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“Nahni wa x fendik”¹ (We and the Others): Negotiation of multiple identities in the Maronite Community of Cyprus

In this study I will examine the negotiation of multiple identities in the Maronite Community of Cyprus which comprises four villages in the occupied territories (Kormakiti, Asomatos, Karpashia, Agia Marina) and a large number of displaced population in the area of Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol, and especially the extent to which some identities are negotiable, while others are not.

I will analyze the concept of collective identity in relation to religious and ethnic factors (Maronite, Arab origin vs the Orthodox Cypriots of Greek origin), differences within the community in relation to language (use of a particular Arabic dialect only by the inhabitants of Kormakiti, while other villages speak the Greek-Cypriot dialect) and a deliberate identification with Lebanon through Catholicism and similarities in history.

Key words:

Maronites, Cyprus, negotiation of identity, religious identity, linguistic identity, ethnic identity

This paper was prompted by an incident in August 2010, during my fieldwork in Cyprus. As I was walking along the street with a friend, a Maronite lawyer, who was accompanying me to the Nicosia Public Library, I met, quite by chance, a Cypriot lady acquaintance of mine, whom I had not seen for several months. She greeted me and asked me if I was still engaged in research on the Maronites, expressing her surprise that I found anything of interest among these uncivilized «peasants». Needless to say, I was most embarrassed, given that my companion was a Maronite. He then stepped in and asked her politely whether she had actually met any Maronites. Her reply was negative but she added that she had friends who knew some and that generally she had heard unfavorable comments.

¹ Part of the title is written in the Cypriot Maronite Arabic dialect of the village Kormakitis in Cyprus.

This incident places yet again the object of Ethnology and Anthropology, the “other”, the “different”, and perhaps even the “exotic (Segalen 1989, Todorov 1989), not only to people who are far away from us and whose way of life has nothing in common with ours, but also within our own society and our own culture (Alexakis 2003, Hustrup 1993). As it can be seen very clearly in the episode cited, in most cases the figure of the Other is prefabricated and associated with behavioral stereotypes, before the encounter or any other approach, and it is no surprise that very often scientific function tries to fit this idea to reality.

This paper is based on fieldwork that began in 2002 and deals with the Maronite Community of Cyprus. This time-depth has given me the opportunity of studying the Maronites’ change in behavior, mentality and attitude regarding certain subjects over the course of ten years. The main reason for these changes is that in this decade the political and the social status quo in Cyprus have changed, primarily due to the freedom of movement across the green line, the rejection of the Annan Plan by the majority of Greek Cypriots, and the stalemate in the attempt to find a solution to the Cyprus Problem.

The study is developed along three axes:

Firstly, we shall examine historicity, that is, the process of constituting the minority through the historical and social contexts (Troubeta 2000).

Secondly, we shall analyze the concept of collective identity in relation to national/ethnic, religious and linguistic factors between the Orthodox Cypriots and the Maronites.

Thirdly, we shall try to pinpoint those elements that enhance more clearly the dynamic of the relationship between ethno-religious identity and political claims, as this is developing on Cyprus today.

A) Historical review

▪ The Place and the People

Cyprus has a population of 818.200, of which the Maronite community consists of approximately 4.800 people, most of whom live in the Maronite neighbourhood of Nicosia, while approximately 100 people remain in enclaves in the occupied territory.

The Maronites of Cyprus consider that they originate from Lebanon and they are Greek-order Catholics in religion. Their Archbishop is elected by the Holy Synod of the Maronite Church, seat of which is in Lebanon. In their liturgy Cypriot Maronites follow the Eastern rite of their Church, they use the Aramaic, Greek and Arabic language (Hadjiroussos 2002, Hill 1972, Koumarianou 2009).

The Maronites are citizens of the Republic of Cyprus and have the same rights and obligations as the rest of the population, except that they are not eligible for election to the Presidency (Koumarianou 2004).

▪ Name

The name *Maronites* derives from St Maron, a hermit who died in the early fifth century and was revered by the inhabitants of the wider region of Mount Lebanon, or, according to a different view, from the energetic Bishop and leader John Maron, who zealously supported Monophysitism at the end of the 7th century.

