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From the Cross (and Crescent) to the Cedar and Back Again: Transnational Religion and Politics Among Lebanese Christians in Senegal

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Abstract

This article examines the changing relationship between religion, secularism, national politics, and identity formation among Lebanese Christians in Senegal. Notre Dame du Liban, the first Lebanese religious institution in West Africa, draws on its Lebanese “national” character to accommodate Lebanese Maronite Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christians in Dakar, remaining an icon of “Lebanese” religion, yet departing from religious sectarianism in Lebanon. As such, *transnational religion* can vary from *national religion*, gaining new resonances and reinforcing a wider “secular” ethno-national identity.

Keywords

Transnational migration; ethnicity; Maronite Church; Senegal; Lebanon; religion; politics

In the past few decades, social scientists have examined the interplay of politics and religion in the world, perhaps most famously through the now discredited secularization thesis. More recently, anthropologists (along with other social theorists) have begun to study the interconnection among secularism, religion, and nationalism, discounting yet another thesis—the decline of the nation-state. In this article, I seek to show how various forms of religious, secular, ethnic, and nationalist modes of identification and belonging overlap, and, at times, compete with one another, transforming some functions of the Lebanese Maronite Church in the diaspora in West Africa. Like Vora (2008), I understand diasporas as bounded groups which cannot be abstracted out of their particular contexts.

I follow Goldstone’s (2007) approach, which moves beyond secularism’s more common understanding of demarcating religious from non-religious institutions. He underscores secularism’s “disciplining of religion in such a way that now renders it compatible with the norms and precepts of liberal, democratic governance” (2007:210). Drawing on Asad (2003), Goldstone argues that

a person’s habits and sensibilities must be disciplined just to the extent that one’s sense of *political* belonging—and the invention of a distinction between “political” and “religious” belonging is crucial here—no longer derives primarily from one’s religious community... but is instead found in the nation-state and its values.¹ (2007:208)

If we take the Maronite Catholic Church in Senegal as a proxy for the Lebanese homeland, I maintain, following Goldstone, that Lebanese secularism continues to mediate the interactions between religion and politics—and also between religion and ethnicity—while subject to the circumstances of being a minority community in Senegal (another post-colonial liberal democracy). Yet Lebanese diasporic secularism goes beyond Goldstone's model, where the political aims to supersede the religious in efforts to reify Dakar's Maronite Church as a Lebanese national church inclusive of all religious denominations.

Members of ethnic groups are often categorized by belonging to a particular religious community, speaking the same language, and following certain social practices. Lebanese, in contrast, are characterized by religious pluralism. Religious difference in Lebanon has been exploited throughout history by foreign powers and remains in place today through the division of political offices along religious lines as structured by the French-influenced constitution (Hanf 1993, Makdisi 2000, Salibi 1988). Yet in Senegal, distance from the homeland and the altered and multi-layered dynamics of transnational religious politics enabled the ethnic network of Lebanese to develop over time to become expansive and secular enough to include Christians and Muslims. Lebanese in Senegal can thus be differentiated from Lebanese in Lebanon (Khater 2001, Makdisi 2000), Ivory Coast (Bierwirth 1999, Peleikis 2003), the United States (Gualtieri 2009, Khater 2001, Walbridge 1997), Australia (Humphrey 1998), and other immigrant communities marked by sectarian divisions.²

An alternative model for thinking about religious change has been put forward by Peter van der Veer (1996). He argues that a solution to the 18th century European situation of religious civil warfare was a call for religious tolerance and syncretism, but also an interiorization of belief and a privatization of conversion. He critiques the theories in which modernity implies secularism by suggesting that in fact conversion to Christianity, in the context of the interplay between Europe and the colonized world, is a conversion to modernity. His introduction concludes: “not only does conversion to Modern Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic) seek to transform the Self by changing its relation to Others, it enables a new organization of society” (1996:20). Webb Keane (2007) also examines “Christian moderns,” in the very different context of 19th and 20th century Dutch Calvinist missionaries and their Sumbanese interlocutors in Indonesia. For Keane, “modernity is, or ought to be, a story of human liberation from a host of false beliefs and fetishisms that undermine freedom” (2007:5). Keane's vision of Christianity embeds the global within the local, where a commonality with other Christians is inherent in a long history of texts, doctrines, institutions, and practices in which much is shared, circulated, or reinvented (as well as distinguished and differentiated). He points out that the classical Greek word *ecumene*, used by Ulf Hannerz to characterize the interconnectedness of today's globalized world, is a secularized version of *ecumenical*, referring specifically to the universal church, or the whole (Christian) world.

Academic discourse today claims to have surpassed modernity and Enlightenment, offering in its place a postmodern and postcolonial discussion of “alternative modernities” (Knauf 2002). Yet it is useful to return to these discussions of earlier time periods, especially when examining the development of and responses to religious sectarianism. As a modern understanding of religion and conversion can serve as an answer to political problems in Europe or be more generally applied to human emancipation, so too can the secularization of Dakar's Maronite Mission be understood as one solution to Lebanese sectarianism. If modernity was once problematically identified with secularization, then perhaps modernity can more appropriately be applied to the processes that enable the church's transformation.

²Peleikis (2003:176) even suggests a “long-distance confessionism.”

This *modern* Christianity opens its doors to *all* Lebanese—Muslim and Christian, Greek Orthodox and Maronite Catholic—in the creation of a new type of cosmopolitan and tolerant Lebanese religious institution. Such a modern Christianity also results from what Tsing calls *friction*, “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005:4), where new arrangements of culture and power are formed through heterogeneous and unequal encounters in the diaspora.

This article analyzes religious change among Lebanese in Senegal, many of whom have never visited Lebanon. Lebanese identity in Senegal has transformed over time from religious sectarianism to what I refer to as *secular* ethnicity, represented symbolically by the national cedar tree. Religion ceased to divide migrants and instead became a shared element of Lebanese diasporic culture. The various religious denominations set aside their differences and came together in their spirituality and the practice of their faith more broadly as Lebanese Christians. Socio-religious adaptations took place within a *transnational social field* (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) led by a variety of political and religious actors. Although early estimates suggested that 45 percent of the first generation of Lebanese immigrants to Senegal were Christian (Clark and Phillips 1994), today’s population of between 15,000 and 30,000 Lebanese can be broken down into approximately 95 percent Shi‘i Muslims and only 5 percent Christians.³ Maronites first adapted to being a minority within both the Lebanese and larger Senegalese Muslim communities by emphasizing the Lebanese ethnicity of their church over religious denomination. This served to attract greater numbers of the dwindling population of Lebanese Christians in Senegal (due to higher rates of emigration and lower rates of reproduction than Lebanese Muslims), and was also inclusive of Lebanese Muslims. Religious celebrations remained the primary social events around which community life was organized. Including the immigrant community as a whole, regardless of religious difference, served to bring Lebanese together as an ethnic group to counter discrimination from both French colonial officials and the local Senegalese population. More recently external constraints have begun to threaten Lebanese coexistence in Senegal, as the 2006 Lebanon War served as a catalyst for tensions leading toward a return to religious division. Religious changes took place during three stages: the establishment of the Lebanese community in Senegal under French colonialism (1880s to 1960), Senegalese independence until the latest war in Lebanon (1960 to 2006), and from the July 2006 Lebanon War until the present. Each historical period involves various configurations of ethnic, national, and religious expression shaped in different ways by the changing background of Lebanon and Senegal.

Using Soares and Osella’s (2010) broad understanding of politics, I explore the intersection of multiple levels of state and formal politics but also everyday politics and micropolitics. I examine the history of the Lebanese community in Senegal and its present using archival and ethnographic data, in particular highlighting the voices of Lebanese Christians.⁴ Answering the call of Hann and Goltz (2010) for a greater integration of Eastern Christians in the growing field of the anthropology of Christianity, I provide an additional case study, focusing on the development of the Maronite Church in Lebanon and its Dakar mission, Notre Dame du Liban, the first Lebanese immigrant religious institution in West Africa. My goal in this article is to highlight the Maronite Church as an institution. I do not attempt to survey all Lebanese Christians in Dakar. The Maronite Catholic Mission carries out

³There are no formal statistics enumerating the Lebanese population of Senegal. A more exact estimation is difficult because not all have Lebanese nationality, many are not registered with the Lebanese Embassy, and it is difficult to categorize children of mixed marriages. These numbers were given to me by the former Lebanese Consulate Officer in Dakar.

⁴I have been conducting research on the Lebanese community of Senegal since 2000, and my fieldwork in Senegal has totaled nearly 20 months. I conducted extended fieldwork between September 2002 and January 2004, and have returned regularly to Senegal since then. I was in Dakar in June 2006, one month before the start of the July 2006 war, and returned the following summer. I also conducted research in Lebanon the summers of 2000 and 2001, and returned in May 2007.

religious functions as performed in Lebanon, and is perceived by Christians in Senegal as symbolic of the homeland. The church is therefore more than a religious institution, and Lebanese community leaders as well as Senegalese government officials often group the Maronite Mission together with the Lebanese Embassy and Lebanese Islamic Institute as formal representative bodies of the Lebanese community in Senegal. While this institution was created at the request of the first generation of Lebanese migrants to Senegal, it did not continue in the vein of sectarianism that was common in Maronite Churches in Lebanon. The public profession of Lebanese religion in this church, as understood by later generations of Lebanese (many of whom had never been to Lebanon), took on a Lebanese ethno-cultural character which overrode a singular focus on the Maronite sect.⁵ Notre Dame du Liban drew on its *national* character as Lebanese to accommodate all Lebanese religious groups in Senegal, remaining an icon of *Lebanese* religion without upholding the political nationalism of religious institutions in Lebanon.

