Homeland Identity and Assimilation in the *Mahjar* Press:

The case of *The Syrian World*

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Abstract

In the literature on how different ethnic groups became to be classified as white in the United States during the early 20th century, the case of Arab-Americans has only very recently been addressed in comparison. This thesis aims to provide an analysis of the discourse within *The Syrian World,* by looking at the contributions of its editor to provide a focused account on the topic of identity among Syrian immigrants to the United Stated in the early 20th Century. It argues that a certain myth of identity known as Phoenicianism was adopted by the Syrian community as it provided them with a shared heritage with European groups while also offering them a glorified version of the homeland of which they could identify with.

Keywords: *Immigration, Identity, discourse, Syrians, Phoenicianism*

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article under the heading *Are Arabs and Iranians White? Census says yes but many disagree.*[1] The article states that over 80% of people with Middle Eastern and North African heritage have referred to themselves as white in the census, but that there are lobbying efforts to from the Arab and Iranian communities to create a separate category for people from Middle Eastern and North African descent.[2] This was not the only article on the topic, publications such as *The Guardian, Al-Jazeera, and CNN* have all very recently contributed to the topic of the categorization of Americans of Middle Eastern descent as White.[3] A close look at these article show that all attempt to highlight the problems that arise as a result of this categorization such as loss of identity, population estimation inaccuracies, and lack of notice to existent inequalities between different groups which are all classified as white. As this topic continues to be debated, it is important to highlight that the classification of those of Middle Eastern and North African descent as white Americans is largely due to the efforts of the Syrian immigrant community who migrated to the United States in the late 19th century. It was of their intent and efforts through which the 'white' category came to eventually include incoming individuals from the Middle Eastern region.

In the literature on how different ethnic groups became to be classified as white in the United States, the case of Arab-Americans has only very recently been addressed in comparison. On this topic, a handful of recent publications such as Hani J. Bawardi's *The Making of Arab-*

[1] Sarah, Parvini, and Ellis Simani. "Are Arabs and Iranians White? Census Says yes, but Many Disagree." *Los Angeles Times*, 2019. https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-census-middle-east-north-africa-race/.
[2] Parvini, Sarah, and Ellis Simani. "Are Arabs and Iranians White? Census Says yes, but Many Disagree." *Los Angeles Times*, 2019. https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-me-census-middle-east-north-africa-race
[3] As recently as April 2021, the CNN has published an article on the problems of 'whitewashing' Arabs in the census, See: Alsharif, Mirna. "The Whitewashing of Arab Americans Impacted by Covid-19 Is a Catastrophic Public Health Issue, Experts Say." CNN. April 03, 2021. https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/03/us/arab-americans-covid-19-impact/index.html.

Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S Citizenship and Sarah Gualtieri's *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* have separately addressed the history of Syrian immigration to the United States and the journey towards citizenship. This literature always relies on archival newspapers that were published by the early Syrian immigrant generation to the United States in order to understand the developments of the late 19th and early 20th century. These newspapers were edited and published as early as the 1880s by Syrian immigrants and covered topics related to both political changes in the Middle East as well as American news. To this day, very few in-depth studies exist which focus on the individual newspapers or their contents.

This thesis aims to build on the existing literature on the history of Syrian immigration to the United States by offering an in-depth analysis of one of the publications that is frequently referred to in various literature on this topic, namely a journal titled *The Syrian World* which was in print from 1926-1934. By choosing to focus on one publication, the thesis aims to contribute a more intensive account on the topic of identity among Syrian immigrants to the United States. It credits Phoenicianism, an alternative identity option to Arab nationalism which arose in the early 20th century with offering the Syrian community an ethnic identity which offered a glory to the homeland while maintaining a similarity to European origin groups to which they strived to assimilate with. *The Syrian World* was edited by Salloum Mokarzel, who was a strong promoter of Phoenicianism and one of the only editors to address both the Syrian community and the general American readership in his journal, making his source a rich account on how identity was expressed for assimilative purposes and to perform an identity which was compatible with the criteria of whiteness at the time. A secondary aim of the thesis is to address the current revival of news reporting on Arab whiteness by offering a detailed perspective on why the choice

to be white came about by the Syrian immigrant community, and to place the current debates on the erasure of identity within a broader context of continuously evolving ethnic and racial developments in the United States.

The thesis will also be based on a framework which focuses on concepts of identity, race, citizenship, assimilation and Diasporas. It also utilizes discourse analysis as the approach to present an in-depth analysis of the selected material. This framework will help express how a Phoenician identity complimented each of these concepts into offering an identity in which the Syrian community could keep a connection to their homeland, while still fulfilling the conditions necessary to achieving whiteness. The first chapter of the thesis begins with a historical background on Syrian immigration to the United States, it then offers context on the rise of nativism during the early 20th century and the citizenship rights of the time which were based on racial prerequisites. Next, it introduces the Syrian intellectual circles that were present in the United States which lead to a survey of the Syrian publications which were in circulation during this time. It introduces *The Syrian World* and offers some insight on Salloum Mokarzel. The next chapter will detail the theoretical framework and present the main research questions. The third chapter describe the Discourse Historical Approach, which will be the main method of analysis, and describe the data selection process and which articles by Salloum Mokarzel from *The Syrian World* will be analyzed. Finally the thesis will move into an in-depth analysis of the selected articles in which findings and implications will be discussed. It ends with final learnings and considerations for future work.

Chapter 1. Historical Background

The ways in which Syrian-Americans perceived race and citizenship include multiple narratives and beliefs. In order to understand how the Phoenician myth of identity enabled Syrian-Americans to perform a white identity, it is important to look into the ways in which members of this community began their lives in the Unites States. This chapter will first look into historical migration of Syrians into the United States beginning in the late 19th century. Then, a discussion of the landscape of citizenship rights and questions of race will be presented. It is also important to look into the events that were taking place in Greater Syria itself, and so the chapter will also illustrate the changes that were taking place in the homeland with a focus on the rise of nationalism in the region. Finally, it will explain the importance of the *Mahjar* literary movement, and the Syrian American press.

1.1 The Immigration of Syrians to the United States

Arab immigration to the United States took place within two periods. The first began in 1870 and lasted until restrictions on immigration were imposed in 1924 through the Immigration Act, and the second taking place from the end of the Second World War onwards. This first wave of immigration, which falls within the time-frame of thesis, was made up largely of migrants coming from the Ottoman provinces of Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine. The majority of these immigrants were also Christians belonging to the Maronite, Melkite, and Eastern Orthodox churches.[4] It is difficult to accurately quantify the number of Syrians who were living in the United States at that point, as they were initially identified as 'Turks' before the collapse of the empire. Only after 1918 were immigrants from these regions referred to as

[4] Nadine, Naber, 2008. *Arab Americans and U.S. Racial Formations*. [online] Available at: <https://nadinenaber.com/writing/arab-americans-and-u-s-racial-formations/>

Syrian.[5] Commonly mentioned estimates range between 50,000-200,000 migrants entering the United States until 1924.[6] [7]

Although this thesis focuses mostly on a period when migration had slowed down due to added restrictions, it is still important to understand the nature of migration to the Unites States. Firstly, the United States was one of many different destinations to which immigration was sought after. Other major regions of migration were Central and South America, Canada, France and Egypt.[8] There were also multiple causes for migration, most of which were related to economic necessity and personal development. The decline of the silk industry which had a strong base in Mount Lebanon due to the changing global economy was one a major factor. The opening up of the Suez Canal also shifted economic focus to Egypt within the Middle East. Other factors which explain why the majority of migrants were Christian were related to Ottoman policies, including the obligatory conscription system instated after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Finally, the early 20th century witnessed the presence of multiple Christian missionary groups in the region.[9] This is notable in Lebanon where both Protestant and Catholic missionary groups established their own educational institutions. Changes in policy within the United States also facilitated migration, the 1864 Immigration Act endorsed the sponsorship of labor workers and established an immigration commission which was in charge of checking

[5] A. Deniz Balgamis., and Kemal H. Karpat. *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman times to the Present*. Madison, WI: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008. [Yasmeen, the author's first name comes first in footnotes; the last name comes first in the bibliography, which is alphabetized]
[6] Deniz, A. Balgamis, and Kemal H. Karpat. *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman times to the Present*. Madison, WI: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, 2008.
[7] Amritjit, Singh, and Peter Schmidt. *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.
[8] Stacy D, Fahrentold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
[9] Sarah M. A, Gualtieri. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009. Ch.1

documents and facilitating the transport to the American east coast docking all arrivals in New York City.[10] Whether the main settlement was in New York's famous 'Little Syria' on Washington Street or other locations such as Avenida Corrientes in Buenos Aires, Syrian migration markedly created ethnic colonies or *Jaliyat* which were closely connected to one another. Most migrants were young men who likely knew someone who had successfully immigrated, allowing the community to have strong networks with one another.[11] From these 'Mother colonies', Syrians would then set venture out across all parts of the country to make a living.

The majority of migrants that had arrived during this period identified as temporary workers who hoped to acquire some financial gain and return to their lands of origin. However, the majority settled permanently in the United States. Most scholarship claims that the majority of incoming migrants were poor unskilled workers who were also illiterate, and that the two main occupations they took were peddling and mill work. Although mill workers outnumbered peddlers, it is peddling which has held some historical note among scholars. Peddling was seen as a transformative act. In regard to ideas of assimilation and integrating into American society, peddling was seen as a facilitator of this very early on as a time of romanticized discovery. As early as 1937, Habib Katibah, a Syrian-American political figure who strongly supported Arab nationalist causes was referring to the time of the late nineteenth century the 'peddling stage', which would be followed by the 'orientation phase' which began at the turn of the 20th century till the end of the First World War[12]. More recently, with Alixa Naff's seminal work *Becoming*

[10] Stacy D, Fahrentold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
[11] Stacy D, Fahrentold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
[12] Hani J, Bawardi. *Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015.