However, during the First Crusade the Maronites were forced to submit to the papal authority of the Patriarchate of Antioch (1182) and to accept later (1215) the teaching on the two natures of Christ. In 1736 the latinization of the Maronite Church was completed with the acceptance of the decisions of the Latin Council of Trent (1545–1563) and the Roman catechism, which was translated into Arabic (1786), the acceptance of the filioque in the Credo, the teaching on “transubstantiation”, the use of unleavened bread in the Mass, the Holy Communion of the laity with bread only and not wine (the right of Communion with both bread and wine is exclusive to the clergy), the recognition of the post-Schism (1054) Western councils as ecumenical².

▪ The Maronites in Cyprus

The presence of Maronites in Cyprus dates from the eighth century and reached its peak in the twelfth century, under the Lusignan kings, and later with the defeat of the Crusaders in Tripolis in Lebanon, between 1292 and 1307, when they arrived in waves from the area of Mount Lebanon.

This period coincides with the heyday of the Maronites’ presence on Cyprus. The Lusignan rulers granted them many privileges, firstly because they converted to Catholicism and secondly because they helped the Crusaders during the First Crusade.

The start of Ottoman sovereignty over Cyprus (1571) dealt a big blow to the Maronite Community. For the duration of Ottoman rule, the Maronites suffered persecutions and oppression both from the Orthodox Christians and the Muslims. Furthermore, the Orthodox clergy violently seized many of their churches and monastic properties. The Ottomans, in their turn, forced many Christians from both communities to convert to Islam. Numerous Orthodox, Catholics and Maronites became Muslims and were known as *Linovamvakoi* – a name of metaphorical character, a compound of *linari* (flax, linen) and *vamvaki* (cotton) – which refers to their dual identity, at once Christians and Muslims, as well as to the tortures to which they were subjected, in order to make them change their faith (‘the passions of the flax’) (Hill 1952).

In 1878, the Ottomans ceded the administration of the island to the British, while in 1914 Cyprus was annexed to the British Crown and in 1928 was declared officially a British colony. The British authorities were intent on modernizing rather

² Interview with Father Stephanos Marangos, Archimandrite of the Greek-order Catholic Church, parish of the Holy Trinity, Acharnes (Athens, October 13th 2010).

than abolishing the millet system. The establishment of two separate Educational Councils and the introduction of teachers and teaching material from the two mother countries (Greece and Turkey), contributed to the identification of the Greek Cypriot children with the ideals and ambitions of their compatriots in Greece, in parallel with the ambitions of the Turkish Cypriots who considered Turkey their motherland (Loizos 2001). And whereas the 1881 census was taken on the basis of purely religious criteria, the 1946 census was taken on ethno-religious criteria (Turks Muslims and Greeks Orthodox Christians) – a reaction of the British colonial government, which led to the encouragement of the Turkish Cypriots' national consciousness as counterweight to the Greek Cypriots' ambitions for union with Greece (Polat 2002, 98–116).

Thus, the British colonial government conceived at first a bi-religious model of managing the population, which developed into a bi-ethnic model, succored by the awakening of Greek and Turkish national consciousness and underpinned by acts of violence in the territory. The clash between the two different political ambitions led to the London and Zurich accords (1959), a compromise which officially established and legitimized the bi-communal structure.

According to the clauses of the 1960 Constitution, implemented after Cyprus gained her independence, the Maronites, like the other religious groups – Armenians and Latins – had to choose to which of the two communities they would belong, independently of ethnic origin. In 1969 they were recognized officially as a religious group.

Until the time of the Turkish invasion the Maronites lived all together in four villages in the northern part of Cyprus, close to Nicosia: Kormakitis, Assomatos, Agia Marina and Karpasha, and numbered approximately 5.000 persons. Their main occupation was agriculture since around their villages there are sizeable areas of cultivable land. The Turkish invasion in 1974 radically changed their life. By until 2003 the Maronites fell into two categories: the displaced and the enclaved, who are protected under International Law by the Geneva Convention (IV Convention of 1949), the Hague Regulations of 1907, as well as by more general customary international law.³

The determination and the courage of the enclaved Maronites, mainly of Kormakitis, who have opted to remain in their homes and in this way to keep alive the presence of an indigenous population in their areas, is an important element, a fact which they will, of course, exploit accordingly after the solution of the Cyprus Problem.