I differentiate between *transnational religion* and *national religion*, where the former transcends state boundaries and contributes to transnational civil society (Rudolph 1997), as well as, in the Lebanese case, maintaining a Lebanese identity with changing political loyalties. Some scholars think of transnational religion as a universal religion, uniting migrants from different nationalities under its fold, but the Lebanese case demonstrates that *transnational religion* is selectively inclusive depending on local circumstances in the diaspora. Initially a sectarian institution in Lebanon, the Maronite Church in this particular transnational context frees itself from the Lebanese nation-state to serve a broader role in reaffirming and reinforcing Lebanese identity while adapting to individual and community needs grounded in Senegal. In this sense, transnational Maronite Christianity cannot be deterritorialized as, for example, Roy (2004) depicts global Islam. Territorialization is important, as Lebanese churches and mosques become both icons of and institutions for perpetuating Lebanese identity in the diaspora, inclusive of other Lebanese Christian and Muslim denominations.⁶ Transnational religion is distinct from, yet also shaped by, *national religion*—which remains inherently tied to state politics and, in the Lebanese case, sectarian nationalism. I do not mean to suggest that sectarianism is the “national order of things” (Malkki 1995) in Lebanon, but a “culture of sectarianism” (Makdisi 2000) has prevailed during the key historical periods discussed in this article. Notre Dame du Liban was thus shaped in a transnational social field through interactions between changing policies made by the national Maronite Church in Lebanon and accommodations made locally in Senegal through community demands. The Maronite Mission in Dakar became a cultural and ethno-nationalist institution which reinforced a secularized but exclusively Lebanese identity through performance of the Maronite Catholic rites.

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) have outlined a transnational social field perspective on society, which is a useful framework for understanding religious change in the Lebanese Maronite Church. The Lebanese case will also provide a south-south example for their framework, which has thus far been illustrated by cases of immigrants in the United States or Europe. Levitt and Glick Schiller define the social field as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (2004:1009). They argue against *methodological nationalism*, “the tendency to accept the national state and its boundaries as a given in social analysis” (2004:1007; see also Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Migrants are depicted as

⁵Church publications stress that the establishment of Notre Dame du Liban was at the request and financing of *all* Lebanese migrants, not only Maronite migrants. The church was built in 1952, after the establishment of a Lebanese community in Senegal which began in the 1880s. This was also a period when Lebanese Muslims and Christians came together as a community to unite against French anti-Lebanese campaigns (described below). The Lebanese (Shi'i) Islamic Institute was built much later, in 1978, with the arrival of a Lebanese Shaykh in 1969 (see Leichtman 2008, 2010).

⁶The Lebanese Islamic Institute, which carries out Shi'i Muslim rites, includes Sunni Muslims in its congregation.

living lives of “simultaneity,” located both in country of origin and destination and embedded in “multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind” (2004:1003). In addition to examining migrants and their ties to country of origin, I contend that a third field must be incorporated into transnational migration studies: the host society, which also transforms and is transformed by the migrant population. Scholarship has explored how localities have adapted to migration through studies of diasporic space and multicultural cities, but has paid less attention to non-migrant populations. There is a gap between migration scholars, who fail to examine the dynamic relationship between migrants and places of departure and settlement, and scholars of urban life, who exclude migrants as actors (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Smith 2006 is an exception).

The concept of social field distinguishes between “ways of being and ways of belonging” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1008), where boundaries of social fields do not necessarily overlap with national boundaries. *Ways of being* refer to “actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions” (2004:1010). *Ways of belonging*, in contrast, refer to “practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group...combin(ing) action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies” (2004:1010). In the Senegalese context, Lebanese demonstrate belonging through frequenting Notre Dame du Liban, yet ways of being have changed over the years to be flexibly inclusive of all members of the Lebanese community regardless of their religious affiliation.

Scholars have examined how Catholic churches in the United States have become “pan-ethnic,” catering to a multiplicity of cultural groups—broadly categorized, for example, as “Hispanic” or “Latino”—without allowing majority culture to dominate (Levitt 1998, Menjivar 1999).⁷ Levitt (2007:12) concludes: “In this current period of globalization, however, religion’s universality and globalism often take precedence over its national forms. Religion, like capitalism or politics, is no longer firmly rooted in a particular country or legal system.” In contrast to these depictions of immigrant religion in the US, the Maronite Church in Senegal does not become transnational by becoming “panethnic,” although it does welcome all ethnicities into its fold. In theory, although Notre Dame du Liban is open to all Christians (and African Christians do, on occasion, attend its mass), in practice the church caters primarily to Lebanese Christians.⁸ It engages with secular demands, rooted in Lebanese nationalism and diaspora identity struggles, remaining ethnically Lebanese while *in name* inclusive of all Christians.

As an ethnic, racial, and religious minority unable to easily participate in Senegalese political and civic life, Lebanese depend on the Father Superior of Notre Dame du Liban, along with the Shi‘i Shaykh who founded Senegal’s Lebanese Islamic Institute in 1978

⁷Much of the emerging scholarship on transnational religion focuses on migrant practices in the US or Europe (Cadge and Ecklund 2007, Levitt 2003, Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Vertovec 2000). Rudolph (1997) has suggested that the Church adapted to nation-states at the cost of upholding universal norms. Casanova (1997) also highlights the tensions between the Roman, national, and increasingly global character of the ecclesiastical institution. Hirschman (2004) critiques Herberg’s (1955) classic thesis that new immigrants became more religious after arrival in the US, suggesting that the creation of new ethnic churches must be distinguished from the question of religiosity. Hirschman argues that churches were important as a means of collective and individual socioeconomic mobility for immigrants and second-generation ethnic communities. Religious institutions help immigrants find housing and employment, enroll children in schools, improve their language skills, and create a “new” social life. Lebanese religious institutions in Senegal carry out similar functions, yet the ethnic context in Senegal is not as broad or as ethnically pluralistic as described by Herberg and other sociologists in the US, which is one reason for the different way in which Lebanese consider themselves and are considered in Senegal. Hirschman is correct to explore the extrareligious roles of the transnational church; yet, like Herberg, he does not pay enough attention to actual changes in religious practice and community.

⁸Senegalese Christians will come to Notre Dame du Liban for the weddings or funerals of Lebanese friends or colleagues, but do not regularly attend its mass, which is in Arabic and Syriac-Aramaic, not in French and Wolof. A Lebanese priest once remarked to me that a few Senegalese Christians come to the Maronite church because it is air-conditioned, unlike Senegalese Catholic churches.

(Leichtman 2008, 2010), to serve as political brokers by lobbying Senegalese authorities for community needs and protection. Both religious institutions also provide Lebanese in Senegal with a link to their homeland. The Maronite Church in Dakar does perform the secular, integrating functions of churches observed in the US, but it is important to also examine how these practices can change. I explore this process by first outlining Lebanese immigration to Senegal, followed by a brief history of the Maronite Church and its identity crisis as it transformed from *national* to *transnational*. I then turn to the shifting ethnic and religious identities of the Lebanese community over the various historical periods marking its presence in Senegal.

Lebanese Immigration to West Africa

Lebanese migrants, both Muslims and Christians, first arrived in West Africa as the result of a colonial fluke. As early as the 1880s, and especially during the 1920s, emigrants left Lebanon for Marseilles, the transportation hub of the time. They planned to continue on to the US or South America, where there had been previous Lebanese immigration, but their ships docked at Dakar (Hourani and Shehadi 1992).

The French colonial power convinced them to stay in West Africa to work as intermediaries in the peanut trade between the French in the cities and Senegalese peasants in the rural areas. The French soon began to see the Lebanese as a threat to their hold on West Africa. Concerned over the increasing number of Arab immigrants, the French responded with an anti-Lebanese campaign beginning in the 1930s. A policy of segregating Lebanese from Senegalese aimed to prevent the spread of pan-Islamism, pan-Arabism, and anti-colonial sentiments (Cruise O'Brien 1972, Harrison 1988, Sene 1997). Even Lebanese Maronites, to whom the French had given preferential treatment in Lebanon, were grouped together with their Muslim compatriots. French efforts included restricting the use of Arabic in the colonies and exercising greater control over the importation of publications in Arabic. The French also prohibited Lebanese religious practices from conforming to those of the Senegalese, and in particular prevented Lebanese Muslims from praying in Senegalese mosques (Leichtman 2006:91–98).

Senegal gained independence from France on June 20, 1960, leading to another transition for the Lebanese community. Independence was a time of rural development policies, which first nationalized the production of the peanut monocrop and then slowly diversified the economy to other food crops (Gellar, Charlick, and Jones 1980). Lebanese were required to hire Senegalese employees or move into other business sectors, and many left the rural areas for the cities. As an ethno-racial minority and a powerful business community, Lebanese encountered hostility from the Senegalese population. Becoming socially and politically invisible was the key to Lebanese economic success.

During the colonial period a large number of Lebanese had both Lebanese and French nationalities.⁹ Some felt threatened at independence and their decision to apply for Senegalese citizenship was out of necessity to keep their jobs in certain sectors or to address Senegalese suspicions that the Lebanese community continued to identify with and send remittances to the homeland. Opting for Senegalese citizenship re-affirmed Lebanese commitment to the new nation, and by the end of the 1960s the Senegalese government exerted pressure on Lebanese with Senegalese citizenship to revoke their original nationalities. Many Lebanese in Senegal resented what they perceived to be continuous treatment as foreigners and scapegoats even though they had Senegalese citizenship. It was

⁹I am defining citizenship as the character of a member's rights and duties within the national polity and nationality as a category of belonging without granting full citizenship rights.

during these times of insecurity that the Lebanese community sought to (re)invent its identity, uniting as a secular ethnic group. The potential of ethnic conflict was weighed against the legitimacy of ethnic diversity as external forces in Senegal, such as French colonial policies and the politics of Africanization, encouraged the development of a unified Lebanese community.

