'The Children of the State'? How Palestinians from the Seven Villages Negotiate Sect, Party and State in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT   *In Lebanon, the fear of tawṭīn makes nationalization of Palestinian refugees an anathema. Yet several groups of Palestinians have received Lebanese citizenship since 1948, most (in)famously those from the 'seven villages', a chain of Shiʿi villages on Lebanon's southern border that was incorporated into Palestine in 1923. The trajectory of their nationalization is usually presented as a straightforward consequence of top-down Lebanese electoral politics. This article augments this dominant perspective through a case study of the community from the village of Salha, now in Israel, that currently lives in Shabriha, a small town near the city of Tyre in South Lebanon. Adopting the 'negotiated statehood' framework, the article offers an agency-oriented, bottom-up perspective on the community's gaining of citizenship and shows how the people from Salha have acquired citizenship not merely to gain access to, but also to ensure a degree of independence from, the Lebanese state and political parties.*

Introduction

> They are the children of the state (*āwlād al-dawla*); they have very good connections with people in the government. And this is what makes them strong; it is prohibited to hit them.[1]

In Lebanon, the fear of 'naturalization' (*tawṭīn*) makes nationalization of Palestinian refugees an anathema.[2] Knudsen notes that 'the question of naturalizing refugees is one of the most contentious political issues in Lebanon today'.[3] Yet several groups of Palestinian refugees have received Lebanese citizenship since 1948, most (in)famously those from the 'seven villages', a chain of villages on Lebanon's southern border that was incorporated into Palestine in

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1. Hizbullah representative, Palestinian Shabriha, 4 May 2013.
2. Daniel Meier, '"Al-Tawteen": The Implantation Problem as an Idiom of the Palestinian Presence in Post-civil War Lebanon (1989–2005)', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 32(3) (2010), pp. 145–162.
3. Are Knudsen, 'Widening the Protection Gap: the "Politics of Citizenship" for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948–2008', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 22(1) (2009), p. 51.

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the 1923 Paulet-Newcombe Agreement.[4] The trajectory of their nationalization is largely unaddressed by academics, or where it is discussed it is presented as a straightforward consequence of top-down Lebanese electoral politics.[5]

This article does not dispute the importance of strategic electoral concerns in the nationalization process. Rather, the article augments this dominant reading by offering an in-depth analysis of the case of the community originating from the village of Salha, now in Israel, that currently lives in Shabriha, a small town near the city of Tyre in South Lebanon. The article's approach is inspired by the 'negotiated statehood' framework, which stipulates that access to, and forms of, statehood are the result of negotiated exchanges between various authorities and constituencies that each have their own resources, repertoires and objects of negotiation to advance their position.[6] Based on this framework, the article offers a bottom-up perspective on the community's gaining of citizenship and argues that rather than merely following from the electoral interests of Lebanon's political leaders, nationalization also resulted from the community's purposeful instrumentalization of existing resources (the financial and social capital of the community's clan leader) and active reinterpretation of available repertoires (alternating political, nationalist and sectarian identities). The article further contends that the object of negotiation central to the nationalization was not only votes in exchange for state resources, but also, and apparently contradictory, party loyalty in exchange for a degree of local self-governance.

Analysing the story of a community that was once stateless but is now referred to by their Palestinian fellows as 'the children of the state' makes a two-fold academic contribution. Empirically, it offers a detailed historical analysis of a structurally under-analysed case.[7] Analytically, it conceptualizes the nature and consequences of nationalization in a way that goes beyond a default instrumentalist electoral approach and presents a more nuanced account of the process as a negotiated exchange about not just access to, but also independence from, the state. This insight helps to address the hiatus noted by el-Khoury and Jaulin when they observed that 'very little academic research focuses on the naturalizations' political and electoral impact (e.g. political clientele); the processes (administrative, judiciary, etc.) through which citizenship is granted (or denied); and the background of those who have been naturalized (religious, geographic, social, etc.)'.[8]

Contrasting the experiences of nationalized and non-nationalized Palestinians, moreover, serves as a reminder that 'in conscripting Palestinians to the realm of refugees and refugee studies', we ignore experiences of Palestinians who obtain

4. Asher Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon: Seven Shi'i Villages as a Case Study of Boundaries, Identities and Conflict', *Middle East Journal*, 60(4) (2006), pp. 685–706.

5. Hind Ghandour, 'Citizenship Space: The Case of Naturalized Palestinians in Lebanon' (paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association annual conference, Washington, DC, 22–25 November 2014); and Guita Hourani and Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens: Political Participation, Voting Behavior, and Impact on Elections in Lebanon', *International Migration and Integration*, 13 (2012), pp. 187–202.

6. Tobias Hagmann and Didier Péclard, 'Negotiating statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa', *Development and Change*, 41(4) (2010), pp. 539–562.

7. Khalid Sindawi, 'Are There Any Shi'ite Muslims in Israel?', *Holy Land Studies*, 7(2) (2008), p. 189.

8. Melkar el-Khoury and Thibaut Jaulin, *Country Report Lebanon* (Beirut: EUDO Citizenship Observatory, 2012), pp. 8–9. See also Are Knudsen, 'The Law, the Loss and the Lives of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon' (Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, Norway, 2007), p. 2. Knudsen stresses the 'need to explore the "politics of citizenship" in post-war Lebanon' that refugees face.

Lebanese citizenship.[9] By focusing on the interplay between the geographical border between Lebanon and then Palestine now Israel and the formation of political identities and electoral dynamics within the community from Salha, my case study furthermore contributes to the exercise of linking 'the physical aspect of the border and borderland of South Lebanon with the more symbolic dimension of boundaries' that was recently reinvigorated by Meier.[10] Building on this interaction between spatial and institutional boundaries, the article suggests seeing Salha's simultaneous explicit allegiance to and implicit distancing from the Lebanese state as a manifestation of what Scott calls 'the art of not being governed'.[11]

Seeking to shed light on how Palestinian refugees can, in some instances, regain their socio-political agency, the article's main concern is to adopt a bottom-up and empirical perspective to explore how the community from Salha has been able to use its nationalization to ensure a degree of independence toward the state and to strengthen its position toward local patrons. The article is structured to accommodate the investigation of this key question. The next section offers a historical overview of the nationalization of Palestinians in Lebanon and introduces the 'seven villages' as a special case of 're-nationalization'. This section outlines the dominant top-down perspective on nationalization processes. It highlights the importance of electoral concerns to explain why the nationalization of certain communities was condoned and even supported by particular elites. In the subsequent section, the case study of Salha is brought in. The context-specific nationalization trajectory described here sets the scene for the subsequent section that proceeds with an in-depth analysis of the Salha case. Using the negotiated statehood concept, this section brings in the bottom-up perspective required to substantiate the argument that Salha's nationalization was shaped by more than mere electoral engineering. The final section concludes and places the preceding analysis in broader debates on citizenship in the Arab world and governance autonomy.

The Nationalization of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon[12]

Lebanon hosts some 400,000 Palestinians, constituting roughly 10 per cent of Lebanon's population before the influx of refugees from Syria.[13] The Palestinians constitute Lebanon's most disenfranchised community.[14] Not only can

9. Ghandour, 'Citizen Space', p. 2.

10. Daniel Meier, 'The Palestinian Fidâ'i as an Icon of Transnational Struggle: The South Lebanese Experience', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 41(3) (2014), pp. 323–324.