American: The Early Arab-American Experience, peddling achieved a central position within Arab-American studies as the key to integration of Syrians within American society. In it, Naff argues that pack peddling gave illiterate immigrants the means to quickly learn a new language by closely interacting with suburban Americans in their trade.[13] In some cases, peddling became a means to shift from moving around to opening a utility store. With this ability to afford starting small businesses, Katibah's 'orientation phase' began and included the call for American citizenship.

The early Syrian migrants to the United States encountered a new culture entirely different from what they had been accustomed to. New arrivals encountered a new language and unfamiliar faces, customs, and food. They often depended on previous migrants who had settled in before them for help finding work and a place to live and begin to settle within the community.[14] A second critical consideration was the prominence of racial identification and categorization as a marker of social difference[15]. Social status based on race was a concept that the Syrians were previously not accustomed to, and where Syrians were to be placed in vague categories of 'white' and 'black' was an issue which would take decades and multiple court cases to be answered.

[13] Alixa, Naff. *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.
[14] Sarah M. A, Gualtieri. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009. Ch.1
[15] Sarah M. A, Gualtieri. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009. Ch.1

1.2 Nativism and Citizenship Rights in the Early 20th Century

Studies on how whiteness became a superior racial identifier in the United States have often found their starting point in the slaveholding south. Roediger[16], Ignatiev[17], and Goldstein[18] agree on the idea that during this time people defined themselves by what they were not, and in the context of the United States, this was slaves and being black. Ignatiev and Goldstein also illustrate the vagueness of such concepts through their case studies on the Irish and Jewish migrant communities respectively. In *How the Irish Became White,* Ignatiev describes the oppression of Irish Catholics in Ireland which led to their decision to migrate to the United States. Arriving as poor migrants, they were used by plantation owners to do dangerous work which they did not want to risk losing a working slave in. Their poorer status and willingness to take part in such on railroads canals alongside black slaves led to their identification as 'black'.[19] With this, blackness was not only a category based on skin color, but also a social status. Becoming white and having the privileges associated with it was a process by which Irish immigrants actively distanced themselves from black people, despite having made friendly connections with them. This was done in order to gain a more favored position within American society. They also felt a need to take part in the subjugation of black people in order to show that they belonged to American society and be deserving of citizenship.[20] In *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, Goldstein also demonstrates the ambivalence of race as a social identifier. He describes the case of the Jews as having more social inclusion than other

[16] David R, Roediger. "Critical Studies of Whiteness, USA: Origins and Arguments." *Theoria* 48, no. 98 (2001). doi:10.3167/004058101782485511.
[17] Noel, Ignatiev. *How the Irish Became White*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015.
[18] Eric L, Goldstein. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2006. doi:10.2307/j.ctvs32sd7.
[19] Noel, Ignatiev. *How the Irish Became White*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015.
[20] Noel, Ignatiev. *How the Irish Became White*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015.

groups based on their choice of conformity to white racial norms and letting go of their own traditions and distinctiveness, despite having formed an American-Jewish culture. [21] The rise of anti-Semitism in the early 20th century was also an important factor in the decision to maintain the whiteness of their identity, showing that whiteness was an active choice to be made at the cost of losing much of original identity and culture.

The early 20th century was also a period in which publications of scientific racism proliferated. Much of the material that circulated attempted to profile Jews and Arabs in order to be able to place them within categories of black and white. The most influential American work on race was by racial anthropologist and economist William Z. Ripley whose book from 1899 *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* was based on the belief that race was the basis for human difference.[22] Jews and Arabs were both identified as Semites, but Ripley ultimately needed to place them in a category of black or white. His work was also built upon by Charles E. Woodruff, an army surgeon who states that the Jews were in a position between Aryans and Semites.[23] Both made claims that Jews have had a history of intermarriage with Europeans and concluded that they have little resemblance to modern day Arabs and so they are ethnically white people.[24] In the first decade of the 20th century, Arabs remained categorized as Semites. Under the 1870 amendment to the Naturalization Act of 1790, only two groups were eligible for American citizenship: free white persons having lived in the United States for two years, or those of African nativity or descent. As Arabs belonged to neither of these groups, the Syrian

[21] Eric L, Goldstein. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2006. doi:10.2307/j.ctvs32sd7.
[22] Heather, Winlow. "Mapping Moral Geographies: W. Z. Ripley's Races of Europe and the United States." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 96, no. 1 (2006): 119-41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3694148.
[23] Eric L, Goldstein. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2006. doi:10.2307/j.ctvs32sd7.
[24] Heather, Winlow. "Mapping Moral Geographies: W. Z. Ripley's Races of Europe and the United States." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 96, no. 1 (2006): 119-41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3694148.

community would have to convincingly argue for their whiteness in order to be granted the right to citizenship.

It is important to understand the political context under which Syrian advocacy for citizenship rights took place. As in the case of the Jewish community, Syrians did not seem to perceive themselves as white, but understood the privileges that came with belonging to such a category. In 1907, the Dillingham Commission was set up in response to increased concern over the effects of changing migrant demographics on the United States. Their findings were published in 1912 and concluded that 81% of new immigrants were coming South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. More than just a demographic shift, these new groups which were arriving were deemed harder to assimilate and accused of bringing undesirable traits to the country.[25] Sentiments such as the above had been on the rise since the 1850s when immigration patterns shifted and more migrants from these locations began to arrive in comparison to northern Europeans. Signaling a time of increased nativism, the commission was a representation of growing public opposition to immigration. Incoming migrant groups from Eastern Europe were regarded as socialists and anarchists, Italians as kidnappers[26], while the Syrians were labelled as thieves.[27] Literacy tests were proposed in order to limit migration to literate persons only and linked illiteracy in English with the undesirable claims. There were also various racially driven attacks against immigrants, the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan (KKK)

[25] Charles, Jaret "Troubled by Newcomers: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Action during Two Eras of Mass Immigration to the United States." Journal of American Ethnic History 18, no. 3 (1999): 9-39. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27502448.
[26] Julia G, Young. "Making America 1920 Again? Nativism and US Immigration, Past and Present." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 5, no. 1 (2017): 217-35. doi:10.14240/jmhs.v5i1.81.
[27] Stacy D, Fahrenthold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

intimidated and used violence to challenge Syrian presence, especially in the South where lynching such as that of Nola Romey, a Syrian-American took place in 1929.[28]

These changes made it increasingly difficult for Syrians to have access to American citizenship. In the earlier years of their migration, citizenship was a relatively easy process and many individuals had been granted the right to naturalization. It had only become increasingly difficult during the early years of the 20th century where many contradictory decisions were made regarding the right of applicants for citizenship. Under the 1790 Naturalization Act and the 1870 amendment, only 'free white persons' and 'individuals of African descent' were allowed citizenship.[29]In her book *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora,* Sarah Gualtieri details the process by which multiple court cases finally resulted in citizenship rights to the Syrian community. With laws placing highest emphasis on racial categorization, the cases of Costa Najour, Faras Shahid, and George Dow show the inconsistencies in decisions made by courts regarding the racial classification of Syrians. Costa Najour applied for naturalization in 1909 and his hearing showed the court's rejection of the idea that race should be decided on skin color alone. Judge William T. Newman's decision fell on what he believed was scientific evidence, citing *The World's People* by Augustus Henry Keane as the publication he referred to. The book classified the world's races into four categories: Black, Mongol or yellow, Amerinds, and Caucasians. It also made the claim that Caucasians were light skinned or darker. Newman's final conclusion based on this was that Najour ultimately belonged to the Caucasian white race, and that by coming from the dominions of the Ottoman Empire, denying him citizenship meant denying multiple other white Europeans

[28] Sarah, Gualtieri "STRANGE FRUIT? SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS, EXTRALEGAL VIOLENCE AND RACIAL FORMATION IN THE JIM CROW SOUTH." Arab Studies Quarterly 26, no. 3 (2004): 63-85. Accessed May 16, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41858491.
[29] Sahar F, Aziz. "A Court Decides Who Is White Under Law." American Bar Association. November 2013.

citizenship who were under the control of the Ottomans.[30] According to Gualtieri, Newman's decision showed that color did not matter if the applicant had other qualifications which were deemed necessary for whiteness and naturalization. In cases where the applicant's personal qualifications were in doubt, the applicant was deemed unsuitable for citizenship and color would return to serve as a marker of ineligibility.[31] The following case aims to show how personal ineligibility lowered the chances for naturalization and referred back to physical characteristics as a main reason.

Faras Shahid applied for naturalization four years after the decision was taken regarding Najour's naturalization. An important difference to note between the two applicants was that Shahid was not proficient in English language while Najour had passed the literacy test. In the case known as *In Ex parte Shahid,* Judge Henry Smith rejected the existence of scientific evidence and was suspicious of the idea that being Caucasian implied whiteness. Comparing the case of the Syrians to that of the Jews, he mentions that the Syrians did not intermarry with white Europeans as the former group did. Shahid and many other applicants referred back to their roots as the homeland of Christianity and Judaism to appeal to the judges for citizenship, this attempt was also rejected by Smith as an emotional claim that did not belong in courts. In his final statement before refusing Shahid's application, Smith claimed that the applicant had no understanding of English, desired citizenship only to bring his family to the United States, and that he did not possess qualities which would benefit the country if he was granted citizenship.[32] The importance of understanding English in this case overrode understandings of racial

[30] In re Najour, 174 F. 735 (1909) (United States Circuit Court for the Northern District of Georgia 1909).
[31] Sarah M. A, Gualtieri. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009. Ch.2
[32] Ex parte Shahid (United States District Court for the Eastern District of South Carolina 1914).

classifications, showing that applicants who express an ability to assimilate and contribute to the United States were more likely to be naturalized.