On account of the displacement and the continuous daily contact with the Greek Cypriots, they are being assimilated rapidly by the Greek Cypriot community, mainly through mixed marriages. With their forced displacement they lost the

³ Article 73 of the Hague Regulations guarantees the rights of the enclaved, prohibits the displacement of members and exempts them from military service.

social network and tissue which had enabled them to keep their religion and identity for centuries.

Minority and Collective Identity

The concept of identity is linked essentially with categorizations and classifications of content and container. The main trait of collective identities is always the existence of stereotypes, that is, of real and hypothetical traits that each group has.

The identity construction of the Maronite community in contemporary Cypriot society has been defined by three facts: their adequate population; their opting to belong to the Greek-Cypriot Community in 1963; and their recognition as a religious group in 1969.

Typical of minorities is the promotion of their characteristics and the construction of ideologies upon which the cohesion of the group is structured (Barth 1969, 13–15). These characteristics are transformed into symbolic properties (Bourdieu 1982, 94), which are attributed collectively to the members of the group, attaching to them a particular behavior with regard to its social milieu.

“We Maronites are very hard working. In this respect we differ from all the others. Wherever we go, we’re successful! Also, we’ve got solidarity between us; we help one another, not like the Orthodox who tear out each other’s eyes. And our Church supported us a lot” (Solon, 65 years old).

So, the catalytic factor in constituting the group is not the common characteristics of the social actors, but their opposition to the characteristics of the dominant group. It is these characteristics which give the group its ethnic nature, together with the subjective belief in belonging together, since its members share common historical and contemporary experiences, representations of a common origin as far as their identity is concerned, as well as mutual solidarity, creating an imagined community (Anderson 1991, 6).

Ethno-Religious Identity

According to Smith’s definition, the ethnic group is *‘a discreet – on the basis of name – population which shares myths of origin, histories and culture, which maintains a relationship with a specific geographical region and is possessed by a sense of solidarity’* (Smith 1986, 32, Aggelopoulos, 1997).

The approach to the formation of the Maronites’ ethnic identity will be anthropological, that is, an emic approach. The questions posed are: what does their particular identity constitute for the Maronites, what do they consider as their national origin, how do they understand their position in Cypriot society and how do they see their relation with the other ethnic groups in the wider region? We should add here that of significant value for the formation of identity is the process of eth-

nicization (Bukow 1993, 61). The usefulness of the term “ethnicization” lies in the fact that it reflects two levels of formation: a) hetero-ethnicization that results from the way in which the dominant group perceives and presents the said group, b) auto-ethnicization, which refers to the way in which this group defines itself, in reaction to the surrounding social environment. Fundamental principle of the phenomenon is the fact that, as a rule, ethnicization is imposed by the external environment and is adopted by the group itself (Hargreaves 1995, 36).

In 2002, when my involvement with the Maronites commenced, I tried to understand what it means for them to be Maronites. In the interviews I had gathered then, there were two identities which expressed them: Maronite and Cypriot. *‘Only in the last 30 years have I begun to feel I’m Cypriot. Before that I was only a Maronite, because that’s the way they behaved towards me. I mean, for them I was something like a Turk, uncouth, illiterate, something alien to the place. Probably they did not know us, they didn’t know our history. Today, however, we live and work together with them and we marry Orthodox women. Things have changed’* (Giannis, 63 years old).

Today, eight years later and for the needs of this fieldwork, I asked the same question to the same informants. The answer I received was is that they felt they were Maronites and indeed Lebanese Maronites. *‘We are Maronites and we originated from Lebanon. Our ancestors came here hundreds of years ago, but we are of Lebanese origin. Our priests, our saints, our pilgrim shrines, all our history relates to Lebanon.’*

This change in national consciousness in recent years is not fortuitous. In Cypriot society Greekness is identified with Orthodoxy, and whatever does not fall within these bounds is considered alien and potentially hostile. *‘The Orthodox hounded us and they still hound us. You see this church? (the church of St Romanos at Vouni). It was ours and the Orthodox took it by force. There was a dragoman, Hadjigeorgakis Kornesios, who stole our properties and made them his own; he is to blame for everything. He and the Orthodox are to blame for the desertion of our villages. If you look at the old community documents, all the villages here, below the Pentadakylos, were Maronite. Now, there are hardly four that are ours.’* Although this event which the informant describes happened about 250 years ago, the content of this memory shows the existence of two layers within it: one layer consists of hackneyed memories relating to historical data, while the other touches emotionally each individual.