11. James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2009).

12. Aiko Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages": Their Legal Status and Social Condition', *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, 3(1) (2009), pp. 229–230. Nishikida captures the intricate differences between nationalization (*tajannīs*), which means 'getting nationality as a Lebanese citizen and does not mean to quit being a Palestinian', and naturalization (*tawṭīn*), which carries the zero-sum connotation of 'quit being a Palestinian'. In light of these sensitivities, I will here use the term nationalization to indicate the process of obtaining Lebanese citizenship.

13. Muhammad Ali Khalidi and Diane Riskedahl, 'The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon', in M.A. Khalidi (ed.), *Manifestations of Identity. The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies and Institut franais du Proche-Orient, 2010), p. 1.

14. Jad Chabaan, Hala Ghattas, Rima Habib, Sari Hanafi, Nadine Sahyoun, Nisreen Salti, Karin Seyfert and Nadia Naamani, *Socio-economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon* (Beirut: American University of Beirut and UNRWA, 2010).

Palestinians in Lebanon not vote or work for state agencies, they are also legally discriminated against in the labour market and, since 2001, cannot own real estate.[15] The Palestinians' marginalization is closely connected with the policy to withhold citizenship from them because, as Knudsen notes, in Lebanon, citizenship rather than residence 'is the key to obtain civic rights'.[16]

Despite the policy of opposing Palestinian nationalization, however, some Palestinians did obtain Lebanese citizenship. First, in the 1950s and 1960s some 30,000 Palestinians were nationalized through various lawsuits.[17] Second, in 1994 another approximately 27,000 Palestinians were granted Lebanese citizenship by means of Presidential Decree number 5427.[18] This was followed by an additional 23,000 Palestinians that obtained Lebanese citizenship in 1995.[19]

The 'seven villages'

The 1994 decree nationalized 154,931 foreign residents; Syrians, Bedouins, Kurds and Armenians as well as Palestinians.[20] For the Palestinians, the 1994 nationalization included a particularly intriguing case not of 'nationalization' but of 're-nationalization' or 're-Lebanonization' that is generally known as the story of the 'seven villages'.[21] This case concerns a chain of villages located around Lebanon's southern border that is known for the historically inter-twined socio-economic relations between what are now Lebanese and Palestinian communities.[22] Of these 24 villages and farms, 12 were populated by Sunnis, two by Maronite, one by Greek Catholics and two by Jews; six of the villages were predominantly Shi'i and one was divided between Shi'i and Greek Catholics. The latter seven villages—Terbikha, Salha, Malkiya, Nabi Yusha, Qadas, Hunin and Ibl al-Qamh—have gained currency as *the* seven villages and have, in Lebanon, become widely known for their ambiguous national status.[23]

In a process of colonial contestation, they were first included into the French Greater Lebanon in 1920 and then attached to British Mandate Palestine in 1923, according to the Paulet–Newcombe Agreement.[24] During the 1948 *Nakba* (catastrophe), the majority of the residents from the seven villages was expelled from Palestine and became Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, where they mostly settled in the South.[25] While some individual court cases in the 1960s were successful, Palestinians from the seven villages were only nationalized as a

15. Suheil Al-Natour, 'The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 10(3) (1997), pp. 360–377; and Jaber Suleiman, 'Marginalized Community: The Case of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon' (Brighton, Research Report Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, 2006).

16. Knudsen, 'The Law', p. 4.

17. Simon Haddad, *The Palestinian Impasse in Lebanon. The Politics of Refugee Integration* (Eastbourne, Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2003), p. 4.

18. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', p. 188.

19. Simon Haddad, 'The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon', *International Migration Review*, 38(2) (2004), pp. 470–492.

20. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', pp. 187–188.

21. Ghandour, 'Citizenship Space', p. 7; and Dorothee Klaus, 'Palestinians in Lebanon between Integration and Segregation. Contextualisation of a Conflict' (PhD Dissertation Ruhr-Universitaet Bochum, 2000), p. 46.

22. Ahmad Beydoun, 'The South Lebanon Border Zone: A Local Perspective', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21(3) (1992), p. 35; and Meier, 'Palestinian Fidâ'i', p. 323.

23. Nicholas Blanford, 'The Seven Villages, Another Lebanese–Israeli Complication', *Daily Star*, 25 August 2009; and Sindawi, 'Are There Any Shi'ite Muslims in Israel?', p. 186.

24. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon'; and Rania Maktabi, 'The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who are the Lebanese?', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26(2) (1999), p. 227.

25. Blanford, 'Seven Villages'; and Knudsen, 'The Law', p. 7.

community by the 1994 decree.[26] A decree, Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous found, that 'changed the face of the Lebanese political system and has thus impacted the political scene ever since'.[27]

Electoral engineering and Shi'i emancipation

Scholars explain the 1994 nationalization of the seven villages, which constitutes a clear exception of the generally moribund anti-nationalization policy of the Lebanese state *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians, with reference to two inter-related issues, which I here discuss as electoral engineering and Shi'i emancipation respectively.

Electoral engineering is the dominant explanation for Lebanese political leaders' violation of their general rule of not granting Palestinians citizenship. The reason why Palestinian nationalization is extremely contentious in Lebanon is two-fold. First, Lebanese officials fear that Palestinian 'naturalization' (*tawṭīn*) in Lebanon would decrease the pressure on Israel to comply with UN Resolution 194 that stipulates the Palestinian refugees' right to return (*ḥaq al-'awda*).[28] Second, Lebanon's political system is utterly sectarian. The Lebanese state is organized through a consociational political system that centres on an inter-sectarian power-sharing formula. The system includes corresponding sectarian quota guiding the allocation of all public positions and resources. The fact that the Lebanese state structure is informed by a precarious quest for inter-communitarian balance means that granting the largely Sunni Palestinians Lebanese citizenship would have significant implications for the balance of power governing Lebanon's post-war political dynamics.[29] Kaufman summarizes: 'As a state founded on the basis of a delicate balance between its sects, the Palestinian refugees were perceived as a threat to Lebanon's political order'.[30]

The aversion to grant Palestinians citizenship is thus often presented as 'probably the only issue on which the views of the Lebanese—across ideological and confessional lines—agree'.[31] This, however, tells only part of the story. While Lebanese political leaders indeed recoil from nationalizing Palestinians *en masse*, they have fewer scruples to nationalize those segments of the Palestinian refugees that might benefit their own electoral position. El-Khoury and Jaulin find that 'within the confessional regime, granting Lebanese citizenship, or denying naturalisation rights, have represented key features of [. . .] legal and administrative misuses aiming to modify the demographic balance between sects and, accordingly, obtaining a larger share of power'.[32] Significantly, the people nationalized in 1994 were directly eligible to vote in parliamentary and municipal elections 'without a waiting period or duration of stay' as is usual.[33]

26. el-Khoury and Jaulin, *Country Report Lebanon*, p. 9; and Maktabi, 'Lebanese Census', p. 227.
27. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', p. 188.
28. Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages"', p. 222; and Knudsen, 'Widening the Protection Gap', p. 68.
29. Melanie Cammett and Sukriti Issar, 'Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon', *World Politics*, 62(3) (2010), pp. 381–421. This is intricately related to the broadly shared feeling among Lebanese that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon caused and prolonged the Civil War. Beydoun, 'South Lebanon Border', p. 42; and Meier, 'Al-Tawteen', p. 119.
30. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon', p./ 695.
31. Haddad, 'Origins', p. 473.
32. el-Khoury and Jaulin, *Country Report Lebanon*, p. 6.
33. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', p. 190.

