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# The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who are the Lebanese?<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** *The Lebanese state is analysed as a membership organization where both formal-legal and political objectives control admission. The 1932 census played a fundamental role in the state-building process of the Lebanese state: political representation was based on its findings, it was the basis for personal registration of the population residing on Lebanese territories, and it formed one of the cornerstones for obtaining citizenship in the Lebanese state. This article shows that the way the census figures were presented and analysed embodies issues of contest regarding the identity of the Lebanese state and who its members should be. The restrictive citizenship policy practised by the Maronite-dominated regime until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 is understood as a means to sustain political domination in an ethnically divided society. Lebanon provides an example of the political sensitivity of demographic figures in politics where fixed proportional representation constitutes the main principle of representative political organization.*

## Introduction

Taking into consideration the historical significance and enduring political impact of the 1932 census in Lebanon, the last one carried out until now, surprisingly few studies—if any—have referred to the census in its original form. The sizes of the (then) 17 acknowledged confessional groups are usually rendered in approximated percentages, taking the findings of the 1932 census as given.<sup>2</sup> The census, however, does not only display demographic statistics at a

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<sup>1</sup> Revised and enlarged text of a paper entitled 'State-Formation in Lebanon—The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in a Sectarian State', presented at the conference Citizenship and the State in the Middle East, University of Oslo, 22–24 November 1996. The paper is rendered in N. Butenschon, U. Davis N. and M. Hassassian (eds) *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999). The author is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis entitled 'The Politics of Citizenship in Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon: Membership and Participation in Divided Societies'. Any comments are welcome at e-mail address: rania.maktabi@fafo.no.

<sup>2</sup> See Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p. 16, where estimates of the sectarian composition of the Lebanese population is presented. Arend Lijphart also presents percentages: 'the main sects are the Maronite Christians (about 30% of the population in the mid 1950s), and Sunni Muslims (20%), Shiite Muslims (18%), and Greek Orthodox (11%)'. *Democracy in Plural Societies—A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 147. Eliahu Epstein allegedly presents the 1932 census figures of the six biggest communities, but the numbers rendered are not identical with the figures of the original 1932 census document. The size of the Maronite community, for example, numbers 269,620 persons in Eliahu's

particular point in time. The way the figures were obtained, presented and analysed indicates that the census findings were heavily politicized, and embodied contested issues regarding the identity of the Lebanese state with which the country is still grappling.

The problems surrounding the constitution and enumeration of the population at the time of the emergence of the modern Lebanese state in 1920 are shared with other Third World countries, especially those inhabited by a population divided along religious and ethnic lines. India and Nigeria provide other examples of states where Western liberal democratic ideas of citizenship and institutions that represent enfranchized subjects through systems of proportional representation challenged the vested interests and positions of ruling groups and threatened their survival in the course of a process of modern state-building. When an 'ethnically distinct ruling elite lacks a majority in the total population, it is likely to become conscious of this defect and begin playing the numbers game to forestall its own displacement', Wright notes with reference to India.<sup>3</sup> In the following, an insight into how the numbers game was played in Lebanon is presented. This insight demonstrates the profound political implications that the numbers game continues to have in contemporary Lebanon.

### Political Ramifications

The political ramifications of the 1932 census are reflected in the undocumented National Pact agreed upon by the political elite in 1943. Political representation and power was to be distributed according to the proportional size of each confessional sect as rendered in the census. The census therefore provided the demographic as well as the political cement that molded and legitimized the principle of power-sharing under Christian dominance, based on a ratio of six to five Muslims in the government, the parliament and the civil services.<sup>4</sup> This formula lasted until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 which ended in 1990, after which the constitutional amendments of the Taif agreement were enacted, whereby Christian dominance was reduced. Political representation was altered to a fifty-fifty political parity between Muslim and Christian representatives in the government and parliament, and the Maronite Christian president was stripped of many prerogatives that were transferred to the Sunni Muslim prime minister.

Footnote—continued

table while the figure in the census is 227,800 for resident Maronites and 123,397 for emigrant Maronites, the total being 351,197 Maronite Lebanese. See 'Demographic Problems of the Lebanon', *Journal of Royal Asian Society*, 33 (1946), pp. 150–154. In his *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (London, Sydney and Dover, NH.: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 98, Meir Zamir presents accurate 1932 census figures of the three largest Christian and Moslem communities.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore P. Wright, 'The Ethnic Numbers Game in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflicts over Conversion, Family Planning, and the Census', in William C. McCready (ed.) *Culture, Ethnicity and Identity* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1983), p. 406. In the same book see Baaklini's article on Lebanon, and Olugbemi's article on Nigeria.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Pact the president would be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shi'i Muslim.

## The 1932 Census

Little is known of the ways in which the 1932 census was organized, administered and carried out. But even small bits and pieces of original official documents shed considerable light on the final product rendered in the Official Gazette (*al-jarida al-rasmiyya*) on 5 October 1932. The document that renders the result of the census itself has a form that encourages a closer look at the rationale behind the actual figures (see Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> Some questions arise immediately: Why does the census pay significant attention to the Lebanese emigrant population? Why is the date 30 August 1924 central in the census? How is the category 'foreigners' defined? Why are foreigners not specified according to religious affiliation as the category 'emigrants' and 'residents' are? And finally, why has no census been carried out since 1932?<sup>6</sup> Before answering these questions, we may question the relevance of shedding light on the 1932 census, more than six decades after its appearance.

## Why Revisit the 1932 Census?

Disputes regarding the identity of the state are closely related to conflicts concerning the definition of the citizenry which are still unresolved. Who is to decide what Lebanon is if not its own population? We are left with this basic question: Who are the Lebanese? Or in more legal and social scientific terms: What were the rules and principles that determined the construction and formation of the Lebanese citizenry?

The 1932 census played a fundamental role in the ongoing state-building process of the Lebanese state in two ways: it was the basis for the personal registration of the population residing in Lebanon as well as Lebanese emigrants, and it formed one of the cornerstones of citizenship legislation in the Lebanese state.<sup>7</sup> When new states are created, as the case is in many Third World

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to journalist Hussein Quteish who inspired me to look more closely at the 1932 census in an undated article in *Kull Shay'* where he deals with the issue of the absence of statistical data on the Lebanese population.

<sup>6</sup> A UN estimate gives the size of the population in 1995 at approximately 3 million, *1995 Demographic Yearbook* (New York: United Nations), while the World Bank estimates the size of the population at approximately 4 million. *World Population Projections 1994–95* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press). It is unclear whether the Palestinian population is included in those figures. According to UN-figures, there are 334,659 registered Palestinians in Lebanon. *Guide to UNRWA* (April 1994), p. 7. When asked about estimations regarding the number of Lebanese, ex-Minister of Interior Bishara Mirhij (1992–1996), replied: 'Nobody knows. Lebanon is an extremely mobile society. The matter is complicated by the war; newborns after 1975 are not officially registered. Persons who have been dead for decades are still registered as living and have not been crossed off. There is a whole generation that only possesses *ikhrāj qayd* [official document indicating that the bearer is listed in a personal registry]. We have the problem of ID-forgeries, as well as corruption among the local officials. The issue of counting our population is difficult and sensitive' (Interview, Beirut, 5 February 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Citizenship is here defined as membership in a state, i.e. a legal status regulated by political decisions as reflected in the formation and application of citizenship legislation rather than as a 'desirable activity' where focus is put on citizenship as a function of one's participation in the political community. See Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, 'Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory' in Ronald Beiner (ed.) *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). The distinction is important because the Arabic word for citizenship can be, as Uri Davis clarifies, defined in two ways: *jinsiyya* referring to 'passport

Source: *al-jarida a-rasmiyya, Official Gazette*, 2718 (5 October 1932).