Today the vast majority of the Lebanese community in Senegal resides in Dakar, heavily concentrated near the city center. The first and second generations are traders and small businessmen with shops ranging from small grocers to importers of European fabric and clothing, household items, shoes, furniture, and electronics. Lebanese own numerous fast food restaurants and finer French-style bakeries and cafes that feature Lebanese specialties. Responding to the changing Senegalese economy and increasing retail competition, the second and third generations have begun to move into industry and the professions, dominating the manufacturing of plastics, paper, and cosmetics, and even holding a share in the African cloth business. Among the Lebanese of Senegal are also doctors, lawyers, dentists, pharmacists, tailors, and mechanics. Today the community sees itself as Senegalese, yet distinct from the Senegalese, and as Lebanese, but not like those in Lebanon. Fluent in Wolof or other local languages, Lebanese in Senegal enjoy Senegalese cuisine and have contributed to the development of the country.

An Overview of Maronite Politics and the Maronite Church

The Maronites were the first Near Eastern Christian denomination to embrace the Roman Catholic Church. What is relevant here is to point out the political activism of the Maronite Church and the exclusivity of the Maronites as the only Christian group in the Middle East to have experienced autonomy throughout centuries of Muslim rule. French protection of the Maronites led to independent Lebanon becoming the only Arab country with a Christian head of state. The Maronites considered themselves to be a unique religious-political community, ethnically distinct from Muslims and religiously distinct from non-Maronite Christians.¹⁰ Moosa (1986:2) describes how the Maronites not only became patriarchs and heads of their communities, but the “Patriarchs of Lebanon.” Harik (1966:31) has also depicted the Maronite Church as a “Lebanese national church.”

Nationalist movements were often at odds with local, regional identities, and Lebanism developed alongside other collective identities in the Middle East, such as Ottomanism, Syrianism, Arabism, and Islamism (El-Solh 2004, Kaufman 2004). The Maronites played a significant role in shaping Lebanese nationalism. The French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon began in 1920, enabling the Maronites to establish Greater Lebanon as a homeland for displaced Christians of the former Ottoman empire, such as Armenians and Assyrians. Because Maronite lobbying led to the Lebanese nation-state’s association with a Christian majority government, Lebanese nationalism overlapped with Christian particularism, further enforcing the distinctive national role of the Maronite Church (see Brand 2010, Gualtieri 2009, Hartman and Olsaretti 2003, Kaufman 2004). The 1943 National Pact was a compromise dividing political power in the independent Lebanese state with the aim of coexistence. At the heart of negotiations was the Christian fear of being besieged by Muslim communities in Lebanon and the surrounding Arab countries, and the Muslim fear of Western hegemony. In return for the Christian promise not to seek foreign (French) protection and to accept Lebanon’s “Arab face,” the Muslims agreed to recognize the independence and legitimacy of the Lebanese state in its 1920 boundaries and to renounce ambitions of a union with Syria. The pact also reinforced the sectarian system of

¹⁰Moosa (1986:267–278), however, counters this claim by arguing that the Maronites are Syriac-Aramaic by culture and their church is a branch of the Syrian Church of Antioch.

government begun under the French Mandate based on the confessional distribution of the 1932 census favoring Christians over Muslims.

The 1989 Ta'if Agreement concluding the Lebanese Civil War (begun in 1975) upgraded the Arabism of Lebanon from an "Arab face" to a full-fledged Arab country which would no longer be treated as a special case (El-Solh 2004), further marginalizing the Maronites. In 1990, General Michel Aoun, interim Prime Minister and head of the Lebanese Army, waged a failed war of liberation against the Syrians and the Ta'if Agreement. Furthermore, thousands of Maronites were killed or wounded in violent clashes with the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea, which had broken its alliance with Aoun in 1989, demonstrating Christian internal divisions. Zamir (1999) argues that the Maronites today lack leadership and are deeply divided, having fallen "from hegemony to marginalism," and forced to watch their dream of an independent sovereign Lebanon disintegrate as the country assumes an Arab-Muslim character.

Zamir writes that "in recent years, Maronite leaders, including those in the church, have been calling for the community to adjust to the new reality, claiming that accommodation, compromise and cooperation with the Muslims is the only way to secure their rights" (1999:126). McCallum (2010) points out that the Vatican sponsored Special Synod for Lebanon (1991–1995) emphasized the role of the Maronite Church in working together with Muslims to jointly rebuild Lebanon (see also Dagher 2000). Baroudi and Tabar (2009:207) illustrate that another goal of the Synod was to further encourage collaboration between Eastern churches to extend their social duties (such as educating the youth, preserving the unity of the family, and fighting drugs and poverty) toward all citizens and not only congregation members. They agree with Zamir that Maronites face the danger of losing their political relevance, and their political leadership has passed (once more) to lay leaders like Aoun and Geagea who "are at best junior partners in rival coalitions that are led by non-Christians" (2009:228). It is important to keep the shifting power of the Maronite Church in Lebanon in mind when evaluating changes in the Maronite Mission in Senegal.

McCallum (2010) estimates that Maronites form the third largest community in Lebanon today, at 22 percent of the population. This is a decline from 28.7 percent in the 1932 census, although the number of Maronites in the diaspora has increased to approximately 4 to 5 million. Maronites began to leave Lebanon in the 19th century seeking better economic opportunities abroad, fleeing the large-scale massacres of Christians by the Druze in 1860 (Hitti 1957, Makdisi 2000), and later avoiding conscription in the Ottoman army following the 1908 revolution in Ottoman Turkey. The Church adapted to the demographic changes in its constituency and built missions in Senegal, Argentina, Brazil, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mexico, Australia, and other locations in the second half of the 20th century (Rizk n.d.). Emigration led to internal contestations over the way to preserve the unity of the Maronite Church, a debate most evident at the institutional level with the second Maronite Patriarchal Synod in 2003. Synodal documents state:

At the existential level, the Maronite church is not any more a particular Church confined to a specific place on earth. Along with the dispersion of its followers, first in the past in the Arab world, and presently in the whole world, the Maronite church has been transformed into a global Church despite the fact that its cultural legacy is oriental and Syriac. (as cited in Tabar 2006:188)

Yet Tabar suggests that inasmuch as the Maronite Church in Lebanon has taken steps to become a transnational/diasporan institution, it has also continued to localize Maronites in the diaspora. All diaspora dioceses were placed under the central authority of the Patriarchate in Lebanon, where decisions taken by the Mother Church directly affected moral, social, and political realities of Maronites in the diaspora.¹¹

The identity crisis of the Church was put into even more lucid terms by the Father of Saint Maron Church in Detroit, Michigan, where one of the larger concentrations of Maronites in the US resides:

Is the Maronite Church an ethnic Church? Is it a Lebanese Church or an Arabic Church? Does the Maronite Church serve only those who come from Lebanon or the Middle East and by extension those who are married into a Lebanese or Middle Eastern family? Or is it the Church of Christ, in which there is no distinction between Lebanese and non-Lebanese? (Elkhoury 2008)

Whereas Father Elkhoury took the position in favor of the Maronite Church losing its ethnicity and using the languages spoken in the lands in which it exists, these debates—along the same lines as the pan-ethnicity exhibited by US Catholic churches—are not prominent in Senegal.

Notre Dame du Liban was built in Dakar in 1952 by Reverend Father Abbot Augustin Sarkis.¹² The Church follows a rotation system, where three fathers trained in Lebanon are alternated every three to six years to serve Maronite missions around the world. The father with the greatest seniority becomes *Père Supérieur*. Notre Dame is the only institution representing the Lebanese Christian population of Senegal. Senegal's approximately 1,200 Lebanese Christians are composed of a Greek Orthodox majority, 400 to 500 Maronite Catholics, and a few Protestants, Greek Catholics, and Armenians.¹³ The Maronite Church in Senegal differs from the Maronite Church in Lebanon in that it follows the tendency of the local Lebanese community not to set apart the other Christian denominations.¹⁴ As a result, and unlike migrant churches in the US, the Dakar mission of the Maronite Church has not transformed into a pan-ethnic institution, but into a "pan-Eastern Christian" institution, inclusive of the Greek Orthodox majority among Lebanese Christians in Senegal today. The Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic Church (formerly known as a Uniate Catholic Church, a term with pejorative connotations), united with Rome, but not Roman Catholic, and maintains an Antiochian rite (Loosley 2010). Despite the schisms of church history and liturgical differences, Lebanese Christians—Catholics and Orthodox—were able to maintain their distinct ethnic religious culture through worshipping together under one diaspora church, and to resist being absorbed into the majority Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵

Lebanese Religious Division under French Colonial Rule

Lebanese did not arrive as an ethnically united community. French colonial documents in the National Archives of Senegal suggest that the first generation of Lebanese immigrants to Senegal was religiously divided. The archival evidence stresses that the first generation of Lebanese Maronites in Senegal tried to maintain their religious distinctions in order to gain preferential treatment from the French, as was the custom for Maronites at that time in Lebanon (Salibi 1988).

¹¹A reviewer has clarified that all Maronite Churches outside the Middle East follow spiritual direction from the Maronite Patriarchate, but are subject to the broader authority of Roman Catholic bishops in all other organizational matters. This is a point of contention for some Maronite leaders.

¹²Reverend Father Abbot Augustin Sarkis lived 1906–1971 and first arrived in Senegal in 1949.

¹³These figures were cited by Dakar's Maronite *Père Supérieur*.

¹⁴This is atypical of the Maronite Church in the diaspora. For example, see Doumato (1986) for a description of the multiple churches of the Arabic-speaking Christian population of Rhode Island.

¹⁵In fact, the Middle East Council of Churches, which was founded in 1974 and emerged from earlier Protestant missionary activity in the Middle East, is headquartered in Beirut and has also included Catholics as well as Orthodox and Protestant Christians in its ecumenical setting. These inclusive Eastern Christian organizations are particularly striking given that the World Council of Churches includes Protestants and Orthodox, but not Catholics, thereby suggesting that Lebanon itself has an unusual history of ecumenical cooperation. I am grateful to an anonymous AQ reviewer for pointing this out. See the websites of the Middle East Council of Churches (available at <http://www.mec-churches.org/>) and the World Council of Churches (available at <http://www.oikoumene.org/>).

