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## The Infusion of Stars and Stripes: Sectarianism and National Unity in Little Syria, New York, 1890-1905

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The Infusion of Stars and Stripes: Sectarianism and National Unity in Little Syria,  
New York, 1890-1905

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Bachelors of Arts, College of William & Mary, 2013

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
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Master of Arts

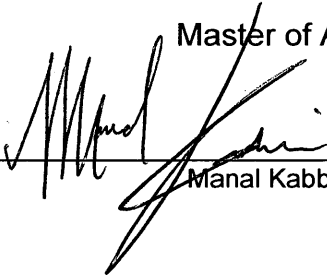
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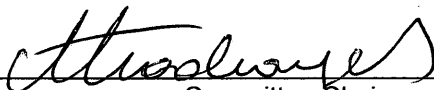
Master of Arts



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## ABSTRACT

In August of 1905, American newspapers reported that the Greek Orthodox Bishop of the American Antioch, Rafa'el Hawaweeny, asked his Syrian migrant congregation to lay down their lives for him and kill two prominent Maronite newspaper editors in Little Syria, New York. The sectarian fragmentation of the Syrian migrant community led to street riots in the following months. This event has been brushed aside in Syrian Diasporic historiography, which is scarce to begin with. This project focuses on the lived experience of Syrian migrants in Little Syria between 1880 and 1905. The goal was to show how sectarianism was reproduced in Little Syria behind the façade of a monolithic national community. This has been done by analyzing events like the street riot that took place on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1905, New York newspapers, and Syrian diasporic newspapers. After thorough analysis of these sources, it becomes evident that the xenophobia faced by the Syrian migrant community forced them to turn inward to survive. The vulnerability of the community was manipulated by competitive members of the cosmopolitan elite, who sought to influence and guide the community. The literary cosmopolitan elite reproduced sectarianism through print media in order to destroy their rivals. Sectarian divisions reproduced by Syrian diasporic newspapers led to newspaper wars, which escalated to street riots when Bishop Hawaweeny was caught between the cross-fires. Through emphasizing the power of print-capitalism, this research highlights the importance of xenophobia in shaping multiple, overlapping identities in the Syrian diaspora, allowing sectarianism to reproduce and prosper.

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## Foreword

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the western end Pentagon by five hijackers affiliated with Al-Qaeda, a militant Islamic organization. There were fourteen additional hijackers on three other planes. Two places crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York. The third plane was meant to crash in Washington D.C, but the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93 overcame hijackers and the plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. The horrendous events of that day led to a nation-wide panic, as the American society redefined what it meant to be a Middle Eastern immigrant in the United States. Violent attacks against Middle Eastern descendants were wide spread. Americans with brown/olive skin-complexions were denounced as “terrorists.”

In reaction to the growing unrest, some Lebanese-descendants living in the United States began considering themselves Phoenician or French. Phoenician and French ancestry was more attractive than Arab ancestry, because of their glorious histories as advanced civilizations. Identifying with a more glorious imagined past was not an isolated incident for Lebanese migrants, but a pattern of reaction to Western xenophobia in attempt to authenticate themselves and their enterprising talents in their adopted homelands.<sup>1</sup> Asher Kaufman suggests that the myth of Phoenician ancestry also reflected the attempt to illustrate the Lebanese contribution to Western society, since Phoenician civilization contributed to Ancient Greek civilization due to its

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<sup>1</sup> See Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 134-138.

monopolization of Mediterranean trade.<sup>2</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, journalist Victor Bérard argues that Hellenic religion and mythology were of Semitic origin, crediting the Phoenicians as the cradle of Western civilization. Lebanese nationalists adopted Bérard's theory to justify Lebanon as a nation. Lebanese immigrants throughout the mahjar adopted the Phoenician myth as well, to justify themselves to their neighbors during times of unrest.

In the moments of intense xenophobia against Syrian migrants, migrant identities became complex. The identities which shaped and fragmented the Syrian migrant community temporarily decreased in importance in order to effectively defend the community. These identities were shaped according to religion, sect, and place of origin. Events following September 11th united all the sects of the Arab immigrant community in the United States (Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, Maronite, Melkite, and Greek Orthodox) as they were threatened by their neighbors and followed by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents. Although they presented a united front through their origin of ancestry, they maintained their underlying sectarian divisions by remaining socially isolated from one another. Sectarianism is the loyal adherence to one's religious subdivision, which encourages intense bigotry and discrimination against other sects.

Sectarian conflict is not a new phenomenon and sectarianism is not a "buzz-word" to describe the events occurring in the Middle East today. There is a long history of sectarian solidarity and conflict in the region as different sectarian groups vied for political power. There were three major civil wars in Lebanon (1860, 1956,

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<sup>2</sup> Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 78.



and 1975) which were due to the imbalance of political powers attributed to the differing sectarian populations. All of these civil wars devastated the Lebanese population and forced mass migrations.<sup>3</sup> The immigrants did not shed their sectarian identity when they added their new *mahjar* (diasporic) identity and reinforced their national identity. These identities sometimes fragmented the community and would often unite the community in the face of foreign threat.

