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Arab American Literature and Culture

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Global Diaspora Sphere—the Arab Experience: The Success Story of a Syrian Village

People who are able to trace their roots back to Arab countries can be encountered nowadays in almost every region of the "New World" (cf. fig. 1). That also includes approximately four million citizens of the United States who live primarily in large metropolitan areas and in the eastern part of the country (cf. fig. 2). The group of Arab Americans[1]—a collective term for Arabic-speaking people and persons of Arab descent in the U.S. majority society—is very diverse and fragmented in terms of ethnicity, as can be seen in the self-description of Helen Samhan (2006, 1), who is the executive director of the Arab American Institute:

> Arab Americans are as diverse as the national origins and immigration experiences that have shaped their ethnic identity in the United States, with religious affiliation being one of the most defining factors. The

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[1] Samia El-Badry (2008) describes the problems doing scientific research concerning Arab Americans in the United States: "Though Arab-Americans are the least-studied ethnic group in the United States, they receive considerable publicity associated with political and economic events, a good example of which has been the intense focus on the community in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. While this attention may be of grave political and diplomatic importance, it overshadows Arab-Americans' financial and social impact in the United States. More importantly, such attention - including the current focus on the community - points out a longstanding problem: Very little is actually publicized and discussed about the make-up of the community."
Fundamental empirical studies regarding the Arab diaspora in the New World can be found in the collected editions of Hourani / Shehadi (1992) and Nancy / Picard (1998).

majority of Arab Americans descend from the first wave of mostly Christian immigrants. Sharing the faith tradition of most Americans has facilitated their acculturation into American society, as did high inter-marriage rates with other Christian ethnic groups. Even though many Arab Christians have kept their Orthodox and Eastern Rite church (Greek Catholic, Maronite, Coptic) affiliations, which have helped to strengthen ethnic identification and certain ritual, their religious prac-tices have not greatly distinguished them from the Euro-centric Ameri-can culture. Roughly two-third of the Arab population identifies with one or more Christian sect.

Source: Nabti 1992, p. 61   Draft: A. Escher 2003

Figure 1

Percent of people who reported Arab ancestry by county

1.2 to 2.7
0.7 to 1.1
0.4 to 0.6
0.2 to 0.3
0.1 or less

U.S. percent 0.4

0   2000 Miles

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary file 4, American factfinder at factfinder census gev provides census data and mapping tools.
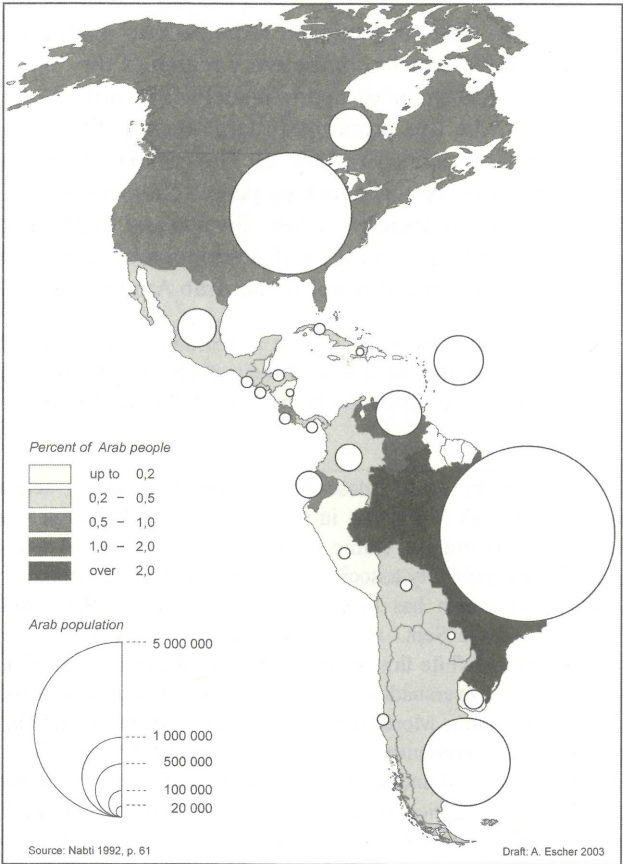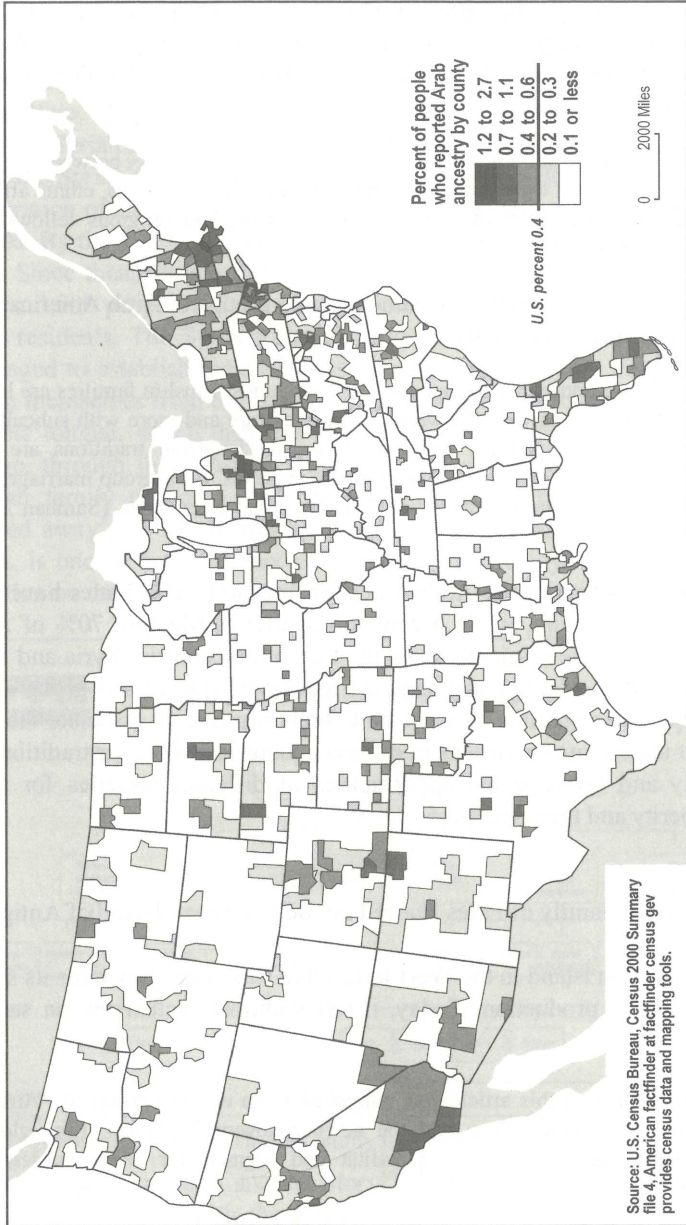
Figure 2