For example, the French noted in their colonial correspondence regarding Lebanese Christians in Senegal:

Their [Lebanese Christian] arguments are always the same: they say that they are not Syrians, that the Maronites belong to France, that Lebanon had better not get involved in an alliance in which it will represent an insignificant minority before a mass of Muslims who pose a threat to it.¹⁶

They take up their old “clichés”: the Crusades, their friendship for France, the schools created by the French, the religion that they have protected in Lebanon.¹⁷ (ANS 1945a)

When asked, the Lebanese Christians focus on the difference of religions and affirm their will to distance themselves from the Syrians and Muslims whose sectarianism and extortions they fear. They attribute to the aforementioned the complete responsibility for a matter in which they claim to have no part. (ANS 1945b)

Furthermore, documents in the French colonial archives describe how the first generation of Lebanese migrants to Senegal differentiated between Maronite and Orthodox Christians. This distinction can be understood in the context of colonial competition between the French and British in West Africa, particularly in Senegambia. Whereas the French established Roman Catholic missions in Senegal, envisioning Catholicism as an instrument for spreading French influence culturally and politically, Protestant missionaries came to British-controlled Gambia. Regarding Lebanese Christians, the French noted,

One of them was saying these past days that the Maronites have been even more clearly won over by France than the Orthodox Christians, who would have a more marked penchant for the English. In any case, the Orthodox Christians here have had to entirely hide their sentiments since their actions would not give rise to this interpretation...

In summary, the Lebanese Christians whose rites are closest to those of the Roman Church seem to use their religion to prove that they are not our enemies, while the others speak less often, and all appear to want to attribute complete responsibility to the Syrians, whom they are not. (ANS 1945a)

These quotes imply that the same ties between the European colonial powers and the different religious confessions in Lebanon also held true in another continent and colonial situation. However, although the French had a marked penchant for the Maronites and distrusted the Arab Muslims whom they saw as a threat, they did not cater to Lebanese Christians in Senegal as they had in Lebanon.

This is highlighted in an interesting story recounted in this same document. A young woman by the family name of Nasrallah wanted to marry a man by the name of Saba Némé. The couple approached the French Father Février of Ziguinchor in the south of Senegal to perform the service. The priest (who is described as sectarian and intransigent) refused because the couple was Orthodox, and without the permission of the pope, the Catholic Church could not perform such a ceremony for non-Catholics. The solution to the problem was a blow to the French. A British pastor from Bathurst “accepted without the slightest

¹⁶All emigrants from the Levant under the Ottoman Empire were called “Syrians” without distinction, yet most of these emigrants were from Lebanon proper. In their colonial correspondence, the French are referring to Muslims when they mention “Syrians.”

¹⁷See Kaufman (2004) for a discussion of these topics.

hesitation to marry these young people.”¹⁸ The ceremony took place in Ziguinchor, and the French colonial officer who penned the document critiqued:

I do not know if the difference which exists between Protestantism and Orthodoxy is less important than that between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and if it was easier for the English to marry these young people. In any event, the Lebanese here praised this Pastor extensively and manifested the fear that the Orthodox of Ziguinchor would not have a proper religious burial if they should die. (ANS 1945a)

This story illustrates how the French distinguished between Catholics and Orthodox and exploited Lebanese religious differences in their colonial rivalries in West Africa. Whereas the Maronites stressed their Catholicism as a unifying factor with the French, the Orthodox were comfortable with either a Catholic priest or a Protestant pastor performing their religious rites in the absence of a representative of the Orthodox Church.¹⁹ I acknowledge that drawing too many conclusions from a limited selection of documents is problematic; however, the archival data (with its colonial biases) does present the first generation of Lebanese migrants to Senegal as having arrived with the same religious differences that were prevalent in Lebanon. It is significant that such confessional differences continued to be recognized by the first generation in these early years, as well as enforced by the French. Even before Lebanon and Senegal were nation-states, ways of being versus ways of belonging and competition between secular, religious, and political forces were being negotiated at the level of the colonial administration in a transregional social field.

Beyond Sectarianism: Lebanese Ethnic Unity Post-Independence

Given this scenario, how did Notre Dame du Liban come to welcome and serve Lebanese Orthodox Christians and work closely with the majority Lebanese Muslim community in Senegal? External and internal pressures encouraged Lebanese ethnic cohesion. Because of the overwhelming prejudice it faced in Senegal, competition between faiths spurred on by actors in Lebanon did not succeed in fracturing the community. In the initial stages of my fieldwork (2000–2004), my informants emphasized that “there are no problems between Muslims and Christians in Senegal.” Similarly, Gualtieri (2009:180) illustrates how Arab Americans adopted *strategic essentialism*, uniting in an effort to gain a collective voice and mount a civil rights campaign against their discrimination.²⁰ Although Lebanese in Senegal did not engage in as formal a campaign as their compatriots in the US, the boundaries between “Muslim” and “Christian” melted away as the community united to face racism. As a result, inter-religious marriages became more frequent, children of different religions studied together in school, and all community members—Muslim and Christian alike—celebrated weddings, funerals, and even religious holidays together in mosques and churches.

The anti-Lebanese campaigns initiated by the French from the 1930s until Senegalese independence did not fully succeed in bringing Senegalese to side with the French against the Lebanese. Hostilities did erupt between Lebanese and Senegalese with the newly independent Senegalese nation-state in the 1960s, and particularly after the implementation of President Senghor’s politics of Africanization shortly after independence. The Senegalese population, especially Murid businessmen who were in direct competition with Lebanese traders in Dakar, envisioned the Lebanese as “parasites” who profited from but did not

¹⁸Bathurst is the old name of Banjul, the capital of The Gambia. The Gambia separates the Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, from the rest of the country.

¹⁹Most likely, in the absence of a Catholic priest, a Maronite couple in West Africa would also go to a pastor of a different Christian denomination for their religious needs.

²⁰Gualtieri (2009) is drawing on Ella Shohat, who is following Gayatri Spivak.

invest enough in Senegal and as “racists” who entertained a superiority complex and maintained social division based on skin color. Alternately, the Lebanese claimed that they did not discriminate against the Senegalese, who discriminated against them. They faulted Senegalese for considering them to be *naar*, a derogatory term which means “Arab” in Wolof. As such, the Lebanese found difficulty in becoming fully accepted by many Senegalese: “It is not enough to merely take on the Senegalese nationality, to speak Wolof, to construct buildings, to set up businesses, and to be buried under Senegalese soil in order to truly become Senegalese,” one informant claimed.

Lebanese in Senegal have had an ambivalent racial status. While perceived as “white” by the African population, they were not welcome in the “white only” social clubs of the French during colonial times. Migrant communities are often confronted with racialization, defined by Omi and Winant (1986:64) as the process whereby racial meaning is imputed onto “a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group.” In the case of the Lebanese in Ghana, Akyeampong (2006) discusses why it was conceptually difficult to envision a non-black citizen in West Africa during the period of decolonization. Understood through the legacy of colonial legal institutions and pan-Africanism (in particular African-American framing of Africa as the place of blacks), Akyeampong suggests that Lebanese in Ghana displaced the European colonizers as targets of local hostility.²¹ Vora (2008) argues that the identities of Indians were changed by their experiences in Dubai, where they exhibited a racial consciousness that reified divisions among South Asians based on class, region, nationality, religion, and language. This enabled migrants to identify with other Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans as one subcontinental Asian group unified through the treatment they received due to their place of origin and their skin color. Senegal provides a somewhat unique situation for Lebanese, whose racial status and economic success is what set the community apart and was not a basis for its integration. These factors also contributed to the coming together of Lebanese Muslims and Christians, for in Senegal, unlike in Dubai, Lebanese could not unite with other Arabs.²²

It is difficult to separate racial discrimination, based on skin color, from social class discrimination, based on economic success, from religious discrimination, based on not belonging to Senegal’s economically and politically influential Sufi Muslim orders. Lebanese are identified in Senegal as a wealthy elite community, yet it should be noted that the Lebanese community itself is divided along the lines of social class. Some Lebanese are poor and depend on community charity for assistance. Those who can afford to visit Lebanon quickly realize that the social status and standard of living they have secured for themselves in Dakar could never be reproduced in Beirut (Leichtman 2005). There are also extremely wealthy indigenous Senegalese. Regardless, it is not uncommon for Lebanese to be the target of crimes in Senegal, which are manifested both in the form of hate crimes as well as theft of commodities. Some Lebanese keep guns in their cars or shops or are trained in Karate or Kung Fu for self-defense, and many Lebanese homes maintain dogs as a deterrent against intruders.

Marriage is the Senegalese solution to integration and a point of contention between the two communities. Senegalese charge Lebanese with being racist for not marrying their daughters

²¹In a very different context, Syrians in the US were recognized as not fully white but somewhere in between Asian and Black and had to lobby for their whiteness in a battle for citizenship. Referring to Greater Syria, which included Lebanon, Gualtieri (2009) maintains that Syrian Arabs did not have firmly established racial identities prior to migration, when their primary identities were framed in religious terms, but were racialized by American politics, culture, and law. Likewise, the Lebanese immigrants studied by Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) went from being a Shi’i minority in Lebanon to a white dominant majority in the US, readily ignoring their religious identity which conflicts with the Christian ideals of whiteness. The authors compare Lebanese Shi’a in the US to Somali Muslim migrants who went from being part of a Muslim majority in Somalia to a visible racial minority in Canada.