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قائمة ٥

## خلاصة نتيجة الإحصاء

لسكان الجمهورية اللبنانية

الذي جرى في سنة ١٩٣٢ وفقاً لقرار لجنة الإحصاء العليا

مهاجرون				مقيمون	
بعد ٣٠ آب سنة ١٩٢٤	لا يدفع	يدفع رسوم	قبل ٣٠ آب سنة ١٩٢٤		
٣٦٢٣٠	١٠٨٩	٦٨٤١	٢٦٥٣	١٧٨١٠٠ - بني	٧٩٣٣٩٦ مقيمون
٢٢٢٠	١٧٧٠	٤٥٤٣	٢٩٧٧	١٥٥٠٣٥ - شيعي	٢٥٤٩٨٧ مهاجرون
٢٢٩٥	١١٨٣	٣٢٠٥	٢٠٦٧	٥٣٣٣٤ - درزي	٦١٢٩٧ اجانب
٢١٨٠٩	١١٤٣٤	٥٨٤٥٧	٣١٦٩٧	٢٢٧٨١٠ - ماروني	١١٠٩٦٨٠
٤٠٣٨	١٨٥٥	١٦٥٤٤	٧١٩٠	٤٦٧٠٩ - روم كاثوليك	
٩٠٤١	٣٩٢٢	٣١٥٢١	١٢٥٤٧	٧٢٣١٢ - روم ارثوذكس	
٥٧٥	١٧٤	١٥٧٥	١٠٧	٦٨٦٩ - پروتستانت	
١٧١٨	١٩١	٦٠	١	٢٦١٠٢ - ارمن ارثوذكس	
٣٧٥	٢٠	٥٠	٩	٥٨٩٠ - ارمن كاثوليك	
٥٤	٣	٣٤	٦	٢٧٢٣ - سريان ارثوذكس	
١٠١	٦	١٩٦	٩	٢٨٠٣ - سريان كاثوليك	
١٨٨	٧	٢١٤	٦	٣٥٨٨ - موعدي	
٠	٠	٠	٠	١٩٠ - كلدان ارثوذكس	
١٩	٠	٦	٠	٥٤٨ - كلدان كاثوليك	
٢٣٤	٥٩	٧٥٨	٢١٢	٦٣٩٣ - متفرقة	
٤٦٢٩٠	٢١٧١٣	١٢٧٠٠٣	٥٩٩٨١	٧٩٣٣٩٦	
اثاث	ذكور	اثاث	ذكور	يسكون	
٥٤٥٥٦	٧٢٤٤٧	١٥٢٣٢	٤٤٧٤٩		
١٩٢٤	٣٠	١٩٢٤	٣٠	١٨٦١٨٤	١٩٢٤
٢٠٠٤٤	٢٦٢٤٦	٥١٣٥	١٦٥٧٨		

Figure 1. Copy of the original document rendering the results of the 1932 census.

countries and newly independent states, these two processes tend to merge. What complicates the relationship between population registration and citizenship in the Lebanese case is the intimate connection between the distribution of political power according to the findings of the census, and the resulting politicization of the demographic figures.

A new reading of the 1932 census requires a revision of the importance attached to the 1943 National Pact as a turning point in the modern history of Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> In the light of the 1932 census, the Pact should be seen as a cementation of the political elite's perception of Lebanon as a Christian nation.<sup>9</sup>

This premise was embodied in the 1932 census and internalized in the 1943 Pact when, as will be indicated in the following, the debatable statistical findings, the problematic inclusion of the emigrant population and the legal significance which the census later acquired were formalized politically.<sup>10</sup> Structural disagreements that were to aggravate rather than disentangle issues of conflict regarding the state-idea<sup>11</sup> of the Lebanese polity were thereby incorporated in the Pact. Political disputes among the inhabitants of Lebanon (who were still *not* legally known as 'Lebanese') regarding the identity of the Lebanese state surfaced immediately following the creation of modern Lebanon in 1920 and represent dilemmas that the Lebanese are still trying to accommodate: Is Lebanon an Arab country, or a state with an 'Arab face'?<sup>12</sup> Is it a refuge for Christians in the Middle East, or is it a plural multi-confessional state? Rather than laying the basis for an inter-communal political *modus operandi* for the Lebanese regime in 1943, the Pact has to be seen as an endorsement of *status quo* at the time because it further legitimized a particular view regarding the distribution of power in Lebanon.

Footnote—continued

citizenship' and *muwāta; duna* implying 'democratic citizenship'. See his *Citizenship and the State. A Comparative Study of Citizenship Legislation in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1997). It should be noted, however, that '*jinsiyya*' is the most common term used for citizenship in Arabic while *muwāt; duana* refers to the patriotic and nationalistic dimensions that are popularly implied in the term citizenship.

<sup>8</sup> It is common to learn in Lebanese schools that the National Pact was a unique agreement between far-sighted politi leaders in 1943. In political science literature, the importance of national pacts as a unifying building block in plural societies is especially prominent within the 'consociational school' established by Arend Lijphart and endorsed in Lebanon by Antoine Mesarra. See Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977) and Mesarra, 'Concordant democracy: A necessity for Lebanon and a model for other societies', *Plus*, 2 (1985). I maintain, however, that the 'uniqueness' of the pact is exaggerated and that this notion served, and still serves, as a popular unifying national ethos among the Lebanese. The pact should rather be seen, as Meir Zamir notes, as 'the culmination of political processes begun in the 1930s'. *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood 1926–1939* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 71. It is within this perspective that the 1932 census is here analysed.

<sup>9</sup> In 1933, the Maronite Patriarch Huwayik maintained that 'the issue of minorities and majorities and their attitude towards us do not concern us; Lebanon is a Christian nation'. Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism—The Rise and Fall of an Ethnic Resistance* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Proportional political representation had already been incorporated in article 95 in the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 under the mandate period. The census findings endorsed further this political formula. The first parliamentary assembly (*al-majlis al-niyābī*) following the 1932 census was formed on 1 January 1934 and included 14 Christian and 11 Muslim representatives (Decree 1).

<sup>11</sup> 'State-idea' refers to conceptions regarding the identity of the State, and normative foundations expressing what the purpose of the state should be, and who is to constitute the members of a particular state's according to these principles. Nils Butenschön describes the idea of the state as the state's 'normative foundation', and sees this idea as representing 'the state character' which reflects its *raison d'être*. See 'Politics of Ethnocracies—Strategies and Dilemmas of Ethnic Domination', paper presented at the National Conference of Political Science, Geilo, Norway, 11–12 January 1993, pp. 15–18.

<sup>12</sup> Note the differences in the Constitution's text (the preamble) prior to the Taif agreement and the Constitution of 1990 after amending the Taif Agreement.



## Re-reading the 1932 Census

On 24 November 1931, Lebanon's president Charles Dabbas issued a law that announced the carrying out of a census through which 'all residents on Lebanese territories' would be counted in the near future. Less than a month later, on 19 December, another law was issued specifying in article 2 that the law of enumeration encompasses both residents and emigrants.<sup>13</sup> The census was finally officially announced on 15 January 1932 through Decree 8837 lining up rules for the enumerating process of Lebanese residents and emigrants.<sup>14</sup>

The previous census carried out in March 1921 had been the first population census conducted after the creation of the modern Lebanese State in 1920.<sup>15</sup> At the time, the French High Commissioner announced that the census was necessary for purely administrative purposes. However, the political ramifications of the census were soon apparent when Regulation 1307 declared that, until a regulation concerning Lebanese citizenship was issued, all subjects registered in the 1921 census would be recognized as Lebanese and thereby eligible for participating in elections.<sup>16</sup>

The conditions to gain Lebanese citizenship were, however, not yet formalized in legal terms. During its first 4 years, the new Lebanese State had no distinct citizenship law that identified its citizenry. The Ottoman citizenship law of 1869, which did not differentiate between the emerging new national identities of the mandate areas, continued to be legally potent until Resolution 2825 was issued on 30 August 1924.<sup>17</sup>

A regulation concerning Lebanese citizenship was not promulgated until 3 years later, on 30 August 1924 when the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923, which regulated the legal status of former Ottoman citizens, was put in effect through Resolution 2825. Article 1 stipulated that '[a]ny person who was a

<sup>13</sup> Both laws are found in *al-jinsiyya wal-iḥṣā' wa wathā'iq al-ahwāl al-shakhṣiyya* (Citizenship, the Census and Personal Affairs), al-Majalla al-Qaḍā'iyya, no. 36, (Dar al-Manshūrāt al-huqūqiyya, Maṭba at Ṣādir, n.d.), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Decree 8837 is reproduced in George Karam, *al-Jinsiyya al-Lubnāniyya bayna al-qānūn wal-wāqī'* (Lebanese Citizenship between the Law and Reality) (Beirut: Maṭba at Joseph al-Hājj 1993), pp. 219–226.