The violent events following September 11<sup>th</sup> were not the first time sectarian identities were set aside within the Syrian diaspora. These recurrent themes began over a century ago in Little Syria, New York, as the first wave of Syrians emigrated from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup> These Syrian immigrants were ushered into the United States through Castle Garden in Battery, New York. In 1890, Ellis Island replaced Castle Garden as the immigration center for Atlantic immigration to the United States. Syrian immigrants looked to the Little Syria neighborhood along Washington Street as their “mother colony,” because it was their first point of contact to the United States. Naturally, Little Syria was the largest Syrian immigrant colony in the United States.<sup>5</sup> By 1892, the colony had grown large enough to necessitate the publication of the first Arabic newspaper in the mahjar, *Kawkab America*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In 1860 there was no Lebanon and thus masses of the now Lebanese geographical area were considered the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>4</sup> Since this thesis is focusing on the time period between 1890 and 1917, I will use the term Syrian to describe the immigrants since the region they emigrated from was the Syrian province and most of the migrants considered themselves Syrian. I recognize that this is problematic, especially after the formation of Lebanon, because it does not always correspond with the political affiliation of the immigrants themselves.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Hitti, *The Syrians in America* (New York: Doran, 1924), 66.

<sup>6</sup> Translated to mean Planet America. Other sources have translated to Star America, but they are wrong.

This work focuses on the multiple identities in Little Syria during the period of 1890-1905. This research analyzes how sectarianism was important to the immigrants, but it would be muffled when there were foreign or domestic threats to Syrian communities. This research does not follow a story of assimilation into the mahjar, unlike many Syrian diasporic histories. This is a narrative of multiple overlapping identities in immigrant communities. Identity is accepted as a monolithic phenomenon in these types of communities, when, in fact, the communities have internal divisions based on class, regional, and religious differences transpiring from their homeland. Hegemony due to ancestral commonalities overshadows these factions for a short period of time, when the community confronts a foreign threat. This research is most relevant to show how sectarian identities transpire into the Syrian diaspora and what lessons can we learn from these historical processes. It also presents how the Syrian people have been able to put aside these sectarian identities for the good of their community. Although this is not a study of Islamic sects, it is relevant because the Christian sects in the Middle East struggle against one another for political dominance today. This may be a narrative of identities in the Syrian colony of New York, but it can be broadened to exemplify the multiple identities in the entire Syrian diaspora and can apply to other diasporas as well.

Beginning in 1880s, there was an infusion of stars and stripes as the Syrian immigrants landed in Castle Gardens and adopted an American identity. Although they accepted this new mahjar, they did not become a homogeneous community as Syrian-Americans, but rather built their sectarian identities in the mahjar.

## Introduction

A sense of romanticism lingers along the exotic Washington Street, where red fezzes bob up and down as olive-skinned people hurry about. Peddlers speed off on bikes, rushing to sell their Jerusalem-made goods and lace. Along the street, men smoke out of long water pipes and drink Turkish coffees at the quaint cafes. Small shops have exotic symbols hanging from their doors and sell dry groceries, glass bracelets, swords, lamps, water pipes, and native alcohol. These same symbols are seen on circulating newspapers which appear to be read backwards. Restaurants serve variations of dishes with different parts of lamb and raw lamb. People live crammed in tenement dens of “grime and order.”<sup>7</sup> The year is 1899 in the Syrian quarter of New York City, where about 3,000 were residing.

During the Great Migration of 1880 to 1914, there was a peak of immigration to the United States.<sup>8</sup> The best known of these immigrants are the Italians and the Greeks, whereas the 90,000 Syrian immigrants are neglected by the majority of scholars. The majority of the Syrian migrants in the United States were Christians, most being Greek Orthodox and Maronite. Syrians emigrated for three main reasons: to escape conscription into the Ottoman Army, the sectarian tensions that burdened the Syrian province, and the promise of economic opportunities in the United States. Ottoman Syrian immigrants settled throughout the Americas, Australia, Europe, and

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<sup>7</sup> Cromwell Childe, “New York’s Syrian Quarter,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1899.

<sup>8</sup> Many people attribute the Great Migration to the migration of African Americans from below to Mason-Dixon Line to Northern Cities. However this period was the greatest peak of international immigration to the United States as well. For this purpose I will use the term Great Migration to also include external immigration.

the Caribbean, but the majority settled along the East Coast in major cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

The Syrian immigrants were very diverse in the workforce after emigrating. Many of the earliest settlers were recruited by shop owners to be peddlers, linking them to a transnational commerce system. Syrian migrants saw greater profit in peddling Jerusalem-made goods rather than working in factories like the Eastern European immigrants.<sup>9</sup> Peddling also did not require much training, capital or language skills. This allowed for women and children to join the diasporic economy by peddling lace and buttons. Syrian peddlers tirelessly bicycled manufactured goods from the supply centers in New York's Little Syria to vast geographical regions in the Americas, bridging the chasm between industrial New York and the rural American countryside. These peddlers brought manufactured goods to the farmer's front door, transforming rural inhabitants into consumers. Housewives came to rely on them and their flexible payment plans.<sup>10</sup> Mexican rebels and soldiers also relied on the Syrian peddlers during the Mexican Revolution, because these peddlers were able to cross the United States-Mexican Border to smuggle dry goods and guns back into Mexico. The peddlers sold these scarce goods to the Mexicans.<sup>11</sup> However, peddling was considered a menial job, reserved only for the lowest-class.

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<sup>9</sup> Peddlers would make about \$1,000 annually whereas factory workers averaged about \$650 annually. See Alixa Naff, *Becoming American and the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 125

<sup>11</sup> See Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp. *So Far from Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), for more about the role of Syrian Peddlers during the Mexican Revolution.