Despite not being the first case filed regarding the issues of citizenship, it was *Dow v. United States* that united the Syrian community across the country to set aside their differences and support the case. In this case, George Dow, a Christian of Lebanese origin, challenged two district court rulings that denied him his petition for naturalization. Both concluded that he was not eligible for citizenship as he was not a 'free white person' under the 1790 Naturalization Act.[33] The presiding judge's argument in this case was that the 1790 Act had been consistently amended through new acts, particularly in 1870 when a clause allowing citizenship for 'those of African descent' was added. The case also opened up debates on scientific knowledge of race, citing updates in the knowledge through Johann Blumenbach's categorization of races as scientific progress that shows that the Syrians of the east Mediterranean were white.[34] Judge Charles Albert Woods followed by concluding that Syrians are descendants of multiple groups historically, but are closely related to those on the European side of the Mediterranean.[35] This finally decided that the Syrian community, who came from the previously Ottoman provinces should be classified as white through their closeness to Europeans and granted all future applicants the right to citizenship.

Throughout the different court cases, the different Syrian communities in the Middle East also took part in publishing studies on race which would place Syrians in a white racial category. This is best exemplified in the Cairo-based journal *Al-Hilal,* which offered multiple articles on the scientific categorization of human types, written by the editor, Jurji Zaydan, a Syrian émigré.

[33] Sahar F, Aziz. "A Court Decides Who Is White Under Law." American Bar Association. November 2013.
[34] Dow v. United States (United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit 1915).
[35] Dow v. United States (United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit 1915).

Al-Hilal's work also offered readers a similar racial categorization as was present in the United States, where at the bottom category were blacks, followed by the Asians, the Native Americans, and at the highest category were the Caucasian, "or the white race." Inside the last category Zaydan listed the Semites, which included Arabs, Jews, and also the Aryans and Nordics.[36]

The ways in which court decisions were taken are crucial to understanding how the Syrian migrant community positioned itself within American society. Firstly, as with incoming European migrants, Christianity was a common factor which they shared and understood its importance in the naturalization process especially as increasing restrictions were being placed on non-Christian immigrants from East Asia. Secondly, the English literacy tests that applicants took were an important indicator of whether they intended to become part of American culture and the booming industrial era of the early 20th century. Finally, being granted citizenship meant that Syrians were able to express their loyalty to the United States, which became evident when 12,500 Syrian soldiers joined the army in the First World War with intent of revenge against the Ottoman Empire.[37] The extent to which these factors shifted from applications and courtrooms to be reflected within the Syrian-American identity can be analyzed in the ways in which they referred to themselves nearly a decade later in the press.

1.3 Understanding the development of Nationalism in the Middle East

The Syrian-American adoption of the Phoenician myth of origin as a way of better fitting into the category of whiteness as opposed to an Arab origin is tied to the ways in which national identities developed in the Middle East. Research on the origins of nationalism in the Middle

[36] Sarah M. A, Gualtieri. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009. Ch.2
[37] Stacy D, Fahrenthold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

East have often attempted to determine when Arab societies shifted towards national ideologies. The general consensus, including that of Rashid Khalidi and Philip Khoury, is that nationalism is a creation that came about after the First World War.[38] This section will not go into the history of development of different national ideas, but it will provide a survey of three prominent ideologies: Arab Nationalism, nation-state nationalism and Phoenicianism during the setting of the early 20th century. These played a significant role in the region and also transnationally debated by the different Syrian communities in the *Mahjar*, or lands of immigration.

It is argued by various scholars including James Gelvin that Arab Nationalism is a modern phenomenon that does not arise from previous forms of identity, and that certain periods of crisis and mobilization resulted in the creation of certain boundaries that separate subjects from the 'other'. The outbreak of the First World War can be treated as one of those instances.[39] While there has been debate over among which groups it originated from, there is also agreement that it initially emerged among the educated elite.[40] According to C. Ernest Dawn, Arab Nationalism was the result of opposition to the Ottoman Empire that developed out of preceding ideas of Arabism, a fluid sense of belonging to a fatherland and Islamic Modernism, the notion that Islamic values have been lost in society and better exhibited by the West. The rise of Arab Nationalism was inspired by both Islamic modernists before 1908 and also driven by the Syrian-Christian contributions to the modern literary revival movement.[41] The movement, known as *Al-Nahda* meaning 'revival' aslso included contributions from the literary figures of the *Mahjar*, which will be discussed in the next section. These were writers, poets, and intellectuals who had

[38] Rashid, Khalidi. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991; Khoury, Philip Shukry. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Princeton Univ Press, 2016.
[39] James L, Gelvin. *Divided Loyalties*. University of California Press, 1999.
[40] Rashid, Khalidi. *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991
[41] Mahmoud, Haddad. "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 201-22. doi:10.1017/s0020743800060219.

immigrated and settled in the West but maintained strong involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. According to Mahmoud Haddad, the spread of Arab nationalist ideas during this time in Syria were a reaction to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the possibility of its end, and their aims were originally focused on autonomy rather than independence. Moreover, Arab Nationalism and nation-state nationalism were not mutually exclusive.[42]

In regards to the development of individual nation-states, the concept of a state centered identity gained momentum in 1908 with the Young Turk revolution. Following the end of the First World War, the geographic region of Greater Syria which included the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Jordan was divided into four small states. Among the original proponents of Syrian nationalism in the late 19th century, which supported Syrian unity within the countries that constituted Greater Syria was Butrus Al Boustani, a Protestant convert from Mount Lebanon.[43] Inspired by European values, he contextualized them into secular principles that promoted unity regardless of religion and area. This more localized understanding of Arab nationalism would become powerfully relevant during the early 20th century with the founding of the Syrian National Socialist Party by Antun Saadeh. At the same time in Greater Lebanon, Maronite intellectuals and politicians were endeavoring for a separatist Lebanese identity based on a new understanding of Lebanon's history. With this, the history of ancient Phoenicia was brought into discussions as being part of a Western nation which sought protection from the France.[44] It is this development of a Phoenician identity which originated in calls for an independent state of Lebanon that can be found in the discourse of Syrian immigrants

[42] Mahmoud, Haddad. "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (1994): 201-22. doi:10.1017/s0020743800060219.
[43] Youssef M, Choueiri. "Arab History and the Nation-State." 2016. doi:10.4324/9781315410579.
[44] Youssef M, Choueiri. "Arab History and the Nation-State." 2016. doi:10.4324/9781315410579.

to the United States. Within the immigrant communities in the United States, it was not used for this same goal, but rather as a tool for assimilation for citizenship.

The reconstruction of the past and creating a continuous sense of belonging through archeological findings is not a unique occurrence to the Phoenician case. The theoretical contributions relating to this case will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, but it is important to note that the Phoenician case did not a single cohesive narrative to which everyone agreed upon especially when comparing the local Middle Eastern narratives with those of immigrant communities, but it did fulfill the criteria of myth of ancestry, golden age, decline and rebirth. Asher Kaufman offers a concise description of the Phoenician idea, in *Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon,* the decline the Phoenician civilization is attributed to Arab occupation.[45] The Phoenicians withdrew to Mount Lebanon in order to preserve their heritage and so the modern Lebanese have inherited their virtues from these Mediterranean ancestors. With the rise of nationalism in the Middle East, the Phoenician ideology ascribed the Lebanese to the most senior civilizing role whose ancient heritage benefitted the Mediterranean civilizations.[46] In an appeal to western sympathy, particularly the French, and support for their claims, supporters of Phoenicianism portrayed themselves as the predecessors of the Greeks and Romans, serving as their role models. In attempts to strengthen their ties to the west, there were claims in the Middle East, and by the immigrant communities that Lebanon was entitled to Europe's help and protection in the way the Italians and Greeks were recognized as the forefathers of civilization.[47] This myth of origin would be further driven by Syrian intellectuals

[45] Asher Kaufman. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." Middle Eastern Studies 37, no. 1 (2001): 173-94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284144.
[46] Asher Kaufman. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." Middle Eastern Studies 37, no. 1 (2001): 173-94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284144.
[47] Carol, Hakim. *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

in the United States who appropriated this identity in order to express their rights to citizenship in the United States and their closeness to European culture and heritage, this thesis will demonstrate and analyze the use of this myth by the Syrian immigrant community.