<sup>15</sup> Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, France assumed the right to rule the autonomous province of Mount Lebanon (*sanjak*) on behalf of the League of Nations at the San Remo Conference on 28 April 1920. Under the French mandate, Mount Lebanon was enlarged on 1 September 1920 to include four regions predominantly inhabited by Muslims: Tripoli and the district of Akkar in the north, the Biqā' Valley in the east, the district of Jabal 'Amil, the coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon in the south, and Beirut.

<sup>16</sup> Sami Abdallah, *al-Jinsiyya al-Lubnāniyya-muqārana bil-Jinsiyya al-ʿArabiyya al-Sūriyya wal-Faransiyya* (Lebanese Citizenship—A Comparison with the Arab Syrian and French Citizenship). (Beirut: Maktabat maṭābī 'al-ṣuḥuf al-ḥadītha 1986), pp. 29–30.

<sup>17</sup> Resolution 2825 represents the promulgation of The Treaty of Lausanne in Lebanon. The Treaty regulated the legal status of former Ottoman citizens and was concluded a year earlier on 23 July 1923. Between 1920 (when France assumed the right to govern Lebanon at the San Remo Conference) and 1924 (when the Treaty of Lausanne formalized the French mandate), Lebanon did not have officially explicit guidelines for identifying the citizenry. During these early state-forming years, the French mandate government was still establishing its administrative routines and the Ottoman citizenship was not formally nullified. The Ottoman citizenship law considered everyone residing in Ottoman territory as an Ottoman subject and did not thereby legally differentiate between Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians until Resolution 2825 was legally promulgated.



Turkish [i.e. Ottoman] subject (*taba'a*) and resided in the territories of Greater Lebanon on 30 August 1924 is confirmed as a Lebanese subject and is regarded from now on as having lost the Turkish [i.e. Ottoman] citizenship'.<sup>18</sup> Until Resolution 2825 came in effect there was thus no distinct Lebanese citizenship law that identified the Lebanese citizenry.<sup>19</sup>

Owing perhaps to the ambiguity in determining which citizenship regulations were to be applied in determining Lebanese citizenship, the date 30 August 1924 figures frequently in Decree 8837. The date has a prominent place in the document that shows the results of the 1932 census. It reflects the importance that Resolution 2825 acquired for determining Lebanese citizenship: **citizenship legislation takes a person's presence on Lebanese territory on 30 August 1924 as its benchmark in granting Lebanese nationality.** The centrality of presence in Lebanon on that date in order to obtain citizenship is not absolute, however, because emigrants who were not present in Lebanon on 30 August 1924 were, as shown in the 1932 census document, listed as Lebanese citizens. In other words, Regulation 2825 that establishes Lebanese citizenship for the first time is clearly moderated by Law of 19 December 1931 that specified the inclusion of emigrants in the census in 1932. The legal ambiguity that was introduced in the corpus of the Lebanese citizenship law by making presence in Lebanon on 30 August 1924 imperative for residents in Lebanon, but non-relevant for emigrants was to create a Gordian knot in Lebanese courts and embassies for more than three decades after the carrying out of the 1932 census.<sup>20</sup>

It is not unique that citizenship legislation in a particular state structures the citizenry. What is unique in the Lebanese case is that the 1932 census—defined as an administrative procedure at the time—developed into an authoritative component in the codification process of the Lebanese citizenry. The census adopted over time a 'legal character' because some of the articles of Decree 8837 that drew up the guidelines for the conducting of the census were later interpreted by the judicial system as decisive specifications for the granting or denying of Lebanese citizenship.

## The Census Adopts a Legal Nature

The legal nature which the census adopted began to become clear when many of those who either remained stateless after the census, or whose birth and

<sup>18</sup> The full text of Resolution 2825 is found in Karam, *Lebanese Citizenship*, pp. 212–213. See also Davis, *Citizenship and the State* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1997) for an account of citizenship legislation in Lebanon.

<sup>19</sup> A distinct Lebanese citizenship law, known as Regulation 15, was issued a year later on 19 December 1925. The law is based on Regulation 2825, and states more specifically in articles 1 and 2 that 'every person born of a Lebanese father' and 'every person born on the territory of Greater Lebanon and did not prove by descent that he has received a foreign nationality' is considered Lebanese.

<sup>20</sup> Embassies received applications for citizenship by emigrants and their offspring while Lebanese courts handled appeals for Lebanese citizenship presented by both resident and emigrant non-citizens. For more on the ambiguous interpretations in Lebanese courts that handled applications for citizenship, see my article 'State-Formation in Lebanon—The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in a Sectarian State', in Butenschon *et al.* (eds) *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East*.

presence had not been officially registered, started filing applications for citizenship because they had no official documentation of their national status.<sup>21</sup> One important result of the 1932 census was that an unknown number of persons who had resided in Lebanon for generations, were not counted as Lebanese, and were denied citizenship as a result of the enumeration process.

In the aftermath of the census, the courts interpreted citizenship legislation following the census guidelines in Decree 8837 when dealing with demands for naturalization. These guidelines favoured the inclusion and naturalization of Christian rather than Muslim applicants for Lebanese citizenship. Many such Christian applicants were either emigrants or the offspring of emigrants who had emigrated before 30 August 1924, or they were immigrants recently arrived in Lebanon (former Ottoman subjects such as the Armenians, Chaldeans and members of the Greek Catholic churches). Some applicants of Muslim background who were not counted in the census resided in the frontier areas, i.e. areas bordering on Palestine<sup>22</sup> under British mandate, or Syria<sup>23</sup> under French mandate.

Article 13 of Decree 8837, for example, mentions specifically that 'refugees from Turkish territories such as Armenians, Syrians, Chaldeans and [members of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches]<sup>24</sup> or other persons who are of Turkish origin, shall be counted as Lebanese provided they were found on Lebanese territories on 30 August 1924 according to Regulation 2825'. Common to these groups is their Christian background. While Christian groups were specified in Decree 8837, Muslim refugee groups, such as the Kurds who came together with their Syriac and Armenian compatriots from Turkey, as well as beduin nomad groups who lived in areas bordering on Syria, were not granted the right to be counted as Lebanese. Article 12 stipulated that only bedouin who

<sup>21</sup> See Hasan Alawiyya, *al-Jinsiyya al-Lubnāniyya wa Turuq Isti'ādatihā* (Lebanese citizenship and ways of regaining it), 1984 and Abdallah, *Lebanese Citizenship*, for many interesting naturalization cases presented in court.

<sup>22</sup> This is the case of the former population of 'The Seven Villages' (*al-qurā as-sab'*) in Southern Lebanon that were part of Greater Lebanon before 1922. Following the Paulet-Newcombe Agreement concluded between the French and the British on 3 February 1922, these villages were detached from Lebanon and annexed to Northern Palestine. The detachment of these villages are here referred to as 'territorial amputations'. (See full text of the Paulet-Newcombe Agreement in Karam, *Lebanese Citizenship*, pp. 186–206). The agreement was, however, not promulgated until the Jerusalem Agreement on 2 February 1926, enabling the inhabitants to claim Lebanese citizenship on the basis of their residence on Lebanese territories on 30 August 1924. (Abdallah, *Lebanese Citizenship*, p. 30). The legal status of these persons was complicated by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Former inhabitants of The Seven Villages fled to Lebanon and registered themselves as 'Palestine refugees', a step which entitled them to UNRWA social and economic benefits. An indication of their Lebanese roots is their Shiite background that separates them from the predominantly Sunni Muslim and Christian Palestinians, and their registration in the 1921 census as found in the personal registries of the district of Tyre (Alawiyya, *Lebanese Citizenship*, p. 7). Former inhabitants and their descendants have tried, since the late 1960s, to obtain Lebanese citizenship, indicating Lebanese ancestry. They did not succeed in court but most were naturalized by decree in July 1994.

