, the methods and results of Ranke’s way as a historian were aimed straight at science: the systematizing of research, the withdrawal of ego from presentation, the unremitting effort at objectivity, the submission of results to critical public scrutiny.”⁷

⁵ Ranke, Leopold von. *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations (1494 To 1514)*.

⁶ Gay, Peter. *Style in History*, 68.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68

What is of the utmost importance in understanding Ranke's contribution and relevance for subsequent historians is his questioning of what constitutes reliability in historical research. In trying to define what renders a source reliable Ranke changed the way historical evidence was scrutinized and inaugurated a new method of examining documents. Examining records and a dedication to the study of primary sources defined Ranke's approach. The accounts of contemporary historians were relegated to secondary and auxiliary positions; the main source of historical evidence lay in contemporary documents alone, and it was in those that the historian found his reliable sources that were the key to historical truth.

Ranke's definition of the role of the historian and his approach to history-writing were already considered obsolete by the middle of the last century but his contribution to the field of historiography cannot be overstated. His research and his writings constituted a turning point in the way historical research was conducted. His main novelty was his quest to redefine the role of the historian as well as to codify what constitutes proper methodology in historical research and history-writing.

In trying to find a proper scientific method for the study of history Leopold von Ranke put in motion a debate in the field of historiography that, in one form or another, is still relevant today among historians as well as philosophers of history. The question of whether history is, or can be made into, a science or not would occupy historians and influence historical research in numerous ways since Ranke first tackled it.

Ultimately, it is in the questions that he asked rather than in the answers that he provided where one is to find the importance of Ranke's contribution. And although for many historians and philosophers the questions themselves have been conclusively answered, it remains to be

said that the debate he helped launch impacted history-writing deeply and influenced it long after his arguments and method were challenged. It also remains to be said that to properly approach the works of most historians writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one must assess their works in light of their exposure to Ranke's arguments and the debates that raged around them.

Many nineteenth century historians who were influenced by Ranke's principles of history-writing employed a similar approach to his in examining sources and evaluating historical records. Jacob Burckhardt, a student of Ranke at the University of Berlin in the early 1840s displayed an equal emphasis on historical evidence and reliability of sources in producing his own historiography. Despite the fact that Burckhardt's interests were centered on art and culture, a fact that sets him apart from Ranke, both historians shared a common understanding of what constitutes reliability when scrutinizing the raw materials at their disposal.

In explaining the duties of a historian in reconstructing a certain past Burckhardt focused on the importance of collecting reliable historical evidence regardless of their initial perceived importance. Nothing is to be dismissed if it carries any potential in assisting the historian in the task of faithfully reconstructing a past of his interest. In the introduction to his book *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* he stated: "And now let us remember all we owe to the past as a spiritual *continuum* which forms part of our supreme spiritual heritage. Anything which can in the remotest way serve our knowledge of it must be collected, whatever toil it may cost and with all the resources at our disposal, until we are able to reconstruct whole spiritual horizons of the past."⁸

⁸ Burckhardt, Jacob. *Force and Freedom*, 85.

Burckhardt's approach to history-writing is one of objective assessment of all historical evidence pertaining to the subject matter and available to the historian regardless of how impossibly arduous this endeavor may be.⁹ With this in mind, the historian assessing the evidence should focus mainly on primary sources and original documents and records. The assessment should be objective thus distancing the historian from the material in hand and ensuring his reconstruction of historical truth. Burckhardt delineated his principle in the form of a dichotomy between knowledge and purpose, where the historian's interpretation might be detrimental to the historical truth that the historian himself is trying to achieve. He stated: "Here we must first consider the relation between the two poles, knowledge and purpose. Even in history, our desire for knowledge is often baulked by a thickset hedge of purposeful interpretation which seeks to pass themselves off as records. Nor can we ever rid ourselves entirely of the views of our own time and personality, and here, perhaps, is the worst enemy of knowledge."¹⁰

Burckhardt's views concerning primary sources and their value and reliability echo Ranke's principles in the sense that the true worth of a source is its presentation of unaltered information about the past. The empirical evidence, the raw material devoid of any interpretation or alteration is what brings the historian closer to achieving an objective reconstruction of the past that is faithful to historical truth. As Burckhardt put it: "Now a source, as compared to a treatise, has its eternal advantages. First and foremost, it presents the fact pure, so that *we* must

⁹ "A complete study of the sources of any important subject according to the laws of scholarship is an enterprise which demands the whole of man." *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

see what conclusions are to be drawn from it, while the treatise anticipates that labor and presents the facts digested, i.e. placed in an alien, and often erroneous setting.”¹¹

Even though the contributions of historians like Ranke and Burckhardt have been superseded by subsequent historians and much of their arguments about the writing of history would be challenged in the decades that followed, it is important to bear in mind that their writings constituted some of the earliest attempts at establishing a standard historiographical method for historians to follow. Turning history into an academic discipline tied to sources and records is a legacy that would not be eroded, as the relevance of such an approach did not diminish with the passing of time.

Aspects of the modern methodological criteria that began with the works of Ranke and Burckhardt retain their relevance to historians today, even if the questions concerning the role of the historian, the impact of interpretation, the meaning of the narrative, and the possibility for objectivity in history-writing have transformed the field over the past two centuries.

Among the most influential opponents of the empirical view of history R. G. Collingwood, with his idealist view, offered an entirely different approach to the interpretation of historical evidence and advanced a different understanding of the role of the historian and of the nature of historiography. In his book *The Idea of History* published posthumously for the first time in 1946, three years after his death, Collingwood presented a theory concerning history-writing that would set him apart from both Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* as well as the positivists who were attempting to render history into an empirical science.

¹¹ Ibid., 98.

In Collingwood's definition of what history is, his emphasis is on the fact that history is not a study of all processes in the past but only an inquiry into human affairs carried out by the interpretation of evidence along the lines of set methodological criteria. Collingwood considered his contribution as answering a set of problems that arose in the nineteenth century mainly due to the major shifts that took place in historical research. His philosophy of history is an attempt at answering these problems as well as redefining history in light of these changes. In defining the purpose and nature of his book he stated: "A special inquiry was therefore needed whose task should be to study of this new problem or group of problems, the philosophical problems created by the existence of organized and systematized historical research. This new inquiry might justly claim the title philosophy of history, and it is to this inquiry that this book is a contribution."¹²

What Collingwood tried to achieve was to apply his own understanding of philosophy to the process of history-writing in order to arrive at a synthesis that is his philosophy of history. In defining what philosophy is and how it operates, he stated "Philosophy is reflective. The philosophizing mind never simply thinks about an object, it always, while thinking about any object, thinks also about its own thought about that object."¹³ What is obvious in Collingwood's view, in the case of applying this philosophy to historiography, is that history is not simply a dichotomy of fact and interpretation. The historian does not just interpret facts of history; his duty is to reflect on his own interpretation of the evidence at his disposal.

What is unraveled in Collingwood's view of history is a role for the historian that goes well beyond a simple display of historical facts, as was the case in Ranke's theory. He dismisses the empirical approach by negating the possibility of knowledge about the past that relies only on

¹² Collingwood, R.G. *The Idea of History*, 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

the collection of evidence. When dealing with the question of knowledge about the past, he wrote: “How, or on what condition, can the historian know the past? In considering this question, the first point to notice is that the past is never a given fact which he can apprehend empirically by perception.”¹⁴ After dismissing the empirical approach he delineated his own principle about the role of the historian by stating that history-writing must involve a re-enactment of past experience on the part of the historian. Only one course of action is capable of providing the historian with proper knowledge about the facts of history, he “must re-enact the past in his own mind.”

Since history, according to Collingwood, is concerned with rational human action, the historian must interpret historical evidence by a recollection of the thinking of the historical personage who carried out the action. The historian must re-enact the past by reflecting on the thought that led to the action. Collingwood took this notion further in his philosophy of history by stating: “Philosophy is never concerned with thought by itself; it is always concerned with its relation to its object, and it is therefore concerned with the object just as much as with the thought.”¹⁵ What emerged was therefore a philosophy of history that is not solely concerned with the study of the past on its own but neither was it solely centered on the historian’s reflection about the past. Collingwood’s philosophy of history is concerned with the interaction between the inquiry conducted by the historian and the facts of history available in the evidence that he is investigating.

Collingwood’s contribution was invaluable in challenging the positivist approach that claimed that the historian should let history speak for itself. His rejection of the “scissors and

¹⁴ Ibid., 282.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

paste” method as he referred to it was an inherent part of his philosophy of history. But the role he ascribed to the historian in his inquiry seems to allow for any interpretation of the evidence to have validity. It also risks reducing history to the actions of key figures and to ascribe to these figures a specific and set rationality in deciding on their history-making decisions. It is also not entirely clear how the historian should re-enact history by reflecting on the thoughts of the figure he is inquiring about. By such a standard, an infinite amount of interpretations might carry an identical amount of validity to them.

Among the historians who challenged Collingwood’s approach, Edward Hallet Carr, in his book *What is History?* offered a critique to Collingwood’s views that put into question some of the assumptions made by the aforementioned historian. Carr did not reject Collingwood’s contribution to the field, he simply pointed to some of the dangers that arise when taking the role of the historian, as stated by Collingwood, to certain extremes. After offering some insights, as he referred to them, into Collingwood’s view of history, Carr stated his objections by writing: “The emphasis on the role of the historian in the making of history tends, if pressed to its logical conclusion, to rule out any objective history at all: history is what the historian makes.”¹⁶

Carr’s objections were directed at what he detected in Collingwood’s writings in terms of total skepticism. He did not dismiss Collingwood’s reaction against the previously held view of history as a compilation of facts about the past; he simply detected a risky tendency in Collingwood’s writings to come perilously near treating history as something spun out of the

¹⁶ Carr, Edward Hallet. *What Is History*, 29

human brain¹⁷. Carr considered the fallacy of ascribing no meaning whatsoever to history to be no different from ascribing an infinity of meanings each as valid as all the others.

In trying to answer the question about the existence of an objective historical truth Carr rejected the reading of history as having absolutely no meaning in and of itself, as well as the reading of history as being open to infinite and equally valid interpretations. On this matter he stated: “It does not follow that, because interpretation plays a necessary part in establishing the facts of history, and because no existing interpretation is wholly objective, one interpretation is as good as another, and the facts of history are in principle not amenable to objective interpretation.”¹⁸

Carr clearly wished to veer away from a reading of history that ascribed too much to the interpretation of the historian without giving enough weight to the facts of history. Failing to give proper treatment of the evidence at the disposal of the historian leads in Carr’s opinion to writing what amounts to propaganda or historical fiction, just like adopting a scissors-and-paste approach leads to a history without any meaning or significance. The duty of the historian is to find a balance in this dichotomy of fact and interpretation, the two must not be separated into two processes of examination and interpretation, and one should never be given priority over the other. On this matter he stated: “The duty of the historian to respect his facts is not exhausted by the obligation to see that his facts are accurate. He must seek to bring into the picture all known or knowable facts relevant, in one sense or another, to the theme on which he is engaged and to

¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

the interpretation proposed...but this, in turn, does not mean that he is to eliminate interpretation, which is the life-blood of history.”¹⁹

Carr made it clear in his writings that the act of selecting the facts and the historical evidence on the part of the historian is already a part of his initial interpretation. Selection and interpretation are inherently linked and integrated into one simultaneous process, and it is in their interaction that history is produced. In his answer to the question of what history is, he concluded by stating: “The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. My first answer therefore to the question, What is history?, is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.”²⁰

The contributions of Edward Hallet Carr to the debates around the nature of historiography and the role of the historian were invaluable. His attempt at finding a balance in the dichotomy of facts and interpretation constitutes a major element in studying the development of different philosophies of history in the twentieth century and until today. Carr’s criticism of the scissors-and-paste approach is widely accepted among the historians who followed him, but his evaluation of Collingwood’s view of history may have included some degree of exaggeration when assessing Collingwood’s treatment of evidence and historical facts. If according to Carr, history is not a zero-sum game between evidence and interpretation, but it is rather an interaction between the two, then Collingwood cannot be accused of adopting the cavalier approach to evidence in the manner that Carr described. Carr may have been accurate in

¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

²⁰ Ibid., 35.

his assessment of the importance that Collingwood attributed to interpretation, but he was not as accurate when it came to assessing the role of evidence according to Collingwood. Ultimately Carr's approach may have been determined by his notion that history can and should be rendered into an accurate science where the historian's inquiry must lead him eventually to an objective historical truth. A controversial assertion that is debatable at best, but one that has occupied the works of many historians and fueled a debate in the realm of historiography for decades to come.

The questions concerning the role of the historian and the interaction between interpretation and evidence would evolve and lead to more complex understandings of the nature of history and the agency of the historian. Hayden White best summarized these tensions and disputes in the realm of historiography in his book *Metahistory* when he stated:

Historiographical disputes on the level of "interpretation" are in reality disputes over the "true" nature of the historian's enterprise. History remains in the state of conceptual anarchy in which the natural sciences existed during the sixteenth century, when there were as many different conceptions of "the scientific enterprise" as there were metaphysical positions. In the sixteenth century, the different conceptions of what "science" ought to be ultimately reflected different conceptions of "reality" and the different epistemologies generated by them. So, too, disputes over what "history" ought to be reflect similarly varied conceptions of what a proper historical explanation ought to consist of and the different conceptions, therefore, of the historian's task.²¹

In this passage White depicted the nature of the debate and the type of questions that still occupy historians and philosophers of history. Collingwood's concerns in *The Idea of History* and Carr's question *What Is History?* are presented by White as part of an ongoing debate in

²¹ White, Hayden. *Metahistory*, 13.

historiography that revolves mainly around interpretation and its function in history-writing. The precise concern of the dispute is in determining what history-writing ought to entail, and what the role of the historian in his or her inquiry should be.

Hayden White's main focus is on the manner with which facts are represented by the historian in a given narrative. In rejecting the notion that the facts of history speak for themselves, White claims that the historian is the one speaking for them, he is the one choosing what gets represented, but also he is the one choosing the shape of representation. When he stated that most nineteenth century historians had neglected the agency of the historian in favor of an emphasis on facts, White stated: "They did not realize that the facts do not speak for themselves, but the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is –in its *representation*- a purely discursive one."²²

White's main contribution was not merely a reiteration of previously held arguments that rejected the positivist approach of nineteenth century historians. The main novelty that he brought to the debate is an analysis of the form and not simply the content of historiography. White's main argument is that narrative by itself carries a meaning and a content of its own independent of what facts the historian places in it. He stated: "narrative, far from being merely a form of discourse that can be filled with different contents, real or imaginary as the case may be, already possesses a content prior to any given actualization of it in speech or writing."²³

In this instance, the agency of the historian is not merely in the selection of her/his facts and the interpretation s/he offers, but it is also in the shape and form of the narrative that s/he

²² White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse*, 125.

²³ White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form*, xi.

chooses to represent his arguments. What White was arguing for is that every historian is telling a story of sorts, and the kind of history s/he is presenting can be detected in the kind of story that the historian is narrating.

White's addition to the debate is twofold, on the one hand he suggested that the narrative on its own carries meaning regardless of content, and on the other hand he argued that the process of organizing facts about the past into a coherent narrative of any kind is inherently artificial and is always the result of an imaginative effort on the part of the historian. In *The Content of the Form* he stated: "What I have sought to suggest is that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary."²⁴

White further elaborated on his notion that history-writing involves an imaginative effort by the historian by arguing that understanding a specific history involves what he referred to as "explanation by emplotment" where "emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind."²⁵ One has to understand what kind of story the historian is telling in order to grasp the role of the historian. The plot structure that the historian provides in narrating his history is the primary indicator of the interpretative role of the historian and the imaginative effort he put in to his historiography.

What White was careful to communicate however, was the fact that the fictive element of the narrative in history-writing does not lead to a history that is of less or more value or accuracy. Unlike Carr who argued that favoring interpretation over facts leads to propaganda or

²⁴ Ibid., 24

²⁵ White, Hayden. *Metahistory*, 7.

works of pure fiction, White argued that any attempt to present a true objective history is itself ideological since history is not a science and is a proto-science at best.²⁶ White summarized his conclusion on this debate in his book *Tropics of Discourse* by stating: “Finally, it may be observed that if historians were to recognize the fictive element in their narrative, this would not mean the degradation of historiography to the status of ideology or propaganda. In fact, this recognition would serve as a potent antidote to the tendency of historians to become captive of ideological preconceptions which they do not recognize as such but honor as the ‘correct’ perception of ‘the way things *really* are.’”²⁷

David Scott, in his book *Conscripts of Modernity*, further elaborated on the principle of emplotment and on the content of the narrative form that were advanced by White. Scott subscribed to White’s idea and made considerable use of it in his book, but he also took it a step further, in a direction that he considered to be neglected by White. Scott tackled the question of choice of story-forms and the usefulness of employing one specific kind instead of another. The question of what informs the historian’s choice of a particular mode of emplotment is a main part of Scott’s inquiry. He stated: “I want to inquire into the problem of how one chooses between kinds of story-forms, or how one decides that a particular story-form, a particular mode of emplotment, say, no longer yields the critical insight it once accomplished, and how one decides whether it might be usefully displaced by another.”²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁷ White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse*, 99.

²⁸ Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity*, 32.

According to Scott, the arbitrariness mentioned by White leaves much to be desired when trying to understand the task of the historical narrative. What white thought of as unanswerable, Scott attempted to answer in his inquiry. He stated: “I am interested in pursuing the stipulation that at any given historical conjecture, the story generated by the literary form of a historical narrative may be perceived to no longer perform the oppositional tasks the present demands of criticism; in other words, that its critical edge, given the new conjuncture, may have become blunted.”²⁹

The argument advanced by Scott stipulates that the story that is generated by the form has a task; it is an answer to a question. If at any given moment it is perceived as inadequate to answer the designated question then the duty of the historian is to provide a new form that must replace the old one.

The ongoing debates in historiography have on some level wielded new questions rather than resolved old ones. The field has evolved substantially since the nineteenth century and in some areas it is unrecognizable. It is important to note however, that in other areas of history-writing the main questions have not and may not be resolved. There are specific criteria that have been set since Ranke wrote his histories, and those are still employed by historians today. But some of the questions that have occupied historians have not been conclusively answered and in some cases they have led to different and more complex questions.

²⁹ Ibid., 33.

Among the historians who attempted a sort of a textbook synthesis of the ongoing central debates in the field of history-writing, John Tosh, in his book *The Pursuit of History* offered a substantial overview of what has occupied and still occupies historians today. Tosh also offered his own presentation of what constitutes established methodological criteria or at least what constitute standard accepted historiographical methods in writing history that are shared among historians, and that do not constitute contested territory among the different views of history that they offer.

Tosh's own standpoint was not to favor one view or to advance a conclusion on what history is today but rather to display the diversity in the practice of history-writing and to present the significant innovations in the field that he deemed worthy of notice. On this matter he stated: "it has not been my intention to write a manifesto for 'the new history'. I have tried instead to convey the diversity of current historical practice, and to situate recent innovations in the context of mainstream traditional scholarship which continues to account for a great deal of first-rate historical work and to dominate academic syllabuses."³⁰

What transpires in Tosh's work is a twofold process. On the one hand he sheds light on the points of contestation, and on the other hand he offers an overview of concepts that are deemed to be established givens in the realm of history-writing. Tosh is keen to highlight the tensions between the facts and the interpretation and the investments that the historians bring to their inquiry. Tosh displays these tensions from the Positivist viewpoint all the way to the Post-modernist one. All throughout he reveals how these challenges influenced history-writing and how historians interacted and reacted to them.

³⁰ Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History*, xx.

In his article about the “Limits of Historical Knowledge,” Tosh offered an evaluation of historical inquiry where he critiqued some of the main approaches that have defined the quest for knowledge about the past. He warned against the perils of subscribing too rigidly to any one approach, be it positivist, idealist, relativist or historicist, and the shortcomings that are in some cases inherent to any one of these approaches. Tosh focused on the unattainable and unrealistic goals set up by Positivist historians, but he also stated that Collingwood’s historicism would always present the historian with difficulties that are unsolvable since an authentic recapturing of the past is not within the realm of possibilities for anyone living in the present. Tosh points that the debate between these two extremes is unresolved and unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future. His stance is one of equidistance while navigating carefully and with the full awareness of what compromises the historical inquiry.

Tosh concluded his critique by referring to the Postmodernist impact on history-writing and the nature of the current debate in the field. The debate he described is one between postmodernists who claim that historians do not uncover the past, but rather invent it, and historians who thrive to distinguish between fact and fiction. Tosh first pointed to some misconceptions and misrepresentation by postmodernists who challenge the work of conventional historians, and he also pointed to the fact that historians are already assimilating elements of the postmodernist approach and integrating them into their inquiries. Tosh summarized the debate between these two sides when he stated: “there is a limit beyond which most historians will not go in embracing Postmodernism. Many welcome a greater sophistication in interpreting texts and a heightened awareness of the cultural significance of historical writing. But few are prepared to join in a rejection of the truth claims of history as usually practiced.”³¹

³¹ Ibid., 194.

Tosh stated that the historians do not accept the claim that “*no* text from the past can be read as an accurate reflection of something outside itself.”³² The main tool that historians deploy in dealing with texts that present complex problems is the discipline of historical context. The duty of the historian becomes to offer an understanding of the text in the context of its time. The social and cultural contexts as well as the conditions that affected the author and his readership are to be investigated along with an investigation of the resources of the language of the text itself. Tosh further reiterates the main argument of the historians by stating: “If the ambition to know the past is completely surrendered, we shall never be able to determine how the present came to be. The social function of history is not to be so lightly abandoned.”³³

In defense of their discipline, few historians retreated to an untenable empiricism, as Tosh referred to it, but many more recognized the features that invalidate historical work –the facts not speaking for themselves but rather being selected by historians and explained in hindsight in accounts that are molded by the preferences of the writer- while advocating that these features can be managed and confined by a vigilant effort on the side of the historian. This claim is further advanced by Tosh’s statement “Historians are members of a profession, one of whose principal functions is to enforce standards of scholarship and to restrain waywardness of interpretation.”³⁴

The vigilance of the historian as stated by Tosh has to include a scrutiny of her/his own assumptions, an explicit hypothesis to be assessed in light of the evidence, and finally, a submission of her/his work to the discipline of historical context. These are the three rules to be

³² Ibid., 195.

³³ Ibid., 197.

³⁴ Ibid., 198.

followed by all historians who wish to remain as true as possible to the surviving evidence of the past.

From Tosh's arguments, one can discern that the challenges presented by Postmodernism were bound to lead to the evolution of the historical inquiry not to its extinction. Tosh's reaction to Postmodernism comes less at the level of theory and more on the level of practice. His answer to all that invalidates historical work is mainly in the set of standard operating procedures and not in the form of a competing theoretical framework. This gives history-writing, from Tosh's point of view, the character of crisis management. The answer that historians give to Postmodernists concerning the shortcomings of their work is then an acceptance and recognition of these problems and a commitment to working on minimizing their impact but nothing more. What this spells is, that just like the debate between Positivists and Idealists, the debate brought forth by Postmodernism is not likely to be resolved any time soon.

My purpose in summarizing the arguments of all these different historians and philosophers of history is not to reach a conclusion about the purpose of history or the role of the historian. Nor is my purpose to adopt any one of the aforementioned views in advocating one proper way of writing history. Moreover, providing this summary is not intended to apply all models of historical inquiry to the writings of the Maronite Church historians whose works I examine. My purpose is simply to contextualize the differing historical methodologies deployed by historians as I address the question of the historicity of Maronite Church historiography and its impact on nationalism in Lebanon.

What I hope to examine is the interaction between the avowed purpose of this historiography, the historical claims it deploys and the evidentiary basis it presents and how they correspond to the methodological questions raised above. I will be investigating whether the historians involved are conscious of their political project, and whether this is made explicit in their writings. And since the time-span covered by my query is substantial, I will also discuss the varieties of histories that were produced by the various generations of historians. Through it all I will be examining the similarities and differences between clerical and lay historiography in order to show how myths about the church eventually find their way into the nationalist narrative.

It is relevant at this point to address the question of how historiography can shape a nationalist discourse. What I ultimately wish to demonstrate is the fact that myths about the origins of the Maronite Church and community found their way into the emerging Lebanese nationalism through the works of both clerical and lay historians. Historiography in this case informed or even produced nationalist discourse at the same time as it was constituted by it. It also shaped much of nationalism's outlook when the myths that were being generated and perpetuated within the confines of Church archives began to appear in printed format and published to the readership at large. When the myths about the identity of the community suddenly became accessible to the general public through the mechanism of print capitalism, a new dynamic was put in place and a new role for the historian emerged.

One of the most influential works that dealt recently with the role of print capitalism and national consciousness is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. In his book, Anderson highlighted the transformative role of the printing press in creating new dynamics for language and identity. He postulated that the proliferation of printing technology in a capitalist environment made it possible to imagine this community that is to become the nation. Anderson summarized his main point by stating: "The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation."³⁵

The main argument advanced by Anderson was the fact that the proliferation of printing in the vernacular used by the readership at large led to several developments that simultaneously prepared the stage for the rise of nationalism. The emergence of a communal consciousness around specific printed languages in time evolved and matured into national identity.

Anderson demonstrated how market forces determined the vernacular's ascendancy over Latin starting in sixteenth century Europe. Eager to tap into a far greater clientele, printing houses sponsored a revolution in the use of the vernacular. He stated: "The logic of capitalism thus meant that once the elite Latin market was saturated, the potentially huge markets represented by the monoglot masses would beckon."³⁶ This increase in the amount of published materials in European Languages other than Latin weakened the already shaken sacred imagined community. The spread of certain vernaculars as tools of administrative centralization hastened the erosion of the sacred imagined community and played a major role in the rise of nationalism.

³⁵ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*, 46.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

The connection felt by readers of specific print-languages reflected the pivotal role of these languages in communication and exchange; they represented a middle ground between the spoken dialects and the Latin language. When reflecting on this idea Anderson stated: “These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.”³⁷ The fixity that print-capitalism brought with it to the language was instrumental in creating an image of great antiquity that is essential to nationalist ideologies, and the fact that some dialects were naturally closer to the print-language turned them into languages of power, as Anderson refers to them, that dominated and assimilated their cousin spoken varieties and imposed themselves as the language of the nation.

It becomes obvious, when reading Anderson’s argument, that his observations and conclusions were woven around a very specific European model. When taken out of their European context, Anderson’s ideas about print-capitalism and the rise of national identity are still applicable but in a manner that is different from the one he employed. In the case of Lebanon, the relation between print-capitalism and Lebanese nationalism is more complex and does not strictly abide by what he advocated. In the Lebanese setting, the imperial language was Ottoman Turkish. A local identity revolving strictly around print-capitalism should have involved the vernacular Arabic that is common in Mount Lebanon, which in turn is a part of the Syrian dialect of Arabic. Neither the vernacular of the Lebanon nor the Syrian dialect play any role, it is rather classical and modern standard Arabic that dominate printing in all its forms. The sacred imagined community in Lebanon would have to follow different lines than in Europe.

³⁷ Ibid., 44.

It must be said however that without print-capitalism the entire debate about the history of the Maronite Church could not have affected national identity in Lebanon. The process began with Maronite Church historians publishing their histories of their Church and community. These works were used by lay Lebanese historians who treated these publications as sources when they produced and published their own versions of Lebanese history. This led to a widespread proliferation of myths about church history that were transformed eventually into nationalist myths. The centrality of print-capitalism in the case of Lebanon is that the nation was generated and articulated by lay and clerical historians, whose arguments, through the printed word, entered the public sphere and into public imagination.

Instrumental to my investigation of the role of institutions in generating national identity are the findings of Joseph Massad about the making of national identity in Jordan. In his book *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* Massad argued for the presence of a disciplinary-judicial Dyad, employed by the nation-state, that plays a productive as well as repressive role. According to Massad, the judicial system and the military institution, traditionally considered to be elements of the repressive state apparatus, also play a productive role in generating national identity. Massad argued that in the realm of national culture, the repressive and productive mechanisms are simultaneously at work destroying the old and creating the new all the while formulating the new as what has always been, a notion that is paramount for advocating the antiquity and authenticity of national culture. Massad stated: “Law and the military, which play their designated repressive role, prove to exceed their control mandate by playing a *productive* role not initially envisioned by those who deployed them. They set new demarcations on who is and who is not a “national”, what is and what is not “national

culture”. They come to constitute and produce the subjects and the categories they seek to discipline and/or repress. Moreover, the strategies through which these subjects are produced generated a range of processes outside the realm of the military and the law, which carry their production to the realm of national culture.”³⁸

Despite the significant differences between the emergence of national identity in Jordan and in Lebanon, the Jordanian case, as Massad revealed, is generalizable insofar as the agency of the institutions in generating identity is involved. In Lebanon, my focus will be on the institution of the Maronite Church, as well as the educational networks at its disposal. The Church, through its historians, its primary and secondary schools, as well as its university, played a productive role in generating national identity, and one that may not have been initially envisaged by the clergy themselves. I will reveal how this process occurred over time, and what consequences it spelled for the multi-confessional political entity that Lebanon is.

In trying to clarify the extent of the role of historians in creating and perpetuating a specific brand of national identity I shall make use of Shlomo Sand’s arguments concerning the place of the historian in the nationalist discourse. In his book *The Invention of the Jewish People* he stated: “Since the fundamentals of nation building almost always included some cultural components, linguistic or religious, that survived from earlier historical phases, clever engineering contrived to make them into hooks on which the history of nations could be skillfully hung. The people became a bridge between past and present, thrown across the deep

³⁸ Massad, Joseph. *Colonial Effects*, 5.

mental chasm created by modernity, a bridge on which the professional historians of all the new nation-states could comfortably parade.”³⁹

As the claim of great antiquity is a common component of the nationalist discourse nationalist historians are the engineers who create the link between the citizens of the modern nation-state and the ancient communities they posit as their progenitors. This they achieve through the transformation of key cultural components that have survived over the ages. In the case of Lebanon, what took place in history-writing was the engineering and transformation of a religious community into a modern nation.

Sand went further by stating: “For a long time, scholars –especially historians- regarded nations as an ancient, indeed primeval, phenomenon. Reading their writings today, one sometimes gets the impression that history began with the rise of national groups.”⁴⁰ In this depiction of the variety of history that was for a long time being produced since the rise of nationalism, Sand pointed to the complex interaction between history-writing and nationalist ideology. The historian, operating from within an emerging nationalism, projected the nascent nation into the past that he wrote about. The nation that existed in the historian’s present had to exist somewhere in the ancient past that he invoked. The function of the intellectual in general, and the historian in particular, is to enable the nation to remember and consolidate its historical imagery in order to consolidate national consciousness, which is why Sand refers to them as “masters of memory” and “producers of culture”.⁴¹

³⁹ Sand, Shlomo. *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁴¹ Ibid., 54.

Sand holds that this function of the historian is found in both civil as well as ethnocentric nationalisms. The Lebanese model that emerged from the writings of nationalist historians is based on what Anthony Smith referred to as *éthnie*⁴² or ethnic community, which is the core of the nation. This ethnic community that Smith pointed to had certain attributes that defined it. It had to have a collective proper name and a myth of common ancestry. In Maronite Church historiography we can find reference to the Maronites not simply as a religious community brought together by the conversion of diverse groups, but as a people with a single fixed ancestry, a fact that reveals that the Maronite historians who wrote these histories saw the Maronite denomination as an ethnic group and not simply as a religious congregation.

This *éthnie* as Smith stated also had to have one or more differentiating elements of common culture, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. These two attributes are already present in a community based on a common religion and specifically in a community organized around a single Church like the Maronites were.

Finally, Smith stated that this ethnic community had to have shared historical memories and an association with a specific homeland. It is in these two attributes where the historians play their most creative and potent role. In the case of the Maronite community, which as early as the high Middle Ages had a very scarce presence outside of Mount Lebanon, the Mountain, already romanticized by Orientalists as a refuge for oppressed religious communities in Syria, was naturally cast as the ancestral homeland.

The matter of shared historical memories is by definition the realm of history-writing, and for that, clerical historians had a great advantage. As Smith stated:

⁴² Smith, Anthony. *National Identity*, 21.

Very often the heroes of the ethnic community are also those of religious lore and tradition... The liturgy and rites of the Church or community of the faithful supply the texts, prayers, chants, feasts, ceremonies and customs, sometimes even the scripts, of distinctive ethnic communities, setting them apart from their neighbors. And over all this heritage of cultural difference stand the 'guardians of the tradition', the priests, scribes and bards who record, preserve and transmit the fund of ethnic myths, memories, symbols and values encased in sacred traditions commanding the veneration of the populace through temple and church, monastery and school, into every town and village within the realm of the culture-community.⁴³

The role that the Maronite clergy played changed significantly over the centuries, but the potential that they held, as mentioned by Smith, is what mattered in the long run. I will be focusing on key moments in history when clergymen from the Maronite Church fulfilled the function that Smith attributed to 'guardians of the tradition' by writing their religious myths into the histories they produced, These myths would eventually be adopted by lay historians from the same *éthnie* who would transform them into nationalist myths.

The contemporary manifestation of Maronite identity has been molded by a tradition of history-writing that developed within the Church over time and by different generations of historians. By examining this tradition and tracing back the genealogy of this identity I will also be examining the different historical moments that affected these different historians and shaped their thinking. I will be investigating the historical and political role played by history-writing, I

⁴³ Ibid., 28.

will isolate its central component today and trace it back in time. In Foucault's terms, I will not be writing a history of the past in terms of the present, but writing a history of the present.⁴⁴

I will not be trying to capture the significance of eighteenth century Maronite historiography in its own day and age, or even trying to recreate the conditions of that epoch, nor will I be arguing that the institution of the Church had a similar nature and function to those it holds today. I will be diagnosing the current situation and investigating how and why it took on this form.

When I delve into the conditions that surrounded a specific generation of historians, it will be to shed some light on the developments that occurred and that separated them from those who preceded them as well as those who would follow. Since I will be arguing that many Maronite Church historians committed the presentist fallacy of projecting meaning back into history I will try to reveal key aspects of the presents that informed their histories and that they projected back into their pasts.

The different historical moments that I will focus on vary greatly. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Mount Lebanon was an Ottoman province administered by a predominantly Druze notable class with a Sunni Muslim family at the top. By the early nineteenth, the notables had already lost much of their power, with the Church on the rise as a landowner and an economic powerhouse. The demographic situation had already changed, with the Christian population far outnumbering the Druze in all parts of the mountain, and the Sunni Family at the top of the notable pyramid already converted to Maronite Catholicism.

⁴⁴ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment*, 31.

The Egyptian presence in Syria from 1831 to 1841 brought reforms unrest and turmoil and ended with foreign intervention and the emergence of sectarian politics. The civil war of 1860 completely destroyed the old order and led to the establishment of an autonomous political entity in Mount Lebanon that would survive until the First World War.

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the coming of the French Mandate would also lead to the declaration of the State of Greater Lebanon in 1920. This development meant the establishment of a political entity that brought together Mount Lebanon with significant areas around it, inhabited by a Muslim majority. The Lebanese republic gained its independence in 1943 and was dominated by a sectarian political system that ensured disproportionate representation of Christians, Maronites in particular, in the state. This situation would be among the main factors that led to the civil war that raged from 1975 until 1991.

These key moments in history transformed and reshaped Mount Lebanon and later the country of Lebanon, but they transformed and reshaped history-writing as well. The far-reaching developments that occurred over the time span that I cover had a drastic impact on all conditions of life in Lebanon and their effect is to be seen in the works of the historians I focus on.

In part one I focus on the question of perpetual orthodoxy and the origins of Maronite ecclesiastical history. I examine the works of Maronite Patriarch Istifan Al-Duwayhi, the father of Maronite historiography. I analyze the form of his history and his stated purpose, as well as his intended audience. I situate the purpose of Duwayhi's writings within the context and anxieties of the era he lived in, all the while investigating the influence his history would have on subsequent historians.

In part two I focus on the 19th century transformation in history and historiography in Mount Lebanon. I refer to the emergence of sectarian politics and the origins of an exclusivist and exclusionary political history where sectarian identity was paramount. I analyze the history of Maronite Bishop Nicolas Murad at the level of the form of his narrative as well as the way he recast al-Duwayhi. I shed light on the significance of Murad's publications in French, which constituted the first plea for Maronite political independence. I analyze these developments against the backdrop of the collapse of the Ottoman system of administration and the sectarian violence that ensued. Also in this part I focus on the significance of the *Mutasarrifiyya* as an inclusive yet sectarian political system. I compare Yusuf al-Dibs' contributions to Murad's while stressing the methodological shift in history-writing that al-Dibs represented both at the level of form as well content of narrative. Throughout this part I refer to the shift from ecclesiastical to political concerns in the purpose of historiography, which accompanied the Maronites' ability to assert political claims in Mount Lebanon.

In part three I focus on the creation of Greater Lebanon, a political entity drawn along sectarian lines where Maronite privileges exceeded by far their demographic status in the nascent heterogeneous republic. I deal with the historians who produced their histories in this era and the challenges they had to face from Arab and Syrian nationalist historians, as well as from the French mandatory authorities and the histories they sponsored. I will focus on the way history was secularized in this era and on the divergence of lay and secular historiographies. I assess the context of Maronite political ascendancy and its impact on history-writing. I address how this ascendancy was reflected in the adoption and propagation of new myths of origin that helped delineate the inclusive and exclusive aspects of identity within the boundaries of the new nation state.

In each part I focus on specific themes that are prominent in the writings of each of the historians that I mention. Among the themes that I focus on is the Maronite Church's claims of an ancient and unbroken orthodoxy. I examine the impact that integration in the Catholic Church of Rome, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, had on the Maronite Church in Lebanon. I also address specifically the conflicting claims of orthodoxy and heterodoxy among historians when writing about the origins and establishment of the Maronite Church itself. In focusing on the debate around orthodoxy, I highlight the impact of what subscribing to one claim or another has had on history-writing in Lebanon. I also place special emphasis on the claim of orthodoxy and the kinds of ripple effect it has had on Church historiography and later lay historiography in Lebanon as relates to the question of national identity.

I subsequently examine the depiction of Mount Lebanon in historiography as a mountain refuge that Christians flocked to in order to escape the persecution of the various Muslim powers that dominated the region since the spread of Islam outside the confines of the Arabian Peninsula. I will examine how this depiction develops in Maronite Church historiography, in the accounts of its different historians while tracing its genealogy and the impact that it has had on the various interpretations of the history of the region.

I also address the dominant myths of origin in Maronite Church historiography. First I address the Mardaite myth of origin that numerous church historians adopted in trying to establish a beginning for the Maronites in Lebanon. I present the debate that still rages among historians in Lebanon concerning the validity of this hypothesis. I also examine the historicity of

the claim and simultaneously investigate the impact that the hypothesis as well as the debate itself have had on history-writing in Lebanon and on communal identity today among the adherents of the Maronite Church. I then focus on the Phoenician hypothesis in Lebanese historiography. I examine the emergence of the hypothesis as a myth of origin for a nascent Lebanese nation and the significance of this myth both in history-writing as well as national identity. I address the interaction of the two competing myths of origin—the Mardaite and the Phoenician—in the realm of history-writing among church as well as lay historians and I discuss the outcome of this interaction and the debates that resulted from it.

Throughout, I focus on certain defining moments in the history of Mount Lebanon and the region. I refer to developments and events that reshaped the area and helped shape communal identity in Lebanon. The turmoil of the mid-nineteenth century will be the focal point due to the significance of the events and the scale of transformations that they brought about. I also address the emergence of new conceptions of identity as well as historiography and the way history-writing was transformed and the way certain claims and hypotheses were codified in this period.

In each part I seek to explore the presence of a tradition in Maronite Church historiography that was maintained by influential clergymen. These clergymen and historians of the Church, through the historical claims they made and the hypotheses they advanced, ultimately defined the communal identity of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon and deeply influenced Lebanese national identity. I attempt to explain the importance of this tradition, its persistence over time, and its impact on identity in Lebanon today. My work is not archivally based nor is it rooted in new primary sources: it is based primarily on the existing literature but

presents a new perspective and new conclusions in examining this literature. What I intend to do is to bring evidence to bear on a particular aspect of history-writing in Lebanon by presenting a reassessment and re-examination of an existing historiographical debate.

If one were to assess the status of nationalist discourse since the dawn of the twentieth century in Mount Lebanon and later in Lebanon, one would find that it has definitely been hegemonic, but one also finds that it has not been entirely so. While many Lebanese, Maronites or non-Maronites, have adopted key elements of the discourse, others have challenged them. In the last couple of decades, scholarly resistance spearheaded by critical historians has emerged. Many of the central claims of Maronite Church historians have been debunked. What I offer, however, is a comprehensive assessment of all of these myths as a single tradition. I will reveal how their interconnectedness came to constitute a tradition and I will focus on the process of creation and proliferation of nationalist myths as a whole and the way they integrate together.

The following will show the way these myths interconnect and the way they constitute and produce the nationalist narrative, which in turn reproduces them as givens (*musallamat*) and foundations of the nation. My approach will not involve a new historical narrative; it will rather be an examination of existing accounts of history. What I will provide is a history not of Lebanon or even of nationalism, but a history of how the nationalist myths have been invented and perpetuated by historians. In this query I will demonstrate how history-writing is one of the main instruments in generating and perpetuating nationalist myths and ideologies and that historians are central agents of nationality.

Part I

The Quest for Orthodoxy: Istifan Al-Duwayhi and the Origins of an Ecclesiastical History

The Birth of the Maronite Church

The extended vacancy of the Chalcedonian patriarchal seat following the assassination of the patriarch in 610, the Arab conquest of Syria in 634, the great support given by the new masters to the Monophysites as well as all the harassments and humiliations suffered, forced some groups from Beth Maron to leave Syria and seek refuge in Mount Lebanon where other brethren had already settled. Furthermore, these factors led the heads of Beth Maron to found their own church, the only Chalcedonian church in the region, and to transfer the patriarchal seat from Antioch to Mount Lebanon.

Chalcedon had thus given birth to Nation Churches; the Maronite Church being the newest of all, its labour pains would last over two and a half centuries. The Maronite Church emerged then, away from its initial cradle.

History seems to have ruled in favor of the first Maronites. Mount Lebanon became an asylum of freedom and autonomy, a center attracting all kinds of minorities, Christians or Muslims, who cherished or shared these values. In the 17th century, almost all the hierarchs transferred their seats to Mount Lebanon.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Translated from the original French:

La naissance de l'Église maronite

La vacance prolongée du siège patriarcal chalcédonien suite à l'assassinat du patriarche en 610, la conquête arabe de la Syrie en 634, l'appui que les nouveaux maîtres prodiguaient aux Monophysites, les vexations et les humiliations subies oblièrent des groupes de Beth Maron à quitter la Syrie pour se réfugier auprès d'autres confrères installés au Mont-Liban. Davantage, ces facteurs amenèrent les responsables de Beth Maron à fonder leur propre Église, la seule chalcédonienne, et à transférer le siège patriarcal d'Antioche au Mont-Liban. Chalcédoine engendre ainsi des Églises-Nations. L'Église maronite est la plus jeune des toutes, Les douleurs de sa naissance auraient duré plus de deux siècles et demi. L'Église maronite naquit alors loin de son berceau initial. L'histoire semble avoir donné raison aux premiers Maronites. Le Mont-Liban devint un asile de liberté et d'autonomie, un pôle d'attraction pour toutes les minorités,

In his 1992 introduction to the Maronite Encyclopedia, Father Karam Rizk dedicated this passage to underline the origins of the Maronites. In it he summarized the events that led to the existence of the Maronite church, and the path that its founding fathers and later members followed as well as the ordeals that led them to establish their stronghold in Mount Lebanon. In this concise account, Rizk introduced key elements of long-established historical claims that are part of a tradition of history-writing in the Maronite Church. What Rizk in fact evoked are absolutes that are a part of church history as well as church identity according to a long line of clergymen who dedicated their works to delineate the history of their church, but also to refute any accusations against them by those who would label the original Maronites as heretics and monothelites. Among the absolutes that are considered by Maronite Church historians to be irrefutable facts regarding the Maronite Church's origins is the identity of the Church founder. Rizk mentions the Maronites in the seventh century, thus linking their origin to Saint Maron (+410 CE) a renowned hermit whose orthodoxy is unquestionable, long before John-Maron (+707 CE) whose religious practices are questioned by numerous historians and is regarded as a monothelite by most of them. The second absolute mentioned in this short passage is the fact that the Maronite Church had always adhered to the creed of the council of Chalcedon. Rizk wrote about the Maronite church in its early days as a chalcedonian church whose seat of patriarchate was moved from Antioch to Mount Lebanon by its early adherents. The link to Saint Maron and to the council of Chalcedon are both refutations of heresy and a defense against any accusation of Monothelitism, part of an ongoing debate within the historiographies that deal with the

chrétiennes ou musulmanes, qui chérissent ou partagent ces valeurs. Presque tous les hiérarques transférèrent leurs sièges au Mont-Liban à partir du XVIIème siècle. *Encyclopedie Maronite*. Université Saint Ésprit. Kaslik Liban: 1992, XVI.

Maronite Church. Rizk further mentions the Arab conquest of Syria and the difficulties that the early Maronites faced when dealing with the new masters. As described in the passage, these difficulties were a fundamental part of the evolution of the Maronite Church and its establishment in Mount Lebanon. Finally the “Mountain” is described as the refuge for the Maronites that shielded them from foreign aggression and external contamination.

The absolutes mentioned by Rizk, an inherent part of Church identity, historiography and self-image since the sixteenth century, are problematic when contrasted to the accounts of historians from the medieval period as well as modern times. Christian historians from the early middle ages and from the Crusader era, as well as Muslim historians, offer accounts that contradict these claims that are resented as “facts” within Maronite Church historiography. These discrepancies and the struggle to assert what are often presented as almost sacred claims characterize Maronite historiography and define in many ways Maronite communal identity in the modern era. The claims that are made impose a specific reading of the history of the Maronite Church and community, and define it in ways that do not correspond to existing documentary evidence.

If history were, among other things, a selective system of cognitive orientation to reality, where the historian is necessarily selective⁴⁶, what does the selectiveness of the historian imply when it is not supported by ample evidence or even when it is supported by some documentary evidence and contradicted by others? When the selection process means subscribing to a specific narrative in history-writing, can the historian escape being trapped by all the claims and hypotheses in this narrative, even the ones she or he wishes to contradict? Or will the selection affect the entire historiography and force the historian to accommodate everything the narrative

⁴⁶ Carr, *What Is History*.

suggests? Answering these questions becomes even more significant when addressing Maronite Church historiography and the claims and hypotheses it includes concerning the Church's orthodoxy and its relation to Rome.

During the Crusader era, numerous but short-lived attempts at establishing relations were made, and the matter of a constant connection between Rome and the Maronite Church in Mount Lebanon failed to materialize before the fifteenth century. The failure to secure a permanent connection linking the two Churches could be attributed in part to the physical reality of the period. The distance from Rome was one such factor that prevented the relations between the Maronite Church and the Vatican from evolving from what they had been during the time of the crusades. The political conditions that prevailed after the last Crusaders were driven from the Levant also played a major role in inhibiting any strengthening or even maintaining of the ties that linked center to periphery in Church affairs. The small number of followers and their minuscule role in the affairs of both Muslim and Christian realms might have also affected the attitude of the Holy See toward the Maronites. Commenting on the relations between the Maronites and the Crusaders, Matti Moosa mentions the account of Crusader-era bishop and historian William of Tyre:

The first to mention this contact was William, bishop of Tyre... In a lengthy testimony William of Tyre refers to the Maronites in two contexts. He describes them as being part of the Syrian nation and as having been Monothelites for five hundred years, stating that through divine providence they renounced this heresy by professing the true faith in the presence of Aimery and by showing readiness to accept the teaching of the Church of Rome. William of Tyre states further that these Maronites were about forty thousand in number They were a strong people and rendered great service to "us concerning our many and significant interests with our enemies. For this reason, our people (the Latin Crusaders) were overwhelmed with joy when these Maronites returned to the true faith", meaning

the faith of the Church of Rome... The first contact the Maronites made with the Crusaders was in 1099, but they did not offer their submission to the Church of Rome until the year 1182, according to William.”⁴⁷

What is underlined in William of Tyre’s passage is the perception of the Maronites by the Crusaders who were present in the Levant when he was writing. The estimated number of the Maronite community at the time is revealed, thus shedding light on what roles the community could have played during that era in addition to the services they offered to the Latin Crusaders. William also mentions the event when the Maronites offered their submission to the Church of Rome and describes it as causing overwhelming joy to the Crusaders. Other than these factual statements, his account describes the Maronites as having been heretics in the time that preceded their contact with the Crusaders. This perception—by no means limited to William of Tyre—would play a major role in shaping the relations that the Maronite Church would later have with the Holy See.

The conditions of isolation that undermined the relationship with Rome in the wake of the Crusader era would not, however, remain unchanged,⁴⁸ but similarly, the physical and political obstacles that hindered the strengthening of the ties did not remain the only ones to be reckoned with. A further, extremely significant, and far more dangerous matter stood in the way of complete integration of the Maronite Church within Roman Catholicism and its acceptance as one among equals in Church affairs and hierarchy. The matter that constantly plagued the

⁴⁷ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 218-219.

⁴⁸ “The loss of Syria to Baybars and the eviction of the last Crusaders from it nearly cut off the relations between the Church of Rome and the Maronites.” *Ibid.*, 229.

attempts at reconciliation was the question of the Maronite Church's earlier heresy. At the time when the Council of Chalcedon was convened in 451 CE, the notion of the dual nature and will of Christ was contested, and the Maronites are suspected to have differed in their convictions on the matter with both Constantinople and Rome. This elevated the difference between Roman Catholicism and the Maronite Church to much more than the difference between Rome and western Christendom on the one hand and eastern Christianity on the other. This was not a matter pertaining to the structure and hierarchy of churches. Differing on the issue of the nature and will of the Christ rendered the divergence into a conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Reprehensible sins such as heresy and heterodox beliefs and teachings cannot be overlooked by the Holy See, even when working within the context of reconciling the differences and bringing the Maronite Church fully into its realm. Regardless of the true objectives of the popes at the time,⁴⁹ amends and repentance had to be applied in order to rectify the status of those who once strayed. The Roman Catholic Church, through the efforts of missionaries and papal delegates, carried out a thorough investigation of the Maronite Church, both on the level of the books available in its monasteries as well as the teachings of its priests. The findings from some of the investigations confirmed many of the suspicions that the papal delegates had concerning the previously held heretical beliefs of the Maronites. This led to a dynamic of reform carried out mainly by the convening of church councils. The declared goals of these councils was to rectify the teachings of the Church as well as to edit and reorganize its libraries. Many of these councils were called for and presided over by the papal delegates rather

⁴⁹ "... the main objective of the popes was to place the Maronites under their authority and to make them acknowledge their supremacy." Ibid., 231.

than the patriarch of the Maronite Church, a fact that underlines the power held by the delegates as well as the nature of the relationship between the Maronite Church and the Holy See.⁵⁰

What resulted also from the investigations led by the papal delegates was a debate that involved them and the Maronite clergy. Having found numerous books in Maronite monasteries that contradicted Roman Catholic creed, and having confronted the Maronite clergy with their findings during the convened councils, the papal delegates precipitated a thorough and spirited defense by the Maronite clergymen who took part of the church councils. The case presented by the Maronite clergy in their defense of their ancient and perpetual orthodoxy was a conspiracy theory that implicated saboteurs, mainly Jacobites, who planted these books in Maronite monasteries. On certain occasions the papal delegates did subscribe to the arguments presented by the Maronite clergy.⁵¹ But regardless of the fact that on certain occasions the papal delegate believed the claims of the Maronite clergymen he was dealing with, and subscribed to their arguments in defense of the orthodoxy of their Church, the question of heresy always loomed when the issue of the Maronite church was concerned, and this had major repercussions on the interaction of the two parties.⁵² This would also later weigh heavily on the views that both would have on the past and subsequently on the claims that both would make concerning the true

⁵⁰ “After having acquainted himself with the beliefs of the Maronites and the “errors” still contained in their books, Dandini notified the patriarch, bishops, and other clergy and deacons of his intention to convene a council. This notification sent not by the patriarch but Dandini, indicates that the authority of the papal delegate was above that of the patriarch.” *Ibid.*, 260.