This electoral logic is clearly demonstrated by the fact that 'politicians continue to mobilize and rally the naturalized to vote'.[34] Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous show that nationalized citizens demonstrated a higher rate of voter participation than native-born Lebanese, which they attribute to effective mobilization by 'machine politics'.[35] Indeed, blocs of nationalized voters have 'tipped the demographic balance in some districts'.[36] Discussing the case of nationalized Bedouin tribes in the Bekaa valley, Chatty et al. conclude that 'Bedouin women and men were seen as blocks of votes "purchased" by the powerful elite to shift the balance in their favour'.[37] There is no reason to assume that such dynamics should be different for Palestinians that were nationalized. In fact, the 1994 nationalization 'turned into a political firestorm from groups fearing that selective naturalisation was politically motivated and being used for personal gain'.[38]

This logic of 'electoral engineering,' which both stems from and perpetuates Lebanon's political system driven by sectarian quotas, is closely related to the second dynamic scholars refer to in explaining the 1994 nationalization of Palestinians: the 'emancipation' of Shi'i political parties in Lebanon.[39] Whereas the practice of electoral engineering explains the interests underlying the 1994 decree, the increase of Shi'i political power in Lebanon explains its timing. Prior to the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), Christian Palestinians much more easily gained citizenship than Muslim Palestinians because, during this period, Lebanon's Christians still firmly dominated Lebanese state institutions.[40] Concurrently, 'the incorporation of Shiite villages into a country with no Shiite population [initially] raised few feathers'.[41] Yet, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the Shi'i parties of Amal and Hizbullah remedied the historical Shi'i political marginalization in Lebanon.[42] It was these parties that 'drew the public's attention to the deviations from the armistice lines of 1920 that led to current boundaries' and claimed that 'seven predominantly Shi'i villages were unjustly robbed from a south Lebanon peopled by their co-religionists'.[43] That in 1994 Lebanon *de facto* claimed the seven villages 'was seen as a testament to the rising power of the Shi'i parties, especially since the remaining non-Shi'i 16 villages left behind by the 1923 deviations were excluded from the territorial claim'.[44]

The 'Re-nationalization' of the Refugees from Salha

Having established the general context of Palestinian nationalization in Lebanon and the exceptional history of the seven villages, I will now zoom in on one of

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 187.
36. Ibid., p. 193.
37. Dawn Chatty, Nisrine Mansour and Nasser Yassin, 'Statelessness and Tribal Identity on Lebanon's Eastern Borders'. *Mediterranean Politics*, 18(3) (2013), p. 422.
38. Knudsen, 'The Law', p. 7.
39. Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages"', p. 224.
40. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon', p. 695; and Klaus, *Palestinians in Lebanon*, pp. 111–112.
41. Warren Singh-Bartlett, 'Seven Villages Await Their Independence', *Daily Star*, 20 November 2000.
42. Both Amal and Hizbullah have a complex relationship with Lebanon's Palestinian community. For an overview, see Jacob Høigilt, 'Islamism, Pluralism and the Palestine Question: The Case of Hizbullah', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 34(2) (2007), pp. 123–136; and Harel Chorev, 'Power, Tradition and Challenge: The Resilience of the Elite Shi'ite Families of Lebanon', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40 (3) (2013), pp. 305–323.
43. Knoozroom, http://knoozroom.com/tale-of-a-lost-village-ch2.php (accessed June 2014).
44. Blanford, 'The Seven Villages: Origins and Implications' (unpublished).

these seven villages: Salha. The analysis presented in the remainder of this article is based on qualitative data derived from interviews, focus groups, documentary evidence and observations conducted and obtained during five months of fieldwork in Shabriha in 2013 and an additional round of more targeted interviews in the summer of 2014.[45]

Salha has gained some notoriety as a result of the 'Salha massacre' in 1948 'when 105 residents were machine-gunned behind the village mosque' by the Israeli Hagannah militia.[46] Salha's residents fled to Lebanon afterwards, where they were eventually registered with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as Palestinian refugees. After an initial stay in the environments of the town of Bint Jbil, the refugees from Salha relocated to an area called Shabriha in 1956, where they initially lived in and around the orchards they worked in. The refugees from Salha consisted of three main families that were taken under the auspices of the leading Shi'i clans in South Lebanon. The members of the extended 'Aun family, constituting a considerable part of Salha's original population, were placed under the patronage of the Lebanese Al-Khalil family.[47] According to a community elder from Salha, the Al-Khalil family forced the people from Salha to work on its lands in dire circumstances. When the people rose up against this exploitation in the late 1960s, they were supported by Shi'i cleric Musa Sadr. He bought a plot of land in Shabriha and donated it to the community so they could create their own village and would be safeguarded from eviction or exploitation.[48]

Some families from Salha received Lebanese citizenship almost directly after their flight to Lebanon in 1948, most probably due to their socio-economic status or political connections.[49] Others successfully raised individual cases in the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the people from Salha, however, collectively received Lebanese citizenship through the 1994 decree. Throughout the nationalization trajectory of the people of Salha, the issue of registration has been ambiguous. Initially, in the 1960s, people from Salha who received citizenship were registered in different places as registration had to happen in an already existing neighbourhood or village, which Shabriha was not at that time. Some people were allegedly registered in the Beirut neighbourhood of Burj al-Barajna.[50] Yet most people from Salha that got Lebanese citizenship before the 1994 decree—even though they lived in Shabriha, on the territory of 'Abasiya municipality—were registered in Basatin, a neighbourhood of Tyre (apparently to avoid tensions in the smaller 'Abasiya).[51] In 1994, the people from Salha who got Lebanese citizenship also registered in Basatin. However, the number of registered people in Basatin

45. Nora Stel, 'Governance between Isolation and Integration. A Study on the Interaction between Lebanese State Institutions and Palestinian Authorities in Shabriha Gathering, South Lebanon' (Working Paper No. 22, Beirut, Lebanon, Issam Fares Institute, AUB, June 2014); and Stel, 'Lebanese–Palestinian Governance Interaction in the Palestinian Gathering of Shabriha, South Lebanon—A Tentative Extension of the "Mediated State" from Africa to the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Politics* (Published online on 20 March 2015), DOI: 10.1080/13629395.2014.984830. (http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13629395.2014.984830#preview).

46. Singh-Bartlett, 'Seven Villages'.

47. Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon. Clans, Parties and Clerics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), p. 47; Chorev, 'Power, Tradition and Challenge', p. 312; and Meier, 'Palestinian Fidâ'i', p. 325.

48. Communal leader, Lebanese Shabriha, 26 July 2013; and Amal representative, Lebanese Shabriha, 17 July 2014.

49. 'UN Representative De Mistura', *Daily Star*, December 2001.