Most Syrian immigrants who began peddling eventually aspired to be shop owners. Most did succeed in establishing their own shops and some built factories. By 1924, thirty-five kimono manufacturers on Washington Street were owned by Syrian immigrants and there were twenty-five Syrian-owned silk factories in New Jersey. Some immigrants immediately set up their shops with Oriental-made goods in the mahjar. Migrants used their kin trade networks throughout the diaspora to maintain the importation of their goods. These diasporic kin networks extended from the Ottoman Empire to Egypt to Canada, Colonial French West Africa, North America, South America, and the Caribbean. The Canadian and Mexican kinship networks allowed for smuggling of products and people across the border. As borders solidified against Syrian immigration in the 1920s and 1930s, Syrian migrants became more creative in their smuggling endeavors. Peddlers used French passports to move freely across the borders after Syrian territory became a French Mandate. Syrians also used these methods to smuggle countrymen into Jamaica and Trinidad, which specifically barred Syrian migrants. Syrian shop owners maintained their kin networks to be successful, and imported Syrian-made goods (including diasporic newspapers and literature) throughout the mahjar.

Those who did not become merchants in the mahjar may have been restaurant owners, butchers, brokers, or hair dressers. When Syrian Sunni Muslims began migrating at higher volumes, most chose to work in the Detroit industrial plants. The highest migrant socio-economic class was the cosmopolitan literate elite, which was made up of writers, newspaper owners, and professors in Little Syria. The first Syrian migrant family to settle in the United States, the Arbeely family, constructed the

cosmopolitan migrant elite in the diaspora. The descendants of Doctor Arbeely became doctors and translators. They also founded Syrian aid associations and the *Kawkab America* newspaper. The Arbeely brothers influenced the Syrian immigrant masses, as the first point of contact into the United States. Najib Arbeely worked as a translator for the Bureau of Immigration in attempt to ease the migration process for Syrians. Na'um Mokarzel, Najib Diab, and other newspaper owners also became part of this elite as they used their newspapers to connect the mahjar and influence the masses. Other members of the Syrian elite were famous writers like Ameen Rihany and Khalil Gibran, whose literary works are popular in American society today. The cosmopolitan elite resided in New York, the center of American culture and print capitalism.

The largest Syrian immigrant colony was on Washington Street in Manhattan's Lower West Side.<sup>12</sup> This area was called "Little Syria" by New Yorkers and "*Ahl al-Shmal*" by the Syrian inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> Renaming the street after their motherland and the Arab-styled shops proved the New York newspapers correct when they reported that the residents of Washington Street maintained their Syrian identity, customs, garments, and ways of thinking. Syrians crossed the Atlantic Ocean, with their sectarian solidarities and strife, to settle along the American East Coast. The sectarian

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<sup>12</sup> New York newspapers, such as the New York Tribune and the Sun were calling these immigrant enclaves colonies. The first being the New York Tribune in 1892. See "A Picturesque Colony: Syrians Settled in the First War," *The New York Tribune*, October 2, 1892. *Ahl al-Shmal* translates to mean people of the North or Syria

<sup>13</sup> The exact parameters of Little Syria are difficult to determine. It included the intersection with Rector Street, Greenwich Street. Little Syria does not exist today, most of its residence moved to Atlantic Avenue by 1945 after the construction of the Brooklyn Battery tunnel destroyed most of the neighborhood.

identities transpired from the motherland and took shape in the United States in the immigrant communities. Ninety-five percent of the immigrants were of Christian sects (Greek Orthodox, Maronite, and Melkite), the other five percent made up Druze and Muslim (Sunni and Shiite) sects.<sup>14</sup> Sectarianism in the colonies first presented itself as a race to establish and strengthen their different congregations. Each congregation raised funds to pay for the travels and salary for priests of their respective church from Syria. These priests would then construct churches in the mahjar.

After churches were constructed, sectarianism took the most public form through community newspaper affiliations in Little Syria: *Al-Bayyan* was a newspaper for the Druze inhabitants, *Mirat al-Gharb* (Mirror of the West), *Kawkab America* (Planet America), and *al-Kalimah* (The Word) were the newspapers targeting the Greek Orthodox inhabitants, and *al-Hoda* (The Guidance) was a Maronite (Catholic) based newspaper. Arabic newspapers circulated the diaspora to keep immigrants updated on the Ottoman Empire. Newspapers in Little Syria also served to connect diasporic trade and family networks throughout the western hemisphere. The editors of the Arabic newspapers in the diaspora sought to promote their views of nationalism through print capitalism. They hoped to shape the politics and culture of a Syrian country during the wave of nationalism occurring in the first half of the twentieth century. Benedict Anderson famously defined nationalism as an “imagined political community... imagined as inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>15</sup> In

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<sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 5.

*Imagined Communities*, Anderson suggests that print capitalism created the imagination of the national community through juxtaposition of local stories and stories from other countries. Newspapers and literature made it possible for growing numbers of people to think about themselves as a community by relating themselves to other communities, thus constructing imaginary borders between themselves and others.<sup>16</sup>

For Syrians in the diaspora, their newspapers imported and utilized their vernacular Arabic language so that Syrian migrants would maintain their Syrian identities and imagined connections to their homelands. The Syrian newspapers in the diaspora also attempted to forge a modernized Syrian nation, acceptable to Western ideals. Historian Akram Khater suggests that the newspaper editors sought to modernize the Levant by teaching its readers the ways and habits of the civilized West, as indicated by the name of the newspapers like *Mir'at al Gharb* (The Mirror of the West) and *al-Hoda* (Guidance). Advice on fashion, children-rearing, social etiquette, education, communal identity, and woman's work were common themes within the newspaper articles, to draw parallels between American values and Syrian values.<sup>17</sup> These articles aimed to influence the creation of national values in a new Syrian nation.