⁵¹ “Since Dandini by his own admission found these “errors” in the Maronite books, it is surprising to see him believe the claims of the members of the council that these books have been “maliciously contrived by the Jacobites”. *Ibid.*, 262.

⁵² “Therefore, he [the Pope] sent Cardinal Peter of Saint Marcellus to investigate their [the Maronites] faith and to reestablish their previous allegiance to Rome.” *Ibid.*, 221.

history of the Maronites. The matter of perpetual orthodoxy would later become a defining aspect of history-writing for the historians of the Maronite Church.⁵³

The differences that plagued the Christian religious communities and their churches in the period preceding the Council of Chalcedon played an endemic role in the history of the Maronite community and a problematic role in the writing of that very same history. The conflict that erupted over the definition of the nature and the will of Christ did not remain restricted to the halls of monasteries and cathedrals, but rather spilled out in violent form into the communities that belonged to the different factions.

Following the Council of Chalcedon, any church that deviated from the consensus that was reached was considered heretical and outside the realm of orthodoxy. Failure to acknowledge the two natures and the two wills of the Christ meant a complete rupture from both Rome and Constantinople, and the Maronite Church was no exception to this rule. This point in the history of the Maronites becomes contested territory between a faction that insists on the heresy of the Maronite Church prior to its reforms, and another faction, mainly the Church itself, that insists that it never strayed away from Orthodoxy and more specifically from Roman Catholicism.

The matter of the possible heretical teachings of the Maronite Church following the Council of Chalcedon came to the forefront at a time when further integration was taking place within the Roman Catholic Church. This was the time when the Maronite College was founded

⁵³ In *Tarikh al-Ta'ifah al-Maruniyya* Duwayhi discussed the historical and religious origins of his people and attempted to prove their unbroken orthodoxy and union with Rome. Noted in Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 94.

in Rome in 1584,⁵⁴ when numerous and very influential Maronite clergymen were in constant contact with the Vatican. Increasing numbers lived there for their training; individuals who then codified the history of their own Church. Among the most prominent students of the Maronite College was Maronite Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi, whose works would have a defining effect on the history and the historiography of the Maronite Church and the identity of the Maronite community.⁵⁵ This was also a time when Rome exerted unprecedented influence on the Maronites as it pushed for reforms that rendered their Church more suitable to, and conformist with, Roman Catholicism. On this matter, Matti Moosa stated: "...We will find Rome still sending missions to the Maronites to investigate their 'true faith' and to examine their religious books, the only reliable source to determine the veracity of that faith."⁵⁶ This underscores the continuous efforts by the Roman Catholic Church and the authority it commanded in dealing with the Maronites. As for the pervasiveness of Rome's influence and the true nature and depth of the changes it initiated, Moosa states: "However, at the First Council of Qanubin convened by Eliano in 1580 and more specifically at the Second Council of Qanubin assembled by Dandini, systematized Latinization affected the discipline of the Maronite Church. According to Maronite Bishop Pierre Dib, 'the work of Eliano and Dandini marked the point of departure of a systematic Latinization, touching the very substance of cult.'"⁵⁷ The errors that the Vatican uncovered, among the books on which the Maronite clergy relied, pertained to the nature of

⁵⁴ "Eliano's mission to the Maronites and the doctrinal "errors" he found in their books yielded two results: through his effort a Maronite school was established in Rome in 1584 for the religious education of Maronite students and the printing of Maronite books after they had been revised." Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 255.

⁵⁵ "Duwayhi was the first Maronite to attempt a complete history of his people. A man of keen intelligence and a graduate of the Maronite College of Rome..." Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 89.

⁵⁶ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 241.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

Christ and revealed the heretical beliefs of the early Maronites. The Maronite clergymen who had to answer to these accusations maintained that Jacobite infiltrators planted those books in Maronite churches to cause confusion, while the true teachings of the Maronite Church never deviated from orthodoxy.

In this environment, where every side had something to prove and a claim to make, where the stakes were high enough to shake the legitimacy of an entire Church, the version of history the Vatican imposed could be confused with the version the Maronites created for themselves. In this context, it becomes imperative that we investigate whether Rome in fact imposed its own version of the history of the Maronites or whether it reacted to their own claims in their own chronicles. This would reveal whether the Maronite clergymen were recipients of knowledge only, or whether they influenced what others thought and wrote about their past. This investigation would also reveal how much of the historical writings of Maronite clergymen were supported and governed by documentary evidence, and how much were determined by church ideology and dogma.

Since a common denominator for most Maronite Church historians is the quest to assert the orthodoxy of the Church, this is subsumed in the different histories that they recorded. It is displayed in different ways in the writings of al-Duwayhi, al-Dibs, Dib, and Daw. It is, therefore, fitting to examine how it weighs on the manner in which they dealt with the issues of the Maronite Church's identity and origin, and what repercussions this would have on Maronite communal identity in modern times.

As a critical historian, Matti Moosa has done a monumental job in investigating many of the myths about the early Maronite Church and community. He succeeded in shedding light on

several misunderstood aspects of Maronite history by presenting and organizing the available evidence, including much of what had been overlooked by previous historians, as well as by offering new interpretations of the available records.

What he did not set out to do however is to thoroughly examine the fallout from all of that on identity and nationalism in Lebanon. He stopped short of demonstrating the different mechanisms through which this tradition in Maronite Church historiography entered the nationalist narrative. It is on this main point that my query differs from Moosa's. I will employ some of his findings in my own analysis, but while his narrative is concerned with the history of the Church and the way it was recorded, I will be focusing more on the way historians imagined the nation and generated identity by recasting the same claim in different narratives and with different objectives. I will address some of the myths he put into question, but only to demonstrate how these myths about the Church found their way into the nationalist discourse through the endeavor of historians, and ended up shaping many aspects of national identity.

I will be investigating the claim of unbroken orthodoxy as the meta-historical task of Maronite Church historiography, but only to reveal how, through emplotment, this claim is transformed into a narrative that becomes an inherent part of a nationalist discourse. I will argue that the narrative, which is the embodiment of the interpretive strategies of the historian, is the main mechanism through which identity is generated. The dissertative aspect of the historical discourse of Maronite Church historians has been thoroughly critiqued; their interpretation of what constitutes historical truth was covered by historians like Moosa and Salibi. My main contribution will be an examination of the narrative aspect, or the form of representation, of what they considered to be a truth about history. It is through that narrative aspect that Maronite Church historians and lay nationalist historians shaped the nationalist discourse.

Contested Claims About the History of the Maronite Church

The term Maronite poses a problem of identity. Despite the fact that today in Lebanon and other parts of the world the name Maronite is applied to a large Christian denomination affiliated with the Church of Rome, since the fifteenth century this sect has endeavored to find a legitimate derivation as a separate entity from the rest of the Eastern churches.⁵⁸

Among the elements that constitute the field of the debate concerning the Chalcedonian orthodoxy of the Maronite Church, one finds the name Maronite to be itself contested territory among historians. The name appears to be the object of conflicting interpretations of available evidence, each carrying its own significant implications concerning the roots of the Church and the creed of its founders. The problematic that arises from the name revolves around the issue of the emergence of the Maronite Church and the formation of a Maronite Christian sect.⁵⁹ The origin of the term Maronite and how the Church acquired it is inherently linked to the Chalcedonian orthodoxy of the Maronite Church and its followers since it points to the founding of the Church and its relationship with the rest of Christendom. The persons, or possibly the monastery, who gave the Maronites their name would determine whether the first Maronites were indeed followers of the Chalcedonian orthodoxy, or whether they subscribed to Monothelistic and Monophesite heresies.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁹ "...at the end of the seventh century the Maronites were still a Monothelite religious group. However, we may state with certainty that only in the eighth century did ancient church writers refer to the Maronites as a distinct Christian sect." Ibid., 117.

Among the available interpretations of Maronite Church history that dealt with the question of the name of the Church, is the interpretation presented in the *Encyclopedie Maronite* [Maronite Encyclopedia]. This interpretation represents the contemporary and official Church-adopted reading of its own history and origin. According to this reading the population of Mount Lebanon converted to Christianity at the hands of the disciples of Saint Maron from whom the Maronites later acquired their name.⁶⁰ This interpretation indicates that the early roots of the Maronite Church are linked to the fifth century figure of Saint Maron whose disciples would later lay the foundations of the monastery that would also carry his name. According to the *Encyclopedie Maronite* the monastery of Saint Maron, the first orthodox monastery, had two main purposes, defending the doctrine of Chalcedon, and evangelizing the regions that were still pagan. And it is around this monastery that the Maronite Church was formed.⁶¹ The encyclopedia offers a summary of the early history of the Maronite Church, the lives of its founding fathers, the process of its birth, and the establishment of the Church and its followers in Mount Lebanon. The account that it presents describes a process of gradual migration of the Maronites following the Arab conquest of Syria in the seventh century, and culminating in the tenth century after the destruction of their convent on the 'Asi river.⁶² At the latter stage, the Maronite presence becomes almost exclusive to Mount Lebanon, while a small community establishes a presence on the island of Cyprus. The description of the general conditions that precipitate this migration from the plains of northern Syria paints an image of a continuous struggle by the Maronites

⁶⁰ *Encyclopedie Maronite*, XIV.

⁶¹ "Ainsi le monastère de St. Maron, premier foyer orthodoxe, se fixa un double but: défendre la doctrine de Chalcédoine et évangéliser les contrées encore païennes. C'est autour de ce monastère, situé vraisemblablement dans la Syrie Seconde, que se forma l'Église maronite." Ibid., XVI.

⁶² "L'émigration des Maronites, commencé au Vème siècle, s'acheva par la destruction de leur couvent en Syrie au Xème siècle." Ibid., XIX.

against heresy and its supporters. The forced migration of the Maronites began when the Monophysite heretics gained the upper hand, and it was completed with the physical destruction of the foremost Maronite center in Syria. The pressures and humiliations that the Maronites endured were caused by the Arab Muslim support of the Monophysites after they conquered the region. These trials encouraged the priests of the house of Maron to seek refuge among their coreligionists who were already present, albeit in small numbers, in Mount Lebanon.⁶³ It is at this time that patriarch John Maron is supposed to have lived. The Maronite Encyclopedia mentions Saint Maron (+410) as the father of the Maronites, while Saint John Maron (+707) is mentioned as the first Maronite patriarch of Antioch, and the true founder of the Maronite Church.⁶⁴

When describing the tenth century events that conclude the migration towards Mount Lebanon Karam Rizk stated in the introduction of the Maronite Encyclopedia that “The Byzantine crusade between 961-967 undertaken by Nicephore Phocas, John Tzimiskes and, later, by Basile II, led to depopulation. Who filled the demographic vacuum? People who were habituated to coexist with the Arabs, and to inhabit the frontiers. The Syrian Jacobites were the better-prepared...Between 954 and 1072, the Jacobite immigrants found in the re-conquered area thirty Episcopal centers and fifty convents. The Jacobite expansion and the connivance of the Byzantines leave no place for the Maronites.”⁶⁵ One can see that, again, the pressures of the heretics in Syria precipitated the forced migration of the Maronites. Those heretics were

⁶³ Ibid., XVI.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “La croisade byzantine entreprise entre 961-967 par Nicéphore Phocas, Jean Tzimiskès et, plus tard, par Bazile II, entraîne une depopulation. Qui comblera le vide démographique? Des gens habitués à cohabiter avec les Arabes et à s’installer sur les frontières. Les Syriens jacobites étaient les mieux préparés...Entre 954 et 1072, les immigrés jacobites fondent dans la région reconquise trente sièges épiscopaux et cinquante six couvents. L’expansion jacobite et la connivence byzantine ne laissent plus de place pour les maronites.” Ibid., XIX.

supported by the established power that governed the region, Byzantium in the case of the mid-tenth to the mid-eleventh centuries, and whose complicity and conniving facilitated if not enforced this migration.

According to the Maronite encyclopedia, the early roots of the Maronite Church are to be found in the person of Saint Maron, while the true founder of the Church is Saint John Maron, the first Maronite patriarch of Antioch. The labor pains and birth of the Maronite Church involved a constant struggle to assert the Church's adherence to Chalcedonian orthodoxy, as well as to evangelize the provinces of Syria that had remained pagan. The sufferings of the early Maronites at the hands of the Arab conquerors who supported their heretical adversaries only worsened when the Byzantines followed a similar policy after they re-conquered northern Syria. These facts led to the migration of the Maronites from the Syrian plains to Mount Lebanon where they found relative security and insularity from the contamination of heretical beliefs.

What becomes evident is that any hypothesis about the term Maronite and its origins precipitates numerous other assumptions about the history of the Maronite Church and its followers. This one simple element would impose a specific reading of history and would necessitate several historical claims in order to support it. This implies that subscribing to one version of how the name emerged or was acquired by the Maronites would force the historian to subscribe to many other hypotheses concerning Maronite history that may or may not be supported by reliable historical evidence. Not only is the Chalcedonian orthodoxy of the Maronite Church brought into question, but also the entire historical interaction that the Maronites had with their surroundings. The relations of the early Maronites with the other Eastern churches, with Byzantium, with the Muslim state, as well as with Rome, are all affected by any hypothesis concerning the name of the Maronite Church. Where did the main threat come

from? And, therefore, who was the “Other” in Maronite Church history. The answers that different historians gave were inherently related to their claims about the Church’s origins, its Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and the perceived existential threat of their eras. This is evident when one assesses the significance of these claims in Church historiography. This is not to say, however, that there is consensus among Maronite Church historians on any one hypothesis concerning the name of the Church and some of the obscure chapters of its past. What is certain is that while Chalcedonian orthodoxy was always a claim to be upheld by Church historians in their writings, the manner with which they made their claim and the kind of supporting evidence they presented did not always conform to the parameters set in the writings of their predecessors. As Matti Moosa stated: “Several questions enter into the quest for identity: whether a church by this name existed from antiquity; whether its name was taken from an individual or monastery; and when and how this denomination became affiliated with the Church of Rome. Maronite writers have offered essays to consider these questions, but the simplest answers are often in conflict.”⁶⁶

What is necessary, therefore, is a thorough examination and assessment of the different accounts offered by Maronite Church historians, including their divergences, as well as any common denominators they possess. It is also important to address the impact that these writings had on lay historians from within and without the Maronite community. The implications of this Church historiography on history-writing in Lebanon at large may have been immensely significant, not only in the realm of history-writing itself, but more so, on communal consciousness and national identity in the country.

⁶⁶ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 11.

The Roots of Authority

As a starting point for many a myth in Maronite Church historiography, the writings and folk songs of Jubra'il Ibn al-Qila'i constitute a fitting place to initiate an investigation concerning the claims of Chalcedonian orthodoxy as well as the name hypothesis and all its implications. What is significant about the works of Ibn al-Qila'i is the fact that they are considered the main source of Maronite history in the period prior to the fifteenth century. What is also significant is the attention they give to the origin of the Maronite Church and its relationship with the Holy See.⁶⁷

Ibn al-Qila'i (1450-1516) himself was a Maronite priest who lived in the last days of the Mameluke sultanate and received his education in Rome from 1470 until his return to Mount Lebanon in 1493. He lived at a time when integration with the Roman Catholic Church was underway and when the Jacobite Church in Syria still posed a threat to the Maronite clergy. He composed what is referred to as *zajaliyyah*, a poem in the vernacular Arabic that in his case was a celebration of the heroics of the Maronites in defending their freedom and an account of the tragedies they suffered when they failed to unite around their church.

Ibn al-Qila'i played a key role in asserting an unbroken orthodoxy for the Maronites, the name according to him is derived from the fifth century Saint Maron (+410), and through association with this saint and with the monastery that carried his name, the Maronites themselves were also adherents of the Chalcedonian creed and could not have subscribed to the Monophysite heresy. The image that Ibn al-Qila'i presents in his epic is one of a golden age, when an independent Maronite Mount Lebanon had the patriarch of the Church at its head, and

⁶⁷ Ibn al-Qila'i, *Zajaliyyat Ibn al-Qila'i* [Folk Songs of Ibn al-Qila'i], b.

was a haven for the true believers in Chalcedonian orthodoxy. This haven was exclusive to the Maronites as the Ibn al-Qila‘i stated: “A heretic was not to be found in it nor a Muslim, if a Jew were to be found, his grave would be revealed by crows.”⁶⁸ This posited golden age came to an end with the penetration of heretics into Mount Lebanon; their presence was said to be the root of all the calamities that befell the Maronites.

Ibn al-Qila‘i’s writings do not constitute a historiography, yet their significance lies with their influence on history-writing among Maronite Church historians. When writing on the historicity of Ibn al-Qila‘i’s epic, Kamal Salibi stated: “Strictly speaking, Ibn al-Qila‘i did not write history. His aim was not to give a factual picture of the past and relate it to his own time. He merely used historical material (which he frequently distorted and confused with legend) to prove to his community that the Roman Faith was the orthodox faith, that the Maronite church was orthodox by origin, and that the preservation of its original union with Rome was natural and necessary.”⁶⁹

The fact that Ibn al-Qila‘i distorted and doctored historical evidence and presented an inaccurate and fictional reading of history in his epic does not discredit his work in the sense that it is, in the end, a folk epic. After all, “the poet is free to invent within the outline of his story, as well as to emphasize some aspects of a known story.”⁷⁰ The problem would later arise when this epic was treated by the future historians of the Maronite Church as a document containing irrefutable historical data rather than literary value written by a fellow priest who was an expert on the history of his denomination. The claims that Ibn al-Qila‘i made about the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronite Church were linked to secondary claims concerning insularity and

⁶⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁹ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 33.

⁷⁰ Cook, *History/Writing*, 33.

constant struggle against heresy, independence from the Muslim state and a condition of perpetual warfare against it, as well as distinctiveness from the surrounding other, be it the other Eastern churches, or the Arab Muslim milieu.

Ibn al-Qila'i may have been the first to approach the history of his church in this manner, but he would not be the last. Salibi stated: "The polemical defense of the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronites and their unbroken union with Rome, which was first attempted by Ibn al-Qila'i and his friend in Italy, became a tradition of Maronite history-writing, and has remained so until today."⁷¹ This is significant not only in the sense that Ibn al-Qila'i started a trend in history-writing among the Maronite clergy, but more so in the sense that his assumptions and distortions of history would later be codified by subsequent historians. The false claims that he presented in his writings would precipitate a chain reaction of sorts since they became the foundation for a tradition in church historiography.

Chain of Transmission

One of the most significant Maronite Church historians whose writings would exhibit concerns, similar to those of Ibn al-Qila'i, for proving perpetual Chalcedonian orthodoxy, as well as an unbroken relation with Roman Catholicism, was Maronite Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi (1629-1704). Considered to be the father of Maronite Church historiography, al-Duwayhi's writing would influence generations of Maronite Church historians in the centuries after his death and until the present. Despite the fact that he left behind a diverse body of literature, he is

⁷¹ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 33.

best known for his historiography, and therefore, the significance of his works for historians, by far outweighs that of Ibn al-Qila'i.

Born in the village of Ihdin in Jibbat Bsharri in 1629, Istifan al-Duwayhi was enrolled in the Maronite College of Rome between the years 1641 and 1655 when he graduated and was selected as a missionary for the College of Propaganda. After several years spent between Mount Lebanon, Aleppo, and Cyprus, preaching and working mostly in education, in 1670 the Maronite bishops and notables elected Istifan al-Duwayhi as Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, and he received the confirmation of Pope Clement X in 1672.⁷²

The three main histories written by al-Duwayhi are *Tarikh al-Ta'ifah al-Maruniyyah*, which is a history of the Maronite Church and the Maronite community; *Silsilat Batarikat al-Ta'ifah al-Maruniyyah*, a chronology of Maronite Patriarchs; and *Tarikh al-'Azminah*,⁷³ a general chronicle of the period from the rise of Islam to al-Duwayhi's own time. Although *Tarikh al-'Azminah* is a general chronicle narrating events year by year and not specifically focusing on the Maronite community, it is of the utmost importance as a source of information on the Maronites and on Mount Lebanon, since no work of its kind had dealt with the community and its lands with the attention given by al-Duwayhi. Due to the nature and structure of *Tarikh al-'Azminah*, where al-Duwayhi did not comment on the events but rather stated them in chronological order, it is from his selection of which events to narrate and from what sources that one can grasp his views on the matters at hand.

⁷² Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 92.

⁷³ These works are primary sources for this dissertation.

It is important to mention the environment that al-Duwayhi operated within since it would leave a distinctive mark on his historical narrative as well as his polemical writings. The Ottoman state was first and foremost an Islamic political entity, not simply in terms of the state being ruled by a Muslim political elite, but that the state was under Islamic rule. Discrimination was systematized and codified, it was not a practice resulting from one form or another of inter-communal tension, it was the law.⁷⁴ The non-Muslim communities, the *dhimmis* that resided within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire were “protected” subjects, in terms of life and property and freedom to practice their religion. This protection, however, was accompanied by a long list of restrictions reflecting the subordinate status of the *dhimmis* of the Empire.⁷⁵

Christian and Jewish religious groups in the Ottoman Empire were organized along local traditional structures that allowed the power of Istanbul to reach the individual in any corner of the state.⁷⁶ The Ottoman millet system organized the relationship between the central authority and the different autonomous religious sects, effectively appropriating the legitimacy of the church and placing it at the disposal of the Ottoman government.

Istifan al-Duwayhi was thus writing in an environment where religious and ecclesiastical consciousness was paramount. Privilege, protection, and the wellbeing of the entire community depended on the legitimacy and efficiency of the church structure. Sects were not politicized in the days of al-Duwayhi, but individuals existed solely as members of officially recognized millets, each with its own specific relationship with the Ottoman center. As a member of a

⁷⁴ Heyberger, Bernard. *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme Catholique*, 44.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

dhimmi community, the other, when al-Duwayhi was concerned, could not have been a Muslim. The structure of Ottoman society rendered it impossible for the Maronites to compete as equals with Muslim subjects. Muslims belonged to another class and the category they belonged to was far beyond reach. Since Ottoman power and Muslim rule was the established norm for al-Duwayhi, the threatening other against whom the self is defined was not the Muslim milieu.⁷⁷ For the Maronite Church structure, competition and threats that could compromise the community came from other Christian sects operating under the same system and with similar privileges.⁷⁸ In the writings of al-Duwayhi, evil was in the Jacobite heresy, and the devil incarnate was in those who tried to spread it among the Maronites.⁷⁹ The survival of the Maronites community depended on vanquishing these heretics and removing them from Mount Lebanon.

A-Duwayhi and Ibn al-Qila'i lived in different eras and under completely different circumstances; their temporal concerns as well as their worldviews were very divergent. "For Ibn al-Qila'i, the historical moment confronted the Maronites with a seemingly urgent choice: either union with Rome as a Latinized church or evisceration by a more literate and more powerful Jacobite church under Islam. Writing years later, Duwayhi did not see the threat to ecclesiastical order as that pressing or urgent."⁸⁰ The struggle against heresy in Mount Lebanon had already been won. It was won by the generation of Ibn al-Qila'i. These divergences in the nature of their writings as well as their contemporary concerns do not extend to the realm of church orthodoxy

⁷⁷ Makdisi, Ussama. *Artillery of Heaven*, 43

⁷⁸ Heyberger, Bernard. *Hindiyya mystique et criminelle (1720-1798)*. Paris: Aubier, 2001, 23

⁷⁹ Mouawad, Ray Jabre. *Les Maronite Chrétien du Liban*. Turnhout: Éditions Brepols, 2009, 61-62.

⁸⁰ Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 41.

and established relationship with the Holy See. The claims that Ibn al-Qila‘i made in the fifteenth century would be repeated by Istifan al-Duwayhi in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These claims would be recast by al-Duwayhi in a different narrative, one that stressed resignation instead of repudiation of coexistence.⁸¹ On issues of the origins of the Maronite Church, including the person of its eponymous founder, and of the perpetual orthodoxy of the Church and its organic relationship with Rome, al-Duwayhi’s claims are similar to those made by Ibn al-Qila‘i. In fact al-Duwayhi refers to the works of Ibn al-Qila‘i, using him as a reference and an authority on Maronite Church history. When al-Duwayhi, for instance, wrote *Asl al-Mawarinah* [The Origins of the Maronites] which was the first part of *Tarikh al-Ta’ifah al-Maruniyyah*, and dealt mainly with the founding of the Maronite Church and the struggles of its early adherents and with how they came to inhabit Mount Lebanon, he cited Ibn al-Qila‘i’s poetry rather than any historical writings available to him.⁸² The latter’s status as an authority on Maronite history is evident in al-Duwayhi’s works since “the Maronite historian to whose works Duwayhi referred most for the history of the late medieval period, and whom he quoted abundantly, was Ibn al-Qila‘i.”⁸³ It is, therefore, not surprising that his folk epic and other writings that address questions pertaining to the Church’s origins are considered to be reliable sources by al-Duwayhi and are dealt with accordingly.

When examining the writing of al-Duwayhi one notices that he uses Ibn al-Qila‘i as a source of historical rather than poetic knowledge. The poetry of Ibn al-Qila‘i is employed by al-Duwayhi as an accurate account of events that took place in Mount Lebanon. It is important to mention that the influence of Ibn al-Qila‘i on the historiography of al-Duwayhi is not only that of

⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

⁸² Al-Duwayhi, *Asl al-Mawarinah*, 174-176.

⁸³ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 103.

a predecessor and a fellow clergyman who was well informed on the history of his church. What we find as well, from examining the works of both writers, is that they performed identical tasks. “Duwayhi set out to prove in *Nisbat al-Mawarina* that the Maronites were so called after the blessed Marun of Cyrus, the eponymous founder of the monastery of Mar Marun on the Orontes, who died in the early fifth century, and that the monks of this monastery had always been faithfully attached to the Roman Church.”⁸⁴ Many of the histories that al-Duwayhi wrote were dedicated solely to the defense of the Maronite Church from any accusations of heresy and Monothelitism. His *Tarikh al-ta’ifa al-maruniyya*, in its entirety, could be considered a polemical defense of his Church. It followed a different pattern of history-writing than the one employed in *Tarikh al-’Azminah*. The latter followed the traditional form of the Arabic chronicle. Historian Kamal Salibi described the nature and content of every one of the three parts of this book:

In *Tarikh al-ta’ifa al-maruniyya* Duwayhi discussed the historical and religious origins of his people and attempted to prove their unbroken orthodoxy and union with Rome. In the first part of this work, which is entitled *Nisbat al-Mawarina* (Origin of the Maronites), he dealt with the rise of the Maronite church and community and their early development until the eighth century. The second part, entitled *Radd al-tuham wa daf’ ashshubah* (Answer to the accusations and disproof of the suspicions), is a polemical defense of the unbroken orthodoxy of the Maronites and their continuous attachment to the Holy See, which is rich in historical and biographical material. There is a third part entitled *Ihtijaj ‘an al-milla al-mawariniyya* (Protest for the Maronite sect), which is an apology for the Maronites, “refuting every accusation made against them by missionaries...” This last part, however, deals exclusively with theological polemics...⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 94.

But as is evident, all three parts of the book deal on one level or another with the accusations of heresy. The first two parts addressed the issue from an historical perspective, using the origin of the Maronite Church and its founder as one proof of its orthodoxy, and adding historical and biographical material that specifically support this claim. The third part addresses the issue from a theological perspective, while addressing specific accusations of Catholic missionaries operating in Mount Lebanon. In all of this, the centrality of polemical writings in the historiography of al-Duwayhi is evident, a fact that would have repercussions on the historical writings of subsequent Maronite Church historians.

The two main elements that affected the divergence between the narratives of al-Duwayhi and Ibn al-Qila‘I were the certainty of Muslim rule, reinforced by Ottoman stability and power, and the union with Rome which had been greatly strengthened by Al-Duwayhi’s times. Both historians were graduates of the Maronite College in Rome, and both were involved in missionary activity among the Maronites. Both of them interacted with missionaries from Europe, Franciscan and Jesuit. What was novel in the narrative of al-Duwayhi was the reconciliation between ecclesiastical subordination to Rome and political subordination to the Muslim surrounding.⁸⁶ Perpetual orthodoxy was a means of coexistence rather than exclusion, a claim not always shared by the subsequent Maronite historians who would redeploy al-Duwayhi’s claims and use him as a source. It was on this specific level that al-Duwayhi launched his most ambitious quest, to counter the claims of heresy leveled against the Maronite Church by Jesuit missionaries, as well as counter the methods and attitudes of the missionaries concerning Eastern Christianity and its place in its Muslim milieu. Competition by the Jesuits was common in al-Duwayhi’s time; their encroachment on the jurisdiction of the Maronite Church had already

⁸⁶ Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 41.

stirred much resistance. The excessive zeal of the Jesuit missionaries often triggered reprisals by the Ottomans, which harmed primarily the Maronite community.⁸⁷ In his writings, al-Duwayhi aimed at refuting the accusations of the Jesuits, preserving the authority of the Maronite Church and clergy, and opposing the attitudes and assumptions of the Jesuits concerning the place of Eastern Catholics in Ottoman society. The audience al-Duwayhi was addressing included the Jesuits and the Holy See, but also included the Maronite clergy who would preserve his manuscripts and his tradition. His plea was that the Maronites had always belonged to Roman Catholicism but in a manner distinctly Maronite and subject to the specific conditions of the Maronite community. “Duwayhi, in effect, constructed a very powerful narrative, disseminated both orally and through manuscripts, which finally grounded the Maronites firmly within their multireligious world under Islamic suzerainty.”⁸⁸

The Mardaites: Al-Duwayhi’s Adopted Myth of Origin

“A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Only two things, actually, constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other is in the present...The nation, even as the individual, is the end product of a long period of work, sacrifice and devotion. The worship of ancestors is understandably justifiable, since our ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, of great men, of glory (I mean the genuine kind), that is the social principle on which the national idea rests. To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have accomplished great things together, to wish to do so again, that is the essential condition for being a nation.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Heyberger, Bernard. *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme Catholique*, 315.

⁸⁸ Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*, 43.

⁸⁹ Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, 17.

In what is probably the most quoted passage from Renan's "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation," the role of the past in identity formation is underlined by the author, but what is more significant is the need of a projected self-image in a nation's past, one that mostly conforms with the desired self-image of the present and the future of the community. And it is in this image that the role of historians and of history-writing emerges and occupies its leading place in the process of identity formation. History-writing does not only contribute to bolstering a powerful popular image of what the nation is by projecting it into the past and establishing an antiquity for it. What the historian does is rather create an image, which would later inhabit the popular imagination of the nation. Renan states: "Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses."⁹⁰ If the essence of a nation according to Renan is not only that all individuals must have many things in common, but also that they must all have already forgotten many things, then it is left to the historians to decide what it is that the nation remembers and what it is that it must forget.

In the case of Mount Lebanon, the communal identity that developed among the Maronites suggested a shared past, one that defined how the Maronites came to be and how they were established in Mount Lebanon. The myth of origin that the Church historians put forward was that of the Mardaites as the ancestors of the Maronite community. If the nation is an "imagined community",⁹¹ Maronite Church historians—especially in the nationalist era—imagined it as a Mardaite one. What remains to be determined is how and why this specific myth

⁹⁰ Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*,

⁹¹ "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-6.

gained preeminence among the histories written by church historians: why this specific past was chosen to define the identity of the Church and its followers, and how a tradition around it was formed and evolved over time.

One of the main claims made about the origins of the Maronite community is that of the “Mardaite” origin. The word “Mardaite” is meant to refer to a group of people who were present during the early Middle Ages in the environs of the eastern Mediterranean. Little is known or substantiated of the group, and they themselves left nothing to indicate their presence in the form of writings or historical artifacts. However, and regardless of these facts, in many historical writings of the Maronite clergy as well as Christian missionaries working in Lebanon, the term Mardaite is used to refer to the early Christian community in Mount Lebanon, the same community that would later evolve into the Maronite community and in a later phase into the modern nation of Lebanon.⁹²

What is evident from historical research is that the attention to the subject of the Mardaites has mainly come from within the Maronite Church. Lay historians of the Maronite community, who tend to place their emphasis more on the secular history of Lebanon, do not seem to have influenced the debate in as many major ways, and were in fact receivers more than contributors when this subject is concerned. This tradition began with the Maronite Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi in the seventeenth century even though the term itself appears in the works of clergymen who preceded him.⁹³ As the father of Maronite Church historiography al-Duwayhi

⁹² “... al-mutabaqah bayna ha’ula’ al-marada’iyyin wa al-mawarinah, wa hiya mutabaqah akkadaha bihamas kabir kul mina al-batriark al-Duwayhi wa al-mutran al-Dibs wa al-‘Ab Butrus Daw.” Isma‘il, ‘Adel, *Al-Marada’iyyun, Al-Maradah: Man Hum? Min ‘Ayna Ja’u? Wa Ma Hiya ‘Ilaqatuhum Bi al-Jarajimah Wa al-Mawarinah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Nashr Li al-Siyyasah wa al-Tarikh, 2000), 8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

was, and still is, regarded as an authority on the history of the Maronites. It was for this reason that his writings about the Mardaite myth of origin turned it from one possible story into a major hypothesis among the historians of the Maronite Church.

In his book, *What is History*, Edward H. Carr stated that “The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate.”⁹⁴ This statement about history-writing becomes very relevant when one considers that the major change that occurs with al-Duwayhi is his interpretation of the word “Maradah”, which is an Arabized term from the Greek “Mardaitai”. Al-Duwayhi claimed that the term is derived from the Arabic word for rebellion, which is “tamarrud”,⁹⁵ which underlined his view of the relationship between this group and the Arab-Islamic State. Despite this false etymology⁹⁶, and the fact that this claim was rejected by influential historians, including Orientalists, such as Henry Lammens, Louis Cheykho, and Yusuf Daryan, the tradition of adopting this explanation of the Mardaites as the ancestors of the Maronites persisted in the writings of prominent Maronite Church historians such Yusuf al-Dibs, Pierre Dib, and Butrus Daw.⁹⁷

By attributing this specific past to the Maronite community, several effects take place. The choice of advancing this claim could be associated with every historian’s view of the identity of the Church and the identity that the Maronite clergy wish to project on their followers. But it is also important to note that this same past coincides just as well with the view of the Roman Catholic Church about its eastern branches, and the Church’s official stance on what

⁹⁴ Carr, *What is History*, 10.

⁹⁵ Isma‘il, *Al-Marada’iyoun, Al-Maradah*, 130.

⁹⁶ Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-‘Arab*.

⁹⁷ Isma‘il, *Al-Marada’iyoun, Al-Maradah*, 134.

constitutes a suitable and appropriate relationship between Catholics in the Levant and their Muslim surroundings. And finally, this invented origin of the Maronite community fits well with many of the views shared by different Orientalists concerning the nature of the “Orient” they were imagining as well as the boundaries that divide and distinguish this Orient from what constitutes western Christendom.⁹⁸

When inventing such a past, the first and most important notion implied is that the Maronites are descended from a non-Arab group. This specific side of the debate arose when competing national identities in Syria were already at play, and was later to become more prominent when Arab nationalism and the Arab ethnic identity that it engendered became dominant in Bilad al-Sham. Those writings that speak of the Mardaites suggest that they were most probably an Indo-European group that settled in Mount Lebanon and established a political entity for themselves in the early medieval period. This in a way establishes distance from the Arab communities of the eastern Mediterranean, and precedence over any of those groups in the claim for the land in the area. Although Aramaic did not give way to Arabic in the different parts of Greater Syria at the same rate, linguistic differences in the northern part of Mount Lebanon were non-existent at the time when these histories were written. Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi states that “as certainly, since the ninth century, their [the Maronites] language has been Arabic, which indicates that they must have originated as an Arab tribal community, even if they had not arrived in Syria from Arabia. The fact that Syriac remains the language of their liturgy, in this

⁹⁸ “Lammens also quotes French writers such as Anquetil Duperron and Rambaud, who maintained that either the Mardaites were an ancient people who for many generations migrated from place to place until some finally settled on the northern borders of Lebanon... Lammens rejects the idea advanced by Father Martin in his history of Lebanon that the Mardaites were Arabs and that their name was derived from *tamarrud* (rebellion); Lammens’s rejection is made on the ground that the Maradites came neither from the Arabian peninsula nor from the east but entered Lebanon from the north...” Excerpted from Moosa, Matti, *The Maronites in History*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 182.

respect, is irrelevant. Syriac, which is the Christian literary form of Aramaic, was originally the liturgical language of all the Arab and Arameo-Arab Christian sects, in Arabia as well as in Syria and Iraq.”⁹⁹ In the absence of this linguistic barrier, a racial barrier was erected to separate the Maronites from their immediate surroundings. The Maronites were thus not only different in matters of religion but were also different and distinct from Christian Arabs.

In every mention of the Mardaites, a hostile relation with the Arab-Islamic center of power is emphasized. They are supposed to be a militarized group constantly waging war on a relentlessly belligerent Eastern power. This condition of constant warfare indicates a status of permanent animosity between two entities that are permanently engaged in hostile activities against one another. The Mardaites are not defeated or subdued, nor do they surrender or enter into any form of agreement with the Muslim Empire; they simply manage to barricade themselves in the Mountain and lock themselves up from any outside intervention or influence. The stress is constantly on trying to establish that the Mardaites never came under Muslim rule, never were a part of a Muslim political entity, were never integrated into any society other than their own: they maintained their distinctiveness, independence, and distance from the alien East that tried to subjugate them.

Finally, a significant problem pertaining to the legitimacy of the Maronite Church is addressed by advocating the Mardaite origin of the Maronite community. By asserting the claim that the members of the Maronite community in Lebanon are direct descendants of the Mardaites, a direct and unbreakable link is established between the Maronite Church and Christian orthodoxy. Since the claim is that the Mardaites were religiously linked to Constantinople, and in many cases answered to the Byzantine emperors, the validity of their

⁹⁹ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 90.

beliefs and practices cannot be questioned by either Constantinople or Rome. Such a group had to practice Orthodoxy, and by linking it to the Maronite Church, the issue of the early heterodox teachings of the Maronite clergy is negated.¹⁰⁰ What was a major obstacle in the way of full integration within Roman Catholicism is removed, and of course the image of the Maronite Church and its legitimacy are safeguarded.

In all of this one has to consider that the Mardaite hypothesis and its occurrence in historiography, regardless of the historical evidence that supports or denies it, reveals much in the way history-writing evolved since the myth was first mentioned. The way with which every historian dealt with the hypothesis sheds light on his or her own understanding of history, of what constitutes historical evidence, of what to refer to as facts of history, as well as what to consider as authority in terms of sources, and finally on what ultimately is the purpose of history-writing. The transmission of the myth, from the poetry of Jibra'il Ibn al-Qila'i in the fifteenth century, to the chronicles of al-Duwayhi in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to the objectivist positivist historical writing of al-Dibs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and all the way to the present, reveals not only the persistence of the myth in historiography, but also, the "process by which a mere fact about the past is transformed into a fact of history."¹⁰¹

As is evident, the Mardaite myth of origin is essential to the claims and theories of all those who included it in their writing of Lebanese history. It is an integral part of the way each

¹⁰⁰ "In his *Kitab Jami' al-Hujaj al-Rahina fi Ibtal Da'awa al-Mawarinah*, he [Roman Catholic Bishop Clement Yusuf Dawud] states: ... 'While these [writers] considered [Maradaites] an orthodox [holding the same faith as that of the Roman Catholic Church] religious sect and considered their adversaries the Malkites heretical monothelites...'" Moosa, Matti, *The Maronites in History*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 183.

¹⁰¹ Carr, *What is History*, 10.

party viewed the region, its historical development, and its relation to Europe and to European history. The relevance of the Mardaite past cannot be overestimated when it comes to numerous assumptions concerning the history of the Maronite community. The power of the Mardaite hypothesis emanates not only from those historians who were advocating it, and least of all from any historical evidence that supported what al-Duwayhi suggested, but also from the fact that it is so hegemonic history-writing that one could scarcely find a single historian who ignores it. Whenever a history of Lebanon or Greater Syria is written, the author has to show his or her stance concerning the Mardaites. Whether it is being denied or supported, the Mardaite hypothesis has become so hegemonic that even in actively refuting it in their writings, historians help to propagate it. What is relevant in this case is what history-writing truly involves, what it is all about, whether it is knowledge of the past or the historian's reflection upon that knowledge, and whether objective analysis of accumulated historical evidence, concerning a specific hypothesis, is actually more relevant to history-writing than the accumulation of interpretations of a single fact of history pertaining to that same hypothesis. When summarizing the views of Collingwood, Carr stated that "The philosophy of history is concerned neither with 'the past by itself' nor with 'the historian's thought about it by itself,'" but with "the two things in their mutual relations."¹⁰² This statement is very important when comparing the historical evidence available about the Mardaites with the numerous interpretations of their role in history.

The Mardaites in History and Historiography

¹⁰² Ibid., 23.

Before we proceed with our analysis of what the Maronite tradition of historiography has to say about the Mardaites, and how such a tradition evolved in the first place, I will review the evidence that historians have uncovered and how it relates to the accumulation of myths that have come to characterize writings on this topic.

In a book dedicated to the topic of the Mardaites, Lebanese historian Adel Isma‘il presented a survey of all the significant historiographies that dealt with the Mardaites in history. Titled “*al-Marada’iyyun (al-Maradah): Man Hum? Min ’Ayna Ja’u? Wa Ma Hiyah ‘Ilaqatuhum Bi al-Jarajimah Wa al-Mawarinah?*”,¹⁰³ [The Marada’iyoun, the Maradah: Who Are they? Where Did They Come From? And What Is Their Relationship to the Jarajimah and the Maronites?] Isma‘il’s work offers a comprehensive overview about the literature on the Mardaites and underlines important aspects of the debate. The book presents and analyzes the different claims that have been advanced about the origins, the actions, and the ultimate fate of the Mardaites. In his book Isma‘il aims to shed light on the debate itself and also to offer a critique of all the arguments as well as methodologies in order to identify historical evidence from compiled “myths” and fiction that surround the issue. After presenting the historical arguments and examining the sources historians relied on, Isma‘il summarizes what is known about the history of the Maradaites and their identity while specifically targeting the misconceptions that are common among many historians who have written about them. In concluding he states what the historical evidence points to so far on the theory of the Mardaites and lists what has been proven to be verifiable historical evidence on the Mardaites and what has been shown so far to be no more than myths or misconceptions.

¹⁰³ This work is a primary source for this dissertation.

One of the primary approaches deployed by Isma‘il to investigate the origins and identity of the Mardaites is a linguistic one. Isma‘il undertakes a thorough investigation of the origin of the term “Maradah” that often occurs in historical manuscripts and survives in the histories and popular culture of today. The inquiry traces back the occurrence of the term to Byzantine sources. The Greek word “Mardaitai” was the Hellenized form of “Mardes,” a term used to refer to a group of tribes of Persian origins that converted to Christianity and entered the service of the Byzantine emperors.¹⁰⁴ One of the main contributions by Adel Isma‘il came from his analysis of how the term Mardaitai came to be Arabized in the form of Maradah that persists to this day. In doing so, Isma‘il not only clarifies the possible origin of the group but also sheds some light on a number of the most significant misinterpretations of the term. What Isma‘il also does is historicize how some of these misconceptions were inherited and reconfirmed by different generations of historians for reasons pertaining to the conditions of their own times, indeed, how they became a part of a historical tradition and were thus redeployed in different historiographies in order to confirm certain assumptions about the Maronite Church, its origin, its identity, and its Orthodoxy.

To list the evidence that ‘Adel Isma‘il was able to confirm and the misconceptions he was able to detect, we must mention first that the Mardaitai were a tribal group originating from the Iranian plateau, possibly Persians or Medes in origin. Having converted to Christianity, they entered into the service of the Byzantine emperors who found use for their military skills by deploying them in the nebulous border region with the Persian Empire. The importance of these claims lies in the ethnic and linguistic origin of the group. The origin of the Mardaitai indicates that the group was clearly not of the region of Syria nor did they speak any Semitic dialect or

¹⁰⁴ “Nabda’ bi al-qawl inna kalimat (mardaitai) hiya, fi al-asl, tasmiyah li qaba’il farisiyyah tud‘a (Mardes) ’aw (Mardi).” Isma‘il, *al-Marada’iyyun (al-Maradah)*, 151.

language, important issues in and of themselves when trying to find a link between the Mardaitai and the Maronites. The other important claim is that the Mardaitai were integrated by the Byzantines into their military after they converted to Christianity; this provides evidence that the Mardaitai were followers of Byzantine Orthodoxy since they answered to the emperors who were the heads of the Byzantine Orthodox Church. This second claim is also important when trying to link the Mardaitai to the Maronites, especially when considering that the Orthodoxy of the Maronites comes into question several times in history. The debate concerning the heterodox beliefs of the early Maronites was never settled, despite all efforts by the Maronite Church to prove an ancient and unbroken adherence to the Orthodox creed.¹⁰⁵

Having dealt with the issues of determining the identity of the group, Adel Isma‘il draws significant conclusions concerning the Mardaitai by relying on available evidence that historical research had uncovered as well as deductive reasoning. With such evidence, Isma‘il demonstrates his conclusions by stating six main claims about the Mardaitai that he considers proven beyond any doubt until further discoveries indicate otherwise. The first of these claims is that the Mardaitai arrived in the environs of Mount Lebanon before the Arab conquest of the region. Whether they were forced out of their original areas of residence or simply redeployed by the Byzantine leadership, all evidence indicates that the Mardaitai were residing in the area of Mount Lebanon when the Arab armies arrived, contrary to previous theories that claimed that they were sent as an expeditionary unit from Anatolia after the Muslim Arabs had seized control

¹⁰⁵ As is discussed throughout by Dib in *Histoire Des Maronites* [History of the Maronites]. Other sources for discussions of this debate include Daw, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari* [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar. 1972), Vol I, 341; and Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami‘ al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu’assal*, (Beirut: Dar Lahd Khater, 1987), 71.

of Greater Syria.¹⁰⁶ Isma‘il affirms a second claim concerning the term Maradah itself, which appears in Syriac and in Arabic. He states that it is the Arabic term that is used to refer to the Mardaitai but it does not originate in the Arabic language itself, nor is it used to describe any attribute of the Mardaitai as some historians had claimed. As Isma‘il states, the term Maradah is merely an Arabized version of Mardaitai, and is in no way related to the Arabic term “tamarrud”, which means rebellion.¹⁰⁷ This discrepancy concerning the meaning and origin of the term—which Adel Isma‘il corrects—is very significant when reviewing the occurrence of the term Maradah in the historiographies produced by Maronite Church historians and the role they allocate for the Maronite community in history.

The third claim that Isma‘il states is that the Mardaitai were in no way related to a people called al-Jarajimah, who were also involved in military activities against the Umayyads and whose mistaken identity with the Mardaitai or the Maradah led to much confusion among numerous historians who wrote about the topic. The fourth claim stated in Isma‘il’s book may well be the most important, since so many of the other claims revolve around it: that there is no possibility that the two peoples, the Maradah and the Maronites, could coincide. The two groups do not coincide ethnically, religiously, or even historically, and thus one cannot possibly constitute the ancestors of the other. The fifth claim holds that the gradual migration of the Maronites and their settlement in Mount Lebanon began to take place seventy years after the Mardaitai had been evacuated from the region in compliance with the orders of the Byzantine

¹⁰⁶ “Les Mardaites ont, très vraisemblablement, émigré au Liban pendant les guerres romano-parthes, ou y ont été transférés d’office lors de l’exécution, en 363, du traité conclu entre Jovien et Sapor, peut-être même à une date très antérieure, en tous cas bien avant la conquête arabe.” Isma‘il, *Histoire du Liban du XVIIe Siècle A Nos Jours*, (Paris, G.P. Maisonneuve-M. Besson, 1955), 187.

¹⁰⁷ “Inna kalimat maradah al-siryaniyyah hiya ikhtisar lafzi mu‘arrab li kalimat Mardaitai al-yunaniyyah wa li kalimat Mardaitae al-latiniyyah. Innahu ism li sha‘b muhaddad bi ‘aynih, wa laysa sifah li haza al-sha‘b.” Isma‘il, “*al-Marada’iyun (al-Maradah)*”, 165.

emperor Justinian the second.¹⁰⁸ The sixth and last claim that Isma‘il insists on is that a small number of the Mardaitai who were ordered to evacuate Mount Lebanon may have chosen to stay behind. Most of this small group would have joined the Greek Orthodox Christian community in the area due to the common creed that they shared and the relations that tied them.¹⁰⁹ This small group was assimilated over time and was no longer a player in the history of the region.

Roots of the Mardaite Myth

In trying to trace back the early roots of the Mardaite myth of origin one has to focus primarily on sources pertaining to the Maronite Church itself. The term “Mardaite” and its Arabized version, “Maradah,” both occur in the writing of numerous historians from the Arab and Byzantine traditions,¹¹⁰ and are in no way restricted to Maronite Church historiography. It is however that link, made between the Mardaites as a people and the Maronites as a community, that seems to be an exclusive feature of Maronite Church historiography, even if not all the historians of the Maronite Church agree on its validity. The claim that the Mardaites were the ancestors of the modern Maronites, and were in fact themselves adherents of the early Maronite Church, is a claim that was made first by Istifan al-Duwayhi.¹¹¹ In his writings Al-Duwayhi used ‘the inhabitants of Lebanon’, the ‘Maronites’, and ‘the Maradah’ interchangeably, as is evident in his book *Asl al-Mawarinah* when he stated: “when the prince of the *Maradah* was killed they chose Sim‘an as their leader... later the Maronites chose Ibrahim the son of their patriarch to

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.,167.

¹⁰⁹ “Wa ma labithu, ma‘a al-zaman, an inkharatu, fi akthariyyatihim bi abna’ ta’ifat al-rum bi fi’l wahdat al-‘aqidah al-urthozoxiyyah wa qurb al-Jiwar baynahum.” Ibid.,167.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.,154.

¹¹¹ Isma‘il, “*al-Marada’iyyun (al-Maradah)*”,145.

command.”¹¹² His claim of Mardaite ancestry, as we will see in the course of this chapter, was primarily upheld and redeployed over time by the historians of the Maronite Church down to the present day.

The pioneering role of Istifan al-Duwayhi in attributing a Mardaite ancestry for the Maronites, and in claiming that the two groups are in fact identical, created a precedent, but did not immediately launch a debate concerning the validity of the claim. As a member of the Maronite clergy, a graduate of the Maronite college in Rome, and later the head of the Maronite Church, it was only natural that al-Duwayhi would dedicate significant parts of his historiography to the history of his church and the community of followers that he felt he represented. It is therefore important to mention that al-Duwayhi wasn't pioneering only in suggesting the Mardaite origin, but his entire historiography was of a pioneering nature. No work prior to his had such dedication to the history of the Maronite Church and community. This of course is one of the main reasons why his historiography is considered the launching point of a tradition among Church historians, and his writings are frequently used as primary references in cases involving the history of the Maronite Church. It is also significant that it would be more than a century before works of the same caliber, and of similar significance, would come out from among Church historians. Although the Mardaites would be associated with the Maronites in the works of Orientalists like Volney,¹¹³ no Maronite historiography of significance would approach the issue until decades later. This is most significant when considering that the debates that would rage over the issue of the Mardaites—and that would often refer to the work of al-Duwayhi—took place in a completely different environment from the one that al-Duwayhi was working within.

¹¹² Al-Duwayhi, Istifan. *Asl al-Mawarinah*, 74.

¹¹³ Volney, *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, 10.

The changes in the historical setting itself, and the changes in the field of historiography, both meant that the arguments that al-Duwayhi presented were later resurrected and redeployed for entirely different reasons. The claims that al-Duwayhi wished to prove, and the arguments he wanted to defend, by advocating a Mardaite origin, retained their significance among the Maronite historians who succeeded him, but to those were added new concerns related to the realm of Church history, and of Church identity, as well as the communal identity among the Maronites whom the Church represented. The notion of the Mardaite origin acquired new roles with the changing circumstances of the Maronite community and with the changing historical setting that this community went through. Al-Duwayhi had to address two main concerns in his historical writings, especially when he addressed the issue of the Mardaites. The first of these was the concern of the Maronite patriarch for upholding the claim of an ancient and unbroken Orthodoxy of the Maronite Church, and the second was the concern for the relationship with Roman Catholicism and the Holy See, a relationship that defined much of the modern history of the Maronite Church and the Maronite community.