50. Amal representative, Shabriha, 17 July 2014; and *mukhtār* Basatin, Masaken, 23 July 2014. A *mukhtār* is a sub-municipal state authority responsible for administrative issues in a certain neighbourhood or village.

51. *Mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 9 July 2014.

then reached the population threshold that allocated it another *mukhtār*.[52] This new *mukhtār* was elected by, and thus represented, the community of Salha living in Shabriha and registered in Basatin. The newly elected *mukhtār*, subsequently, used his capacity to 'collect' (*jama'*) the registration files of the residents of his community and gather these all in Shabriha, an area geographically distinct from Basatin. He thereby separated Shabriha from Basatin as an administrative unit. Several *mukhtārs* explained to me that a *mukhtār* has the authority to request a relocation of registration files if he can prove that the citizens in question have been living for three years in the new place of registration.[53] This clarifies how, in 1997, the registration of the nationalized people of Salha (both those that received citizenship before and those that had been nationalized through the 1994 decree) was transferred from Basatin (and Burj al-Barajna and possible other locations) to Shabriha, which was thereby recognized as a neighbourhood on its own.[54] In the words of the *mukhtār*:

> At the time when we got Lebanese nationality [in the beginning of the 1960s], there was no registration file for Shabriha; there was nothing called Shabriha. That is why we lived officially in Basatin. But everyone was living in another place [i.e. Shabriha]. In 1995 there was a decision to call this area Shabriha. At that time, we started to make a registration file. And we worked to transfer this file until 1997. We transferred the appropriate names from Basatin to our own file called Shabriha.[55]

This move was partly made to avoid competition in *mukhtār* elections with the original inhabitants of Basatin.[56] More importantly, however, and as I will elaborate on below, it allowed Shabriha to manage its own affairs relatively independently. It was not until 2004, however, that the registration file of Shabriha was included in the voter registration system of Tyre municipality.[57]

Before turning to a more thorough analysis of the above-described nationalization and registration process, it needs to be stressed that there is a gap between official citizenship, experienced national identity and the material consequences of both in the case of the people from Salha.[58] It is ultimately impossible, and undesirable, to determine whether the people from Salha are 'Lebanese Palestinians', 'Palestinian Lebanese' or neither.[59] These issues of identity and belonging are even more pronounced as the village of Shabriha emerged in tandem with a settlement started by Palestinian Bedouin tribes that had also fled Palestine during the *Nakba* and, after a short stay in Qlayla, chose Shabriha to 'set up camp' as well. While both Palestinian, these two groups (the people from Salha and their Palestinian neighbours) differed significantly in terms of sect (Shi'i versus Sunni), place of origin (border area versus Safad) and vocation (Bedouin versus farmers [*felāḥīn*]). To this day, while they share the same kindergarten and primary (UNRWA) school, both communities live spatially segregated. While outsiders would refer to both settlements as 'Shabriha', the people from Salha living in Lebanese Shabriha tend to refer to the inhabitants of Palestinian Shabriha as 'the

52. A neighbourhood is allowed one *mukhtār* per 500 residents.
53. *Mukhtār* Basatin, Tyre, 25 July 2014; and Palestinian–Lebanese municipal council member, Burj al-Shemali camp, Tyre, 24 July 2014.
54. *Mukhtār* Basatin, Masaken, 23 July 2014.
55. *Mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 23 July 2013.
56. Mayor, Tyre, 25 June 2013; and *mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 23 July 2013.
57. *Mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 6 May 2013.
58. Singh-Bartlett, 'Seven Villages'.
59. Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages"', p. 220.

tribes' (*al-'Arab*) or 'the camp' (*al-mukhayim*) and the Palestinians living in Palestinian Shabriha would consistently call Lebanese Shabriha 'Salha'.

The Palestinians in Palestinian Shabriha see the people from Salha as first and foremost Lebanese and most people in Lebanese Shabriha seem to agree, often employing a deliberately primordial Lebanese identity. One communal leader from Lebanese Shabriha, for instance, remembered: 'My grandfather told me that at the southern end of the village of Salha there was a big stone on which it was written "here end the Lebanese lands"'.[60] Singh-Bartlett documents similar sentiments. One of his respondents reminisces:

> 'Our family was Lebanese before the Ottomans, before the French, and before there was even a Lebanon,' says Hajj Abou Fawwaz Hassan Khodroj, who was just 13 when he left his home for the last time. 'I'm Lebanese, and our land is Lebanese, there is no doubt about it.'[61]

Yet at the same time there is a distinct refugee identity discernible in my respondents' accounts. They yearn for return to Salha, which is now in Israel. And they benefit from their refugee identity, because it is their Palestinian ID card that entitles them to enrol in (free) UNRWA schools and clinics.[62] Indeed, despite internal Palestinian 'othering',[63] many respondents stressed their Palestinian origin. A Palestinian scholar mentioned that nationalized Palestinians from the seven villages established a non-governmental organization that is fighting for their right to return 'and thus confirms their Palestinianness'.[64] As further discussed below, these identifications are crucially linked to the trajectory of nationalization followed by the people from Salha.

Making Sense of Salha: Electoral Engineering and Societal Savvy

In line with the broader literature about the seven villages, the nationalization of the people from Salha seems predominantly inspired by electoral scheming. However, it is not the 1994 nationalization as such that had any direct electoral results. It was the 2004 registration within a specific—and from a residential perspective not the most obvious—municipality that evidences the dominance of electoral logic in this story. As el-Khoury and Jaulin note for other instances of nationalization in Lebanon: 'In several constituencies, groups of newly naturalised persons were registered on electoral lists, although they were not residing there. The aim of such irregularities, so-called parachuting, was to influence the election's outcome'.[65] Similar dynamics seem to have been at play with regard to 'Salha's' 2004 registration in Tyre. The eventual inclusion of Shabriha's (nationalized) voters in Tyre's electoral file. and not in that of 'Abasiya, was laid down in Decision No. 120 (19 February 2004) and allegedly resulted from interventions from Speaker of Parliament and Amal leader Nabih Berri.[66]

60. Communal leader, Lebanese Shabriha, 26 July 2013.
61. Singh-Bartlett, 'Seven Villages'.
62. Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages"', p. 225.
63. Kathleen Fincham, 'Learning Palestine: The Construction of Palestinian Identities in South Lebanon' (PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2010). Fincham describes how in 'Palestinian society, boundaries are constructed between "authentic" Palestinian Sunnis and Palestinian Shi'ite "Others"'.
64. Mar Elias camp, Beirut, 21 March 2013.
65. el-Khoury and Jaulin, *Country Report Lebanon*, p. 12.
66. Mayor, 'Abasiya, 11 April 2013; and *mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 3 April 2013.