The "Syrian" national identity was constructed in the mahjar as an imagined socio-political collective identity due to the migrant experience in the diaspora. The experience of the newcomer status and minority group in the Western world, against

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 35

<sup>17</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 88



the backdrop of Orientalism, constructed this imagined community in the diaspora. The Syrian literature and newspapers gave the Syrian community a sense of pride of common Syrian heritage and presented the migrants as a monolithic friendly community. Ancestral ties in the mahjar were reinforced by the newspapers, which allowed their readers consciousness of the political debates in the Syrian province.

By keeping Syrian migrants informed about the news of the motherland, the immigrants maintained their connection to Syria. The feeling of a collective unity with Syrians dispersed in the diaspora as migrants raised funds for Syrian national causes. This sense of nationalism only fueled in the wake of the Balkan wars, as the mahjar newspapers and literary texts protested for an independent freed Syrian nation. Najib Diab, editor of *Mira'at al-Gharb* and the most prominent diasporic supporter for a free Syria, attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to represent Syria as a nation. There was also a smaller, but prominent Lebanese nationalist group within the Syrian diaspora, headed by the Philadelphia *al-Hoda* newspaper editor Na'um Mokarzel. Mokarzel envisioned and lobbied for a separate Maronite Lebanese nation. He attacked all the other Syrian diasporic newspaper writers who called for a Syrian nation. Mokarzel maintained close ties with Francois Georges-Picot and attended the Paris Peace Conference to advocate for the separate Lebanese nation.<sup>18</sup> Syrian migrant editors were so emotionally invested in diasporic nationalism that their newspapers led to the divisions among the migrant communities based on their various views.

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<sup>18</sup> Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 63.

Print media also reproduced the sectarian collective identities imported from the homeland. Mokarzel began multiple conflicts among the newspapers based upon sectarianism and politics, attacking other newspapers who promoted inter-sectarian relationships. Mokarzel hoped to promote his vision of a Maronite Lebanese nation-state, separate from Syria and the Ottoman Empire, through fostering sectarian conflict in the diaspora. Mokarzel used his newspaper to attack *Mira'at al-Gharb* and other leaders of the Greek Orthodox Syrian community in the turn of the twentieth century. One incident of Mokarzel's bigotry led to a street fight on Washington Street in 1905 between the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox immigrants when he attacked the Bishop of the Archdiocese, Rafa'el Hawaweeny.<sup>19</sup>

Syrian migrants united under a Syrian national identity whenever confronted with a foreign threat, whether domestically or internationally. This is apparent when they united to confront Irish immigrants and the American police when a group of Irish immigrants denounced Syria. A skirmish ensued, ending with a Syrian woman in the hospital. A united group of Syrians, from all sects, went to the police station to demand protection. The immigrants united against the Ottoman Empire, calling for a Free Syrian nation-state and formed many political groups in the Syrian Quarter to send appeals to create a separate Syrian nation. This resentment of the Ottoman Empire spilled into the Syrian diaspora against the Turkish Muslim immigrants in Little Syria. Syrian immigrants harassed the Turkish shop owners. When World War I broke, the Syrian newspapers urged their communities to join the army to fight the Ottoman oppressors and help create an independent Syrian nation. The third threat that

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<sup>19</sup> Rafa'el Hawaweeny is now referred to as Saint Rafa'el by the Greek Orthodox community.

allowed Syrian immigrants to place their sectarian identities in the background in lieu of their united Syrian identity was the threat of British and French intervention in Syria, as each country supported different sectarian groups to exert their influence in the region (the British supported the Druze and the French supported the Maronite), leading to war and chaos.

Despite the image of a nationally unified migrant group, the sectarianism that was imported into the Syrian diaspora continued to fragment the Syrian community. The fragmentation of the community led to the constant calls by the literary cosmopolitan elite to gap the chasms between the factions and unite for the nationalist cause. Writers such as Kahlil Gibran and Ameen Rihany urged the Syrian community to unite in order to free Syria from Ottoman rule and foreign influence. The elite also united the migrant community against domestic threats. In these cases, sectarian identities were only set aside, not destroyed.

## **Historiography**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw improvements in transportation and the spread of industrialism, which led to a peak in transnational migrations. Scholars have intensely researched many of the diasporas during in this era of displacement, most notably the Irish, Jewish, and Italian diasporas. However, migration patterns from the Syrian have been less visible in scholarly works, although the Lebanese diaspora alone is estimated to be 8 million, and 4 million still reside in Lebanon. Claiming to escape Ottoman tyranny, sectarian tensions, and military conscription, early Syrian people emigrated from the Ottoman Empire to the Americas, Europe, and West Africa. In the 1920s and 1930s, nation-states in the

Americas, Africa, and islands of the Caribbean passed exclusionary laws to prevent further Syrian migrations.

The historiography of the Syrian diaspora began in opposition to the United States Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which excluded Syrian people from migrating to the United States. In 1925, Philip Hitti wrote *Syrians in America* to argue that Syrian migrants can assimilate easily. The historiography of the Syrian diaspora and Syrian political activism ceased until the exclusionary laws were repealed in the 1960s. The suspension of the exclusionary laws and the fiery socio-political atmosphere of the Civil Rights, anti-war and counter-culture movements of the 1960s led to a celebration of identity. Graduate students began to ask larger questions about social change in history and the assimilation of immigrants. Within this context, scholars also celebrated the notion of immigrant histories. While in graduate school in the 1960s, Alixa Naff was interested in reconstructing the history of the Syrian migrant community. She drove throughout the United States to collect artifacts, photographs, and oral histories of early Syrian immigrants and donated these primary sources to the Smithsonian. Naff's collection revived the historiography of the Syrian diaspora. The past decade has moved beyond Naff, to study the transnational and imperial effects of the Syrian migrants. Naff repeats Hitti's argument that the early Syrian migrants assimilated and Americanized, unscathed by discrimination.<sup>20</sup> Naff believed that Syrian peddlers furthered American interests by bridging the chasm between the industrious cities and the rural countryside by bringing manufactured products to their doorsteps, so they were well-liked by their customers.