When writing about the history of the Mardaites and the role they played in the region shortly after the Arab conquest, al-Duwayhi stresses certain claims about the Mardaites that are essential for addressing his claims concerning the Maronites. The religious orthodoxy of the Mardaites is of the utmost importance, and subsequently claiming that the Maronites and the Mardaites are one and the same would serve as a refutation of any accusations of heterodox beliefs leveled against the early Maronite Church. The matter of defending the Orthodoxy of the early Maronite Church is an ongoing debate, but it was especially important for the generation of Istifan al-Duwayhi. The debate arises from the fact that “to the Maronites Monothelism is a touchy question. The Maronites, particularly those who were educated in the Maronite school in

Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and who wrote mostly in Latin, denied that the Maronites or their church had ever been monothelites.”¹¹⁴ Istifan al-Duwayhi is not only one of those who took up the task of defending the Orthodox beliefs of the Maronite Church, he is without a doubt the most influential author of his generation to tackle that issue, and his contribution made a lasting impact by leaving a legacy to be followed by future men of the Church. As Matti Moosa states: “Maronite Patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi devoted the entire second part of his *History of the Maronite Denomination* to the refutation of various critics, beginning with Ibn Batriq.”¹¹⁵ This would later result in a trend among Maronite church historians who followed in the footsteps of al-Duwayhi. It is clear in the works of Yusuf al-Dibs¹¹⁶, Pierre Dib¹¹⁷, and Butrus Daw¹¹⁸, despite the long periods of history that separate these historians themselves, and that separate them from al-Duwayhi, that a sense of duty, for a historian of the Church to refute the accusations of Monothelitism, dictated much of the historiography that they produced. Both al-Dibs and Dib dedicate a significant amount of their historiography and their literary production to the task of voicing these refutations.

By adhering to the claim of Orthodoxy, and by tying his historiography to the task of refuting Monothelitism, al-Duwayhi offers a version of history that artificially links the Maronites to the Mardaites and through them to Orthodox belief. Therefore, in his book *Asl al-Mawarinah* [The Origin of the Maronites], al-Duwayhi offers his defense of Maronite adherence to Orthodoxy by stating that they were the same as the Mardaites who owed allegiance to the

¹¹⁴ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 195.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹¹⁶ Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami' al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal*, and *Tarikh Suriyya*. These two works by al-Dibs, and the following two works by Dib and Daw, are primary texts for this dissertation.

¹¹⁷ Dib, *Histoire des Maronites*. [History of the Maronites].

¹¹⁸ Daw, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*.

Byzantine Empire. He maintains that the Orthodox Church fathers had examined thoroughly the teaching of the different sects, which allowed them to determine who advocated the heresy of the single will of God. The Maronites were not listed among those and were never mentioned in the investigation. He goes further and states that the Byzantine historians of that era claim that the people of Mount Lebanon at that time were the only force at the aid of the Byzantines and were alone in holding off the Arab advance.¹¹⁹

Al-Duwayhi's reasoning and his version of the historical events of that period are contained in several assumptions that he makes when chronicling the history of the region. These assumptions include the claim that the Maronites and the Mardaites were one and the same, and therefore the Maronites were Orthodox, since all historical evidence points to the fact that the Mardaites followed Constantinople in religion and politics. Al-Duwayhi further claims that the term *Maradah* isn't an Arabized form of *Mardaitai* or *Mardaite*, but is in fact derived from the Arabic word *tamarrud* which means rebellion. In insisting on this undefended conclusion, al-Duwayhi is claiming that the Maronites were never subdued by the Arab conquerors, that they constantly maintained hostile relations with the Caliphate, never submitting to its authority while remaining loyal to Orthodoxy, and later, specifically, to Roman Catholicism. Such claims do not hold up to a thorough historical assessment. Any investigation of the events of this period, basing itself on the numerous primary sources that are available, reveals crucial evidence that not only contradicts what al-Duwayhi advocated, but also proves the impossibility of such claims altogether. The historian Matti Moosa reviewed the relations of the Maronites to the Mardaites in his book, *The Maronites in History*. When covering Istifan al-Duwayhi's version of the events

¹¹⁹ Al-Duwayhi, *Asl al-Mawarinah*, 134.

pertaining to the origins of the Maronite Church and to the Mardaite presence in Mount Lebanon,

Moosa writes:

After relating his story about John Marun, al-Duwayhi states that John Marun finally became the “head of the Maronite nation”. How did John Marun achieve such a position, and who were the people who constituted the “Maronite Nation”? Al-Duwayhi offers an explanation in relation to the occupation of Lebanon by the Mardaites who were dispatched to that country by Byzantine Emperor Constantine IV, Pogonatus, in the year 676. According to al-Duwayhi, no sooner had John Marun been ordained bishop than he began to travel from place to place to spread his faith. Within a short period of time he was able to convert many Monophysites, to such an extent that he found himself the head of a great flock. Al-Duwayhi states further that John Marun ruled over not only these new converts in Lebanon, but also over all the inhabitants of the countries from Armenia to Jerusalem. He quotes in this respect the chronicle of Theophanes (d 818), the first to relate that in the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Constantine IV, Pogonatus, (677) the Mardaites attacked Mount Lebanon and occupied all the country, from Black (al-Lukam) Mountain to Jerusalem. According to al-Duwayhi, these Mardaites were the Maronites under the jurisdiction of John Marun. Al-Duwayhi states the reason why these warlike people were called Mardaites or Marada (rebels) and not Maronites can be found in an ancient book transcribed by Jirjis, son of Dawud, son of Ibrahim, in 1315. He then relates in Syriac an incident which has no connection with either the Mardaites or the Maronites, neglecting to identify or offer any description of this ancient book, thus compelling us to discredit his account regarding this source.¹²⁰

What is apparent from Matti Moosa’s examination of Istifan al-Duwayhi’s historiography is the latter’s choice of advancing certain convictions pertaining to the history of his Church at the expense of historical accuracy and proper methodology in historiography. Either by misinterpreting existing historical evidence and documents, or by simply fabricating sources in order to support his arguments, al-Duwayhi is more concerned with defending the orthodoxy of the Maronite Church and refuting any accusations of Monothelism, rather than investigating and clarifying the true origins of the Maronites and the actual history of the Mardaites. Furthermore, al-Duwayhi takes the liberty in interpreting the linguistic meaning of the term

¹²⁰ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 175.

Maradah. He explains the word as meaning rebelliousness, which is the attribute that he wished to cast upon the Maronite community in its interaction with the prevailing power in the environs of Mount Lebanon, be it the Muslim Caliphate, or in some incidents the Byzantine Emperors. What is important here is the falsehood of this claim, just like the inaccuracy and incoherence in dealing with historical sources, al-Duwayhi makes false claims with his inaccurate linguistic interpretations, and then develops his theory around them. But as etymological research has shown, the term Maradah is a shortened simplified version of Mardaitai, which is a difficult term to pronounce in Arabic. This difficulty was dealt with by the thirteenth century Arab chronicler Ibn al-'Ibri (1225-1286) who coined the term Maradah to simplify the Greek Mardaitai and make it easier to pronounce in Arabic. This however did not take place until the thirteenth century, generations after the chronicling of the Arab conquests.¹²¹ Ultimately the point in all this is that the term entered the Arabic language from the Greek, and therefore there can be no relation between the Greek name *Mardaitai* and the Arabic term *tamarrud*.¹²²

Al-Duwayhi held great influence over subsequent Maronite historians as is evident from the fact that the same fallacies found in his writings were adopted by the generations of Maronite historians who followed in his footsteps and who integrated many of his arguments without reexamining their validity. One of the most obvious examples was of course the false Arabic derivation he offered for the term Maradah. This obvious mistake that appeared first in his writings and was the reason for much confusion,¹²³ was adopted more than a century and a half later by Maronite historians like Nicolas Murad¹²⁴ and Yusuf al-Dibs,¹²⁵ and almost three

¹²¹ Isma'il, *al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah)*, 126.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 131.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Murad, Nicolas, *Notice Historique sur L'Origine de la Nation Maronite.*, 1844.

centuries later by Pierre Dib¹²⁶ and Butrus Daw.¹²⁷ These discrepancies in interpreting historical sources, added to the inaccuracy in chronicling events, as well as the fallacies in understanding and translating key terms, are enough to undermine the legitimacy of any historiography. The peculiarity in this case of course is that these are the historical writings of the father of Maronite historiography, a pioneering historian in chronicling the history of the Maronite Church, and one of the most famous and influential patriarchs in the history of the Maronite community.

On numerous issues pertaining to the history of the Maronite Church, Istifan al-Duwayhi may well be the only authority, or in fact the only source, for the simple reason that such an endeavor that he undertook had never been attempted before his time and many primary sources and documents may have survived only through his writings. This grants al-Duwayhi unparalleled influence on Church historians and on anyone attempting to approach the history of the Maronite Church. Equally so, historical distortions and myth-making, by someone of his caliber and of his status were bound to have major repercussions on the following generations of Maronite Church historians who may regard his writings as the sole authority on church history. This influence exerted by al-Duwayhi on the subsequent historians of the Maronite Church is what ultimately canonized his status for later generations.

What is important about the role of al-Duwayhi in Maronite Church historiography is the fact that, as an authority his arguments could be, and in fact were, redeployed by subsequent historians in a manner that best suits the purpose of their histories as well as the political projects

¹²⁵ Al-Dibs, Yusuf, *Al-Jami' al-Mufasssal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal*, 1987; and *Tarikh Suriyya*, 1994.

¹²⁶ Dib, Pierre, *Histoire Des Maronites* [History of the Maronites], 2001.

¹²⁷ Daw, Butrus, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari* [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], 1972.

that they are engaged in. In the seventeenth century Mount Lebanon, the investment of al-Duwayhi in an etymology that points to rebellion may have had more to do with the orthodoxy of the Maronite Church rather than anything else. But when these same claims based on this same etymology were redeployed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they carried different implications.

In the nineteenth century Mount Lebanon was the stage for sectarian conflict and civil war and was ultimately transformed into an autonomous political entity where the Maronite community held the leading role. In this environment where the Maronite Church was pushing for a Maronite political entity, making claims concerning an ancient conflict with the Arab and Muslim surrounding meant that the Maronites were never at peace with the rest of the region and were in fact never subdued and assimilated into the existing states that controlled the area. Claiming that the term Maradah means rebels and that the Maronites are the Maradah meant that the identity of the Maronites is centered on rebellion. In this instance the definition of Maronite becomes rebel, which suggests a perpetual independence and an antagonistic relation with the rest of the region.

For historians writing in an independent Lebanese state in the twentieth century, and fearful of reunification with or even domination by Syria, the etymology of rebellion was recast in a different light. The avowed purpose and the political projects were different from those of al-Duwayhi but the arguments were based on his writings. The ultimate result was a myth of origin that is inherently tied with an act of rebellion and warfare that the Maronites were engaged in since time immemorial. Claiming that the Maronites were Maradah meant that the identity of the Maronites was by definition anti Arab and anti Muslim, which carries serious implications in a country where at least half of the population is Muslim and Arab.

What is important in investigating the persistence of a tradition of Mardaite ancestry is not only the accumulation of historiographies that promulgate the Mardaite myth of origin, but it is also the manner with which these different readings of history interact. The writings of Istifan al-Duwayhi, for example, summarized mainly in *Asl al-Mawarinah* and *Tarikh al-Azminah*, were the focal starting point for Church historiography. These writings became constituted as a tradition a century and a half afterwards when historians such as Dibs and Dib canonized him and transformed his writings into historical orthodoxy. A major debate concerning the relation of the Maronites to the Mardaites would take place at about that same time. When assessing the debate and its main contributors one has to take into consideration the different historical settings from within which those historians operated. These same settings determined to a large extent the historical awareness of every historian and determined the nature of his historiography. The environment that shaped the thought and literary contributions of someone like Yusuf al-Dibs for example bore little resemblance to the world in which al-Duwayhi lived. The concerns, the motives, and the ultimate purpose of historiography, shaped much of what would become the tradition of history-writing among the Maronite Church historians who wrote a century and a half after al-Duwayhi and who addressed theories of the origin and identity of the Mardaites and who identified the Maronites with them. It is therefore imperative to investigate the concerns of these major historians as well as their arguments. As tradition claims to exist outside time and history, that it persists transhistorically, the stated intentions of the historian at the moment of writing clarifies the context in which his historiography was produced, which can help us historicize it, and therefore to better understand how tradition was created historically. Understanding the motives behind the redeployment of prior arguments will help clarify the factors that led to the invention and the persistence of this tradition.

The Debate Among Clerical Historians

When examining the elements of the debate among historians on the issue of the Mardaite origin and identity, Adel Isma‘il focuses his investigation on what he considers to be the chief point of contention among the contributors to these historiographies. He states that the main point of the debate was identifying the Maronites as being Mardaites. This claim was advanced and supported by Maronite Patriarch al-Duwayhi, Maronite Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs, and Father Butrus Daw in more recent times, as well as others who took up this issue in their research. The claim was stressed to the point that, according to these historians, this identification has become proven fact, and one of the absolutes of contemporary Lebanese history. This claim would become lodged in the memory of many members of the Maronite community, especially Maronite politicians, despite its rejection by numerous Maronite intellectuals. Chief among the Maronite intellectuals who rejected the claim was Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan as well as some of the fathers of the Latin Church, most prominent among them was the orientalist Jesuit priest, father Henry Lammens. Those intellectuals and historians who rejected the claim considered the Maronites and the Mardaites to be entirely different peoples, with no ethnic, linguistic or sectarian connection, even if they both belonged to the Christian faith.¹²⁸

When examining the circles within which the debate evolved and unfolded, it becomes apparent, as Isma‘il maintains, that the investment in the Mardaite myth came mainly from within clerical circles. Lay historiography according to Isma‘il played a marginal role, if any, in

¹²⁸ Isma‘il, *al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah)*, 9.

the evolution of the Mardaite theory and the controversy surrounding it. He concludes, that those who were dedicated to the study of the subject were, for the three preceding centuries, all Maronite clergymen and foreign catholic missionaries.¹²⁹

Another important issue concerning the debate around the theory-myth of the Mardaites is the temporal gap that separated the moment when the theory-myth was invented to the moment that it became a major element of contestation among historians. The most prominent historian who peddled the myth in the seventeenth century, as already mentioned, was Maronite patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi. But the actual debate about this myth did not gain momentum (especially with the matter of the origin of the Mardaites, their religious creed, their language, their relation to the Maronites, and their role in defending the Byzantine Empire and its frontier) until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³⁰ This temporal gap raises several questions concerning the reason for which the debate was launched and the effects that this elapsed time had on history and historiography. Questions such as what initially precipitated the debate, but also what were the motives and concerns that the historians in the debate voiced when asserting their claims. Writing about the issues of nostalgia for the past and the resurrection of communal myths, Anthony Smith states:

Nostalgia for the past, especially the ethnic past of 'one's own' people, has indeed been a feature of society in all ages and continents, because people have always sought to overcome death and futility with which death threatens mortals. By linking oneself to a 'community of history and destiny', the individual hopes to achieve a measure of immortality which will preserve his or her person and achievements from oblivion; they will live on and will bear fruit in the community. Now, as long as the community was seen as a vessel and embodiment of a religious way of life, linked to the attainment of salvation (usually in the next world), nostalgia for an ethnic past only surfaced in periods of acute crisis, when the values and life-style of the religious community were under threat. As long as

¹²⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid.,18.

the individual, by living according to communal traditions, could hope to attain salvation in another world or state of being, the need to revive the past was muted. Besides, in a 'traditional' society, one was expected to fashion one's life-style and ambitions in terms of collective traditions, so that there was little need to yearn for a past that was being continued. Only when new developments within or pressures from outside undermined that practice and sense of continuity, was there any need for an "ethnic revival."¹³¹

Much of what Anthony Smith is explaining seems to apply to Lebanese secular nationalist historians writing in a tradition that evolved outside the realm of Church historiography. Historians who endeavored to assert claims of the eternal nature of the Lebanese nation and its presence in Mount Lebanon since time immemorial. But the peculiarity in this case and in fact the question concerning the power of the Maronite communal identity—that the Maronite Church and Maronite Church historians endeavored to assert—is whether it came from the fact that it was both a "community of history and destiny"¹³² as well as a religious community whose members are promised salvation in the afterlife. It is also imperative to question specific claims concerning the Maronite communal past, both in its epic and defining history of struggle as the Mardaites, and in the unbroken and unchallenged Orthodoxy of that same group, an Orthodoxy that ensures salvation in the religious realm.

When examining the issue of the Mardaites, it may be of little concern when ethnic nationalism becomes a "surrogate religion" since much of the tradition predates the spread of nationalist ideology in Mount Lebanon and the proponents of the Mardaite theory are mostly clergymen of the Maronite Church. It is important, however, to determine when the history being written was no longer simply a history of the Church as an institution, but was a history of the

¹³¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 177.

¹³² Smith, *National Identity*, 161.

community of its adherents as well. An important indicator would be whether there was any confusion between the Maronite Church and the “Maronite Nation” and whether they were used interchangeably in the historiography of the Maronite Church. This indicator would determine if the term “Maronites” in Church historiography was used to refer to a community of believers as well as a community in the socio-political sense. What also matters is the form of the narrative in which the myth of origin and the communal identity chosen and advocated by the Maronite Church became the myth of origin and the communal identity of all Maronites.

Having stated all this, the questions that must also be addressed center on the claims of specific communal pasts at specific moments in time, and the significance of these claims in light of what Smith advocates concerning communal myths and ethnic pasts. What was the catalyst for launching the debate? And what were the pressures from within and from without that determined the claims that different historians made concerning the Mardaite identity and ancestry? In short, what were the present needs that prompted the reconstruction of specific pasts?

The Mardaites had appeared in the chronicles of numerous historians since the seventh century. The exact term used to identify them differed according to the language of the historian as well as the sources he relied on. The exact role they played also differed from one historical account to the other. But their presence in the historiography of the region is a constant, albeit in a very marginal capacity since their impact on the historical events that unfolded was not a lasting one. The Mardaites appear in a new light in the historiography of Istifan al-Duwayhi as the Maronite Patriarch codified significant and ultimately controversial claims about the group. This by itself did not lead to any responses from any historians working on chronicling the history of the region during the lifetime of al-Duwayhi or immediately after his death. Writing in

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the readership of al-Duwayhi was clerical. His main audience was almost restricted to members of the Maronite clergy who had access to his manuscripts. This is one of the reasons why there is no public historical debate involving al-Duwayhi's historiography until centuries after his death, by then the numerous changes that had occurred caused a debate to be launched. It is important to note that the writings of al-Duwayhi concerning the Mardaites came into question in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a time when the historians who were writing had already been exposed to new ideologies such as colonialism, Orientalism, and nationalism, and they read al-Duwayhi in a presentist way and employed his claims to support their contemporary arguments. By that time also, the conditions of publication and the relative ease of communication among historians cleared the way to launch a debate among the community of contributors to the realm of historiography. Although the debate was an open one, the main contributors, and if one is to use the term factions, were mainly clerical historians drawn mainly from the ranks of the Maronite Church and catholic missionaries. By those times, the audience was different and Duwayhi would be recast in different narratives, to serve the objectives of subsequent historians and their projects.

Lebanon the Mountain Refuge

While reexamining the modern concept of the nation, Anthony Smith underlines the main prerequisites and components of that ideal-type nation which is defined as a form of human association. He states, "...in so far as the nation is a form that is never finally achieved, but is always being developed, its features are the outcome of incremental cultural, social and political processes. Typically, these processes involve the following...Territorialization – the possession

of particular historic lands, or ancestral homelands, within recognized borders, and the development of collective attachments to them.”¹³³ Despite the fact that he represents the opposite end of the spectrum in his theories on nationalism, Hans Kohn similarly wrote, “The most important outward factor in the formation of nationalities is a common territory...”¹³⁴ Such is the importance of territory in the formation of national identity according to varying theories of nationalism.

As is often the case, the nature of the terrain and the shape and outline of the landscape have a significant share in shaping the identity of a community and are essential components of the image that the nation creates for itself. As the main geographic feature of the land and in fact the element that constitutes most of the national landmass, Mount Lebanon is one of the foremost symbols if not the embodiment of Lebanese nationalism. Within the boundaries of the nation state, the mountain range is such an imposing and dominant physical characteristic of the terrain that various districts of the country are associated with specific sections and mountain peaks of the Mount Lebanon range, such as *Jabal Kisrawan*, *Jabal al-Shuf*, and *Jabal ‘Amil*.

In retracing the origins of the idea that the Mountain was a home for a community of Christians who were distinct and isolated from their surrounding environment, one finds several roots and numerous advocates for the notion of Lebanon, the Mountain Refuge.¹³⁵ As Ussama Makdisi states, “Perceived by European powers as a mountain refuge in which they had a historical, religious, and increasingly strategic stake, nineteenth century Mount Lebanon became

¹³³ Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 17.

¹³⁴ Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 15.

¹³⁵ Throughout this dissertation, I will use “Mountain”, “Mountain Refuge”, and “Mount Lebanon” interchangeably to refer to this notion.

the location of a host of competing armies and ideologies.”¹³⁶ The idea that the mountainous terrain acted as a shield or a fortress that guarded the Maronites from hostile, alien, and oppressive Muslim surroundings features in the works of countless Maronite clergymen, and in many works that capitalize on the notion of insularity. It is present in the histories of clergymen such as Butrus Daw in his 1970 *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari* [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites] as well as in the works of secular Lebanese historians such as Yusuf al-Sawda in his 1924 *Fi Sabil Lubnan*. While one of the earliest and staunchest advocates of the notion is the Maronite Bishop Nicolas Murad (1796-1862),¹³⁷ the fact that he died more than one hundred years before the publication of Daw’s *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari* in 1972 demonstrates the resilience of the idea over the passage of time.

The notion of the Mountain Refuge is not, however, restricted to the works of the Maronite clergy and Lebanese historians; it is also found in the works of secular Orientalists as well as Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries who wrote about the region.¹³⁸ Those missionaries, in certain cases, were intimately involved in the workings of the Maronite Church and thus, the

¹³⁶ Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 11.

¹³⁷ “While he stressed the unbridgeable temporal and sacred distance between Maronites as modern Catholics and the Druzes as uncivilized ‘infidels’, [Maronite Bishop Niquila] Murad was at pains to portray the Maronites as not just pro-French but actually as French people living in a specific territory known as the mountain refuge.” *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³⁸ “‘Who dares be skeptical at the foot of Lebanon?’ asked Gerard de Nerval, French traveler and author of *Voyage en Orient*. ... Nerval identified the biblical landscape, the stunning beauty of the mountain chain overlooking Beirut, which appeared to be an inviolate sanctuary ... Writings and paintings evoked a timeless biblical land, a mountain refuge, that pleaded to be saved from Islamic Ottoman domination.” *Ibid.*, 15.

works that they produced complemented and sometimes overlapped with those produced by their Maronite counterparts.¹³⁹

This complicated web of interaction and influence raises numerous questions concerning the origin of the mountain refuge idea as well as the motives of its originators. We need to look back at some of the earliest Maronite historiographies, such as the writings of Patriarch al-Duwayhi in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to find the first traces of the idea that the mountain acted as a shield or refuge.

The events that preceded this era cast a shadow on the writings of al-Duwayhi. The Roman Catholic Church had failed in its reconciliation attempts with the Eastern Orthodox Church and was pushing for the further integration of the Maronite Church of Lebanon within the realm of Catholicism and the influence of the Pope. The “Maronite College” in Rome had already been established;¹⁴⁰ it was inaugurated by Pope Gregory in 1584, and missionary activity was already in full swing in Mount Lebanon. This atmosphere and the interaction it entailed brought forth the need to propagate ideas of insularity from the surroundings that could bring heretical beliefs to the Maronites. Thus a physical barrier that would precede and produce a psychological one had to be found; the Mountain was portrayed as a shield as well as an island of

¹³⁹ See Cheykho, *Al-Taifah al-Marunyah wa al-Rahbaniyah al-Yasu'iyah Bayn al-Qarnayn al-Sadis 'Ashar wa al-Sabi' 'Ashar*, and Lammens, *La Syrie, precis historique*, for full discussions of this historical background.

¹⁴⁰ “In 1584 a Maronite School was founded in Rome to educate Maronite young men in the Roman Catholic faith.” Moosa, Matti, *The Maronites in History*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 7.

orthodox Christendom. This notion is also to be found in the writings of European travelers as well as the more recent histories of the Maronite Church and of Mount Lebanon.¹⁴¹

While advancing the idea of insularity, the advocates of the Mountain Refuge theory had to deal with contradictory facts on the ground. The claim of constant oppression had to be substantiated, and proof needed to be found or fabricated in order to demonstrate the state of insularity of the Maronite community. Numerous arguments emerged to validate the claims of the Orientalists, the missionaries, and the Maronite clergy; all had to face substantial obstacles. Paramount among those obstacles was the presence of the Druze community in Mount Lebanon in large numbers living side by side with the Maronites.¹⁴² The proximity and similarity in custom and appearance ran against the notion of insularity. The relatively long and peaceful coexistence of the two religious communities and the ties they both maintained with the centers of power in the region indicated a reality that was contrary to any claims of insularity, hostility, or isolation of the inhabitants of the Mountain.

¹⁴¹ “Amongst the most famous travelers was Volney, [Constantin de Volney] whose influential portrait of Mount Lebanon shaped much of the romantic discourse of nineteenth-century travel writing... Volney described the reasons for the persistence in the East of the Christian Maronites. He saw first the ‘insurmountable barrier’ between Maronites and Muslims, which prevented the ambitious Maronites from uniting with ‘the stranger’ to betray their nation. He also argued that the difficulty of the terrain and the imperative to unite in the face of enemies pushed the Maronites into a rocky outpost. To Volney, Mount Lebanon was a haven from Islam...” Maqdisi, Usama, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 19.

“Bien que l’histoire de l’indépendance soit, chez Daw, celle de sa défense permanente contre les convoitises arabes et musulmanes.” Baydoun, Ahmad, *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains*, (Beirut: Université libanaise: Distribution, Librairie Orientale, 1984), 277.

¹⁴² “Dans la recapitulation, par les historiens, du devenir du ‘Nom’, nous avons vu le ‘noyau’ lui-même se scinder en deux aires d’identité: d’une part, le Mont-Liban maronite et, d’autre part, la ‘Montagne des Druzes’. Sans oublier le cas longtemps particulier du Kisrawan.” Ibid., 57.

Another main issue that had to be dealt with in order to validate the theory of “Lebanon the Mountain Refuge” was the presence of a large Shia community in the northern part of the Mountain, in proximity to the most ancient and most important Maronite religious centers and sites. This situation is rendered more significant by the fact that Shia communities, prior to the fourteenth century, occupied much of what was to be considered later the core of Maronite Lebanon.¹⁴³

The birth and early development of the Maronite Church also play a significant role in directing the historical writings and shaping the arguments of those who formulated and propagated the Mountain Refuge theory. The concern over the heretical teachings of the fathers of the Maronite Church constitutes a point of disagreement among the different advocates of the theory and plays a significant role in determining the motives, the influence, and the agency of every party.

What is most significant about the theory of the Mountain Refuge is the frequency of its occurrence in the history books and chronicles, and its widespread use by Lebanese nationalist writers.¹⁴⁴ The necessity for such a notion to exist brings forth the agendas of those who use it but also those who brought it to existence. It is in the different ways with which every party took up and advanced the argument that the motives can be revealed. The manner in which every

¹⁴³ “...ce sont les chiïtes seuls qui, parait-il, ont tenu tête aux Mamelouks d’abord..., mais aussi aux druzes tanoukhs. Les chiïtes vaincus, se sont les chrétiens qui viendront occuper leurs villages en ruines.” Ibid., 106., and also “Wa kana ‘ahali Kisrawan, wa mu’zamuhum min al-Shi’ah al-‘Imamiyah...”. Salibi, Kamal, *Muntalaq Tarikh Lubnan*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1979), 132.

¹⁴⁴ The notion is present in Istefan al-Duwayhi’s (1630-1704) *Tarikh al-‘azminah*, in Yusuf al-Dibs’ (1833-1907) *Tarikh suriyyah*, and even in Butrus Daw’s *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*, published in 1972.

obstacle to the theory was dismantled by different parties reveals much about the nature of the interaction of these parties with each other and the influence they exerted upon each other.

In documenting the events and upheavals that the community went through during different phases of its history, differences emerge among Church historians when identifying the Maronites and the territory they occupied. The threats that the Maronites faced, first as a church, and later as a community dictated how the notion of insularity or the lack thereof was advanced as well as the way the geography of the land was represented in the different histories of Maronite clergymen. What changed in the nature and perception of the interaction between the community and its non-Maronite surroundings from the time of Istfan al-Duwayhi (1630-1704) through the time of Nicolas Murad (1796-1862) and up to our current period, determined to a certain extent the avowed purpose and therefore the form of the narrative.

Duwayhi's influence on Maronite Church Historians: Origins and Development of Clerical Historiography

Discussing the historiography of Istfan al-Duwayhi, Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi states, "Duwayhi was the first Maronite to attempt a complete history of his people. A man of keen intelligence and a graduate of the Maronite College of Rome, he was well-fitted by natural ability and training to deal with the semi-legendary fragments of historical information which lay in the various monasteries of Lebanon."¹⁴⁵ Such a description of the man's abilities and education is significant in this case since the exact abilities mentioned by Salibi—dealing with

¹⁴⁵ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 89.

semi-legendary fragments of information, and discerning between accurate historical facts and popular fiction—are the ones that govern the historiography of Duwayhi. The tension apparent in his writings often resulted from the different sources he relied on, sources that ranged from books by medieval historians like al-Tabari and Ibn al-‘Amid, to the fifteenth century popular folk epic of Ibn al-Qila‘i. The insertion of elements from folk epics and popular myths in Duwayhi’s works alongside the information from preceding historians left a mark not only on his own production but also on that of Maronite historians who followed in his footsteps. Thus one can trace back the early roots of a tradition in historiography with constant and repeated ideas, one of which is that of Mount Lebanon as a mountain refuge, as the idea is there in Duwayhi’s histories even if he never took it as far as those historians who came after him.

Al-Duwayhi lived at a time when sectarian conflict was not a part of political life in Mount Lebanon, and he wrote his history long before the emergence of nationalism, in a period when the Ottoman Empire was still relatively safe from foreign intervention. Any political project behind the writings of al-Duwayhi has to be understood in light of these facts. He was surely committed to proving and defending the unbroken orthodoxy of the Maronite Church, and he did include Ibn al-Qila‘i as a source and by doing so subscribed to the latter’s notions of the insularity of Mount Lebanon and of its purity from foreign influence, but that is as far as he took these ideas.

In the centuries to come these ideas were redeployed by subsequent historians who had different political projects. Historians like Maronite Bishop Nicolas Murad, writing in the 1840s at the height of sectarian tension, had a completely different purpose and a completely different project when he employed the same notions that al-Duwayhi did. Yusuf al-Dibs, writing after the civil war of 1860 held different views and his history carried a different purpose.

And certainly, Christian nationalist Lebanese historians and intellectuals writing in the twentieth century redeployed these same notions of purity and insularity for nationalistic reasons that were the product of their own day and age. But the one thing that links all these historians together is the fact that they use al-Duwayhi as the main source, the authority on the history of Mount Lebanon, and they deploy the notions he inherited from Ibn al-Qila‘i for whatever purposes their histories hold. Ibn al-Qila‘i may have composed his *zajaliyyah*, but it was through Istifan al-Duwayhi that this *zajaliyyah* would be known to subsequent generation since he used it as a primary source on the history of the Maronites.

As someone who lived in *Jibbat Bsharri* at a time when the Shia Hamade clan held sway over it, it would have been difficult for Istifan al-Duwayhi to endorse or advocate the idea that the mountain was a refuge for the Maronites from their hostile Muslim surroundings, especially since he himself was forced to leave the Patriarchal seat at *Qannubin* due to the hardship he endured.¹⁴⁶ One does find elements of the notion of the refuge when al-Duwayhi chronicles the origin of the Maronite community insofar as he comments on the founding fathers of the Maronite church in their place of origin at the monastery of *Mar Marun* in the valley of the Orontes river, and how there came to be a Maronite community in Mount Lebanon. These events are placed within the context of inter-Christian religious violence, between orthodoxy and heresy. Al-Duwayhi defends the orthodoxy of the Maronites while claiming that they took refuge in the mountain to shelter themselves from the oppression of the heterodox Christian sects that were present in the area.¹⁴⁷ The “Other” from which the Mountain was supposed to shelter the Maronites was not the Muslim according to al-Duwayhi, he was rather a Christian heterodox Other seeking to corrupt the unbroken Orthodoxy of the Maronite community. Thus while

¹⁴⁶ Al-Duwayhi, *Asl al-Mawarinah*, 20.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

narrating events relating to Mount Lebanon, and specifically to Jibbat Bsharri, al-Duwayhi—who was relying on the histories of al-Tabari and Ibn al-‘Amid—did not portray a state of isolation, insularity, sovereignty, or even hostility towards the region that surrounds Mount Lebanon. The mountain is rather a part of the whole, its status and its fate no different from other constituencies in *Bilad al-Sham*.

The one thing that al-Duwayhi does however is that he includes sections of Jibra’il Ibn al-Qila’i’s folk epic in his chronicle alongside the histories of established historians. Ibn al-Qila’i’s version of events was, however, one where the Maronites were an independent nation that never submitted to Muslim rule and was constantly and successfully waging war against Muslim enemies to preserve its sovereignty. One instance that demonstrates this process is the Mameluk attack on Jibbat Bsharri in the late thirteenth century, a part of a general campaign to reassert control over the coastal areas and the mountains near Tripoli at the close of the Crusader era (1283 CE). As Kamal Salibi maintains, “In the course of this attack al-Hadath, one of the principal towns in the district, was destroyed, and so were other towns and villages. Ibn al-Qila’i related this event elsewhere in the *Madiha* ..., placing it in the wrong context...”¹⁴⁸ In Ibn al-Qila’i’s version, the Maronites are triumphant and al-Hadath and the rest of the district remain unconquered. When chronicling this event al-Duwayhi mentions the former version first¹⁴⁹, then immediately after that he quotes what Ibn al-Qila’i’s had said about it. And in these quotes we find not only a different version of history in which the mountain is a refuge from Muslims, but a different terminology that specifically evokes “*ahl jabal lubnan*”, the people of Mount Lebanon, and “*al-umam al-gharibah*” the foreign nations, or foreign peoples.

¹⁴⁸ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Duwayhi *Tarikh al-’Azminah*, 261.

A-Duwayhi quoted Ibn al-Qila‘i when narrating events that the later claimed to have happened in the late thirteenth century. These events portray a conflict between the Maronites of Mount Lebanon and unspecified Muslim groups. They paint a picture of insularity, sovereignty, and purity from foreign influence that must be maintained by preventing any none-Maronite groups to reside in Mount Lebanon because by their mere presence they corrupt it. Al-Duwayhi stated: “In these days Nqula, the *muqaddam* of the town of Bsharri found, at the hills of Yahrana, Muslim folks pillaging the villages that lay on the Rash‘in river, he attacked them by himself and killed twenty, and while he slept, says Ibn al-Qila‘i, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and ordered him to take revenge of those who spread corruption in Mount Lebanon and to destroy the progeny of Salem, the *muqaddam* who, out of greed, had allowed foreign peoples to reside in Mount Lebanon.”¹⁵⁰

When it comes to chronicling the history of the region Kamal Salibi may have been right about al-Duwayhi’s training and education, since the Maronite historian relied on the works of well-established historians that preceded him. However when it comes to the history of the Maronite community and of Mount Lebanon, the main contribution of al-Duwayhi, we find the Maronite historian relying on “semi-legendary fragments of historical information”.¹⁵¹ Salibi also stated: “the Maronite historian to whose work Duwayhi referred most for the history of the late medieval period, and whom he quoted abundantly, was Ibn al-Qila‘i.”¹⁵² So despite the fact that Ibn al-Qila‘i’s version of events is baseless and contradicts the other sources available, al-Duwayhi never discredits Ibn al-Qila‘i, but by including significant selections from his narrative, he legitimizes his folk epic as an accurate or reliable source of historiography. It is through this

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 271.

¹⁵¹ Salibi, *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, 89.

¹⁵² Ibid., 103.

process that popular myths seep into the accepted historiography of the Maronites and become the basis for a tradition of history-writing that evolves over centuries and survives to our present day.

Salibi's work is instrumental in assessing the life and historiography of key Maronite clergymen as well as the history of the Church in general and more specifically on the question of its unbroken orthodoxy. What Salibi does not examine in depth is the stated purpose of each historian individually, or at least each generation of Maronite historians. For this matter, neither does Moosa. Establishing beyond a doubt a claim of ancient and perpetual orthodoxy may be considered the metahistorical task of Maronite clerical historiography but the function of the historian and the avowed purpose of his narrative should not be blurred since these were anything but similar in each era of developments in Mount Lebanon.

Moosa's examination of the Maronite quest to establish unbroken orthodoxy seems a-historical and essentializing. Understating the purpose of each individual narrative suggests that it was in the nature of Maronite clergymen to defend themselves and the founders of their Church from accusations of heresy. Moosa's approach alludes to the fact that it was the essence of Maronite clerical culture to deal with the burden of proof, which paints the Maronite Church as having an unchanging essence locked in a timeless and seemingly endless defense of its legitimacy.

As a historian writing in the late seventeenth century, al-Duwayhi cannot be faulted for employing the epic of Ibn al-Qila'i as a source for historical knowledge. His method of

collecting facts about the past, and what constituted reliable sources according to his criteria, differ significantly from that of modern historians. Al-Duwayhi included the works of Ibn al-Qila‘i among the works of medieval historians that constituted his archive, and his method of doing that may not differ greatly from the historians of his era. But what ultimately resulted from this process was a chain of transmission, internally generated within Maronite Church historiography, providing raw material for subsequent historians and their projects. Those historians drew on these facts of history and from the legitimacy of one of their most famous patriarchs, in order to produce new narratives that performed new oppositional tasks and new functions.

Part II.

Moments of Change in History and Historiography

Throughout their various trials and adversities, the Maronites never ceased to keep up active relations with the Vatican, and through it contrived to obtain a certain hold on, and connection with, the Christian powers of Europe. But it was not till the seventeenth century, that their temporal affairs obtained the special care and supervision of the French government. Both Louis XIV. and Louis XV. granted them “Letters of Protection,” the language of which seems to indicate that their right to do so had been more or less conceded by the Sultan... The French consular authorities at Beyrout exercise a direct and almost sovereign power over the Maronite clergy, who, on their part, make no scruple of boasting of their allegiance to France, and of declaring the Maronites to be the French of the east.¹⁵³

This passage by Charles Churchill represents a depiction by a European agent, present in Mount Lebanon during the turbulent years of the mid-nineteenth century, of the Maronite Church’s relationship with Rome, and through it, what he refers to as the Christian powers of Europe. As an outside observer representing British interests, his portrayal of these affairs would naturally differ from one given by a Maronite clergyman or even an agent of the French government. The author’s hostility towards French interventionism is evident in this passage, a natural outcome of his allegiance to a competing power that was also struggling to assert its role in the eastern Mediterranean. This hostility is not only a clear indication or perspectivalism that paved the way for some exaggeration on the part of Churchill, it also ensured that he gave ample space to highlight the amount of influence and control that the French authorities commanded

¹⁵³ Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites Under the Turkish Rule: from 1840 to 1860*, 20.

over the Maronite Church. What is even more significant is the author's depiction of the way with which this control by the French was perceived by the members of the Maronite Church, not as a foreign unwanted influence to be resisted and from which to be liberated, but rather as the natural state of things and the desired one at that. Even though Churchill himself does not dwell on the issue, at least not in this short passage, his depiction does invite a closer examination of how such an influence and control came to be established, but more importantly how it came to be so positively received and welcomed by the Maronite clergy in the nineteenth century, and how such a relationship became intertwined with the Maronite communal identity to the point where Maronite clergymen boasted of their allegiance to France and identified themselves and their community as the "French of the East."

Rome Reaching Out

At about the same time that integration within the Roman Catholic Church was taking place in the late fifteenth century, missionary activities were initiated in the area of Mount Lebanon. One of the functions performed by the missionaries was to assist in reforming the Maronite Church, something that was deemed necessary after centuries of being almost completely cut off from the Holy See.¹⁵⁴

The reforms that took place included a complete transformation in the structure of the Maronite Church in Lebanon, a transformation that would precipitate changes in the nature of the

¹⁵⁴ "In the period following the Council of Florence, the Church of Rome appears to have charged the Franciscan monks in Syria and Palestine with increasing responsibility in attending to the affairs of the Maronite Church. Prominent among these Franciscans was the Flemish monk Fra Gryphon (d. 1475)... Franciscan sources indicate that Fra Gryphon was very active in building new churches in Lebanon and in eliminating many "errores ablegavit" in the Maronite Church." Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 233-234.

Church as well as its function within the society of Mount Lebanon. One of the major outcomes of these reforms was a substantial increase in the physical wealth of the Church. The land acquired during this period and up to the middle of the nineteenth century meant that the Maronite Church had a different function and a different role in the economy of the Mountain, and an altogether different vision of its rightful place in the affairs of the community. The newly acquired wealth changed the balance of power in the area, as one of the subsequent consequences of such large acquisitions was freeing the Church from the control or influence of secular feudal power brokers.

But another main change was to play the most significant role in the process of history-writing in Mount Lebanon. The reforms undertaken led to the establishment of numerous educational institutions owned and operated by the Maronite Church itself and, by bolstering the educational capabilities of the Church at a time when little or no educational facilities existed in the area, rendered the Maronite clergy the sole educators in the Mountain.¹⁵⁵ Thus one can say that the Church emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the most powerful landowner and the primary educator in Mount Lebanon.

It is suitable to perceive the historiography produced during this period as the result of two processes that took place simultaneously and were intertwined. One involved the Church simply reacting to its newfound power and imposing its own vision of its past, a vision that gave further legitimacy to the new role that the Church was playing. The other involved the influence of missionaries, as well as Orientalist writers, travelers, and agents of the European powers of the time, who imposed an identity and a past that suited their visions and their ends. These were

¹⁵⁵ “The European Catholic states turned their attention to their local co-religionists, and none did so more dramatically than the French who put a high premium on their missionaries and their schools.” Ibid, 23.

later adopted by the Maronites when the interests of the two sides overlapped. It is also interesting to note the way in which this new role for the Church was reflected in the process of history-writing when it involved the history of the Church as well as the history of the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon.

In his reading of anticolonial nationalism's creative imagination, Partha Chatterjee stated: "Anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the east had succumbed. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the "essential" marks of cultural identity."¹⁵⁶ This inner spiritual domain is posited by the anticolonial nationalist as a sovereign domain and a bastion of resistance to colonial cultural influence. On the other hand the argument could be made that the inner domain is not impervious to the cultural influence of the colonizing power, as Joseph Massad stated: "this [spiritual] domain is hardly 'sovereign' or independent from productive colonial machinations. The colonial state, through its institutions, is, in fact, instrumental in the production of national culture."¹⁵⁷ The questions concerning the presence of such a domain and of its impermeability to colonial influences become more complex when examining the history of the Maronite Church and community and the interaction of both with the Ottoman and French authorities as well as with the Church of Rome.

In the case of Mount Lebanon, it is difficult to determine what would constitute a sovereign spiritual domain and to determine accurately who contributed to it. What I will attempt

¹⁵⁶ Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan*, 7.

to show is that Maronite Church historiography played exactly such a role. This internally generated process of history-writing was codified in the nineteenth century in the new emerging historiography. Numerous influential historians perceived it as authoritative and representing authenticity just as the Church itself, which had always been regarded as the essence of the community, posited itself as the sole representative of the Maronite 'nation'.¹⁵⁸ This process endowed Church historiography with the capacity to influence and alter identity in Mount Lebanon. I will cover the events that reshaped Lebanon and the region in the nineteenth century as well as the new histories that emerged in the wake of this turbulent period of change. Through it all I will attempt to investigate how identity formation was influenced by the currents of history and historiography. How the emergence of sectarian political history would lead to recasting the historiography of al-Duwayhi in a new narrative that advocated an exclusive and exclusionary Maronite identity.

Political Order in the Time of the Imarah

The events that shook Mount Lebanon in the mid-nineteenth century, and that forever changed history and history-writing in it, were not the result of a sudden change in the conditions of the region, but they were rather the culmination of decades, and in some aspects centuries, of gradual change that, once it reached a critical level, needed only a trigger effect to spark the violence that plagued Lebanon in the 1840s and 1860s. The fighting that took place in those decades between the Druze and the Maronites in the southern part of Mount Lebanon and its environs had ensued from an immediate and recent catalyst, but the conditions that allowed such fighting to take place had been centuries in the making. The stage upon which the events took

¹⁵⁸ Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*, 56.

place and the players themselves had been undergoing massive transformations in socioeconomic, political, as well as demographic changes. These changes by themselves may not have been sufficient to trigger the civil strife and subsequent war in the nineteenth century, but without them such a war could not have taken place.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, at the time of the Ottoman conquest of Bilad al-Sham, the Maronites as a community were hardly significant players in the affairs of the region; one finds it difficult to imagine the roots of a rivalry between the Maronites and the Druze, considering the immense gap in the power and privilege of the two communities in favor of the latter. When describing the conditions of the Maronites at the time of the Ottoman conquest, Iliya Harik stated: “when Sultan Salim conquered Syria in 1516, the Maronites did not appear to be a political community like the Druze, whose chiefs figured as important political leaders in western Syria. There is no record that Sultan Salim took any notice of them. The regions of northern Lebanon where the Maronites lived were given over by Sultan Salim I to the Turkoman house of ‘Assaf.”¹⁵⁹ This description of the conditions of the Maronites depicts the insignificance of the community during that period of the history of Mount Lebanon. But it also depicts the early buds of change that would come with the Ottoman conquest, for it is in the conflict for domination in northern Lebanon between the Druze house of Ma‘n and the Turkoman house of ‘Assaf that the first changes begin to occur in the fate of the Maronites. The policies adopted by the Druze chiefs, beginning with the reign of Fakhr al-Din II, would forever alter the conditions and status of the Maronites and would have a monumental effect on the history of Mount Lebanon. The Maronites, and in a very short period of time, went from a *dhimmah* people forbidden to carry arms, ride horses, wear Muslim garb, or ring bells in their

¹⁵⁹ Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, 19.

churches, to become a thriving community with a major political role, producing its own notables and expanding demographically and geographically under the patronage of Ma'ni emirs.¹⁶⁰ During the Ma'ni period (1516-1697), primarily the time of Fakhr al-Din II, the district of Kisrwan began to attract the Maronites, and by the eighteenth century it became predominantly Maronite in population.¹⁶¹ One of the most significant cases of the Ma'nid emirs' impact on the status of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon was the creation of the first notable, or muqati'ji house, from among the Maronite community, an action that would have far reaching consequences for both the community itself as well as the rest of Mount Lebanon and the other communities that inhabit it. It is specifically after the Druze Fakhr al-Din's first major success against the House of 'Assaf that he acquired the territory of Kisrwan, which he bestowed upon his advisor from the Maronite house of al-Khazin in 1616, "thus the Khazins became the first Maronite house to achieve muqati'ji status."¹⁶² This highlights not only the kind of patronage that elements of the Maronite community received from their Druze overlords, but also the process initiated by these overlords, which led to the rise of powerful Maronite elites capable of playing a major role in the affairs of the Mountain and of protecting and advancing the fortunes of their community. This process entailed a steady, albeit gradual change, a change that would have far reaching implications for the Maronite Church and the Maronite community in the centuries to come.

The first visible change was not, however, at the level of the institutions that governed society in Mount Lebanon; those would actually remain intact for a considerable amount of time

¹⁶⁰ Isma'il, Adel. *Histoire du Liban du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*. [A History of Lebanon from the Seventeenth Century Until Present], 37.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38

¹⁶² Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, 29.

after the Ottoman conquest. The earliest changes of consequence were of a demographic nature. The demographic changes that occurred over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as the early nineteenth would play a key role in toppling the established sociopolitical order in Mount Lebanon. These population shifts were initiated and sponsored early on by the house of Ma'n, and later by the ruling house of Shihab, whose ruling branch converted from Sunni Islam to Maronite Christianity in the eighteenth century. These two ruling houses initiated and encouraged the change, which would later acquire a life of its own.¹⁶³

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, on the eve of the Ottoman conquest, the Maronite community was confined to the northern parts of Mount Lebanon mainly in Jubbat Bsharri and Bilad al-Batroun and Jubail; those areas were the only ones which in fact were referred to as Mount Lebanon by their inhabitants. South of that was Jabal al-Shuf or Jabal al-Druze. Under Shihabi rule the Maronites had outnumbered the Druze not only in Mount Lebanon at large, but even within the confines of Jabal al-Druze.

Also to be taken into consideration were the important developments at the level of muqati'jis in Mount Lebanon, especially in the areas where the population was becoming predominantly Maronite. In the early sixteenth century, muqati'jis drawn from within the ranks of the Maronite community were non-existent, by the mid-eighteenth century, the picture was entirely different. The house of al-Khazin, with their base in the Kisrawan district, may have been the most important in terms of precedence and in terms of their eventual power and role. They were originally in the service of the House of Ma'n, and later served as tax collectors under the House of Shihab, acquiring much land possessions, prestige, and power in the process. They

¹⁶³ Heyberger, Bernard. *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme Catholique*, 34.

would grow to become the most important Christian family of notables, with virtual domination of the Maronite Church for a while. Their initial rise through Ma'nid patronage may be the most obvious example of what went on during this period, but they represent only a sample of the Maronite muqati'ji class that emerged over these centuries.

The political system of Mount Lebanon resembled, to a point, any political system where one form of feudalism or another was being applied. The socio-political stratification and the hereditary titles and the functions they carried with them were anything but unique to Mount Lebanon. What *was* unique was the way this order was applied to the multi-sectarian population of Lebanon and the way it affected inter-religious sociopolitical relations, especially when pertaining to the geographic expansion and demographic growth of the Maronite population of Lebanon.

In a multi-religious society, where the political order a feudal one (iqta'), and where rights and privileges were determined by the social class that the individual was born into, one must not underestimate the emergence of an upper muqati'ji class among the Maronite community where one did not exist before. For the first time since the Muslim conquest of Syria in the seventh century, a local Christian family, traditionally restricted to the class of *dhimmi*s with no right to bear arms, entered the ranks of the notables and became a part of the landed gentry. The titles of shaykh and amir had no place among the Maronite population in the early years of Ottoman domination, the emergence of powerful houses like the Khazins and Abillama' from the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries had immense consequences on the fortunes of the Maronite community. This is of course not to say that the feudal system in Mount Lebanon was organized along sectarian lines, as political loyalty did not follow sectarian lines.

That said, one has to mention that this rule applied much more accurately to the affairs of the Maronite and Druze communities, the so-called coexistence of the two sects side by side in Mount Lebanon under the muqati'ji system is easily defended. That situation, however, does not easily apply to the other large sectarian community in the Mountain, the Shi'a.¹⁶⁴ This hardly seems to be the case when the Khazins become the muqati'jis in Kisrwan. In that district a process of ethnic cleansing took place under the command of the muqati'ji class, the Shi'i population of Kisrwan was forcibly removed and subsequently supplanted by Maronite settlers from the northern part of Mount Lebanon. A process similar to the one that took place in Kisrwan, later took place in Iqlim Jazzin and Iqlim al-Tuffah in the south as well as Bilad Jubail and northern Lebanon where the fortunes and even presence of the Shi'i community had a downfall following the expulsion of the Shi'i Hamade clan from the north in the 1640s, due to rivalry among the notables. Similarly, the fortunes and presence of the Maronites in Kisrwan was inherently linked to the power of the Maronite house of al-Khazin in that district. Since the most prominent feature of the iqta' was the political supremacy of each muqati'ji in his particular domain, it would not be strange to find that the district of Kisrwan, the oldest iqta' that was granted to the most powerful Maronite muqati'ji family, would later house the seat of the Patriarchate of the Maronite Church, and would play a leading role in the politics of Mount Lebanon as the heart of Maronite Mount Lebanon.