While electoral outcomes were relatively stable in 'Abasiya, they were hotly contested in Tyre, the capital of South Lebanon. Apparently Amal, to which the Lebanese in Shabriha adhered ever since Musa Sadr guaranteed their loyalty by freeing them from the yoke of the Al-Khalil family, could use their votes better in Tyre than in 'Abasiya and intervened to include Shabriha in Tyre's electoral zone.[67] In the words of the former district governor (*qāimaqām*) of Tyre:

> This is a nice piece of Lebanese political work. [. . .] The minister of interior did this by administrative act; he made a liaison between Tyre and Shabriha. [. . .] This is political. Shabriha is part of the same political movement as Tyre. Shabriha and Tyre are both with President Berri. So this gave Tyre some additional members; enhanced their chance there to succeed.[68]

While separating cadastral and electoral territories is not unheard of in Lebanon, a local observer was quite upset by the entrance of this 'bloc' (of over 700 Amal votes) of Shabriha into the electoral dynamics of Tyre as it had a significant impact on the balance between the competing alliances for the municipal elections: one supported by Amal and the other by Hizbullah.[69] Another commentator concurred, stating that Shabriha constitutes a 'homogenous electoral block' that is 'a reliable contingency' for any election.[70] Thus, 'citizenship is only relevant to the extent it challenges the balance'.[71]

This might also explain why Amal only utilized the latent voting bloc of Shabriha in the 2004 municipal elections and did not immediately exploit this benefit in the 1998 elections. It seems that Amal had not expected the fierce competition posed by Hizbullah in its traditional stronghold in South Lebanon in 1998 and only just maintained a 'slight advantage' at that time.[72] This experience, however, may have prompted Amal to better prepare for the competition with Hizbullah that *i*Montly called one of the most important dynamics of the 2004 elections.[73] In fact, in 2004 Amal's electoral position in South Lebanon deteriorated even further: in the South, Hezbollah was 'victorious in over 60 percent of the municipalities (compared with 55 percent in 1998), while Amal captured only 30 percent of municipalities (down from 45 percent in 1998)'.[74] Amal did, however, manage to maintain its dominance in Tyre, the regional capital that is of great political significance to it.[75]

Thus, for many analysts, it is clear why Lebanese political leaders bothered to nationalize the people from Salha: strategically administrable votes. But what was in it for the people? The material benefits of citizenship are usually put forward as

67. Former *qāimaqām*, Tyre, 22 June 2013; and Mayor, 'Abasiya, 11 April 2013.

68. Tyre, 22 June 2013.

69. Ameir Kanso, 'Intervention in the Electoral Process in Tyre', Al 'Ahed, www.alahednews.com (accessed June 2014).

70. *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper, 26 February 2004, Bint Jbil, www.bintjbeil.com (accessed June 2014).

71. Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee representative, Beirut, 26 March 2013.

72. Carole Dagher, 'Lebanon Holds First Municipal Elections in 35 Years', *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, July/August (1998), pp. 55–56.

73. *i*Montly, 'Changing of the Guard? Wrapping up Lebanon's Municipal Elections, All Eyes are Now on 2005', *Public Sector*, 24 (2004), p. 4.

74. Rodger Shanahan, 'Hizballah Rising: The Political Battle for the Loyalty of the Shi'a of Lebanon', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 9(1) (2005), p. 2.

75. *i*Montly, 'Changing of the Guard?', p. 4; and Shanahan, 'Hizballah Rising', p. 4. The mayor of Tyre (15 July 2014) insisted, however, that 'in the end, we [Amal] got 72 percent of the votes and they [Hizbullah] got 28 percent. So the 700 voters from Shabriha—which is like 8 percent as the total number of voters is around 11.000—wasn't decisive'.

the main motivation for people to seek nationalization.[76] Indeed, in the case of the people of Salha, the consequences of their right to own property, work in government agencies and benefit from municipal services stands in stark contrast with the situation of their non-nationalized Palestinian neighbours. This 'pragmatic citizenship' conception was prevalent in almost all accounts and highlights the refugees' understanding of citizenship as (primarily) a set of rights rather than as (only) a national identity.[77] Clearly, for refugees, those 'without the right to have rights', it is in 'the inextricable binding of rights to citizenship', particularly in the exceptionally marginalizing context of Lebanon, that citizenship gains its ultimate relevance.[78] A nationalized Palestinian elaborated: 'My two girls have finished university. If you're Lebanese you pay only $500,- per year, Palestinians pay $2000,-; which is more than I would have been able to afford. And many people have joined the Lebanese army'.[79] On top of these formal state services, moreover, are parallel sectarian services, such as education, health care and alimonies, provided by Lebanon's Shi'i political parties. This informal sectarian patronage, however, cannot be separated from formal citizenship, as such clientelism is only beneficial for parties if it can be exchanged for votes. Thus, Lebanese citizens mostly access the state and its resources as a voter for a political party (rather than based on the civil rights they hold as a citizen). Nahas describes that it is through party structures that state redistribution is executed.[80]

This, then, is the dominant perspective on the nationalization of people from the seven villages: Lebanese political leaders need their votes and the people need these leaders' mediation to access both state and partisan services and resources. It is not this article's intention to contest the importance of strategic electoral concerns in the nationalization process concerning the people from the seven villages. In fact, the account from Salha underwrites the importance of these dynamics. I do intend to show, however, that this top-down lens does not tell the whole story. I seek to complement it with a more agency-oriented perspective that highlights the role of the community and its leaders in the emergence, timing and manifestation of the nationalization. I thereby build on Kaufman's conclusion that accounts of the seven villages are characterized by an absence of the perspective of the villagers themselves.[81] Nationalization was not all about 'political machines [taking] advantage of their political demoralization and comparative social weakness'.[82] Instead, nationalization has, in the case of Salha, to some extent 'encouraged the naturalized to develop a feeling of group identity and electoral clout'.[83] This emancipation did not, as Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous assume, 'lead to a willingness to challenge the control of their benefactors', but it did enable them to use their citizenship in ways that went, if not against, certainly

76. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon', p. 703; and Klaus, *Palestinians in Lebanon*, p. 39.

77. Ghandour, 'Citizen Space,' p. 19.

78. Ibid., p. 2; see also Sari Hanafi, *Governing Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East: Governmentalities in Search of Legitimacy* (Beirut: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, AUB, 2010), pp. 53–54.

79. Communal leader, Burj al-Shemali camp, Tyre, 26 July 2012.

80. Charbel Nahas, 'The Lebanese Socio-economic System, 1985–2005', in L. Guazzone and D. Pioppi (eds.), *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization. The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East*. (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2012), p. 135.

81. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon', p. 703.

82. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', p. 192.

83. Ibid., p. 193.

beyond the interests and motivations of the 'godfathers' who facilitated their nationalization.[84]

I use Hagmann and Péclard's negotiated statehood concept to show these divergent motivations and the active role of the community of Salha that are mostly overlooked in analyses of nationalization in Lebanon.[85] While the negotiated statehood idea is predominantly concerned with the study of political authority in settings of 'state fragility' and is overwhelmingly based on African case studies, its underlying logic offers a useful perspective on the dynamics of citizenship as dealt with in this article. It focuses on the 'processes of negotiation, contestation and bricolage' that make states and shed light on how citizenship, a key institution constituting the state, is acquired and shaped.[86] The concept offers a heuristic framework that approaches negotiation processes as consisting of resources (social and material capital) and repertoires (or frames), on the one hand, and objects of negotiation on the other. Resources and repertoires refer to the instruments by means of which access to the state is negotiated. Objects of negotiation pertain to the motivations for negotiating this access.