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<sup>20</sup>Naff, 4.

Scholarship since Naff refutes her rosy picture of the migration experience. Scholarship of the Syrian diasporic history has since recognized that xenophobia and discrimination were essential realities of Syrian migrants. Gregory Orfaela and Jeffrey Lesser contributed to Naff's research by expanding upon the labor history of the Syrian migrants. Orfaela and Lesser analyze the cultural lives of the peddlers, the xenophobia they faced and how they assimilated to United States and Brazilian societies.<sup>21</sup> Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp refutes Naff's arguments that the Syrian migrants assimilated; instead she suggests that acculturation occurred among the Syrian migrants at varying rates in response to local xenophobia in Mexico. Velcamp suggests that socio-economic success determined whether a migrant identified as Syrio-Lebanese or Mexican. The successful migrants identified themselves as Lebanese with Phoenician ancestry to justify their wealth, while the others either acculturated their identities or identified solely as Mexican to combat xenophobia. Velcamp is the first historian to attempt to create a transnational history of Syrian migration, by identifying transnational economic and kin network of the migrants.<sup>22</sup>

Other historians of the Syrian diaspora focus on the racial xenophobia against the immigrants, which helped to construct a global color-line.<sup>23</sup> Sarah Gualtieri,

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<sup>21</sup>For more information about the labor and assimilation histories of the Syrian immigrants see Naff; Randa A. Kayyali, *The Arab Americans* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006); Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); and Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> See Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far From Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Henry Reynolds and Marilyn Lake, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Although Lake and Reynold do not necessarily show how the Syrian migrants fit into the intellectual debates over whiteness, these intellectual debates led to the waves of exclusionary acts in the United States, Canada, the Caribbeans, South American countries, and even colonial French West Africa in the

Michael Suleiman, and John Tehranian analyzes the racial discriminations and xenophobia the immigrants faced in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Lesser's work also focuses on the Brazilian xenophobic reactions against these "undesirable" immigrants. Christina Cirantos researches and analyzes the xenophobic reactions to the Syrian immigrants in Argentina.<sup>25</sup> Andrew Arsan reconstructed the first comprehensive transnational history of Eastern Mediterranean migrations ranging from Ottoman Syria, the United States, Marseilles, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mauritania, French Sudan, French Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Upper Volta, Dahomey, and Niger. Arsan argues that racial xenophobia from the French colonial settlers, rather than the locals, shaped the ways the Lebanese migrants represented themselves and justified their place in the French Empire.<sup>26</sup>

Other historians who depict the xenophobic reactions to the Syrian immigrants specialize in the diasporic histories of other immigrants which overlap with Syrian immigrants. Daniel Elazar and Peter Medding focus on the xenophobic reaction to Sephardic Jews in Israel and along the Jewish diaspora, which are mostly Syrian Jews. Lara Putnam, a Caribbean diasporic specialist, explores the xenophobic reactions to the Syrian shop keepers in Jamaica and Trinidad during the Jazz Age. Putnam shows that the exclusion acts of the 1920s targeted British West Indians, who returned to

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first half of the twentieth century to restrict Syrian migration. Syrians were viewed by the United States government as Asian.

<sup>24</sup> See Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian-American Diaspora* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2009); John Tehranian, *Whitewashed: America's Invisible Middle Eastern Minority* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> For more information about xenophobic reactions to the Syrian immigrants see Christina Cirantos, *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants and the Writing of Identity* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2006); Daniel J. Elazar and Peter Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia, and South Africa* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

their homelands to limited economic opportunities. Jamaicans, in turn, pushed their governments to pass exclusion acts against Syrians and Chinese emigrants, who “stole” *Jamaican* jobs. A famous example of Jamaican anti-Syrian sentiment was in an article by Marcus Garvey in *the Kingston Daily Gleaner* on Dec. 12, 1927, describing the Syrians and Chinamen as “[sapping] the wealth of this country [Jamaica] while [Jamaicans] die in poverty.”<sup>27</sup> Although these historians focusing on other diasporic peoples, they unintentionally exemplify how diasporic peoples share similar experiences in sites of the diaspora. This historians also show how immigrants interact with one another, sometimes not in the best ways. The Syrians throughout the diaspora claimed the intermediary position between white and black races, and industrial and rural regions. Their intermediary positioning in these categories, and their economic success created racial xenophobia in their adopted homelands.

It is important to understand these interactions and how the different immigrants had similar experiences in their diasporic sites and influenced each other in these different communities. Without interaction with the Irish immigrants, the Syrian diasporic experience and imagined community created may have taken a different shape. The Syrian migrant interaction with the Irish migrants was not primarily violent. The Syrians sold goods to the Irish migrants, married Irish migrants, and communicated on a daily basis. The Syrians borrowed nation-building methodologies from their Irish neighbors.