The Arab immigrants, who arrived in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, and especially the immigrants after World War II adhere to their ethnically derived day-to-day traditions that they brought with them.

> The shape and intensity of ethnic identity varies widely between the first and second waves of Arab Americans. For all generations, ethnic affinity is resilient in food, extended-family ritual, and religious fellowship." (Samhan 2006, 2)

Moreover, there is a tendency among some groups of Arab Americans to isolate themselves socially:

> Those immigrating since the 1950s and most Muslim families are likely to relate less with the white majority culture and more with subcultures in which religious, national-origin, and language traditions are preserved. For those who live in ethnic enclaves, intra-group marriage, and family businesses often limit outside social interaction. (Samhan 2006, 2)

Today, two-third of the Arab Americans in the United States have embraced Christianity, while barely one quarter is Muslim. 70% of Arab Americans come originally from the Levantine countries Syria and Lebanon. Taking a large family and the associated clan of this group as an example, it is possible to show how Arab immigrants associate the different underlying conditions in different countries with their traditions of family and leverage the opportunities of different societies for their prosperity and their success.[2]

The Syrian Family of Fares Hadeed on the Caribbean Island of Antigua

Antigua is an island in the West Indies that was once known for its sugar and tobacco production. Today, it relies almost exclusively on sailing

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[2] The content of this article was published in an earlier version as "Amar-al Hosn, the mothervillage and the newborn overseas village: Eine globale Gemeinschaft mit geteilter Lokalität und segmentärer Diaspora-Identität" (183-208).

tourism and tourists from cruise liners. The official internet presence of Antigua's and Barbuda's tourism authority describes the culture of its society as a "mixture of African, European, American and Middle Eastern culture." Only 0.7 % of the island's approximately 69,000 inhabitants are Syrian and Lebanese. Despite the marginal share of the population, the Syrian inhabitants have a major significance for the island. The emigration of Syrians to Antigua is very recent, dating back to just the 1950s. By the 1970s, several dozen Syrians in total had moved to Antigua. Since then, the number has increased steadily. There are between 475 and 500 people of Syrian descent currently on the island as permanent residents. The Syrians are primarily involved in import and have managed to establish themselves in academic professions. They distinguish themselves from the island's other inhabitants through their native Arabic tongue, which they use in addition to the official English language, through their costumes and many other cultural practices. The Syrian family of Fares Hadeed, whose founding father has already passed away and which now includes twenty persons in three generations, is one of the most successful families and enjoys an exceptional position on the island (cf. fig. 3).
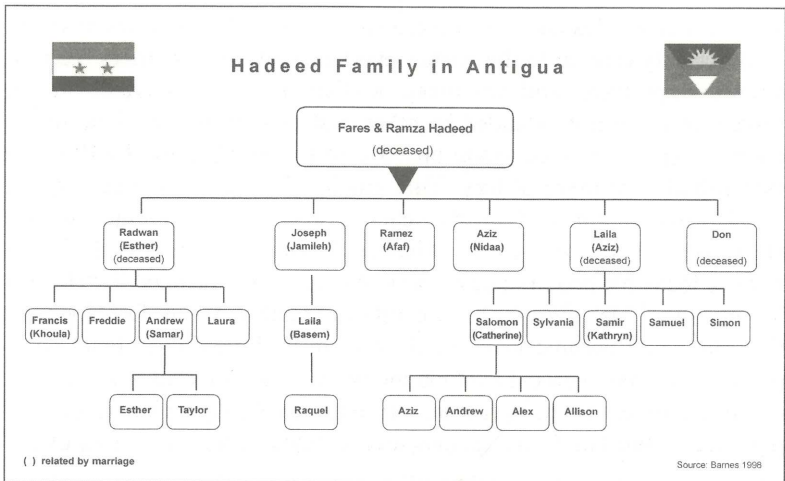