A divergent motivation: objects of negotiation

For Hagmann and Péclard, 'objects' of negotiation signal which interest is at the heart of a negotiation. Hagmann and Péclard consider the 'institutional structure of the state, and especially the balance of power between the "centre" of the state and its "peripheries"', a crucial object of negotiation.[87] While the nationalization of the people from Salha is always portrayed as being about electoral politics, it is also about the carving out of local autonomy for the Salha polity. Both electoral engineering and local autonomy relate to the institutional structure of the state as an object of negotiation, but they put a premium on different components of this institutional structure. The electoral frame stresses the importance of getting access to state structures, whereas the autonomy frame emphasizes the relevance of independence from state structures.

As established above, a main reason for the people from Salha to be enthusiastic about Lebanese citizenship is the access to state services and resources it generates as well as the parallel benefits associated with party patronage. Interestingly, however, respondents indicated that apart from access to the state, the nationalization was in part also inspired by a desire for independence from the state's imposing hierarchies and surveillance regime. The bid for their 'own' *mukhtār*, for instance, was a deliberate move:

> This was our idea, we wanted to be independent. If we wouldn't have our own registration, we'd need to go to Tyre, to 'Abasiya, to other villages to ask for services. We prefer to have our own *mukhtār* so we can manage our internal affairs alone. And now we're independent and we can do everything alone.[88]

Such independence could not have been achieved under the category of Palestinian refugeeness, something respondents from Salha had experienced prior

84. Ibid.
85. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood'.
86. Ibid., p. 539.
87. Ibid., p. 553.
88. *Mukhtār*, Lebanese Shabriha, 23 July 2013.

to their nationalization. It was only as Lebanese that the people in Salha sought and realized a rather unprecedented degree of local self-governance and autonomy. In practice, now, the *mukhtār* can operate as if he runs his own municipality because Tyre is not very interested in what it does as long as Shabriha votes for the dominant party and 'Abasiya does not have much leeway to impose anything on Shabriha because Shabriha enjoys the political backing of the much bigger Tyre municipality. The vice mayor of Tyre explained: 'In Shabriha, yes, the *mukhtār* is his own municipality. My friend says it's like Monaco or the Vatican in Europe: a small state on its own'.[89] The former *qāimaqām* agreed that 'in Shabriha they're like a small state by themselves'.[90] A representative of the Korean contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which provides development aid to several municipalities in the region, mentioned Shabriha on a par with 'Abasiya, Burkhliya and Burj Rahal; that is, as being a municipality.[91] Shabriha's *mukhtār* summed up the situation of his community as follows: 'Geographically we're under 'Abasiya. Politically, we're with Tyre. Practically, we're independent'.[92]

Leaders from Lebanese Shabriha, moreover, assured me that they are working to transfer this *de facto* independence into *de jure* independence as well:

> Soon, I think in the coming years, we will become our own municipality in Shabriha. [...] Now if we want a project, we need the acceptance of Tyre, because they'll pay from their budget and we have to wait until they finished all the previous budgets and you have to remind them every week. But when we have our own municipality, we have our own budget and we can implement our projects quickly and we don't need permission from Tyre. [...] And we don't have to be with one against the other. If, in elections, they want to make common lists they cannot force us to be with one [political party/block] against the other.[93]

This aspiration to become a municipality of their own is remarkable as many commentators insisted that, because Shabriha currently has the status of a neighbourhood (*ḥayy*), and not a village (*quriyya*), it cannot legally be awarded its own municipality, a privilege limited to villages. A *mukhtār* from Basatin, however, suggested that Shabriha might not settle for this: 'Shabriha has many people abroad and their economic situation is good and this makes them ambitious, wanting to be independent. They might think they'll get their own village and become independent.'[94] After all, laws have been changed on Shabriha's behalf before. What is more, some intentional administrative loopholes to promote Shabriha to the status of municipality might have been installed already. Advising me not to 'dig too deep', a representative of Tyre municipality hinted that Shabriha's current status is more than that of a 'neighbourhood', even if not officially that of a 'village'. He told me: 'Shabriha was added to the voting list of Tyre in 2004. Officially, now we're the municipality of Tyre-Shabriha, like a joint venture. But we'll never entirely understand this situation'.[95] An authority figure from Shabriha also told me that Shabriha would soon 'gain the decision to be our own village [and have] two members in the Tyre municipal council from

89. Tyre, 3 April 2013.
90. Tyre, 22 June 2013.
91. Burj Rahal, 16 October 2014.
92. Lebanese Shabriha, 3 April 2013.
93. Amal leader, Lebanese Shabriha, 25 July 2013.
94. *Mukhtār* Basatin, Tyre, 25 July 2014.
95. Tyre, 15 July 2014.

the ministry of interior' as a step towards an independent municipality.[96] Another respondent seemed to corroborate this, saying: 'Shabriha is like a municipality already even while there is no real municipality there'.[97]

An active role: resources and repertoires

The previous section argued that the people from Salha had their own distinct motivations for seeking nationalization and pursued different goals than the Lebanese politicians that granted them their citizenship; the objects of negotiation were different for both. The community's passiveness as assumed by the exclusively electoral paradigm is further nuanced by the active role the people from Salha and their representatives played in the actual nationalization process. First, by lobbying for their nationalization. Leaders from several of the seven villages emphasized that citizenship was not bestowed on them out of the blue. A *mukhtār* originally from Terbikha remembered: 'We asked for this! We asked so hard for this!'[98] Representatives from the seven villages united in an informal committee that petitioned Lebanese Shi'i leaders. A local community leader explained that 'the seven villages are very close to Nabih Berri and to Amal and to the Shi'i council in Lebanon; they talked to all of them'.[99] The *mukhtār* originally from Terbikha stressed that, in initiating the call for citizenship, Berri merely supported requests that spokespersons of the seven villages had already been voicing for a long time.

When they had attained citizenship, community leaders from Salha secondly took an active stance in the process of registration. The *mukhtār* of Lebanese Shabriha said that he, rather than his Lebanese patrons on his behalf, 'made an agreement with Tyre municipality'.[100] The *mukhtār*'s strategic registration of his people in one and the same place was, he told me, informed by his own aspirations to serve the community rather than by requests of political parties. It was this immediate administrative unification that later made electoral inclusion under Tyre a politically interesting option. Many local leaders I spoke with were convinced that the eventual electoral clout 'Salha' attained had been envisioned by its representatives from early on. In response to my question of why the people form Shabriha would want to be registered as a collective, for instance, a municipal council member from Burj al-Shemali stated:

> Because then they can have authority. When they vote, they calculate the number. Authority moves from the bottom to the top ... And 'Aun is a big family, so they want all people to stand together so they can say "Bayt 'Aun votes like this". This would put them in a good position in the upper echelons.[101]

Resources: unity and representation

A look at the resources available to the community from Salha helps to explain how such an active role was possible despite the hierarchical structure of Lebanese

96. Shabriha, 17 July 2014.
97. Communal leader, Qasmiya, 26 September 2014.
98. Masaken, 23 July 2014.
99. Burj al-Shemali camp, Tyre, 24 July 2014.
100. Lebanese Shabriha, 3 April 2013.
101. Nationalized municipal council member, Burj al-Shemali camp, Tyre, 24 July 2014.

politics. Hagmann and Péclard define resources as 'the material basis of collective action; they include tangible and intangible assets such as bureaucratic capacities, organizational skills, finance and ability to mobilize funding, knowledge and technical expertise, control over physical violence, international networks, political alliances'.[102] In the case of Salha, it was particularly the socio-political capital of the *mukhtār* and the community's cohesiveness that indicate nationalization was not merely a matter of waiting until a Lebanese patron deemed it beneficial to grant them citizenship.