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<sup>27</sup> Article in *Kingston Daily Gleaner*, December 12, 1927, rpt. in Lara Putnam, *Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age* (Raleigh: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 263

Nationalistic protests and riots were very present among the Irish American community even before the first wave of Syrian immigration, as seen by the 1868 riots. Irish immigrants were also a fragmented community, by regionalism and, consequently, sectarianism, but presented a united front when discrimination against them began after 1830.<sup>28</sup> Campbell theorizes that the lived experience of the Irish in their diasporic sites “and the newcomer’s status as a minority” forged a united national identity and destroyed regionalism and sectarianism in the community.<sup>29</sup> The Syrians did not only interact with Irish migrants, but the “new migrants” as well. Syrian migrants were living amongst Greek, Balkan, Italian, and Turkish migrants. This exposed the Syrian migrants to constant interaction with national protests from these new migrants and their methods of diasporic nation building. The Syrians seemed to learn more from the Balkan and Greek migrants, with whom they also interacted due to their commonality of Ottoman hegemony. Like the Balkan and Greek literature, Syrian literature also depicted the Ottoman sultanate as oppressive, in attempts to construct a separate Syrian nation. They also faced the same xenophobia, often being clumped together as “dagos” in the diaspora because of their similar attributes.

The modernizing national fervor was widespread throughout the various diasporic sites during the early half of the twentieth century, as Irish diasporic peoples called for an Ireland for the Irish, free from British oppression, and the “Black International” called for an “Africa for Africans”, embodied by Garvey and the Black

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<sup>28</sup> See Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland’s New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 20



Star Ship Line.<sup>30</sup> The Jewish diaspora called for a Jewish homeland in reaction to the anti-Semitism in Europe, which eventually took shape in the Belfour Declaration in 1917 to create that Jewish homeland in Palestine.<sup>31</sup> It was common among diasporic people during this era to view themselves as ‘liberators’ while they attempted to free their ancestral homelands from the grips of colonialism and enlighten current inhabitants. Immigrant diasporic peoples all used newspapers and literature to help foster their imagined community and move these nationalistic ideals forward.<sup>32</sup>

Scholars such as Benedict Anderson have questioned the construction of nationalism in diasporic communities, due to its complexity with emigration patterns. Anderson coins the word “long-distance nationalism” to describe nationalism phenomena in diasporic communities. However, Anderson questions the diasporic participation in national politics. He does not believe that the diasporic migrants are true exiles awaiting for victories in the homeland. Instead, Anderson believes that their

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<sup>30</sup> For more information about Garveyism and the African Diaspora in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century see Adam Ewing, *Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Robert Trent, *The Americans Are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012); Putnam, *Radical Moves*; Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins, *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); and James Campbell, *Songs of Zion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> For more about the Jewish Diaspora in the age of Nationalism see Rebecca Kobra, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora: The Modern Jewish Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Robert Levine, *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba* (Tampa: University of Florida Press, 1993); Daniel J Elazar, and Peter Medding, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies: Argentina, Australia, and South Africa* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983); Victor A. Mirelman, *Jewish Buenos Aires 1890-1930: In Search of an Identity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Although many of the diasporas overlap and influenced one another during this time, this thesis will focus primarily on the Syrian diasporic community Little Syria. It is important to be well aware that the same themes (maybe not specifically sectarianism, but fragmentation and national unity) occur in other diasporas at the same time, but analysis of the influences the diasporas had on one another in a diasporic site will have to be saved for a later project. This thesis is focused on the sectarian fragmentation and national unity in the Syrian mahjar of Little Syria, New York during this era of nationalism.

voluntary emigration is proof of their detachment from the nation. He contends that although they may support their homeland's political causes, long distance ethno-nationalists feel little attachment to homeland, paying no price for the long-distance politics. Anderson suggests that nationalist immigrants are "émigrés who have no serious intention of going back home, which, as more time passes, more and more serves as a phantom bedrock for an embattled metropolitan ethnic identity."<sup>33</sup> The host-land becomes home for the migrants and long-distance nationalism is symbolic of a frozen imagined past.

Anderson may have been influenced by earlier diasporic historiography when writing about the symbolic nature of long-distance nationalism. Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that made the American People* (1951) is considered the pioneering work of diasporic history. Handlin argues that migration was experienced as an alienation from family, community, and tradition. Handlin suggests that immigrants are uprooted from their culture and assimilated into their host countries, creating a melting pot. Many diasporic historians between the 1950s and the 1980s, including Alixa Naff, Charlotte Erickson and Rowland Berthoff, followed Handlin's path by focusing on the assimilation of diasporic groups.

Scholarship of the 1980s moved away from the melting pot theory of diasporic identities. In *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (1987), John Bodnar refutes the notion that immigrants were uprooted from cultures of their homeland. Instead, Bodnar suggests that immigrants transplanted the cultural and

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<sup>33</sup> Benedict Anderson, "Long Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics" (paper presented at the Wertheim Lecture, CASA, University of Amsterdam, 1992), 12.

political values of their homelands in host-societies. Since Bodnar's ground-breaking work, historiography of the diaspora has analyzed conditions which prevented assimilation and allowed for long-distance nationalism to spread throughout immigrant communities. Khater argues that the returning migrants and the diasporic newspapers forged a middle class, constructed gender-roles, and modernized culture in the Lebanese region, as defined by middle-class America.<sup>34</sup> I argue that Syrian migrants did not necessarily transplant the cultural and political values of their homelands, but reconstructed them in the form of sectarianism through print capitalism due to their experience in the mahjar.