1.4 The Mahjar and Intellectual Contributions

The Syrians living in the United States during this era referred to themselves as being part of the *Mahjar* community, a term used to imply life as part of a diaspora. *Mahjar* in its literal meaning refers to the land itself as a place of immigration and was mostly used to speak about the Americas.[48] The term *Mahjar* also became associated with a literary culture that developed in the United States and South America which included scholars, writers, poets, and journalists. The majority of these members had immigrated from Syria during the late 19th century and established themselves as the voice linking East and West. Much of their work received worldwide acclaim, and despite their physical distance. The contributions of the *Mahjar* intellectuals had a strong impact on modern Arabic literature. Their work was also key in expressing the identities of Syrian-Americans who apart from racial categorization, felt a certain dual existence as both American citizens but with a strong connection to their homeland identities. The immigrant press was an extension of the Arab cultural *nahdah*, or the Arab intellectual renaissance which was growing in Syria and Egypt. As the Ottoman Empire was weakening, and the different national ideals in Syria were being presented, the *Mahjar* writers also articulated a similar sense of self-awareness and equally debated different options for the future of an independent Syria.[49] The intellectual circles of the *Mahjar* also had strong connections to one another, writers and poets contributed articles in the press, and different

[48] James G, Thomas. "Mississippi Mahjar: Lebanese Immigration to the Mississippi Delta." *Southern Cultures* 19, no. 4 (2013): 35-54. doi:10.1353/scu.2013.0043.
[49] Stacy D, Fahrenthold.. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.

newspapers reflected on the work and in many occasions refuted other publications usually due to differing political opinion. Newspapers often had a certain political view regarding the lives of Syrians in the United States and the future of Syria and were generally associated with specific religious groups.[50] The following section aims to illustrate the ideas of some of the leading *Mahjar* intellectual, it is not a comprehensive account of their work which is vast but provides an overview of the diversity of thought that was present among the early 20th century intellectual circles.

Many renowned literary figures have been associated with this movement such as Mikhail Naimy, Nasib Arida, Abd Al-Masih Haddad, Amin Rihani, and Khalil Gibran. These figures had a strong effect on modernizing Arabic literature and made it their mission to promote cultural and political reform in their homeland based on their experience in the West, and to encourage a spiritual awakening in the West based on their knowledge of the Middle East.[51] In his book *Letters to Uncle Sam*, Rihani expressed the loyalty of the Syrian community to the United States and also called on them to side with the allies against Germany and the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.[52] Other important intellectual figures included scholar Phillip Hitti, Syrian-American Society president and lawyer Joseph Ferris, and clergy from New York's Maronite church such as Reverend W.A Mansur, all of whom engaged in debates and contributed articles to *The Syrian World* which defended the Syrians as a race in America and

[50] Hani J, Bawardi *Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015.
[51] Tanyss, Ludescher. "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature." *MELUS* 31, no. 4 (2006): 93-114. Accessed May 13, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029684.
[52] Suheil B, Bushrui. Thought and Works of Ameen Rihani by Dr. Suheil Bushrui. 1998. http://www.alhewar.com/Bushrui_Rihani.html.

highlighted their Phoenician heritage.[53] The next section will provide an overview of the largest publications of the time and their editors, it will also introduce the main material of this thesis.

1.5 The Syrian-American Press

During the early 20th century, the Syrian-American press was the main source of information on the Middle East for the Syrian community living in the United States and acted as the voice of various intellectuals and scholars to express their thoughts through. Multiple different publications were based in New York and circulated all across the United States and Latin America.This section will provide an overview of the largest publications, their editors and contributors, and introduce the main material of this thesis.

Various Arabic language newspapers were being circulated during this period, the largest being*: Al-Nasr, Al-Ayam, Al-Bayan, Al-Sayeh, Kawkab America, Al-Kawn, Al-Hoda, Meraat al-Gharb, Al-Funun,* and *Al-Samir*. In English, the largest Arab-American publication was a journal called *The Syrian World.*[54]

The publications which were available during this time were not published in isolation. Various different centers for publishing existed where large communities of Syrians were based, including Egypt where many of the issues the Syrians were facing in the United States such as concepts of race were also being discussed. Other newspapers were based in Brazil, which hosted a separate group of *Mahjar* poets and intellectuals. *Al-Fayha* and *Al-Brazil* both began to circulate in 1895.[55]

[53] These figures were regular contributors to *The Syrian World.* See: The Syrian World 2 (March 1928); The Syrian World 2 (September 1928)

[54] All these publications have been archived and can be found in the Library of Congress. The Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies at North Carolina State University also holds some of these publications and offers digitized volumes of some; all published volumes of The Syrian World are also available online through the center. The center is chaired by Akram Khater, a Middle East historian at the university.

[55] Ignacio, Klich and Jeff Lesser. *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*. London: Routledge, 2007.

According to Michael Suleiman, these publications mirrored the distinct identities of the different Syrian communities, these identities reflected their national aspirations for Syria and were often based on religious differences. He asserts that the newspapers also carried the messages of different sectarian leadership, which competed in claiming to be the best representatives of their sects.[56] An example of such competition can be found between the Najib Diab, the founder and editor of *Kawkab Amirka* and *Mera'at Al-Gharb* who was a Greek Orthodox and Naoum Mokarzel, a Maronite Christian who was the editor of *Al-Hoda*. Differing national ideals where Diab advocated for an independent Greater Syria while Mokarzel supported French tutelage over the Mount Lebanon region can be found across the pages of both magazines, were expressed in the form of verbal attacks from one newspaper to the other.[57] As the outspoken Maronite representative, Naoum Mokarzel made *Al-Hoda* one of the longest running newspapers in the Syrian-American press. His brother Salloum Mokarzel however, had a much more nuanced tone and differing interests in his publication *The Syrian World.* An overview of both figures will be presented below, followed by an introduction to *The Syrian World,* which is the focus for the thesis.

Naoum Mokarzel was a leading pioneer in Arab American journalism, having arrived in the United States in 1890 and founded *Al-Hoda* in 1898. *Al-Hoda* was published fully in Arabic and was one of the earliest available newspapers for the Syrian audience. Mokarzel was a supporter of maintaining the Arabic language and did not want the community to lose its core characteristics and national identity, which conflicted with his work supporting the Syrians

[56] Michael W, Suleiman. "The Arab American Press." CRL. 2004. https://www.crl.edu/focus/article/5844.
[57] Hani J, Bawardi. *Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015; an example of Mokarzel's statements against Mira'at Al Gharb can be found in: *Al-Hoda*, October 10, 1905, 4.

appeal for American citizenship.[58] After his death in 1932, the newspaper was taken over by his brother Salloum Mokarzel and remained in print until 1971. He was a loyal Lebanese nationalist who advocated throughout his career for an independent Lebanese state, and urged the Maronite community to support the French in order to liberate Lebanon from Greater Syria.[59] At the Paris Peace Conference, he was also part of the delegation sent to call for an independent Lebanese state.[60] As with other members of the Syrian-American press, Mokarzel supported various efforts to prove that Syrians were eligible for American citizenship on the basis of being white, his publishing house *Al-Hoda Press* published a book called *The Origins of the Modern Syrian* by Maronite pastor and intellectual Khalil Assaf Bishara which recalled the origins of Syrians back to an ancient Phoenician heritage in order to demonstrate their whiteness as Semites and closeness to Christianity.[61] Although he supported the publication of this book, the idea came from his younger brother Salloum Mokarzel, who at the time was an editor of a commercial magazine and would launch *The Syrian World* in 1926.[62] The narrative offered by the younger Mokarzel in his journal will be the focus of this thesis, the below will introduce the publication and the task of its editor.

1.6 The Syrian World

According to Gregory Orfalea, much of the documentation that is available on the original Syrian immigrant community in America is partially owed to Salloum Mokarzel and his

[58] Michael W, Suleiman *"The Mokarzels Contributions to the Arabic-speaking Community in the United States" 1999.https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858285.*
[59] Michael W, Suleiman *"The Mokarzels Contributions to the Arabic-speaking Community in the United States" 1999.https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858285.*
[60] Stacy D, Fahrenthold. *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
[61] Kalil, Bishara A. *The Origin of the Modern Syrian*. 1914.
An electronic copy can be found at the Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies: https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/items/show/13964#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0
[62] Michael W, Suleiman. *"The Mokarzels Contributions to the Arabic-speaking Community in the United States" 1999.https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858285.*

publication *The Syrian World* which ran from 1926 till 1934.[63] The younger Mokarzel, like his older brother was also born Syria, in a town called Farikah north of Hama and followed in his brother's footsteps in immigrating to the United States to work in the press in 1890.[64] In this periodical, Mokarzel's mission was different to that of his brother, The journal went into print after the First World War and two years after the Immigration Act of 1924 which limited Syrian immigrants to the United States to only 2% a year of all immigration which marked the end of the mass migration era and the beginning of a more stable time for the community.[65] Mokarzel wanted his audience to be the second-generation children of immigrants who were born in the United States and the general American public.[66] The journal covered some specific themes that were of Mokarzel's interest such as race, the relationship of migrants to their homeland, and some accounts of his travels between the United States and Syria. Many of the prominent *Mahjar* intellectuals were frequent contributors whose contributions also fit the themes that Mokarzel focused on. The journal's first volume highlights its mission. It argued that the biggest problem being faced by Syrians in the United States was the growing divide between immigrant parents and their American born children, the biggest question was how the second generation could embrace their American identity but still retain a connection to Syria.[67] *The Syrian World'*s aim to spread awareness of the rich cultural heritage of the Middle East focused mostly on the Greater Syria and the Arabian lands, noting that Mokarzel did not view himself and his

[63] Gregory, Orfalea. "On Arab Americans: A Bibliographical Essay." American Studies International 27, no. 2 (1989): http://www.jstor.org/stable/41280727.
[64] Helen, Samhan. "The Mokarzel Family." Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies. https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/collections/show/44#:~:text=Naoum Mokarzel emigrated to the,, journalist, and medical student.
[65] Diogo, Bercito. "Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News." Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies News Passing a Camel Through Ellis Island ArabAmerican Press and the Immigration Act of 1924 Comments. August 28, 2019. https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2019/08/28/passing-a-camel/.
[66] "The Syrian World." Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies. https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/collections/show/42.
[67] The Syrian World I (July 1926)

community to be of an Arab ethnicity. As a supporter of Phoenicianism, he credited all positive attributes of the Syrian community to their Phoenician 'stock'.[68] This belief was common among Maronite Christians, however his treatment of this identity in *The Syrian World* was not dismissive of the Arab identity, and he also included articles which highlighted the great achievements of the Islamic civilization. As discussed in previous the previous section, the Phoenician myth came to play a large role in the events leading up to the independence of Mount Lebanon from Syria, and offered a path for distinction from other Arab groups.