The unity of the community is often regarded as a consequence of the fact that the part of Salha which relocated to Shabriha consisted of one extended family. These close ties explain why the community can act as a collective *vis-à-vis* Lebanese patrons and is less susceptible to divide-and-rule politics than other villages. According to Klaus, 'often whole families were associated with a particular political leader whom they would support and vote for. In return, they could expect to be granted privileges from his side'.[103] This was certainly the case in Lebanese Shabriha. The vice-mayor of 'Abasiya explained:

> Most of the villages when they were displaced from the south were spread over many villages [. . .]. Only Salha came together and stayed together. This is what facilitates them to ask for a *mukhtār* and have the ministry agree to this.[104]

Considering the strength of the leader heading this unified village, the role of the *mukhtār* as described in the previous section was crucial, not least because he has the authority to demand unified voting as described above. A Palestinian admiringly said:

> Look to the second [Lebanese] Shabriha: what the *mukhtār* tells them is done, they obey him in everything. He is the only responsible. They are united; they are improving their village and now they are a force in Tyre city. They are a small village, but they have an effect in the elections. *Mukhtār* 'Aun has good relations with [the head of the union of municipalities in Tyre area] because the *mukhtār* is smart and he is building good relations from all sides.[105]

While, as mentioned above, the *mukhtār* gained particular clout only when he became an actual *mukhtār*, he and his forefathers had played the role of community leaders before and their authority can thus be considered a crucial resource even before it was institutionalized as a state function.

Repertoires: nation, sect and politics

Hagmann and Péclard see repertoires as the symbolic counterparts of material resources; the frames that are used to 'mobilize popular support and to give meaning to their actions'.[106] Repertoires come close to ideologies, but also touch upon national, religious and cultural identities.[107] In the case of Salha, the community has been able to shape the process and interpretation of nationalization by strategically alternating the emphasis on the nationalist, political and sectarian

102. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', p. 547.
103. Klaus, *Palestinians in Lebanon*, p. 37.
104. 'Abasiya, 1 July 2013.
105. Rashidiya camp, Tyre, 6 July 2013.
106. Hagmann and Péclard, 'Negotiating Statehood', p. 547.
107. Ibid.

aspects of their socio-political identity. Inherently, the issue of citizenship is about a national identity and hence a nationalist repertoire—it is all about whether or not these people are 'really' Lebanese or 'actually' Palestinian. Yet the particular set-up of the Lebanese state also brings in a sectarian repertoire that activates Shi'i versus Sunni identities to appeal to sectarian parties. For quite some time, however, there was a political identity the people from the seven villages played upon that bridged both nationalist and sectarian repertoires. The strategic highlighting or downplaying of any of these repertoires available to the people from Salha has helped them in realizing their object of negotiation—access to state resources and services and simultaneous independence from state dominance. Indeed, as Peteet describes, the self-identification of Palestinians in Lebanon, as either refugees, citizens or nationals, most pertinently depends 'on the current nature of their relations with their Lebanese hosts'.[108]

Initially, in the pre-Civil War phase, people from the seven villages were active in the Palestinian National Movement that had a pan-Arab outlook. During this time the communities from the seven villages purposefully ventilated their dual Lebanese and Palestinian identity, identifying themselves as the embodiment of pan-Arabism. Meier demonstrates how, at least until the mid-1970s and especially in South Lebanon, the Palestinian struggle was 'effectively transnational', cast as it was as 'the ferment of "an Arab revolution" that should lead to liberation and development' for society as a whole.[109] While the people from the seven villages were supported in this struggle by the Shi'i clergy in Lebanon, which longed to claim a contribution to the fight for the liberation of Palestine in the pre-Hizbullah era, this Shi'i identity was of minor importance. Their programme was dominated by resistance against occupation and implementation of the international revolution. According to an Amal representative from Shabriha, Musa Sadr initially encouraged the men from Salha to join the Palestinian Revolution under the flag of Fatah as there was close coordination between Sadr and Yaser 'Arafat. The mayor of Tyre noted: 'the first fighters of Amal were trained by Fatah and were fighting inside Fatah. [. . .] Their relation is historically intertwined'.[110] Only with the demise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon in the late 1970s did the seven villages start to organize themselves with the intent to seek Lebanese citizenship.[111] A Palestinian legal scholar noted: 'They were the real pan-Arabists, Lebanese and Palestinian at the same time. And yet this brought them nothing. So the thought was "now our guys [the Shi'i in Lebanon] are on the ascendancy, why shouldn't we benefit?"'[112] A nationalized Palestinian scholar corroborated that 'after the withdrawal of the PLO [from Lebanon in 1982] and the diminishing of importance of the right of return in the negotiations [between Israel and the Arab countries], the feeling became "let's live"'; that is, get Lebanese citizenship.[113]

This entailed an increasing identification as (also) Lebanese. A Palestinian from Palestinian Shabriha noted:

108. Julie Peteet, 'Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39(4) (2007), p. 640.
109. Meier, 'Palestinian Fidâ'i', pp. 334, 327.
110. Tyre, 15 July 2014.
111. Meier, 'Palestinian Fidâ'i', p. 331.
112. Mar Elias camp, Beirut, 28 June 2014.
113. Saida, 7 July 2014.

> Before 1948, Palestinians saw them as Palestinians. There was no discrimination between Muslims, Christians and even Jews and they would live in the same village and even intermarry. And the villages in Palestine and Lebanon had a good and close relationship. But now, we surely see them as Lebanese, because this is what they want; they see themselves as Lebanese.[114]

Ironically, and despite the shared refugee identity mentioned above, to avoid accusations of *tawṭīn*, people from the seven villages often felt the need to 'be more Lebanese than the Lebanese'. Aversion of Palestinians seems a rather national Lebanese trait.[115] Someone from Palestinian Shabriha summarized the general sentiment there that 'they [the people from Salha] don't like the Palestinians; they're really Lebanese, accent and all'.[116] A Palestinian analyst told me of a joke that circulated just after the 1994 decree was announced:

> One boy is in love with his niece, his uncle's daughter, and they're supposed to get engaged. His nephew, his uncle's son and niece's brother, is his best friend. Then the nephew gets citizenship and the boy does not and the nephew tells him: 'no way you're marrying my sister, we don't want our girls to marry Palestinian refugees!'[117]