²²Morocco and Mauritania each had distinct migration histories and state relationships with Senegal.

to Senegalese men. Lebanese respond by adamantly stating, in one lawyer's provocative words during an interview, "integration is not done below your belt." Although there is some intermarriage between Lebanese men and Senegalese women, there are fewer marriages between Senegalese men and Lebanese women. The Lebanese explain this phenomenon by the fact that they do not practice polygamy, which is accepted in Senegal but not in Lebanon, and for them, is a question of culture and not of racism.²³ Lebanese migrants elsewhere also prefer endogamous marriage, which, Akyeampong (2006) posits, reinforces Ghanaian perceptions of the Lebanese community as separate and aloof. Peleikis (2003) illustrates how village and patriclan endogamy was reinstated when travel between Ivory Coast and Lebanon became cheaper and communication technologies enabled regular contact. Gualtieri (2009) describes how Syrian marriages in the US became more flexible, with cousin marriages giving way to marriage with Syrian co-ethnics and some out-marriage when the pool of available Syrian marriage mates was limited. Humphrey (1998) points to the high number of parallel and cross-cousin arranged marriages between Lebanese in Australia and Lebanon, used to recruit kin members to Australia. Karam (2007) also notes high rates of endogamy among Syrian-Lebanese in Brazil, as does Walbridge (1997) among Lebanese Shi'a in Dearborn, Michigan.

Yet interreligious marriages with other Lebanese are also culturally acceptable. In Lebanon, as in Senegal, marriages between Shi'i and Sunni Muslims are permissible. What is more unusual in Senegal is that there are marriages between Lebanese Muslims and Christians. According to one of the Maronite fathers, more than 25 percent of marriages involving a Lebanese Christian in Senegal are interfaith marriages. If the groom is Christian, the marriage usually takes place in the Church. If the groom is Muslim, the couple is married in the mosque.²⁴ Many marriages result from a small pool of eligible partners from within the Lebanese community. Marriage options are not limited to Senegal, however, and some find their spouses through family connections in Lebanon or elsewhere in West Africa. Today's youth also use the Internet to meet suitable partners in Lebanon or the Lebanese diaspora.

This perceived absence of tensions between Lebanese Muslims and Christians post-independence is also a product of the education system in Senegal. Lebanese in Senegal are multilingual, with French the dominant written language for business and education. They continue to speak Arabic among themselves (though many cannot read or write standard Arabic) and are fluent in Wolof, often switching back and forth among the various languages depending on their audience. Although both the Maronite Church and the Lebanese Islamic Institute have their own religious schools, a majority of Lebanese youth, Muslim and Christian alike, attend the French Catholic schools. The French schools are the most prestigious in Senegal, and the French government approves the examination system and curriculum (which teaches French and European, not Senegalese and African, history and geography).²⁵ International recognition is valuable for families who plan to send their children abroad for university education, or for those who do not intend to remain in Senegal. Furthermore, Catholic schools do not impose Christian religious values upon students of other religions. Today, Muslims form the majority of students in the French schools, which offer a course choice of either Catechism or Manners (*politesse*), the latter

²³Lebanese Muslims in Senegal are predominantly Shi'i. Polygamy is more acceptable to Lebanese Sunni Muslims in other West African countries. Xerxes Malki has pointed out that it is common for a Sunni to have a Lebanese wife in Lebanon and a Ghanaian wife in Ghana (personal communication).

²⁴While some Lebanese in Senegal have used these religious intermarriages as examples of religious coexistence, more often the groom is Muslim and the bride Christian. Islamic law forbids Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims whereas Muslim men are able to marry Christian women because Islamic law is patrilineal and identifies their children as Muslims. Christian men who choose to wed Muslim women convert to Islam in order to facilitate their marriage, unless the bride leaves her religion. Such practices have occurred historically in Lebanon as well (see Abillama n.d.).

²⁵In the 1970s, the content of the French schools changed and students now have an option of choosing the French system or the Senegalese system.

option favored by Muslim students. This class-based decision to send children to the most expensive and competitive schools is indicative of parents' wishes for a better future for the next generation, superseding their preferences that children are taught the Lebanese Muslim or Christian tradition.²⁶ Students mix with classmates of all religions in the Catholic schools, which further enforces religious coexistence. In Senegal the religious institutions have the right to establish educational institutions. These require authorization from the Senegalese government, and some schools receive subsidies from the state, although it has been a point of contention that the Catholic schools receive more money than the Muslim educational institutions.

The Lebanese of Senegal often use the phrase "religion is for everyone" and say that faith is essential, denying the dominance of any particular religion. This is put into practice by some Christians going to the Lebanese Muslim shaykh for advice, and by Muslims asking the priest's opinion and lighting candles for the Virgin Mary. Lebanese Muslims and Christians in Senegal prioritize amicable relations with one another, even if their religious theologies are different and they do not always agree to the intermarriage of their children.

They are also united in their disappointment that the Lebanese state is not playing a more proactive role in recognizing the West African communities or assisting in their efforts to identify with Lebanon.²⁷ Some women in particular are outraged at the Lebanese government's discriminatory policy regarding citizenship: only men are allowed to pass citizenship on to their children.²⁸ In Senegal, many Lebanese men revoked their citizenship in order to keep their businesses under Senegal's Africanization laws. The only efforts organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Emigrants were a sporadic series of conferences catering to businessmen in the diaspora in the hope of increasing diasporic investment in Lebanon, which became especially important for rebuilding after the destructive Civil War (1975–1990).

My first encounter with Lebanese from Senegal was at one of these conferences in Beirut in June 2000, where a small delegation of Muslim and Christian businessmen from Dakar proudly represented their community, but pointed out in their address to the Minister of Finance that the Lebanese of Africa appeared largely forgotten and forsaken by the Lebanese state. As proof, they were frustrated at the neglect they experienced when the ministry provided simultaneous translation of the conference in multiple languages for the visiting emigrant delegations: in English, Arabic, Spanish, and Portuguese, but not French, the predominant language of many Lebanese in West Africa. Although Arabic is Lebanon's official language, a special law regulates the use of French, considered to be a second language, for administrative purposes, and it is taught in many schools as a secondary language along with Arabic and English. This omission is especially shocking considering the Ninth Francophonie Summit was even held in Lebanon in 2002, a point of great pride for Lebanese in Senegal, especially since former Senegalese president Abdou Diouf was elected Secretary General in Beirut.

The examples above highlight the disenchantment with the Lebanese government experienced by the Lebanese community in Senegal. Perhaps these sentiments enabled internal pressures for coexistence to dominate the external forces that encouraged sectarian divisions in the diaspora. However, not all religious leaders coming from Lebanon supported

²⁶Similarly, Muslim children in Lebanon have attended well-reputed Christian schools.

²⁷See Brand (2006:133–175) for an overview of the politics and evolution of Lebanese state institutions responsible for emigration.

²⁸This is for fear of upsetting Lebanon's delicate sectarian balance or enabling the large Palestinian refugee population residing in Lebanon to gain citizenship. A majority of Lebanese emigrants are Christians, whereas the majority population in Lebanon is now Muslim. The 1989 Ta'if Agreement served to also politically accommodate Lebanon's demographic shift to a Muslim majority, dividing parliamentary seats equally between Christians and Muslims.

the religious institutions' opening doors to believers of other religions. When a Maronite priest first arrived in Senegal from Lebanon in 1999, he was opposed to joint activities with Muslims. His congregation suggested that he change his views about Muslim participation in Christian celebrations and allow children of all religions to play on the church playground. Eventually, he came to accept the community's recommendations and made an *iftar* (the meal that breaks the fast during Ramadan) in the church, which the Lebanese shaykh attended. The Lebanese community itself enforced religious coexistence, and in addition to the Church influencing the migrants, Lebanese in Senegal also reshaped their national Church. It was essential for a united Lebanese ethnic group to stand up to the challenges faced in Senegal, starting with the community making an example of the oldest Lebanese religious institution in West Africa. Religious competition gave way to unity in order to combat ethnic discrimination and prejudice.

Change in Dakar's Maronite Mission

So far, I have discussed the influences at the nation-state level on the Lebanese transnational social field, from both French colonial domination in the Middle East and West Africa and the independent Lebanese and Senegalese states. I now turn to the changes that developed on the ground in Senegal, as ways of being began to diverge from ways of belonging to the Lebanese religious institutions as community members embraced modern secular ethno-national forces.

The *Cinquantenaire*, released to mark the Maronite Church's 50th anniversary in Senegal, officially emphasized the religious harmony of the community. It declared: "The Parish Notre Dame du Liban looks after the spiritual life of all the Eastern Christian families disseminated throughout Senegal regardless of their order: Maronite, Melchite-Catholic, Orthodox, Armenian and Protestant" (1999:6). Not only did the Church open its doors to all Christian denominations, but it also recognized the important role of Muslims in the Lebanese community of Senegal. The Church was established at the request of the entire Lebanese community, and was financed by Maronite and Orthodox Christians, as well as by many Muslims. The church publication also acknowledged this fact:

Thanks to the generosity of the Lebanese of Senegal, both Christians and Muslims, Father Sarkis had the great pleasure of witnessing the creation and development of the foundations of the first Lebanese Maronite Mission in Black Africa, and in Senegal in particular, contributing thus to the *diffusion of Arab culture and allowing Lebanon's spiritual and cultural life to shine*. (*Cinquantenaire* 1999:3, emphasis added)²⁹

On November 21, 1999, the former Superior General of the Lebanese Maronite Order came from Lebanon to lead a mass in honor of the 50 years of service of the Maronite Church in Dakar. The church publication noted that, along with many other dignitaries, also present at the ceremonies were "Shaykh Abdul Menhem El-Zein, accompanied by an important delegation from the Lebanese Muslim Community of Senegal" (1999:25). Furthermore, "Shaykh El-Zein congratulated the Father General, the members of the Church and the whole of the Lebanese Christian Community" (*Cinquantenaire* 1999:25). In recognizing Muslims and depicting sectarian openness, the church publication did not stress Christianity, but *secular* Lebanese culture, and reinforced the idea of a *national* Lebanese church. It is

²⁹A reviewer pointed out that the construction of an inclusive Lebanese identity in Senegal thus adopted the colonial language of "Black Africa" and the "shining" light of "culture" and civilization. Lebanese often depicted themselves as the "pioneers" of the land. See Alfaro-Velcamp (2007) for a discussion of how religiously diverse Lebanese immigrants in Mexico constructed their community through an idealized version of Lebaneseness that emphasized Christian and European linkages. The historical, demographic, and cultural situation in Mexico is very different from the Senegalese case, but this book offers another illustration of blurring along Muslim-Christian lines.

also significant that the Lebanese diaspora was putting into practice the policy of the 1995 Synod for Lebanon in calling for better relations with Lebanese Muslims and the other Christian denominations. While such changes have occurred in Senegal, it is important to keep in mind that sectarian incorporation at the church level differs in Lebanon, where each church has its own tradition and its own following. In Lebanon, Orthodox Christians would never attend a Maronite church as their primary church. Although interfaith visits do regularly take place in Lebanon, *all* major religious and secular celebrations in Senegal include delegations of Lebanese Muslims or Christians in the Lebanese church or mosque, representing the image of unity and cohesiveness that the community wishes to project to Senegalese society at large.