The politics of Mount Lebanon were still the politics of notables during this era, and these developments do not amount to the sectarian politics that would dominate the nineteenth century. But what these developments indicate is that there was a direct relationship between the

¹⁶⁴ Winter, Stefan. *The Shiites of Lebanon Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

demographic changes on the ground and the political and military fortunes of notables of specific sects. Druze and Maronite notables sponsored Maronite and Christian demographic expansion on the one hand, while a loss of fortunes by Shi'i notables in certain districts of Mount Lebanon was accompanied by a gradual ethnic cleansing of Shi'i presence from those same districts that now belonged to none-Shi'i notable families.

The Maronite Church as a New Source of Leadership

During the second half of the eighteenth century in Mount Lebanon, a new source of leadership -cultural and political- emerged. The changes in the traditional organization of the Maronite Church signaled its gradual ascendancy over the muqati'ji class allowing it to gradually but decisively challenge the iqta' political system. This left the Maronite Church and its clergy as the new powerbrokers in Mount Lebanon. The fact that the leadership role that was acquired by the Church was cultural as well as political reveals where the Church was to have its deeper and more lasting effect.

It is important to note that the early growth of the Maronite Church's wealth and power did not develop in competition with the muqati'ji class or despite them; in reality it happened with their blessing and support. It was in fact through the sponsorship of the muqati'jis that the process was accelerated and sustained long enough for the reformed Church to emerge as a major player in the eighteenth century. When examining the historical evidence it becomes clear that without this sponsorship of the notables, no amount of reform would have led the Church on the road to ascendancy that was to be its fate.

In the early stages of change, when the Maronite community was growing, the Church accompanied that growth and was in fact inherently linked to it. It was at this stage that the influence of Maronite muqati'ji houses like al-Khazins over the Church and its affairs was at its highest. These most powerful of Maronite notables commanded enough leverage and influence over the Church and its clergy that they exercised a kind of protectorate over the Church.¹⁶⁵ The Maronite Church would at first welcome the sponsorship with what it offered as well as what it demanded and would endure until the moment when such sponsorship was no longer needed. It was at that time that the political order in Mount Lebanon would be toppled.

When writing about the state of affairs in Mount Lebanon during the war of 1860, Charles Churchill stated:” The deadly enemies of the Druzes were not the Maronite aristocracy, but the Maronite clergy. The former never embarked heartily in any movement against them. The Shehab emirs, with no feudal retainers whatever, and important only by the prestige of their name, were, whenever they appeared on the scene, merely the tools of the latter, and drew upon themselves accordingly a large share of Druze rancor and hatred.”¹⁶⁶ This statement highlights the extent to which the Maronite Church had risen up the scale of power and prestige in Mount Lebanon. So imposing was its power in the mid-nineteenth century that its humble origins would not have been visible to an observer at this point. The Church’s meteoric ascendancy could not have been imaginable less than a century earlier, from a protectorate of the Maronite house of al-Khazin in the mid-eighteenth century, to be powerful enough a century later to be described by an outside observer like Charles Churchill as the puppeteer who controls the Shihabi Imarah

¹⁶⁵ Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, 88.

¹⁶⁶ Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites Under the Turkish Rule: from 1840 to 1860*, 178.

from behind the scene and who is the main catalyst for change in the turbulent years of the mid-nineteenth century.

To understand the complex power structure that existed in the Shihabi Imarah and the complex relations of power especially between the muqati'jis and the Maronite Church, one has to consider that despite the existence of a sort of protectorate by the house of al-Khazin over the Church, a symbiotic relationship was in place simultaneously. It is in the case of the Khazins and in the district of Kisrwan, which they controlled, that this symbiotic relationship was most evident. Kisrwan had been entirely transformed demographically with Maronite newcomers supplanting the Shi'i inhabitants who were expelled by the Maronite and Druze muqati'jis. The predominantly Maronite population of the district dictated a specific interdependence between the Khazins and the Maronite Church highlighting the symbiotic accord that linked these two religious and civil authorities. To the Maronite Church, and specifically among the upper ranks of the clergy, a special relationship to the Khazins meant recognition and respect from the side of the peasants as well as muqati'jis from within as well as without the Maronite community. The temporal power that the Church often needed to exercise was derived from the Khazins as it could not be generated internally from within the assets of the Church. As for the Khazins, who ruled over a predominantly Maronite district, the Church provided added religious support and legitimacy to their already prestigious house. The quest to secure this added religious aspect of authority led the Khazins to attempt to further secure their hold on the affairs of the Church and to impose their control over it, first by expanding the number of monasteries in their district and succeeding in having the patriarchal see moved to it where their leverage would be at its highest, and later by infiltrating the ranks of the Maronite Church and eventually securing the election of a bishop from their own house as Patriarch of the Church.

To the Khazins of course, the Maronite Church was not a necessary source of legitimacy in local affairs, their status among the muqati'ji class was in no way dependent on any religious authority, and their prestige among the people of Kisrwan was in no way lacking, but the Church promised also to pay back their protection with moral and material support through its international connections, something that no other side, institution or notable, in Mount Lebanon could promise. Herein lies the intersection of the rise of the Maronite community with the rise of European imperialism in the region.

The state of affairs that existed between the Maronite Church and the muqati'jis would not remain unchanged. The symbiotic relationship that necessitated the quasi-protectorate condition vis-à-vis the house of al-Khazin would be transformed as the conditions of the Church and country were being transformed. The protective role of the muqati'jis would diminish over the decades as the Church organization grew and acquired power and influence that granted it the ability to play a leading role in the affairs of Mount Lebanon.

The reforms that the Maronite Church underwent starting in the sixteenth century were both a result of the changes that the Maronite community was undergoing as well as a catalyst for further changes that the community would go through. In the first phases the case was almost solely an effort by Rome to consolidate its influence over the eastern Churches, the tasks of these missionary activities was mostly to reestablish links with the Holy See. In later periods, when the Maronite community had grown in size and was spread across new mixed areas of Mount Lebanon, the organization of the Church needed to be adapted to the new conditions. Church bureaucracy and hierarchy were restructured to meet the new demands. The education of priests at the Maronite College in Rome played a tremendous role in bringing new ideas of reform and a new mission for those who returned home. Councils were convened to restructure the Church

and organize its affairs, first by initiatives from Rome, and later by local initiatives by the Maronite clergy with Papal approval and supervision. Under these new conditions, change acquired a momentum and speed and led to consequences that were unforeseen to the parties that supported and encouraged it among the old elites.

Among the most consequential developments that occurred in the Imarah, mainly in the eighteenth century, were the changing economic conditions of Mount Lebanon. In an agrarian feudal society the land and its tenants are all the wealth and power to be found, and when these elements shifted from one side to another, the balance of power in the Mountain was bound to shift as well. In the early phases, the muqati'jis had a vested interest in attracting the Lebanese Order of Monks to their domains; the policy went hand in hand with the relocation and settlement of Maronite peasants to tend to the lands of both Maronite and Druze notables. The presence of the monks was reassuring to the Maronite peasants who were easier to attract once a monastery was in place in the new district they were moving into. This translated into a great amount of land granted by Maronite and Druze notables to the monks to establish new monasteries. These monasteries and the lands that surrounded them were to be the nucleus of the emerging economic power of the clergy in Mount Lebanon. Gradually the monks would acquire more and more territories and accumulate wealth that would have otherwise gone to the muqati'jis, a process that began to put stress on the relations between the clergy and the notables. The shift in land property and with it all power and prestige, had been so acute that in some districts the muqati'ji houses were left with no property to speak of by the early nineteenth century. For instance, in the case of the house of Abillama' in the Matn district, the monastery of Mar Yuhanna al-Khinsharah, established with their permission and encouragement in the year 1710, had by the year 1833 acquired through purchase all the lands that had belonged to them in

the entire Matn district.¹⁶⁷ What is even more striking is the complete shift in power and prestige that accompanied this loss of property even from a house as significant as that of Abillama‘, who were the only muqati‘ji house to enjoy an equal level in status as the ruling house of Shihab. The archives of the monastery reveal that in the early eighteenth century the monks had required the protection of the muqati‘jis and had in fact secured written decrees ensuring such protection, while no such process appears to have taken place after the year 1751. Moreover, the monks seem to have gone from a status of those in need of protection, to the status of those who trespass on the lands of the muqati‘jis themselves as the legal documents show in 1799, by which time the muqati‘jis were having problems securing what lands had remained to them from the trespassing and aggressive expansionist policies of the monks.¹⁶⁸

A factor that contributed to the growing confidence and power of the clergy was to be found in the network of connections and support that the Maronite Church had been endowed with by this time. The safety net that the clergy could rely on was an extensive one, and it included local as well as international players. By the early eighteenth century, the clergy had recourse to authorities that could override and annul any influence that the muqati‘jis of the district had previously enjoyed over the Maronite Church. The clergy by this point could appeal to the temporal powers of the Shihabi Hakim of Jabal al Druze, and the French consul general in Sayda. This state of matters made it possible for the clergy to go above the local muqati‘jis and thus liberated them from any influence these houses exercised over them in the past.

In the struggle between the clergy and the traditional temporal authorities in their districts, the final step in undermining the power of the muqati‘jis came when the monks opted to

¹⁶⁷ Abu Nahra, *Al-Iklirus wa al-mulkiyyah wa al-sulta: abhath fi tarikh Lubnan al-’ijtima‘i wa al-’iqtisadi*, 52.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

rid themselves of the burdens of taxation that the muqati'jis held over them. The success of the clergy in securing such a concession was devastating economically as well as morally to the muqati'ji class.¹⁶⁹ With these repeated blows to the power and prestige of the traditional feudal houses, the stage was set for the coming cataclysm that was to transform Mount Lebanon.

When pointing to the impact of the disintegration of the feudal system, and the role this process played in the sectarian massacre of 1860, Malcolm Kerr stated: "... an excellent case can be made for the view that the issues of feudalism, and of other forms of institutionalized authority also, were of more fundamental importance than those of intersectarian relations. The role of the Maronite higher clergy, for example, as a rival of feudal social and political authority, was probably more significant than its role as a champion of Maronites as such against Druzes as such. Viewed from this starting point, the massacres were a by-product, in part at least, of the weakening of the feudal system."¹⁷⁰

The events of the mid-nineteenth century, and specifically the civil war of 1860 were directly linked to the weakening of the traditional feudal elites, and to some extent the rise in power of the Maronite Church. The disintegration of the feudal system was definitely not the sole reason for the violence that occurred, since by any account the war was not the outcome of one specific event or process. What is almost certain, however, was that this disintegration amounted to an act of removing the one force that may have been the best suited to prevent the chaos of 1860. The one effective deterrent on the ground had practically been dismantled by the mid-nineteenth century, and the consequences were severe.

The loss of power and prestige that the muqati'ji class suffered is inherently linked to the ascendancy of the Maronite Church, since that power and prestige shifted from the hands of the

¹⁶⁹ Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845*, 117.

¹⁷⁰ Kerr, *Lebanon in the Last Years of Feudalism, 1840-1868*, X.

feudal elites to the hands of the clergy, a process that the muqati'jis themselves put into motion early on and later lost control of, but it was not the Church alone that undermined the established feudal system. The events of the early nineteenth century reveal, that it was the head of the feudal hierarchy, the Shihabi Hakim [ruler] of Mount Lebanon who would deliver the coup de grace to the muqati'jis in his bid for complete control and absolute power in the Mountain.

The early buds of change took place in the mid-eighteenth century with the conversion of a number of Shihabi notables, the first such occurrence in Mount Lebanon. These conversions from Sunni Islam to Maronite Christianity, though mostly undeclared at first except to members of the Maronite Church, were a major indicator of the rise of power of the Maronite Church and of the level of influence that the Church's European sponsors had reached within the Ottoman Empire. Though the impact of these conversions was not immediately felt, their long-term consequences were to be detrimental to the established order in Mount Lebanon. As Charles Churchill wrote:

In the year 1756 an event occurred which subsequently gave rise to an entire change in the amicable relations which had hitherto existed between the Druzes and Christians, and influenced not only the fortunes of the Shehabs, but of the Lebanon itself. Two Shehab emirs were in that year converted to Christianity, and became Maronites. Several other emirs in the course of a few years followed the example. Though not daring openly to avow their change of faith, the effects of the ambitious policy of the Maronite clergy, or the general conduct of the Shehabs, became, at length, in a an evil hour for them, unmistakably conspicuous: thus paving the way for that general disruption of the social system in the Lebanon, which has recently been consummated in such awful and revolting characters.¹⁷¹

The one historical figure whose personal actions directly and greatly undermined the feudal system of Mount Lebanon was Bashir Shihabi II. He was inclined to disregard the rules of engagement and to take drastic actions regardless of what that entailed in terms of shaking the

¹⁷¹ Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites Under the Turkish Rule: from 1840 to 1860*, 23.

balance between the factions whose leadership he had assumed. His quest for absolute authority did not leave room for any other major player in the Mountain, a fact that dictated in many ways his actions throughout his rule and slowly but surely eroded the traditional structure that the emirate was based on and paved the way to the sectarian conflicts that would arise.

Bashir II [1788-1840] seized power in Mount Lebanon with external support from the governor of Acre Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, and with internal support from the paramount Druze feudal lord, Bashir Janbalat. Bashir Shihab II would employ the Druze Bashir Janbalat to suppress a predominantly Maronite peasant revolt in 1820 -1821 only to later employ the influence of the Maronite Church and the numerical superiority of the Maronites to undermine the Druze feudal establishment. The alliance between the two Bashirs did not last long since the power and the wealth of the Janbalats was a far greater threat to be tolerated by Bashir Shihab. After having suppressed the Maronite peasantry, Bashir II announced officially his conversion to Christianity in a push against the Druze feudal lords. The main opposition came from Bashir Janbalat whose efforts were framed in an Ottoman Islamic context as opposing a Christian governor in an Islamic Sultanate. The conflict between the two Bashirs took place within a larger conflict opposing the governor of Damascus, and ally of Janbalat, and the governor of Acre, the ally of Shihab. Bashir Shihab would subsequently convince the governor of Acre to invite Janbalat over to Acre only to have him apprehended and killed.

The reign of Bashir II was characterized by a series of confrontations among the different components of the regime aimed at weakening each and every party. Bashir II, as the Hakim (ruler), would then support one side to finish off the other, rather than arbitrate as usually was his duty, only to follow this by going after the party whose victory he had ensured, thus leaving the Hakim as the only party still standing.

One of the most blatant examples of Bashir's disruptive policies was his handling of the power of the Druze shaykhs who were the backbone of the Imarah. Instead of implementing the traditional policy of maintaining a balance between the two main Druze factions, he decided to side with the weaker faction, the Janbalats, in order to undermine the power of the more powerful Yazbaki faction which he viewed as a rival if not a threat. The outcome was a victorious Janbalati faction that would later suffer the consequences of their own victory. As mentioned earlier, Bashir II would later turn against the house of Janbalat whom he considered a threat at that point and would have Bashir Janbalat imprisoned and killed in Acre, thus greatly undermining the power and influence of that muqati'ji house as well as the faction it commanded. This single action was to have severe consequences on the Imarah and the house of Shihab, consequences that went beyond the politics of factions of Mount Lebanon.¹⁷² The action undertaken by Bashir Shihab would lead to the undermining of all muqati'ji power regardless of faction since the Bashir as Hakim (ruler) had not spared anyone in his assault. This would indirectly lead to, or at least facilitate, the sectarian strife that would follow. But the act of having Bashir Janbalat killed would be interpreted in sectarian terms, which was something unprecedented up until that moment. For the first time in Mount Lebanon, the interaction between the Hakim (ruler) and the muqati'ji (feudal) clans was viewed religiously, and since the interaction was of a violent nature, the entire affair was rendered into somewhat of a religious conflict. When the first conversions to Christianity occurred in the Sunni house of Shihab, the long-term cost may not have been evident, but a century later it would become too clear when it played a role in the demise of that house as well as the Imarah. Bashir II, a Maronite Shihabi, had the most powerful Druze muqati'ji assassinated, and even though the action itself did not

¹⁷² Hashem, Rimon. *Jawanib min tarikh Jabal Lubnan, 1820-1860*, 29.

emanate from any sectarian or religious motives, the Druze notables perceived it to be the case, for after having the Yazbakis greatly diminished, that same Christian Hakim went after the only other Druze powerhouse and annihilated him. That action could not have come at a worse time, since the seeds of change had already been sown, and the entire region was coming into a new era and a new cycle of violence. What Bashir II did was set up Mount Lebanon to undergo the worst kind of violence in the region and the most devastating one. The scene, as Bashir II helped turn it into, was a sectarian Mount Lebanon where the factions in the Imarah were seeing themselves less and less as simply muqati'jis from one faction or the other, and more as members of sectarian groups bent on eliminating each other.

It must be mentioned at this point that foreign patronage and support of the Maronite Church, especially from France is also a factor in the rise of sectarianism in Mount Lebanon. France already had very close ties to important Maronite notable families such as the house of al-Khazin whose members acted as French consuls at various points during this period. But those notable families were still part of the system of notables of Mount Lebanon, and in fact they were dependent on this system. The Maronite Church on the other hand had no place within that system and the gains it made came at the cost of those whose interest relied on the politics of notables and the established order.

The conversion of the leading members of the house of Shihab was a reflection of the growing influence of the Church but especially of the growing power of France in Lebanon. The meteoric ascendancy of Maronite Church wealth and influence with the active support of a foreign Christian power along with the dependence of the Shihabis on the Church had far reaching effects. Bashir's actions went against the established norms of notable politics in Mount Lebanon. This, along with his association with the Maronite Church and through it France

led to the perception of his actions in a sectarian framework instead of the traditional framework of the politics of notables.

Regional Politics and Foreign Intervention

Several factors contributed to opening Mount Lebanon to external intervention, be it on the regional level with regard to the Ottoman governors, or the international level with regard to European direct intervention, as opposed to the indirect influence, which had been the norm up until the nineteenth century. At the level of policies enacted in Mount Lebanon, Bashir Shihab II, a Maronite Shihab, transformed his relations with the regional Ottoman governors in ways that rendered them far more influential in the affairs of the Imarah than in previous eras. In his numerous attempts at eliminating possible rivals or opponents in the Mountain, he relied on the meddling and the power of the governors to advance his cause. This not only undermined the local forces that had traditionally been the power base of the Hakim, but it rendered him more dependent on the external support of the governors, a development that would eventually prove costly to the Hakim and to Mount Lebanon. The result of such policies by Bashir II was a disenfranchised muqati'ji class, and a disempowered Hakim that would have usually relied on them. This political realignment rendered Mount Lebanon more and more unstable and significantly more vulnerable to external meddling, a situation that proved to be extremely volatile once the new wave of change arrived with the Egyptian army that marched into Syria in 1831.

The conquest of Syria by the Egyptian army would have brought immense changes to the political and social landscapes under any circumstances, but the policies that were implemented by Ibrahim Pasha and the reforms he enacted seemed, unintentionally as it were, tailored to cause an upheaval among the political brokers as well as commoners of Mount Lebanon. The promises of equality among the citizens of Syria from all sects and religions may have appealed to the Christian and Jewish minorities at first, but the heavy burdens that came with the military presence and with supplying the Pasha's forces soon helped dissipate the welcome that the Egyptians first received. The logistical requirements of that had to be met, and Bashir's willingness to meet the demands of his overlords to the detriment of the population of the Mountain aggravated the situation even further. The draft, which was imposed on the Druze by Bashir II in order to supply Ibrahim Pasha's war machine with fresh recruits, was very unpopular among them. Once the Druze resisted the draft, Bashir II complied with the Pasha's demands to disarm them along with the entire population of Mount Lebanon. When insurrection broke out, Christian recruits were armed and fielded to fight against the Druze, setting a precedent and fueling hatred between the two communities. Clashes had been occurring in separate flash points across the region between the Druze and the Christians, but those were still at the level of isolated incidents and did not yet threaten to break out into an all out confrontation. But Bashir II's decision to arm and use one community against the other set the stage for things to come, especially that the whole region was getting militarized and mobilized since significant quantities of arms and ammunition were being delivered to the Syrian coast by European navies. Threatened by the Egyptian military success, European powers with vested interests in maintaining the status quo, intervened to prevent the collapse of the enfeebled Ottoman state. Muhammad Ali's economic reforms in Egypt on many levels went against the interests of

European merchants and their local agents. The application of similar policies in Syria and/or possibly Anatolia would have been detrimental to European interests. Russia's early intervention to protect Istanbul in 1833 precipitated the intervention of all the other European powers that were pushing to expel the Egyptians from Anatolia and Syria. The purpose of distributing weapons among the local population was to encourage and support the ensuing revolt against the Egyptian forces and their agents. This process was not by any means controlled by these outside forces, nor could the suppliers exercise any leverage once the weapons were delivered since it was mostly done randomly and with relatively no contact with local forces, a fact that contributed to aggravating the violent incidents that were to occur.

The revolt against the Egyptian presence did materialize, and it did bring together the various communities in Mount Lebanon around that one cause, most notably the Maronite and the Druzes. "Druze and Christian rebels were united by their common fear and hatred of foreign troops and oppressive duties, and, more specifically, by their fear of conscription and disarmament."¹⁷³ The rebellion was ultimately crushed by the Egyptian forces and with Bashir II's assistance, which in turn prompted the intervention of the European powers that had a vested interest in preventing the breakup of the Ottoman State. This intervention ensured an Egyptian withdrawal and the re-instatement of Ottoman rule in Syria.

The course of events following the revolt and the subsequent Egyptian withdrawal might have been different had it not been for the myriad changes that the Ottoman state and the eastern Mediterranean in particular had already been undergoing. What followed the Egyptian withdrawal was not a return to the old alliance between Maronite and Druze muqati'jis but rather a period of unrest began which spelled the end of the Imarah. Following the re-conquest of Syria,

¹⁷³ Makdisi, Ussama, *The Culture of Sectarianism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 84.

the Ottoman authorities deposed Bashir Shihab II and sent him into exile, in his place Bashir III was installed, the latter lacked the leadership skill and strength of character to handle the affairs of the Mountain and impose order especially in the wake of such turmoil. Bashir II had also instigated changes that transformed the political scene in Mount Lebanon, changes that he may have been able to deal with while performing his duties as Hakim, his successor was not well suited to meet the demands of the new era. In 1841, clashes erupted between the Druze and the Maronites in the Shuf and later spread to other districts of Lebanon. The Ottomans used the deteriorating situation as an excuse to end the special status of the Mountain. In early 1842, Bashir III was deposed which officially ended the Imarah of the house of Shihab. Following the failed Ottoman attempts at directly governing the Mountain, attempts that were faced with internal as well as French and Austrian resistance, the Ottomans and the European powers reached a compromise with the system of the Double Qaymaqamate which took effect in the month of December of 1843. This new system was meant to facilitate the administration of Mount Lebanon by dividing it into two separate districts, a northern Christian one, and a Druze district in the south.¹⁷⁴ In reality, neither one of the two districts was entirely homogenous; the southern one especially was two thirds Christian. Even in the northern district, the area of the Matn still had a significant Druze community. These demographic facts, coupled with the unworkable frameworks of the system itself caused numerous problems, most notably in 1845 when the system was revised to address its most troublesome shortcomings and quell the revolt that was in place. The result was an ineffective government that appeased neither Druze concerns nor Maronite ambitions.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 120.

The Tanzimat Reforms and Integration Into the World Economy

Two interrelated and equally transformative processes were initiated in the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire and would influence the course of events in Mount Lebanon during this turbulent period. The first process was the Ottoman state's reaction to the difficulties that had befallen it before and during this period, and that was the Tanzimat reform movement. The other equally if not more significant process was the increased commercialization of the economy of Syria at large and especially Mount Lebanon, and the integration of the region into the world economy. When discussing the early phases of change that transformed Mount Lebanon at the beginning of this era Engin Akarli stated: "One of the developments toward the end of the eighteenth century that altered the balance of forces in the Mountain was the increasing commercialization of its economy and its consequent dependence on the outside world. Above all, the rising demand for the Mountain's raw silk in inland towns as well as in Egypt and France, engendered a steady increase in the amount of land planted in the mulberry trees used in sericulture... By the early nineteenth century, only 35-40 percent of the grain consumed in the Mountain was locally produced."¹⁷⁵ What this situation implied was not only a dependence of the Mountain in economic activity as well as sustenance on its trade with Egypt and France for instance, but also the increase in the imbedded vital interests of these external powers in the Mountain. The outcome of this new economic cycle was the supremacy of trade with Europe, with Beirut as the epicenter of the exchange, raw silk from the Mountain to be exported and manufactured goods to be imported from Europe. This is when European influence

¹⁷⁵ Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, 17.

reached the heart of the empire and its provinces. Beirut already housed the consulates of the various European states involved in this trade, with these consulates promoting their countries' economic interests as well as playing a role in local politics. This atmosphere rendered economic activities with Europe more significant than trade with the interior and it also encouraged a closer relation with the European powers than with the central government. More local communities sought by this point an accord with a patron European power, where services would be provided by the locals, while protection would be ensured by the European state in question, this led to a polarization of the various sectarian groups within Syria.¹⁷⁶

The challenges that the Ottoman state was faced with and the setbacks that it suffered precipitated a series of reforms intended to modernize and centralize the state and to restore its competitiveness and ability to maintain and defend its territorial integrity. This process of reform was referred to as the Tanzimat. The term, Tanzimat, which means orderings, signified a series of reforms that were essentially western inspired laws issued between 1839 and 1876. These legal reforms were aimed primarily at centralizing the empire's administration, which was the only effective avenue for change. What these reforms introduced however, was the principle of equality among the population of the empire regardless of religious affiliation¹⁷⁷. Christian and Jews, long treated as *dhimmi*s or protected people, forbidden to serve in the military and required

¹⁷⁶ Makdisi, Ussama, *The Culture of Sectarianism*. ?

¹⁷⁷ "A series of military defeats, political humiliations, and territorial losses to Europe and the dispute with Russia over the Holy Places, which involved Ottomans in the Crimean War (1853-56), led to the proclamation of the *Hatt-i Humayun* (18 February 1856), which mandated equality of Christians with Muslim subjects. This only served to harden Muslim attitudes and to nurture their bitterness against both their rulers and their non-Muslim subjects. Muslim inhabitants of key cities like Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut, Sidon, Jerusalem, and Jidda in Arabia resorted to open protest and violence in order to express their indignation over Ottoman policies abetting European intervention in their internal affairs." Farah, Caesar E. *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830-1861*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), xxi.

to pay a special tax, were now equal, in the eyes of the law, to the Muslim subjects. The Tanzimat paved the way for the religious minorities to gain privileges and for the Muslims to lose ground to outsiders since they provided the legal basis for everyone to be equal before the law and thus theoretically leveled the playing field for all communities in the empire, native and foreign. Except the playing field was anything but level at this point, since the minorities in question had had longstanding relationships with the European powers and had been acting as middlemen and agents of these same powers for a considerable period of time by then. This situation rendered these communities far more ready to take advantage of the new venues opened by these reforms and far more adaptive to the changes that occurred than their Muslim counterparts. The numerous factors that were at play by this point rendered a loss of fortune on the part of the Muslim merchant elite in Syria inevitable, the conditions were entirely aligned to their disadvantage and the reforms had left them entirely vulnerable to the risks involved with the full integration into the world economy.¹⁷⁸

The outcome of these changes was the replacement of the old social elites with a new class of merchants. What is also significant about these changes is that the old elites were of mixed religious background with a Muslim majority in accordance with the demographics of Syria, while the emerging merchant class that was replacing them was predominantly from the Christian and Jewish minorities with a very scarce presence of Muslims within it. This fact among others exacerbated the sectarian tension that had already begun to cast its shadow on the politics of the region. The break with the traditional order had already been under way since the

¹⁷⁸ Fawwaz, Leila, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*, 22.

early 1840s, and a developing sectarian consciousness had emerged among the elites¹⁷⁹. Under such circumstances sectarian issues prevailed over class solidarity and local communities in Mount Lebanon and in Syria at large were polarized along sectarian lines, a situation that was conducive to the events of 1860.

1860 The Moment of Change

The moment when total war was triggered may have come in the summer of 1860, but the violence that was to engulf Mount Lebanon had already been under way in one form or another since 1858. By that time the power of the *qaymaqam* had already been all but destroyed in the northern district of the Mountain, which was in a state of anarchy. The agitation of the population against the *qaymaqam* as well as the influence of the Khazin family culminated in a peasant revolt, which would eventually be led by a muleteer from the Maronite district of Kisrawan named Tanyus Shahin, and the expulsion of the Khazins from their home district of Kisrawan. As Ussama Makdisi explains in his discussion of the events of the civil war: “The violence indicated not a resurfacing of old hatreds but a historical development of new ones. It must be understood in its most immediate and dramatic context, as a single challenge to the social order that began in Kisrawan in 1858 and culminated in the mixed districts in the summer of 1860.”¹⁸⁰ But what had begun as a peasant revolt involving the population of Kisrawan against their *muqati'jis* in that district unsettled the rest of Mount Lebanon. The rebels and their leaders did not perceive their actions as targeting an isolated local grievance against their traditional

¹⁷⁹ “The conflicting appeals of the elites reflected a developing sectarian consciousness that was torn between old and new and oriented both to Europe and to the Ottoman Empire.” Makdisi, Ussama, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 62.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

overlords but as a natural conclusion of the changes that had occurred in the Mountain and the Ottoman State at large since the beginning of the Tanzimat, which meant that the rebellion, after succeeding in Kisrwan immediately threatened to spill over out of the district and into the mixed southern districts. “Throughout 1860, Shahin and *ahali* like him saw little difference between social liberation in Kisrwan and freedom from Druze ‘tyranny’ for the Christians of the mixed regions.”¹⁸¹ This open repudiation by the Kisrwani rebels of Druze hegemony turned a peasant revolt targeting Maronite muqati‘jis into a sectarian crisis and put the recently organized *ahali* of Kisrwan and the Christian towns on a collision course with the Druze notables and their forces. “The intercommunal strife escalated when villagers from Kisrwan mobilized in May and marched south toward the Shuf –whether in response to Druze provocation or the cause of Druze aggression is not, and probably will never be, known. What is certain, however, is that these mobilizations led to full-scale hostilities between Druzes and Maronites.”¹⁸²

The sporadic clashes that had plagued the Mountain for months erupted into full-scale confrontation sometime on May 27th. “The civil war started south of the Maronite district of Kisrawan—where exactly it is difficult to determine. Tension was so high everywhere that fighting appeared to erupt in any number of places at once.”¹⁸³ Soon the entire southern part of Mount Lebanon, where the mixed districts were located, was engulfed in confrontations between the Druzes and the Maronites. The fighting did not remain restricted to the Mountain as it soon spread to the plain of the Beqaa as well as the anti-Lebanon range with Druzes from the area of Hawran and Muslim forces joining the fighting. On the whole, Druze forces were far more disciplined and better led in battle, while the Christian presented a divided front on almost every

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁸² Ibid., 118.

¹⁸³ Fawwaz, Leila, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*, 49.

battlefield of the war. The complete rout of the Christian forces on all theatres of operation was partly the result of the superior preparations and cohesiveness of the Druze forces that came out victorious in the war. The cost to the Christians in the mixed districts was enormous.

By late June, 1860, the price that the Christians of the mixed districts paid following their total defeat was in burned and plundered villages, massacres on a scale never seen before in Mount Lebanon, streams of refugees fleeing from the Druze, and a complete loss of the main Christian towns in the southern part of the Mountain. The culmination of the Druze offensive was in the conquest of the town of Zahle, a long-perceived impregnable Christian stronghold that presented the Druze Sheikhs and their men with the most difficult obstacle to victory. Once that obstacle was overcome, the momentum gained by the Druze forces was unstoppable as they pushed their advantage further and accomplished the rest of their objectives. The sacking of Zahle spelled the end of Christian resistance as collapse occurred everywhere else, Dayr al-Qamar soon followed and its population suffered a fate just as gruesome. Soon the violence spilled out of the Mountain and spread in the direction of Damascus. There, on July 9th, and after a considerable period of tension in the city and its surroundings, a minor incident led to disaster. Muslim mobs from the city and its vicinity attacked and sacked the Christian quarter, looted it and set it ablaze. Thousands were killed before the violence subsided.

The Mutasarrifiyyah

The events of the summer of 1860 may have represented a military victory for the Druzes in Mount Lebanon, and a general calamity to the Christians in the Mountain as well as in

Damascus, but the Ottoman as well as international reactions to what occurred rendered the outcome of the civil war a complete loss to the Druze leadership and community and the Maronite Church as the true victor of the many years of turmoil.¹⁸⁴

The Ottoman government reacted swiftly to deal with the crisis, especially when it seemed that the events were pushing for more European intervention in Ottoman internal affairs. The Ottoman foreign minister Fuad Pasha was invested with special powers and sent to Damascus, via Beirut, at the head of an Ottoman brigade. “His justice was swift and harsh, meting out the severest punishment to the Ottoman officers and officials for having failed to prevent the attacks.”¹⁸⁵ After imposing the peace and erecting tribunals to deal with the culprits the Ottoman government, in agreement with the European powers, issued an organic statute referred to as “*Règlement* for the reorganization of Mount Lebanon”. Subsequently, Mount Lebanon was to be organized into a special Ottoman governorate, the *Mutasarrifiyyah*. This governorate was to be an autonomous zone, headed by an Ottoman non-Lebanese Christian governor appointed by, and directly responsible to the sublime port, and presiding over an elected body of representatives from all the sects in the Mountain. This arrangement insured the safeguarding of the unity of the Mountain, and enforced a Maronite hegemony in its politics. “Now the Maronite dominance was questioned by none, and the Mountain had become Mount Lebanon.”¹⁸⁶

The establishment of *Mutasarrifiyyat Jabal Lubnan*—the autonomous region that covered most of Mount Lebanon—became the embodiment of the cataclysmic changes that overtook the region. The role of the notables was eliminated and their power broken, thus

¹⁸⁴ Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, 30.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 31.

diminishing the influence of the Druze community, a fact exacerbated by the sectarian politics of the *Mutasarrifiyyah*. The system of the *Mutasarrifiyyah* was inclusive of all the communities in the Mountain, but it was run by sectarian representation, and in such a system, the Maronites—as the largest demographic group—became the main benefactors of a regime presided over by a Christian Ottoman, a codification of the new Christian identity of the Mountain.

The Emerging Historiography

Born almost a hundred years after Istifan al-Duwayhi died, Maronite bishop Nicolas Murad was the product of a completely different phase of the history of Mount Lebanon, and his writings certainly represent a major shift in historiography. Murad was born in 1796¹⁸⁷ in the village of ‘Aramun in the district of Kisrawan, now a predominantly Maronite district. In 1814 he was admitted to the seminary of ‘Ayn Waraqa which had been founded in the region of Lebanon in 1789 to succeed the Maronite College of Rome and was already performing the latter’s educational tasks. Although he filled mostly administrative and diplomatic functions, in 1844 he published his “*Notice historique sur L’origine de la nation maronite et sur ses rapports avec la France*” which constitutes his sole contribution to the realm of historiography. This single publication carries great significance both in its content as well as its form, especially when viewed in light of the circumstances and historic conditions under which it was produced.

The novelty in Murad’s work is the avowed purpose and the political project that motivated the process of history-writing. The book is dedicated to the king of France Louis

¹⁸⁷ Murad, *Nabza Tarikhiyyah fi Asl al-’Umma al-Maruniyyah*, 20.

Philippe I (1773-1850), and it is a plea for assistance from the French monarchy to offer protection to the Maronites of Mount Lebanon and assist them in achieving political independence. The title itself is a departure from previous historical writings about the Maronites; it is *Historical Note on the Origins of the Maronite Nation and on its Rapports with France*. The Maronites are no longer referred to as a denomination or a Christian Church but as a nation, with all what the term nation signified in the French language that he used in 1844. It is this nation that has rapports with France, and not simply the Maronite Church or clergy.

Murad stated: “To his majesty Louis Philippe I, King of the French: Sire, Since king Louis, of saintly memory, all the devout Christian kings have honored with their protection the Maronites of Lebanon, who have always been grateful for it. Allow me, Sire, to place under the protection of your majesty a work destined to make known and appreciated in France this devout nation. Your Majesty, we hope, will not only offer us what his august predecessors have offered; we would like to expect more from his personal ability and influence.”¹⁸⁸

While dedicating his book to the French monarch in the form of a plea, Murad also made several important claims about the Maronites and their relation with France. He evoked the name of Louis IX, also known as Saint Louis, who was king of France from 1226 until 1270, and who was the only canonized king of France and the only French monarch to die on a Crusade. Murad’s claims in this instance are of an old and unbroken rapport between the Maronites and the French monarchy. It is also a claim to a Maronite nation that has existence in Mount Lebanon since antiquity, and through the assistance of Christian monarchs, has remained independent and sovereign.

¹⁸⁸ Murad, *Notice historique*, 9.

Towards the end of his book, Murad stated his case more clearly by claiming that Lebanon had always been a Maronite principality ruled by a Maronite princely family. Moreover, these princely families had no obligations toward the Ottoman state, and had only begun paying tribute about a century earlier in order to escape external pressure.

In referring to the ancient history of the Maronites and their presence in Lebanon prior to any other community Murad stated: “The Maronite tribes established themselves in Syria since the end of the fourth century, this means a thousand four hundred thirty two years ago, and almost all made their residence in Mount Lebanon. The Druzes were almost all located near Aleppo. In the 1300s they inhabited Hawran, near Damascus, and it only in the 1400s that they decided to take up residence in Lebanon. There they offered their services to the princes who tolerated their presence in the Mountain.”¹⁸⁹

What is interesting here is that the Maronites are presented as ancient tribes, and not simply a religious community. They are the first to inhabit Mount Lebanon, a full millennium before the coming of the Druzes who were the second largest community in nineteenth century Mount Lebanon with the Maronites being the largest. Murad continued by stating: “The princely families, the house of Ma‘n and Shihab, had coexisted for a long time, and up until a hundred years ago, the princes of Lebanon were not charged with any tribute to the Sublime Porte. It was at the era that the family of Shihab, seeking to avoid the pressures and vexations of the Turks, began to pay an annual tribute to the pasha of Sayda. However, in terms of mode of government,

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 50.

the Shihabi princes like their predecessors of the Ma'n family, were always independent, their authority absolute over their subjects.”¹⁹⁰

This piece of historical fiction completes the image that Murad wished to convey to the French monarch. The Maronites are an ancient tribe of Mount Lebanon, who maintained their independence over the centuries. It is only through the tolerance of their princes that other communities came to live in the Maronite principality of Lebanon. Now the nineteenth century Maronite nation is under duress and its independence threatened, and for that reason the assistance of the French monarchy is needed.

One does not need to subject Murad's work to the scrutiny of modern criteria in history-writing to recognize the flaws in it. Murad predates the major works on history-writing in the nineteenth century and therefore he cannot be faulted for the mishandling of archival materials, or a lack of scrutiny for primary sources, or for that matter what constituted sources for him. Neither John Tosh's approach, nor Collingwood's, nor Carr's, not even for that matter Ranke's approach, need to be employed to assess Murad's history.

The problem with his work is that most of the misinformation present in it was common knowledge for any resident of Mount Lebanon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Murad presents an imaginary Mount Lebanon and transforms basic facts about its history and about its present conditions in the nineteenth century. The Maronite princely families he mentioned were neither princely nor Maronite. The house of Ma'n was Druze, and the Shihabs were Sunni Muslims. Even though a part of the Shihabi family converted to Christianity in the late eighteenth century, the cadet branches remained Muslim, and those who converted kept it a

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 51.

secret for a long time. The fact that these families had no official capacity except as Ottoman tax collectors would have been common knowledge to anyone born in Mount Lebanon in Murad's time. Murad was not only misreading his past, he was misrepresenting his present for ideological and political reasons.

What is also relevant in Murad's history-writing is the form of his historical narrative. His political project was stated clearly in the content of his book, but it is the form that is even more significant when looking back at the evolution of Maronite Church historiography. To borrow Hayden White's principle that the narrative has a content regardless of what it is saying and that the meaning of a story is in the kind of story told by the historian, then the form of Murad's narrative is very significant and is in fact a departure from what proceeded in history-writing in Lebanon.

Murad did not produce a chronicle of all the important events in Maronite history, nor of important persona from the Church's past, he wrote an epic of Maronite struggle to maintain independence and sovereignty. If as White claims, the narrative always has a recognizable shape of a story of one kind, then the story told by Murad is a nationalist epic. Hayden White maintained that the form is arbitrary, but I disagree, at least in the case of Murad. As I mentioned in my introduction David Scott rejected White's claim that the form of the narrative is arbitrary, and instead he maintained that the narrative is always answering a question and performing an oppositional task. In Murad's case, one can see that the narrative evolved to maintain certain claims. Murad was very clear about the task of his narrative, he is openly requesting French aid to establish an independent Maronite principality, and for that, he frames his plea in the form of an epic about an ancient independent Maronite nation and political entity in Mount Lebanon. He was the first to do so, but as I will demonstrate later, he was not the last.

If Nicolas Murad was not a historian by training and seldom by practice, he made up for those shortcomings as an eyewitness to one of the most animated and decisive periods in the history of Mount Lebanon. The late eighteenth century and the early to mid-nineteenth century marked the end of the old system of notables in Mount Lebanon. The rise of confessional politics, the assertion of direct Ottoman administration, the civil war and the foreign intervention that followed it and entailed entry into the world economic system, were all transformative events that Murad witnessed. This is one reason why, regardless of what kind of history he produced, his writings are valuable and informative to anyone trying to understand the impact of that era on the residents of Mount Lebanon.

Not only did Murad witness the cataclysmic events that reshaped Lebanon and the region before his death in 1862, he may himself be considered a product of the historic changes that swept over the mountain in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

The historical setting that Murad came into differed greatly from that of al-Duwayhi. Mount Lebanon that Murad was born in was hardly recognizable from the Mountain that al-Duwayhi wrote about, in fact the designation "Lebanon" no longer meant what it did in the early eighteenth century. Socially, politically, religiously, economically, but also demographically, little remained unchanged from the seventeenth century to the early to mid-nineteenth century. This is not to mention that the entire region of Greater Syria and the Middle East had been through deep changes and upheavals that were related in more ways than one to the changes on the European scene and in the European balance of power, changes that if anything accentuated France's already prominent role as a protector of the Maronites and increased French intervention in Mount Lebanon. Locally, the changing role of the Maronite Church and the reforms it had undergone, coupled with the population explosion of the Maronite community and

its spread into the southern districts of the mountain chain had an enormous effect on the role the Maronites played in the life of the mountain. Their new economic role and demographic status were translated into different forms of political and military power on the eve of and in the aftermath of the Egyptian invasion of Syria in the nineteenth century.¹⁹¹

With the monumental changes brought about by the events of the nineteenth century came equally significant changes in historiography with the emergence and development of the new local histories during this period. The mid-nineteenth century can be considered one of the main moments of change in the history as well as the historiography of the Maronite Church. As Ussama Makdisi states:

History, politics, and education -which in the old regime had reinforced a nonsectarian hierarchical social order- were all put to work to create a sectarian hierarchical social order... Maronite Bishop Nicolas Murad was also reworking Maronite identity, casting it in imaginary national sectarian terms that totally excluded the Druzes... the text [*Notice historique sur l'origine de la nation Maronite*]. [Historical Notice on the Origin of the Maronite Nation. Paris: Librairie d'Adrien Le Clère, 1844] was modern in that it framed Murad's appeal as a part of a wider struggle of a modern, progressive, and united Christianity against a barbarous Islam...Murad's use of the term "*ahali*" became synonymous with the "people" of a nation. Thus when Murad referred to himself as the "general representative of the Christian people" or when the Maronite Patriarch referred to the *ahali*, they were marking a political boundary between Maronites and non-Maronites.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ For detailed accounts of these developments consult Usama Makdisi's *The Culture of Sectarianism*, and Riyadh Ghannam's *al-Muqata'at al-Lubnaniyyah fi Zil Hukm al-'Amir Bashir al-Thani wa Nizam al-Qa'imaqamiyatayn 1788-1861*.

¹⁹² Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 81

It is therefore evident that the changes that occur in history-writing both on the level of form as well as content are main indicators of motive and agency.¹⁹³ Those same changes underline a shift in the focus of Maronite historians from addressing primarily the history of the Church to addressing the history of the region and its inhabitants with added emphasis on the Maronites of Mount Lebanon. It is useful at this point to quote Murad and the manner with which he addressed the French monarch in his letter to him. Murad ended his letter by saying: “The Maronite nation and I, will not stop praying to the almighty for the conservation and happiness of your majesty and your honorable family.” Murad’s use of the French word ‘nation’ is significant here, since he could have written ‘community’ or ‘Church’, instead he chose a term that meant much more in nineteenth century Europe, and especially France. In one sentence, in a letter to the French king, the archbishop invoked the existence of a “Maronite nation”, and laid claim to representing such a nation when conducting politics on an international level.¹⁹⁴

What is interesting in this instance is that as early as this stage, and long before a Lebanese national idea would come to maturity, the Maronites were already posited as an ancient ethnicity. If one is to examine Smith’s argument concerning the ethnic roots of nationalism in the *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, the following passage is dedicated to the Maronites:

Christian ethnic communities have also maintained themselves locally in the Middle East for well over a millennium. The real founder of the Maronites, St

¹⁹³ “The importance of Murad’s book cannot be exaggerated. It is the first book written in French by a Maronite demanding a separate political entity for the Christians in Mount Lebanon. Moreover, arguably, this is the first work that voiced the Lebanist idea.” Kaufman, Asher. *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon*, 37.

¹⁹⁴ “La nation maronite et moi nous ne cesserons jamais de prier le Très-Haut pour la conservation et le bonheur de Votre Majesté et de son auguste famille.” Murad, Nicolas. *Notice historique sur l’origine de la nation Maronite*. [Historical Notice on the Origin of the Maronite Nation], (Paris: Librairie d’Adrien Le Clere, 1844), 10.

John Maron (patriarch from AD 685-707), organized the community of this mountain people (*Ahl al-Jabal*) around the Qadisha Valley of central Lebanon with a Syrian liturgy and rites. Its monasteries, often perched on high ridges, became both forts against persecutors and centers of learning; while their ecclesiastical union with the Roman Church, begun in AD 1182 and completed only at the synod of AD 1736, afforded a measure of political protection, even if it did not penetrate down the social scale. As a result, Gibbon could assert: ‘yet the humble nation of the Maronites has survived the empire of Constantinople, and they still enjoy under their Turkish masters a free religion and a mitigated servitude.’¹⁹⁵

But it is in the works of Maronite Church historians that such identification can be found. If one is to borrow Anthony Smith’s term, the Maronites appear as a distinct “*éthnie*” in the works of historians like Murad writing in the nineteenth century. The war of 1860 and the period immediately following it witnessed the first demands of a Christian political entity in Mount Lebanon, already a leap in terms of Maronite communal identity. Yet more important is the way such demands were formulated and the claims that justified them. Historians like Murad were not writing the history of a dynasty or the notables of the region or even the Church, but in fact writing the history of a Maronite nation, an ancient and distinct ethnic community residing on a geographically definable territory that had always belonged to the Maronites and been governed by a Maronite prince since time immemorial.¹⁹⁶

It was not simply an exclusive identity in the sense that it stressed the particularism of the Maronite community and of Maronite history; it was first and foremost an exclusionary identity

¹⁹⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 113.

¹⁹⁶ “The core of ethnicity as it has been transmitted in the historical record and as it shapes individual experience, resides in this quartet of ‘myths, memories, values and symbols and in the characteristic forms or styles and genres of certain historical configurations of populations.’” *Ibid.*, 15.

and an exclusionary vision of history. Murad was not simply arguing that the historical evolution of the Maronite community involved its own intricacies that were unique to it and set them apart from other denominations residing in Mount Lebanon. He was actively advocating the existence of a Maronite nation built around a Maronite *éthnie*, and actively pleading for a Maronite state where all other denominations are excluded. He was writing a history where the Druzes have no place, a national epic where the Druzes were the antagonists, the enemies of the nation, while pleading for a Maronite nation-state where the Druze community would be physically absent.

In examining the works of Church historians like Murad, the emergence of an ethnic identity is clear. In the writings of Murad the myth of origin evoked rendered concrete the claim of ancient ethnicity for the Maronite community.¹⁹⁷ The fact that this myth of origin was adopted by later Lebanese nationalists led to the formulation of an exclusive Lebanese identity based on ancient ethnicity that left out the other sectarian groups of Lebanon. The fact that what was written was the history of a Maronite nation and not a Lebanese trans-sectarian nation influenced the emergence of distinct sectarian histories in Lebanon and distinct sectarian identities.¹⁹⁸ These sectarian divisions were recognized, politicized, and codified in the “Mutasarifiyyah” of Mount Lebanon and later by the French mandate, only to be inherited by the independent Lebanese

¹⁹⁷ “One has to look at the nature (forms and content) of their myths and symbols, their historical memories and central values, which we can summarize as the ‘myth-symbol’ complex, at the mechanisms of their diffusion (or lack of it) through a given population, and their transmission to future generations, if one wishes to grasp the special character of ethnic identities”. *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹⁸ “...there are ‘ethnic roots’ which determine, to a considerable degree the nature and limits of modern nationalisms and nations, and which elites must respect if they are to achieve their short-term objectives.” *Ibid.*, 18.

republic in 1943. Thus this chain of events and historical writings dating back to the mid-nineteenth century had an enormous influence on Lebanese national identity as well as the shape of the Lebanese state itself regardless of whether the notions invoked in these histories were accepted by later and more contemporary historians.

As to the question of a sovereign spiritual domain in the context of Maronite Mount Lebanon, two assertions can be made from reading nineteenth century historiography. The first is that the Maronite Church, around which the communal consciousness of the Maronites developed, was never pressed to distinguish itself from the Church of Rome or to distance itself from French influence. On the contrary, the Maronite clergy aggressively sought to conform to Roman Catholic creed and to produce a history of their church as having always adhered to Roman orthodoxy. The same clergy constantly asserted their close relationship with, and their reliance on France. Declaring that the Maronites are the French of the East is an indicator of how the community was perceived as well as posited by its leadership it also reveals an understanding of international power, racialized identity, European supremacy and Orientalist views of the East. And since this leadership, embodied in the Church, represents a spiritual, temporal, and ideological leadership, it played a productive role in shaping the identity of the entire community. This leads to the second assertion, and that is if one is to attempt to locate a sovereign spiritual domain that is authentically Lebanese, and to place this domain within the realm of the Maronite Church, then this domain turns out to be thoroughly and blatantly colonized. In light of this, one can say that to a Maronite reading the histories produced by her or his own Church, the “Other” of that identity is local, Druze and Muslim, while the image of the authentic Maronite is that imagined by and modeled on the views and representations of

European outsiders, mainly the French, which in this period were not colonizers yet, at least not in political terms, though they were such arguably in cultural and economic terms.

Finally, one can sense the tangible influence of the historian as exemplified by Murad's politicization of his function as clergyman and historian. Murad's role in politics was evident in his missions and travels from Istanbul to Rome and France. The fact that he published his book in France and not Rome is quite significant. It reveals his connection to the political capital of the main European power with the most ties to the Maronites, and with the most interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. It does not allude to the role of the religious capital of the Catholic world. After all, what is evident in Murad's historiography is that he was making a political claim and not a religious one. The historiography that he represented, may have been produced by clergymen, but it was not ecclesiastical, it was nationalistic. It was not for inner church consumption but rather for popular public readership. Unlike Duwayhi's works, which were annals, confined to churches and monasteries, Murad was writing in French and addressing a European readership in published form. He was addressing the European political and intellectual elites of the 19th century in their lingua franca; he was no longer addressing the Catholic Church, he was not writing in Syriac, Latin, or even Arabic.

Murad was recasting Duwayhi, not publishing his findings. He produced his own national epic about the Maronites, and he made it accessible to both Maronite and European elites. Duwayhi was a part of it and so was Duwayhi's historiography. He was used as a primary source; his writings were treated by Murad as the "raw materials of history". Murad laid claim to this tradition and subjected it to his own purposes. The form and the narrative are completely

different and so is the avowed purpose of this history. Since the “other” had become Ottoman and Druze, the identity produced was exclusivist as well as exclusionary. The surrounding was the source of the threat. Murad transformed the anxieties of al-Duwayhi of Jesuits and Jacobite encroachment, and redeployed Duwayhi’s arguments to perform a new oppositional task, to fend off a new perceived threat and to challenge a new other.