Figure 3; Family tree of the Hadeed family in Antigua

"The Hadeed story is a success story!", is the common perception of everyone who deals with the family. The founder of the family, Fares

Elias Hadeed, was born in Amar al-Hosn, Syria, in 1911. He married at the age of 28 and moved abroad in February 1952, leaving behind his wife and six children ranging between the ages of six months and eleven years. Like many Syrian Christians from villages of the al-Hosn region, he first immigrated to Venezuela. From 1952 to 1954 he dealt with groceries. Then he moved to Jamaica for one year, followed by six months in Guyana, two years in Barbados and six months on Trinidad and Grenada. Everywhere he went, he encountered relatives and acquaintances from his home village, the al-Hosn region or Greater Syria.[3] They provided him with assistance and helped him to establish himself in the New World. Nevertheless, he was unsatisfied with the opportunities to earn money and continued to look for a place that offered him better prospects for success. In 1958 he arrived with his son in Antigua for the first time and took up a door-to-door salesman job which was relatively common for Syrian immigrants (cf. Nicholls 1981 and Plummer 1981).

> Mr. Hadeed, with his valise of goods traveling through the countryside, became a familiar figure and he became well known in all the villages. He took the merchandise which the people needed to their doors. (Barnes 1998, 25)

The traveling salesman was described as a kind-hearted businessman who not only catered to the wishes and needs of his customers but also knew their problems and was always willing to grant them credit. At that time, credit was not extended by other traders visiting the island to the colored population who made up 90% of the inhabitants. In 1960, he established a furniture factory. This was his first step to the subsequent family-run corporation. Over the years, he also invested in other sectors. He organized his own bank, "Finance & Development Co. Ltd.," to finance loans for potential customers of his own car dealership "Hadeed Motors Ltd." He invested in real estate, "Marble Villas Development Co. Ltd.," and became involved in tourism by investing in hotel complexes and in the regional aviation industry. While the economic success can be attributed to many factors, all those involved emphasize the importance of the family on various levels. "One of the hallmarks of our

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[3] Greater Syria refers to the historical region of Bilad esh-Sham, which comprises the current nations Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel.

family's success has been our togetherness over the years. That family bond is precious to us all and it is something we do not take lightly," explains a daughter of Hadeed (Barnes 1998, 29). "United we stand, divided we fall," remarks another family member with reference to the most important imperative of the American society.

Rituals and traditions have been established to ensure that family relations are upheld and preserved. In addition, there are publications about family reunions and anniversaries. The publications contain family photos, biographies and family trees (Barnes 1998 and Hadeed 2001). Several members of the extended family have carried their self-portrayal to the internet for economic purposes. Celebrations are always joint affairs and not individual occasions. All activities such as the education of the children, the choice of professions and the formation of companies are decided in the family, taking into account the overall interest.

One of the most important strategic and economic principles of the Hadeed family was put into practice by the founding father:

> As a businessperson, if you can't live with the people, you can't make it. From the very beginning, we socialised with the people. We lived their lives; we lived with them. We had no flair. (Barnes 1998, 4)

In other words, the Hadeeds had been accepted by the locals, since they did not appear as "colonial" masters but rather as equals. Another point is that the immigrants did not become involved in sectors or activities where they competed with the local population. In a publication commemorating the company's twenty-fifth anniversary, the managers of the family said:

> It is a family policy that we do not touch whatever the locals can do. We never went into supermarkets or food trade because we consider that is for locals. We focus mainly on what is not available on the island in terms of businesses. (Barnes 1998, 7)

Guided by the perspective of their own judgment, the managers of the family-run corporation have understood the need to let the locals feel as if they were supporting the people through their involvement. "We do not interfere and we do not compete (in areas) we consider to be for the local or small man attempting to raise himself up in business. We assist them, but we do not compete with them" (Barnes 1998, 14). This so-

phisticated approach proved to be a winning strategy. Even the division of tasks between generations within the Hadeed family seems to function like clockwork. The Hadeed family has also been very successful at collecting political posts, including for instance the Antigua and Barbuda ambassador to Arab states, a member of Antigua and Barbuda's parliament, the honorary consul for Arab states to Antigua and Barbuda and the honorary consul for Arab states to Trinidad and Tobago. That way, the family is able to control the migration between Arab states and the Caribbean islands to a great extent.[4] And the consul does not forget to mention the basis of the Syrian community on the island and their self-image: "And all, in Antigua they live like one family!" The Syrian family of Fares Hadeed on Antigua is closely integrated in the large Hadeed clan with all their social, economic and political contacts. The clan traces its origin back to Hanna Hadeed from Ramallah, which is part of today's Palestine. In the family's collective memory and in the documentation of the family's history, which was published to mark the last family reunion on July 14, 2001, their ancestors wandered through several stations before settling in the Syrian village Amar al-Hosn. "The Hadeeds," as the clan likes to refer to itself, nowadays live primarily on Caribbean islands and in the United States (cf. fig. 4). Most members of the clan live in Trinidad, where many Syrians and Lebanese begin their lives in the New World before traveling to other locations. There are numerous Hadeed families living on the small island of Antigua and