<sup>23</sup> This is the case of many long-term stateless inhabitants on Lebanese territories known as residents of the Khaled Valley (*Wadi Khaled*) who were also naturalized in 1994. The Valley includes 16 villages in the northern region of Akkar bordering Syria, that were included to Mount Lebanon when Greater Lebanon was formed in 1920.

<sup>24</sup> The Arabic word is *arwām* 'Rumies', which has been translated as 'members of the Catholic and Orthodox Greek churches'.

‘normally’ reside on Lebanese territories more than 6 months were to be counted as Lebanese, an instruction which resulted in the exclusion of Sunni Muslim bedouin partly because they could not prove the length of their period of residence on Lebanese territories. Citizenship regulations were later to be interpreted so that refugees of Christian background did not have to prove their residence on 30 August 1924, while other former Ottoman subjects, mainly of Muslim background, had to provide documents proving residence on that specific date.<sup>25</sup>

An interesting figure rendered in the 1932 census is the group of more than 60,000 persons categorized as foreigners. The enumeration and definition of the status of ‘foreigner’ was not clearly specified in Decree 8837, a point which requires closer scrutiny. Apparently, a ‘foreigner’ need not be a citizen of another state. Article 13 indicates that, in order for inhabitants to be counted as Lebanese they must present their identity cards (*tadhākir nufūs*) to the census committee. The article specifies further that

those who came to Lebanese territories after that date [30 August 1924], did not acquire Lebanese citizenship, and who are unable to prove their residence on Lebanese territory on the mentioned date, are counted as foreigners and are registered without citizenship. [i.e. stateless; my remark]

Judging from the text, it is unclear whether local census committees were supposed to register those without identity cards as ‘foreigners’, or whether this legal status was to be applied to persons who were actually citizens of other States. One interpretation is that persons unable to prove residence on 30 August 1924 (by showing ID-cards from the 1921 census or other official documentation), were registered as foreigners, although most were resident on Lebanese territories, and *not* citizens of other states. This interpretation is confirmed by article 18 which indicates that ‘each Lebanese is obliged to obtain an identity card (*tadhkarat hawiyya*), while foreigners can choose [whether or not to produce an ID-card] in that matter’. The question is whether the choice between having or producing ID-cards was instrumental in excluding inhabitants who *did not have any ID-cards or citizenship whatsoever*, and turning their status legally into ‘foreigners’. Interestingly, article 9 of Decree 8837 requests that the Higher Census Committee (*lajnat al-iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulyā*) which was headed by the Minister of Interior ‘presents a table for resident foreigners that specifies their numbers and their country of origin’. One certainly wonders why emigrants who belonged to Christian communities were finger-counted and categorized so

<sup>25</sup> See Abdallah, *Lebanese Citizenship*, pp. 45–46. The discourse regarding the interpretation of ‘presence’ on Lebanese territories as required in resolution 2825 ended partly when the regime issued Decree 398 on 26 November 1949 specifying more accurately that persons seeking to obtain Lebanese citizenship had to document residence by providing certification of historical character. The decree states that a person seeking to obtain Lebanese citizenship had to present ‘all documents that prove his Lebanese origin such as registration in old personal records of him or one of his ancestors, official documents issued by the administration or the district, notifying him or his family in kinship books and family history, or the like’. See Karam, *Lebanese Citizenship*, p. 227. The most restrictive interpretation regarding evidences of residence on Lebanese territory was applied.

painstakingly,<sup>26</sup> while more than 61,000 persons were considered not worthy of closer identification as the Decree specified.

According to Isam Ni'man, lawyer and ex-MP (1992–1996) several groups were created following territorial amputation of Lebanese villages as a result of the Paulet-Newcombe Agreement in 1922,<sup>27</sup> the deficiencies of the 1932 census, and inaccurate personal registries and registries of birth.<sup>28</sup> These groups of persons became known as 'the concealed'<sup>29</sup> (*al-maktūmīn*), 'the deprived'<sup>30</sup> (*al-maḥrūmīn*), while others became known as persons whose identity was 'under study' (*qayd ad-dars*). All these groups reside in the northern and southern parts of the country, areas that were added to Mount Lebanon when Greater Lebanon was created in 1920, and where the population was predominantly Muslim.

Some of the administrative shortcomings that occurred during the carrying out and the aftermath of the census, whereby many persons were not counted and thereby rendered stateless and legally undocumented, were probably mere bureaucratic blunders. Many cases can be explained by popular ignorance of the consequences of non-registration because the establishment of a state apparatus and the centralization of political power were new to the region. My hypothesis, however, is that while these deficiencies may well have started as administrative mistakes, the consistent exclusion of stateless persons and resident non-citizens as members of the Lebanese state became politically motivated over time.

<sup>26</sup> Among the citizens enlisted in the 1932 census document we find for example one Armenian Orthodox, nine Armenian Catholics, six Syriac Orthodox, nine Syriac Catholic migrants who migrated before 1924, and three Syriac Orthodox enlisted as emigrants after 1924.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 22 for more details.

<sup>28</sup> In the lack of updated population censuses that render vital statistical information on the constitution of the population, other administrative institutions play a central role in surveying the population in Lebanon. Among the most important state institutions we find two directories placed under the Ministry of Interior: the Directory General of Personal Affairs (*al-mudīriyya al-āma lil-aḥwāl al-shakhṣiyya*) which surveys Lebanese citizens, and the Directory General of Public Security (*al-mudīriyya al-āmma lil-amn al-āmm*), which surveys the non-citizen population. Both directories register births, marriages, deaths and the confessional affiliation of each person resident in Lebanon. In addition, there are personal registries (*aqlām qayūd*; *aqlām an-nujūs*) in all the country's districts, in which only Lebanese citizens, at least those that have been reported, are registered. It is important to underline the word 'reported' as we are dealing with a society where personal and family affairs are administered by the religious communities, making the religious leaders responsible for informing the State administration. In some cases, these leaders did not carry out their administrative responsibilities with the consequence that unreported births and deaths resulted in the creation of the problem of 'concealed' persons as well as 'living dead' persons.

<sup>29</sup> Persons whose official legal status is concealed include individuals whose names were deleted administratively from local personal registries following the 1932 census. Local committees deleted the names of members of impoverished families that had ten or more children not believing it to be possible to have such big hatches. See *ad-Diyār*, 16 May 1993. These became known as 'the administratively deleted' (*maṣṭūb qaydahu idāriyyan*). See *ad-Diyār*, 10 December 1992 and *al-Nahār*, 5 May 1993. The administration is permitted to delete the names of persons who were unrightfully registered in the 1932 census through a paragraph added to article 21 of Decree 8837 on 9 September 1944 (Decree 1822). *al-jinsiyya wal-iḥṣā' wa wathā'iq al-aḥwāl al-shakhṣiyya* [Citizenship, the Census and the documents of Personal Registries], *al-majalla al-qada;du'iyya* [The Legal Magazine] (Dār al-Manṣhūrāt al-Huqūqiyya, n.d.), p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> Many spouses registered their marriage with the local Muslim shaikhs who in turn did not inform the authorities. Children born to these officially unregistered marriages became 'legally unregistered offspring'. Their names were not found in official personal registries, which prevented them from obtaining citizenship. In other cases, male children were not enrolled in personal registries because parents feared forced conscription.

Stateless, unregistered and long-term immigrants of Muslim background continued to be excluded from the citizenry by the implementation of severe citizenship policies in order to solidify Christian numerical dominance.

