Lebanese Syriac: A Forgotten Language & The Missing Piece of Lebanon’s Identity

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# Introduction

Lebanon is a peculiar case in terms of geographical influences on identity. Being situated near the center of the Middle East, many would expect that Lebanon’s culture and traditions at least somewhat align with those of its Arab neighbors. Even the Lebanese Constitution of May 23rd, 1926 declares that, “Lebanon is Arab in its identity and in its affiliation. It is a founding and active member of the League of Arab States and abides by its pacts and covenants" (Lebanese Constitution). However, in reality, it is unique from every other Arab-classified country. It’s the only one to not be situated in a desert, instead being mountainous and green, and its culture values and traditions feel entirely different from those of the Gulf, such as the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia. Even its people don’t believe that the country itself is Arab; In a world values survey conducted in Lebanon during 2008 with a sample size of 3,039—close to evenly split based on religious faith and geographical origin—it was found that 67% of the total considered themselves Lebanese above all else, while only a mere 4% considered themselves Arab above all.