The Maronite Church provides a place for Lebanese in Senegal to enact, through Christian rituals, ways of being Lebanese. These rituals are inclusive—some are Maronite traditions; others are examples of syncretism adapted from the Orthodox liturgical year into services at the Maronite Church during significant moments. Thus the sects continue to be distinguished, but the Church transforms into a Christian space accommodating all Lebanese. The Church also allows for secular ways of being not associated with religious ritual, but with other Lebanese social functions, as religious institutions often become community centers in the diaspora. Therefore Lebanese who attend services at various Senegalese Catholic churches may also frequent other community events at Notre Dame du Liban.

For example, an Orthodox man informed me that when he visits Lebanon he goes to an Orthodox church, but in Senegal he attends the Maronite Church. He even commented that if the Lebanese community built an Orthodox church in Senegal, he would not attend. “One must not search for Lebanon in Senegal,” he told me, arguing that Lebanon should be left for the Lebanese. This situation is not unlike that of many new immigrants in the US who worship ecumenically because each community cannot at first afford to build its own place of worship. He recounted how when his father died, there was a law that the Orthodox could not be buried in a Maronite church. The Senegalese Catholic Church, however, was more lax in following the laws, and they performed his father’s funeral ceremony. Later, the Maronite Church requested authorization from the pope to bless Orthodox interments. According to this man, after this incident, the Lebanese Christian community of Senegal never thought again about the differences in the Christian denominations. Thus unlike the pan-ethnicity of the churches in the US, the Lebanese church changed its laws in order to become a pan-Eastern Christian church and to incorporate other *Lebanese* Christian sects.

The Lebanese Maronite head priest also participates in efforts for Christian unity, such as a week of prayer in late January. This includes being part of all church-related events in Senegal, as well as catering to Orthodox members of the Maronite Church. The Father Superior recounted that Notre Dame du Liban was crowded with Greek Orthodox worshippers during the February holiday for Saint Marun, the founder of the Maronite Church. Although the Church celebrates the Catholic Easter, the father also leads a prayer for the Orthodox Easter. An additional touch is his playing Orthodox music before and after the Catholic mass. These examples demonstrate how the Maronite Church in Senegal has changed its ways of being to accommodate the Lebanese community as a whole.

Although the Maronite Church opens its doors to all Christians, churchgoers have the choice of attending Dakar’s Lebanese Church or various other Senegalese Catholic churches. Jean, a successful engineer who is the son of an Orthodox father and Maronite mother, prefers churches that conduct services in French and is attracted to their Senegalese culture.³⁰ He

³⁰Names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of my informants.

enjoys the inclusion of tam-tam drums and certain songs in Wolof, and only goes to the Lebanese Church if there is a wedding or funeral. For Georgette, a teenager who was born in Lebanon but has grown up in Senegal, being Orthodox means attending a different church in Lebanon than she would in Senegal, with clergy who dress differently. She also knows that unlike the Maronites she does not recognize the pope, but she did go to see Pope John Paul II when he visited Senegal in February 1992. She usually attends the Senegalese Catholic church near her apartment because it is close by and mass is in French. She does not go to the Lebanese church since prayers are sung in Syriac-Aramaic with sermons in Arabic, and French is her first language. She understands and can speak Lebanese Arabic, and took an elementary class on how to read and write the language, but she would rather pray in French and finds the Senegalese touch to the service a beautiful addition. Georgette, like Jean, sees herself as a “good Christian,” and believes that it makes no difference if she prays in an Orthodox or Catholic, Lebanese or Senegalese church. Even though the institution of the Maronite Church adapted to Lebanese community needs in Senegal, not every community member equated their religious and ethnic identities.

The Maronite Church not only provides religious services to Lebanese Christians, but is also a center of their social lives.³¹ Several hundred men, women, and children attend the religious services together, filling the church every Sunday, and some participate in the church choir. Children often take part in church rituals, such as “spreading the peace” to the congregation by passing the priest’s blessing from pew to pew through the touch of their hands. After Sunday mass, the fathers serve coffee to several dozen Lebanese churchgoers who joke and tell tales to one another. The Church also serves as a proxy for Lebanon, and has come to be a symbolic, representative institution for the “homeland.” One Lebanese family celebrated the news of their daughter’s engagement in Lebanon by decorating their Dakar apartment with flowers, drinking wine, eating cake, smoking cigars, and lighting a candle at the Maronite Church in honor of their absent daughter’s happiness. Candles are often used in Christian weddings, where the flame is a symbol of Christ, and marriage is understood as a sacrament established by Christ, who gives graces to the couple throughout their married life so that they will remain faithful to their commitment. Since the family was unable to attend their daughter’s ceremony, lighting the votive candle at the Maronite church indicated their prayers on behalf of their daughter’s happiness and wishes for a successful marriage. This otherwise joyful event was filled with tearful phone calls to Lebanon because the family did not have the travel funds to share this occasion with their daughter.

The Maronite Church thus becomes a home away from home for Senegal’s Lebanese Christian community. After the Sunday coffee, a small group of Christians stay for a Church-sponsored lunch of *hummous* (chick-pea spread), *tabouli* (parsley and cracked wheat salad), *baba ghannoush* (roasted eggplant spread), rice and *kabob* (skewers of lamb), chicken, fries, and a fine array of desserts, including fruit, French and Lebanese pastries, and sometimes even an ice cream cake. The meal lasts for hours. This festive occasion includes an abundance of alcohol, the passing of the *narguila* (water pipe), and a drum to provide background music for the lively Lebanese songs performed in Arabic by those present. Sunday lunch, and evenings when Lebanese Christians entertain themselves in the Church by playing cards with the fathers, are primarily attended by those who recently came from Lebanon and do not have immediate family in Senegal with whom to dine after mass.³² This

³¹In addition to attending church, Lebanese Christian social lives include gambling, especially trying their luck in the horse races of France, and in any of Dakar’s four casinos. The casinos often do good business on the Christian holy days such as Epiphany, Christmas, and New Year’s Eve with expensive dinners, a holiday bingo theme night, and a raffle with prizes such as a new car or cellular phone.

³²The economy in Lebanon is suffering, and some young men who have distant family connections in Africa are coming to Senegal to try their luck in business. Others are sent by the Lebanese branches of international companies to work their way into the West African market.

is a way for the community and its recent arrivals to remain tied to Lebanese culture, and they reminisce about Lebanon while gossiping about those in Senegal. Such leisurely social lunches do not take place at churches in Lebanon, but cater to reinforcing a stronger Lebanese cultural identity among Christians in the diaspora.

In addition to religious and social activities, the *Mission Libanaise* of the Maronite Church also works in education. Its school, attached to the church, first opened in 1957 with a preschool, and later added a primary school in 1999. The school attracts upper-class Lebanese, Senegalese, and European students (including children of ambassadors) with a ratio of 30 percent “Africans” to 70 percent “foreigners” comprised primarily of Lebanese (*Cinquantenaire* 2007:12).³³ The second school of the church, *Collège Notre Dame du Liban* (CNDL), built in 1960, houses a kindergarten, primary, and secondary school. When the Lebanese worked mostly in the interior of Senegal, CNDL was built as a boarding school. Students lived with the Catholic fathers during the year, and returned to their families in the villages for a one-month vacation. This system worked until the 1980s—by which time most Lebanese had left the villages for Dakar, and withdrew their children from the Maronite school, placing them in other schools. Senegalese now comprise the majority of the student body, with a few *métis* (children of mixed Lebanese and Senegalese parentage) and Lebanese children.³⁴ The school teaches the Senegalese curricular program in addition to English and Spanish, but does not teach Arabic.

The Maronite Church also has a women’s charity, begun in 1970, which organizes two annual fundraisers: an Easter ball and a February sales exposition with food and entertainment. The charity is a member of the organization of Catholic women in Senegal, and is part of the *Fédération des Associations Féminines du Sénégal*, a group of 50-some organizations. It helps Senegalese orphanages, donates sewing machines, and contributes to women in prison. Women answer calls by the Senegalese government to help with vaccines and schoolbooks, and, for example, assisted in the aftermath of the tragic sinking of the Joola ferry boat in 2002. Although Lebanese genuinely give charity to help the poor, their actions are also publicized and remembered by Senegalese society. Charity work hence becomes a political statement, a sign of “integration,” and a necessity for the Lebanese community, which is viewed with envy by many Senegalese as wealthy and successful, to publicly “give back” to their hosts. The Church’s charity often works in tandem with its sister organization of the Lebanese Islamic Institute, and in 2008 the Lebanese Embassy honored both female directors with medals for their service to Senegal.