Two diverging but related points indicate that this interpretation is not unlikely: First, several incidents and documents show that influential religious and political leaders tried to 'find ways' of preserving Christian hegemony and of filling the demographic imbalance created by the inclusion of predominantly Muslim areas when Greater Lebanon was formed. One of these ways was the politicization of demographic data. Second, the emigrant population was included in the 1932 census, a step that assured a Christian demographic majority. The bulk of these emigrants (approximately 73%) had left Lebanon before 30 August 1924 and did not fulfill the legal requirements set by Regulation 2825. However, Law of 19 December 1931 and Decree 8837 moderated the importance of this requirement in specifying that emigrants be included in the census. The date that Resolution 2825 set as imperative for obtaining Lebanese citizenship was nevertheless used in order to differentiate between emigrants that had left before and after 30 August 1924.<sup>31</sup>

What were the political arguments regarding the inclusion of emigrants in the citizenry who were considered 'inhabitants of the Lebanese Republic'?<sup>32</sup> It is possible to identify territorial, nationalistic and demographic objectives for including the emigrant population as expressed by the Maronite-dominated regime at the time.

### Territorial Objectives: 'Squaring the Circle'

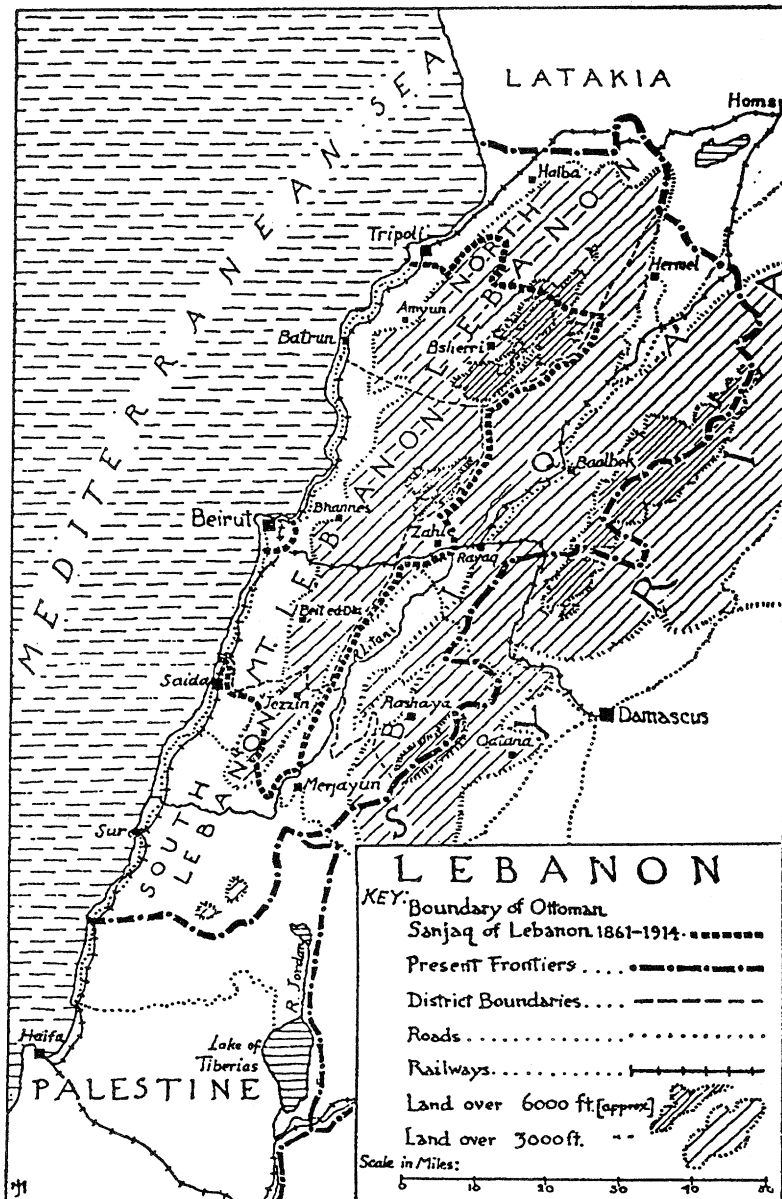
The creation of Greater Lebanon on 1 September 1920 satisfied the national aspirations of Maronite religious and political leaders at the time. However, the extended borders entailed the inclusion of a large Muslim population. Whereas the Maronites had constituted a majority in the *sanjak* of Mount Lebanon, in Greater Lebanon they became a minority. The population of the *sanjak* in 1911 totalled 414,800 of whom approximately 80% were Christians, with the Maronites comprising 58%. In the areas annexed to the *sanjak*, the Christians comprised 35% of the population after 1920, with the Maronites comprising a mere 14%<sup>33</sup> (Figure 2).

<sup>31</sup> The census results also render the distribution of tax-paying and non-tax-paying emigrants. Apparently, the census committee wanted to indicate that many emigrants were still contributing financially to their homeland, and had thereby the right to be represented. The well-known slogan from the American Revolution that equates tax-payment with representation is stressed. However, less than one-third of emigrants paid taxes, while nearly 70% did not pay taxes, but were nevertheless represented politically in their homeland.

<sup>32</sup> Lebanon is a significant emigrant nation. The nineteenth century saw the initial migration of mainly members of Christian communities to the Americas, Australia as well as to European countries. In the 1930s and 1940s Lebanese migrants, mainly of Muslim background, settled in different parts of Western Africa. The civil war (1975–1990) has also seen the migration of unknown numbers of Lebanese. See Hourani and Shehadi (eds) *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> See *as-Safir*, 23 March, 1993 and Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (London, Sydney and Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 98–99.





**Figure 2.** Map over Lebanon that shows the territorial boundaries of Mount Lebanon before 1920 (Boundary of Ottoman Sanjak of Lebanon 1861-1914) and the territorial boundaries of Greater Lebanon after 1920 (present frontiers). *Source:* A. H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay* (Oxford/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946).

At the time, the Muslim population in the annexed territories, who resented their enforced detachment from Syria and regarded Greater Lebanon as an artificial entity, repeatedly insisted on being reunited with Syria, which they regarded as their Arab homeland.<sup>34</sup> These aspirations posed a fundamental threat to the Maronites' idea of Lebanon as a predominantly Christian state with strong ties to the West. How were the Maronites to retain a politically dominant position in Greater Lebanon where they constituted less than one third of the resident population in 1920?

Already in May 1921 George Samné, a Lebanese immigrant in France, argued that the Maronite political leadership had either to detach the annexed areas in order to retain a Christian majority, and thereby a more consistent Christian identity, or to retain the enlarged borders, which would inevitably require a different approach towards Syria and the Muslim population. He described the fulfillment of the two as an attempt to 'square the circle'.<sup>35</sup> Five years later, in July 1926, the Maronite Patriarch Huwayik writes to Briand, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs:

The original idea that served as a basis for the establishment of the Lebanese state was to make it into a refuge for all the Christians of the Orient and an abode of undivided fidelity to France, yet we are sorry to say that after eight years of hesitant efforts, more has been lost than gained. Wouldn't be right to do here what was done in the Balkans and Silesia? There is nothing wrong in an exchange of population between Jabal Druze and the Southeastern region of Lebanon, namely the Druze, as well as between the Muslims and Christians of some other regions.<sup>36</sup>

Neither territorial amputations nor population displacements were effected as a result of unequal ethnic demographic distribution, as seen by some Christian political leaders. The carrying out of the 1932 census and the application of citizenship policies in the aftermath of the census should, however, be seen within a perspective where certain steps were undertaken in order to preserve and buttress Christian hegemony over the state.<sup>37</sup> What were perceived as unfavourable demographic realities were sought to be controlled through citizenship policies that differentiated between desirable and undesirable members of the Lebanese state.

One indication of the use of citizenship as a means of buttressing Christian supremacy appeared during the census period in 1932. A prominent Maronite

<sup>34</sup> The Sunnis had supported Faisal's appointment as King of Syria in 1919 and were eager to see the formation of Lebanon united with Syria before Faisal was expelled by the French in July 1920.

<sup>35</sup> Together with Shukri Ghanem, Samné organized a group of Syrian and Lebanese Christian immigrants in France, the *Comité Central Syrien* that supported the French mandate policy in the Levant. Samné was editor of *Correspondance Syrien*, where he published a series of articles during 1921 and 1922 pointing at the difference between the autonomous Province of Mount Lebanon prior to 1920 and the enlarged Greater Lebanon after 1920. See Meir Zamir, *Smaller and Greater Lebanon—The Squaring of a Circle?*, *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 23 (Spring 1982), pp. 40–41.