The one thing in common is that both clergymen viewed their history as a means of preserving a unique and distinct Maronite identity, a sovereign spiritual domain where the essence of their community, as they defined it, is preserved.

The Refuge of the Mutasarrifiyyah

Edward Hallet Carr stated that there are basic facts about the past that are the same for all historians; these are the raw materials of the historian¹⁹⁹. In the case of the Maronite Church historiography that refers back to the works of al-Duwayhi, fictional elements that survived from Ibn al-Qila‘i’s epic were treated as basic facts and they were employed as the raw material for

¹⁹⁹ Carr, Edward Hallet. *What is History*, 8.

Church historians. In turn, many lay historians in the twentieth century, when writing about Mount Lebanon, approached this Church historiography as their raw materials, and treated it as constituting facts about the past, a process that facilitated the entry of these fictional elements into the nationalist discourse.

From a modern perspective, One can say that it matters less how al-Duwayhi approached his sources, what matters is how subsequent historians approached al-Duwayhi as their source. Historians like Nicolas Murad writing in the 1840s and like Yusuf al-Dibs writing in the late and early twentieth centuries ignored the internal inconsistencies and contradiction of the works of al-Duwayhi and treated him as an authority.

If, as Carr stated, history depends as much on the choice of the historian, to include as well as to ignore certain facts, then one must state that historians like al-Dibs and Murad made a decision to ignore basic facts about history that were accessible in the nineteenth century, and relied on fictional accounts when sensitive issues pertaining to Church history were involved. Even by the nineteenth century standards set by Ranke, this amounts to producing works of fiction or ideology, and not of history. What is also important to note is that in the case of some of the historians that I will mention, their scrutiny of the sources was thorough, except when the source was al-Duwayhi, which reveals an internal inconsistency and a level of bias in conducting their inquiries.

Carr argued that a fact about the past only becomes relevant when it is rendered into a fact of history. This process relies solely on the efforts of historians. If enough historians take up a certain fact about the past and mention it in their writings, then it is rendered into a fact of history. What is interesting in the case of Maronite Church historiography is that fictional

accounts about the past of the Church were picked up by enough clerical historians to render them into facts of history. These were subsequently employed by lay nationalist historians who brought them into the nationalist discourse.

When speaking of the barriers that helped isolate and maintain the Maronite community, French historian and Orientalist Constantin François comte de Volney stated in 1787: "...the nature of the country, offers great defenses everywhere, and has given to each village, and almost to each family, the means to resist with its own forces, and consequently to block the establishment of a single authority."²⁰⁰ This was the view held by many European travelers who followed in Volney's footsteps to the Levant, and who wrote about their experiences in Mount Lebanon. Despite the presence of Christian communities in almost every corner of Syria, the Maronites of Lebanon were perceived in a different manner, and their presence and survival in the East was attributed to many factors. Primary among those factors was the natural barrier that shielded them and granted them a haven from Islam. The notion of the inviolate sanctuary, the mountain refuge, was developed even further in the century that followed Volney's voyage as a tradition grew and evolved with the compilation of European travel literature. Prominent among those travelers was Gerard de Nerval, who in his "*Voyage en Orient*" offers a seminal example of nineteenth century travel writing. The romantic discourse of such writings had been influenced and shaped by Volney's portrait of Mount Lebanon.²⁰¹ The influence that Volney had

²⁰⁰ "...la nature du pays, qui offrant par-tout de grandes defenses, a donné a chaque village, et presque a chaque famille, le moyen de resister par ses propres forces, et par consequent d'arrêter l'extension d'un seul pouvoir." Volney, C.-F. *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*. v.2. (Paris: Volland et Desenne, 1787), 15-16.

²⁰¹ Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 17.

on the writings of Gerard de Nerval is apparent in the latter's depiction of Mount Lebanon as a fortress, offering any invading army a series of inaccessible barriers.²⁰²

Such writings would not only influence the perception of Mount Lebanon which was held by European audiences, but as exposure to this literature increased and its readership expanded, the image held by Maronite clergymen and historians came under its influence as well.

When writing about the historiography of Nicolas Murad and the general shifts in history-writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Ussama Makdisi states: "Murad's Lebanon, like that of the European travelers before him, was a mountain refuge that had long held out against the Saracens and other infidels as an "independent" Christian principality."²⁰³ He later adds: "Murad was at pains to portray the Maronites as not just pro-French but actually French people living in a specific territory known as the Mountain Refuge."²⁰⁴ It is clear that at this stage the degree to which the mountain is portrayed as a refuge and as an inaccessible fortress²⁰⁵ for the Maronites by far exceeds and differs from what al-Duwayhi mentioned in his writings.

As the conditions of the mountain were transformed so were the aspirations of the Maronite community. As one of the foremost advocates for establishing an independent Christian principality in the mountain, Nicolas Murad inserts his political ambitions into his historical writings by advocating that it had always been the case that the Maronites held sway over the mountain, far from Muslim domination. By making such claims Murad is making several claims that can be considered components of the idea of the Mountain Refuge, isolation

²⁰² De Nerval, *Voyage en Orient*, 13.

²⁰³ Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 82.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁰⁵ Murad, *Notice historique*, 54.

and insularity being the first of them, since he clearly mentions that the Maronites were established in these “inaccessible” mountains. Murad stated that not only were the Maronites culturally and religiously isolated and safe from their non-Christian surrounding, they enjoyed political independence and sovereignty as Murad states. He even pushes the point further by claiming they dominated the whole of Syria at one point. Thus taking the notion of the mountain refuge to its logical conclusion.²⁰⁶

Yusuf al-Dibs

Bishop Nicolas Murad died in the month of December 1862 while on a mission to Rome, having been a witness to the events of 1860 but not quite having had ample chance to comment on, or react to, them. That task was left to Maronite Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs whose works by far exceeded Murad’s in abundance as well as in their value due to their methodology. Al-Dibs’s scrutiny of sources was much more thorough than Murad, and the history he produced was based on evidence from surviving materials. He relied on medieval Muslim historians as well as Maronite sources; he also made use of archival material from the Church as well as from the families of notables that he had written about. In a sense the works of al-Dibs were more in line with the kind of histories that were being produced in the nineteenth century. When possible, al-Dibs did try to let the facts speak for themselves; at least his arguments relied on available documents rather than mere speculation, or like in Murad’s case, imagination. If one is to use Ranke’s criteria in judging the histories of al-Dibs then he was a far better historian than any of

²⁰⁶ “Les Maronites, forts de l’énergie de leurs chefs et de leurs ascendant fermement établi dans ces montagnes alors inaccessibles, avaient réussi à étendre leur domination politique sur la Syrie entière” Ibid., 28.

his predecessors. He is also more comparable to al-Duwayhi in being one of the most influential historians that the Maronite Church has produced.

Yusuf al-Dibs was born in 1833 in the village of Ras-Kifa in the north of Lebanon not far from Ihdin, the village of Istifan al-Duwayhi. In 1847 he joined the seminary of 'Ayn Waraqah where he stayed until 1850 after which he continued his education privately. One of the main achievements of al-Dibs is the founding of *al-Hikmah* University, which would later spawn numerous primary and secondary schools in Lebanon to become the foremost educational institution of the Maronite Church to this day. Among his historical writings, the most ambitious was *Tarikh Suriyya*, the first volume of which was published in 1893 and the last in 1905. This book was summarized later in two volumes under the title *al-Muwjaz Fi Tarikh Suriyyah*. The sections of *Tarikh Suriyyah* that dealt with the history of the Maronite community were selected and published separately in his book "*al-Jami' al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal*",²⁰⁷ which would be the last book that he published (in 1905) before his death in 1907.

What distinguishes al-Dibs from Nicolas Murad is that even though he too was the product of the same era in Mount Lebanon, and he too was a witness to the civil war of 1860, he lived long enough to reflect on those important events, and to benefit from his acquired training and the cultural movement of the late nineteenth century in order to produce a more developed and more refined historiography. Al-Dibs was also a resident of *Mutasarifiyyat Jabal Lubnan*, the autonomous district of Mount Lebanon that came as the culmination of centuries of changes and upheavals, a fact reflected in his writings.

This political entity that al-Dibs resided in was, in its very structure, inclusive of all the communities residing in Mount Lebanon. Every sect was represented in the administration

²⁰⁷ Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami' al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal*.

regardless of the scarcity of its demographic presence.²⁰⁸ It was also first and foremost an Ottoman autonomous district, which meant that al-Dibs was still writing in an Ottoman context. He did not however advance the same kind of exclusionary political claims that Murad did. The quest for political independence had been defeated at a very costly price for the Maronite community. What was achieved however was an autonomous system, inclusive of other communities, but that insured and preserved Maronite hegemony. The Druze other of Murad's writings had been politically defeated and relegated to a subordinate position when al-Dibs was writing. And the Ottoman other had become a guarantee for Maronite hegemony within the system of the *Mutasarrifiyyah*. The Maronite Church by this point was no longer aiming for political independence, and was staunchly committed to the special political regime of Mount Lebanon, which secured its basic aims.²⁰⁹ "This revised aim, which involved spiritual, social and political dimensions, lost its former separatist and aggressive bent and content, in favor of a more conventional objective, namely the preservation of the particularity of a religious minority within the framework of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire."²¹⁰

It can be said that the writings of al-Dibs are accurately representative of the inclinations and aims of the Maronite Church in the second half of the nineteenth century. The avowed purpose of his historiography is a reflection of the sociopolitical objectives of the Church in his own time.

²⁰⁸ Hakim-Dowek, Carol . *The Origins of The Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1914 (Ph. D. Thesis, St. Antony's College)*, University of Oxford, 1997, 225.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

When addressing the issue of Mount Lebanon generally and the Maronite community specifically and its relation with its surroundings, Yusuf al-Dibs seems at first glance to be a mere continuation of his predecessors. After all, he seems to take much of his information about the Maronites verbatim from al-Duwayhi with little if any additions. On the issue of Mount Lebanon serving as a sanctuary for the Maronites who were escaping persecution at the hands of the heterodox Christian sects, the account is identical and al-Duwayhi is often quoted.²¹¹ The mountain is again portrayed as an impregnable fortress that sheltered the Maronites from their enemies and from any outside intervention, whether the outsider is a heretical Christian sect,²¹² the Byzantine Empire,²¹³ the Muslim Caliphate,²¹⁴ or even the Crusaders.²¹⁵ Even though al-Dibs persists in subscribing to the idea of the Mountain Refuge, he differs slightly from his predecessors in the sense that he has a more analytic approach to the matter. He still advocates the notion that isolation and insularity existed, but is less keen on claiming that complete independence and sovereignty were enjoyed by the Maronites throughout their history. Rather than reiterate mythical accounts of heroism in defense of Jibbat Bsharri and Bilad al-Batroun, al-Dibs mentions only that after the Arab conquest of Syria, the Muslim Caliphs did not care much for the Mountain district. The reasons why the Muslim authorities did not pay much attention to Mount Lebanon were due to its lack of importance and meager resources, the insignificance of the district in area, population, and resources, along with the ruggedness and difficulty of its terrain, all of which were a blessing of a sort for the Maronites, he stated: “it is known that the Rashidun Caliphs, upon conquering Syria and evicting the Byzantines, focused their efforts on

²¹¹ Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami‘ al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu’assal*, 11.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

conquering the cities and did not care for the mountains because they were of little importance and almost no use.”²¹⁶

The image that al-Dibs offers of the Maronites and their conditions in the Middle Ages is one of autonomy and relative isolation while maintaining a peaceful coexistence with the powers that be. In fact one can compare al-Dibs’s account of the hardships that befell the Maronites when they were persuaded by the Byzantines to rebel against the Arabs, only to be abandoned by them once they no longer served their purpose, to the events of 1860 and the price the Maronites paid for their miscalculation and their defiance of the established powers. Another similarity is that of the autonomy granted by the Caliphs to the Maronites by appointing a local dignitary to oversee the affairs of the district and the long peace that this method of governing led to, and the conditions in the *Mutasarrifiyyah*, which had a local governing body, albeit one presided over by a non-Maronite Ottoman Christian.²¹⁷

Al-Dibs is always careful in his choice of words when describing the symbiotic relationship between governing and being governed. He describes the Maronites as having abandoned their raiding, and having kept quiet, while maintaining loyalty and obedience to the authority of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs. They dedicated themselves to tending to the land and raising their herds, safely sheltered in Mount Lebanon. He also states that the wisdom of the Caliphs, and the difficult terrain and meager resources of Mount Lebanon, kept the Maronites safe from depredation and competition over its land and forests, and thus they lived safely while maintaining their religion and autonomy.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

²¹⁷ See Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, for a comprehensive history of this period.

²¹⁸ Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami‘ al-Mufasssal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu’assal*, 99.

Despite all the attributes that distinguish al-Dibs's historiography, he never completely breaks with the tradition of constantly claiming a special condition for Mount Lebanon and the fact that it was a refuge. He stated: "it appears that the Maronites of Lebanon enjoyed a kind of administrative autonomy under the caliphs and when the Franks came and seized most of Syria they did not rob them of this blessing but they rather left them independent."²¹⁹ He may attribute a different degree of isolation and insularity to it, and he may substitute complete independence with autonomy, but he is still a part of the same tradition that maintained a special status for the Maronites and the idea of the Mountain Refuge.

These facts about al-Dibs's historiography are supported as well as explained by his reliance on the works of al-Duwayhi for the most part when it comes to the history of the Maronites, but also on the popular folk songs known as *Zajaliyyat* of al-'Aquri²²⁰ and al-Qila'i. His analytic skills and methodology in history-writing are employed to explain and clarify their accounts and sometimes to moderate some of their claims but never to challenge them, and therefore, just like al-Duwayhi, he grants legitimacy to such baseless claims by including them in his work, thus adding himself to this continuing tradition and catapulting it forward to the next generation of historians.

When writing about the Maronites having had princes ruling them in the seventh century, al-Dibs stated: "al-Sim'ani said, quoting Istifan al-Duwayhi, who was quoting a Syriac book written in 1315 CE..."²²¹ In this instance al-Dibs took a completely different approach to the way he scrutinized evidence in the rest of his writings. He accepted the authoritativeness of an account simply based on the fact that it was made and transmitted by Maronite clergymen. He quoted al-

²¹⁹ Ibid., 119.

²²⁰ Ibid., 35.

²²¹ Ibid., 29.

Sim'ani, a clergyman of the Maronite Church, who was quoting al-Duwayhi, a patriarch of the Church, who in turn was citing a source that only he had examined and that was nowhere to be found in the days of al-Sim'ani or al-Dibs. Al-Dibs in this case did not care for the fact that this alleged Syriac source is no longer available for him to examine, he did not note that it was allegedly written six hundred years after the events it is said to describe, and that it contradicts every single source that he himself had considered reliable to use and in fact had relied on in writing his history. This inconsistency indicates that, on matters related to Maronite history, al-Dibs broke from his own methodology and used entirely different criteria for what constituted a reliable source to him. He treated al-Duwayhi as well as al-Sim'ani as unquestionable authorities on Maronite history and perpetuated a tradition of internally generated historiography that did not abide by any methodology or criterion that originate outside the Maronite Church.

Although Murad and al-Dibs were contemporaries, the changes to the political reality where they operated left a deep impact on the histories they produced. The *Mutasarrifiyyah* itself and its political institutions were inclusive in nature, a fact that left a mark on Dibs and distinguished him from Murad. The Maronite Church's rise to power had been fully achieved by al-Dibs' time as "the Maronite Patriarchate's role as the supreme representative of its community and the defender of its political rights was consolidated under the *Mutasarrifiyyah* regime."²²²

Dibs may have witnessed the worst of religious violence and the most frightening Maronite defeats, but he also witnessed their political victories. The establishment of the *Mutasarrifiyyah* and the privileged status of the Maronite community in it left their mark on the

²²² Hakim-Dowek, Carol . *The Origins of The Lebanese National Idea*, 226.

historiography of al-Dibs. He did not share the anxieties of Murad. The political goal had been partially achieved, with autonomy instead of full independence. Unlike Murad, the tone in the writings of al-Dibs was not one of campaigning. One can even glimpse in the writing of al-Dibs a desire to preserve and maintain the status quo and enjoy what had been achieved. This desire was shared by local notables in Mount Lebanon as well as by the Maronite Church.²²³

The audience that al-Dibs was addressing was also different. The socio-economic and cultural changes that occurred in his time meant that a wider readership was available. And it was this urbanite literate Syrian public for whom al-Dibs was publishing in classical Arabic. The moment of change in Dibs' historiography came when new challenges faced the Maronite community at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Henri Lammens

As mentioned above, the period that Yusuf al-Dibs lived in brought about far reaching changes to the world at large but specifically to the Ottoman Empire and the Levant. When he died in 1907, the area was about to be hit by a whirlwind of events and instability that would not abate until the late 1920s. It was only natural that such a period would bring changes of equal magnitude to the realm of historiography. As the world bid the nineteenth century farewell and braced itself for what was to come in the First World War and its aftermath, the field of history-

²²³ Ibid., 220.

writing offered ample opportunities for those who wished to leave their mark on it. Among the most influential historians of this period in Syria was Jesuit priest and Orientalist Henri Lammens (1862-1937).

Although Lammens had a tremendous influence on historians writing about Mount Lebanon, as he himself had a significant share of the writing of that history, one must keep in mind two important facts when comparing him to historians like al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs. Unlike them, Lammens did not belong to the Maronite Church, and unlike them he did not dedicate any of his works solely to the Maronite community or to Mount Lebanon. Lammens therefore occupies a peculiar place among the historians who were writing about the region, insofar as he was neither a secular historian, nor was he a clerical Maronite historian. Being a Jesuit made his relationship with the Maronite Church as well as Rome that much more complicated, especially during the Mandate years.

Lammens was a traveler and a linguist as well as a historian. He dedicated the majority of his works to Islamic history and Islamic civilization. He published mainly in the bi-weekly *Al-Machreq* magazine, as well as in the daily *Al-Bashir*, and many of these publications were later to be collected into books. *La Syrie*, the book that Lammens dedicated to the history of Greater Syria, came about at the suggestion of General Gouraud, the French High Commissioner in Lebanon in 1920. The book covers the history of Syria from 4,000 BCE to the time of the First World War. Lammens places special emphasis on the Umayyad period in Damascus, on the Crusader era, and on the period of Bashir II, all in an attempt to trace back the events that culminated in the establishment of Greater Lebanon.²²⁴

²²⁴ Lammens's work, *La Syrie: Precis Historique*, serves as a primary text for this dissertation.

Even though Lammens did not work specifically on Mount Lebanon, the added value of his book is that it places any events he narrates about the Mountain and its communities within the greater context of the region rather than dealing with them as isolated incidents. The perspective with which he gazes at the Mountain isn't that of an insider's narrow vision, but rather that of a historian who is conscious of the continuity and connectedness of Syria as a land. Therefore, the impression Lammens gives of the Mountain, and of Maronite history in general, varies greatly from that presented by al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs.

Lammens's portrayal of Mount Lebanon is in some ways that of a refuge, in the sense that he recognizes the effect of geography and the nature of the terrain on the political conditions between center and periphery in any given state. This recognition of the Mountain's attributes as a physical barrier does not, however, amount to the mythical status that one can see in Ibn al-Qila'i's folk song, or even in the works of al-Duwayhi, al-Dibs, and of course Volney and De Nerval, to mention a few. What Lammens seems to be constantly reiterating is the fact that in periods of unrest when the central authority is unable to extend its powers as it normally would, those areas that are least accessible to the center of power are naturally the most prone to defy that power. In recognizing the forbidding nature of the terrain Lammens does not give any special status to the Maronite community, but rather mentions how the mountains of Syria attracted mostly heterodox Muslim sects such as the Nusayris and the Druzes as well as twelver Shi'a groups, and it was the case that these groups and their warfare against the central Mameluk authority gave the Maronites space to spread out across Mount Lebanon.²²⁵ Rather than an example of isolation and insularity, the Maronites were one community among many that resided

²²⁵ Lammens, *La Syrie: Precis Historique*, 198-199.

in the mountain, and it was through interaction with these other groups that the destiny of the Maronites was determined.

As for the notions of independence and sovereignty, Lammens does not agree with the claims of his predecessors among the historians of the Maronite Church. As a community within the state, he argues the Maronites were governed much like any other group of non-Muslim subjects. Lammens does mention instances when there were revolts in the Mountain, but those were not exceptional nor were they the only revolts taking place at the time in the Abbasid state. If anything, these failed revolts are in themselves proof of the subjugation of the Maronites, who were suffering in Mount Lebanon from the depredations of Abbasid agents.²²⁶ Lammens does go over the times when the Mameluk authorities used to appoint local tax collectors from Jubbat Bsharri to act on their behalf, a practice that was in no way restricted to the Maronites, since the Druzes chiefs in the southern and central districts of the mountain were always operating under that rule. In the instances when the center was going through periods of unrest, like the Mameluk state in the second half of the fifteenth century, short periods of semi-independence,²²⁷ as Lammens refers to it, took place, but nothing resembling an actual separation from the state.

As far as the idea of Lebanon the Mountain Refuge goes, Henri Lammens is outside the tradition of its advocates: he may approve of some of their claims, but overall he does not subscribe to the idea. When writing about a revolt in Mount Lebanon that was crushed in the early years of the Abbasid Caliphate, Lammens stated: “The rebels were torn off from their villages and the majority of the population of Lebanon was scattered across Syria. The rigor of the repression provoked the protests of al-Uza‘i the famous *faqih* of Beirut.”²²⁸

²²⁶ Ibid., 90-91.

²²⁷ Ibid., 213.

²²⁸ Ibid., 91.

When it comes to the notions of isolation, insularity, sovereignty, and independence, Lammens never goes nearly as far as the historians who claim that the mountain was a refuge that provided all of these to the Maronite Church and its followers. That said, however, one should mention that Lammens' status as an historian outside of a certain tradition did not prevent those among his successors who advocated the theory of the Mountain Refuge from using him selectively as a source of information as well as a source of legitimacy.

Redeployment and Regeneration of Authoritativeness

Already, at this early stage, one can notice the emergence of a trend to defend the legitimacy and orthodoxy of the Maronite Church. It was a concern that would occupy Maronite Church historians and that would have drastic implications for the histories they wrote. This trend is best described by Matti Moosa who, upon dealing with the issue of the Maronites and Monothelism, evoked the writings of Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs, describing him as the foremost defender of Maronite orthodoxy. On this subject Moosa stated:

More than any other Maronite, Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs vehemently defended the "orthodoxy" (Chalcedonian faith) of his church against what he considers the "sheer envy" of critics, Chalcedonian or otherwise. His book *Ruh al-Rudud*, a refutation of the opinion of Syrian Roman Catholic Bishop Yusuf Dawud, is but one example. From this book, as from his other books, we can readily detect the reason behind the fury of the Maronite clergy on the subject of Monothelism -- namely, the accusation of heresy. Maronite Church historians unanimously counter their critics by attempting to prove that the Maronite Church has always

been “orthodox”, that is, holding the faith defined by the council of Chalcedon, and, therefore, never heretical.²²⁹

The accusations of heresy that Istifan al-Duwayhi had to refute did not subside after his time, the evidence he provided in his protests was never considered conclusive, and the question of the Monothelism of the early Maronites remained an open one. The main source of worry for al-Duwayhi were the *Al-Maqalat al-‘ashr* [The Ten Treaties] by Tuma al-Kfartabi which, as a solid primary source, would implicate the Maronite Church in the Monothelite heresy. For Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs (1833-1907), writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the renewed attack came from Syrian Roman Catholic Bishop Yusuf Dawud, against whom al-Dibs dedicated his defense in *Ruh al-rudud fi za‘m al-khuri Yusuf Dawud*, which was published in 1871 accompanied by a Latin translation as well as a summary in French titled *Histoire de la catholicité des maronites* [The History of the Catholicism of the Maronites]. In this book, al-Dibs reiterates the claims about the ancient and unbroken Chalcedonian orthodoxy of the Maronite Church and its relation to the Holy See,²³⁰ while arguing against the specific accusations of Crusader era Catholic Archbishop and historian William of Tyre, as well as Sa‘id Ibn al-Batriq Archbishop of Alexandria. In his arguments al-Dibs relies on the previous works of al-Duwayhi and adopts his conclusions, stating that the latter “had already provided sufficient and ample evidence from Maronite sources to support these claims.”²³¹ In it he also included al-Duwayhi’s response to Tuma al-Kfartabi whom he accused of forgery and of falsifying and planting evidence in Maronite liturgical books to spread the heresy of the one will of Christ among them.

²²⁹ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 195.

²³⁰ Al-Dibs, *Ruh al-rudud fi za‘m al-khuri Yusuf Dawud*, 5.

²³¹ “Wa qad ghala al-batriarq Istfanus al-Duwayhi al-Ihdini bizikr al-shawahid min kutub tuqusina.” Ibid., 89.

All throughout his book, al-Dibs referred to al-Duwayhi as well as Ibn al-Qila‘i²³² to support his arguments, a fact that is indicative of the place that the writings of these two occupied in his historiography.

Yusuf al-Dibs also wrote about the early history of the Maronites, and their temporal and religious conditions from the fifth century to his day. In his book *Al-Jami‘ al-mufasssal fi tarikh al-mawarinah al-mu’assal* [The Detailed Collection of the True History of the Maronites], he included a detailed account of the events that led to the establishment of the Maronite Church as well as its evolution over the centuries. The starting point to his history of the Maronites was the fifth century hermit Saint Maron whose teachings were, according to al-Dibs, the cornerstone of Maronite creed. His disciples and the monastery that they erected, which was named after him, was the first cradle of the Maronite Church before the forced exodus to Mount Lebanon.

From the onset al-Duwayhi’s influence is omnipresent in the book, every argument presented by al-Dibs is supported by a citation from the former. When writing about the life of Saint Maron and his correspondences with clergymen of his time, al-Dibs supported the events he mentioned with what he considered to be sufficient evidence from al-Duwayhi: “And patriarch Istifanus al-Duwayhi al-‘Ihdini had informed us in his *History of the Maronites* when he spoke of Saint Maron.”²³³ This statement appears in one form or another with every topic that al-Dibs approached; when he wrote about the disciples of Saint Maron,²³⁴ when he discussed the

²³² Ibid., 106.

²³³ “Wa qad anba’ana al-‘allamah al-batriark Istfanus al-Duwayhi al-‘Ihdini fi kalamih fi tarikh al-mawarinah ‘ala al-qiddis Marun.” Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami‘ al-mufasssal*, (Beirut: Dar Lahd Khater, 1987), 2.

²³⁴ Ibid., 6.

manner with which they spread across Syria in the sixth century,²³⁵ as well as when he described the hardships and oppression they suffered defending their Catholic faith.²³⁶

What is remarkable is not only the fact that al-Dibs subscribed entirely to the narrative of al-Duwayhi concerning the early Maronites (the claims of both historians are virtually identical on these matters), but also the fact that al-Duwayhi's claims are not thoroughly investigated or even questioned by al-Dibs. The latter cited the former as an authority whose claims are to be treated as solid evidence by subsequent historians. Al-Dibs did not rely solely on the writings of al-Duwayhi, but when reading the sections of *Al-Jami' al-mufasssal fi tarikh al-mawarinah al-mu'assal* [The Detailed Collection of the True History of the Maronites], that cover the period and topics in question, it becomes evident that the primary source of information employed by al-Dibs is al-Duwayhi's *Tarikh al-mawarina*; all other sources cited were auxiliary, used to support the assumption made by al-Duwayhi and reiterated by al-Dibs two centuries later.

What is significant in the writings of al-Dibs is the kind of effort he made in offering a polemical defense of Maronite adherence to orthodoxy, which is an element that is visible in all of the variety of works that he produced. What is even more significant is the manner with which this one element is tied to many other aspects of the history he wrote and the claims he made. By the time that Yusuf al-Dibs was writing the region had undergone considerable change, but the realm of historiography had become different as well. These factors weigh in on the historical writings of al-Dibs. The nineteenth century that al-Dibs lived in had brought significant changes to the field of history-writing, from the positivistic approach of compiling material and assessing historical evidence, to the form and style of presenting historical findings. When one compares

²³⁵ Ibid., 7.

²³⁶ Ibid., 11.

al-Dibs's *Tarikh suriyya* [The History of Syria] to al-Duwayhi's *Tarikh al-'azminah* [History of Times], the difference becomes obvious. The two works differ both at the level of scope as well as at the level of the historical awareness of the two historians. What was available to al-Dibs was not available to al-Duwayhi, and the training and exposure of the former in the field of history-writing was very different from what the latter learned and experienced. What becomes striking then is the similarity that defines the writings of both historians when dealing with issues of Maronite Church origin and orthodoxy despite their different historical locations and training. The claims made concerning these two questions are identical in the accounts of both historians. It is also significant that these claims cannot be isolated from other hypotheses about the early Maronites and the events surrounding the establishment of their Church. Proving orthodoxy necessitates the adoption of specific claims without which the task becomes impossible. Asserting these claims presents a link that connects Ibn al-Qila'i with al-Duwayhi, and al-Dibs, including their contemporaries among Maronite Church historians as well as those who followed them.

The Modern Debate About the Mardaites

The debate about the Mardaite origin and identity dates back to the year 1902 in *al-Mashriq* magazine where Jesuit priest and orientalist, Father Henri Lammens, launched a controversy that would occupy Lebanese historians and inhabit their historiographies up until the present day. That controversy was about the relation between the Maradah, *Jarajimah*, and the

Maronites. Lammens on the one side claimed that the Mardaites were not the same as the Maronites, and clergymen from the Maronite Church on the other, insisted that the two groups were in fact one and the same. The main venue for this academic debate was *al-Mashriq* magazine, where the articles of the opposing sides appeared. *Al-Mashriq* was a Jesuit magazine published in Beirut by Jesuit priest and orientalist father Louis Cheykho beginning in 1898, the last edition was published in 1970. That of course was merely the beginning since all of the participants in the debate went on to publish their arguments in separate books and included the Mardaite hypothesis in their general narratives.

Lammens does not clearly make a decisive conclusion concerning the identity of the Mardaites. What Lammens does in his article is present the case of the Mardaites from his perspective, and the perspective of the sources he chooses, and then sheds light on the discrepancies and disagreements among historians concerning the identity of those Mardaites. The version of history of the Mardaites that Lammens offers sums up many of the absolutes that the historians of the Maronite Church would want to assert concerning their own church and their own community. The Orthodoxy of the Mardaites is confirmed in the account, which is in no way unusual since no account of the Mardaites accuses them of heresy. The role that most historians ascribe to the Mardaites as agents of Byzantium confirms their religious allegiance to the Orthodox Church. This proven Orthodoxy isn't easily defended by the Maronite clergy when writing their refutations against accusations of Monothelism. Furthermore, Lammens's account of the Mardaites ascribes to them the role and attributes that the Maronite historians wished to ascribe to their own community. The independence, isolation, and insularity that Lammens ascribes to the Mardaites are all conditions that Maronite Church historians attribute to their church and community. The problem was that Lammens grants the Mardaites all the attributes

claimed by Maronite historians in their version of Mount Lebanon the Mountain Refuge, and the unconquered Maronite mountaineers, and then brings into question the relation of the Mardaites to the Maronites, even though he never completely denies it since he goes on to say “groups of Mardaites were able to remain in Mount Lebanon, supported by the Maronites and the Christian mountaineers, with whom they were soon fused.”²³⁷

The responses to Lammens’s comments and the contributions made by Maronite historians to the debate revolved around the earlier writings of al-Duwayhi, whose claims concerning the identity and origin of the Mardaites—and the Maronites after them—became authoritative. The situation established was one where the historical writings of al-Duwayhi were already the main source employed by Maronite Church historians when referring to the history of the Maronite Church and the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon. But also, since al-Duwayhi identified the Maronites as being one and the same as the Mardaites, he became the main authority employed by Church historians when investigating the history of the Mardaites. In this instance one has to mention that questioning the claims of al-Duwayhi would undermine the authority of the father of Maronite Church historiography by putting into question his knowledge and claims about the origin and identity of his own church and community.

These concerns had to be taken into consideration when addressing the matter of the Mardaites, especially if the historian involved in such investigations had already posited himself as being a part of a tradition that reaches back to the historiography of al-Duwayhi. Church

²³⁷ “Des groupes de Mardaites ont pu se maintenir dans le Liban, appuyés sur les Maronites et les montagnards chrétien, avec lesquels ils ne tarderont pas à fusionner.” Lammens, Henri, *La Syrie Précis Historique*, (Beirut: Dar Lahd Khater, 1994).

historians writing about the identity of the Mardaites worked within the parameters established by al-Duwayhi two hundred years earlier.

The status reserved for the history of al-Duwayhi is not always explicitly stated in the writings of Church historians like al-Dibs and Daw, but it is in the choice of sources that one can detect the authoritativeness of al-Duwayhi's narrative. The only written sources that have survived concerning the Mardaites are from Byzantine historian Theophanes and Arab historians al-Baladhuri and Ibn al-'Ibri. These sources were even employed by al-Dibs and Daw, except that both historians refer to al-Duwayhi when they claim congruence between the Mardaites and the Maronites. Nowhere did Daw or al-Dibs mention why al-Duwayhi, a seventeenth century Maronite historian, is an authority on seventh century events. But as I will demonstrate later, time is not a factor when the history of the Maronites is involved. Al-Duwayhi was to be considered an authority on Maronite history because he is a Maronite patriarch, and if the Mardaites were Maronites then his account of Mardaite history is to be relied on regardless of what previous sources such as Theophanes and al-Baladhuri stated.

Working from within his parameters and acknowledging al-Duwayhi's claims as unquestionable truths constituted the starting point of the tradition. This, however, did not mean that the interpretation of these claims, the motives behind reemploying them, and the end purpose of the history being written, were identical to those that dictated the contributions of al-Duwayhi.

The claims about the Mardaites that al-Duwayhi firmly makes in his historiography do not pertain solely to the origin and identity of the group but to their political role and function in the history of the region. As already discussed, al-Duwayhi's two main claims which dominated his writings on the Mardaites as well as the writings of Maronite Church historians after him

were that the Maronites and the Mardaites were the same people, and that the term Maradah means rebels, and that the latter name was used by the enemies of the Maronite Church and community to describe the Maronites. The question that these suppositions beckon, however, is that if the Mardaites are the Maronites, and Mardaite or Maradah means rebels, who were the Maronites rebelling against? And how does such a supposition fit with the existing historical evidence about both Maronites and Mardaites?

According to Istifan al-Duwayhi the Maronites were named Maradah, which means rebels, for refusing to obey the commands of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and did not resist the Muslim Arab advance.²³⁸ The claims that Lammens offered did not fit the mold that al-Duwayhi had cast. Lammens points to the issue that the Mardaites were originally from the Amanus Mountains, from the city of *Jurjumah*, which is why Arab chroniclers referred to them as *Jarajimah*,²³⁹ which means the people of Jurjumah. They were auxiliary units in the Byzantine military and with the command and support of the Byzantine Emperor they launched raids into Syria on more than one occasion, taking advantage of the internal struggles of the Arab Caliphate during the reign of Mu'awiyah the first time, and the second and last during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. The end of the Mardaite threat came with the treaty between the Muslim Caliph 'Abd al-Malik and the Byzantines, according to which the Byzantine emperor withdrew his raiders and spread them across the Empire. Some of those raiders used the difficult terrain of Mount Lebanon to their advantage, shielding them from Arab pursuers, which brought them into contact with the Maronites and the Christian mountaineers who rendered them

²³⁸ Isma'il, *al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah)*, 56.

²³⁹ There is no consensus as to whether the terms Jarajimah and Maradah of Arab chronicles are two terms that refer to the same group. As Adel Isma'il points out in his book *al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah): Man Hum? Min 'Ayna Ja'u? Wa Ma Hiyah 'Alaqatuhum Bi al-Jarajimah Wa al-Mawarinah*, the term Maradah is the Arabic version of Mardaitai, and it does not refer to the same people as the word Jarajimah which evidently refers to the people of Jurjumah.

assistance. A process of fusion took place between some of the Mardaites and the Maronites when the former were deployed in Mount Lebanon, but the majority left with the conclusion of the treaty between the Caliph and the Emperor. The final blow to the Maradah came with a Muslim military campaign launched against their own city of Jurjumah, which led to the destruction of the city and the end of the Mardaite peril. Following this event those Mardaites who did not relocate to other areas in the depth of the Byzantine Empire entered the service of the Arabs and contributed to their military campaigns while remaining Christian in faith.²⁴⁰

Lammens' sources are the same Byzantine and Arab chronicles that decades later, Lebanese historian 'Adil Isma'il would reexamine. The difference between the two historians is on the level of interpretation, what brings them together is the fact that, unlike al-Duwayhi and the Maronite Church historians who followed him, Lammens and Isma'il examined all the evidence available about the Mardaites, from the Arab historians such as al-Tabari and al-Baladhuri, to the Byzantine Theophanes. Their conclusions were based solely on the evidence at hand and their own interpretation of it. This is not shared with Maronite Church historians who exercised selectiveness in their approach to the evidence and made claims that were often unsupported by any material that they could produce.

These Mardaites, or Maradah, or Jarajimah, that Lammens speaks of are far from the Mardaites that al-Duwayhi referred to. Despite the fact that Lammens suggests that some Mardaites may have remained in Mount Lebanon and joined the Maronite community, he does not suggest that the two people were the same. The Maradah of Lammens were a Byzantine military unit, deployed in Mount Lebanon and some parts of Syria by the orders of the Byzantine emperor, and later withdrawn from these regions also by the orders of the Byzantines. They were

²⁴⁰ Lammens, *La Syrie Precis Historique*, 57.

not originally from Mount Lebanon, nor did they rebel or enter in any hostilities against the Byzantine authorities. Lammens's claims contradicted all the claims made by al-Duwayhi.

One of the more prominent Maronite Church historians, and a contemporary of Lammens, Maronite Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs took it upon himself to rectify the falsities that according to him were plaguing Lammens's claims. When writing about the temporal state of the Maronites in the seventh century, Yusuf al-Dibs began by summarizing the most important events that he wishes to cover. In this brief introductory summary he reveals his main concerns and the essential purpose of that part of his historiography. The example he wants to present and the lesson he wants to preach are clearly mentioned in his text. He maintains that

We will now go over their [the Maronites] temporal history in this century, and this is a lesson that we preach to the sons of our sect and all our citizens, to warn them from the perils of challenging the established authority at the encouragement of opportunist parties that are far from them. For it is known that when the Rightly Guided Caliphs took Syria and expelled the Byzantines, they focused their attention to conquering its cities and did not care much to the inhabitants of its mountains due to the insignificance of these mountains, the scarcity of their resources, and their difficult terrain. It is also known that the Byzantine Emperors did not give up on trying to win Syria back and kept instigating unrest and encouraging its people to create disorder and prevent stability to facilitate its reconquest. They tried many times and failed. Among their attempts was that they encouraged the Maronites –who inhabited the mountains from Galilee to Antioch- to rebel and organize raids into the plains, and they managed to put their government in such a position that some caliphs sued for peace with the Byzantines with the terms including that they restrain the Maronites who were nicknamed Maradah at that point and to refrain them from their raids. The result was that these same Byzantine Emperors -who had encouraged the Maronites to rebel and turned them against their own government- turned against the Maradah and decimated them. They betrayed them and kidnapped twelve thousands of the elite of their young men and deported them from their homeland. Then the Byzantines proceeded to destroy and burn their homes and attempted to apprehend the Maronite patriarch and pursued him as far as Tripoli, and if it weren't for the divinely ordained victory of the Maronites over the Byzantines the Maronites would have been annihilated. This is the example that we want the sons

of our sect and our citizens to remember, so that they be true in their obedience to their established government²⁴¹

Al-Dibs's account reveals key indicators to understanding his view of the Maronite past. The Maronites to him were the Mardaites as is clear from the text where he used the terms Maronites and Maradah interchangeably. He also subscribes to al-Duwayhi's interpretation of the term Maradah as rebels, and like al-Duwayhi he claims that the act of rebellion that gave them that name was directed against the Byzantines and not the Arabs. What is more interesting in this introductory passage is that the entire text seems like a plea in the form of a lesson to be learned. Al-Dibs opens with a warning and ends with another. The idea he wishes to convey is the cost of adventurism and the repercussions of any challenge to the established authority could have on the Maronite community.

The seventh century events that he's narrating echo the fears and anxieties of his age, as he seems to be projecting the conditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Mount Lebanon to a past setting. When al-Dibs writes about the Maronites and their government, this government is the Muslim Arab government of the caliphs. The distant foreigners who encourage the Maronites to challenge the authority of their established government are the Byzantines. It would seem that if one is to replace the Umayyad government of the seventh and early eighth centuries with the Ottoman government of the nineteenth, and the influence of the Byzantines with that of the European powers and their interventionist policies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one would have a mirror image of two historical eras. This is further revealed if one is to compare the price al-Dibs believes the Maronites paid in the eighth century

²⁴¹ Al-Dibs, *Al-Jami' al-Mufasssal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal*, 22.

for their actions, and the price he witnessed his community pay in the massacres of 1860, as well as the price he feared they would pay at the turn of the twentieth.

This version of events appeared first in the historiography of al-Duwayhi two hundred years earlier. In both instances one can grasp an attempt to reconstruct the past to address contemporary needs. Istifan al-Duwayhi had lived in the period following the demise of Fakhreddin al-Ma'ni the Second and he experienced the repercussions of that notable's challenge to Ottoman authority on the population of Mount Lebanon. The challenge to authority followed by the harsh conditions that Mount Lebanon underwent in both the mid-seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries left a mark on the writings of both historians and shaped much of their historiography concerning the Mardaites. The historiography of both al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs reveals their sense of responsibility and duty to warn their community by recounting past miscalculations that led to peril and tragedies.²⁴²

To compare the writings of al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs and determine the relationship between them it would be fitting to quote Albert Cook when he described annals and chronicles as “the materials of history rather than history itself.”²⁴³ What is relevant here is the era that al-Dibs lived in and what history-writing meant to historians of his time. Carr describes the nineteenth century as “the age of facts” when “the positivists, anxious to stake out their claim for history as science, contributed the weight of their influence to this cult of facts.”²⁴⁴ What is more important here is what he claims later when he states: “It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is

²⁴² Isma'il, *al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah)*, 137.

²⁴³ Cook, *History/Writing*, 21.

²⁴⁴ Carr, *What is History*, 5.

he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context.”²⁴⁵ In light of all this, a better understanding of al-Dibs’s historical writings is possible through the examination of what he treats as historical evidence and what facts of history appear in his books.

The writings of al-Dibs reveal much in the sense of the purpose of his historiography. The role he ascribes to the Mardaites in history and their interaction with regional powers, both Arab and Byzantine, and the ultimate result of that interaction, seem to reflect al-Dibs’s hopes and fears about the Maronite community in his own time. His writings also reveal the absolutes that he considers established facts about the history of the Maronite community as well as his stance concerning the established tradition of Maronite Church historiography. Finally, the writings of al-Dibs reveal his views concerning the role of Maronite Church historiography and Maronite Church historians in the defining the essence of Maronite identity and in preserving that identity from outside claims and influence.

In reacting to the writings of Lammens, in which he brings into question the identification of Mardaites as Maronites, Maronite Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs expresses his disappointment at the stance taken by Lammens on the issue at hand. Al-Dibs expresses his hopes of persuading Lammens of the validity of the Mardaite origin of the Maronite community and of the fact that the term Mardaite was used to refer to the Maronites at a certain point of their history. Al-Dibs points to the fact that this matter had been thoroughly dealt with by numerous historians of the Maronite Church who had concluded that the Mardaites were indeed the Maronites and that this had become an established truth in Maronite Church historiography.

In explaining the importance of the Mardaite hypothesis, al-Dibs refers to it as a “truth that had been defended by a great number of our historians, even if it does not equal in

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

importance the question of the perpetual Catholic orthodoxy of the Maronites.”²⁴⁶ What becomes evident in the writings of al-Dibs is a certain hierarchy of established truths in Maronite history as well as a dichotomy of a religious and a temporal history of the community, both of which are the responsibilities of Maronite Church historians. In this hierarchy erected by al-Dibs, the spiritual is superior to the temporal in the matters of historiography.

The two issues that al-Dibs invokes are the perpetual Orthodoxy of the Maronite Church and its loyalty to Roman Catholicism as the main concern of Maronite historians when dealing with spiritual history, and the Mardaite origins as the main established truth of the temporal history of the Maronite community. The fact that the spiritual exceeds the temporal in importance does not undermine the significance of the temporal history as evident in the Mardaite hypothesis. He states that the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronites offers the key to their religious history, and their Mardaite identity offers the key to their temporal history.²⁴⁷

It is in the wording of al-Dibs’s historiography that one can perceive that the history he’s writing is not only the history of a Church, it is the history of a community that existed alongside and around the Church. This is evident in *Al-Jami’ al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu’assal* where he dedicates sections in every chapter to the religious affairs of the Church, and sections that he titles, *The temporal conditions of the Maronites in this century*.²⁴⁸ By erecting this dichotomy of temporal and spiritual realms of historiography, he establishes the role of the

²⁴⁶Al-Dibs, Yusuf. “Al-Marda wa al-Mawarinah,” [in *al-Mashriq, op. Cit., vol V, n2*], 915.

²⁴⁷ “Mais si la perpetuelle orthodoxy romaine des maronites offre la clef de leur histoire religieuse, leur identite supposee avec les Mardaites offre la clef de leur histoire temporelle.” Beydoun, Ahmad. *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporains*. (Beirut: Université libanaise: Distribution, Librairie Orientale, 1984), 165.

²⁴⁸ Al-Dibs, Yusuf, *Al-Jami’ al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu’assal*, Beirut: Dar Lahd Khater, 1987. A primary source for this dissertation.

Maronite Church historian as the chronicler of both Church and community. When Yusuf al-Dibs stated that “we Maronites know that the term Mardaites was used by our enemies in the eighth century to denote us, and that Maronites and Mardaites were one and the same nation.”²⁴⁹ It is interesting that al-Dibs does not restrict the knowledge of the Mardaite past to Maronite Church historians; by stating that “we Maronites know” he’s including the entire community, and thus the Mardaite origin amounts, according to his version, to a communal identity and a history of the community preserved not only by its historians but also by the collective memory of its members. This is tantamount to the Maronite community, according to the historiography of Maronite Church historians, as considered to be both, a community of history and destiny²⁵⁰ as well as a community that embodies a religious way of life and of salvation.

In a display of the agency that Maronite Church historians possess, and the power over history that they wield when their community is concerned, al-Dibs states that in the case of any discrepancy over any matter pertaining to the history of the Maronites, the version of events prevalent in the Maronite tradition must be advanced as the correct one. He justifies his argument by stating that in the study of the history of any tribe, an astute historian would take into account the tribe’s own version of its history, from what its historians had documented, as well as what is prevalent in its common traditions, and he would prefer that version to anything attributed to the history of that tribe by historians foreign to it. Al-Dibs stated that there is no justifiable reason why the Maronites should be excluded from that established rule, especially on a matter on which their own historians concur. All of these points were summarized by al-Dibs in an article in *Al-Mashriq* where he stated: “It is a common practice among historians, when addressing the

²⁴⁹ Beydoun, *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporains*, 165.

²⁵⁰ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 175.

history of a tribe, to rely on what has been written by its own historians and on what these historians perceive as its general tradition, and to prefer these testimonies over all of what has been written about the tribe by foreign historians. There is no reason to subtract the Maronites from this principle, so far as their historians are unanimous concerning the debated question.”²⁵¹

What appears in the writings of al-Dibs is a Maronite community that is both temporal (a tribe) as well as religious (a church). And the authoritative sources of this community’s history are embodied in the collective memory of the entire community that complements the written historiography of its Church historians.

It is important to note at this point that Yusuf al-Dibs was not the first to make such claims about what constitutes authoritative sources of Maronite history. Two hundred years earlier, Maronite Patriarch al-Duwayhi titled his book “The Origin of the Maronites”. In one chapters al-Duwayhi narrates the disputed account of the coming of a certain Patriarch Yuhanna Marun from Antioch to Mount Lebanon. The person in question is considered by al-Duwayhi to be the founder of the Maronite sect and the father of the Maronite Church. The written accounts of the existence of such an individual as well as his relation to the Maronite Church contradict the claims of al-Duwayhi.

But when al-Duwayhi asserted his claim he did not refer to any known chronicles or written historiography, he simply refers to a folk song composed by a Maronite priest in the fifteenth century named Jibra’il Ibn al-Qila’i.²⁵² When al-Duwayhi concluded his investigation and offered his assessment of the validity of all the arguments, he took the account of Ibn al-

²⁵¹ Al-Dibs, Yusuf. “Al-Marda wa al-Mawarinah,” (in *al-Mashriq, op. Cit., vol V, n2*), 916.

²⁵² Ibn al-Qila’I, Jibra’il. *Zajaliyat Jibra’il Ibn al-Qila’i.: Dirasat Wa Tahqiq Butrus al-Jumayyil*. Bayrut, Lubnan: Dar Lahd Khatir, 1982.

Qila'i to be the valid one. Al-Duwayhi does not attempt to justify how a folk epic or any oral tradition from the fifteenth century could be more accurate in accounting for events that unfolded in the seventh century than written accounts of those events from only a few decades after they took place. Al-Duwayhi simply states: "The claim of Jibrail Ibn al-Qila'i ... is the opinion of the sect, and it is the correct one."²⁵³

When trying to discern the purpose or the driving objective behind the redeployment of a certain historiography or a specific version of history—in the case of al-Dibs—it is necessary to examine the circumstances that surrounded the historian and the significance that his history had on the current events of his day and age. Al-Dibs was himself witness to the civil war of 1860 and its events and lessons seem omnipresent in his historical writings of past conflicts in Mount Lebanon. The massacres of the Maronite inhabitants of the southern part of Mount Lebanon in 1860 were still vivid in popular memory at the time when al-Dibs was writing, thus referring to or even hinting at them would have carried his message to his readership. Al-Dibs makes use of this in his account of the Mardaite past, and the message he wished to convey is visible in the very wording of that account.

The past that al-Dibs invoked represented a projection of his anxieties on the history of his community. Rather than a nostalgia for a utopian past or a blueprint for the future, the history that al-Dibs writes about represents what should not have been, and what should never be again. The image of the present and the vision of the future are derived from the experiences of the past but in a negative sense. Rather than an example to be followed, they are a calamity that must not be repeated. The future that al-Dibs desired at that turning point in history was the one he imposed on his recounting of the past. By invoking a tragic episode of his community's

²⁵³ Al-Duwayhi, *Asl al-Mawarinah*, 135.

history—be it accurate or not—he expressed his hopes that such fate would never befall them again.

Regardless of the specificities of his period and the purpose of his narrative, Yusuf al-Dibs represented a continuity of a tradition of historiography that reaches back to the writings of al-Duwayhi, one where facts about the Maronite Church are generated and perpetuated internally. Both historians are in fact the main pillars of this tradition, who will be quoted and referred to on the main matters pertaining to the history of the Maronite Church and the Maronite community by subsequent historians. In the writings of both al-Dibs and al-Duwayhi, certain claims are transformed into absolute facts of Maronite identity, not least among them the myth of Mardaite origins.

Lebanese historian Ahmad Baydun had an interesting approach in his analysis of why the debate became immediately heated between Lammens and the Maronite historians who reacted and responded to his article. Baydun places the emphasis on the contents of Lammens's article since he claims that the manner of presenting the arguments in that specific article played a role in provoking an immediate and defensive response by certain Maronite historians.²⁵⁴ Although one might add that regardless of the manner of presentation, bringing the Mardaite myth into question is enough to cause tension, especially when so much of the Church's history is related to that myth.