The ethnic identity of the Maronites today includes a particular devotion to Lebanon and denotes, *inter alia*, the subconscious identification of religious and ethnic identity, through identification with one State (Lebanon) and one religious group in that State, with which they consider they share a parallel course and mythology. This is the direction in which the continual cultural exchanges with this country tend, as an effort to strengthen the sentiment of national origin.

The mythology underpinning the Maronites of Cyprus in relation to their homologues in Lebanon can be summarized as follows:

A) The history of the Maronites in Lebanon was shaped in the isolation of the mountains and in the endless struggle with the other religious groups. The writings of their clergy forged the idea of Maronite identity, which is based on Catholicism and concurrence with Rome, on uniqueness and on militancy for survival in relation to the other religious groups (Spagnolo 1971).

B) The Maronites once were and still are a nation whose cradle is Lebanon, and they translated their religious identity into nationality on terms of political legitimacy, unity, action and authority (Moosa 1986, 175).

Thus, the Maronites in Lebanon, given their long-standing ties with West, throughout their history, do not feel they belong to the Arab Muslim world (at least the majority of them). Concurrently, they feel threatened by the assimilative practice of Islam. In the same way, the Maronites in Cyprus feel that their religious and national identity is threatened by the dominant Orthodox ideology. Since their religious singularity gives them a political existence, it acquires in their eyes the value of a symbol (Koumarianou 2010).

So, living in a State that recognizes religious groups, which acquire political representation in Parliament but within which their status appears inferior, the Maronites in Cyprus desire their identification with Lebanon, where the system of government allocates political and institutional power proportionally between the religious groups, and the Prime Minister is always a Maronite (Salibi 2005).

However, the difference is that whereas the Lebanese Maronites have turned towards the West and deny a pan-Arab identity (Hagopian 1989), the Cypriot Maronites, particularly the Arabic-speaking ones, have turned towards their Lebanese homologues, not just towards religion, but also by developing an Arab identity with them. This is something that the political leadership of Cyprus does not want at all, since in popular sentiment the identity "Arab = Muslim" and "Muslim = Turk" holds sway.

The Christophias government, fully aware of the rift being created and the risk that recognizing the Maronites as an ethnic minority entails, has made a significant turn-around in its policy, with the aim of achieving their better incorporation in Cypriot society. Very recently, on 18 January 2011, the President of Lebanon, General Michel Suleiman, visited Cyprus, President Christofias declared his particular respect for the role of the Maronites of Cyprus in Cypriot society. And he went on to say: *'The Maronites of Cyprus are our brothers and sisters, whom our government assists in various ways to preserve their cultural identity'*. At the same time, the President of Lebanon had contacts with leading members of the Maronite community and heard their problems (Mavrohannas 2011).

These recent political changes have reinforced relations between the two sides to an unprecedented degree. In recent years, there has been an upsurge in excursions of organized groups to Lebanon, where the travellers usually stay in monasteries. The founding of association has led to official exchanges between the municipal authorities.

Maronite relations with the *Greek Cypriot* community are characterized by mutual mistrust and very often by highly negative sentiments, as the incident I described at the beginning attests.

“I wonder how you can involve yourself with them. Personally, I can’t stand them. My kid is jobless, while all the Maronites are sitting pretty in civil-service posts. [President] Kliridis supported them a lot. And not only he. They all help them” (Mary, 52 years old, Orthodox).

The negative stance of a large part of the Orthodox population is not without real grounds, since the Maronites have managed to negotiate, through the intervention of the Pope, certain rights and freedoms for those enclaved in the occupied part of the island, which does not hold for the Greek Cypriots of Rizokarpaso⁴. This fact in itself created much ill-feeling in the Greek Cypriot community, which was exacerbated after the announcement of additional rights for the Maronites in the North. Specifically, Maronites wishing to settle permanently in the occupied part of the island are entitled to the necessary papers and identity card from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), so that they may participate fully in the economic and social life of the pseudo-state. Many Maronites have taken advantage of this option and at the same time have received from the Cypriot Government financial aid to resettle (Sotiriou 2011). This tactic further fuelled the climate of mistrust as to what extent the Maronites are or feel themselves to be “Greek Cypriots”, since they used their special religious identity in order to gain greater profit – depending on circumstances – that is to what extent someone can be simultaneously a citizen of the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC.