<sup>36</sup> See the letter in Zamir (*ibid.*, pp. 48–49) where the letter is rendered. It is indicated that part of the original letter has been omitted. This appears to be the case with the rest of the paragraph concerning population displacement quoted above.

<sup>37</sup> Citizenship policies reflect the authorization process where legal regulations (laws, decrees and regulations), as well as political considerations (law interpretation over time, regime formation and alliance constellations) determine membership in the state.



political figure, Emile Eddé,<sup>38</sup> proposed measures that 'permit [Lebanon] to have a more consistent Christian majority'.<sup>39</sup> He recommended the transformation of Tripoli into a free city under direct French control; the Christian inhabitants of the city would obtain Lebanese citizenship while the Muslims would obtain Syrian citizenship. Eddé explains:

In this way, Lebanon would number 55,000 Muslims less, which would constitute an agreeable result ... There is also room to make the whole region of South Lebanon, which is composed of a very large Muslim Shiite majority, an autonomous entity. Thanks to this second amputation, Lebanon will be quit of nearly 140,000 Shiite and Sunni Muslims, and remain with a Christian majority equaling approximately 80% of its entire population.

The date of the memorandum, 29 August 1932, suggests that the preliminary results from the 1932 census (which ended in September 1932), showing the close balance in numbers between Muslim and Christian inhabitants on Lebanese territories, were most probably known to its author. This might have encouraged him to propose alternative measures, where the distribution of citizenship was seen as instrumental in order to strengthen Christian numerical dominance before the results were officially presented. The use of citizenship as a political instrument, in ways curiously similar to Eddé's suggestions, was effected in the aftermath of 1932 census.<sup>40</sup> On the one hand, **undesirable residents were either excluded from enlisting in personal registries, or they were categorized as 'foreigners'.** These steps excluded thousands of residents from acquiring citizenship. On the other hand, **'desirable' emigrants were given the opportunity to register in the census, enabling them to gain Lebanese citizenship.**

### The Emigrant Card

The inclusion of Lebanese emigrants in the 1932 census was vital for securing the political aspirations of the Christian political leaders and buttressing the state-idea of Lebanon as a Christian nation. **Table 2 shows that while 35% of the total Christian citizenry were emigrants, only 9% of the total non-Christian citizenry were emigrants.**

**Table 2 shows furthermore that the inclusion of emigrants benefited first and foremost from the numerical strength of Christian communities: 85% of the emigrant citizenry was Christian while Muslim emigrants constituted only 15% of the total emigrant population. All in all, nearly one-fourth of the Lebanese citizenry in the 1932 census were emigrants. However, while Christian emigrants constituted approximately 20% of the total Lebanese citizenry, non-Christian emigrants constituted approximately 4% of the total Lebanese citizenry.**

The distribution of resident citizens and emigrants according to confessional

<sup>38</sup> Eddé was a member of the first and third Lebanese deputation to the Paris Conference in 1919–1920 that demanded the creation of 'Greater Lebanon'. He served as Prime Minister in 1929–1930, and was President in 1936–1941. See Meir Zamir, 'Emile Eddé and the Territorial Integrity of Lebanon', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 14 (2) (1978), p. 232.

<sup>39</sup> The propositions are found in the form of a memorandum which is not dated but a note attached to it is dated 29 August 1932. The writer is identified as 'M. Eddé, député Libanais'. Zamir, *ibid.*, pp. 232–233.

<sup>40</sup> On the use of citizenship as a political instrument, see my *State-Formation in Lebanon*, pp. 20–30.

**Table 2.** Christian and non-Christian citizenry as rendered in the 1932 census document according to emigrant and resident status

	Residents	Residents in % of total resident citizenry	Emigrants	Emigrants in % of total emigrant citizenry	Total citizenry of religious groups	Emigrants in % of total citizenry of religious group	Emigrants in % of total Lebanese citizenry
Christians <sup>41</sup>	396,946	50	215,844	84.7	612,790	35.2	20.1
Non-Christians <sup>42</sup>	396,450	50	39,143	15.4	435,593	8.9	3.7
Lebanese citizenry	793,396		254,987		1,048,383		24.3

<sup>41</sup> The Christian citizenry includes the Maronites, Greek Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Protestants, Armenians, Syrians and Chaldeans.

<sup>42</sup> The non-Christian citizenry includes members of the Sunni, Shi'a, Druze and Jewish communities, as well as those labelled as 'miscellaneous' (6393 residents and 1263 emigrants) as rendered in the 1932 census results.

Table 3. Resident and emigrant Lebanese citizens by religious community according to the 1932 census

	Resident citizens	Residents in % of total resident citizens	Emigrants	Sect in % of total emigrant citizenry	Total citizens (emigrants residents)	Sect in % of total Lebanese citizenry
Maronites	227,800	28.7	123,397	48.4	351,197	33.5
Greek Orthodox	77,312	9.7	57,031	22.4	134,343	12.8
Greek Catholic	46,709	5.9	29,627	11.6	76,336	7.3
Armenians	31,992	4.0	2,424	1.0	34,416	3.3
Other Christians <sup>43</sup>	13,133	1.7	3,365	1.3	16,498	1.6
Total Christians	396,946	50.0	215,844	84.7	612,790	58.5
Sunnis	178,100	22.5	17,205	6.7	195,305	18.6
Shiis	155,035	19.5	11,501	4.5	166,536	15.9
Druze	53,334	6.7	8,750	3.4	62,084	5.9
Other non-Christians <sup>44</sup>	9,981	1.3	1,678	0.7	11,659	1.1
Total non-Christians	396,450	50.0	39,143	15.4	435,593	41.5
Total	793,396	100	254,987	100	1,048,383	100
Foreigners	61,297	7.2 <sup>45</sup>				

<sup>43</sup> The category of 'other Christians' includes Protestants, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Chaldean Catholics and Chaldean Orthodox.

<sup>44</sup> The category of resident 'other non-Christians' includes 3588 Jews and 6393 persons labelled 'miscellaneous' in the 1932 census.

<sup>45</sup> The percentage figure points at the relative number of 'foreigners' of total residents in Lebanon (both foreigners and Lebanese citizens).

**Table 4.** The distribution of the emigrant population before and after 30 August 1924 according to religious group

	Emigrants before 1924	Emigrants before 1924 in %	Emigrants after 1924	Emigrants after 1924 in %
Maronites	90,154	48.2	33,243	49.4
Greek Orthodox	44,068	23.6	12,963	19.3
Greek Catholic	23,734	12.7	5,893	8.8
Armenians	120	0.0	2,304	3.5
Other Christians <sup>46</sup>	2,433	1.3	932	0.7
Total Christians	160,509	85.8	55,335	81.2
Sunnis	12,493	6.7	4,712	7.0
Shiis	7,520	4.0	3,990	5.9
Druze	5,272	2.8	3,478	5.2
Other non-Christians <sup>47</sup>	1,190	0.6	488	0.7
Total non-Christians	26,475	14.1	12,668	18.8
Total emigrants	186,984	100	68,003	100

background reveals an even more shrewd relationship. Table 3 shows that the Maronite community in particular was heavily represented among the emigrants: nearly half of the total Lebanese emigrant population was Maronite (48.4%), Maronite (48.4%), while the Maronites constituted 29% of the resident citizenry. When the Maronite emigrants are added to the resident population, the Maronite sect increases the percentage of the total Maronite population to 33.5% of the total Lebanese citizenry. At the same time, the inclusion of the emigrant community reduces the percentage of the Sunni and Shi'a community of the total Lebanese citizenry. The Sunni community which constituted 22.5% of the resident citizenry is reduced to a share of 18% of the total Lebanese citizenry, while the Shi'a community which constituted 19.5% of the resident citizenry is reduced to approximately 16% of the total citizenry. In sum, the inclusion of emigrants was decisive in establishing what eventually appeared as a Lebanese population with a Christian majority.