It is unclear why the journal was named *The Syrian World*, as its primary focus was not the current events of the region at the time. It could have been a title that appealed to the imagination of both groups of its readership, who have not been to Syria. Moreover, as the analysis of Mokarzel's articles will show, he sometimes used an Orientalizing writing style in order to pique the interest of readers and possibly to fit within the common ways of alluding to the region and its culture during the early 20th century.

It is difficult to understand the level of agreement that readers had with the *The Syrian World's* ideas beyond the letters to the editor section included within it, but an analysis of it allows for the understanding of one of the narratives that the community was exposed to at the time. As Mokarzel mentions his dedication to finding a balance in the first page of the publication, *The Syrian World* offers an opportunity to understand Salloum Mokarzel's mission and how his narrative of the homeland facilitated whiteness rather than hindered it. The journal also offers the chance to understand the legacy of the debates around citizenship, and which elements Mokarzel believed are part of the white Syrian-American identity a decade later.

[68] Michael W, Suleiman. *"The Mokarzels Contributions to the Arabic-speaking Community in the United States" 1999.https://www.jstor.org/stable/41858285.*

Finally, it offers insight into how national identities that emerged in the homeland, could be adopted by the diaspora in order to fulfill their own aspirations of a dual identity.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the thesis' theoretical framework, focusing on the key concepts of the research which are identity, assimilation, Diasporas and discourse. The way in which this thesis fits within the framework will also be presented throughout this chapter.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The definition and nature of nations and nationalism has been the subject of various theories. From a modernist perspective, Benedict Anderson defined a nation as an imagined political community which is imagined to be both limited and sovereign.[69] He continues to explain that it is imagined because fellow members from the same nation of any size will not all meet one another. The nature of being limited comes from having boundaries to who is part of the nation and who is not, these boundaries also comply with the idea that individual nations do not attempt to have all mankind as members. Finally, Anderson elaborates on his theory that the nation forms a community by highlighting its nature as a horizontal relationship between all members and a deep comradery despite any inequalities that may essentially exist. In relation to this, the Phoenician myth of identity could be understood as an imagined community, especially one which has a transnational character in the case of *The Syrian World*. Mokarzel was a supporter of Phoenicianism while living the majority of his life in the United States, and maintained his belief both in relation to the homeland and also in relation to the community his

[69] Anthony, Smith. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

journal was addressing. Thus, Mokarzel's references to descent from a Phoenician past will be analyzed being part of this imagined community.

The Syrian immigration trend of the late 19th century and early 20th century throughout North and South America certainly led to the development of a Syrian Diaspora in this region. In his critique of the usage of the term 'diaspora', Rogers Brubaker suggested that the term is better used as a category of analysis.[70] He explains that in this way, the term would overcome a static definition being placed on a community and take into account the identities and loyalties of the population. Citing Khachig Tölölyan's work [71], he shares the example of the Armenian Diaspora in the United States, and highlights that over time it has become less diasporic in nature and that the Armenian character of individuals has become more closely aligned with symbolic ethnicity.[72] In this sense, the thesis treats the Syrian community in the United States as a Diaspora, which can be characterized by dispersion, an orientation to the homeland, and certain boundaries that maintain them. However, it does not view these characteristics as static and aims to highlight a certain shift in the Diasporic identity through the efforts of the community itself. The thesis highlights the multiple border changes that were taking place in the early 20th century and the rise of various and often competing identities during this time. It also takes into account the religious differences and political elements which shaped the community's diasporic experience during this time.

[70] Rogers, Brubaker. "The 'diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-19. doi:10.1080/0141987042000289997.
[71] Khachig, Tölölyan. "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 3-36. doi:10.1353/dsp.1996.0000.
[72] Rogers, Brubaker "The 'diaspora' Diaspora." Ethnic and Racial Studies 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-19. doi:10.1080/0141987042000289997.

In 1964, Milton Gordon laid down the basis of assimilation studies in the United States. Gordon offered a number of steps in which immigrant groups undergo to reach assimilation. Beginning with what he defines as 'structural assimilation' which is the ability of immigrants to fit into everyday American life but only maintaining secondary relations with non-immigrant groups. Gordon describes a linear process which then ends with a close identification with the host society in which prejudice, discrimination, and value conflict come to an end at the stage he terms 'behavioral assimilation'[73]. In 2003, Richard Alba and Victor Nee built on this process and offered a perspective which also emphasizes the role of the host society in assimilation which involves a change from the host society in becoming more accepting.[74] This framework on assimilation are taken into account throughout this thesis by tracing the beginnings of Syrian immigrant communities as peddlers to forming strong ties to the United States as businessmen and intellectuals. It also illustrates some of the discrimination they faced during their time and the progression to becoming 'white' American citizens. The analysis of Mokarzel's work will also show how assimilation could be expressed as taking pride in participating in daily and political American life.

This thesis uses an archival journal as resources for analysis and so it is also based on an understanding of media as social phenomena as well as discourse. In *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media.* John B. Thompson characterizes communication as a form of action that is meaningful to the producer as part of a contextualized social phenomenon.[75] He characterizes mass media as extending the availability of symbolic forms within space and time.

[73] Milton, Gordon. *Assimilation in American Life the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1964.
[74] Richard D, Alba and Victor Nee. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
[75] John B,Thompson. *Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Oxford: Wiley, 1995.

Mediated messages which are produced within a certain context extend to recipients who are completely removed from such contexts, which applies to the case of this thesis. He describes mass media as having created a sense 'Mediated Worldliness' in which the spatial horizons of understanding are greatly expanded and plays an important role in present attempts at shaping the past.[76] In addition to this, Ruth Wodak also described texts as sites of social struggle in which they show elements of opposing ideological struggles.[77] Moreover, she defines an ideology as a perspective which is made of related convictions, opinions, and attitudes. It is one that is shared by members of a specific social group and serves as a means of establishing or maintaining unequal power relations through discourse.[78] Within the context of the present day, this thesis will make use of Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach in order to understand the different symbolic forms presented by Mokarzel in order to understand how his choice of words within the context of the early 20th century played a role in shaping a Phoenician version of identity in the United States which was applicable with standards of whiteness and Americanness at the time.

2.2 Research Questions

Based on the previous historical background and theoretical framework, Salloum Mokarzel's contributions to *The Syrian World* deserve attention for their clear mission. They offer rich material from which the Phoenician myth of identity was articulated in a way to fit within the assimilative need of Syrian immigrants in the United States. As one of the only English language publications at the time, it offers insight into what ideas were also intentionally

[76] John B, Thompson. *Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Oxford: Wiley, 1995.
[77] Ruth, Wodak. "Critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach." *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction* (2015): 1-14.
[78] Ruth, Wodak. "Critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach." *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction* (2015): 1-14.

expressed to the non-Arab communities in order to demonstrate not only the Syrian cultural heritage, but also their deservingness of being considered white American citizens.

This thesis will attempt to answer the below questions:

1) How was the Phoenician narrative of Syrian-American identity depicted in *The Syrian World*? How did this identity enable the assimilation of the Syrian community as white Americans?

In the next chapter, the main methods for analyzing Mokarzel's texts will be presented as well as the selected articles which will be analyzed in this thesis. It will then move on to analyzing each text and sharing final implications.

Chapter 3. Methods and Research Design

In this chapter, the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) will be applied to selected articles from *The Syrian World.* As defined by Ruth Wodak, DHA is an interdisciplinary study which combines linguistic analysis with historical and sociological methods.[79] By the analyzing visual, textual, or oral material, this method allows for an investigation of the research sample under different aspects and allows for the tracing discursive change in a historical context.[80] This method is the most suitable for the analysis of *The Syrian World* as it allows for the analysis of the different elements of Syrian-American identity within the historical context of the early 20th

[79] Ruth, Wodak, and Martin Reisigl. 2017 "The Discourse-historical Approach." *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*: 87-121. doi:10.4135/9780857028020.d6: 94
[80] Ruth, Wodak, and Martin Reisigl. 2017 "The Discourse-historical Approach." *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*: 87-121. doi:10.4135/9780857028020.d6: 94

century. By looking at how discourse of two ideas, Phoenicianism[81] and Americanism[82], it can be demonstrated that the adoption of the Phoenician origin myth was a choice in order to create an identity compatible with accepted categories of American identity and citizenship of the time.

3.1 Research Design

The main way to understand the use of the Phoenician myth is to place elements of the discourse surrounding as belonging under certain categories of Americanism. In DHA, this is illustrated by Wodak in her section on argumentation theory. Certain 'topoi' or claims of argumentation that fit under the main umbrella theme attempt to prove a certain condition or correlation of the elements to the conclusion.[83] More generally, these 'topoi' help break down the larger concepts into different angles for investigation. In this research, the Phoenician myth included in selected articles by Mokarzel from *The Syrian World* will be categorized into certain topoi which fit under the broader theme of Americanism. Within the context of the early 20th century, the concept of American citizenship as 'belonging' is in itself exclusionary often through religion, gender, and ethnicity.[84] Thus, this section aims to show that the Phoenician myth could be used as a tool which allowed the Syrian community to share similar representational features to those of Americans. These features being a common religion and race.