A special occasion for Lebanese and Senegalese Christians was the week-long visit of the Superior General of the Lebanese Maronite Order, the Most Reverend Father Abbot Elias Khalife, in March 2006. His reception at CNDL included the Lebanese Ambassador and Shi’i Shaykh, the Senegalese Minister of National Education, the National Secretary and Diocesan Secretary of the National Syndicate of Catholic Schools in Senegal, and the Diocesan Director of the National Office of Catholic Education in Senegal. Students welcomed these distinguished visitors by carrying miniature flags of Senegal and Lebanon and singing both national anthems. The occasion was used not only to praise the quality and educative mission of CNDL and its staff, made possible by the support of the Lebanese Maronite Order, but also for CNDL’s Senegalese Headmaster to make an announcement:

³³During the Christmas season, I was surprised to see a crèche at the church altar displaying multi-racial miniature figures with a black baby Jesus. This is one symbol of the diverse student body and openness of the Church.

³⁴According to the Maronite Father Superior who directs the school, in 2006, there were 3,237 students enrolled, including children from a poor neighborhood of Dakar who were awarded scholarships. Most students pay for the private Catholic school, which has a better quality of education than Senegalese public schools, which are often on strike. Approximately 250 students were Christian with a Muslim majority. Nearly all of the school’s staff were Senegalese Christians.

I will no longer stay silent on the exemplary nature of coexistence, imprinted in the spirit of understanding and brotherhood that characterizes the Lebanese Christian and Muslim community. They are for us a source of much learning within the framework of Muslim-Christian dialogue; a necessary interreligious dialogue for the establishment of a world of peace and solidarity. (*La Voix du CNDL*:19)

In addition to meeting with various Senegalese Catholic authorities and touring a local monastery in Senegal, the Superior General visited the Lebanese Islamic Institute in Dakar. The headmaster's remarks and the visiting reverend's itinerary highlighted the unique nature of Senegal's Lebanese community as a model for others to follow.

Thus, despite its Maronite form, Notre Dame du Liban became an ethnic symbol for the Lebanese, and a means of spiritually uniting the community, regardless of the formal religious denominations into which its congregants were born. As such, like the white immigrants analyzed by Herberg in post-World War II America, Lebanese immigrants in Senegal "inevitably transformed the church they thought they were transplanting" (Herberg 1955:23). Currently, however, the Lebanese church community in Dakar is becoming less unified. This is due to the convenient location of various Senegalese churches as downtown Dakar becomes more expensive and Lebanese families move to more remote suburbs.³⁵ Most importantly, however, the weakened congregation is due to the new generations of Lebanese, many of whom are not fluent in Arabic, and are not comfortable worshipping in an unfamiliar language. The younger generations also tend to be less religiously observant. Although the Church maintains ties to the "old world" by the formality of its service, it is losing the second and third generations by not adapting to the French-speaking needs of the youth.

Transnational Politics, the Lebanon War, and the Rupture of Ethnic Unity

Another challenge for Lebanese unity in Senegal was the 2006 Lebanon War. Round-the-clock coverage by Hizbullah's channel *Al-Manar* (available in Senegal for the past decade) of the 2006 war and the horrific images of death and destruction moved Lebanese Shi'a in Senegal to action for the first time. This was unlike the community's reaction to Lebanon's Civil War (1975–1990), which, I was told, Lebanese in Senegal followed in a detached manner through French TV reporting in an era before the spread of Arabic satellite television. Kraidy and Khalil have argued that media is used as a weapon in Hizbullah's struggle and depict *Al-Manar* as a "'militant' institution with clearly defined and unabashedly ideological missions" which "combines paramilitary propaganda with mainstream television genres" (2010:88). *Al-Manar* is part of the seismic shift in the Middle East from state-owned television stations to commercial pan-Arab satellite television industries, which began in the early 1990s. Kraidy and Khalil (2010) have questioned whether Arab television industries have created a pan-Arab sense of belonging by increasing cultural identification and economic links between Arab nation-states. This question also applies to the resurgence of nationalist sentiments from diaspora Lebanese. New media technologies may thus be a contributing factor to the response of Lebanese in Senegal to the 2006 war. In contrast, whereas there is no ethnographic or archival evidence on the impact of the earlier Lebanese Civil War in Senegal, a former Lebanese Consular Officer in Dakar informed me that the Lebanese community had worked with the Embassy at that time to deny visas to war refugees from Lebanon (many of whom migrated to Ivory Coast). This conscious attempt to control the proliferation of sectarianism through limiting immigration to Senegal is no longer possible in this age of mass mediation.

³⁵The community also had a dispute with the former Maronite head priest, whose rotation in Dakar was terminated early for allowing the construction of a café for profit on Church property, among other issues of disagreement (see Ndiaye 2000).

On July 20, 2006 the Lebanese community organized a large protest against the war, estimated at 3,000 people, which took place between Senegal's national television station and Dakar's Grand Mosque. Those in attendance waved signs denouncing Israeli attacks and thanking Senegal for its hospitality. I was told that the Lebanese Shaykh spoke more about politics at this occasion than during the usual religious ceremonies, and was full of praise for Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, whereas he had previously been careful not to demonstrate any attachments to Lebanese political parties.³⁶ On August 3, 2006, a silent vigil took place at Dakar's Independence Square where Lebanese and some Senegalese lit hundreds of candles commemorating the victims of the Lebanon War. Lebanese Shi'i youth draped the Senegalese and Hizbullah flags over their backs, while others wore t-shirts of the Lebanese flag with the image of a clenched fist next to the cedar tree commanding "*Résistons!*"³⁷ Publicly protesting Israeli actions brought about Muslim solidarity, where Sunni Muslims worldwide joined the Lebanese Shi'i cause.

Moreover, the 2006 war initiated increasing tensions between Lebanese Muslims and Christians in Senegal. In Lebanon, the war brought about a divide between Shi'a and Christians, who were outraged at the destruction of Lebanon, yet blamed Hizbullah for provoking Israeli attacks and feared Nasrallah's increasing power. The war re-emphasized the divergence of the Maronite vision of Lebanon from Hizbullah's nationalism, which pushes for an Islamic and Arab nation (see Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008). The resulting failure of Lebanon's government and the growth of sectarian tensions led analysts to predict another civil war; these heightened sensitivities also spread to Senegal.

The Maronite Church reacted by strengthening its relationship with the wider Senegalese Christian community. In the summer of 2007, the Maronite Church organized a *jumelage* (twinning), partnering with a nearby Senegalese Catholic church. The series of events intermixed the two Christian traditions, and a joint mass was co-led by both Lebanese and Senegalese priests in a mixture of French, Syriac-Aramaic, Arabic, and Wolof languages, with two different choirs. Congregations attended services at one another's churches, and the pairing ended with a procession carrying a statue of Jesus and candles around Dakar's Independence Square. There was an exchange of gifts between the two churches: the Senegalese church gave Notre Dame a statue of Jesus with a diploma and the Lebanese church reciprocated with a trophy bearing the image of the baobab tree, the national tree of Senegal, grafted with the cedar, Lebanon's national tree, with a cross and heart in the middle. A merging of these two national trees is a common symbol for integration initiated by Lebanese organizations in Senegal.

Such events are not uncommon among Maronite congregations in other countries, but this was the first time a church pairing took place in Dakar. One Lebanese Christian explained that the reason for the *jumelage* was to show the unity of Christians and proclaim their presence in Senegal, especially in light of the growing dominance of a more "political Islam." Not only had Hizbullah commanded global Muslim unity behind the Lebanese Shi'i cause, but Islamic reformist movements in Senegal were also increasing in popularity (see Diouf and Leichtman 2009). Just like the Maronite Church had united with Rome in an earlier period, the small Lebanese Christian community in Senegal turned to the larger Senegalese Catholic church for power in numbers. Here, again, is another example of

³⁶The Lebanese Shi'i shaykh and Maronite Catholic priests were born in Lebanon, frequently return to visit Lebanon, and have personal political sentiments and affiliations with Lebanese political parties. They endeavor to carry out their religious work in Senegal in as detached a manner as possible from Lebanese politics, given that many Lebanese in Senegal maintain a strong Lebanese cultural identity but have never been to Lebanon and do not embrace its political ideologies. Religious leaders do occasionally engage in individual conversations on Lebanese sectarian politics with these Lebanese in Senegal who travel regularly to Lebanon and are more politically inclined.

³⁷See Leichtman (2010) for analysis of these events.

external pressures on both Lebanese and Senegalese encouraging solidarity as *Senegalese* Christians over ethnic diversity.

Senegal's Lebanese Christians quietly objected to the increasingly pro-Hizbullah sentiments of their Shi'i neighbors, but did not themselves remain immune to the infiltration of Lebanese politics. A small group of Lebanese Christians in Senegal backed former general Michel Aoun, the Member of Parliament who leads Lebanon's Free Patriotic Movement. A Maronite, Aoun publicly aspires to be a *secular* Lebanese leader. His Free Patriotic Movement is comprised of thousands of Lebanese members from different religious sects, including a significant number of Muslims. The party's charter declares "that people are born equal and die equal, having equal rights, freedom, and dignity, and being able to differ in opinions, orientations and beliefs." This refers as much to equality between men and women as between the various religious sects. The charter sets out that Lebanon is a "sovereign, free and independent entity" and that "Lebanese will be a dimension of Lebanon in foreign countries and not a foreign dimension within Lebanon," with a guarantee to safeguard the existence of the Lebanese state (Free Patriotic Movement n.d.). Among the party's goals is to "institute a culture of citizenship in the aim of achieving equality between the Lebanese; enact a discretionary civil personal status law; and separate politics from religion to facilitate the establishment of a secular state" (Free Patriotic Movement n.d.). Nevertheless, and despite his official discourse, Aoun is a divisive figure, particularly as a result of his surprise alliance with Hizbullah in 2006 (and break with other Maronite politicians in the March 14 coalition). Furthermore, some may question his secular ambitions, especially given Hizbullah's position favoring Islamic rule.