The inclusion of emigrants was legally legitimized through Law of 19 December 1931, issued less than a month before the announcement of the carrying out of the census through Decree 8837 on 15 January 1932. Although the requirement of presence in Lebanon on 30 August 1924 was thereby made irrelevant, the results of the census made a clear distinction between those that had migrated before and after that date. Looking more closely at the distribution of emigrants as rendered in Table 4, we find that approximately 187,000 persons had left before 1924, and 68,000 after 1924. In other words, more than 73% of all emigrants, of whom 86% were Christian, would not have been able to fulfill the requirement of presence in Lebanon in order to be registered as a Lebanese

<sup>46</sup> The category of 'other Christians' includes 6869 resident Protestants, 5890 resident Syriac Catholics, 2723 residents Syriac Orthodox, 548 resident Chaldean Catholics and 190 resident Chaldean Orthodox.

<sup>47</sup> The category of resident 'other non-Christians' includes 3588 Jews and 6393 persons labelled 'miscellaneous' in the 1932 census.

citizen as required by Resolution 2825 if special measures were not made. The law issued a month before the census ensured that Resolution 2825 be moderated in the case of emigrants in order to secure the registration of the large numbers of Christians who had left Lebanon before 1924. Unlike the enumeration of residents which was more or less specified in the decree, the manner in which emigrants were to be registered was not specified. The enlisting of emigrants is indirectly mentioned in article 19 of Decree 8837 that reads:

Each Lebanese who is temporarily away from Lebanese territory during the census, and has not been enlisted in the questionnaire which the head of household presents, is requested to submit a petition to the Office of Personal Affairs within the first month of his arrival in order to register him in the census registries.

The task of enlisting members of the emigrant community was thus delegated to a resident head of household. In short, emigrants were labelled 'Lebanese' *in absentia*.<sup>48</sup> In many cases the *in absentia* inclusion of emigrants as part of the Lebanese citizenry did not equip the person included with a citizenship document which verified that the person included in the census was a *de facto* citizen. The *in absentia* naturalization of Lebanese emigrants led eventually to problems for an unknown number of emigrants and their descendants who opted to acquire a Lebanese citizenship document (in the form of passports, travelling documents, or getting enlisted in personal registries in Lebanon). The *in absentia* naturalization of emigrants explains also partly why the application of citizenship legislation became more and more complicated for descendants of Christian Lebanese emigrants with the passing of time, and was not only beheld persons of Muslim background.

As Table 2 shows, when we exclude the emigrant population in order to assess the constitution of the resident population we find that the resident Christian Lebanese majority over the resident non-Christian Lebanese population is marginal, amounting to around 500 persons (396,946 Christians and 396,450 non-Christians). This meager Christian majority among the resident population was reached by adopting two instrumental and debatable steps: first, by explicitly specifying (in Decree 8837) that Armenian, Syriac and Chaldean refugees (who

<sup>48</sup> According to Kaare Wassenden who works with the year 2000 census at the Norwegian Statistical Bureau, the inclusion of long-term emigrants in the state's citizenry as was done in the Lebanese 1932 census is rather unique (telephone interview, May 1999). In comparable countries where the emigrant population is substantial, such as Israel and Ireland, a census registers only persons present within the state's territory at the time of the enumeration. In Israel and Ireland, the total citizenry (i.e. all those holding citizenship) is potentially larger than the resident citizenry as it appears in the state's annual statistical abstracts. Emigrants usually 'count' only in terms of their right to vote. In elections, an Israeli or Irish emigrant is able to vote only if he or she is physically present in the state. (Information given by the Israeli embassy and the Irish consulate in Norway, May 1999.) A Lebanese emigrant is also required to be present in Lebanon in order to vote. The crucial difference between Lebanon, on the one hand, and Israel and Ireland, on the otherhand, is the pre-set proportional confessional representation system that *pre-calculated* the emigrant population in the overall distribution of power until the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. Hanf comments on the ongoing political debate regarding the definition of the Lebanese population 't[h]e crucial issue is the Lebanese abroad. The most extreme Muslim view is to ignore them completely; the Christian counterpart is to count all as Lebanese emigrants. The inability to reach agreement on this question has precluded a census in the past half century'. *Coexistence in War-Time Lebanon* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 89–90.

implicitly have a Christian background) are to be counted as Lebanese citizens including thereby approximately 73,000 persons of Christian background as Lebanese citizens; second, by labelling approximately 60,000 inhabitants and refugees of predominantly Muslim background as 'foreigners' owing to their lack of legal identity. In addition to these two steps, the numerical dominance of Christian groupings was bolstered by including the emigrant population, of whom 73% had migrated before 1924, and where emigrants of Christian background constituted 85% of the total emigrant population.

### The Politics of Membership and Citizenship

Walzer indicates that 'the distribution of membership ... in any ongoing society, is a matter of political decision'.<sup>49</sup> In other words, governments apply certain political standards and have absolute authority to include or exclude persons as members of state. Some answers to the puzzling questions regarding the problems of counting the population in Lebanon and the politicization of demographic data can therefore be discerned by analysing the politics of membership and citizenship in the Lebanese state. Apparently, while '[g]eographic borders delimit territory, citizenship laws delimit the people'.<sup>50</sup> In an ethnically divided polity such as Lebanon, citizenship laws and policies have been formed and applied in ways where members were included and excluded according to political objectives which aimed to buttress the influence of particular groups over others. By resisting any updating of the census, and manipulating the naturalization process in its favour, the regime was able to compose the citizenry in ways of its own choosing. The Maronite-dominated regime not only inflated the number of Christian citizens, it sought to both make and keep opponent groups minoritarian.

What makes a re-reading of the 1932 census especially interesting today is the exceptional importance it was given in defining the Lebanese citizenry during a politically volatile period (1920–1943) when the political entity was under foreign rule and also faced incompatible claims regarding its identity. The census aimed at counting the Lebanese at the same time as the citizenry was actually formed, resulting in the politicization of both the enumerating and the naturalization processes. One of the reasons for the politicization of the 1932 census is the legal importance it acquired over time in determining who was eligible to Lebanese citizenship. For the most politically mobilized leadership at the time, the Maronites, the census was a central building block in forming a politically favourable citizenry. Potentially undesirable members of competing groups were excluded, while favourable potential members were included.

Citizenship policies enable the regime to dominate in compliance with its overall objective: the maintenance of its rule in accordance with its implicitly and explicitly expressed state-idea. In this respect, debates about

<sup>49</sup> Michael Walzer, 1994 [1983] *Spheres of Justice—A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell), p. 40.

<sup>50</sup> Tomas Hammar, *Democracy and the Nation State—Aliens, Denizens and Citizens in a World of International Migration* (Aldershot, Brookfield, Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney: Avebury), p. 85.

citizenship are rightly described by Brubaker as being debates about nationhood.<sup>51</sup> Those who are or become members of a polity are also those that can legitimately represent particular norms and values, and influence the direction in which a polity is taking towards achieving these preferences.

The carrying out of an updated population census in Lebanon is improbable as long as the identity of the 'Lebanese citizenry' remains unclear for three reasons. First, there is still considerable disagreement over whether and how to include or exclude Lebanese emigrants—most of whom are citizens of other countries—as 'Lebanese citizenry'. Second, the naturalization of non-Lebanese is managed through a set of citizenship regulations because the forming of a consistent law, although suggested in parliament on several occasions, has not gathered the necessary political consent.<sup>52</sup> Third,—and this point is perhaps the crux of the matter—the democratic ideal of 'one man one vote' transformed the demographic strength of each community into a political determinant. In a divided society like Lebanon, the representation of confessional groups according to their relative size has obviously politicized any demographic surveying. The greater the numerical strength of an ethnic community, the more powerful its political influence, and thereby its potential ability to implement its own political aspirations regarding the identity of the State *vis-à-vis* the other sectarian or ethnic groups.<sup>53</sup> In other words, as long as representation continues to run along ethnic lines in Lebanon debates over numbers and the presumed or alleged size of groups will continue.