Contrary to Anderson's theory, the Syrian newspaper editors and their readers maintained feelings of attachment to the homeland in the diasporic communities. The editors paid the price for their visions of the emerging Syrian nation through lobbying efforts. The diasporic newspapers constructed a collective national identity to give voice to the community against the injustices they experienced in the mahjar and protect themselves from foreign threat. Hani Bawardi refutes Anderson's theory when he analyzes the Syrian political organizations the migrants constructed and their calls for a separate Syrian nation. The immigrants were very involved in the political atmosphere in Syria, forming organizations to push for Syrian independence. The nationalist fervor was apparent in the mahjar, which shows the triumph of a Syrian

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<sup>34</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 90

national identity to unite the colonies.<sup>35</sup> Not only were the migrants involved in Syrian politics, but they also were involved in the modernization project of the Syrian nation.

Bawardi urges his audience not to exaggerate the presence of sectarianism among the immigrants because the political organizations showed a union of Syrians of all sects with a nationalist goal. However the Syrian migrants who subscribed to these newspapers based on their sectarian affiliation, and the literary elites who called upon the masses to put aside sectarian strife in favor of a united front would disagree. I contribute to this historiography by proving that sectarianism still persisted in the mahjar, reproducing itself in print-capitalism as the elite fought one another for influence. I will also show that the Syrian migrants did not only unite under a national identity in political organizations but also against domestic threats. Sectarianism was very much alive among the common immigrants, but the factions briefly united when presented with a foreign threat against the Syrian community.

To make this project feasible, this analysis concentrates on the events of Little Syria during this time. The community newspapers highlight the fragmentations of the community. These sources show how the calls for national unity in the diaspora to confront foreign influence in Syria. The newspapers will also show the provocations from other immigrants in Manhattan, which caused unity within the Syrian neighborhood to defend themselves as Syrians. The first section of this thesis covers a brief history of the sectarian tensions in the Ottoman Empire which led to the creation of an immigrant colony in New York, while also highlighting the divisions between

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<sup>35</sup> See Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).

the immigrants in the mahjar. The original confrontations that the immigrants faced in their experience with the New York Police Department and the Irish-American immigrant communities in Manhattan to cause them to unite and forge a collective community, finalized by creating the first newspaper of the diaspora. The second section will cover 1900-1905, with the street riot being the apex of sectarian disputes. More newspapers were created during the first decade of the twentieth century, further fragmenting the community along sectarian lines.

## Ottoman Syria: Industrial Transformations

### The Ottoman Millet System and Religious Tolerance

Sectarian tensions have plagued Syria since the medieval era as sectarian groups splintered from Christian and Muslim groups and were persecuted as heretics. Wars erupted over which religious sect should have more political representation. During the Fourth Crusade, Roman Catholics laid siege to the Greek Orthodox Antioch Church in Constantinople, causing fights between the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox peoples in Syria. Yet, the first wave of mass emigration from the Syrian did not occur until after 1860.<sup>36</sup>

The Ottoman Empire was vastly diverse in its ethnic and religious composition; Ottoman Christian and Jews were protected under Islamic law as *dhimmi* communities. The poly-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman subjects worked and worshipped side by side. Persecution based upon religious convictions were very rare, but tolerance of religion did not necessarily cause an egalitarian society. The *dhimmi* people were treated as second-class citizens in Ottoman society, in order to recognize the primacy of Islam. To successfully accommodate their diverse religious subjects and maintain their loyalty, the Ottomans gave *dhimmi* communities sufficient

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<sup>36</sup> The brief history of the sects begin with the Council of Chalcedon, which led the Syriac Orthodox from the Chalcedonians in 451 and violence between the two sects. The Syrian Orthodox accepted a non-Chalcedonian, Severus, as Patriarch and relied more on Constantinople under the Byzantine rite. The Greek Orthodox Church seceded from the Holy Roman Catholic Church in 1054. In 1724 Cyril VI was elected the Greek Patriarch of Antioch, and he led the split from the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, as the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, welcomed back into the communion of the Roman Catholic Church. The Maronite Catholics is a different rite from the Roman Catholic Church, who took their name from their first church, Reesh Moran (head of our lord). For more information about the history of late antiquity sectarian conflicts among Christians see Menz Volker-Lorenz, *Justinian and the making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). During the fourth crusade Catholics sacked Greek Orthodox towns in 1203. For more information about the fourth crusade see John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall* (London: Folio Society, 2003).

opportunities to become economic stakeholders in the empire. Although they were restricted in status, the *dhimmi* became the backbone of the Ottoman financial and diplomatic administration. For instance, wealthy Phanariote Greek Orthodox Christian families controlled the revenue produced by Moldavia and Wallachia, shaped Ottoman foreign policy, and administered the Aegean islands.

The millet system was implemented by the Ottoman Empire to keep their religious minorities loyal to the sultanate by granting their religious communities “a degree of legal autonomy and authority with the acquiescence of the Ottoman state.”<sup>37</sup> The patriarch of each millet community was responsible for the community’s taxes in exchange for state recognition of autonomy. However, the millet system was unevenly enforced throughout the Ottoman Empire, supporting only larger minority religious communities. Smaller religious communities, like Jews, Maronite Catholics, and Armenian Christians, did not have sufficient ecclesiastical centers to meet their needs and traditions. Smaller religious communities resented the Greek Orthodox Christians for their special privileges and prosperity under the Ottoman millet system. The Maronites were one of the groups who resented the Greek Orthodox. Their resentment strengthened over the years, transpiring in the Syrian diaspora in the nineteenth century. Animosity between the two sects was witnessed in Little Syria as members of the Maronite elite attacked a Greek Orthodox bishop, causing a riot in the Manhattan neighborhood.

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<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 12-13.