When a priest belonging to the Jesuit order, an order that does not recognize the ancient Orthodoxy of the Maronites, brought the Mardaite myth into question, things were certain to get heated. By focusing on the manner of presentation and the persons involved, Baydoun

²⁵⁴ Baydoun, *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporain*, 163.

underplays the fact that these historians belonged to, and represented, religious institutions with specific convictions and traditions. Perhaps the fact that Baydoun, who is a secular lay historian, had a completely different set of concerns, directly affected his analysis of the debate. This is evident in his reluctance to even state his own claim concerning the controversy, instead he is content to present and assess the opposing sides but never to a point where he takes a stance, and thus he never really takes part in the debate. It is important however to note that Baydoun realizes that those historians who did respond, and primarily al-Dibs, considered themselves responsible for speaking on behalf of not only the Maronite Church but also the entire Maronite community, and considered their historiography to be representative of Maronite communal consciousness. On this specific matter Baydoun mentioned what al-Dibs stated, “the Maronites (not only their historians) have a fixed position concerning this question.”²⁵⁵ In this instance, Baydoun’s investment, by bringing the debate to the fore, is revealed in his assertion that the debate is not as settled as al-Dibs claimed.

Clerical Resistance

In examining the debate about the Mardaites and their relationship to the Maronites, an important contributor distinguished himself as the only Maronite clergyman to wholly negate any relationship between the two people. Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan represented a historiography that examined all the sources, Arab and Byzantine, that dealt with the Mardaites,

²⁵⁵ Ibid.,164.

and through those investigations came to the conclusion, backed by documentary evidence, that the Mardaites were not the Maronites of the seventh century.²⁵⁶

Daryan concludes that although the Mardaites did operate at some point in and around Mount Lebanon, they were not indigenous to the region, nor did they settle in the mountain and establish a significant and lasting presence.²⁵⁷ Bishop Daryan states that the Mardaites were a military group sent by the Byzantine Emperor to harass the Arab State and help thwart further Arab incursion into Byzantine domains.²⁵⁸ Daryan brought decisiveness to the debate in presenting his argument, supported by the sources that he relied on.

What is interesting here is the fact that Daryan had at his disposal the same sources that Lammens, al-Duwayhi, and al-Dibs had access to, accounts by Theophanes, al-Baladhuri, al-Tabari, and Ibn al-'Ibri. What were different were Daryan's interpretation of the available evidence and his refusal of making claims that were unsupported by the aforementioned medieval Byzantine and Arab historians. Rather than attempting conciliation of a sort between established Maronite historiography on the Mardaites and the authoritative Byzantine and Arab sources, Daryan simply rejected any account that presented a discrepancy. Those accounts by Maronite clergymen as well as Jesuit priest Henry Lammens that contradicted the older historical records without the use of more recent evidence, were categorically rejected by Daryan as unsupported claims.

Daryan did not shy away from challenging the authority of the Maronite tradition of historiography. He rejected the points of both Lammens as well as al-Dibs concerning the origins

²⁵⁶ Isma'il, *'al-Marada'iyun (al-Maradah)*, 79.

²⁵⁷ Beydoun, *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporain*, 181.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

and identity of the Mardaites, and consequently rejected those views held by Istifan al-Duwayhi. He also disagreed with his contemporaries as well as his predecessors among Maronite Church historians on the role the Maradah played in the region's history, their relationship with the Byzantine and Muslim states, the ultimate fate of the group, as well as the meaning of the term Maradah itself that appears in Arabic.

Daryan summarized his findings about the Mardaites in five main points. He stated:

First: Theophanes and al-Baladhuri refer to the same people; the former calls them Marada'iun, which is the same as Mardiyyun or Maradah, the latter calls them Byzantine cavalry. Twice in his writings does Theophanes himself refer to them as squadron or army of the Mardaites. Second: these two historians, al-Baladhuri and Theophanes, recount an identical account of those Mardaites who are Byzantine cavalry, They tell a single story happening at the same time at the same place and under the same circumstances and the divergence between the two accounts is insignificant and concerns auxiliary matters. Third: these Mardaites, or Byzantine cavalry, were not the Jarajimah nor were they the indigenous population of either the Amanus Mountains or of Mount Lebanon. Contrary thus to what Jesuit Father Lammens affirmed (...). Fourth: any of the indigenous groups who joined the Byzantine cavalry or the Mardaites could not have been themselves the mentioned Byzantine cavalry or Mardaites because the latter entered from the outside; otherwise, there would be contradictions in the account.²⁵⁹

The fifth point that Daryan makes is concerning the origin of the term "Maradah." Daryan contradicts Yusuf al-Dibs and concludes that the term Maradah is not related to the Arabic word *tamarrud* (revolt), the Mardaites did not revolt against the Byzantines but were in fact a part of the Byzantine military and were sent to fight the Arabs. The term itself indicates that the Mardaites were Medes or Armenian in origin.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Daryan, *Al-Barahin al-rahina*, 83.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

It is important to note that Daryan's reading of the past differed from that of a traditional historian. His positivist assessment of evidence did not bind him to knowledge available in religious texts and Church sources. Even with issues pertaining to the Church, Daryan's approach to history-writing was not dependent solely on religious sources, but rather on the collective evidence available to him. In this regard the writings of al-Duwayhi do not supersede those of Theophanes or William of Tyre for example, except in the nature of the evidence they provide. By following this positivist approach Daryan was not bound by any tradition in Maronite Church historiography when he tackled the Mardaite hypothesis. Important in this regard, is the reaction Daryan's views received at the time when the debate was taking place. Also important is the place that was reserved for him by future generations of Maronite Church historians as well as the manner with which these historians dealt with the history that Daryan had written.

Upon publishing his contribution to the Mardaite debate, Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan found himself at the receiving end of a reprimand initiated by Bishop Yusuf al-Dibs. Bishop al-Dibs phrased it in terms of defending the greater good of the community and presented it as representing the entirety of the Maronite community. In a letter sent to Daryan in 1903, al-Dibs accused him of conduct unbecoming a Maronite bishop. The letter was phrased as a warning from someone who considered his actions as accomplishing a communal obligation, while Daryan's position, from al-Dibs's point of view, failed to abide by that duty and in fact amounted to an act of sabotage against the efforts of those responsible for the Maronite community. Al-Dibs surmised that it was his duty to secretly invite his co-religionist and colleague to retract his

opinion while threatening to publicly disavow him before the community should he fail to comply.²⁶¹

Regardless of the effect that such threats had on Daryan's actions, they reveal the severity of the situation for a historian who offered an argument that went against the established tradition of the Church concerning key issues like that of the Mardaites. The fact remains that the corrective presented by Daryan (which is how he saw his intervention) was the most historically sound one from a positivist perspective, supported by evidence from the writings of both Theophanes and al-Baladhuri, and was the only one in the debate that was lacking in any significant contradictions. This did not help to save Daryan from the criticism of his contemporaries, especially from within the Maronite Church, nor did it help establish a place for his contributions within Maronite Church historiography. Aside from the actual debate initiated by Henry Lammens, and the contribution of al-Dibs, all subsequent Maronite Church historians would ignore the historiography of Daryan and would continue to recite Mardaite myth over and over again.

By stating his conclusion concerning the identity and origin of the Mardaites, Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan went against the entire tradition in which Istifan al-Duwayhi and Yusuf al-Dibs were part. The points that Daryan made contradicted almost every claim that his predecessors and contemporaries among Maronite Church historians took as proven facts and established truths concerning the identity of the Maronite church and Maronite community. By doing so, Daryan represents a voice from within the Maronite Church that advocates a different historiography from the established tradition. The reception his views had and the reaction to his

²⁶¹ Beydoun, *Identité Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporain*, 167.

writings among Church historians highlight the fact that rather than becoming an alternative for Church historians to rely on, his historiography became the exception that proved the rule of an authoritative tradition in Maronite Church historiography. His case sheds light on how the tradition that began with al-Duwayhi persisted through the exclusion of opposing views and dissident voices.

It is important to mention however that Daryan was not a historian by training; he was however well versed in the Greek and Latin classics as well as Syriac and Arabic classical literatures. His conclusions are based on a comparison between the only available written sources that mentioned the Mardaites in history, mainly Theophanes, Ibn al-‘Ibri, and al-Baladhuri. The other important fact about Daryan’s contribution is that his claims and conclusions are based only on the available texts and therefore, even by the modern academic criteria for history-writing, his history cannot be described as fictive or ideological.

When commenting on the place that was reserved for Daryan’s contribution to the realm of historiography, Adil Isma‘il states “it is a pity that the essay of Bishop Daryan that appeared in Arabic in 1903 remained unknown in Orientalist circles and among Lebanese historians, especially the Maronites among them, and it remains neglected to this day. This neglect reached a point where Father Butrus Daw, in his book *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari* [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], failed to mention the name of Bishop Daryan even once. What are the reasons for this forgetfulness? Was it a punishment to the Bishop who dared challenge these sacred truths and unscientific traditions, and refused to comply with historical fallacies that were rendered by some of the people of his sect

into untouchable and unalterable truths around which no debate can take place?”²⁶² No explicit action was taken against Daryan, when he passed away he was still a bishop of the Maronite Church. But for never recanting his views, his contribution was ignored by subsequent Maronite historians and he was excluded from their tradition. It would seem that although Daryan the clergyman was never punished for his arguments, Daryan the historian definitely was.

Isma‘il’s observations concerning Daryan’s place in Maronite Church historiography is quite accurate. If one is to take a glance at the main histories of the Maronite Church that have appeared since the debate, Yusuf Daryan’s writings are completely and utterly absent from those volumes.

What Isma‘il failed to do was to assess the significance of this clerical resistance in terms of the avowed purpose of each historical narrative. He did not delve sufficiently into the specific concerns of the historians he examined. Most of his inquiry was aimed at addressing the historical accuracy of the different claims posited in the debate about the Mardaites. He did not attempt to explain the oppositional task behind the narrative of each participant of the debate. How these participants’ claims differed is thoroughly examined by Isma‘il, but why their claims differed, even when examining the same body of evidence, is not touched upon in his narrative. His contribution, though valuable, merely renders him into a participant in the debate since he did not contextualize the historians he studied while critiquing their writings.

²⁶²Isma‘il, *al-Marada’iyun (al-Maradah)*, 80.

Metahistorical Task and Changing Narratives

In the presence of ample historical evidence the stress should be on the role that the Mardaite myth of origin played in the narrative of al-Dibs, and on the oppositional task of that same narrative. The urgency to answer Lammens' claims and to assert the primacy of Maronite historians in defining the identity and origin of their Church and community was the main purpose of the narrative of al-Dibs. The oppositional task of that narrative was to assert the function of the historian as guardian of the Maronite past.

When the myth of the Mardaites occurred in the writings of Istifan al-Duwayhi the question was ecclesiastical, and it was one of inclusion into Roman orthodoxy but on Maronite terms. The purpose was directly linked to orthodoxy, which is not clearly shared by the subsequent historians who recast the historiography of al-Duwayhi.

Redeployment of specific claims does not necessarily imply a shared task in historiography. For Murad, the quest was political, and it was one of exclusion and exclusivity. He recast the claims of al-Duwayhi in the form of a national epic and accompanied it with a plea for political independence. The turning point in the nineteenth century happened with the rise of sectarian politics, the breakup of the old regime, and the ability of the Maronite Church to make political claims for the first time in its history. The ecclesiastical was no longer the primary concern. Maronite Church historiography from this point on was politicized. Clerical historians had an added function to perform, and that was reflected in their narratives.

The power that was gained and the role that was acquired by the time Murad was writing did not dissipate after him. One can see it in the writings of al-Dibs despite the fact that the challenges of his time meant that he had a different narrative and a different oppositional task.

But regardless of the stated purpose, certain absolutes were maintained. Anything that threatened orthodoxy as a metahistorical task had to be challenged and refuted. Though the immediate purpose of the narrative differed, and the objectives behind asserting perpetual orthodoxy varied, the commitment to upholding this claim was never compromised by clerical historians. It was however employed repeatedly to perform new objective and to address emerging challenges that the Maronite community was faced with.

If Maronite Church historiography contained certain constants on the level of its content, the form of the narrative was ever changing. The one constant aspect of the form of that historiography was that it constantly evolved with the evolution of the Church and community. It performed a different oppositional task with every emerging challenge and it gained a new role with every gain the Church made within the Maronite denomination and within Lebanon at large.

Part III.

Lay and Clerical Historiography in the State of Greater Lebanon

The Emergence of the Modern Lebanese State

It is fitting at this point to give a brief chronology of events to contextualize the changes that occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth in Lebanon and Greater Syria. Such a chronology is necessary to understand the spheres that the historians were operating within. The events that unfolded locally and internationally imposed a new reality and generated new ways of perceiving the nation and the nation's history. In the case of Lebanese historians and intellectuals writing about a Phoenician past, these were the formative years, and this was the period when the shape and content of the Phoenician hypothesis were formulated.

The main events that dominate the history of Lebanon and the region coincided with the closing phases of the First World War and the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. The *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon, which was brought into existence with the *Règlement Organic* of 9 June 1861,²⁶³ and which granted Lebanon limited autonomy inside the Ottoman Empire, came to an abrupt end in 1914 with the outbreak of the Great War. The Ottoman government abolished the system of the *mutasarrifiyya* and the administration of Mount Lebanon was put under the Interior Ministry in Istanbul, on the one hand, and the military authorities in Damascus, on the other.²⁶⁴ With the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from the area in 1918, the

²⁶³ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 43.

²⁶⁴ Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 173.

contending forces on the ground were the British, the French, and the Syrian-Arab nationalist forces under Prince Faisal.

With the defeat of the Arab-Syrian forces at the battle of Maysalun on the 24th of July 1920, the entirety of Syria came under French occupation.²⁶⁵ With complete control of the coast, Mount Lebanon, and the Syrian main cities and hinterlands, the French colonial authorities were in a position to implement the colonial policies of their choosing and to organize the political arena along lines that would serve the greater interests of France as well as France's clients in the Levant.

On September 1, 1920, the modern state of Lebanon was established with the declaration of Greater Lebanon as a separate, albeit not sovereign, nation state distinct from inner Syria. "The creation of 'Grand Liban' by General Gouraud, high commissioner for Syria and Lebanon, was the first step taken by France, the mandatory power, to fulfill its pledges to its traditional Lebanese protégés. For the Christians, especially the Maronites, the establishment of an independent Christian state with extended borders and under French protection was the realization of a centuries-old dream."²⁶⁶

It would actually take a little over two decades of developments and struggle, as well as the Second World War, for the newly conceived Lebanese nation state to achieve full independence from France. In this period, the struggle against the mandate authorities, as well as the attempts at dealing with the new socio-political as well as demographic realities on the ground, shaped much of the political culture of Lebanon. The historians and intellectual elites were among the most hard-pressed to narrate a vision that would justify the existence of Lebanon as a distinct political entity. They also had to deal with the problem of uniting the

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 180.

²⁶⁶ Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, 1.

reluctant inhabitants of the newly expanded borders in a common view of the nation that they were supposed to belong to, and be loyal towards, at this point.²⁶⁷

The impact of these monumental developments can be seen in all aspects of history-writing in Lebanon. The histories that were produced beyond this point reflected a different political reality and different anxieties for Maronite historians. A Maronite ethnic identity had already crystallized and a Maronite dominated political entity had emerged. Writing the history of the Maronites was no longer restricted to clergymen; instead, lay historians from the Maronite community were now producing the history of their nation. The “gatekeepers of the Maronite past”²⁶⁸ now included a host of lay historians who were not chronicling the history of a church but rather making political and ideological claims on behalf of a nation and a nation state. Even though they shared or redeployed many of the historical hypotheses present in the historiographies of their clerical counterparts, the secularization and politicization of this history transformed it on the level of narrative as well as on the level of stated purpose.

The creation of Greater Lebanon signified the emergence of a nation state organized along sectarian lines. The codification of sectarianism brought sectarian politics into the fabric of national culture. The new sectarian political culture was based on Maronite privilege in a multi-sectarian country. The boundaries of the nascent state extended well beyond the limits of the

²⁶⁷ “Other historical and geographic theories were formulated to justify Lebanon’s existence as an entity separate from the rest of the Arab world. Two intellectual movements which emerged during the 1920s, the ‘Phoenicians’ and the ‘Mediterraneans’ had a profound influence on Lebanese nationalism over the following two decades. Their ideas were primarily a response to the continuing challenge posed by the Arab national movement”. Ibid., 125.

²⁶⁸ Di-Capua, Yoav. *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

mutasarrifiyyah into areas where Muslim presence tipped the sectarian demographic scale. The presence of this other in the country and its active participation in the political system dissipated any notions of exclusion such as the ones that existed in nineteenth century historiography. The emerging historical narratives of this era carried the need for inclusion of non-Maronites albeit in a subordinate place in the historical narrative, one that reflected the subordinate role of these communities in the Lebanese political system.

The challenges that Maronite historians were dealing with did not pertain solely to the political changes of the early twentieth century in Lebanon. Maronite clerical and lay historians had to contend with the rising ideological currents that were emerging in Lebanon and the region at large during this period. The competing nationalist ideologies that were crystallizing at this time posed a threat to the brand of Lebanese nationalism that was on the rise within the Maronite community and among its historians. The transnational nationalisms advocated by Arab as well as Syrian nationalism were contradictory to and mutually exclusive from Lebanese nationalism. The cross-border identities that these two nationalisms called for were a direct threat to all the political gains that the Maronite community had attained following the First World War. Arab and Syrian nationalisms were a direct challenge to the very fabric of the Lebanese state. They not only challenged the legitimacy of its borders, but they challenged its very right to exist. The Lebanese nationalist claims of Lebanon's distinctiveness and unique political evolution were completely rejected by Arab and Syrian nationalists, a fact that rendered the spread of these two brands of nationalism within and without the boundaries of Lebanon an existential threat to the Lebanese state. Maronite historiography in Greater Lebanon carried the burden of defending the legitimacy of the Lebanese state as well as the historicity of the Lebanese nation.

It is important to note in this case that the creation of Greater Lebanon as a Maronite dominated nation state did not signify independence or sovereignty. The aspiring nationalists among Maronite historians still had to contend with the realities of French Mandate authorities and the limits those imposed on the quest for complete nationhood. What the Mandate authorities brought with them were not only limits to national political aspirations, they also brought a different historical narrative that did not always coincide with Maronite historiography, and that did not coincide with Maronite political aspirations. The preexisting conflict between clerical Maronite historians and Jesuit historians acquired an added dimension; a conflict between Lebanese lay nationalist historians and the colonial version of Lebanon's history. The debates that were once clerical and confined to church manuscripts and correspondences became public and national debates. What were at stake at this point were not just church dogma and missionary zeal, but the identity and the fate of a nation in the making.

In this Lebanese sectarian reality where Maronite political primacy had to be upheld, both lay and clerical historians created a historical narrative that justified the existence of the Lebanese state and the special status that the Maronites enjoyed in it. Lay historians adopted the clerical narrative of Maronite history and secularized and nationalized it in order to complement the nationalist discourse. Church historians of preceding eras were considered the only authority on the history of the Church and the primary authority on the history the community. Secondary sources from clerical histories dealing with the Maronite Church were adopted as primary sources by lay historians and presented as a living tradition that constituted the authentic essence of the Maronite community. Instead of competition, what emerged was a synergy between lay and clerical Maronite history-writing. Religious history remained the realm of clerical historians.

Secular historians referred to these sources when addressing any issue pertaining to the history of the Maronite Church. Social and political history was shared between the two sides, and even though the narratives were not identical, they were complimentary. Lay historians did not venture into the realm of Church history, and the elements of history that they added did not contradict the dominant narrative. The pre-Christian past that Maronite nationalist historians wrote about was virtually left untouched by clerical historians. While lay historians who projected their nation into pre-Christian antiquity endeavored to include the religious history of the Maronites into their nationalist narrative as a determining chapter in the history of the Lebanese nation and an essential element in the formation of its distinct identity.

One can say that the existence of Lebanon as a political entity was justified in the narratives of lay Maronite historians, while the narrative of clerical historians of the Maronite Church justified the primacy of the Maronites within this nascent nation state.

The Persistent Question of Orthodoxy: Facticity Within a Self-Sufficient Tradition

As one of the most prominent historians that the Maronite Church produced in the twentieth century, Bishop Pierre Dib left a most influential work that dealt with the history of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon both on the level of Church history as well as on the level of the Maronite community. Published less than ten years after Henri Lammens's *La Syrie: précis historique*, the first volume of Pierre Dib's *Histoire des maronites* [History of the Maronites]

borrowed heavily from the former work and represents a synthesis of previous historical writings dealing with Mount Lebanon. The history of Pierre Dib runs along the lines of the tradition that was established by historians from within the Maronite Church even though he relied often on Lammens. The difference in the two men's backgrounds and training is translated, as we will see, into two modes of interpreting history.

Born in 1881 in the village of Dlepta in the district of Kisrwan, Pierre Dib joined the seminary of 'Ayn Waraqa at a young age and graduated at 21 and continued his education in Belgium and later France. He published the first part of his history, written in French, in Paris in 1930. The second part was published in Beirut in 1962, and the remaining sections were collected and published after his death in an edition in 1973 and later in 2001.²⁶⁹ *Histoire des Maronites* [History of the Maronites] is the principal work and in a sense the lifetime achievement of Pierre Dib, who was the Maronite Bishop of Cairo for almost twenty years (1946-1965).

In his book *Histoire des maronites* [History of the Maronites], Dib delineates the history of the Maronite Church in a manner that resembles to a great extent the way that Yusuf al-Dibs employed almost a century earlier. In the first volume of his book, titled *Histoire de l'église maronite* [History of the Maronite Church], Dib covers the rise of the Maronite Church and its establishment in Mount Lebanon, as well as the trials and ordeals that the early Maronites were faced with, and of course the controversies that arose concerning their alleged heresy and belief in Monothelitism. The volume also covers the temporal and religious conditions of the Maronite

²⁶⁹ Pierre Dib's work, *Histoire des Maronites*. [History of the Maronites], is a primary text for this dissertation.

denomination during the Crusades, under the Mameluks, as well as during the Ottoman era, the fourth and last part of it dealing with the organization of the Maronite Church. Much like al-Dibs before him, Dib begins of course with the life of Saint Maron, his disciples, and the monastery that carried his name. The first chapter, of the first part of the first volume is titled *Saint Maron et le berceau de l'église maronite* [Saint Maron and the Birth of the Maronite Church]. With this very simple statement, the message of Dib is strongly and clearly conveyed, his stance concerning the establishment of the Church is the same as al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs, the roots of the Maronites reach back to the late fourth and early fifth century Saint Maron, with all of what that claim implies in terms of Chalcedonian orthodoxy and distance from Monothelitism. The second and third chapters of Dib's book are titled *La legende du monophysisme des maronites*²⁷⁰ [The Legend of the Monophysism of the Maronites], and *Le Prétendu monothélisme des maronite*²⁷¹ [The Monothelite pretense of the Maronites] respectively. These two chapters are both polemical in nature and deal with the two heresies the early Maronites are accused of having professed in the centuries before their integration with the Roman Catholic Church.

The third chapter is especially significant since it includes, following in the tradition set by al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs, a detailed and categorical response to every accusation leveled against the Maronites by subsequent non-Maronite clergymen and historians. Dib's adherence to the tradition of al-Duwayhi and Dibs is visible in the fourth chapter as well. Titled *Formation du patriarcat maronite*²⁷² [Formation of the Maronite Patriarchate], it covers the process that led to the establishment of a separate patriarchate for the Maronites in Mount Lebanon. On this matter he stated: "The establishment of the patriarchate dates back to the last years of the seventh

²⁷⁰ Dib, Pierre, *Histoire des maronites*, 11.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 59.

century. It is also the savant patriarch Istifan al-Duwayhi who preserved this tradition for us. In fact, he listed the series of Maronite patriarchs since the time of John Maron, the first in the line (who is not to be confused with Saint Maron, the founder of the Church), until his [al-Duwayhi] own time as patriarch (1670-1704).²⁷³ In this instance one can deduce two important things from such a short statement by Dib: he agrees with al-Duwayhi on the identity of John Maron as first patriarch of the Maronites, but also, al-Duwayhi is his primary source for the history of the Maronites during that era, and his hypothesis is not to be questioned or put in doubt. It is also important to note that Dib lists the sources that al-Duwayhi relied on in order to put together his complete list of Maronite patriarchs. According to al-Duwayhi himself, he relied on a paper he found among the belongings of his predecessor George of Bsib'il (d1670) and a letter written by Ibn al-Qila'i in 1498, and a list sent to him by the Bishop of 'Aqura George Habqouq.²⁷⁴ The historical evidence that al-Duwayhi relied on was internally generated the Maronite Church. Moreover, one of the main sources is the letter of Ibn al-Qila'i, thus revealing a bit more of this tradition that had survived for long among the writings of Maronite Church historians. The early roots date back to Ibn al-Qila'i who was rendered into a reliable source of historical evidence by al-Duwayhi, whose claims are in turn redeployed by Dib. Dib, just like al-Dibs, subscribed entirely to the narrative of al-Duwayhi. The three centuries that separate al-Duwayhi from Dib were enough, obviously, to cause substantial changes in the realm of history-writing, as is obvious when comparing their books. The substantive historical claims, however, remain fixed:

²⁷³ "...l'établissement du patriarcat remonterait aux dernières années du VIIe siècle. C'est encore le savant patriarche Étienne Douaïhi qui nous a conservé cette tradition. Il a, en effet, dressé la série des patriarches maronites depuis Jean Maron, le premier de la lignée (qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec Saint Maron, fondateur de l'Église) jusqu'à lui-même (1670-1704)". Ibid., 60.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 61.

the accounts on the early Maronite Church are almost identical, and Dib subscribed entirely to al-Duwayhi's hypotheses on the same matters that al-Dibs before him did.

Butrus Daw, who published *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*. [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites]²⁷⁵ for the first time in 1972, followed a path that was practically identical to that of Pierre Dib when dealing with the establishment of the Maronite Church. The first volume of his book is titled *Min mar Marun 'ila mar Yuhanna Marun (325-700 AD)* [From Saint Maron to John Maron (325-700 AD)]. The title on its own is enough to convey Daw's hypothesis, for it is indicative of the link that he was suggesting existed between the Maronites and the fifth century saint whom Daw suggested they were named after. Daw began in his first chapter with a presentation of the era and the environment that Saint Maron was born into. He covered the clash between Christianity and paganism and the conversion process that was taking place, as well as the heresies and controversies that challenged Eastern Christianity during that period. The same chapter, (titled *al-'Asr wa al-bi'ah*)²⁷⁶ [The Era and the Context] also covered the temporal conditions of the Byzantine Empire as well as the role of the Church and its saints and councils and of monastic life at large. This introductory chapter distinguishes the writings of Daw from those of Dib; beyond it the two approaches converge. Daw made a point throughout his book to include detailed accounts of the geography of the areas his research covered as well as vivid descriptions of the religious and urban centers he mentioned. The element of detail in listing the physical conditions of the milieu that he covered is much more visible in the historical writings of Daw

²⁷⁵ Daw, Butrus. *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*. [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites]. Beirut: Dar al-Nahar. 1972. This work is a primary source for this dissertation.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 17.

than in the writings of Dib. What is remarkable, however, is that the chronology of both historians is identical.

Since both historians were writing about the history of the early Maronites and the rise of their Church, they both began with the life and times of Saint Maron. Immediately following, and similarly to Dib, Daw wrote about the disciples of Saint Maron, the monastery that carried his name and the role it played in religious controversies that troubled the region before and after the Arab conquest.²⁷⁷ The following sections deal with the forced gradual exodus of the Maronites from the Orontes Valley toward Mount Lebanon with a section dedicated to the Mardaites and the role they played during that era. The last four sections of the book deal with the establishment of the Maronite patriarchate, the historic or mythical figure of John Maron, and the controversy of Maronite belief in the heretical creed of Monothelism, with a section specifically titled *Mawqif al-kanisah al-maruniyyah*²⁷⁸ [The Stance of the Maronite Church].

Throughout his book, it becomes clear that Daw subscribes to the narrative already prevalent within Maronite Church historiography. The quest to assert Chalcedonian orthodoxy and an unbroken relation to Roman Catholicism are the dominating hypotheses around which all other claims are made. The roots of the Church, the identity of its founder, as well as the rise of its patriarchate and presence in Mount Lebanon, are all absolutes within the tradition of history-writing that Daw belongs to, even if in some cases the form and manner of supporting these claims differs from one historian to another. The detailed accounts of geography and urban environment were not the only areas that exhibited the divergence of Daw's writings from those

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 164.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 378.

of his predecessors, the apologies he offered and his responses to accusations of heresy were not the same as those found in the writings of al-Duwayhi, Dibs, or even Dib.

An important instance where Daw's divergence from Dib is made visible is in the responses the two historians advanced against the accusations of Monothelitism leveled against the Maronite Church by William of Tyre. On this issue Matti Moosa stated: "In sum, Maronites avow that they have perpetually upheld the faith of Chalcedon and that, on the basis of their faith, they were always united with the Church of Rome. For this reason they attempt to discredit those historians—especially tenth-century Sa'id Ibn Batriq (Eutychius), Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, and twelfth-century William of Tyre—who charged the Maronites with Monothelitism."²⁷⁹ Moosa's view fits perfectly with Dib's interpretation of historical evidence and the type of response he directed against William of Tyre's accusations. In fact, Dib answered the accusation of Sa'id Ibn al-Batriq first, whom he accused of inaccuracy and of confusing chronologies, and thus, "his annals, contained too many inaccuracies and mistakes to be accorded a real value".²⁸⁰

After having dismissed the accounts of the patriarch of Alexandria, Dib directed his criticism against the archbishop of Tyre, who had claimed that the Maronites were the followers of the teachings of a heretic named Maron from whom they acquired their name, and that for five hundred years they had been separate from the true church. He also described the fortuitous conversion of this community after having renounced the heresy of the single will and energy of Christ, and entered into communion with the Roman Catholic Church.²⁸¹ Dib categorically

²⁷⁹ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 8.

²⁸⁰ "Les Annales d'Eutychès sont trop mêlées d'inexactitudes et de lourdes méprises, pour qu'on puisse leur accorder une valeur réelle." Dib, *Histoire des maronites*, 46.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

rejected the claims of William of Tyre, branding them as baseless and misinformed while insisting on the importance of refuting them due to the significance the latter historian's writings had for subsequent historiographies of the Maronite Church. Dib stated: "The historians who subsequently upheld the hypothesis of Maronite Monothelitism all supported their claims with the account of the archbishop of Tyre... Therefore, the testimony of William of Tyre deserves to be studied closely."²⁸²

After going over the arguments of the Crusader era historian and attempting to reveal the gaps in his knowledge of Maronite faith and history, Dib comes to the conclusion that the archbishop of Tyre was misinformed about the Maronites and that due to his ignorance of their creed he misinterpreted certain events of their history; specifically, their full and official integration with the Church of Rome, and recognition of the legitimate pope during the period to which he referred in his writings. Dib stated: "In summary, William of Tyre did not know the Maronite faith except through Eutychius. The way he narrates it, a conversion of the Maronites is unlikely, given the circumstances. His account could be explained by a conversion in the sense of recognition of the legitimate pope, especially that the Crusader-era historian placed this event exactly at the time when the schism that occurred with the death of Adrian IV had ended."²⁸³

In answering the accusations of heresy, the approach followed by Daw differed significantly from the one employed by Pierre Dib; the latter's concern was to discredit the

²⁸² "Les historiens qui, dans la suite, ont soutenu la thèse du monothélisme maronite, se sont tous appuyés sur le récit de l'archevêque de Tyr... Le témoignage de Guillaume de Tyr mérite donc d'être étudié de près." Ibid., 47.

²⁸³ "En résumé, Guillaume de Tyr ne connaissait la foi des maronites que par Eutychès. Telle qu'il la rapporte, une conversion des maronites est invraisemblable, étant données les circonstances. Son récit s'explique par une conversion entendue au sens d'une reconnaissance de pape légitime, et cela d'autant plus que l'historien des Croisades place cet événement précisément à l'époque où se termina le schisme qui avait surgi à la mort d'Adrien IV." Ibid., 52.

historians who leveled the accusations against the Maronite Church, the former strove to deconstruct them. In his apologies Daw did not target the accounts of William of Tyre per se, he simply offered other interpretations of their meaning and questioned their implications. Daw focused on neutralizing their arguments by disarming them of any meaning that would implicate the Maronites in any heretical beliefs, or imply a certain schism with the Roman Catholic Church.

When discussing the claim of Maronite belief in the one will of Christ, Daw confirmed what was already present in Maronite liturgical texts and admitted that the early Maronites did subscribe to that specific understanding of the nature of divine will. He did not, however, approve of the implications of the historical facts for the orthodoxy of the Maronites. What he suggested was that “Maronite understanding, of the single will, was a purely literary (*Adabi*) understanding and did not imply heresy.”²⁸⁴

Daw’s second argument as to why the Maronite stance concerning the controversy does not imply heresy was the fact that they were not informed of the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the matter. He stated that “their position did not entail any mutiny, since that, as we mentioned, does not happen unless they were legally informed. And indeed, the Maronites continued to consider themselves in union with the Holy See throughout the era during which they subscribed to the single will.”²⁸⁵ With this interpretation of available evidence Daw frees the Maronite Church from the burden of accusation of heresy while reaffirming its attachment to the Church of Rome. What he sets out to do is affirm this claim despite the extant evidence rather than through denying it. In fact when Daw responded to William of Tyre’s claims, if one were to

²⁸⁴ Daw, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*, Vol I, 381.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

consider it a response, he did not question the latter's evidence, or the accuracy of his statements, instead he accepted what was being posited, and then interpreted the events in a manner that was commensurate with his own claims.

When quoting the archbishop of Tyre, Daw maintained: "Their [the Maronites] 'conversion' of which William of Tyre spoke, took place following the discovery of the free will belief in their books. When they took heed of that fact, due to their interaction with the Latin clergy, they accepted what the Roman Church advocated about this issue and they did so spontaneously and without hesitation, which is indicative of the fact that their subscription to the single will was according to an innocent understanding and not the result of obstinacy or mutiny."²⁸⁶ If one is to compare this statement with the writings of Dib on the same topic, the divergence between the two is obvious; the former recognizes the evidence brought forth by the historiography of William of Tyre, the latter categorically denies it. In the end, the conclusions of both historians concerning union with Rome and Chalcedonian orthodoxy are identical.

Daw may not have targeted the evidence present in the different accounts, yet he did interpret it in a manner that vindicated the Maronite Church from Monothelism and proved its union with Rome. This approach is not unique to Daw since Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan had already adopted this same interpretation before him. On this matter Matti Moosa concludes: "Although some Maronites accept the fact that the Maronites were Monothelites, they gave their Monothelism a rather peculiar interpretation to make it appear to be in harmony with the faith of Chalcedon. Of these we may mention Maronite Bishop Yusuf Daryan, who admitted to

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 382.

Maronite Monothelitism in his book *Lubab al-Barahin al-Jaliyya ‘an Haqiqat Amr al-Ta’ifa al-Maruniyya* (n.p., 1911).”²⁸⁷

Selectiveness and Interpretation in Defending Orthodoxy

When commenting on the use of facts by a historian, Edward Hallett Carr stated: “First you get your facts straight, then plunge at your peril into the shifting sands of interpretation –that is the ultimate wisdom of the empirical, common-sense school of history. It recalls the favorite dictum of the great liberal journalist C.P. Scott: ‘Facts are sacred, opinion is free.’”²⁸⁸ The problem with Maronite Church historiography is that the facts, or the scientifically verifiable historical evidence, are not abundant, and in the case of Monothelitism and union with Rome, most evidence leads away from the desirable conclusions that the Maronite clergy want to advocate. The basic facts that are the same for all historians and constitute the raw material for history-writing²⁸⁹ are not made available in this specific case. This led to two opposing phenomena among the writings of Maronite Church historians. One phenomenon is manifested in the refusal of evidence that does not fit into the approved narrative of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, an approach adopted by historians like Pierre Dib. Another phenomenon is manifested in a selective and peculiar interpretation of the available evidence to force it to comply with the narrative that the historian is writing within, Butrus Daw employs this approach. But in the end, if accuracy is a duty, not a virtue, of a historian,²⁹⁰ then both approaches are

²⁸⁷ Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 8.

²⁸⁸ Carr, *What is History*, 7.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

inherently flawed, a fact that weighs heavily on history-writing in Lebanon, since Maronite Church historiography did not remain restricted to the confines of the Church.

The centrality of the hypotheses of orthodoxy and communion with Rome is omnipresent in Maronite Church historiography; it constitutes the common denominator for Church historians. And though the shape and form of history-writing may diverge, and the arguments in support of these central claims may vary, the quest to assert these claims remains a main characteristic of the historiography of the Maronite Church. Other than works dedicated to the religious and temporal history of the Maronite denomination, numerous publications in recent times that were actually dedicated to the questions of origin and identity of the Maronites, exhibit conformity on these issues. That said, the narrative that was employed by Church historians affected lay historiography as well, when dealing with the Maronites specifically but also when writing about Lebanon at large. The tradition has become so powerful and imposing that it is difficult to challenge. One finds it in key publications such as the *Encyclopedie maronite* [Maronite Encyclopedia] and *Pentalogie antiochienne/domaine Maronite*, as well as in less substantial works such as *al-Mawarinah man hum wa madha yuridun* [The Maronites: Who Are They? And What Do They Want?], or *al-Mawarinah: su'al fi al-huwiyyah* [The Maronites: A Question of identity]. The literature produced that subscribes to the narrative is by far more prolific than the one that opposes it, in fact, in the introduction to the *Maronite Encyclopedia*, the section dedicated to the Maronites and Monothelism, the historians who advocate the heterodox beliefs of the early Maronites are mentioned by name.²⁹¹ One explanation for the dearth of works published in Lebanon could be tied to the sensitivity of the questions involved. The hypotheses

²⁹¹ *Encyclopedie Maronite* [Maronite Encyclopedia], XVII.

have religious implications, and, at least on the surface, suggest a debate that is exclusive to the Maronite and the Roman Catholic Church.

The fact that the need to assert Chalcedonian orthodoxy while countering all accusation is unanimously exhibited by the members of the Maronite clergy over the centuries, is evidence enough of the significance and sensitivity of this matter to the Maronite Church and its proclaimed identity and subsequently posited origin. The claim of orthodoxy became so intertwined with the claims concerning the origin of the Maronite Church, as well as the identity of its founder, that bringing any of these claims into question is treated as an existential threat by the Maronite clergy.

Matters are further complicated by the interrelation of the hypothesis with other contested claims concerning the history of the Maronites. The one question of orthodoxy, which is the central concern for Maronite church historians, brings with it a myriad questions concerning the religion, the history, and the identity of the Maronites. Subscribing to one narrative, and one set of claims, necessitates a similar and complementary subscription to other hypotheses that are interdependent and intertwined with it. The selectiveness of the historian in dealing with historical evidence and the interpretation he offers of that evidence has to coincide with the narrative he subscribed to initially, a fact that necessitates a rigid reading of history and a problematic approach to writing it.

Within a changing world and within limitless variables of history and historiography, one constant has to be kept by Maronite Church historians, and that is the notion of the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronite Church. This fact led to tensions in history-writing as historians had

to accommodate a supreme truth that was not always supported by historical evidence. The inconsistencies that resulted had an impact on the image that these historians cast upon their Church and their community. When these inconsistencies spilled over from the realm of historiography into the realms of politics, nationalism, and ethnic identity, they ultimately informed the constitution of the self and the other within the Maronite community.

In his introduction to *The Maronites in History*, Matti Moosa stated: “Due to political and communal reasons throughout their history, Maronite writers have endeavored to establish an organic tie with the Church of Rome which has led them to substantial historiographical revisionism and reinterpretation particularly in recent centuries. Such revisionism, in a communal sense, was also a quest for distinct identity. This quest by the Maronites for a distinct identity continues until this day.”²⁹²

Moosa’s statement applies to the majority of Maronite historians from the past three centuries and until the present. Ibn al-Qila‘i, al-Duwayhi, al-Dibs, Dib, and Daw, all upheld the absolute truth about the orthodoxy of the Church and sustained it within the tradition of Maronite Church historiography. Despite the fact that the shape and form of the historiography being produced differed over time, and the intentions of the numerous historians varied according to the demands of their era, that tradition in historiography evolved and persisted. What this meant was that all other arguments advanced by Maronite Church historians had to conform to that one imposing claim, thus historiography was dedicated to the task of defending the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronite Church. By submitting entirely to the claim of perpetual orthodoxy, and positing it as an unquestionable fact, meant that this historiography was put into the service of Church ideology. When the histories produced by Maronite Church historians were fixed

²⁹²Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, 10.

within the boundaries of perpetual church orthodoxy, ideology then determined what this historiography advocated and ultimately what identity this historiography produced and propagated.

What is missing in Moosa's analysis is a comparison of the different forms of the narratives where this metahistorical claim is constantly recast. One should mention that the oppositional task of each narrative was significantly different, which meant that orthodoxy while a primary concern for all Maronite Church historians had a different role and a different significance in each narrative. The objective of the historian and the purpose of his narrative dictated how the claim of orthodoxy was employed and how each generation of historians recast the historiography of their predecessors.

What can be concluded though, is that rather than being a quest to find historical evidence about the past of the Church and the community, the historiography of Maronite Church historians was bound by a quest to prove and defend perpetual orthodoxy. This rendered it subservient to Church ideology and dedicated to a purely apologetic approach to history lacking an evidentiary basis. It could not then, by definition, question such an ideology or use supportive documentary evidence to level a critique.

The fact that perpetual orthodoxy was the ultimate concern for clerical Maronite historians had far-reaching effects on history-writing in Lebanon well beyond church circles. Having posited the idea of perpetual orthodoxy as the *raison d'être* of the Maronite community and its presence in Mount Lebanon, clerical historians had to justify this presence in a supposedly mountainous refuge. This was addressed at times by suggesting a Muslim threat, Orthodox Byzantine oppression, or a Jacobite encroachment.

A history based on the myth that the Maronite Church had always followed orthodox creed would necessarily posit the other as Muslim Arab or Eastern Christian. The choice of the other for each historian changed with the changing political project of the histories produced. Secular Maronite historians would later recast this claim when they wrote down their own histories of Lebanon, thus determining much of the direction of history-writing on the national level even outside the realm of the Maronite Church. The effects of these claims when recast by nationalist historians would include an isolationist Maronite identity, with the Muslim and Eastern Christian surrounding it as its principal Other.

Though this myth has been treated by critical academic historians, its exact implications on national identity has not been given due attention. The question of whether the early Maronite Church held beliefs that ran contrary to Chalcedonian orthodoxy seems to have been answered by historians, but the repercussions of such a myth on lay historiography as well as the nationalist narrative were neglected by these.

Upholding an ancient unbroken orthodoxy would have remained strictly a concern for the clergy or the extremely devout members of the Maronite community in Lebanon had it not been for the effects it brought about in the historical narrative. The evidence so far indicates that maintaining a claim of ancient orthodoxy is the meta-historical task of Maronite Church historiography. But when accounting for historical causality one will see the far-reaching effects of this task, effects that go well beyond the confines of the Church.

It is in the very act of emplotment, when these claims were transformed into a narrative of a specific kind, that the full impact of such a myth can be seen. When nationalist lay historians upheld the myth of Maronite Church orthodoxy it entered the nationalist discourse along with all the other historical claims that it carried with it. The interpretive strategies of these historians are

the main mechanism through which history-writing generates national identity. Whether they are being evaluated according to Carr's criteria or Tosh's perception of what constitutes modern academic historiography today, Maronite Church historians can be faulted concerning the claims they made on the level of the dissertative aspect of their discourse. What is more significant however is the narrative aspect, when these claims were represented in the form of a national epic they entered the nationalist discourse and it is there that they had their greatest and most lasting effect.

The Mountain Refuge in the Lebanese Republic

When writing about the establishment of the Maronites in Mount Lebanon, Lebanese historian Pierre Dib adopts the Mountain Refuge theory, in that he narrates the persecution of the Maronites at the hands of the Abbasids and their gradual escape from the valley of the Orontes to the northern district of the mountain chain, *Jibbat Bsharri*, where they enjoyed a degree of safety and autonomy in the isolation of their new homeland.²⁹³ Although he does not go as far as Nicolas Murad with the notion of a long established independence, he does differ with Lammens on the degree of autonomy and insularity of the Maronite community.²⁹⁴ In dealing with that part of their history, Dib quotes primarily Lammens and al-Duwayhi. He mentions the struggle and

²⁹³ Dib, *Histoire des Maronites*, 70.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

military efforts of the community to maintain its autonomy and the role of the local chiefs in defending and maintaining the special status of the Maronites.²⁹⁵

The traces of al-Duwayhi's vision are clear in the text as Dib quotes him repeatedly, and thus he is a part of the same tradition in dealing with the idea of the Mountain Refuge. When quoting Lammens—who doesn't recognize the mountain as an inviolate sanctuary but rather as a geographic feature to be taken into account—Dib is very selective. One of the reasons for Dib's selectiveness in quoting could be simply to invoke those arguments that support his own claims while omitting others, but more probably this selectiveness is mainly due to the fact that Dib is focusing only on the Maronites and only on Mount Lebanon while Lammens's book is about greater Syria.

What this means is that all the arguments and information that Lammens offers about the general conditions in the entire region at any given era—information that would nullify all claims of peculiarity or distinctiveness to the Maronites, let alone isolation or independence—are not included in Dib's book, and therefore what remains is a text that advocates insularity backed up by evidence, arguments, and legitimacy from al-Duwayhi but especially from Lammens. When explaining Maronite presence in Mount Lebanon Dib clearly stated: "Guarantees had to be found to safeguard the faith, thus the Maronites chose to abandon the rich plains of Syria and to take refuge in Lebanon, to leave the banks of the Orontes where the most diverse cultures could flourish and take refuge in the arid mountains and savage lands."²⁹⁶

One should mention that the political projects of the histories produced were very different when Lammens and Dib were involved. The avowed purpose of each narrative was almost the opposite of the other. When one examines the role of the historian and the function of the history

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 76-91.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 70.

he is producing, Lammens and Dib could not have agreed on specific claims concerning Mount Lebanon regardless of the similarity of the evidence at their disposal.

One might even conclude that the act of writing a history dedicated solely to Mount Lebanon and to the Maronite community, that is, anything other than Church history, and reaching back further than the nineteenth century, is in itself an act of advocating the theory of the Mountain Refuge. Therefore, a history of Lebanon that covers events taking place in the eleventh century, for example, would be governed more by ideology than by historiography. The object and choice of historiography in such a case would already be decided by ideological bias, highlighting the influence of political ideology on the realm of historiography.

It is important at this stage to mention some of the main historical events that had occurred locally in the periods when those historians were writing, for it is necessary to place in perspective the approaches they each had to the study of history in light of what they had witnessed and the general conditions under which they lived. Between the times of Murad, al-Dibs, Lammens, and Dib, the socio-political, economic, and cultural conditions had taken numerous turns both locally as well as globally. Every one of these historians witnessed a new era in Mount Lebanon and a new political setting that influenced if not shaped the kind of history he was writing. If Murad had witnessed the rise of *Mutasarrifiyyat Jabal Lubnan* shortly before he died, al-Dibs spent most of his life living in it. One cannot overestimate the significance of experiencing political life in a defined political entity, albeit, autonomous but not independent, which was one of the foremost aspirations of the Maronite clergy in the nineteenth century. Belonging to that clergy himself and living in that era, al-Dibs' writings were inherently linked to the political reality that surrounded him.

Among the other factors that had an impact on anyone working in that era were the new patterns of clerical as well as lay historiography. Those patterns that emerged in the nineteenth century, especially following 1860, due to both local incentives as well as European influence, forever altered the field of history-writing in Lebanon and thus a significant difference is immediately visible when examining books produced before and after this period. Despite the fact that only sixteen years separate the publication in 1905 of *Al-Jami' al-Mufassal Fi Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-Mu'assal* by al-Dibs and the publication of *La Syrie* in 1921 by Henri Lammens, the political setting that both men experienced was entirely transformed.

Ottoman Lebanon and the Mutasarifiyyah had ceased to exist, and with the proclamation on September 1, 1920, by General Gouraud of the establishment of "The State of Greater Lebanon," the Mountain entered the age of the nation state with the expansion of the borders of the Mutasarifiyyah and the formation of a Lebanese republic under the French mandate. Though Pierre Dib was a contemporary of Lammens and relied heavily on his work, he, unlike Lammens, was exposed to post-World War I Lebanon, which was primarily an independent Lebanon where Maronite privilege was paramount.

This succession of events left a deep mark on historians and historiography. Despite the monumental changes that took place, a tradition continued among Maronite historians of Lebanon, both clergymen as well as secular writers, a tradition dating back to the time of al-Duwayhi and before him al-Qila'i, that advocated the idea of Lebanon as a mountain refuge for the Maronites and their church.

A primary example of a Maronite Church historian who subscribes to the theory of the Mountain Refuge is Butrus Daw, the author of *Tarikh al-Mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*, published in 1970. In his book Daw incorporated many of the arguments presented in the

previously mentioned books as sources. Daw, however, takes the notion of independence to its extreme, claiming that Mount Lebanon was a refuge for the Maronites and acted as a quasi-fortress that helped them maintain and secure their independence from the Muslim states since the 'Umayyad period.

As he states in the first volume of his book, “they [the Maronites] did not hesitate to raise massive armies and launch organized raids against the Umayyad state while it was at the height of its power in order to secure their independence in this forbidding mountain.”²⁹⁷ He did not advocate that the Maronites were completely isolated in the mountain but simply that they enjoyed political independence and security, while maintaining peaceful cordial relations with neighboring states.

His main point is that the Maronites were on friendly terms with the Muslim states that dominated the area because they had parity with them. The interaction is described by Daw as such: “the relationship between the Maronites on the one hand and the Arabs and Islam on the other throughout the ages can be summarized in three sentences: friendliness with mutual respect, interaction with equal openness, complete independence with mutual cooperation.”²⁹⁸ Therefore the Maronites, according to Daw, were not only a community that was fortified in the mountain, but they were a community that was so sure of its independence and security in Mount Lebanon that they were engaged in political and economic relationships on equal terms with the neighboring empires, at times even initiating military operations against them in order to maintain that kind of relationship. As he himself wrote, “Friendliness and cooperation were and

²⁹⁷ Daw, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari. Vol I.* [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], 412.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 406.

still are closely tied for the Maronites to their unwavering commitment to complete independence.”²⁹⁹

Daw of course was dealing with the repercussions of the civil unrest and the civil war that followed in the 1970s in Lebanon. The threat to the Maronite community was tangible and immediate, and Maronite political power in the Lebanese state was in a precarious situation. The purpose of his narrative is evident in the claims and political assertions that he makes in his historiography.

Histories of Syria and Lebanon: Lay Historiography and the Persistence of a Tradition

The idea of the Mountain Refuge was not restricted to historians of the Maronite Church; it went beyond them to the secular realm. As secular Lebanese historians began to leave their mark on the field, the notion of the mountain being a refuge for the Maronites throughout history began to appear in their writings. One should note that secular historiography emerged in Mount Lebanon at a time when the idea of Lebanon as a political entity was being formulated; when the Maronite Church was at the height of its power and not only struggling to assert its domination over the mountain but to create a political entity for itself and its community.³⁰⁰

Among the first secular historians to adopt the notion of the mountain refuge was Yusuf al-Sawda. Al-Sawda went even further than his predecessors in his book *Fi Sabil Lubnan* when he stated: “since Phoenician times Mount Lebanon was a fortress to the Phoenician people and protected their independence and sovereignty, thus significantly contributing to the greatness of

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 412.

³⁰⁰ An in-depth analysis of the emergence of the “Lebanist” idea and of the subsequent shifts in secular historiography will be included in Chapter IV.

Phoenicia.”³⁰¹ What al-Sawda claims for, and the image he presents of, Lebanon is that of a perpetual independence safeguarded by a vigilant population of mountaineers fighting back invader after invader from the safety of their fortress-mountain. One can find the traces of al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs, as well as Lammens in the works of al-Sawda, but his interpretation of the sources and the way he displays historical information differs even from the historians with whom he agrees.