[81] A national identity which began to appear in Lebanon in the late 19th century, claims mainly that the people of Mount Lebanon are descendants of ancient Phoenicians and so are not Arabs. Adopted mainly by the Christian community.

[82] Defined by Michael Kazin & Joseph A. McCartin as patriotic values aimed at creating a collective American identity and can be defined as "an articulation of the nation's rightful place in the world, a set of traditions, a political language, and a cultural style imbued with political meaning"
Kazin, Michael, and Joseph A. McCartin, eds. *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. doi:10.5149/9780807869710_kazin.

[83] Ruth, Wodak, and Martin Reisigl. 2017 "The Discourse-historical Approach." *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*: 87-121. doi:10.4135/9780857028020.d6: 94

[84] Irene, Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul. "Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008): 153-79. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608.

The next section will analyze some of Mokarzel's articles from *The Syrian World* to show how certain elements of religion and race within the Phoenician myth are used in order to boost belonging of the Syrian community as American citizens within American society. However, there are certain limitations to this, it is difficult to fully prove a causal relationship despite the use of DHA but certain compatibilities of the two identities can be shown.

3.2 Categorizing *topoi* of the research

The research will focus on four different claims of argumentation, or topoi. The first two are selected based on Bloemraad's identification of exclusionary elements of citizenship, namely topoi of religion and race.[85] The third selected topos focuses more Baubock's definition of citizenship as a political participation within society[86], this will be known as the topos of participation. In this way, the third topos allows the analysis to move away from the discourse in the articles which focuses on the exclusionary measures, but to also show how an inclusionary element of citizenship was used to portray a 'belonging' to American society. The final topos will be the topoi of heritage. In this, discourse regarding the ancient Phoenician narrative and the qualities that the newspaper claims they had will be examined. The following table shows how certain discourses are organized under each topoi, noting that certain claims can fulfill more than one topoi:

[85] Irene, Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, and Gökçe Yurdakul. "Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation-State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008): 153-79. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608.

[86] Rainer, Bauböck. "Expansive Citizenship: Voting beyond Territory and Membership." PS: Political Science and Politics 38, no. 4 (2005): 683-87. Accessed April 18, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30044350.

Topoi	Type of Discourse
Topos of Religion	Discourse on Christianity, Biblical scripture, religious philosophy, and the relevance of the Middle East
Topos of Participation	Discourse on life in the USA, American culture, political commentary, and patriotism
Topos of Heritage	Discourse on Ancient Phoenician past, civilizational achievements, link of the past with the present.
Topos of Race	Discourse on Whiteness, racial categories, scientific racism, and citizenship

Table 1.1

3.3 Data Selection

While it was in publication from 1926-1932, *The Syrian World* was edited entirely by its founder, Salloum Mokarzel. Throughout the eight volumes of the journal, it can be observed that a select few individuals make up the largest number of articles published within. Regarding journalistic articles, contributors such as Mokarzel himself, Reverend M.A Mansur, K.A Bishara, and George Ferris have articles included in the majority of publications in each volume. The journal also includes literary contributions such as short stories and poems by leading Syrian-American intellectuals such as Khalil Gibran and Amin Rihani. Given Mokarzel's background and affiliation with Phoenicianism[87], it can be understood that nearly all of the contributions to the journal are in line with his beliefs. Thus, the articles selected for analysis will focus on Mokarzel's own contributions to the journal as being representative of the ideas included within the journal.

The first article, titled *History of The Syrians in New York* is the opening article in one of the journal issues. In it, Mokarzel writes in the romantic style common throughout his journalism and describes the arrival of the first Syrian immigrants to New York and their settlement in the Eastern states. Mokarzel presents to readers the reasons behind their immigration to the United States, and their social status and living conditions upon arrival. He also illustrates the ways in which this community attempted to make a living when they first settled to their future successful business establishments. He also describes their religious demographics, churches they founded, societies, and intellectual achievements.[88]

[87] Michael W, Suleiman. "THE MOKARZELS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARABIC-SPEAKING COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES." Arab Studies Quarterly 21, no. 2 (1999): 71-88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41858285.

[88] Salloum, Mokarzel "History of Syrians in New York" The Syrian World II (November1927): 3

The second article that will be analyzed is titled *Can we Retain our Heritage: A Call to Form a Federation of Syrian Societies.* In it, Mokarzel discusses the issue of prejudice against Syrian-Americans and the negative stereotypes placed on non-'Nordic' racial groups and the need for dialogue in order to bring about understanding between Syrian-Americans and other American communities on a national scale. He makes a few proposals on how this can be achieved and offers *The Syrian World* to be a medium of such dialogue[89].

The third article in the analysis is a radio talk that was given by Mokarzel and was included in the fourth volume of the journal. In *The Syrians in America*, Mokzarzel talks about the geographical importance of Syria including some of its most important cities and landmarks, some through his own personal account of his trips to Syria. He also discusses its historical heritage including the Phoenician and Roman civilizations, and then moves on to describe the beginnings of the Syrian-American community as peddlers when they first moved to the United States. Some ties are made between the work ethic of Syrian-Americans and Phoenicianism.[90]

Chapter 4. Analysis: Selected Work by Mokarzel from *The Syrian World*

In Mathew Jacobson Fry's book *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race.* It is argued that discourse on whiteness in the United States has been heavily framed by the different waves of immigration, which ultimately broadened the scope of who is white to become the catch-all 'Caucasian' term used by the mid-twentieth century.[91] For the Syrian-American community, being one of the first non-European groups to achieve this classification was also a mission of distancing themselves of what the opposite of whiteness may

[89] Salloum, Mokarzel. "The Syrians in America" The Syrian World IV (May 1930): 37

[91] Matthew Frye, Jacobson. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1998. doi:10.2307/j.ctvjk2w15.

be. The timing of when the Syrian community became classified as white is also important, it was a year after the outbreak of the First World War. This is important to note in relation to Gordon's he work on assimilation theory in which describes the period of WWI as "pressure cooking assimilation"[92]. A decade after citizenship rights to the Syrian community was granted, *The Syrian World* went into print, making it an excellent resource to understanding the legacy of the Phoenician myth and its interpretation in a way that was compatible with ideals of Americanness of the time.

This section analyzes the selected works by Mokarzel to understand how the myth of Phoenician origin was constructed in a way that was compatible with ideals of Americanness. By analyzing each text through the lens of the topoi from table 1.1, the section argues that Phoenicianism allowed the Syrian-American community to maintain an identity of white American while still expressing a national identity which would be accepted by the Anglo-American controlled social and racial system.

In the selected texts, Mokarzel is addressing both the Syrian-American youth, whom his goal is to maintain interest in their land of origin, but a big reason his publication was in English was also because he wanted to appeal to the general American public, and to inform them of the history and culture of Syria. As he aimed for a wide readership, it can be understood that words were meaningfully produced, and that general public approval was sought. His goals were to inform and make an impression, and not necessarily to call for any direct action. This distinction across the articles however is clear, in some cases he refers to his readership as 'the Syrians in America', not as Syrian-Americans or other American first identity. In other cases, he expresses strong patriotism with claims such as 'our American homeland'. His use of these terms show

[92] Milton M, Gordon. "Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality." Daedalus 90, no. 2 (1961): 263-85.. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026656.

how his use of Phoenicianism allowed for the Syrian-American community to exist under a certain grey area, where as American citizens they were strongly patriotic and fulfilled certain ideals of American citizens but also as Syrians who still had strong ties to the heritage and current affairs of the Middle East. While the newspaper was in publication from 1926-1934, the Syrian-American community would have only been two generations from their first arrival in the 1890s so connections to Syria were unsurprisingly strong, but their relatively fast naturalization process would certainly speed up their attempts at fulfilling the white category they were under.

4.1 Topos 1: Religion

Syrian immigration to the United States before the outbreak of the Second World War was largely a Christian endeavor, it was only until the 1960s when a sizeable Islamic Syrian-American community would form. So, religion in this case is focused on Christianity as a category of analysis. This topoi can be found in two different forms; first, it is presented as a historical element of Syria, and secondly as a Syrian reality in the United States. The texts of the first type will be presented as they are the meaningful element that contributed to the whiteness of Syrian-Americans. Two examples are below:

> "The early emigrants must have struggled hard to break away from centuries-old traditions and to leave the land which they stood ready to defend in all past tie against all odds with the greatest determination, especially since the religious factor had always proved a controlling force in the lives of the Lebanese Christian who loved the soil and the rock of his mountain not alone because it ceded him a scanty means of subsistence, but more because the fastness of the mountain had enabled him throughout the ages to defend himself against his aggressive neighbors and thereby maintain his right to religious freedom."[93]

The second:

[93] From *History of The Syrians in New York*

> "But this is not all the glory that was Syria. The Cedars of Lebanon are still young in spite of their age of four or five thousand years. The city of Damascus shows every sign of youth and virility in spite of the fact that it is the oldest city in the world. Crusaders castles still crown the strategic points of Syria bearing mute testimony to the desperate struggles which that country as seen during its various stages"[94]

In these two examples, the concept of Christianity as an integral part of Syrian history is evident. He describes the Lebanese Christian's love of their homeland. In his poetic narrative, Mokarzel refers to natural elements of soil and rock, thus implying a strong sense of connection of the immigrants to Lebanon, by doing this he also ties the concept of Christianity to Syria. Mokarzel then references Lebanon as a refuge to Christians in the region from religious persecution. He could be implying multiple different events, especially since in other articles he cites the Ottoman presence in Syria as a barrier to religious freedom, but in this case, he most likely refers to the Muslim conquest of the 7th century and Umayyad rule as it was during this period when the Maronite Christians migrated from northern Syria towards Mount Lebanon. In this quote, the role of Christianity could be understood as part of a romanticized origin myth, by which the Syrian community promoted their origin from the Holy Land which at the time was witnessing heightened interest from the West. It also served as a differentiator between 'us' the Christians Syrians and the Christian United States and 'them' the Arabs, a term which was at the time tied with Islam.