Following the Taif agreement, many argue that numbers no longer matter because of the parity between Christians and Muslims at the political level. The Lebanese are thereby politically considered as members of equally large collective groups rather than as individual citizens. The current parity between the two main confessional groups in Lebanon, however, further reflects the prescriptions of the consociational democracy model whereby conflict is to be avoided by giving primacy to group representation rather than being addressed *per se*. The idea is that fair group representation leads to a lower degree of conflict. My reading of the 1932 census, however, supports the argument that it is the existence of conflict in the first place that has led to sectarian segregation, rather than segregation that has led to conflict. Conflict over the identity of the state, still unresolved in Lebanon, continues to politicize the religious affiliation of residents as well as the process of defining the legitimate members of the state through citizenship legislation. The regime's preoccupation with keeping a 'balance' between the main religious groups turned the question of numbers into a taboo.

An important step towards resolving the problems created by the incomplete identification of the citizenry came with the issuing of a naturalization decree in July 1994 under which between 100,000 and 200,000 persons received Lebanese

<sup>51</sup> Rogers Brubaker (ed.) *Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America* (Lanham and London: University Press of America, 1989), p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> The formation of a citizenship law is stipulated in the Taif Agreement, but has not yet materialized.

<sup>53</sup> Butenschön indicates that the export of Western political and constitutional wisdom into ethnically divided territories turns voting power into a critical factor and demographic strength into a critical resource in determining the political identity of the regimes. See *Politics of Ethnocracies*, p. 4.



citizenship.<sup>54</sup> This step signals that the new regime stressed territorial attachment (*jus soli*), rather than blood attachment (*jus sanguinis*) in granting citizenship.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

A re-examination of the 1932 census indicates that the apparent Christian majority in Lebanon was a heavily politicized majority based on the questionable exclusion of considerable numbers of residents on Lebanese territories and the debatable inclusion of significant numbers of emigrants. The identity of the state was to be resolved by projecting a demographic 'reality' indicating that the identity of the population was predominantly Christian, thereby securing and legitimizing Christian political dominance.

The results and the principles behind the 1932 census were maintained despite clear indications of the shortcomings that evolved in its aftermath: the creation of a large number of stateless and legally undocumented individuals, as well as of the political under-representation of certain communities, most notably the Shi'is. Lebanon had to endure a tragic civil war in order to adjust political power distribution to demographic realities. What a re-reading of the 1932 census also shows is that the presence of a Muslim majority on Lebanese territories did *not* primarily evolve over time. This majority has been manifest and explicit since the creation of modern Lebanon, although the demographic disparities between the groups has widened dramatically over time. In other words, there was no demographic rationale for Christian political dominance in a country *inhabited* by just as many Muslims as early as 1920.

The probability of ignoring population figures in Lebanon will continue as long as a consociational political arrangement based on one or another form of quota representation is perceived as a model for political distribution in Lebanon. The question however remains: *How is it feasible to disregard updated population figures when calculating quotas depends on some sort of basic quantitative assessment, whether we are talking of proportionality or the size of electoral districts? The conflict over election laws and the choice of the size of the*

<sup>54</sup> Among the groups that were granted Lebanese citizenship were residents of the Seven Villages, the inhabitants of Wadi Khaled and members of the Kurdish communities. The number of naturalized is uncertain and strongly contested among some Christian groupings. The Maronite Association (*al-Rābita al-Mārūniyya*) has raised a case against the state following the naturalization decree (*Nidā' al-Waṭan*, 27 August 1994). See Tony Atallah's, *al-Mujannasūn fī lubnān: haqā' iq wa arqām bi-rasm al-mustafidiñ* (*The Naturalized in Lebanon: Truth and Figures on the Part of those who Benefited*), paper presented at the Citizenship in Lebanon conference, American Lebanese University, Byblos, 11–12 July 1997.

<sup>55</sup> An important exemption to this rule is the Palestinian refugee community. The presence of the Palestinian community in Lebanon (probably equaling up to 10% of the total population) complicates the issue of citizenship, notwithstanding their unsolved status as stateless non-citizens on Lebanese territories. My analysis indicates clearly that the Lebanese regime applied selective citizenship policies *before* the Palestinian refugees came to Lebanon in 1948. The Palestinians certainly exacerbated the imbalance of demographic strength in favour of Muslim groups, but did not *create* this imbalance which already existed in 1920, nearly three decades before their arrival in 1948. Indicative of the ethnic and class-based citizenship policies is that large segments of the Christian Palestinian population, who were generally of a higher class affiliation than their Muslim compatriots, received Lebanese citizenship in the 1950s under the presidency of Camille Chamoun. The presentation of a new citizenship law by the Minister of Interior Michel al-Murr (al-Anwar, 8 June 1999), also reflects the government's preoccupation with the issue of citizenship.

electoral districts which occurred during the 1992 and 1996 elections, as well as the rigid pre-set political structure, indicates that the politicization of numbers lies behind all representative calculations.<sup>56</sup> In Lebanon, numbers lie underneath any discussions regarding the distribution of power. Until there is a consensus on who the Lebanese are, and an updated population census takes place, the disagreements and conflict regarding the identity of the Lebanese state and political representation are likely to persist.

The article shows how sensitive the statistical enumeration of the population is in a state divided along sectarian lines. Lebanon represents an extreme case, but census figures play much the same role in other states in the Middle East such as Jordan, Israel and the oil-rich Arab Gulf countries which are populated by residents that have divergent membership status in the state. Israel has also applied segregated citizenship and immigration policies in order to create and buttress a Jewish state and undermine the legal presence of the Palestinian population.<sup>57</sup> In 1949, the regime in Jordan bolstered its sparsely settled population by granting Palestinian refugees Jordanian citizenship at a politically decisive period in the state-building process. Four decades later King Hussein decreased the number of his subjects by denaturalizing almost a quarter of Jordan's citizenry when the West Bank was disengaged in 1988. Thus, the regime was able to shed economic and political responsibilities towards a weakened Palestinian population that no longer provided political leverage for the King and his kingdom's survival into the twenty-first century. In Kuwait, members of the stateless 'bidun'-population, who count between 150,000–200,000 persons, were conveniently counted and officially categorized as 'Kuwaiti citizens' in order to inflate the meager number of nationals before the Iraqi invasion in 1990. The Bidun were however regrouped as 'non-citizens' in official statistics immediately after the invasion in order to enhance the regime's overall internal control following its come-back in 1991.<sup>58</sup>

In states where vital internal security considerations have taken on more importance than accurate population figures, the ruling regime does not refrain from applying different forms of the 'numbers game' in order to arrange demographic data, applying citizenship policies that are in accordance with what it wishes to exhibit as the identity of the state.

<sup>56</sup> The present election law denies citizens the opportunity to vote in the place where they reside, obliging them to travel to the places where they were born (in the case of women, in the place where their husband is born), in order to maintain the finely tuned and preset political canvass.

<sup>57</sup> The case of the 'Israeli Arabs', that is the Palestinians who did not leave Palestine in 1948 and their descendents who eventually received Israeli citizenship, cannot be ignored in this context. However, as long as a range of citizenship rights (such as welfare services and economic benefits) are tied to the condition of having served military service which Israeli Arabs do not fulfill, the status of Israeli Arabs remains a second-class citizenship status. See Lisa Hajjar, 'Making Identity Policy: Israel's Intervention among the Druze', *Middle East Report* (July–September 1996). Yoav Peled, however, presents the view that the citizenship status of Israeli Arabs is 'the key to Israel's function as an ethnic democracy' and resents the definition of Israeli Arabs as second-class citizens. See 'Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Construction of Citizenship: Arab Citizens of the Jewish State', *American Political Science Review*, 86(2) (1992).

<sup>58</sup> See my 'Liberated Kuwait—Change and the Regime's Quest towards Internal Stability', in Nils Butenschøn, (ed.) *Golfkrisen i perspektiv [The Gulf Crisis in Perspective]*, Research Report 01/93, (Oslo: University of Oslo, Department of Political Science), pp. 164–169.