Within this climate of mistrust and disparagement, the Maronites promoted the superiority of their faith: Time and again in my presence, when they started discussions about which doctrine is the best, they all ended up saying that Maronitism, and by extension Catholicism, is much more human. Whenever an opposite view was expressed, there were conflicts. This is proof that their religious identity is not negotiable.

“Essentially, we have no differences with the Orthodox, even though they don’t want us. But we accept them in our Church and when our people marry Orthodox we don’t demand that they be baptized as Maronites. But you (addressing me) ask us to change faith and to become Orthodox. But our own religion is much more human. For example, Purgatory, which gives our people the chance to pray and to beseech, so that whatever you’ve done your soul can, in the end, go to Paradise.

⁴ Since 1998 some significant steps have been made to facilitate the enclaved Maronites and their families. The enclaved are able periodically to visit their families in the free region, and vice versa, whereas for the Greek Cypriots with enclave relatives there was the age limit of 16 year. This restriction does not apply to the Maronites, which after submitting an application and paying a deposit bond are able to visit their relatives. Even the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Resolution 1333 (2003) calls for Greek Cypriots living in the north to be granted “at least the same rights as those already allowed to Maronites”.

That's why we go frequently to Lebanon. To beseech the Virgin Charrisa and St Siarbel for our dead ones and also to help us to return to our villages" (Marinos, president of the ecclesiastical committee of Agia Marina, Skylloura).

In my discussions with them, they put the argument of origin to the fore, with the aim of justifying their claims, reversing their minority status to "minority superiority" and supremacy.

In relation to the Turkish Cypriots, the discourse is of those who remained in the occupied north of the island.

"We've survived so many centuries and so many persecutions. We've never forgotten our faith. And those they call 'Linovamvakoi' were in reality Maronites. A large percentage of Turkish Cypriots is made up of these, and that's why they love us and we get on well with them. Whatever happens, we will try to survive. That's why we get on with everybody. It's in our interest" (Ninos, 45 years old)

Later in their discourse they will express the stereotype of the Turkish Cypriot, who is identified with the Turk. *'What is there to be afraid of from them? You've got to have your way, we manage to deal with them and we get along fine with them. The Turk has to be dealt with in a certain way'*

At the same time, they consider they have much in common with the Turkish Cypriots and indeed they stress that in the past Turkish Cypriots were Maronites who changed religion. That is why they think the Turkish Cypriots are amicably disposed towards them and very often in mixed villages there are intermarriages between Muslims and Maronites. It is noteworthy that the children born of these unions chose whether they would become Maronites or Muslims. Such incidents show the mind-set of the groups, whose only way of comprehending the differentiation and division is as a process of family division or splitting off from the ethnic group.

Linguistic Identity

Part of the Maronite identity is connected with language, as Kormakitis, the main Maronite village, is distinguished by the fact that its people speak a variant of Arabic called Cypriot Maronite Arabic (CMA). The dialect has never been written and it is transmitted orally through everyday conversation.

According to Alexander Borg, an eminent linguist who studied it, the most intriguing aspect of Cypriot Maronite Arabic (CMA) is that it is a survival of the Medieval Arabic dialects spoken in the urban centres of the Near East, especially Baghdad. This raises questions about the historical links between the urban centres of the Near East and the social upheaval caused by the Crusades.

The fact that CMA is solely the vernacular tongue of Kormakitis village and not of the neighboring villages is very interesting. Kormakitians attribute this fact to their origin from the village of Kour in Lebanon. *'We feel Lebanon is our*

second native country. I am from Lebanon, from a village called Kour. And from this name comes the contemporary name of our village: 'Kour ma zit', which means, 'we came here but Kour didn't'. This is what our ancestors used to say when they arrived on the island. The memory of the village is so strong that we kept speaking Arabic'.

At the same time, the dialect has yielded to the impact of the Greek language; Greek vocabulary loans are ubiquitous. The linguistic term “code switching” is used to describe the process whereby speakers change from one language to another, depending on the situation. Parents eager to improve the future social standing of their children do it voluntarily.