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[4] The Hadeed family, who has lived in Antigua for more than 40 years, is one of the oldest and most influential supporters of the regime. According to reliable sources, the family has loaned the regime substantial sums of money to pay bills including wages to government employees. The Hadeed Group now owns car dealerships, petroleum products, electronics assembly, financial institutions, construction business, an airline and tourist development as well as the control of Antigua's electricity supply. The Hadeeds were recently granted a lucrative contract to build a government office complex. Bird (*Prime Minister of Antigua*) appointed Aziz Hadeed as an ALP senator in 1994, and Hadeed was also appointed chairman of LIAT, the regional Caribbean airline which is majority controlled by the Hadeeds and the government. Aziz Hadeed's brother, Ramaz is Antigua and Barbuda's ambassador to the Middle East. "What a useful thing it must be, to own your own country!" <http://pub17.ezboard.com/fdiligizerfrm6.showMessage?-topicID=487.topic>

several families on the islands of Grenada and Jamaica. Allentown, Pennsylvania, is also home to Hadeed families and thus an important location for the global village community of immigrants from Syria's Amar al-Hosn. The remaining family members live in Oregon, Pennsylvania, California, Arizona, Illinois and Texas (cf. fig. 2). The Hadeed relatives in Trinidad and Jamaica as well as in the United States are also able to boast noteworthy economic successes.[5] For the family in Antigua, the clan represents a higher-level unit of communication in the New World. In this case, they rely on the common Arabic language, which is still spoken by family members in everyday life, and especially on the common ancestry from the village, from the al-Hosn region and / or from the former Greater Syria.

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[5] Online self-portrayal of a member of the Hadeed family living in Kingston, Jamaica:
HADEED, Ray, Business Executive, President Serv-Wel since 1960. Executive Chairman General Consultants and Insurance Brokers Ltd., R.E.H. Investment Ltd., Rosa Investment Ltd., Hadeed Holdings Ltd., Financial Investment Management Services Ltd. Director Century National Bank, Serv-Wel Electric, Serv-Wel Marketing Co., Alumina and Steel Products. Serv-Wel Precision Tools, West Indies Shipping Co., Jamaica Industrial Development Corporation, A & S Services Co. Organizations: Life Director Jamaica Manufacturers Association; U.S. Business Club. Born: Syria, February 21, 1921, son of Elias Hadeed, Farmer, and Sophia. Educated: Omar High School. Denomination: Presbyterian. Married: Rose Hannon, April 29, 1945; 1 son, 2 daughters. Interests: Hunting, Reading. Address: (business) 8 Ashenheim Road, Kingston 11; Tel. 923-6036; (residence) Manor Court, Kingston 8. <http://www.discoverjamaica.com/gleaner/-discover/whoswho/hnames.htm>
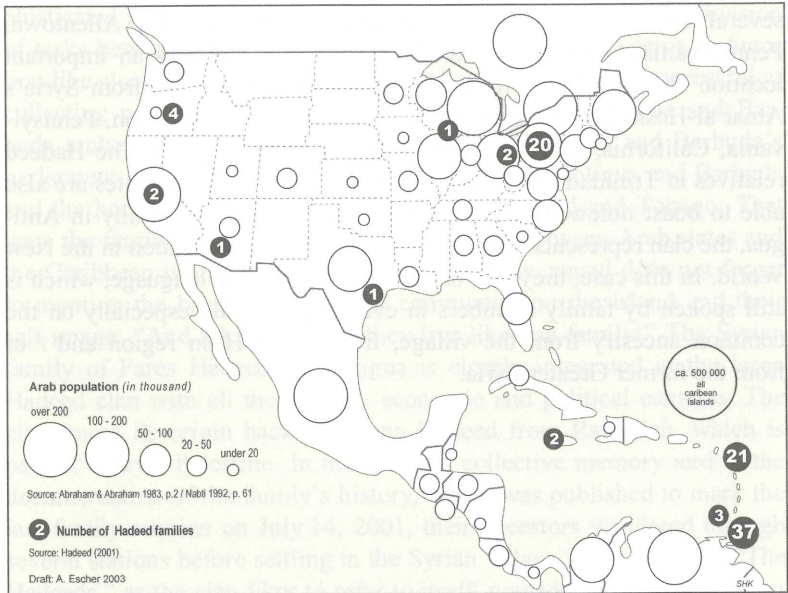
Figure 4; Arab population in North and Middle America, as well as parts of South America and the Caribbean.

Amar al-Hosn, the Center of the Network, a Village in the Syrian Arab Republic

The entire network of the Fares Hadeed family includes, in its opinion, members of the Hadeed clan, other families from the village of Amar al-Hosn, all Syrians from Wadi Nasara[6] and other Arabic-speaking persons who have been "integrated" into the network of relations for different reasons, oftentimes for economic reasons. During the course of the twentieth century, the home village of these Syrian families has evolved into a factual and imaginary center of the worldwide network, which is in part controlled via the center of the immigrants in Allentown, Penn-

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6   Wadi Nasara, Valley of the Nazarene or Valley of the Christians, is a valley
    that is to the north of the Syrian-Lebanese border, where mostly different
    Christian groups live.

sylvania. The Syrian village plays an exceptional role for the diaspora community as the actual point of origin and point of departure for all virtual nodes.