Lebanese Christians in Senegal established a "cultural association" in 2009, called *Association Liban-Senegal*, which supports Aoun and (they hope) will eventually help them to obtain voting rights in Lebanon.³⁸ This association, which is also a political movement, aims to teach youth that Lebanon does not only suffer from war. Founding members envision the association reinforcing cultural, economic, and social ties between Senegal and Lebanon, with the goal of influencing Lebanon to aspire towards secularism like Senegal. Members plan to teach the history of Lebanon and explain the reasons for its multiple wars; with time, they intend to influence Lebanon's National Assembly, where they would send a deputy from the diaspora to represent alternative voices in Lebanese politics. Ideas for activities are to organize a conference on the Maronite author, poet, artist, and philosopher Gibran Khalil Gibran, arrange trips for youth in Senegal to visit Lebanon, and present the ideas of former general Aoun for a secular and democratic Lebanon. This "secular" nationalist movement would stress Lebanese citizenship over religious sectarianism.

I happened to return to Dakar during the 2009 Lebanese general elections, which have been touted by some analysts as the first truly competitive Lebanese elections in decades, despite critiques that it resulted in insufficient electoral reforms.³⁹ I attended Sunday mass at Notre Dame du Liban on June 7, the newly legislated Lebanese Election Day, and found the congregation passionately discussing Lebanese politics over coffee after the service. I stayed for lunch, which was a more sober affair than the usual festive meal—the singing and drumming replaced by watching and commenting on the election coverage (shown on Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation Europe channel). Some Maronites in Dakar supported Samir Geagea and the Lebanese Forces party, especially those, such as the Father Superior, who were from the same northern Lebanon village as Geagea. Others backed his rival Aoun,

³⁸There is not the possibility of an absentee vote for those with Lebanese nationality in the diaspora, who may return to Lebanon to cast their vote in person during elections (see endnote 28). This is currently a topic of debate in Lebanon, and Notre Dame University's Lebanese Emigration Research Center is surveying the Lebanese diaspora on absentee voting.

³⁹See Berti (2009) and Sharp (n.d.).

and, in fact, Association Liban-Senegal had become the only official Lebanese political party in Senegal. Some of its members even attended a congress in Lagos, Nigeria for Lebanese in support of Aoun. Lebanese in Senegal had noticeably become more politicized than before the 2006 war, and, for the first time, some of them (about 10 percent of Lebanese Christians, I was told) voted in the elections. The political parties paid for Lebanese in the diaspora, including Senegal, to return to Lebanon in order to cast their votes. It is too early to evaluate the success of the Senegalese Aoun party or to appraise its actions. I can only cautiously suggest that some support for Aoun's politics in Senegal might hint at secular leanings. Conversely, this may also lead to a new kind of diaspora sectarianism or merely a renewed manifestation of kinship ties which bind extended families abroad to those in Lebanon. After all, transnational election rituals, following the tendency of Lebanese to vote in village of origin and not in actual place of residence, bring in those from abroad to mark their ballots in solidarity with those of their ancestral homes in Lebanon with particular political leanings.

Conclusion

The Senegalese context provides a case study for how "host" national cultures and histories shape migrant identities, whose perceived racial, religious, and social class status further sets them apart. The study of transnational religion provides an empirical example into ways of being and belonging that cannot be encompassed by a nation-state (Levitt 2003). It is especially important to explore migrant relations with *both* countries of origin and destination. Using the model of the Lebanese Maronite Church, I have examined how *transnational religion* is selectively inclusive depending on local circumstances in the diaspora, thereby freeing itself from restrictions imposed on *national religion* by the Lebanese nation-state. Over the distinct historical periods marked by French colonialism, Senegalese independence, and the 2006 Lebanon War, Lebanese in Senegal created a secular ethnic network that included all Lebanese religious denominations and that was responsive to both local and global change. The shaping of Dakar's Maronite Church was not about completely adapting to Senegal or maintaining an exact past tradition from Lebanon, but about creating a modern public civic space in the diaspora. The Lebanese of Senegal gained a national ethnicity they never shared in Lebanon by downplaying their strong religious identities, sharing secular and religious rituals, and allowing religious institutions to represent their minority community as a whole, regardless of denomination. Migrant perceptions of serious differences between Muslims and Christians transformed throughout various historical periods into perceptions of limited differences in selected spheres of religious and cultural activity, particularly when juxtaposed with their collective differences from Senegalese society at large. Such *friction* led to country of origin overtaking religion as their ethnic identifier, and being Lebanese became the unifying factor for these migrants in an instrumentalist "strength through unity" approach to counter a sometimes hostile "host" society.

The transnational social field shaping Notre Dame du Liban and the Lebanese community is marked by interconnecting and overlapping forces at the nation-state and local levels in both Lebanon and Senegal. French colonial administrators first brought Lebanese to Senegal, and later initiated a bitter campaign against them. The failure of the Lebanese state to reach out to its diaspora in West Africa led to a distancing from its sectarian politics, even when taking into consideration the weight of such perspectives from visiting Lebanese religious leaders and dignitaries in Senegal. The Senegalese state affected Lebanese ethnic identity both negatively, by targeting foreigners in its post-independence economic policies, but also positively, by authorizing and subsidizing a public education system that helped to institutionalize religious pluralism.

Furthermore, Lebanese community members themselves chose to intermarry and attend events in one another's mosque or church. Religion was even separated from ethnicity through the philosophy of spirituality without boundaries and the choice of some Lebanese Christians to frequent Senegalese churches instead of the Maronite Mission. Ways of being over ways of belonging, uniting as a Lebanese ethnic group and not dividing along religious lines, also gave the community more leverage and greater power vis-à-vis both the Senegalese and Lebanese states by increased numbers. In south-south cases, migrants do not necessarily achieve more social power through migration with respect to their homeland as is common for migrants in the west. Without the regulatory structures of the Lebanese or Senegalese legislatures behind their economic endeavors and community or individual membership projects, Lebanese in Senegal felt marginalized, vulnerable, and isolated. Religious institutions served simultaneously to tie migrants to the Lebanese homeland while legitimating their demands for protection made to Senegalese authorities. Societal context thus plays a critical role in understanding transnationalism.

The cry against Lebanese sectarianism enabled the Maronite Church in Senegal to work toward religious diversity, thereby contrasting the legitimacy of ethnic or confessional coexistence with the potential for ethnic competition. The transformation which resulted from embracing a more *modern* and *secular* Christianity led to the formation of a transnational church, which maintained rituals as practiced in Lebanon as a shared element of *national* culture without the divisive sectarianism that dominated Lebanon. Do pluralistic societies have greater tendencies to identify with transnational religion? The Senegalese example suggests that ethnic group integration on the secular, not religious, level is greater when there is some degree of ethnic pluralism and where society is marked by uneven numbers in different religious groups. Christians in Dakar are a double minority—within a Lebanese and Senegalese population dominated by Muslims, and as an ethno-racial minority in black Africa. Senegal's treatment of its ethnic minorities, particularly the Lebanese, led to the creation of institutions to safeguard the needs and interests of the Lebanese community as a whole, Muslim and Christian alike. Lebanese also faced changing conditions in Senegal leading to heightened economic competition amidst political marginalization, in addition to an increase in cost of living despite a decrease in public services. Such efforts to unite on secular ground have enabled the Lebanese to succeed economically and politically in Senegal by working together as a minority community to fight discrimination and collectively represent their interests.

The 2006 Lebanon War has impinged on this harmony, which was indicative of the difficulties faced by Lebanese religious institutions in the diaspora in continuing to embrace secularism and distance themselves from national politics. In response, Lebanese Christians publicly demonstrated solidarity with the Senegalese Catholic community, seeking an even wider "power in numbers" from the earlier transformation of the Lebanese Maronite Church into a "pan-Eastern Christian" church. Yet the global identity crisis affecting the Maronite Church as a more inclusive *Catholic* Church has not reached Senegal, whose Lebanese community continues to depend on Notre Dame du Liban as a pillar of Lebanese *secular* culture. The latest war in Lebanon, while arguably weakening the nation-state, has conceivably strengthened national identity among Lebanese in the diaspora, who became more emotionally tied to the embattled homeland. Will this moment of rupture for the Lebanese community of Senegal endure or will the call of the 2003 Synod for church inclusivity prevail? Lebanese Christians are too small a minority for the community cohesion that has characterized Lebanese as an ethnic group not to persevere. Lebanese Muslims, despite increasing Shi'i sentiments, also continue to value working together with their Christian compatriots to counter ongoing political and economic tensions faced by all Lebanese in not being fully accepted as Senegalese.

Newfound interest in Lebanese politics from Senegal, through reactions to the 2006 war and enthusiasm for the 2009 Lebanese general elections, might be analyzed as a counterforce to the decline of Maronite dominance in post-Ta'if Lebanon. Perhaps since the image of the Maronite Church as a national church in Lebanon has been challenged, Lebanese Christians in Senegal feel even more strongly, especially in a period of increasing Shi'i Muslim sentiments in Lebanon and in Dakar, to reinforce their leadership position. In embracing General Aoun's "secular" and democratic vision, they are also advocating for the Lebanese state's recognition of an important role for Lebanese citizens abroad. In calling for an absentee vote and the inclusion of a deputy from Senegal to influence the Lebanese National Assembly, they hope to have a voice in promoting a fresh perspective on Lebanese coexistence, drawing from their experience in Senegal as modern, secular, tolerant Christians. It remains to be seen whether a small group of Lebanese Christians from the diaspora will be able to convince their compatriots in the homeland to discipline religion and to break free from the colonial-influenced politics of sectarianism in order to conform to an alternative picture of liberal, democratic governance.

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