The second quote was taken as part of Mokarzel's description of the geography and landmarks of Syria. The first part of the quote more closely fulfills elements of heritage as a category of analysis, but it provides interesting context to his second statement. Of the multiple landmarks which he could have mentioned in relation to Syria's age, Mokarzel chose the crusades as symbol of the country's evolving history. This choice also offers a western

[94] From *The Syrians in America*

perspective on the history of the region, as the crusades have not generally been viewed positively from the Middle Eastern perspective and were known to have failed. This also ties to this choice of naming crusader castles as the 'crowning' the strategic points in Syria. The term is generally used to refer to landmarks which have a cultural pride. The way in which Mokarzel describes these landmarks implies that the crusades were not the struggle, but Arab expansion was the struggle to which the crusades were sent to. This also is a western oriented perception of historical events.

4.2 Topos 2: Participation in American life

Despite gaining citizenship rights in 1915 and the classification as white people, Syrian-Americans still faced certain prejudices due to their skin color, negative reputation as peddlers, and as uneducated immigrants. These issues were often discussed in *The Syrian World* with multiple contributions expressing the loyalty of Syrian-Americans to the United States, and the contributions that they have made to American society. Mokarzel often remarks on these issues, even admitting to some 'ignorance' from the early immigrants of the 19th century, but generally highlights the achievements and progress that Syrian-Americans have made as citizens. The majority of the texts focus on the entrepreneurial achievements, but some touch on others such as scientific and intellectual contributions. His expressions were often strongly patriotic, proving that Syrian-Americans were first Americans, and then of a certain heritage. The first example is from Mokarzel's call for the formation of Syrian-American societies:

> "Ignorance fosters fear and mistrust. America, above any other country in the world, needs the cementing influence of mutual understanding among her heterogenous elements. There are already some organized bodies, fostered by far-visioned, benevolently disposed Americans, doing splendid constructive work along this line. This could be strengthened and brought to more fruitful results and fuller successes by

> cooperative effort on the part of the different racial groups along the same line. The Syrians should prove themselves willing to do their part"[95]

In this text, Mokarzel expresses a willingness to take part in social institutions to foster understanding between different ethnic groups in the United States. He expresses an understanding of multicultural societies and the need for dialogue at this time of high conservatism. As previously mentioned, the context of the United States during the early 20th century was one of heightened anti-immigration sentiment with limits being placed on the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States, the Syrian community was still facing a level of racism and prejudice against them, despite being naturalized white citizens. Interestingly, he describes positive attributes to well-meaning 'Americans' who have already been part of such initiatives and calls for the 'Syrians' to do the same. In this way, he is identifying white Americans as those making the initiative and calls on the Syrian-Americans to do their part, meeting the standards of white Americans. While this text appeals for some actions from the Syrian-American community, the second quote below expresses some pride:

> "One of the great lines in which Syrian business enterprise has discovered and introduced to the American market, and still largely controls, although it has become a staple in decorative linens, is that of Madeira embroideries. Syrian insights was quick to perceive the potentialities of this article and having first made importations from native manufacturers, Syrian importers proceeded very soon to establish their own factories employing in some instances thousands of operatives. The industry was thus organized and conducted on systemic lines and the prices reduced to such popular levels that these fine art linens were made available to all American homes" [96]

The above shows a different perspective on Syrian-American participation in American life, Mokarzel mentions the achievements of Syrians as entrepreneurs and innovators who were able

[95] From *Can we Retain our Heritage*
[96] From *History of the Syrians in New York*

to make sales across all American homes. As mentioned, the rule of the Ottoman Empire over Syria based the silk industry mainly in the Mount Lebanon region, and so many of the Syrian immigrants were skilled in making linens and embroideries due to this heritage. Moreover, some of the largest Ottoman trading ports were based in the Syrian region such as in Akka, Beirut, and Latakia. In this text, it can be understood that Mokarzel is placing the Syrian community's commercial achievements to a contribution to the economic growth of the 1920s. In his reference to systemic production lines, his claim seems to be reminiscent of the Ford Model-T automobile.[97] Mokarzel also places the commercial accomplishments of the Syrian community as on that has made a mark on the American middle-class which was growing during that time. In this way, the Syrian community is portrayed to play an active role in the growth of the American economy and one that is well-received by American consumers. The concept of trade and innovation is also one that is linked with the Phoenician heritage which Mokarzel supported, this will be discussed in the following section analyzing the topoi of heritage.

4.3 Topos 3: The Phoenician Heritage

Phoenicianism arose in the Middle East as an alternative identity option in response to the rise of Arab Nationalism. One of the main goals of this ideology was to help gain Lebanon's independence from Greater Syria and establish its own republic. By claiming to be descendants of the ancient Phoenicians. The Lebanese were able to create some distance from their Arab neighbors and establish closer ties with Europe and France more specifically under which they sought protection. This thesis argues that the same identity was used in the United States to establish closer links with the American people and solidify their position as white Americans.

[97] In production from 1908 till 1927, Ford's Model T was one of the most influential cars of the 20th century as it provided affordable transportation on a mass produced scale, the car also was a symbol of innovation to the growing middle class and became a sign of the United States' age of modernization.

As an ancient civilization, the ancient Phoenicians were known as great sea-farers and traders around the Mediterranean Sea. They were also credited with the invention of the first alphabet and a type of purple dye which was adopted by royal families in Europe. Mokarzel highlights these qualities in his texts but also makes a link with Christianity in order to establish a stronger connection with his American audience. In the below quote, Mokarzel celebrates his homeland as the host of multiple civilizations and creates a link of the past with the current situation:

> "The foregoing is a brief outline of what Syria was in history. It is far from that country that Syrians now in America have come. From the oldest country in the world to the land known as the New World, they bring their priceless racial distinction as heirs to the culture of the ages. They come with the gifts of all the attributes of varied by virile blood – Phoenician, Semitic, Roman, Grecian, and Arabian. And it is a significant fact that the first of the Syrians to emigrate were the Lebanese of the north who claim direct lineal descent from the Phoenicians. It would seem that the law of atavism seeks to assert itself and here finds complete vindication. The great sea-wanderers of old have bequeathed their wanderlust to their long line of descendants." [98]

Here Mokarzel begins by creating an association between old and new, making the fact that Syrians coming from one the oldest continuously inhabited regions arrived to the United States a point of significance. He highlights their multi-ethnic background by claiming to be racially from some of the important civilizations to have existed in Greater Syria. He then identifies the Lebanese as those who are direct descendants of the Phoenicians. This is an interesting point as Mokarzel does not deny that Syrians are ethnically related to Arabs, but points out a distinction that the Lebanese were direct Phoenician descendants. It is interesting to note that Mokarzel claimed descent from two of the greatest civilizations, Greeks and Romans, but chose to highlight the Phoenician heritage. It can be understood this way that the Phoenician myth of identity here is not only used to express a connection with the West, but also to claim and help

[98]From *The Syrians in America*

maintain a distinct identity for the community in which they felt connected to while still being a significant civilization to the West. Mokarzel follows by a romanticized statement claiming that the migration of Syrians to the United States was a legacy of their Phoenician sea-faring heritage. This is one of my examples in which Mokarzel gives a romantic and somewhat orientalized account of Syrian heritage. With such statements, Mokarzel turns the reality of Syrian migration to the United States into an adventurous pursuit rather than a migration out of need.

The above example shows how Mokarzel used the Phoenician myth to offer a distinct identity in which the Syrian community could connect to, but also was one that was historically significant to the west. However, his contributions also offer accounts of how other elements of the Phoenician myth of identity could also be used to express similarities and compatibility with white Americanness specifically. The below two quotes offer such examples:

> "Romance in business is not dead. It thrives today in the age of steel and steam and under the shadows of towering Manhattan skyscrapers as it ever did when the first Phoenician ventured across the billowy main in his wind driven galleon laden with spices of the East and the industrial products of Sidon and Tyre." [99]

And the second:

> "What could be more of a business romance than the record of a penniless, almost illiterate immigrant who, in the course of a decade rises from the humble rank of a peddler to the exalted position of an international merchant prince directing from his office in New York humming industries he controls across both the waters of the Atlantic Pacific and the Pacific? The Syrian can now claim representation in every country on the face of the globe, and everywhere he goes he is an emissary for the promotion international good-will and exchange of benefits through trade"[100]

[99] From *History of the Syrians in New York*

[100] From *History of the Syrians in New York*

In the first text, Mokarzel expresses a revival of Phoenician trading glory in the form of Syrian commercial achievements in the United States. In this expression, he also gives a romanticized account of both the ancient spice trade and the modern industrial environment. The second text builds on this and also highlights the progress that the Syrian community has made in their immigration. These texts allude to the idea of the American Dream, which celebrates the United States as a land of opportunity that is open to people regardless of social class and depending on hard work. According to Reeve Vanneman and Lynn Weber Cannon, the American Dream helped offer a common vision to all members of society and places much emphasis on wealth and affluence.[101] By using the allusion in relation to continued Phoenician commercial glory, Mokarzel allows the Syrian community to take part in the vision of the American Dream and express their abilities in achieving it. It also celebrates the commonality of trade skills which the ancient Phoenicians were known for and which was of increasing importance during the American economic boom of the 1920s. In the end of the second quote, Mokarzel points out the global presence of the Syrians and their role in the promotion of 'international good-will', this is a noteable statement given the isolationist nature of the United States during the 1920s. From the text, it can be understood that Mokarzel is still referring to trade benefits as the United States still required exports to Europe. Moreover, the idea of good-will was also linked with the nature of American foreign policy of the time, as in 1928, the Kellogg-Brand Pact agreed to stop war and settle conflicts through peaceful diplomacy. Thus, the global presence of Syrians implied that they also were part of the United States' increasing global presence.