The village Amar al-Hosn[7] is located in a typical Mediterranean landscape with its stunted tree and bush formations. Besides the small village core with its winding streets and small houses, the village is dominated by three large hotel complexes. The large and spacious hotel complexes with restaurants and swimming pools only have apartments with multiple bedrooms for families. Several old houses in the village core have been developed extensively, and spacious villas are now popping up along the cliffs of the mountain.

The village core includes a Greek Orthodox and a Greek Catholic church as well as a Presbyterian church (cf. fig. 5). In 1950, the village still had a population exceeding 2,000 inhabitants. Today, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, scarcely 400 persons live there during the long winter months. From June to August, the number of people staying in the village frequently surpasses 2,500. The seasonal residents from surrounding areas and overseas visitors come to stay in the village. During those months, people wearing Western European or familiar American clothing can be encountered in the streets, in residential homes and hotels. The inhabitants who describe themselves as "Amarians" can be divided into three categories: into "permanent residents", returning emigrants and retirees who regularly visit their overseas relatives, including 73 people, who possess a U.S. Green Card (only three of the permanent residents have never left the village during their lifetime for the purpose of work); into "visitors to the village" who usually spend their summer vacation in the village every year, and into "travelers" who do not regularly live in the village or who regularly live in another part of the world.

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[7]   The author was able to interview Ramis Hadeed during his first visit to Amar al-Hosn on September 20, 1987 and to become acquainted with the world of the Amarians. Since then, the author has visited the village on numerous occasions, supplemented by additional interviews and discussions with Amarians in Germany, Antigua, Jamaica, Trinidad, Brazil, the United States, and Australia.
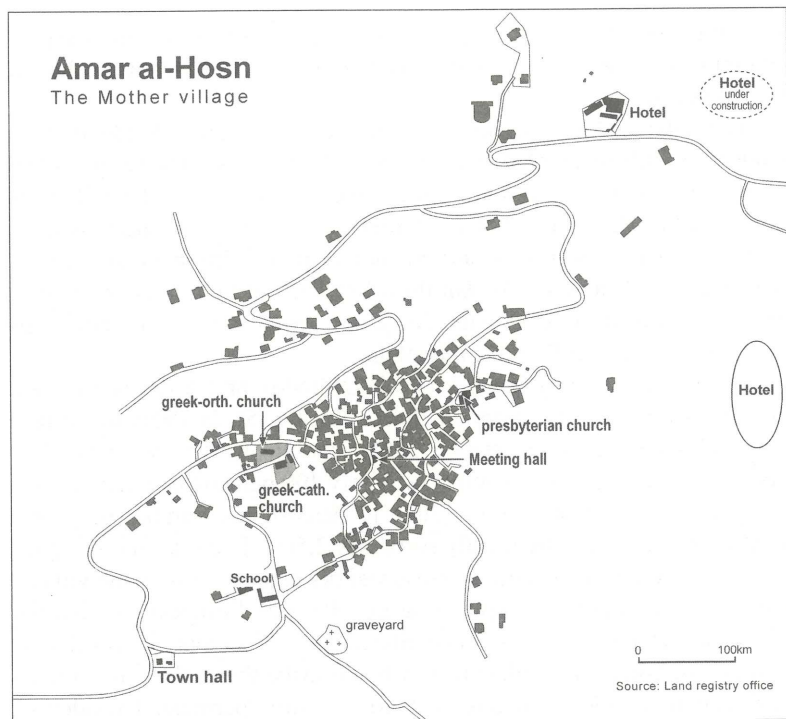
Figure 5; Map of Amal al Hosn.

The general conditions for agriculture have always been poor in the village. Since the marginal soil requires a lot of work with only minimum return, people rely on extra income, which must be obtained outside of the village through migratory work and services or retail trade. During the nineteenth century the inhabitants of Amar al-Hosn started to wander to larger cities in the surrounding area like Trablus and Beirut and close provincial towns like Homs and Banias while fleeing the state authorities and searching for income. Subsequent destinations included the industrial cities Damascus and Aleppo. A new epoch was ushered in when many inhabitants of Amar al-Hosn decided to embrace the Presbyterian faith, after missionaries from the United States built a school in the village in 1879. The first immigrants from here arrived in the New World just before the turn of the century around 1880. The majority of

these immigrants assimilated into the new society and the village community disappeared (cf. Younis 1995 and Kayal / Kayal 1975).

The first villager who contributed to the formation of the current community was Aziz Atiyeh who taught at the American University of Beirut. He immigrated into the United States in 1888 and returned to Amar al-Hosn in 1903 to take his brother with him. By doing so, he established a connection between the place of departure and the overseas destination. The majority of the villagers followed suit and explored the world in a kind of kin-based chain migration. A larger group from Amar al-Hosn settled in Allentown, Pennsylvania, at the beginning of the twentieth century, where newcomers received support from the local Presbyterian church. Soon every family in the village had a representative in Allentown. Today the largest community of immigrants and descendants from the al-Hosn region can be found in the vicinity of New York and in Pennsylvania (cf. Benson / Kayal 2002).