The Mountain in the writings of al-Sawda was always a refuge, not only for the Maronites but also for all those seeking freedom in the region, and its terrain always assisted them in this quest. When he wrote about the Mameluk punitive campaign in Kisrawan in the fourteenth century he stated: “When the Mameluks seized power in Egypt and Syria, they did not look kindly upon the freedom and independence of the mountains. By then all the freedom seekers in the region had taken refuge in them, Shi‘a in the northern Beqa‘, Druze in the Shuf, and Maronites in the north.”³⁰²

Although al-Sawda was the first secular historian to adopt and disseminate the idea of the Mountain Refuge, a more prominent historian, Jawad Bulus (1899-1982), gave the idea much more depth on the theoretical level. Bulus adopted the notion of the Mountain refuge and thus clearly belongs to the tradition that reaches back to the Church historians who preceded him. That said, what is novel in Bulus’s books is his scientific approach to geography and geopolitics.

On the matter of geopolitics he states, “Politics is descended from history, and history is descended from geography, and geography, relatively speaking, does not change.”³⁰³ With that

³⁰¹ Al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, 24.

³⁰² Al-Sawda, *Tarikh Lubnan al-Hadari*, 177.

³⁰³ Bulos, *Al-Tahawwulat al-Kabirah fi Tarikh al-Sharq al-Adna Munz al-Islam*, 18.

claim dominating his historical writing, he was bound to focus on the mountainous features of the Lebanese terrain and their role in shaping the history of the country. He states: “the Mountain is the basis for the existence of the country of Lebanon. It gave the country its name and essence, it is the impregnable fortress both politically and militarily which generated independence and, through natural evolution became a religious haven.”³⁰⁴ He adds that Mount Lebanon itself is more like a natural fortress, which determined the course of history of the society that resided in it or that was attracted to its safety.³⁰⁵ Again, the claims of insularity, isolation, independence and sovereignty are all advanced under the notion of the Mountain Refuge.

The theory of the Mountain Refuge was not restricted to the works of historians writing specifically about Lebanon, in fact, it appears in works dedicated to the history of Syria as a whole, in which Mount Lebanon acquires a peculiar specificity as a particular or exceptional case. Philip K. Hitti’s *History of Syria* was—as the title clearly suggests—not meant to be a work that focused on Mount Lebanon’s role in Syrian history. The book is an ambitious endeavor covering the history of *Bilad al-Sham* along with the general developments in world history that were deemed relevant to the region. It encompasses the history of Syria from the Stone Age all the way to the twentieth century. The scope of the work included an examination of demographic, linguistic, cultural, economic, and political developments over those long eras. Yet even in such a vast endeavor, the notion of the Mountain Refuge is invoked several times.

When writing about the topographical features of Syria, Hitti reiterates the claims made by the historians who preceded him by describing the mountain as having been a refuge throughout the ages: “Such terrain has through the ages provided places of refuge for

³⁰⁴ Bulos, *Lubnan wa al-Buldā al-Mujawirah*, 245.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

communities and individuals with unpopular loyalties and peculiar beliefs, and at the same time afforded an unusually large proportion of high valleys and fertile tracts which attracted the more enterprising and freedom-loving of the neighboring population. Maronites, Druzes, and Shi'ites (called in Syria Matawilah) have nestled and maintained their identity in the fastnesses of Lebanon. A true mountain, Lebanon has been through the ages the home of lost causes and the last of the lines to fall to foreign invaders."³⁰⁶

That Hitti took for granted the notion of the mountain having served as a refuge from the forces that held sway in Syria is already evident in this passage. Mount Lebanon to Hitti was a home for minorities who held unpopular beliefs, who with their "enterprising" and "freedom-loving" lifestyle sought to find shelter in the mountain in order to maintain their identity. Hitti doesn't elaborate further on these points, leaving out the facts that even Mount Lebanon proper was never restricted to the communities he mentioned, not to mention that at the time when he was writing substantial Sunni groups inhabited most of its northern extremes in very close proximity to the original area of Maronite presence, while another substantial Sunni group inhabits the area known as Iqlim al-Kharnub district next to the Shuf, and the Ante-Lebanon and the Beqaa valley also have significant Sunni concentrations in Baalbek, Hasbayya and the western Beqaa.

The refuge hypothesis brings with it a number of problematic implications, first of these is the idea that if one is to consider the mountain as a refuge to threatened communities than one has to conclude that the survival of these communities outside the mountain was difficult if not impossible, which in turn means that these communities should not exist outside the mountain in any significant numbers. That however is not the case, as the Druze presence in Hawran, in

³⁰⁶ Hitti, *History of Syria*, 37.

Galilee, and in Rashayya is at least as significant as their presence in the Al-Shuf and the rest of the western Lebanese mountain chain, and so has been the case for much of the history of the community. As for the Christian presence in the main cities of Syria and in the Lebanese coastal cities, it far exceeds the Christian presence in the mountain that the Refuge hypothesis brings into question, especially when one considers that no Christian community is exclusive to Mount Lebanon, and that includes the Maronites who have a long established presence in Aleppo in northern Syria.

As for the Shia community, not only are they not restricted to Mount Lebanon but one has to consider also that at the time when the Shia communities spread across the mountain, Shi'ism, in its numerous sects, was far from being an "unpopular belief" in the rest of Syria thus negating the need to take refuge in the first place. As for the time when the community did come under attack from the Sunni Mameluks, one has to only consider that after that event, Shi'ism maintained its dominance over the plains of the Beqaa and the more accessible and less rugged southern part of Lebanon, Jabal 'Amil, rather than in the more imposing Kisrwan, thus putting into question the kind of protection that these mountains such as Kisrwan provided to their inhabitants.

The issue of resistance to central authority has been dealt with by historians such as Dinnawi and Salibi, and even by historians from within the Maronite tradition, the fact that the mountain did not enjoy political independence is simple to prove in light of the fact that the established powers in Syria at every phase of history raised taxes and appointed officials to maintain order in the mountain. The third issue is that of insularity and isolation, and this entails two different claims, the first is that the communities in the mountain could not maintain their beliefs in the face of external influences outside of Mount Lebanon, which we already stated was

not true, and the second claim is that the communities in the mountain were cutoff and maintained isolation from the outside and from one another. To disprove that, one has to only examine the demographics of Mount Lebanon today, and as far back as the sixteenth century, and see that not one district of the mountain was at all exclusive to a single sect at any point during that long time, thus negating any claims of isolation and insularity.

The notion of the Mountain Refuge, at this point, exists independent from empirical facts; it is a *fait accompli* that the mountain was such. When Hitti dedicated later books to the history of Lebanon, he justified singling out that minuscule geographic area and excluding the rest of Syria and the region by stressing the peculiarity of Lebanon as being an exceptional case within Syria. On this matter he states: “Clearly Lebanon can vie with any other land of comparable size not only in the volume of events enacted on its stage but in their meaningfulness in terms of world value and importance. It is one of those lands that could be described as microscopic in size but microcosmic in influence.”³⁰⁷ Of course, singling out Lebanon and specifically Mount Lebanon only adds to Hitti’s claims of independence and insularity and in his views of the mountain as a refuge for he states: “Whereas in its [the land of Lebanon] highlands—out of the way if not inaccessible—conservatism self-containment, independence, isolation and insulation became the key words to the understanding of the history.”³⁰⁸

When writing about the Syrian churches in his *History of Syria*, Hitti goes over the early days of the Maronite Church and how a Maronite community came to be in Mount Lebanon, stating: “Lebanon offered a better refuge and the new sect struck its roots in its northern soil... the Maronite community developed into an autonomous nation which with one arm kept the

³⁰⁷ Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, 4.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

Moslem caliph at a distance and with the other the Byzantine emperor. When in 694 Justinian II desired to subdue the Maronites, his troops, after destroying the monastery on the Orontes, were routed by Yuhanna at Amyun. Since then the Maronites have isolated themselves and developed the kind of individualism that characterizes mountaineers.”³⁰⁹ In this instance Hitti is actually relying on Istifan al-Duwayhi as his source, and he unquestionably endorses the assertions made by the seventeenth century historian and mimics him in his claims about Maronite isolation and independence in the refuge that is Mount Lebanon. Nowhere does he question how Justinian II and his army appeared near Amyun in the Kura district a thousand miles from the border in Umayyad-controlled Syria, nor does he refer to any other sources to examine the validity of those claims, at least insofar as checking whether such an incident ever took place. The seventeenth century assertions of Istifan al-Duwayhi on isolation and independence, despite three centuries of upheavals in history and historiography, still find their way into histories written for twentieth century audiences. The sanctity of the Mountain Refuge as a defining element of Maronite historiography is preserved in an unbroken tradition that begins from within the Church itself and spreads into both clerical as well as lay historiography.

The evolution of history-writing had come a long way since the days of al-Duwayhi and by the time Hitti was writing his history the field had been entirely transformed. What counted as a reliable source to al-Duwayhi in the seventeenth century should not escape the scrutiny of a twentieth century academic historian. Carr stated that the basic facts, or as he referred to them, the raw materials are the same to all historians.³¹⁰

In the case of Hitti, he used the writing of al-Duwayhi as his raw materials. The fact that al-Duwayhi was narrating events that took place a full millennia before he was born, and the fact

³⁰⁹ Hitti, *History of Syria*, 37, 521.

³¹⁰ Carr, *What Is History*, 8.

that his account contradicts accounts from the seventh century do not prevent Hitti from treating him as an authority on the subject.

When examining specific topics that involve political claims concerning the history of the Maronites, one can see that the writings of the seventeenth century Maronite patriarch are recast and redeployed by a twentieth century Maronite lay academic historian to perform an oppositional task that is far removed from the purposes of seventeenth century historiography.

Collingwood stated “in so far as an historian accepts the testimony of an authority and treats it as historical truth, he obviously forfeits the name of historian.”³¹¹ The task of the historian in his investigation, according to Collingwood, is to examine a source not to refer to an authority. Hitti would not be at fault if he used al-Duwayhi as a primary source, as long as the term ‘source’ did not imply any specific value prior to scrutiny. Hitti however did not do that; he chose to employ the writings of al-Duwayhi as an authority on Maronite history, regardless of context and despite the availability of more reliable sources.

The notion of the Mountain Refuge, which was by now widespread among church historians and secular Christian historians of Lebanon, did not remain restricted to those two categories of historians. As the first Muslim historian to dedicate his works to the history of Mount Lebanon,³¹² ‘Adil Isma‘il also seems to subscribe to this notion by granting Lebanon the same specificity that his Christian contemporary historians advocated. While his arguments are not focused on the role of the land or the geographical features of the terrain in the course of the

³¹¹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 256.

³¹² Beydoun, *Identite confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains*, 150.

history of Mount Lebanon, he does state as fact in his book, *Histoire du Liban du XVIIe siecle a nos jours*, that the mountain was throughout history a land of refuge.

The chapter of his book that he dedicates to geographic and historical conditions is in fact titled “Lebanon Land of Refuge”. On this matter Isma‘il states: “Due to its natural conditions, the nature of its terrain and the obstacles that it presents, Mount Lebanon has always been a land of refuge. All the persecuted minorities found in its valleys and steep heights a safe haven.

There is no doubt that the minority communities of the Orient who abandoned the fertile plains of the coast and the even more fertile plains of the interior, to settle in the arid Lebanese mountain, were not driven by more favorable economic conditions. This can only be explained, as Volney said, by the quest for liberty: ‘here everyone enjoyed security for his life and property’.”³¹³ In choosing to title a chapter of his book—albeit a minor one—“Lebanon Land of Refuge,” and in choosing to quote well-known Orientalists and European travelers who advocated the notion of the Mountain Refuge, ‘Adel Isma‘il subscribes fully to the hypothesis. Though Isma‘il does not invest the mountainous terrain with the same magnitude of importance, as do other historians of this tradition, he does recognize and subsequently advocates some of the important points of this theory. Unlike contemporary historians like Bulus and Hitti who exaggerate the protection and isolation that the mountain provides,³¹⁴ ‘Adel Isma‘il focuses less on geography and more on the currents of history in determining the conditions in Mount Lebanon,³¹⁵ thus setting himself aside from the likes of Bulus who view Lebanon as a “geographic nation.” That said, Isma‘il does not reject the idea of the mountain refuge, rather, he

³¹³ Isma‘il, *Histoire du Liban du XVIIe siecle a nos jours*, 12.

³¹⁴ Beydoun, *Identite Confessionnelle et Temps Social Chez Les Historiens Libanais Contemporains*, 141.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

takes it for granted and subscribes to it fully even if he does not assign to it the magnitude that his colleague did.

Revisionist Historiography: The Debate Over the Mountain Refuge Theory

This tradition, and the theory of the Mountain Refuge, constitute a part of a narrative that is hegemonic, but not entirely so. Certain Lebanese critical historians have challenged many of the claims that the narrative carries. Among those historians who re-examined the validity of these claims in their writings about Lebanese history and Maronite Church historians, Kamal Salibi³¹⁶ did not invoke in any of his books an image of an isolated independent Mount Lebanon with the mountain acting as a shield for the Maronite community against foreign invaders. Salibi did, however, point out the geographic nature of Syria and the geopolitical context in which it existed. The broken terrain, along with the distance from the centers of power of the reigning empires of the region, deeply affected the course of history in Syria. The fact that central authority resided for much of the history of the region in Baghdad, Cairo, and Istanbul left Syria with a provincial and peripheral status, making the mountains near the coast into the periphery of a periphery. This surely had consequences for the communities that sought to live in these mountains, and among those of course were the Maronites.³¹⁷

When Salibi wrote about the way Mount Lebanon had been administered throughout different phases of its history, he stated: “of the parochial history of the Lebanon range in antiquity, little is known for certain. In Islamic times, however, its northern parts (Jabal Lubnan

³¹⁶ Kamal Salibi, in his *Maronite Historians of Medieval Lebanon*, is a primary source for a definitive discussion.

³¹⁷ Salibi, *Tarikh Lubnan al-Hadith*, 16.

to Jabal Akkar), and its central and southern parts (Jabal Kisrawan and Jabal al-Shuf), invariably formed parts of different provinces.”³¹⁸ And thus, the mountain was not only lacking in political independence, but it was never under local administration. Since Mount Lebanon was not considered a unit, nor did it possess enough in the way of agricultural resources to become a district on its own, it was constantly carved up administratively and its different sections attached to one of the different provinces of the Syrian hinterland.

In his book *Muntalaq Tarikh Lubnan*, Salibi goes over in great detail the procession of historical events on the Syrian scene, with an emphasis of course on the area of Mount Lebanon. The study covers the history of the region with some mention of events and facts from the early middle ages, but more specifically from the Arab conquest in 634 to the Ottoman conquest of Bilad al-Sham in 1516.³¹⁹ When going over the major administrative policies that were introduced in the early Abbasid era, Salibi speaks of the popular discontent that was widespread in most of Syria due to these changes that were being introduced. Salibi states that in the year 759-760 the people of Jubbat al-Munaytirah in the northern district of Mount Lebanon pleaded with the governor of Baalbak about the crushing taxes imposed on them. When their demands were not met, they broke out in open rebellion only to be crushed by the governor and their villages razed. The punitive measures implemented against them were only lifted upon the request of al-'Imam al-'Uza'i who defended their rights as “dhimmis”.³²⁰ It becomes clear in this instance that neither before nor after this rebellion did the mountain offer any real protection or insularity for the Maronites. They were “dhimmis” like all Christians under Muslim rule, they were subjected to the same heavy taxation as the rest of Syria, and when they defied the

³¹⁸ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: A History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, 65.

³¹⁹ Salibi, *Muntalaq Tarikh Lubnan*, 173.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

authorities they fared no better than the people of the plain. Salibi later mentions in his book the succession of states and powers that held sway over Syria or parts of it over the ages.

When writing about the Crusaders, he mentions that the Maronites did not take kindly to the feudal policies of the rulers of Tripoli, which were enacted to keep a firm grip over the mountain, and they sometimes rebelled against them.³²¹ This suggests that the natural order of things was one of well-established control by the masters of the coastal city over the mountain.

Salibi does mention that there may have been brief periods during the Crusades—when the balance of power was shifting—when the Maronites were neither under Crusader nor Damascene control. Such interludes may have inspired the story of an independent Maronite kingdom in the folk epic of Ibn al-Qila‘i.³²² These interludes were not restricted to the Maronites, Salibi states, but the case was somewhat similar for the Shia population of Kisrawan, further south from the areas inhabited by the Maronites.³²³ But when the Mameluks eliminated the Crusader presence in Syria they dealt a decisive blow to the Shi‘a inhabitants of Kisrawan, and after that campaign they quickly established firm and complete control over all Maronite villages.³²⁴

The one time Salibi mentions the Maronites taking shelter in the mountain and actually finding it a refuge for them is in his book, *A House of Many Mansions*. There he lists the events leading to the Maronite migration from the Orontes valley to Mount Lebanon. About those events he states:

It was not the Muslims, but the Byzantines who drove the Maronites out of the Orontes valley, but this did not happen in 685 as Dwayhi had supposed. The

³²¹ Ibid., 89.

³²² Ibid., 96.

³²³ Ibid., 132.

³²⁴ Ibid., 154.

whole of Syria, at the time, was under Umayyad rule. Between 969 and 1071, however, the situation was different. The Byzantines were in actual control of the Orontes valley; but they had no foothold in Mount Lebanon, and Aleppo remained under Muslim rule. In the Orontes valley, they must have subjected the Maronites to enough persecution to force them to abandon the place and join their co-religionists in Mount Lebanon, either in one massive exodus or by stages. In Muslim Aleppo, however, the community survived, as it does to this day.³²⁵

In this instance the mountain did perform the role of refuge to the Maronites, but not in the sense of acting as a fortress to shield them from their enemies. It was simply a domain that was at a safe distance out of the reach of Byzantine forces and out of the new frontier zone that they were contesting with the Muslim powers. What shielded the Maronites in Mount Lebanon is the same thing that shielded the Muslims on the coast, and the same thing that shielded the Maronites in Aleppo, mainly the resistance spearheaded by the Aleppan Muslim dynasties, and later the coming of the Seljuk Turks.

Among the other Lebanese secular historians who rejected the notion of Lebanon the Mountain Refuge, Mohammed ‘Ali al-Dinnawi presents a different reading of the history of Lebanon and the region in his book *Qira’ah islamiyyah fi tarikh lubnan wa al-mintaqah*. In this work al-Dinnawi criticizes what he refers to as an invention of history deployed by Maronite historians to fill gaps in their communal memory. Al-Dinnawi asserts that Maronite historians of different generations addressed the lack of reliable and detailed sources—along with the discrepancies around the rise of the Maronite Church and its presence in Lebanon—by engaging in creative endeavors rather than attempting a thorough reconstruction through historically sound means.³²⁶ He directs his criticism toward what he refers to as “the Maronite tradition”³²⁷ in

³²⁵ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 91.

³²⁶ Al-Dinnawi, *Qira’ah Islamiyyah Fi Tarikh Lubnan Wa al-Mintaqah*, 76.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

history-writing, a tradition of invented myths that are invoked to account for defining moments in the history of the Maronite Church.

The deployment of these myths conforms to the desired image, for the Church and its followers, which the historian wished to convey at the time when he was writing. In addressing the issue of these myths al-Dinnawi mentions the writings of Butrus Daw and Philip Hitti concerning the independence and insularity of the Maronites of Mount Lebanon. One of the primary examples al-Dinnawi presents is the episode of the Maronite-Byzantine battle near Amyun and the subsequent Maronite victory, which resulted in mastery over the mountain and political freedom. The fictional event that Hitti included in his book served to emphasize the distinctiveness and particularity of the Maronites as well as the advantages that the mountain provided them with. Despite the fact that the event in question has no basis in any known source, and in fact contradicts what is commonly and reliably known about the period when it was supposed to have taken place, nevertheless it is to be found in the works of al-Duwayhi, al-Dibs, Dib, Daw, and even Hitti. As a contemporary secular historian Hitti is criticized often by al-Dinnawi for reciting the Maronite tradition without examining it.³²⁸

What tracing the roots of an idea, or ideas, that have been present in the histories written by Maronite historians since the time of al-Duwayhi, and that are deployed differently and for different ends by every new generation. This evolutionary process, where the same account takes different forms, with every generation redressing the claims, indicates both the different uses of history-writing between eras as well as the different ends that these uses served. It is true that the roots may have been there since al-Duwayhi but the way Daw uses them differs immensely.

³²⁸ Ibid., 125.

From Idea to Hypothesis, the “Mountain Refuge” in the Histories of Today

In as far as the theory of the Mountain Refuge and the debate revolving around it are concerned, the contested issues are interrelated. The historian who subscribes to the theory of the Mountain Refuge has to endorse at least one of several claims that are intrinsically linked to the theory. The first of these claims is that the communities of Mount Lebanon settled the Mountain in the hope of finding refuge from persecution that they were suffering from in the more accessible parts of Syria, and of course that the Mountain actually provided them shelter from such persecution. The second of these claims is that the Mountain provided insularity and isolation for the communities that inhabited it, and isolation that helped preserve the faith and identity of the mountaineers, something which wouldn't have been possible anywhere else in Syria. And the third claim is that of independence. A historian asserting the third claim is adhering to the notion that those who took refuge in the mountain—primarily the Maronites—were seeking to preserve their freedom and independence, something which was only possible to achieve in the valleys and on the steep slopes of Mount Lebanon. This last claim has to include assertion that at least in the case of the Maronites, the quest for freedom and independence culminated in success, in which case the historian has to state that the Maronites enjoyed complete political freedom and were in no way subjugated by the central authorities that were in control of Syria over the ages.

Since most of these historians were primarily concerned with the Maronite community and its history, all the claims mentioned, refuge insularity independence, mainly refer to the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon and not simply any inhabitant of the Mountain. This list of claims, made by historians writing from as early as the late seventeenth century and all the

way into the mid to late twentieth century, invites at least a basic examination of the facts that it stood on in terms of the historical events that are known and the sources that are available today, as well as the facts and sources that were available to the historian at the time when he wrote his piece. Such examinations, conducted by historians from outside the established tradition, have led to the main arguments that contradict the Mountain Refuge hypothesis. But in the end, what matters most is not just the issue of whose claims are more historically sound and accurate, but the debate itself and the persistence of a tradition.

This tradition persists despite the passing of time, despite the immense changes that have taken place, and despite the pressure from within the field of historiography against the historians of this tradition and their assertions. What allowed this tradition to persist are numerous factors but primary among them is the fact that there are absolutes that Maronite Church historians would normally not concede. These absolutes are linked to the Church's own identity, self-image, and function in society within Mount Lebanon, but most of all to the nature of the relation of the Church and the Maronite community to the Mountain. Also important to note is that the assertions of the historians of this tradition—while basically never contradictory—are similar but not always identical, insofar as historians from different eras of history deploy them. Every phase or moment of change imprinted these same claims with the concerns of the historian and the demands of the period that he lived in. The mountain of Murad was nothing like the mountain that al-Duwayhi lived in, the region post 1860 and pre-World War I that al-Dibs experienced was imprinted on his writings, much as the late nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies were imprinted in the writings of Daw. What took place was a recasting of these claims with a new purpose and to serve a new political objective.

When examining the repercussions of the Mountain Refuge hypothesis from a contemporary perspective, it becomes clear that the notion affects both identity and politics in modern day Lebanon. The historians who advocated the Mountain Refuge hypothesis did not lose much legitimacy over time, their value rather appreciated, as their works are repeatedly used and their arguments redeployed by contemporary historians who redeployed their assertions. When nationalist historians wrote their narratives, the idea of the Mountain Refuge spilled from the realm of historiography into all facets of life and dominated many aspects of national identity.

According to Edward Hallett Carr, treating an event as a fact about the past means that this fact has to be supported by solid empirical evidence. This strategy is ignored by Maronite Church historians when making key claims about the past of the Maronite Church and the conditions of the Maronite community throughout history. Claims like the Mountain Refuge are not based on any surviving historical evidence. What is more significant in Carr's argument is his explanation of how a fact about the past is transformed into a fact of history. When this fact is adopted and posited by enough historians over a sufficient period of time then it is rendered into a fact about history.³²⁹

The tradition that emerged in Maronite Church historiography is visible when claims about the Maronite past, unsupported by empirical evidence, were put forward by influential clergymen as facts about the past. These were then adopted and perpetuated by generations of Maronite Church historians and were thus transformed into facts of history. It is through this process that baseless claims about the Maronite past and the past of Mount Lebanon entered the nationalist discourse in the form of facts about Lebanese history.

³²⁹ Carr, *What Is History*, 10.

The proliferation of the idea of the Mountain Refuge, especially when recast by nationalist historians, led to the production of an exclusionary political ideology, which is detrimental to political stability when coupled with the sectarian mosaic of the Lebanese population, and especially with the sectarian nature of the political system of the Lebanese Republic. If Mount Lebanon was the nucleus of the Lebanese state, and this Mountain was meant to be an exclusive refuge for the Maronites, a refuge that shielded and isolated them from all those who did not belong to their church, then the majority of the population of Lebanon today is presented as made up of invaders who are foreign to the land, the “other” therefore exists within the boundaries of the nation state, and a common inclusive national identity is therefore impossible to advocate.

The Reemergence of the Mardaites

When Maronite priest and historian Father Pierre Dib published his book *Histoire des Maronites* (The History of the Maronites) in 1962, his main reference on the Mardaites was Henry Lammens. Father Dib favored one of the many theories suggested by Henry Lammens concerning the Mardaites, and it was the theory of fusion in which the Mardaites and the *Jarajimah* come into contact with the indigenous population of Mount Lebanon and are absorbed by it, and thus become one single nation.³³⁰ A decade later, in 1972, when the Maronite priest Father Butrus Daw would write his own version of the history of the Maronites, *Tarikh al-*

³³⁰ Dib, *Histoire Des Maronites* [History of the Maronites], 71.

mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], he would state that the Mardaites were Maronites in creed and followed Saint John Maron, the father of the Maronite Church, to Mount Lebanon, where they were fused with the local Maronite population.³³¹ The Maradah, the Jarajimah, and the Maronites are thus one people with three different names. Butrus Daw uses selections from al-Duwayhi, Jibra'il Ibn al-Qila'i, and Lammens, on which he bases his conclusions.

The myth of Mardaite origins would also not remain exclusive to Maronite Church historiography; it would be later adopted by secular and lay Lebanese historians who reiterated the arguments of Maronite Church historians like al-Duwayhi and al-Dibs. Among the lay historians who subscribed to this identification was Yusuf al-Sawda, who in two of his books, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, published in 1924, and *Tarikh Lubnan al-Hadari*, published for the first time in 1972, advocated the identification of Maronites as Mardaites. In the setting in which he spoke, with the Lebanese nation state having been established, al-Sawda used the terms Lebanese, Maronite, and Mardaites interchangeably. The Maronites, who were indigenous to Mount Lebanon according to al-Sawda, were called the Mardaites or Maradah by the Byzantines and Arabs.³³²

According to Orientalist Philip Hitti, the identification of Maronite to be the same as Mardaite is correct. He does, however, choose a different interpretation of history than that subscribed to by al-Sawda. Hitti follows the theory of fusion advocated by Lammens, in which the Jarajimah, Maradah, and Maronites come together in Mount Lebanon and form a single

³³¹ Daw, *Tarikh al-mawarinah al-dini wa al-siyyasi wa al-hadari*. [The Religious Political and Civilizational History of the Maronites], 314.

³³² Al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, 45; Al-Sawda, *Tarikh Lubnan al-Hadari*, 162.

nation that would survive under a single church as the Maronites.³³³ Hitti's notion of fusion was also adopted by many historians, including Jawad Bulus, who mentions it in two of his most influential books.³³⁴ His version of events is one in which the Mardaites did depart from Mount Lebanon, although many opted to stay and were thus absorbed by the indigenous population, primarily the Maronites, and came to form a single group.³³⁵

Among the historians who subscribe on one level or another to the Mardaite hypothesis, one would find it difficult to determine another common denominator to set them apart from those who categorically reject it. In fact, a glance at their works reveals the differences in their approach to history-writing. For example, Al-Sawda writes from a nationalist perspective and takes an ideological approach, he internalizes the Mardaite hypothesis offered in Church historiography. Orientalist Philip Hitti's writings on the subject are closer to fellow Orientalist Henri Lammens in adopting the fusion hypothesis. Later works that dealt with the Mardaite hypothesis, and that offered a more positivist approach, relying on a more objective analysis of available historical evidence, rejected the myth altogether on the basis that the evidence to support it was lacking, and the available sources pointed to another series of documented events that contradicted the claims of Maronite church historians.

Many Lebanese historians rejected the identification of Maronites with Mardaites in all its forms, arguments, and explanations. Historians like Kamal Salibi, Mohammad Ali Dinnawi,

³³³ Hitti, *History of Syria*, 449; Hitti, *Lebanon in History*, 246; and Hitti, *Syria: A Short History*, 90.

³³⁴ *Lubnan wa al-Buldan al-Mujawirah* and *Al-Tahawulat al-Kabirah Fi Tarikh al-Sharq al-'Adna Munz al-'Islam*, were both published in Beirut in 1961.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

and Adel Isma‘il, categorically rejected the theory in the histories they had written.³³⁶ Regardless of the historian’s opinion on the matter, or whether he deems it worthy of mention, he has to argue the matter in his writings. This situation leads to the propagation of the term “Maradah” and its association with Lebanese historiography and with Lebanon, even by those same historians who wish to reveal the falsity of such claims. One of the main opponents to the claim, Adil Isma‘il, states (in a book dedicated solely to proving the falsity of the Mardaite myth), that the falsity has become so widespread as truth that it had become an integral part of Maronite popular memory and one of the pillars of Maronite history.³³⁷

One of the main Maronite militias to fight in the Lebanese civil war, from 1975 to 1991, was called “The forces of the Maradah”, and this group has evolved to become one of the main political parties in Lebanon that relies on a predominantly Maronite constituency.

This tradition in historiography that advocates identification between Maronites and Mardaites began with Maronite Church historians, more concerned about the perpetual orthodoxy of their Church than any political or cultural agenda. The concept advocated within the tradition would later be found in redeployments within clerical historiography for numerous and differing aims, the notion acquired different uses under new circumstances. With every new deployment, the arguments of the predecessors were used to prove the validity of the new claims, and to grant authority and legitimacy to the new role that the argument had acquired. The propagation of the idea and its presence in secular as well as lay historiographies turns it into a

³³⁶ Al-Dinnawi, *Qira‘ah Islamiyyah Fi Tarikh Lubnan Wa al-Mintaqah*;

Isma‘il, *al-Marada‘iyun (al-Maradah): Man Hum? Min ‘Ayna Ja’u? Wa Ma Hiyah ‘Alaqtuhum Bi al-Jarajimah Wa al-Mawarinah?*; Moosa, *The Maronites in History*; and Salibi, *Muntalaq Tarikh Lubnan*. These works are all primary sources for this dissertation.

³³⁷ Isma‘il, *al-Marada‘iyun (al-Maradah)*, 139.

potent myth of origin for a significant section of the Lebanese population, especially for the members of the Lebanese Maronite Church.

Even the opposition to the idea from prominent secular Lebanese historians only contributes to the further propagation of the notion as well as the familiarization of a wider audience with the term Maradah as a possible equivalent to Maronite. In the end the most important element about the myth of Mardaite origin is the mere fact of its survival. The fact that it has survived this long and that it continues to occupy historians and to appear in contemporary historiographies is more significant to Maronite communal consciousness than the actual validity of the idea or how well it holds up in the light of accurate and scientific investigation and assessment of the historical evidence available today.

If one is to consider that the poetry of Ibn al-Qila'i is one of the primary sources of history to subsequent Maronite clergymen and historians, Albert Cook's statement about the role of poetry in history is here fitting: "the poet is free to invent within the outline of his story, as well as to emphasize some aspect of a known story. The historian must establish the aspects of a story that has happened but that he must coordinate from scratch."³³⁸ And if one is to consider the tradition in history-writing that survives to this day among Maronite Church historians who restate the Mardaite hypothesis as an established truth within Church historiography, then Collingwood's statement is the most fitting: "We know that truth is to be had, not by swallowing what our authorities tell us, but by criticizing it; and thus the supposedly fixed points between which the historical imagination spins its web are not given to us ready made, they must be achieved by critical thinking."³³⁹ But when a myth or hypothesis, like that of the Mardaites, is

³³⁸ Cook, *History/Writing*, 33.

³³⁹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 243.

stated and re-interpreted time and again, would it not be considered at this stage a “fact of history”?³⁴⁰

Writing about historiography in Lebanon, Kamal Salibi asserts: “for any people to develop and maintain a sense of political community, it is necessary that they share a common vision of their past... In a society having a heterogeneous structure, historical fictions that flatter one group may turn out to be unflattering and sometimes highly objectionable to others.”³⁴¹

Regardless of what role they played in the medieval history of Mount Lebanon, most Lebanese Maronites and many non-Maronites today consider the Mardaites a fact on the ground. They inhabit Lebanese popular and political culture. The debate around their origin and identity is ongoing, but only in academic circles. What spilled out of the realm of historiography into politics and identity in Lebanon was that the Mardaites are in fact the Maronites.

In a country where the borders have expanded beyond those of Mount Lebanon, and where the population is primarily non-Maronite, a founding myth of origin that is exclusive such as the Mardaite myth of origin has created problems for the consolidation of national identity, a task pursued occasionally by the Lebanese state.

If the common myth is that the Maronites are descended from a group whose sole purpose was to wage war against a non-Maronite Other, then the situation today is one of the enemy within, rather than the enemy at the gate. In a political system marked by sectarianism, where the individual exists only as a member of a sect rather than as a citizen of the state, ascribing a sectarian origin that is defined by an inherent hostility towards all other Lebanese sects is detrimental to any sense of unity that is advocated among the general population.

³⁴⁰ Carr, *What is History*, 10.

³⁴¹ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 216.

Instead of the claim of perpetual Orthodoxy, that may have been a possible reason behind the myth, the events of history, the discrepancies of the political system, and the redeployment by certain historians, led eventually to a claim of perpetual warfare as a defining characteristic of the Maronite community. It survives as a state of warfare that was, and may once again be, the prevalent condition among the people of Lebanon.

The Phoenician Hypothesis: Secular Historiography and the Pre-Christian Past of Greater Lebanon

“Cette Phénicie âme:

Le seul nom de Liban, quoique haut comme nue, Ne peut la ceindre, exploit qu'elle est d'autel à seuil. Pour l'histoire elle est date à jamais retenue, Et sur nos plumes-or, chant d'amour revenue, Cette Phénicie âme et du créer orgueil!”³⁴²

In this poem, from his book *Sagesse de Phénici* [Wisdom of Phoenicia], prominent Lebanese poet Said Akl made several statements concerning identity and history in the case of Lebanon. What is most significant is that the poet asserted that Phoenicia is the name of Lebanon and the two are one and the same. In another poem from the same collection, published in 1999, the poet, now in his eighties, started with the title “We children of Phoenicia,”³⁴³ which he repeated in the first verse of the poem. With that verse the poet was asserting his identity and the identity of the Lebanese people. Thus, “we the Lebanese” is identical to “we the Phoenicians” in the poetry of one of the most prominent and widely read poets in Lebanon in the twentieth century and today. To understand why these assertions can come so naturally and be as adamant as if stating an evident fact, one must look back at the evolution of history-writing in Lebanon,

³⁴² Akl, *Sagesse de Phénicie*, 58.

³⁴³ Ibid., “Nous, fils de Phénicie,” 164.

starting in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the time when this idea of Phoenicia emerged and was propagated as an uncontroversial assertion. The way with which this specific past was posited and the reasons and means for its adoption and propagation are as much a part of Lebanese historiography as they are a part of modern Lebanese history itself. The evolution of the tradition of history-writing in Mount Lebanon as well as the developments that occurred in what was to be called Greater Lebanon are intertwined with the development and propagation of the Phoenician hypothesis in the realm of historiography as well as its spread into the realm of politics and popular cultures in the Lebanese republic. The Phoenician hypothesis has been as relevant to Lebanese politicians as it was and still is to Lebanese historians, and the debate over its validity is inherently linked to the debate concerning national identity in a divided and fragmented Lebanese society.

With the growing influence of Orientalists making its mark on the image and nature of the area and its history, several trends emerged in the process of history-writing. In the case of Lebanon, romanticizing the Mountain and attributing to it a role from visions of visitors that were in no way related to the lived experience of its inhabitants or their past had major repercussions. But in the end, it is in archaeology that one finds the main influence. Archaeologists played the main role in bringing about new histories that were in no way related to the role of the Church and that were separate from the role of the Maronite clergy and their place in Lebanese society. It is in this period that the idea of Phoenicia emerges,³⁴⁴ and slowly it

³⁴⁴ “Following the discovery of a Phoenician inscription at the tomb of Eshmon‘ezer (Sidon 1856), Renan hoped that a thorough excavating enterprise along the Phoenician coast would provide more Semitic texts... Three years after he returned to France, he published his corpulent tome, *Mission de Phenicie*... Renan of course was not the first scholar to study the Phoenician civilization... Jean-Jacques Barthelemy (1716-1795), Arnold Heeren (1760-1842), Francois-Charles Movers (1806-1856) and others became the founding fathers of the study of the ancient Phoenician world long before Ernest Renan published his *Mission de Phenicie*... The

would find its way into Lebanese history books, especially in the time following the declaration of the State of Greater Lebanon.

The Lebanese Maronite Church was hardly interested in the promotion of a pre-Christian, pagan past as part of the identity and the history of the Lebanese nation. It is important to note, however, that this particular past was essential in justifying—from an historical perspective—the annexation of the Lebanese coastal cities to Mount Lebanon for the creation of the modern Lebanese state. This expansion of the national boundaries brought with it as well a large Muslim population that had not been an integral part of the community of the Mountain. Since the Church was heavily involved in the creation of “Greater Lebanon,” its stance toward the changes that this precipitated was a pragmatic one, the expansion was justified in economic terms related to the survival and security of a viable state in Mount Lebanon. These changes in the boundaries did not, however, leave a significant mark on Maronite Church historiography as it did on Lebanese secular historiography. It is important at this point to note the influence and the role that the colonial power and its secular agents played, without ignoring, however, the kind of agency that the Maronite Church possessed in this process of history-writing. Based on this, a pattern can be discerned with regards to the Church’s view of the pre-Christian past, and subsequently in the relation between Mount Lebanon and the Maronites on the one hand, and the surrounding area and its Muslim population on the other, in the way that the two sides are perceived in light of a common history or past.

attentiveness of the French public to ancient Phoenicia became apparent with the publication of *Salammbô*, the novel by Gustave Flaubert, only a year after the return of Renan’s exploratory mission. The novel tells the story of an historical episode of the most eminent Phoenician colony—Carthage.” Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 22, 39.

The questions that arise when the Phoenician hypothesis is discussed concern the way the hypothesis was born as myth and how it was propagated and by whom. Then follow the questions concerning the motives behind propagating it as historical fact. The implications revolve around the issues of the exclusive and inclusive potential of such a myth of origin and whether it ever was a reaction to Arabism (which was beginning to make its mark across Greater Syria, including Mount Lebanon, since the mid-nineteenth century, as the most salient identitarian and cultural ideology), or not. And finally, since the myth conjures up a pagan past and was thus almost restricted to the circles of lay historians, who held the upper hand in the end in influencing the communal identity of the Maronites in Lebanon? Was it Maronite Church historiography? Or was it the lay historiography? I will address these questions as well as provide a summary of the historical changes and events that occurred in Lebanon over this period and that were inherently linked with the spread of the Phoenician hypothesis.

What I will argue is that the Phoenician hypothesis, although not initially conceived as a reaction to Arabism or any form of Lebanese Arab identity, was subsequently employed specifically to oppose any identity that wasn't exclusivist Lebanese and that set Lebanon apart from its surrounding. I will argue that although Maronite Church historians never adopted the Phoenician myth of origin as a plausible myth of origin for the Maronites of Lebanon, it was influenced indirectly by Church historiography.

Lay historians in Lebanon did adopt the Mardaite hypothesis, which was initially posited by the Maronite Church, and incorporated it in a "fusion" theory. This theory suggested that the Phoenicians and the Mardaites came together at some point in history to form one group, the proto-Marionites. By suggesting this reading of history, both pasts are attributed solely to the Maronite community, thus excluding any possible inclusion of the Muslims or Druze, or even

Eastern Christians of Lebanon, in any myth of origin. My final point would be to show that even though Maronite Church historians played an insignificant role in the conception and propagation of this powerful Phoenician myth of origin, their historiography still held the upper hand by imposing its own Mardaite myth of origin and thus channeling the Phoenician hypothesis towards an exclusivist Christian Lebanese identity.

Ancient Phoenicia: the People, the Geography and the History

But the Amorites had not only swept into Mesopotamia. A small number of them had stayed behind during the long migration and had made a home for themselves on the Mediterranean coast, in Palestine and what was to become Phoenicia. They were the Canaanites. The word means either the low, that is to say the lowland, people, or if it comes from the Akkadian word *kinahhu*-purple- the red people. If the latter is the case, these newcomers must have been called by the name under which they later became famous from a very early date. The Greek word *Phoinikes* can also be translated as ‘the people from the purple land’ or more simply as the red ‘people’. At all events the Phoenicians themselves usually called themselves Canaanites- even at the time Alexander took Tyre.³⁴⁵

This passage by Gerhard Herm delineates certain key elements in the history of the Phoenicians as a people, their identity, their origin, and the source of their name. Herm summarizes certain determining historical events that were essential to the formation of ancient Phoenicia, and to the reason why a certain people known as the Phoenician came to be known as such and to be distinguished from their surrounding. Most essential among the events mentioned by the author in this brief paragraph are the migrations that brought the Phoenicians, or more accurately the Canaanites to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and split them from the other accompanying nomadic elements, as well as the way with which they acquired the name

³⁴⁵ Herm, *The Phoenicians*, 25.

with which they were to be known under in antiquity, as well as when they were rediscovered in modern times.

Among the things that one can ascertain is that the origin of the term “Phoenician” suggests that it was only an exonym used by the Greeks in order to refer to the inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean city-states of early antiquity. All available historical evidence indicates that the Phoenicians of these cities never used that specific term for self-designation, instead the term “Canaanite” was the one employed locally to designate the communities they belonged to. As Orville Bullitt stated: “We are told that the name Phoenicia was derived from the Greek word first found in Homer, ‘Phoenix,’ ‘Phoenikes,’ meaning purple or dark rose. Their sailors were also called the ‘red men’ from their brown and sallow complexion. They were named ‘Phoenices or Poenis’ by the Romans, hence the name for the Punic Wars.”³⁴⁶ This is not to say that the origins and the early history of the Phoenicians are in any way clear or well documented through the available historical evidence. In fact, there are so many controversies about the name itself and about the specific origin of the people who settled in what was to be known as Phoenicia that it is difficult to make one absolute claim about them. “We know that the Phoenicians called themselves *can‘ani*, ‘Canaanites’, and their land Canaan. This term is of eastern semitic origin and very probably indigenous to the country. The etymology of the word, starting with *kn‘n*, however, is just as obscure and as controversial as the Greek Phoinix, if not more so.”³⁴⁷ Even the claim that the term Phoenicia was an exonym of Greek origin is not conclusive and was even brought into question by scholars who found it perfectly legitimate to search for an origin outside

³⁴⁶ Bullitt, *Phoenicia and Carthage*, 3.

³⁴⁷ Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, 8.

of the Hellenic linguistic realm.³⁴⁸ All these facts shed light on how obscure the early history of the people who would be known Phoenicians really was.

What is known about the Phoenicians is that they were a Semitic people who came to inhabit the eastern Mediterranean as a part of the several waves of migrating Semites who came from the Arabian Peninsula. It is difficult to ascertain when one can actually refer to the emergence of a distinct Phoenician element among the population of the region as a definable and separate branch of the Canaanites. “What is certain is that by the fourteenth century BC in the Amarna letters the inhabitants of Canaan were calling themselves in Akkadian Kinahu or Kinanu.”³⁴⁹ As for the Greek term Phoenician, “at first it was no doubt used for all Canaanites; later it would be confined to those who lived in the coastal belt and retained their independence... The Phoenician as a people cannot be differentiated from the general mass of Canaanites until somewhere during the later half of the second millennium BC.”³⁵⁰

The original homeland of the Phoenicians was spread on the eastern Mediterranean seashore between the Orontes River in the north and the Belus or the Kishon River in the south; in the east the Jebel Nuseiriyeh and the Lebanon range constituted the natural as well as political boundary. The coastal strip occupied by the Phoenicians defined much of what was to be the shape and outlook of their civilization and their role in the region as well as the Mediterranean at large. As Aubet stated: “In short, we can state that, reduced to a narrow coastal territory, the Phoenicians had no alternative but to operate within the limits of a mountainous hinterland, rich in wood and iron, suitable for the development of shipbuilding enterprises, a coast with enormous possibilities for creating fishing industries, and arable land which, in some areas, was

³⁴⁸ Vandersleyen, “*L’Étymologie de phoenix, ‘Phénicien’*”, 22.

³⁴⁹ Hardin, *The Phoenicians*, 22.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

unable to supply the demands of cities that, at times, sheltered huge concentrations of humanity.”³⁵¹ These factors determined the shape of the Phoenician civilization as a seafaring culture with an economy oriented mainly towards maritime trade and its security and expansion reliant primarily on mastery of the sea.

The broken and poor terrain that was occupied by the Phoenicians also contributed to their political development. The absence of large continuous plains and the compartmentalized geography hindered any kind of political unity among the Phoenicians and instead led to the emergence of a group of city states that were never united in a single political entity except when conquered by a single outside force. “Thus the Phoenicians remained a disunited country, each city being independent of the other, and as the economy of each was, by force of circumstances, similar to that of its neighbor, a deep sense of rivalry and jealousy arose between the various cities which went further to deepen the geographical chasm.”³⁵² These factors, despite the fact that they hindered the rise of a large political entity, did not, however, hinder the prosperity, growth, and expansion of Phoenician trade and of the Phoenician communities across the Mediterranean basin.

The Phoenicians for a significant period dominated trade across the Mediterranean and beyond, sailing and trading as far as the British Isles, and established colonies far from their original homeland, on islands in the Mediterranean as well as on the African and Iberian coasts. The most important of these colonies was Carthage, which would grow to become the largest and most successful, and most powerful Phoenician city in history.

The beginning of the first millennium BCE witnessed the height of Phoenician fortunes; at its end, almost nothing of a distinct Phoenician civilization would remain. The end in the east

³⁵¹ Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, 16.

³⁵² Baramki, *Phoenicia and the Phoenicians*, 3.

coincides with Alexander's destruction of Tyre in 332 BCE, and in the west, Carthage was sacked and destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE.

Many of the aspects revealed by the historical evidence concerning the Phoenicians are relevant to anyone examining how archaeologists resurrected such a past, which was appropriated by nationalists for redeployment in a modern context. Among the historical and archeological facts that are important to recall is that the Phoenicians never referred to themselves as such, they rather identified themselves as Canaanites, and were for much of their history indistinguishable from the wider Canaanite communities in Greater Syria.

The Phoenicians who inhabited the eastern Mediterranean coast never constituted a single political entity or state, they were never united as one country or kingdom, nor did they remain restricted to the area of the eastern Mediterranean. Their most important city-states were overseas, in North Africa in what is today Tunisia and in the Iberian Peninsula. What is also important to recall in the presence of claims of a Phoenician Lebanon distinct from its surrounding in Greater Syria, is that the original Phoenician settlements, the original homeland, and the first city-states from which a Phoenician civilization emerged, were not all geographically located in what was to become in modern times the state of Lebanon. In fact these Phoenician city-states were spread well beyond the boundaries of the modern Lebanese state.

As Baramki noted: "The ancient boundaries of Phoenicia are thus not coterminous with those of the modern Republic of Lebanon. On the one hand the littoral between the mouth of the Orontes and the Eleutheros in the north and the plain of Acre in the south were part of Phoenicia,

but at the present time the former is in Syria and the latter is in Palestine; on the other hand the Lebanon Mountains and the Biqa (Coele-Syria) were not part of ancient Phoenicia.”³⁵³

Archaeology and the Discovery of Phoenicia

Asher Kaufman’s book, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon*, dealt with the emergence and propagation of the Phoenician idea, and focused on the mid-nineteenth century as the moment of discovery when archaeology played a decisive role in the birth of the Phoenician idea. Kaufman’s first chapter, titled “First Buds: 1860-1918”³⁵⁴ begins by delineating the role of French archaeologist Ernest Renan and the excavations that he carried out in the Levant in search of Phoenician ruins and artifacts. The pivotal role played by colonial archaeology is a central theme when addressing the origin of the Phoenician idea and its propagation.

Kaufman is not alone in choosing the mid-nineteenth century as a timeframe and colonial archaeology as the main tool behind the birth of the Phoenician hypothesis in understanding the history of the region. As Harden stated: “Until archaeology came to the rescue in the middle of nineteenth century our knowledge of the Phoenicians was entirely derived from the writings of other nations.”³⁵⁵ The dearth of sources concerning Phoenician culture and civilization hindered any understanding of them, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that the Phoenicians themselves did not leave much behind in terms of their own cultural contributions, Phoenician literature has almost wholly perished.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Ibid., 2.

³⁵⁴ Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 21.

³⁵⁵ Hardin, *The Phoenicians*, 19.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

In many ways, the archaeological research done on the Lebanese coast followed the same developments that had been taking place in Egypt. The general atmosphere in Europe was one of increasing interest in Egyptology and of the discovery of the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean basin. What was different in the case of ancient Phoenicia was that not only were there no written records from the Phoenicians themselves, but even the ruins that were visible on the surface in Lebanon and in Greater Syria did not allude to the existence of such a civilization. In terms of physical evidence, the Phoenician city-states did not leave any imposing structures that could withstand the predation of time and of conquerors who passed through or colonized. Nothing remained in terms of tangible visible reminders of who the Phoenicians were or even whether they ever existed. These factors rendered archaeological excavations the only means to resurrect this past and to bring it back into the realm of historiography and later popular culture.

Upon completing the excavations in Tyre and Sidon in 1861, Ernest Renan mentioned that Sidon had not conserved at ground level any trace of its Phoenician past, all that was visible was a reminder of a vibrant city from the Roman and Byzantine eras, but a real underground Sidon had been discovered a few years earlier.³⁵⁷

This lack of physical evidence, this absence of a visible tangible remnant of Phoenician presence points to the magnitude of the role played by archaeologists who dug up and uncovered the remains of a people who were absent from living memory and a civilization that was invisible to the inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean in the modern era. In many ways this is the role played by archaeology and archaeologists wherever the field came into action

³⁵⁷ “Saïda n’a conservé au-dessus du sol presque aucune trace de son passé Phénicien. Tout ce qui est appaissant rappelle une ville brillante de l’époque romaine et byzantine; mais une vraie Sidon souterraine a été découverte il ya quelques années.” Renan, Ernest, *Correspondances 1856-1861 (Mission en phénicie)*, Edition établie, présentée et annotée par Maurice Gasnier. (Brest: Centre d’Étude des Correspondances, Faculté des Lettres. 1994), 132.

worldwide, but what distinguishes the case of the Phoenician civilization is that without the archaeological excavations, that were undertaken starting in the mid-nineteenth century, there would be nothing to be seen, nothing to be known about them. There were no imposing pyramids to be seen, no sphinx, nor any massive temples to indicate the millennia of Phoenician presence. Renan, his predecessors, and those who followed in his footsteps had to excavate and conjure up this past and bring it back into memory. It is in this creative role that archaeology influenced identity in the eastern Mediterranean, and it is in this manner that European archeologists influenced nationalist movements in Lebanon in the decades to come.

When delineating the motives and ultimate goals of European archaeologists working in the field in North Africa and the Levant, Asher Kaufman stated:

Archaeological excavations in the Levant became intertwined with French Christian missionary work. As of 1867, the historical research of the ancient civilizations in Algeria and Tunisia became inseparably affiliated with the new Bishop of Algeria, Monsignor Lavigerie. He entrusted the excavations in Carthage to the hands of the Père Blancs and, by so doing, set the example that would be followed in geographical Syria by the Jesuit mission. Lavigerie's archaeological work in North Africa, just like the Jesuits' in Syria, was strongly tied to his Christian convictions. In this missionary enterprise, excavation of the ancient world was perceived as the unearthing of the missionaries' own cultural roots. It was a belief shared by most Europeans, lay and clerical alike. By exposing the ancient past of the Biblical world, Rome, and Greece, they believed they were actually excavating and exposing their own progenitors and thus demonstrating their own cultural, scientific and political superiority³⁵⁸

The Eurocentric views of the archeologists working on the ruins of Carthage, and later on the Phoenician ruins present on the Syrian coast, dominated much of the way they interpreted their findings. In fact these views, which are probably better referred to as beliefs, directed their research efforts long before anything was found in the field, and once ruins were uncovered they became pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that had to be fitted in place to form the picture of world

³⁵⁸ Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 23.

history that was already present and very clear in the archaeologists' minds. The fact that the historical research as well as the archaeological studies were dominated by the Catholic clergymen of the Jesuit order gave their work on Phoenician civilization a missionary aspect. This missionary aspect brought, in addition to the scientific methods employed in the field, an ideological agenda to this supposedly scientific inquiry. The Catholic missionary world-view, which coincides with the European colonial one, became an inherent part of their archaeological research, and an integral part of the histories they produced.