As a result of Lebanon's sectarian system, the path to national citizenship went through sectarian mobilization: it was the ascendancy of Shi'i political parties that provided the people from the seven villages with the opportunity of citizenship, not their apparent hailing from Lebanese soil. From the latter perspective they had been Lebanese all along, yet it was only when they were recognized as *Shi'i* Lebanese that nationalization occurred. Thus, identifying as Lebanese was a necessary but insufficient condition for nationalization into the Lebanese sectarian state. The most basic way, in a confessional political culture, was to follow the sectarian logic that since there are no Shi'i Palestinians, the Shi'i of the seven villages were 'intrinsically Lebanese'.[118] One of Singh-Bartlett's respondents whose ancestors are from Hunin, for instance, reasoned that: 'We're Shiites and we're Lebanese. Why put our villages in Palestine? There are no Shiites in Palestine'.[119] The attempt to 'out-Lebanonise the Lebanese', to be more Shi'i than the Shi'i, should be seen in this light.[120] For the people from Salha, the opportunity to prove their Shi'iness, and through that their Lebaneseness, came during the War of the Camps (1985–1987) that pitted the Lebanese Amal militias against Palestinian PLO militias.[121] In Palestinian Shabriha there were many accounts about the way the people of Salha had turned against them—even if the people from Salha maintained they had actually sided with the Palestinians from Shabriha against the Shi'i from 'Abasiya and had protected them from worse.[122] An UNRWA employee told me: 'The people of Salha fought with Amal against the Palestinians. Not out of hate, but to prove themselves to the head of the Shi'i, Nabih Berri—to show they were more Lebanese than the Lebanese.'[123] Some

114. Hamas leader, Palestinian Shabriha, 5 April 2013.
115. Haddad, *Palestinian Impasse*; and Peteet, 'Problematizing', p. 632.
116. Resident, Palestinian Shabriha, 1 April 2013.
117. Mar Elias camp, Beirut, 21 March 2013.
118. Maktabi, 'Lebanese Census', p. 227.
119. Singh-Bartlett, 'Seven Villages'.
120. Kaufman, 'Between Palestine and Lebanon', p. 703.
121. Fincham, *Learning Palestine*, p. 31; and Jihane Sfeir, 'Palestinians in Lebanon: The Birth of the "Enemy Within"', inKhalidi (ed.), *Manifestations of Identity*, pp. 13–35.
122. Resident, Palestinian Shabriha, 9 April 2013; and PLO representative, Palestinian Shabriha, 9 April 2013.
123. UNRWA representative, Tyre, 9 April 2013.

respondents were even convinced that it was their particular fervour in the War of the Camps that gained the people from the seven villages their nationalization:

> In the Civil War, these Shi'i stood more or less with the Shi'i in Lebanon and some of them became prominent in Amal. One became a member in their political bureau; another one was martyred. And this is why Amal raised their nationalization.[124]

Conclusion: The Children of the State?

As also illustrated by the quotation with which I opened this article, the non-nationalized, Sunni Palestinians living in 'Palestinian' Shabriha have repeatedly referred to the nationalized, Shi'i 'Palestinians' living in 'Lebanese' Shabriha as 'belonging to the Lebanese state' or even as 'children of the state', indicating both a loyalty to and a privileged status within the Lebanese political system.[125] I have argued that this perspective is indeed insightful since people from Salha generally identify as predominantly Lebanese and, due to their local electoral significance, have a special relation with Shi'i political leaders representing the Lebanese state in South Lebanon. The main purpose of this article, however, has been to show that painting the Palestinian–Lebanese from Salha who live in Shabriha as 'children of the state' tells only part of their story.

Through the 'negotiated statehood' framework that allows for a more agency-oriented and bottom-up perspective on the community's gaining of citizenship, it becomes clear that the people from Salha have acquired citizenship not merely to gain access to, but also to ensure a degree of independence from, the Lebanese state and political parties. This attempt, moreover, was driven by bottom-up interests and initiatives as well, not only by top-down ones. Tellingly, it was not the nationalization *per se* that rendered the new citizens of Shabriha electorally relevant, but rather the strategic administrative manoeuvring that followed. Had Shabriha's *mukhtār* not taken it upon himself to register all of Salha at one place as soon as 1997, his community would not have been as electorally convenient for the Amal leadership in 2004 and hence would not have had the political leverage to engineer their *de facto* autonomy the way it did. As such, the story of Salha questions the passive posture of nationalized constituencies and nuances Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous' conclusion that 'these naturalized groups were continuously at the mercy of their patrons'.[126]

This conclusion speaks to debates about citizenship in the Arab world. Salha's negotiated access to the Lebanese state confirms Ghandour's claims that, with regards to the Palestinian community in Lebanon, citizenship should more straightforwardly be conceptualized as a set of rights rather than as a national identity (only).[127] In the case study central to this article, rather than a 'nationalized form of membership that imposed top-down notions', acquiring citizenship was about a bottom-up negotiation to obtain the socio-political rights that brought with it the liberty to distance oneself from exactly such imposed national projects. The dynamics analysed in this article, however, are relevant beyond definitions of citizenship as well. I have shown that the inclusion in the

124. Nationalized Palestinian, Mar Elias camp, Beirut, 19 June 2013.
125. Journalist, Lebanese Shabriha, 27 June 2013.
126. Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Naturalized Citizens', p. 198.
127. Ghandour, 'Citizen Space'.

state that comes with nationalization is neither uncomplicated nor unproblematic.[128] As also recognized by Nishikida, despite the increased services and other material benefits, inclusion in the state might also lead to being caught up in political vendettas and dependencies.[129] Consequently, the people from Salha and their representatives have used their inclusion in the state to negotiate a remarkable degree of independence from this same state.

In this regard, Salha's residents bring to mind Scott's 'art of not being governed'.[130] Stateless communities, refugees among them, are often particularly apt at mobilizing different identifications in order to 'adjust their distance from the state'.[131] This distance here, clearly, is symbolic and political more than spatial. In Scott's words: 'It is perhaps one of the features of shatter zones located at the interstices of unstable state systems that there is a premium on the adaptability of identities'.[132] Connecting these observations with Meier's borderland/boundaries nexus, it becomes apparent how the people from Salha utilized the spatial ambiguity of the South Lebanon borderland to negotiate other, institutional and socio-political, boundaries.[133]

In the context of a long-contested borderland characterized by significant periods of state absence, they have carved out their specific form of administrative independence. While geographically and institutionally inside the Lebanese state, then, the community of Salha can be thought of as having acquired what Scott would call a tributary status *vis-à-vis* that state, where 'the periodic renewal of oaths' guarantees remaining 'outside the direct political control of court officials'.[134] Reliable block votes, in such an argument, are the currency for relative autonomy. While this dynamic is clearly viable only on a small scale that does not encroach on larger fictions of state sovereignty, in this way Salha's 'Palestinian Lebanese' might be emblematic for Lebanon at large where, in some cases, 'despairing of having a "better" state, citizens ask for "less" state'.[135]

Acknowledgements

128. Haddad, *Palestinian Impasse*, pp. 68–69.
129. Nishikida, 'Palestinians From the "Seven Villages"', pp. 227–228. Here between Hizbullah and Amal and between 'Abasiya and Tyre. Many respondents felt 'Abasiya municipality acted in a vengeful way towards the people from Salha. Communal leader, Lebanese Shabriha, 8 May 2013; and focus group, Palestinian Shabriha, 28 July 2013.
130. Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*.
131. Ibid., p. 325.
132. Ibid., p. 329.
133. Meier, 'Palestinian Fidâ'i'.
134. Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 54.
135. Nahas, 'Lebanese Socio-economic System', p. 147.

Disclosure Statement

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