Only a few villagers ended up in the Latin American countries Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico. The second international wave of immigrants occurred after World War II, when villagers from Amar al-Hosn moved to Latin America and the Caribbean. During this time, inhabitants of Amar al-Hosn tried their luck on Caribbean islands such as Grenada, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Antigua and Bahamas (cf. Lafleur 1999). In the meantime, members of the village emigrated to other countries around the globe as well. Young Amarians set off at the end of the 1950s to study in the Federal Republic of Germany, in Greece and in Canada and then stayed in these countries. In the mid-1970s, emigration to Australia was encouraged by the constant violent conflicts taking place in the region. Amarians immigrated to Melbourne and Sydney. Other villagers found work in Gulf countries, in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Emigration and further migration brought the al-Hosn villages and their descendants to many other countries and created a basis for developing a global network spanning four continents (cf. Fig. 6).
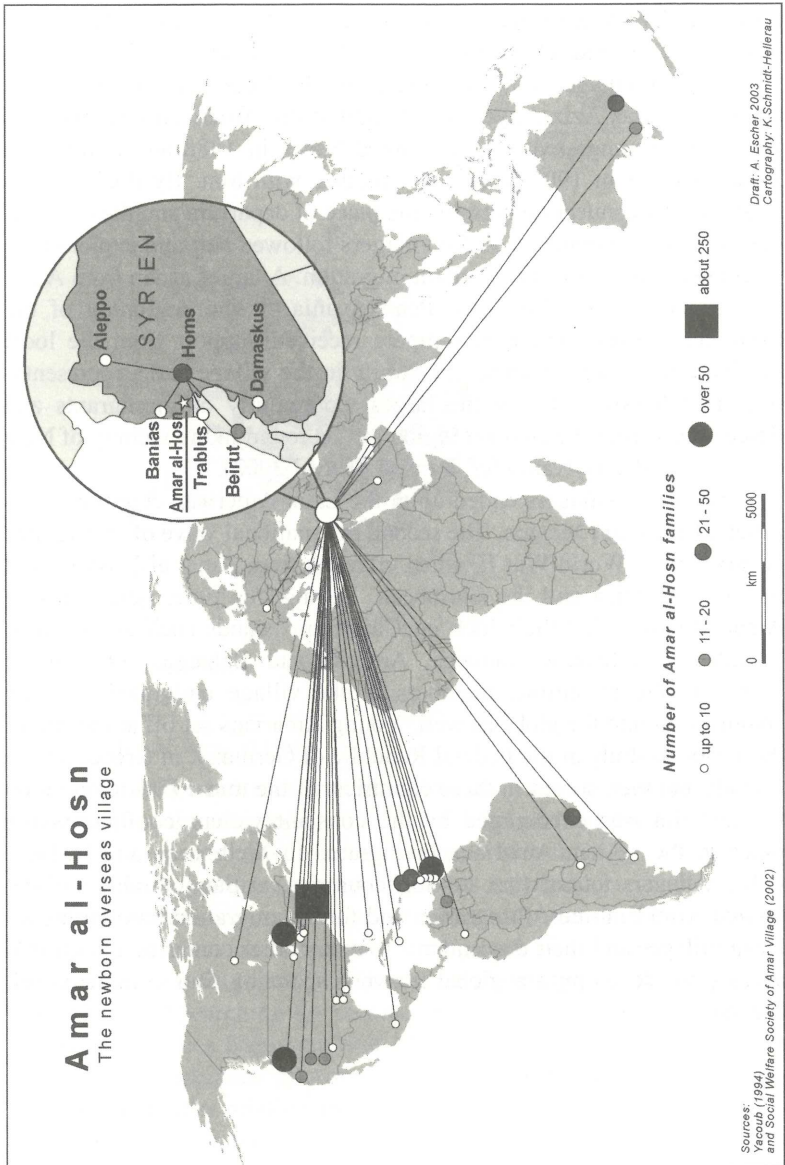
Figure 6

Amar al-Hosn, the Global Village of the Clan

The villagers and the members of families from Amar al-Hosn view their community, which is distributed all over the globe, as a "newly born" and expanded village. "We believe that our village, Amar al-Hosn, comprises two villages: the mother village and the newborn overseas village," says the director of the "Social Welfare Society of Amar Village" in the preface to the telephone book, where the telephone numbers of Amarians residing in various places of the world are listed. The preface of the directory is almost a creed for the village community, stating that: "We believe in the fact of communication and its efficiency. We believe that human relations may not ripen and become fruitful without interconnection. We believe that the higher value: Love, fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, devotion, and sacrifice will not flourish without communication." This credo forms the basis—the indispensable requirement for the existence of Amar al-Hosn as a global community. These normative standards apply only and solemnly to Amarians. The village of Amar al-Hosn in Syria as place of origin, as mother village, is assigned a kind of supernatural status and becomes a "sacred location." The symbols of the village include nature and the esthetics of Wadi Nasara. The olive tree as an icon is the hallmark of the village and the community. The village is glorified as a bride. Moreover, the location and the village are praised in songs and poems in all its sub-communities throughout the world:

> O, Amar, cradle of my love / I cannot bear being away from you / Awake or asleep, I dream of you, / Your memories buoy me up on / Wings of ecstasy and love. (Yacoub 1994, 22)