Of great importance for the survival of CMA is the Accession Treaty of Cyprus to the European Community, as EC decisions concerning minorities already exist. The Council of Europe has declared CMA as a seriously endangered language, since only a few hundred people still speak and use it and those who do are all over 40 years of age. Furthermore, ever since 1993 CMA also features in the European section of the UNESCO Red Book Report on Endangered Languages.

However, in its Initial Report (2004) the Republic of Cyprus declared only Armenian as a minority language but not CMA, which was excluded and designated as a dialect spoken by relatively few and thus in no need of protection.

Under constant pressures from both the Maronite associations and the Council of Europe, on 17 September 2009 the Ministry of Education and Culture submitted to the Ministerial Council a memorandum relating to the obligations of the Cypriot government regarding recognition of CMA as a minority language.

It is important to stress that recognition of the Maronites as a linguistic minority with regard to Aramaic involves the whole community, because that language is used in church services. In contrast, their official recognition as a linguistic minority with regard to CMA involves only those persons living in or originating from Kormakitis. CMA recognition will be extremely beneficial to Kormakitian landowners whose land has been actively safeguarded by their enclaved relatives. Conversely, this is clearly not the case of many others originating from the other villages, whose property has been stripped and who are understandably more concerned with illegal possession than CMA recognition.

Issues of Identity and Political Claims

According to the Manchester School – Bailey, Epstein, Turner and Gluckman – politics is essentially a struggle between contestants for socially-defined prizes. From that perspective, politics is a constant struggle between groups in a society (Swartz 1966).

The basic disadvantage of ethnic categories lies in the fact that they obscure social conflicts (which are the driving force of constituting groups and minorities) concealed behind ideological symbols.

The goal of the Maronite community is to gain by all means the status of a Minority. Without such status, the rights continue to apply but may become more difficult in practice. For this reason, the Maronites have taken measures and actions of a conscious political character. In order to acquire this status, they try to maintain a *sufficient number of speakers* and to preserve and stress in every possible way their otherness.

Their main claims are: a) protection and promotion of their religious, ethnic and linguistic identity b) participation in the Parliament (the right to vote and to play an active role in parliamentary committees);⁵ c) to ensure the right of property ownership and exploitation in the occupied territory; and d) to be allowed to return to their villages and settle under conditions of security.

Perhaps one of the most important legal rights to emerge from this recognition is also the *principle of local self-government* or *local autonomy*. The principle of autonomy states that: *'The participating States make every possible effort to protect and to create conditions that contribute to the defense of the national, linguistic, cultural and religious identity of the minorities, by instituting the appropriate local or autonomous administrative bodies, which will respond to the particular historical and local conjunctures of these minorities and in accordance with the policies of the State'*.⁶

Autonomy of this kind can be applied to issues of local elections, residence, land management, protection of nature and cultural heritage, education, etc. In a word, autonomy is essential for real control in a *defined area*.

The reluctance of the Cypriot government to attribute the status of minority to the Maronite community and to recognize CMA as a language stems from the implications this action may have in the settlement of the Cyprus problem, as it demands mutual agreement and cooperation with the so called "Republic of Northern Cyprus" – a phantom state that seeks legal basis for its existence. For instance, during the discussion on the Annan Plan, among the things to be implemented immediately after the agreement was the return of Maronites to their villages. This is why over 90% of Maronites said "Yes" to the Annan Plan, but when this agreement was rejected, the government accused them of putting their personal benefit above the general public benefit (Chrisostomidis 1997).

Epilogue

The ascertainment that social groups become aware of their particular identity when they find themselves in inter-relationship with the "Other" (Cohen 1985, 3) has been accepted by Social Anthropology since the late 1960s, when Barth (1969) published his monograph entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. The pri-

⁵ UN Doc. E/CN.4/1992/SR.17, para 19.

⁶ Copenhagen Document of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe) Human Dimension, para 35.

mordial traits of an ethnic identity function as symbolic systems which express and conserve the oppositions within the society. Consequently, their value as components of identity can be transmuted easily and negotiated, since it depends on the fluctuations in social rivalry (Balibar 1988, 133).

First of all, the Maronites present a local/territorial identity, which is linked also with localness, and they are distinguished by fragmentation into elemental units, of loyalty and participation, which maintain tense relations of rivalry, competition or negative reciprocity between one another.

