

Summary
Religious diversity and relational pluralism in Lebanon
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The religious difference in the Middle East has often been presented as major and radical instituting barriers between persons, groups and societies. Relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews, were either ignored or, when acknowledged, explained by the economic utilitarian factor. Work in a shi'ite and maronite village situated in the historically multiconfessionnal area of Byblos, Lebanon, permitted me to delve into several layers of pluralism. I take pluralism as a principle of regulation of religious diversity, be it on a local or more broadly on an institutional level. In my presentation I tried to show that a different perspective can be made on religious diversity. I focused on the construction, mechanism and stake of what I call "relational pluralism". Religion participates to bond-making especially on the occasion of rites of passage, commemorations and feasts, all religious events. Feelings of empathy, the sharing of sorrow and joy as well as commensality create or consolidate what the villagers refer to as "fraternity". In a multi confessional context, mutual participation entails the recognition of the difference of the other. As I see it, this recognition is the first criterion of relational pluralism. The second is the application of equality in the expression of the difference, i.e. to recognize the other as equal in his faith, his spiritual need and the practice of his cult. The third criterion is that participation takes place during events that do not pertain to what is imperatively the domain of each religious group. Furthermore, it is with no religious counter indication that villagers operate overtures. The forth criterion of relational pluralism concerns the mutual knowledge that the villagers have of some of their beliefs. Relational pluralism as a form of regulating the difference necessitates apprenticeship of this difference. If in the occasions that give reason to participation, religion is not put aside or distanced, new experiences and traditions are formed that contribute to shape a common culture.