All members are expected to embrace this spirit, and the majority does in fact strive to visit Amar al-Hosn again, either in thought or in reality. Part of the annual vacation is spent in Amar al-Hosn, especially children are brought back to Amar al-Hosn to become familiar with the area. The time that the children spend in the village is a period (almost) without constraint, since attention is placed on forming a bond between the third- and fourth-generation descendants and the Amar community through the village. The old generation migrates back to spend their retirement in the village, while the third generation wants to remain in the host countries, which are no longer host countries, at least for eco-

nomic life. The problems of the divided village are overcome through communication and travel, as Joseph Hadeed reports:

> As you can see, I live in both. Almost every year I go to Syria. And every year I go, not just for one month or so, sometimes I go three or four months. I have house in Syria, I have house in Antigua. Oh we have lot of people like me. . . . But there are two things that keep me comfortable about retirement. My grandchildren, they are here in Antigua, and when I go for instance, I can not really spend the rest of my life in Syria, because I have my family here, my wife, my daughter, my grandchildren. And I can not really live here all the time, so I share between both. (Joseph Hadeed)

The selection of location and the frequency of visits depend on the economic situation of the family and the individual's position in the generational cycle. The club in Amar al-Hosn courts the expatriate villagers and attempts to establish a bond between them and the village— the locality that is shared jointly.

> My dear emigrant: Your mother village calls you: its beautiful nature, flowering greens versants of its mountains, lofty summits, immortal forests, enchanting dream spring that always grants and contributes. (Social Welfare Society of Amar Village, w/o year, 6).

The society arranges the community telephone book with a directory of all families which originally came from Amar al-Hosn. This type of publications has a long tradition, which begins among other things with the first Arab "business directory" published in 1908 in New York and which has many imitators like the Arab social guide from Chile (Mattar 1941). The society organizes the popular "festival of emigrants" every year in August in the village's largest hotel, which attracts many Amarians from all over the globe.

Affiliations to Organizations and Institutions

To cope with their individual and social existence all people need an identity in space and time. The identity of the Amarians is created by family affiliation and Amar al-Hosn as their place of origin. While the community can be furthered through marriage and adoption, "family"

and "origin" are not negotiable. That is especially evident when looking at their marriage and travel behavior, as the Syrian consul for Antigua explains:

> 99% of the young generation, they marry Syrians. . . . I have three nephews, who get married and they go to Syria abroad two, three, maybe four times from their childhood, and every time they go there, they make friends. . . . Well, two of them, they find girls that they can get married to and they get married to Syrian girls and they have the wedding in Syria. (Joseph Hadeed)

Today, the phone and especially the internet play an even greater role in the networking between locations than traveling. The home village is used to facilitate and act as a marketplace for marriages. While marrying outside the community of origin is possible, it is frowned upon. Official connections with lower class locals, e.g., colored islanders, from Antigua or Trinidad are not accepted and result in expulsion from the community.

It is a different story when it comes to belonging to organizations and adaptable institutions like nation or state, church or religion, and club or society. For instance, the inhabitants of Amar al-Hosn have a completely pragmatic view of "nationality" and "affiliation to a nation." A businessman from Amar al-Hosn in Kingston, Jamaica, explains: "Yes, I am Jamaican. I have Syrian passport, too. Also I have British passport, too" (A. Hadeed). It is only a question of how to get a passport that offers advantages when traveling. People with a passport from the European Community usually do not need a visa for most countries in the world or have no difficulties in obtaining a visa. That's why preference is given to a British passport. The Syrian consul for Antigua has exactly the same argument:

> At the time when I came to Antigua, of course I have a Syrian passport. Now, I'm naturalized Antiguan and I still maintain my original Syrian nationality. I'm holding both nationalities. At the same time I'm the Syrian counselor in Antigua. (Joseph Hadeed)

In the global village of Amar, the idea is to have children in the United States because they will be U.S. citizens. If we were to meet the inhabitants of the global village in the Amar al-Hosn mother village, they automatically present themselves as Syrians and praise their country and

president who ensures the safety, protection and freedom of travel. With all the political posts that the members of the global village Amar have accumulated in the meantime in the world, the village community virtually has its own political representatives. As a result, it is possible for the community of Amar al-Hosn to describe itself as a single imaginary political unit that has evolved among nations and countries as a part of globalization.

In response to the question regarding the religious affiliation that the people in the village have, an elderly man answers with a whimsical smile: "We always have the religion which people who live in villages have and whom we meet during our travels!" This does not mean that the villagers renounce their religion, but rather focus on their acceptance among other groups that they meet. The members of many families have various denominations: The son of the eldest of the Presbyterians is Maronite, while the other son belongs to the Greek Orthodox community. The wife of a Presbyterian in Amar al-Hosn is a member of the "Jehovah's Witnesses," who are forbidden in Syria. This mixture clearly illustrates that the villagers view their affiliation to a religious community as a strategic element for opening up avenues to potential resources outside the village. Within the village, it is possible to see Protestants attending Presbyterian services and members of other Christian religious groups at the Greek Orthodox church services. The Presbyterian church has played a key role for the early immigrants from the village. This American church facilitated a better integration of immigrants into everyday life in the United States than was the case for other Arab immigrants in the past. In the New World, the "First Presbyterian Church of Allentown" still offers services like "sacraments of baptism" and the "Lords supper" in Arabic language. The Christians do not stand out in their efforts to shape their plans or in their lifestyle. They maintain a reflected and organized lifestyle that is mainly focused on economic success. Moreover, the Presbyterian church provides a clear mission that can be found on the back of the documentation relating to the family reunion of the Hadeed clan. It may also be construed as the family motto by further emphasizing the individual: "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" (I Chronicles 4:10). Other Christian churches also play a constructive role

in the immigration of their members and thus contribute to the cohesion of the Amarians in the world (cf. Kayal / Kayal 1975).