What is significant at this point is to examine how the missionaries' role in the uncovering and rediscovery of the Phoenician civilization affected the views of Lebanese lay historians when they wrote their histories of Lebanon. The Maronite Church and Maronite Church historians may not have subscribed to the Phoenician hypothesis as Kaufman stated, but nor did they oppose it, they simply ignored it and left it out of their own historiography. But if the Church historians did not tackle the issue at hand this did not remove the religious element that the missionaries brought into play: the western Christian Catholic world-view, omnipresent in every aspect of the research done on the Phoenician civilization by the Jesuit missionaries, came to dominate the works of Lebanese lay historians who later subscribed to the Phoenician hypothesis and who claimed a Phoenician origin to the Lebanese nation that they imagined.

When working within these parameters, one can deduce that adopting the Phoenician hypothesis that asserts an ancient Phoenician origin for the population of Lebanon and transforms that population into a "people" in the nationalist sense, is tantamount to subscribing to a Eurocentric perception of world history and an overall European world vision. This understanding of world history would suggest the centrality of European nations, those who have a history, and a world beyond Europe that is to be understood only in relation to the general

trajectory of European history. This world beyond Europe represents in many ways Europe's past, the primordial essence that Europe evolved from as it came to represent modernity. This objectified Orient was to be located geographically in the regions where these ancient civilizations thrived, Greater Syria being an integral part of that geographic denomination. By laying claim to the Phoenician past and distinguishing the area of Lebanon from its surroundings, Lebanese lay historians and nationalist intellectuals would remove Lebanon from this past and render the region into Lebanon's Orient, the past of the modern Lebanese nation that is an integral part of Europe.

When comparing European and Japanese attempts at objectifying an Orient within which to locate the past of the nation, Stefan Tanaka stated:

“The East” was important, in fact essential, to the understanding of national culture in Western Europe and Japan. The orients formulated in (European) Oriental studies and (Japanese) *toyoshi* were necessary for self-comparison, for the extraction of resources (tangible and symbolic), and to offer help. In these orients both groups found a beginning from which they could create a narrative that demonstrated a connection to that which was universal and belonged to their own heritage: as primordial, it was the Origin; as primitive, it demonstrated ties to purity; and as a remote realm, it possessed the proper mystique, to which only certain people can gain access.³⁵⁹

This identification of the self, or the nation in this case, through the “Other,” i.e., the Orient that represents the modern nation's past and origin, becomes very relevant in the case of an emerging Lebanese national identity, one that seeks to assert an inherent and categorical difference with inner Syria as its *raison d'être*, and one that strives to present itself as an integral part of a European community of nations, on a par with, and having a special relationship with, France.

³⁵⁹ Tanaka, *Japan's Orient*, 269.

This quest for equivalence involved a claim on history and the appropriation of a specific geographic region to be designated as the origin of the modern embodiment of the nation. In the case of Japan, Tanaka stated that “the Japanese quest for equivalence conflicted with western history: both East and West were contending over the same region for the origin that gave authority to their own philosophy of history. By laying claim to the Asian spirit, Japanese intellectuals sought a new beginning, one which predated that of Europe.”³⁶⁰

In the case of Lebanon one cannot speak of a different philosophy of history when comparing the writings of Lebanese nationalist historians and their European counterparts. But subscribing to the Phoenician hypothesis, and invoking that specific past, served to address similar concerns as those addressed by Japanese historians’ objectification of the Asian continent. On that matter Tanaka asserts: “this strategy served to equalize the East and the West and also to narrate positivistically the true emergence of the Japanese present within a universal framework... Asia became the object of both Europe and Japan; the Orient and *toyo* served as that primordial past from which both had progressed and would continue to advance.”³⁶¹

In the case of Lebanon, equalizing the emerging Lebanese nation with its European counterparts was through making Phoenicia the object of modern Lebanon; it served as Lebanon’s primordial past and its illustrious antiquity. By asserting that Lebanon had a unique past, to be located in ancient Phoenicia, was to assert that Lebanon was modern and an integral part of world history, rather than constituting a part of Europe’s past.

The choice of Phoenicia also brings with it the association with ancient Greece, the paramount element in Europe’s posited past and antiquity. In positing this hypothesis, modern Lebanon is granted a past and an antiquity that had always interacted with Greece and formed a

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 270.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

historical continuity with it. Lebanon's past is thus inherently related to Europe's past just as modern Lebanon is to be posited as being a part of Europe.

The uniqueness of Lebanon is also asserted in the specific Phoenician civilization, a fact that gives a sort of prevalence to the Lebanese nation. "Being 'the source of' establishes one's own view as historically prior to others and enables one to create a narrative that distinguishes one's own culture from another."³⁶² This element is omnipresent in the Phoenician past that is posited by Lebanese nationalist historians, especially when they emphasize that the Phoenician alphabet was the one used by the ancient Greeks to formulate their own, a historical claim that can be used to establish a Lebanese history prior to that of Europe and without which a European civilization, to which Lebanon belongs, could not have emerged.

In the case of Japan, Tanaka spoke of numerous attempts to separate Japan from the Asian continent in order to create a geographical divide that distanced the Japanese nation from that alien oriental sphere and distinguished them from that Orient which is then rendered into their past. He stated: "This separation of Japan from the alien continent was achieved by locating specific spatial and temporal units—such as *shina*—within *toyo*. This process helped to objectify the geographic entity of China and establish it as belonging to Japan's past."³⁶³

It is interesting to extrapolate this observation onto some of the elements that are inherent to the Phoenician hypothesis in writing Lebanese history. The Mountain, which is already a pivotal element for Lebanese nationalists in the way it represents Lebanese national identity, coincides with the eastern borders of ancient Phoenicia. The fact that Mount Lebanon itself was not an integral part of ancient Phoenicia is undermined in this narrative, as well as the fact that the Phoenician city-states were scattered along the eastern Mediterranean coast well into what

³⁶² Ibid., 108.

³⁶³ Ibid., 19.

constitutes modern day Syria and Palestine (now Israel). Regardless, Mount Lebanon represents a geographic divide that distinguishes Modern Lebanon from the Orient just as it separated Phoenicia from the hinterlands of geographic Syria. This becomes more relevant when one takes into account that modern Lebanese nationalist and lay historians, while they posited themselves as the inheritors of that illustrious ancient civilization which constitutes their primordial origin, chose the exonym granted to that civilization by the ancient Greeks and employed by modern European historians, instead of resurrecting the name that the so-called Phoenicians used to designate themselves: Canaanites—a name that neighboring Palestinian nationalism at times posits in defense of its identity against colonial Zionist claims.

One drawback for choosing the indigenous name for Phoenician civilization is that it doesn't distinguish the people of the coast from the inhabitants of the Syrian interior. Canaanite or *Can'ani* may be the historic indigenous name, but it is a name that is inclusive of much of Greater Syria, when all that the Lebanese lay historians and nationalist intellectuals were seeking was exclusivity and separation.

By asserting the Phoenician-ness of the modern Lebanese nation and the Lebanese state, these Lebanese historians and intellectuals were not reacting, or rather *not only* reacting to an emerging transnational Arab identity. In fact these nationalist intellectuals and lay historians were shedding the designation of “Oriental” and joining European history not as the object of historical study but as a subject possessing knowledge about history. Claiming that the Lebanese were Phoenicians meant that the Lebanese people were not a gathering of numerous Oriental peoples belonging to Europe's past, but that they were one, unique and modern. In fact, claiming a Phoenician past is an assertion of a Lebanese nation that belongs to modernity, as a European

nation with a distinct and glorious history, and that the beginning of this illustrious history is to be found in ancient Phoenicia.

Historical Evolution and Variations on the Hypothesis

The Phoenician hypothesis employed in understanding the ancient history of the Eastern Mediterranean, which would subsequently be appropriated to posit an ancient and distinguished past for the Lebanese nation, went through a series of variations and adaptations that accompanied its various deployments. The span of time that passed while the hypothesis evolved into maturity coincided with major historical developments that were bound to have major effects on the way history was written and the way the past was perceived. The definition of the self and the other, and of the nation and the state, would be altered in this period, and these alterations would be reflected in the different interpretations of the Phoenician idea. It is also significant that the intellectuals who tackled the issue, and who adopted the idea as a viable hypothesis for a Lebanese history, came from different backgrounds and operated in different fields, and this meant that they did not always perceive the hypothesis in identical ways, nor was their deployment of it identical in form or in intention.

As Asher Kaufman stated: “Towards the end of the 19th century, the content of writings by Maronite clergy on Maronite identity slowly changed. Religious history still dominated, but as a result of the expansion of scientific knowledge about the region, other details were added to the origins of the ‘mountain people’.”³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 37.

Tarikh Suriyya [The History of Syria] by Archbishop Yusuf al-Dibs can be considered the foremost example for this significant shift from a clerical historiography, one that was centered on the Maronite Church and Mount Lebanon, to a historiography that focused more on Greater Syria as a geographic and cultural entity, and that addressed a lay as well as a clerical readership. The first of eight volumes of this book was dedicated to the history of the ancient peoples of Syria. It included an introductory part that dealt with a general history of Syria and the wider region, from biblical times until antiquity, with mention of the origins and interactions of the different peoples and civilizations in these parts.

The first part of the book also included two treatises, one about the Hittites, and the other dedicated to the ancient Phoenician civilization. The part of the book that focused solely on the Phoenicians was significantly longer and more detailed than the other sections. It started by delineating the origins of the Canaanites and their earlier homeland along with the reasons for their migrations into Syria and their settling in those parts.³⁶⁵ What followed were detailed accounts on the origin of the name of the land, Phoenicia, the geography and natural boundaries, as well as an account of the cities of ancient Phoenicia. Al-Dibs proceeded then by covering the history of the two most significant Phoenician city-states, according to his account, Sidon and Tyre. This section delved into the different aspects of Phoenician civilization, from their seafaring trade, their colonies, the political conditions that were prevalent in different eras, as well as the interaction of the Phoenicians with the other peoples of the region. The other chapters of the treatise focused on the conditions of Phoenicia under foreign rule, mainly the Assyrian and the Persian eras, with a genealogy of kings and battles as well as key events that he considered to be turning points in the history of the region. The final four chapters al-Dibs dedicated to the

³⁶⁵ Al-Dibs, *Tarikh Suriyya* [The History of Syria], 241.

contributions of the Phoenicians to world history and the cultural influence they left behind on world civilizations. Maritime trade was covered in one chapter, and crafts and craftsmanship, of course, with a focus on purple dye, were covered in another. The final two chapters were respectively devoted to the alphabet and the pagan religion of ancient Phoenicia.

What is interesting in the contribution of al-Dibs is the fact that it came from within Maronite Church historiography while tackling topics that were in no way integral to the Church's view of itself and the community of its adherents. The past that al-Dibs invoked was not consistent with the previous historical writings of Maronite clergymen who chose different starting points for the histories they wrote, be it in the early days of Christianity or the rise of the Maronite Church.

When writing about the contribution of al-Dibs and the place his writings occupy in advocating and propagating the Phoenician idea, Kaufman stated:

Al-Dibs deals with the origins of the Phoenicians, their commercial skills, their colonies, crafts, the invention of the alphabet and other subjects that later, over the 20th century, became the basis of the assertion of the new Phoenicians of their rich past and their invaluable contribution to human civilization. Al-Dibs made no direct link between the ancient dwellers of Lebanon and the current inhabitants, but he created a continuous chronological narrative from the ancient Phoenicians to the present inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. Later this description would be adopted and extended by Lebanese who were reconstructing the history of their emerging nation.³⁶⁶

What is evident is that al-Dibs did not posit the Phoenician civilization as the origin of a modern Lebanese nation, his book was in the end about Greater Syria, and a true Lebanese national idea had not yet emerged. The Phoenicians according to al-Dibs were not in any way portrayed as the proto-Lebanese or the ancestors of the nineteenth century population of Mount Lebanon. Instead al-Dibs sheds light on the Phoenician past while stressing its significance in

³⁶⁶ Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 38.

world history, and at the same time establishes a chronological link connecting ancient Phoenicia to modern Lebanon as a part of one general history. Although al-Dibs himself would not venture further with this notion of a Phoenician past, later historians and Lebanese nationalist intellectuals would be influenced by his work and they would capitalize on this chronological narrative and develop the idea to its logical conclusion in the Phoenician hypothesis.

Tannus al-Shidyaq was the other nineteenth century historian whose writings influenced the propagation of the Phoenician idea and paved the way for its adaptation by subsequent nationalist intellectuals and ideologues. The contributions of al-Shidyaq and the significance of the historiography that he produced is best summarized by Asher Kaufman in the following passage:

Tannus al-Shidyaq wrote several books of history, but his most celebrated work was *Kitab Akhbar al-A'yan fi Jabal Lubnan* [The Book of Information about Notable Families in Mount Lebanon], written in Beirut in 1857-1859....In a Chapter entitled "*Mudun Lubnan al-Finiqiyya*" [Lebanon's Phoenician Cities], he described the eight principal cities of the Phoenician coast and provided a short historical account of each. He referred to the mountain and the coast as an integral part of Historic Lebanon and, in doing so came closer than any other writer of his time to defining the borders of Greater Lebanon. He asserted that a Lebanese entity had existed since time immemorial, not only as religious group or a familial estate but as a self-conscious society. The fact that al-Shidyaq's book begins with a historical survey of the Lebanese people starting with the ancient Phoenicians is very important for understanding the development of the Phoenician idea in Lebanon. It shows us that, even before Renan's celebrated mission to Lebanon, a lay Maronite wrote about the Phoenicians in a history book, although he stopped short of describing the dwellers of Mount Lebanon as direct descendants of the ancient Phoenicians.³⁶⁷

Of course what merits mention at this point is that al-Shidyaq might have been more influenced by earlier clerical historians and archeologists who preceded Renan in writing about

³⁶⁷ Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*.

the Phoenician past. This undermines the importance and the novelty of al-Shidyaq's book and it reduces his role as a local innovative historian of the non-clerical tradition. The fact that al-Shidyaq mentions the Phoenicians in his book is simply another indicator of his exposure to a European tradition of historiography that was becoming more accessible at the time.

It also becomes evident that at a very early point the stage was being set for an eventual mature Phoenician hypothesis in asserting an ancient, evident, and distinct Lebanese nation. Even though neither the historiography nor the nationalist sentiment were mature enough at this time to make the final leap, the roots of an emerging national identity appear in the work of al-Shidyaq. For the first chapter of al-Sidyaq's book titled *Fi hudud Lubnan wa sukkanuh* [On the borders of Lebanon and its people], which he defines as coinciding with "four days in Phoenicia,"³⁶⁸ is indication enough about how different this work is from the previous works of history produced in Lebanon up until that point.

What is also significant about the writing of al-Shidyaq is that he seems to have contributed, just like al-Dibs, to a chronological narrative that links ancient Phoenicia to the modern population of Lebanon. In his second chapter, titled "*Mudun Lubnan al-Finiqiyya*" [The Lebanese Phoenician Cities], al-Shidyaq names the cities of the coast and presents a brief history of each. All of the histories of these cities evidently begin with the Phoenicians, followed immediately by the Medieval and then the modern period, with a comment on who lived in these parts at the time when al-Shidyaq was writing. This continuous chronological narrative links ancient Phoenicians to the nineteenth century inhabitants of Mount Lebanon and provides an unbroken historical narrative that progresses from early antiquity to the present day.

³⁶⁸ Al-Shidyaq, *Akhbar al-a'yan fi Jabal Lubnan* [History of the Notables in Mount Lebanon], 7.

By invoking the Phoenician past and placing such an emphasis on ancient Phoenician civilization in the histories they wrote, both al-Dibs and al-Shidyaq set precedents that would be followed by subsequent generations of historians and intellectuals in Lebanon. It must be said that neither al-Dibs nor al-Shidyaq wrote explicitly about a Phoenician descent or a Phoenician origin for the modern day inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. In the case of both historians, the Phoenicians were not yet posited as the ancestors of a Lebanese nation, thus a Phoenician hypothesis as a possible myth of origin had not fully emerged at this point. But what must also be mentioned is that these two historians set the cornerstone for the Phoenician hypothesis, without which further historiographies would not have been influenced by, or dedicated to, Phoenician civilization and its place in the histories of Lebanon that were being written. Despite the difference in the form of their historiography, and the difference in the role that was ascribed to the Phoenician past, al-Dibs and al-Shidyaq were both local starting points for the Phoenician hypothesis (which they borrowed from Orientalist and colonial archeological accounts) and their works were monumental in its influence on historiography and identity in what was to become in later decades the state of Greater Lebanon.

Golden Age and National Rebirth

The Phoenician myth would play a pivotal role in the formation of national identity in Lebanon in the early twentieth century. The Phoenician past became the representation of the

ancient golden age of the eternal Lebanese nation. The ancient Phoenician civilization would become the proof of the existence of an ancient Lebanese nation since early antiquity, and the achievements of the Phoenicians would come to represent the contributions of this Lebanese nation to world civilization. These claims would be posited as testimony and a justification, first to the existence of a Lebanese nation since time immemorial, and second, for the right of this Lebanese nation in modern times to claim a state for itself as an equal member of the international community of nations. This new historiography would spill over into the public realm and political discourse through the press, the publications that the political and cultural elites were exposed to, as well as the national agitation that these same elites led and directed.

When writing about the role of the past in forming national identities and the way an invented golden age can influence nationalist sentiments, Anthony Smith stated: “Through the rediscovery of an ethnic past and the promise of a collective restoration of the former golden age, national identity and nationalism have succeeded in arousing and inspiring ethnic communities and populations of all classes, regions, genders and religions, to claim their right as a ‘nation’, territorial communities of culturally and historically cognate citizens, in a world of free and equal nations.”³⁶⁹

Within the parameters that Smith mentions, the Phoenician civilization falls perfectly into the role of a golden age that must be resurrected and restored. The Phoenician past is the origin of the modern Lebanese nation and the proof of its ancient existence as well as its worthiness for proclaiming a state for itself. By positing the ancient Phoenicians as the ancestors of the present population of Lebanon, the nationalist intelligentsia attempted to reconstruct and reshape their

³⁶⁹ Smith, *National Identity*, 170.

heritage into an ‘old-new’ national identity.³⁷⁰ This is best described by Smith when he states: “transcending oblivion through posterity; the restoration of collective dignity through an appeal to a golden age; the realization of fraternity through symbols, rites and ceremonies, which bind the living to the dead and fallen of the community: these are the underlying functions of national identity and nationalism in the modern world, and the basic reasons why the latter have proved so durable, protean and resilient through all vicissitudes.”³⁷¹

The changes brought about by the political developments of the early twentieth century cast their shadows on the Phoenician idea. The notion of being a Phoenician began to take a new political dimension that was absent in the nineteenth century; clearly by July, 1919, the term “Phoenician” bore a definite political weight, implying non-Arab, non-Syrian, pro-Western orientation.³⁷² The roots that were present in the historiographies of al-Dibs and al-Shidyah in the mid-nineteenth century were re-deployed in a new form and with a new agenda. “During the political strife that led to the formation of Greater Lebanon, the Phoenician identity crystallized and was used by Christian Syro-Lebanese as the historical justification for the existence of a distinct national community, founded on the ethnic and cultural non-Arab similarities of its members.”³⁷³

Phoenicia in Early Twentieth Century Historiography

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 171.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 163.

³⁷² Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 85.

³⁷³ Ibid., 110.

Among the main changes that took place in historiography, and when it came to the issue of the Phoenician civilization, was the mention of Lebanon, the nation state, as one and the same as Phoenicia. This is evident in the writings of historian Yusuf al-Sawda as early as 1919. In his book *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, al-Sawda stated: “it is wrong to consider Lebanon and Phoenicia as two distinct words meant to designate two entities that are independent of each other.”³⁷⁴

Al-Sawda’s book is relevant on many levels, it represents a sample of the kind of historiography that was being produced at this point in time, and it contains all the characteristics that would define the completely mature Phoenician hypothesis. The first chapter of the book is titled *Lubnan al-finiqi* [Phoenician Lebanon], a title that suggests an eternal Lebanon existing since time immemorial; the recorded history of its early antiquity is the Phoenician civilization. In the very first paragraph al-Sawda equates Lebanon with Phoenicia. His argument is a nationalist one relying on the notion of the Phoenician ancestry of the modern Lebanese nation. The main argument of al-Sawda is that “every nation has a passion to go back to its origins and display its illustrious ancestors to enrich its present from its own past, Italy is the inheritor of Rome, and the modern Greeks are proud of the accomplishment of the classical Hellenic civilization. The civilized world, he writes, recognizes the right of the Greeks and Italians to take pride in their origins, and respects the greatness of the ancestors in their modern descendants. Europe even assisted Italy and Greece to achieve independence to restore that glory and in admission of that virtue. Therefore, if any nation should take pride in its origin and its ancestors, it is the Lebanese nation. Lebanon must remind others, and be reminded that it is the cradle of civilization in the world; it was born on its slopes and grew on its shores, and from these shores the Phoenicians carried it to the far reaches of the world. If Europe has a duty towards Italy and

³⁷⁴ Al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, 15.

Greece, it has much more so towards Lebanon, the country that was a teacher to Rome, and a mother to Greece.”³⁷⁵

What is remarkable in al-Sawda’s writings is the degree of factual certainty the Phoenician hypothesis had reached and its entanglement with politics and political ideology. Al-Sawda posits the Phoenician past as an undisputed fact and takes it to its ultimate conclusion. The Phoenician hypothesis, now an undisputed historical fact, is his vessel to declare difference from Syria and the Arab-Islamic surroundings.

The hypothesis is also a vessel to claim the right for an independent nation state, and for Europe’s support in achieving that goal. Al-Sawda clearly mentions that Europe is indebted to Phoenicia, and therefore Lebanon, and the Lebanese nation deserves at least as much support as, if not more than Italy or Greece. This is explained by claiming that Phoenicia was an integral part of European civilization, and was in fact the root of it from which Greece and Rome grew out. In this one paragraph from the first chapter we can see the Phoenician hypothesis transformed into historical fact in all its lineaments; anti-Arab, pro-Western, exclusivist nationalist, and assertive of the political demand for the establishment of the nation state, and invoking an ancient golden age that must be resurrected and restored. All these are the elements that enter into the Phoenician idea in the years leading up to the declaration of Greater Lebanon and further in time until independence and beyond.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

Relation Between Lay and Clerical Historiographies

Several facts are evident when examining a history book like *Fi sabil lubnan* by al-Sawda. First, it is a secular lay history, independent of the historiography of the Church. And second, it is a nationalist history, with its ultimate goal of demanding a nation-state for the Lebanese nation. The second fact suggests that the author is actively engaged in formulating a Lebanese communal identity and national sentiment. What is interesting about the way that al-Sawda proceeds in doing so is his manner of bringing together the different origins and histories that make up the posited Lebanese nation in his time. To bring the different histories into one narrative al-Sawda employed the theory of fusion, achieving, thus, a solution to the different ancestral claims that had been made about Mount Lebanon. This fusion, however, remained restricted to a Christian and primarily Maronite Lebanese nation.

Al-Sawda's fusion theory is a perfect example of the way in which the more recently discovered Phoenician origin was made to fit within the mold of a pre-existing Christian Maronite myth of origin. In his second chapter, devoted to the history of Lebanon in Roman times, al-Sawda wrote about Christianity in Lebanon, the ebb and flow of religious conversion and pagan resistance, until the Maronites arrive in Lebanon from northern Syria. Al-Sawda stated that they spread across Mount Lebanon and mixed and fused with the local population until they became one Christian people gathered by the unity of religion.³⁷⁶

This notion of "fusion" is not uncommon in history-writing; al-Sawda was not bringing in a new concept to the study of the Phoenician past. In fact when writing about the Phoenicians

³⁷⁶ "Asbaha al-lubnaniyyun sha'b masihi wahid tajma'uhum wahdat al-din." Ibid., 40.

themselves, Baramki, who had written one of the most influential books about the Phoenicians in history, stated: “In process of time the Aegeans, or ‘People of the Sea’ as the Egyptians called them in their annals, were assimilated by the inhabitants of Phoenicia and by about 1100 B.C. the fusion of the two races, the proto-Phoenician Semitic Canaanites and the Indo-European Aegeans, gave birth to a new and virile nation of seamen which quickly stepped into the gap left by the displaced Achaeans, and established a thalassocracy over the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean and the Aegean.”³⁷⁷

This perception of human history as a series of migrations and fusions of races and nations is tied to the assumption that progress is not generated locally in isolated areas, but it is through the mixing of different displaced groups that it comes about in human history. This is not, however, the way al-Sawda employed the concept of fusion; his was not an attempt at explaining progress, but it was rather a attempt at bringing together two incompatible myths of origin to create one exclusive Christian Lebanese identity.

Al-Sawda wrote about a Lebanese nation that was first and foremost a “Christian element”³⁷⁸ with its patriotism mixed with its religion, and its nationalism fused with its sect. This Lebanese nation took refuge in Mount Lebanon and warded off all foreign incursions while the rest of Syria was repeatedly overrun by conquerors. This Christian identity that he spoke of was later to develop into the identity adopted by modern Lebanese nationalism.³⁷⁹

It is important to note that the third chapter in al-Sawda’s *Fi sabil lubnan* was dedicated to the Mardaites, the Church-adopted myth of origin. This is one more example of how Maronite

³⁷⁷ Baramki, *Phoenicia and the Phoenicians*, 10.

³⁷⁸ Al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, 40.

³⁷⁹ “al-Qawmiyyah al-Lubnaniyyah hallat mahal al-‘unsuriyyah al-masihyya.” Ibid., 43.

Church historiography permeated lay and secular Lebanese historiography, and even dictated the direction that this lay historiography would take.

The Mardaite myth of origin, for all logical purposes, contradicts on every level the Phoenician myth of origin. The Mardaites were supposed to be mountain dwellers, as opposed to the seafaring Phoenicians. In one version of the Mardaite myth they hail from eastern Anatolia and settle in the highlands of Lebanon in the seventh century as opposed to the Phoenicians who are thought to have been the indigenous population of the eastern Mediterranean coast. But this did not stop al-Sawda's Lebanese Christian nationalism from appropriating the Phoenician past and including it in a single exclusivist myth of origin that rendered even the Phoenician hypothesis closed off to any Arab influence. Al-Sawda categorically listed every myth written about in Maronite Church historiography, and dedicated for the purpose of claiming insularity, independence, and exclusivity for the Maronites in Mount Lebanon. The Mountain Refuge hypothesis, the Mardaite hypothesis, the mythical Mardaite wars and their independence in Mount Lebanon, all of these notions are to be found in this book, written in the twentieth century by a lay Lebanese historian. When it came to these specific myths concerning Christian Maronite insularity and particularity, al-Sawda recast al-Duwayhi and Ibn al-Qila'i to serve the avowed purpose of his own nationalist narrative. The authoritativeness that was asserted among the Maronite clergy concerning their knowledge of their own past is redeployed in the lay histories that were dedicated to advocating an independent Christian Lebanese state.

One can deduce from this that Phoenicia in history, as in the writings of al-Dibs and al-Shidyaq, may not have been an answer to Arabism, and it definitely was not a call for an exclusivist anti-Arab Lebanese Christian identity. But Phoenician Lebanon in historiography was definitely a riposte to the claims of Arabism, and it was definitely a call for a Christian Maronite

Lebanon free of ‘*al-’ajnabi*’³⁸⁰ [the foreigner], the Other that al-Sawda wrote about, who was in this case, Muslim, Syrian and Arab.

Fi Sabil Lubnan, which was published in 1919 in Alexandria, Egypt, where Pharonic histories were being produced to assert the origins of modern Egyptians with the builders of the pyramids, was indicative of the times and conditions of the region and the Christian Lebanese intellectual elites at the end of the First World War.

The significance of the book and the tradition that it belonged to, are to be found in the persistence of the concepts and the myths invoked in it as well as the hypotheses it posited. Five decades later, in 1972, and again in 1979, the Lebanese Dar al-Nahar publishing house would publish *Tarikh Lubnan al-hadari* [The Civilizational History of Lebanon] also by Yusuf al-Sawda. The same concepts, the same myths of origin, and the same legends and hypotheses concerning Lebanon and the Lebanese nation, appeared again in the text. In fact, *Tarikh Lubnan al-hadari* was a reiteration of *Fi Sabil Lubnan* fifty years after the latter had been published, and on the eve of a Civil War (1974-1990) that expressed itself in identitarian and sectarian terms hoping to establish the meaning of Lebaneseness once and for all.

By the time of the second edition of *Tarikh Lubnan al-hadari* came out in 1979, Lebanon had already undergone four years of civil war, one foreign invasion and one foreign intervention, and scores of massacres. The conflict in question, while being extremely complex and multifaceted, did involve the questions of defining Lebanon the state, the Lebanese nation and identity, and how this nation should interact internally, as well as with the others in the region. Yet the historiography about Phoenician Lebanon seemed to transcend the reality of Lebanon the country and enter the realm of mythology in the works of certain Lebanese intellectuals.

³⁸⁰ Al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil Lubnan*, 40.

Phoenicia in Contemporary Historiography

In his history of Lebanon, *A House of Many Mansions*, Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi tackled the question of the Phoenician past in Lebanese historiography in a chapter titled *Phoenicia resurrected*. When recounting the Phoenician hypothesis he stated: "The whole story, put together, provided an illustrious pre-Arab antiquity for Lebanon around which a superficially appealing Phoenicianist theory of the Lebanese past could be developed."³⁸¹ Salibi's book *A House of Many Mansions* was as much about history as it was about historiography in Lebanon. The book was divided into themes relevant to history-writing in Lebanon. What is interesting in the case of Salibi is that in his previous works, dedicated solely to the history of Lebanon, he did not deal with the Phoenician hypothesis or even assign any chapter or subchapter to it. He only evoked the hypothesis in *A House of Many Mansions* when he critiqued and rejected it. What is noteworthy in this case is that Salibi had ample chance to cover the Phoenician past in his previous works, if not in his book *Tarikh lubnan al-hadith* [The Modern History of Lebanon] which dealt with the modern history of the country from the days of the Shihabi Imarah to the present, then at least in *Muntalaq tarikh lubnan*. [The Roots of Lebanese History], but the roots of Lebanese history in his case went back to the time of the Arab-Muslim conquest of Greater Syria.

Salibi is a good example of a Lebanese historian who does not subscribe to the Phoenician hypothesis and who provides an important critique of it in his writings. When he produced his own narratives of the history of Lebanon he did not include the Phoenician past.

³⁸¹ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 171.

Salibi in fact did not cover any part of the history of Mount Lebanon before the Arab conquest. It is only when he wrote about the narratives of other historians that he mentioned the Phoenician hypothesis, and only as one myth of origin that is present in Lebanese historiography.

The debate about the Phoenician hypothesis among historians writing on Lebanon took many shapes over the years. In many cases, the type of history s/he wrote would reveal the historian's stance. A history of Lebanon dealing with the modern era would hardly have a place for Phoenician civilization in it. A book such as Fawwaz Traboulsi's *A History of Modern Lebanon* would definitely be void of any Phoenician references on the level of historical analysis. While a book like Philip Hitti's *Lebanon in History* gives an account of the historical evolution in Lebanon since the Stone Age, with ample attention to the Phoenician past.

What is evident is that a historian who perceives and who wishes to posit Lebanon as a modern nation-state, conceived in the twentieth century and with possible roots as a political entity reaching back to the nineteenth century, would not find any relevance in the Phoenician past since it doesn't touch on her or his research and arguments and thus it is of no interest to her/him.

While a historian who wishes to posit Lebanon and the Lebanese as a nation existing since time immemorial and an ancient country that was resurrected in modern time, would delve into the details of ancient Phoenicia in order to give an account of the civilizational history of Lebanon.

In the Maronite Church historiography, of course the stress is on the origin of the Maronites and never on Phoenician antiquity. This is evident in works published long after Yusuf al-Dibs' *Tarikh Suriyya*, [The History of Syria]. When Pierre Dib and later Butrus Daw

wrote their histories, they restricted their research to the history of the Maronite denomination and the later emergence of a Maronite Lebanon, without making any references to the Phoenicians.

The debate among historians was never an isolated phenomenon. In a politically divided society like that of Lebanon, competing national myths were not confined to the realm of historiography. Different groups invoke these myths, to stress difference from, or superiority over, others within the Lebanese nation. As a myth that is linked to an era that predated the emergence of Christianity and Islam the Phoenician myth, in theory, lends itself more easily to the multi-religious population of Lebanon. The problem however is that other myths of origin are much more closely tied with the confessional identities of the different Lebanese communities.

For Lebanese Muslims, the claim of descent is rarely that of a local community that was conquered, converted and Arabized over time. The more popular claim of origin is that of conquering Muslims who arrived with the Arab conquests of the seventh century, or of warlike tribes who re-conquered the land from the crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The claims that are adopted by historians from Sunni, Shi'i, as well as Druze communities contradict the Phoenician myth in the same way that the Mardaite claim of origin does. What is different for these communities however, and what sets them apart from the Maronites is the fact that they all have a demographically more significant presence in neighboring countries than in Lebanon. This is also true of Greek Catholics as well as Greek Orthodox Christians. These two communities are also present in greater numbers in Syria.

These facts are among the many reasons why within the layers of identity for the non-Maronite communities of Lebanon, a transnational one is competing with the local. An Arab

ethnic identity, if not always Arab nationalism, is much more evidently present in the Muslim milieu, while a Syrian identity and a Syrian nationalism competes with the local Lebanese nationalism among Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox as well as Muslims in the country. With the exception of the Maronites, no other Lebanese community is linked solely to Mount Lebanon, and Maronite historians are the most active in advocating a fusion hypothesis that brings together the Phoenicians with the Maronite Mardaites. This situation renders even teaching history in Lebanese schools a problematic process. No agreement exists as to what history to teach and even public schools are having problems in modernizing the curricula. Not even the ministry of education has been successful in sponsoring a unified history book for public schools so far.

The power and persistence of the Phoenician hypothesis was underlined by Asher Kaufman when he concluded: “the ancient Phoenicians are still there to be used as a legitimate backdrop in the history of Lebanon and its people, demonstrating that the long years of preoccupation with the ancient inhabitants of Lebanon planted those Phoenicians deep in the heart of the much disputed Lebanese national consciousness.”³⁸²

What must be added to Kaufman’s statement is the fact that the resilience of the myth did not render it into a unifying one. Much like everything else in the socially and politically fragmented Lebanon, not only is the myth itself contested, but even for those who accept it, the meaning of subscribing to the myth is not agreed upon.

³⁸² Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*.

Being Lebanese is not a contested fact for most of the population of Lebanon, but there is no consensus on what it actually means to be Lebanese. Similarly, the Phoenician myth might not be rejected by an absolute majority of people within Lebanon, but this hypothesis did not succeed in becoming a unifying factor and did not bring about an inclusive national identity. Instead the Phoenician hypothesis, like everything else in Lebanon, was broken down along the lines that divided and governed Lebanese society.

One could say that the Phoenician myth of origins like the other mythological claims of clerical and lay Maronite historians produced the very fragmentation and sectarianism of Lebanon precisely because of the exclusivist and sectarian claims of the historians who employed them. A fact that kept much of the population of what would become the Lebanese state external to their imagination of the nation.

Conclusion

Based on historical evidence, Church historians do not make a connection between the Phoenicians and the Maronites, and the Christians of Mount Lebanon are not mentioned as the descendants of the Phoenicians even in the works of clergymen who address in detail the Phoenician past. Unlike the lay historians who adopt the Maronite Church's myth of the

Mardaites, the Church historians themselves never attempt a similar move towards reconciling the two theories of origin.³⁸³

While lay historiography had to artificially integrate the clerical historical narrative into its own by advocating notions of fusion of different possible origins, clerical historiography never attempted such an endeavor, but simply relied on the power and authority of its narrative and its own myth of origin. While one can speak of the lasting influence of the Phoenician idea and its role in historiography, the Mardaite myth of origin advocated by the clerical historiography seems to exceed it in the frequency of its usage, and what is noticeable is that it is not challenged by historians as often as the former.

The Phoenician myth of origin may not have been an answer to Arabism, and in fact it preceded the rise of Arab nationalism. But an examination of the available historiography shows that while the Phoenician idea was part of Orientalist historiography's and archeology's needs to create and unearth pasts of nations and peoples, the first books that consecrate the idea of a Phoenicia as Lebanon appeared well after the rise of Arab nationalism and must be seen in relation to it.

The shape of the nascent Lebanese state and the political system that dominated it informed the narratives of early Lebanese nationalist historians. The state was inclusive of non-Maronites but the state system was designed to preserve Maronite privilege and supremacy. For nationalist historians witnessing Maronite political ascendancy in a yet precarious nation state the urgency was to advocate a vision of history that legitimized the existence of a Lebanese political entity independent from the Syrian interior and where the Maronites held a

³⁸³ "His [Patriarch Elias Huwayyek] Patriotic horizons, however, never exceeded the beginning of Christianity. Even when he spoke about "our ancestors"... Even al-Dibs, who wrote extensively on ancient Phoenicia... could not write about the pagan Phoenician ancestry of his flock." Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia*, 38.

disproportionate degree of power in the political system. The presence of non-Maronites had to be acknowledged while Maronite privilege had to be justified. Those historians were also faced with different narratives that challenged their views of history and their political aspirations. Arab and Syrian nationalisms mainly, but the Mandate powers themselves as well. This situation meant that early on, before the Phoenician hypothesis could play a unifying role in Lebanon, it was employed in a nationalist narrative to serve an oppositional task that was anything but conciliatory or inclusive of a regional identity, Syrian or Arab.

In either case, the Phoenician idea and the Phoenician myth of origin were never compatible with Arabism or Arab nationalism. The exclusionary identity already present in historiography was incompatible with a reading of history that accepted the Arabness of a significant part of the population. The inability to reconcile a Phoenician past with an Arab identity is evident in the absence of any fusion hypotheses that brings the two suggested historical roots together, even though Orientalist accounts do show that the Canaanite population of historic Syria including the coast migrated from the Arabian Peninsula.

Advocating a simultaneously Arab as well as Phoenician Lebanon in history-writing is problematic at best, and in popular culture the two roots have become mutually exclusive. It is not, however, the Phoenician past that brought about an exclusionary Christian Lebanese identity, but it is the already powerful idea of a Christian Lebanon, long advocated by Maronite Church historians that led to the employment of the Phoenician myth to advocate the distinctiveness of the Christian population. By advocating a fusion theory that brought the Phoenician myth of origin together with that of the Mardaites, Phoenician identity was rendered into an exclusivist identity that sets the population of Lebanon apart from their Muslim-Arab surroundings. And though it may not have been initially devised as a reaction to Arabism, it

would be deployed exclusively for that purpose since the period that briefly preceded the declaration of Greater Lebanon and until this day.

When examining the role of historians in imagining nationalism one has to keep in mind that nationalist historians operate from within an emerging nationalism. The nationalistic tendencies of such historians are evident in the presentist fallacies that they commit when they project the nascent nation that they are a part of into the past that they are writing about. The nation that the historians belong to had to have existed since time immemorial, and it is that element that dominates the narratives of nationalist historians.

When Shlomo Sand referred to historians as the ‘masters of memory’ and ‘producers of culture’ it was because nowhere are the ancient roots of the nation as vivid as they are in the narratives produced by historians. The ancient nation can only exist in such narratives and it is for that reason that the imagined community that Benedict Anderson spoke of, can only be imagined in some cases by historians. It is on this level that the creative role of the historian becomes evident and the role of history-writing in generating identity becomes clear.

Since it is in the nature of nationalism to seek ancient roots, the historians become the bridge between the modern nation and its ancestral past. If there is a certainty that a Lebanese state and nation exist today, the uncertainty lies in what roots to claim for this nation. It is here that history-writing plays its most creative and most persistent role. The hypotheses posited by historians are the cornerstone of national identity.

When the nationalists seek to lay claim to the ancient roots of their nation they turn to their historians, their experts of origins. The claims made by historians carry with them the potential to generate identity and define what the nation is in the present. And it is for that reason

that as long as the claims of historians vary concerning the origin of the Lebanese nation, and as long as these claims run along sectarian lines, the definition of Lebaneseness will remain contested territory among the different confessional groups in Lebanon today.

Epilogue

A specific tradition in history-writing evolved within Maronite Church historiography upholding specific claims that have been sustained by church historians until the present. These claims address the question of the identity and the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronite Church, which constitutes the metahistorical task of Maronite Church historiography. Asserting an ancient and unbroken orthodoxy necessitated advocating subsequent historical claims concerning the history of the Maronite Church and community as well as the history of the region. These asserted claims were not in accordance with the historical evidence available at the disposal of these clerical historians, and available to us today. These claims were also deployed in different socio-political settings, over a protracted period of time and in varying narratives. The role and function of the historian were not uniform in these instances, as every historian recast these claims in a different narrative with a different purpose that performed a unique oppositional task.

Developing and sustaining this tradition in historiography was achieved through a process of exclusion from the tradition for those who contradicted its core claims, and selectiveness in using historical sources to support and defend these same claims. These tactics were employed when writing about specific events pertaining to controversial episodes in the early history of the Maronite Church and of the Maronite community in Mount Lebanon.

The shifting narratives within this tradition had far reaching implications on both lay and clerical historians in Lebanon and subsequently on national identity in the Lebanese Republic today.

This tradition went through different phases and involved different mechanisms employed by Maronite Church historians in advocating specific absolute truths about their Church and its development. The effort to confirm the adherence of the early Maronite Church to orthodoxy was recast by certain Maronite clergymen and historians in a narrative that represented an exclusivist and exclusionary political and sectarian history. They offered an interpretation of the early history of their church and of the early presence of a Maronite community in Mount Lebanon that suggested a state of perpetual antagonism and hostility between a purely Maronite Mount Lebanon and a wholly hostile surrounding.

At the time of the first exposure to nationalist ideologies, Maronite Church historians posited their specific vision of the history of their church and of the history of the region. They appropriated an Orientalist and a colonial discourse and contributed to the formation, codification, and propagation of an exclusivist Lebanese Christian national identity. This exclusivist identity posited the Arab Muslim milieu as its “Other” and is subsequently incompatible with the multi-sectarian landscape of the Lebanese state and the Lebanese nation today.

When scrutinizing the historiography produced by Maronite Church historians one will find that regardless of the era and the generation of historians under scrutiny, common traits dominate certain aspects of history-writing within the Maronite Church. Even when considering that some of this tradition predates Ranke, when writing about specific sensitive topics concerning the past of the Maronite Church the selectiveness and internal inconsistencies in dealing with historical evidence is reproduced by successive generations of church historians until the present.

Regardless of the existing methodological debate on the role and nature of historiography, on the levels of both facts and interpretation these historians did not abide by any accepted historiographical method or methodological criteria when they treated the evidence at their disposal. The avowed purpose of history-writing for these historians was evident in their works, and it was not consistent throughout the time span of this tradition. This proves that the perpetual orthodoxy of the Maronite Church is the metahistorical project of Maronite Church historians and it defines clerical historiography even when the temporal conditions change and the political project of the historian is different.

The tradition in historiography that I focused on survived through centuries of transformative events that reshaped Mount Lebanon and the modern Lebanese republic. The early signs of its emergence date back to the late seventeenth century, when the Maronite Church was still going through major reforms to achieve full integration with the Church of Rome. The following century would witness the spread of the Maronite community to the southern part of Mount Lebanon, and the rise of the Church as an economic and political powerhouse that overshadowed the power of the traditional notables. The mid-nineteenth century would see Mount Lebanon undergo the Egyptian occupation and reforms in the 1830s as well as the Ottoman *tanzimat*, along with foreign intervention and entry into the world economy. It would also witness the rise of sectarian politics and a civil war in 1860 that would ravage Mount Lebanon and end with the complete destruction of the old regime and the establishment of the autonomous political entity of the *Mutasarrifiyyah*. This phase ended with the First World War, the disintegration of the Ottoman state and the imposition of French mandatory authority over all of Syria.

The declaration of the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon in 1920 and of official independence in 1943 signified the expansion of the borders to their current proportions. This development was accompanied by the codification of sectarian politics over a much larger population with a significant Muslim presence within the newly acquired territories of the nascent republic. The disproportionate distribution of power in the Lebanese state and the tensions it created would be the determining factor behind the civil war that ravaged the country from 1975 until 1991. The sectarian political system that is still in place is one of the determining factors for instability that plagues the country's political system until this day.

The central claims that form the content of this tradition were upheld throughout all of these changes, despite the fact that the purpose of the historians differed over time. The power of the discourse has been in its ability to conform to many different narratives. That said, this tradition has been hegemonic, but it has not been entirely so. Some critical historians have already rejected it and provided ample evidence to refute many of its claims. The main focus has been so far on the content of the tradition, an important endeavor in its own right. But what I have pointed to as well is the role of the form of these histories. Since the shape of the narrative carries meaning in of its own regardless of content, it is important to consider the changes that occur on the level of the different narratives employed by the historians. And since the narrative is never arbitrary, it is always answering a question and performing a specific task, I felt it necessary to point to a specific moment in the nineteenth century when the narrative begins to take the form of a national epic and what that signified for Maronite communal identity.

When the national epic form began to dominate the historical narrative, it was the national epic of a specific *éthnie*, and was therefore an exclusive Maronite epic that first emerged in clerical historiography. The advent of print capitalism transformed this internally generated

tradition of the Maronite Church into a widely read and accessible history, and through both clerical and lay historians it entered the nationalist discourse and helped define the emerging Lebanese nation.

Critical Lebanese historians had scrutinized Maronite Church historiography but they had not given ample attention to the way the claims of this tradition affected national culture. The focus thus far had been solely on the dissertative aspect of this historiography, but what I tried to reveal was that alongside the dissertative aspect the narrative aspect of history is the main conduit through which the historian plays her/his role in nation-making.

Historians are considered ‘masters of memory’, and it is through that capacity that history-writing plays a creative role not initially envisaged for it. It imagines, generates, and perpetuates the nation. Maronite historians are not the only ones producing identity in Lebanon. I have not given much space for non-Maronite historians despite the significance of their contributions. The problem would have been in coping with the transnational identities that Muslim, Druze, as well as other Christian communities in Lebanon might advocate. The Arab and Muslim identities are always competing with the local Lebanese nation. Syrian nationalism attracts many adherents from all confessional groups in Lebanon including substantial numbers of Christians. The fact remains that all other communities are present in significant numbers in neighboring countries, which leads to a conflict on the level of the layers of identity between the local and transnational. The Maronite community is the only one with a myth of origin tailored specifically for a Maronite Mount Lebanon. The problem with this narrative is that it advocates an exclusivist identity, and with the expansion of the mandatory boundaries in 1920 to include new territories and incorporate them into the Lebanese state, the non-Maronites in the narrative

are interlopers and they are only Lebanese because they reside within the boundaries of the Lebanese state.

One of the significant characteristics in Lebanese historiography is that it has no controlling narrative. In fact, when trying to go back in time to establish ancient roots for the Lebanese nation, any attempt at a controlling narrative breaks down. With the powerful confessional identities of Lebanon's present, Lebanon's past cannot be made into one thing. With nationalist historians being prone to presentism, modern day divisions are projected onto the past and they produce multiple myths of origins and multiple identities.

The notion of layers of identity is not uncommon in the region with the conflict between local and transnational identities being prevalent. Arab and Muslim identities compete with local identities of individual Arab nation states. This is evident in Iraq with both a Babylonian as well as an Arab myth of origin. In Egypt the Pharaonic also competes with the Arab myth. The Jordanian case does not only include Nabatean and Bedouin myths, but a Palestinian Jordanian aspect as well. The Tunisian example involves a complimentary relationship between a Carthaginian/Phoenician myth as well as an Arab myth of origin. In all these cases history-writing plays a productive role in generating identity and imagining the nation. The difference however lies in the fact that very few cases involve societies whose myths of origin are split along sectarian lines, as is the case in Lebanon. With confessional identities as strong as they are in Lebanon they cannot form a single *étnie* within the nation state. Historians writing and imagining the nation's past, from the presents they inhabit, do not write about a single myth of origin, and therefore they never generate a single inclusive nation.

That said, one cannot assert that Maronite hegemony in history-writing has been overthrown. It is true that writing the history of Lebanon is no longer restricted to Maronite circles, clerical or otherwise. It is also true that the histories produced by non-Maronite historians often challenge the narratives of these historians, especially on matters pertaining to identity, origin, and historical development. But the fact that more non-Maronite historians are writing histories of Lebanon is an indicator of the acceptance of the Lebanist idea and of Lebanon as a final homeland to all its citizens, Lebanon has simply become a *fait accompli*. Certain claims, that were Maronite in origin, gained acceptance over time as political realities gradually informed the historical narrative. The idea of Lebanon is the main determining contribution of Maronite historiography, and it is in that idea that this historiography had its most lasting impact. What did occur, however, was the weakening so far of the metanarrative. A unified masternarrative has been scarcely produced by clerical historians in the post civil war era Lebanon. Secular historians are even less predisposed to contribute such productions since a unified identity does not exist. The yet unresolved conflict over a unified history book for official use is only an indication of the multiple identities and multiple readings of history that exist in Lebanon. This resulted in a lack of a controlling narrative that is normally conducive to the propagation of a unified national ethos. This fact is a reflection of the presence and agency of the numerous Lebanese denominations along with their different interpretation of what constitutes their core national identity and what it means to be Lebanese.

This historiography began with an ecclesiastical quest for inclusion into Roman Catholicism on Maronite terms. It has since been recast through emplotment in numerous narratives with varying purposes and in order to perform a myriad of oppositional tasks. From an exclusivist and exclusionary political history with the nineteenth century rise of sectarian

politics, to a nationalist narrative in the twentieth century that attempted to preserve Maronite privilege and political ascendancy. Central claims have been preserved as absolutes within this tradition. To some, they have become facts of history and the raw materials of the historian. And as another whirlwind of developments and instability shakes Lebanon in the twenty first century, they are available to be recast and redeployed in new narratives that perform new oppositional tasks, which eventually inform national culture and communal identity in Lebanon.

Topography and Geographic Conditions

Mount Lebanon represents a rugged mountain range running northeast to southwest facing the eastern Mediterranean coastline; there is a rise from sea level to a parallel mountain range of about 2,000–3,000 m (6,600–9,800 ft) in less than 40 km (25 mi), and heavy downpour of winter rains has formed many deep clefts and valleys in the soft rock. These deep valleys have often served as the administrative boundaries of the districts of Mount Lebanon. East of the Mount Lebanon Range is the Beqaa Valley, an extremely fertile flatland about 16 km (10 mi) wide and 129 km (80 mi) long from north to south. At the eastern flank of the Beqaa rise the Anti-Lebanon Range and the Hermon extension, in which stands Mount Hermon straddling the border between the modern states of Lebanon and Syria. Mount Lebanon contains few rivers, and its harbors are mostly shallow and small. Abundant springs, found to a height of 1,500 m (4,900 ft) on the western slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, provide water for cultivation up to this height; this lack of agricultural resources has been a feature of the economy of the Mountain and of its demographic conditions. The layout of the terrain means that rainfall, trapped by the Lebanon Range, is less abundant on the eastern slopes, thus restricting the population in those parts to areas close to the Beqaa Valley floor. This also meant that trade routes did not run through the Mountain since far easier routes ran, south and north of it, from the cities of the interior towards the coast. The broken terrain as well as the vegetation it supported made conditions less favorable to a pastoral nomadic lifestyle, rendering Bedouin settlement throughout history, albeit frequent, less abundant on the western slopes of the mountain range.

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