[101]Reeve, Vanneman, and Lynn Weber Cannon. "The American Dream." In The American Perception of Class, 257-82. PHILADELPHIA: Temple University Press, 1987. Accessed June 12, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv941wv0.17.

4.4 Topos 4: *On Racial Understanding*

The articles published in *The Syrian World* were in circulation a decade after the decision to grant Syrian immigrants American citizenship on the basis of their whiteness. It is important to take a look at the legacy of how racial discussions influenced the way in which the Syrian community understood concepts of race in relation to themselves. As the below will also demonstrate, racial discussions of the time were linked closely with discussions of two of the previous topoi, namely the Phoenician heritage and Americanness. As the below quote will demonstrate, the categorization of Syrians as white did not put an end to some of the discrimination they faced:

> "The American nation is a conglomeration of various racial strains. Almost every element of human race is represented in its makeup, and because this was brought about in such a comparatively short time racial origins are still markedly defined. Rather, there has appeared insidious attempts by one so-called element at monopolizing all the credit and all the honor for contributing all that there is virile and worth-while in the American nation. And by imputation, even by plain accusation, they ascribe to other racial strains all that is apprehensible in America. It is a destructive policy which this element, in its blind selfishness and narrow-minded views, fails to appreciate its harmful results. But we Syrians, as well as other races who are not classed among the so-called Nordics, want to prove that we are a valuable element in the composition of the American nation" [102]

In this quote, Mokarzel brings to light a trend that negative attributes are often ascribed to communities that that do not belong in the category of Nordics. He strongly opposes such beliefs and confidently claims that the Syrians can prove that they are a valuable element among the communities which make up the United States. From this text, it can be understood that while Mokarzel did not place the Syrian community in the same category as Nordics, his confident tone and insistence on the value of Syrians to the United States could imply that he is utilizing

[102] From *Can we Retain our Heritage?*

the general whiteness of the community as Americans. His defense against the accusation that some racial groups are ascribed all the negative qualities within the context of the 1920s seems to only be a defense other white but non-Nordic groups, rather than non-white groups who at the time were still heavily discriminated against. Thus, the quote provides a sense of establishment that Mokarzel felt in his understand of whiteness, which a decade later allowed him to express strong disapproval at some of the ways his community was perceived. Towards the end of the quote, Mokarzel expresses an assurance in the ability of Syrians to prove to be valuable to the United States. This could also be understood as a sense of self-assurance in the Syrian community in being a valuable element in and of themselves rather than in relation to and upon how much other groups perceived their value to be.

A decade after the Syrian community received the rights to citizenship as white Americans, the ways in which the Phoenician heritage was instrumentalized in relation to their racial identity also experienced a shift. This can be attributed to the above understanding of a feeling of establishment that the Syrian community began to feel. In the below quote, Mokarzel celebrates the pride that Syrian youth have in their racial origin and the high-esteem they are held by other Americans:

> "Where once there had been a suspicion of indifference, even hesitancy and reluctance to admit one's racial extraction, we have in these societies proof positive that our young generations beginning to show genuine pride in its origin. The truth seems to have dawned upon our youth that while it is the duty of every loyal American to hold America first in his or her love and esteem, there is no travesty on one Americanism to know and proclaim one's extraction"[103]

> "During all the time they have been in America, the Syrians have proven themselves most law-abiding and loyal to the institutions of the country. It is the opinion, not alone of the casual observers, but of official authorities that the Syrians in America are one of

[103] From *Can we Retain our Heritage?*

> the most constructive and industrious elements among the heterogeneous stocks of the of the American nation" [104]

It is difficult to find out whether the pride among youth that Mokarzel is referring to is accurate of not. Since one of the key aims of the journal was to attract interest of young Syrians in their cultural heritage, then this may just be a statement to pique the interest of the readership. However, he does make a point which also shows the certainty he has of his community. Mokarzel claims that pride in one's racial origin does not have an effect on their Americanism. This signifies a shift in how the Syrian community expressed themselves as in earlier years, the eligibility of groups to be Americans was dependent on their race and the two concepts were not separate. In the second quote, Mokarzel claims that the Syrian community has been by official authorities as important commercial contributors to the United States. His focus on the commercial achievements of the Syrians as a quality of their Americanness is also important. Mokarzel is still expressing pride in the rise of the Syrian immigrants from peddlers to successful entrepreneurs. It is equally difficult to validate his claim that authorities express approval of the Syrian community, but this could also be a way to appeal to the general American readership of his journal.

The above analysis on Mokarzel's understanding of race shows that a decade after the Syrian community was granted citizenship as Americans, the concepts of whiteness, racial origin, and Americanness became separate and no longer dependent on one another to fulfill the community's eligibility as Americans. Moreover, Mokarzel comfortably takes part in expressing his thoughts against the actions and opinions of other white groups towards the Syrian community, which shows an independence of the community which no longer relied on the level

[104] From *The Syrians in America*

of deservingness that more socially superior groups felt the Syrian community had in being white American citizens.

4.5 Results

The above analysis focused on utilizing the Discourse Historical Approach as a method of analysis in order to understand how Syrian-American identity was expressed under certain categories of analysis. Namely, how heritage, race, religion, and Americanness contributed to the formation of this identity. It demonstrates that the Phoenician myth of identity provided a path to a white American identity but at the same time allowed the Syrian community to have an ethnic identity in which they still felt connected to. This is demonstrated through excerpts from Salloum Mokarzel's article in *The Syrian World.*

Firstly it can be understood that religion was important to the discourse included in *The Syrain World.* As the large majority of Syrians in the United States at the time were Christians, religion offered a path to expressing similarities with Western culture and creating some distance from other Arab groups which were heavily orientalized at the time. The concept of religion also established importance of the region of Syria by crediting it as the birthplace of Christianity. The concept of Americanness is a category that Mokarzel wanted to express belonging to. It can be understood that the primary category that Syrians fulfilled within the elements of Americanness was entrepreneurship. Mokarzel romanticized the journey of Syrian immigrants as peddlers into becoming successful business owners. This category also allowed Mokarzel to take part in American commercial achievements and keeping up with modern innovation. Phoenicianism was the myth of identity which complimented the discourse of Americanness in creating a uniquely Syrian-American identity. It was included in Mokarzel's articles for the purpose of

providing a history of the Syrian region which depicted it in closer connection with Europe through the Phoenician interaction with great Western civilizations such as the Greeks and Romans. Moreover, Phoenicianism was also heavily romanticized by Mokarzel in order to express some cultural continuity of the achievements of the ancient civilization with the current achievements of the Syria community of the United States, and allowed for these achievements to also become part of the greater American dream. Finally, the category of race showed a different side to how Mokarzel described his community. His discourse showed how a decade later, the concepts of whiteness, racial origin, and Americanness became separate and no longer dependent on one another to fulfill the community's eligibility as Americans, implying a sense of establishment of the Syrian-American community within the United States as active, participating citizens who understood their problems and could choose to confidently address them.

Conclusion

The results demonstrated above contribute to the background information and theories presented in earlier chapters by presenting an in-depth case study on how the Phoenician myth was utilized within *The Syrian World* in a way which helped the Syrian community maintain a white American identity. Firstly, the Phoenician myth in Mokarzel's articles fulfills the categories of an imagined community. The identity was utilized by him to speak on behalf of the imagined 'Syrian-American' community, in this way he was able to create a certain group identity for the Syrian community in the minds of the readership despite not every Syrian identifying with Phoenicianism. The newspapers analyzed in this chapter were published a decade after the Syrian community gained citizenship as white Americans, this timespan helps demonstrate the dynamic nature of diasporas, which is in line with Tololyan's theory on diasporas and transnationalism. Despite maintaining a strong connection with the homeland, these articles demonstrate an increased interest in taking part in daily American life. As Mokarzel addressed the general American readership, he expresses an understanding that the assimilation of the Syrian community also required the acceptance of the American public in allowing them to be a part of American society which in line with the ideas that Alba and Nee introduced to build on Gordon's linear assimilation theory.

This thesis argued that the Phoenician myth of identity was used by Salloum Mokarzel in order to enable the Syrian-American community in performing a white American identity while still maintaining some elements of their homeland identity. In reference to today's climate in which minority identities have become of increasing importance, this thesis illustrates the dynamic and variable nature of ethnic and national identities. It also contributes to highly comparative studies on race and assimilation in the United States by choosing to focus on a

community which has only recently began to achieve much needed academic consideration due to its richness. It also sets the groundwork for broader comparative studies among the different Syrian groups in the United States, the multiple immigrant communities, and of the various insightful publications which were in circulation during the early 20th century.

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