Diaspora organizations soon evolved in the immigrant communities regardless of the number of families at the adopted destination. The purpose of these clubs or societies is always to preserve and strengthen family associations as well as develop new family contacts among the Arabic-speaking community. Such clubs organize the Syrian social life and maintain contact with their home country (cf. Escher 2000). They also create a Syrian location in a culturally different land that in many aspects eliminates the spatial difference and isolation from the place of origin. The most important club of the Amar al-Hosn village is the "American Amarian Syrian Society," which was originally founded in 1926 in Allentown under the name "Amarian Club". It made a significant contribution to the construction of a hospital in the Syrian al-Hosn region. During the period from 1966 to 1974, there was a sports club in Amar al-Hosn that was also responsible for cultural activities. Today, the "Social Welfare Society of Amar Village" attempts to preserve the community based on the perspective of returning emigrants.

"The Syrian Lebanese Women's Association of Trinidad and Tobago" is a club for Syrian and Lebanese women in Trinidad (cf. Besson 1992 and Besson / Besson 2001). Founded in 1950, it organizes the entire social life of the Syrian-Lebanese community on Trinidad and Tobago and documents it in recurring publications. A Presbyterian woman from Allentown encouraged the foundation of the club, even though the majority of the immigrants on Trinidad were members of the Roman Catholic church for pragmatic reasons. That is because the schools on the island are organized by the Catholic church (cf. Sandhoff 2003). Today, the club is still an important focus for the Syrian and Lebanese women on the island, since they have no social life outside the house and the club, and since men do not want women to have social contact with the rest of the island's population due to the latent security problems. The people from Amar al-Hosn are, as the example shows, also included in clubs and societies of other Syrian-Lebanese immigrants.

Intensification of Identity Through Diaspora Networking[8]

Networks of immigrated Arabic-speaking groups have existed since the establishment of colonies and the appearance of returning emigrants. A diaspora may evolve once people immigrate to multiple countries maintaining a network that is integrated through communication. All empirical research regarding Syrian-Lebanese immigrants focuses on the role of the family in this process. "The concept of family life as something sacred has not yet been divorced from the Syrian mind", states Hitti (1924, 80) in one of the first comprehensive qualitative analyses of Syrian-Lebanese immigrants in the United States. In a comparative manner, these statements still apply half a century later (Kayal / Kayal 1975, 116): "All cooperation between individuals, therefore, is limited to their traditional groups—family, village, ..." A village community structured in families becomes a global organization dispersed to many regions of the earth. The foregoing qualitative analysis shows that the identity of the global community is based on the place of origin—the village of Amar al-Hosn. A network in the form of a diaspora has evolved. Nation-state positions, religious institutions and social clubs are leveraged for prosperity and for establishing the world village community and can be negotiated strategically. The shared locality, the place of origin or the "mother village" is the fixed point, the sacred location, which facilitates symbolic actions and defines the members of the community. The place of origin of the global community becomes a holiday destination, a place to relax, a place of communication, a place of future business, a place of new alliances and a place for retirees and pensioners. The location becomes the mental center of the community which has "branch locations" all over the globe. A global community is established, which refers to national organizations and religious institutions, similar to segmented communities.[9] The underlying technical and political conditions at the beginning of the twenty-first century advance the development and strategies of the global village community and promote the social, economic and political cohesion of immigrants and

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[8]   Theoretical insight into the diaspora concept can be found in Clifford (1994), Schnapper (1999) and Butler (2001).

[9]   Theoretical insight into the concept of a segmented community can be found in Sigrist (1994) und Kraus 1995).

inhabitants as well as future generations of the village. As part of this structure, the members implement strategies that contribute to the preservation and functionality of the community. In this case, the diaspora identity of the Amarians is significant, since it allows the members of the community to act in relation to a given context and offers pragmatic strategies for economic benefit in a dynamic world marked by competition. The people of Amar al-Hosn are not subject to uprooting and marginalization as well as deterritorialization and removal of boundaries. Instead they expand their territory and increase their strategies for economic success. The small colonies, the parts of their families at various locations around the globe, form a flexible communicative and active unit. The conditions of globalization provide the people of Amar al-Hosn with the opportunity to recreate their village community and to increase their options, since they are able to leverage a wide variety of locations with diverse political and economic conditions. Central anchor point, common thread and shared longing remains Amar al-Hosn.

Conclusion

The global network of Syrian families in the United States, the Caribbean and in other parts of the world is based upon the identity of family, village and region. Family connections and group-internal solidarity, individual education, collective experience and business sense contribute to the functionality of the global network. The church as an organization in its translocal form and the newly founded clubs at almost every corner of the world are instrumentalized for shaping the global village. They serve to formally reinforce family ties. Religion and nationality, on the other hand, depend on the given context and are thus negotiable. The identity of Syrian families, which are based locally and / or regionally, is intensified in the diasporas and does not only contribute to their preservation but also to social effectiveness and economic success of the globalized village community.

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