Their ethnic identity includes a particular devotion to Lebanon, with which they consider to share a parallel course and mythology. The continual cultural exchanges with this country tend in this direction, in an effort to strengthen the sense of national origin and to promote their case at an international level.

Their relations with the Greek Cypriot community are to a large degree negotiable, particularly in recent years, depending on the political conditions and the community's claims both at State and international level.

The main element of opposition between the two communities is identified at a religious level (Geertz 1968). It is well known that religion can be used successfully as an assimilative force of national/ethnic communities. If they are incorporated in central value systems, they can even legitimize relations of power (Lekkas 1986, 189).

The Maronites have good relations with the Turkish Cypriot community, to the annoyance of the Greek Cypriot community. Namely, the beneficial relation of the emotions, duty and religious solidarity prevails.

One other very important element in claiming their recognition as a *linguistic* minority is the use of the very interesting Arabic dialect of Kormakitis. Linguistic otherness allows one group to stress its difference and at the same time allows it to raise claims and rights on account of the special regime to which it wants to be subject (Mac Donald 1989). In relation to the preservation of both the linguistic and the ethnic otherness, the actions on the part of the Maronites are consciously political in character.

In their discourse and their narrations they present a form of negotiation regarding the language, but not their origin and their religion, which for them are not negotiable.

I conclude with the words of an 84-year-old Maronite who said to me one day: *'The water slowly slowly digs the stone ...'*, meaning that the Maronites' patience and persistence will win in the end.

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“Nahni wa x fendik”⁷ (Ми и други): Преговори вишеструких идентитета у маронитској заједници на Кипру

Овај рад је настао на основу теренских истраживања која су започела 2002. године у маронитској заједници на Кипру. Током 2010. године ауторка је поновила истраживања у овој заједници. Захваљујући временској дистанци, могла је да сагледа промене у понашању, менталитету и вредносним ставовима, које су се одиграле током једне деценије. Главни узрок тих промена у овом временском периоду јесу последице политичких и социјалних промена на Кипру. Наиме, дошло је до слободе кретања преко тзв. *зелене линије*, одбијања Анановог плана од стране већине Грка Кипрана, и застоја у покушају да се пронађе решење кипарског проблема.

Студија се развија у три правца. У првом реду ауторка се бавила испитивањем историчности, тј. процесом стварања мањине у историјском и друштвеном контексту. Затим је у другој фази анализирао концепт колективног идентитета у односу са националним/етничким, религијским и лингвистичким факторима између православних Кипрана и Маронита. У трећем делу ауторка је покушала да укаже на оне елементе који повећавају динамику односа између етно-религијског идентитета и политичких захтева, што је случај на Кипру данас.

Код Маронита је идентитет повезан пре свега са локалношћу, територијом. Они су подељени на мање групе према лојалности и учешћу, у којима постоје напети односи ривалства, надметања или негативног међусобног реципроцитета.

⁷ Део наслова је записан на кипарском маронитском арапском дијалекту у селу Кормакитис на Кипру.

Маронитски етнички идентитет укључује у себе посебну посвећеност Либану, са којим сматрају да деле паралелни ток и митологију. Сталне културне размене са Либаном имају тежњу да ојачају осећање националне припадности и да промовишу маронитски случај на међународном нивоу.

Маронитске везе са грчком кипарском заједницом могу се разматрати на више нивоа, посебно последњих година, у зависности од политичких услова и од питања заједнице на државном и међународном нивоу. Маронити имају добре односе са турском кипарском заједницом, што изазива незадовољство грчке кипарске заједнице. Може се рећи да преовлађују интересни однос емоција, дужности и религијске солидарности.

Веома важан елемент у постизању њиховог признавања као *језичке* мањине јесте употреба једног веома занимљивог арапског дијалекта. Језичка различитост дозвољава једној групи да истакне своју посебност и истовремено јој омогућава да поставља захтеве и тражи своја права. По питању очувања језичке и етничке различитости, активности једног дела Маронита имају свесно политички карактер.

У маронитском дискурсу и њиховим наративима може се приметити да се о језику може преговарати, али не и о питању њиховог порекла и религије, о којима се не дискутује.

Ауторка закључује рад речима осамдесетчетворогодишње казивачице Марониткиње: „Вода полако, полако круни камен...“, у смислу да ће маронитско стрпљење и истрајност на крају победити.