The Maronite resentment of the Greek Orthodox was due to their minority status in the Ottoman Empire. The Maronite Church in the Mount Lebanon region were forced to seek investiture from the pope rather than the Sultan, because the Ottomans were not interested in this small religious community. Due to the weakness and disorganization of the Maronite church, their political affiliations to the *muqati'ji*, or the fief holder/chief, and *amir* in the Mount Lebanon region cut across sectarian lines.<sup>38</sup> The community of Druze, Maronites, Nusayri-Alawites, Nizari-Ismailis, and Shiites shared the same political affiliation of the chief of the region, which was usually a Sunni Muslim. Notable families in Mount Lebanon dominated to role of the chief of the region, like the Shihabi, Khazin, Ma'ni and Jumblatt families. The Shihabi family ruled during the second half of the eighteenth century and united the different religious communities in Mount Lebanon for almost a century.<sup>39</sup> These communities were religiously fluid, the Shihabi family was predominantly Sunni. However, some branches of the Shihabi family converted to the Maronite faith or the Druze faith. Sectarian lines hardened throughout the nineteenth century during Ottoman economic downturns and political transitions. The Maronite Church was also restructured with Papal financing and strengthened during this period. As it strengthened, the Maronite clergy sought political dominance in Mount Lebanon.

The relative autonomy and freedoms dhimmi societies received under Ottoman rule were not constant. In times of turmoil and economic downturn,

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<sup>38</sup> The *muqati'ji* also collected taxes from their diverse community

<sup>39</sup> See Iliya F. Hakik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society, 1711-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). The union among the sects under Shihabi rule fell in 1841 when Amir Bashir Mulhim Shihab (Bashir III) alienated his Druze subjects by allying with Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, when Egypt occupied the region.



prosperous dhimmi subjects were attacked with stricter restrictions. It was common for the Ottoman administrations to increase the jizaya head tax when there was an economic downturn, but they increased all taxes for all the peasants at the same time.<sup>40</sup> Sometimes old restrictions were resurrected due to the belief that Ottoman laxity and moral corruption led to the economic downturn of the Empire. Sometimes non-Muslims were tricked into converting due to jealousy of economic success during these economic downturns.<sup>41</sup> Economic downturns followed the wars of the eighteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire realized the limits of its expansionist rule and began losing territories in the Balkans and Crimea. The Ottoman Empire had to modernize its military, economy, and political sectors in face of these defeats. The cavalry was replaced with an expanded janissary, which now included Ottoman Muslim peasants. Extraordinary taxes, or *avariz*, was made regular to fund wars, and tax-farming replaced the old feudal system. Tax-farming allowed for the emergence of the notable families in Syria and the decentralization of the Ottoman Empire, blurring the lines between the peasantry and the nobility.

## **Industrialization and Foreign Influence**

Old restrictions and religious tensions resurfaced in the nineteenth century as the Ottoman economy was transformed by the spread of capitalism and industrialization. International trade increased sixty-five fold. Industrialized Western countries aggressively penetrated the Ottoman economy, transforming transportation

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<sup>40</sup> The jizaya head tax was taxes reserved for dhimmi protection in lieu of conscription into the Ottoman Army.

<sup>41</sup> For more about forced conversions see Tijana Kristic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

and Ottoman politics. In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt and Syria to dominate Eastern trade. Bonaparte also hoped attack British commerce by undermining British access to India. The Ottomans reconquered Egypt with the help of the British. In exchange, the British received capitulations which allowed the British to flood Ottoman markets with British exports. Domestic commodities such as Mediterranean sugar, mocha coffee, and Indian dye were replaced by cheaper European colonial commodities. European colonial products were made cheaper through slave labor and advanced mechanization, yielding greater production. By 1840 British cotton replaced Indian cotton due to the labor saving mechanisms of the spinning jenny, water frame, and the Samuel Crompton's mule.<sup>42</sup> These inventions allowed for good quality yarn at competitive prices. Western countries financed railroads and steamships in the Ottoman Empire to increase the availability of their commodities in Ottoman markets. Traditional commercial centers were displaced by deep-water port cities, like Beirut. The improvement of transportation and communications in the Ottoman Empire led to population growth. European financiers began opening silk factories in Syria in response for the increasing French demand for silk thread. Growing number of women and children were incorporated into the manufacturing work force while traditional guilds decreased in strength. The shift to unskilled and unorganized labor financed by Western Europeans depressed wages and

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<sup>42</sup> Halil Inalcik, "When and how British cotton goods invaded the Levant Markets," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, ed. Huri Islamoglu-Inan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 377.

increased inflation. The transition of a 'modernized' Levant commenced, as gender roles and family structures were reconfigured in face of industrialization.<sup>43</sup>

In the 1830s Muhammad Ali Pasha declared Egypt independent from the Ottoman Empire and invaded Syria. To protect their Ottoman and Indian markets, France, Britain, and Russia assisted the Ottomans in reconquering Syrian territory. To further punish Muhammad Ali Pasha, Sultan Mahmut II held a trade convention with Great Britain in 1838. Under the Anglo-Turkish Convention, Sultan Mahmut II granted the British equal economic rights to other foreign nations. The capitulations agreed upon were made permanent, allowing the British to buy Ottoman products and resell with limited duty-cost. European merchants extended their advantageous capitulations to Ottoman Christians through berat certifications. Berat certifications gave Christians tax exemptions. Although the Anglo-Turk Convention was meant to hurt Muhammad Ali Pasha, it displaced Muslim merchants and Ottoman industrial workers.

The Ottoman economy plummeted after the Crimean War, allowing greater European intervention. To fund the Crimean War in 1853, the Ottoman Sultanate obtained high-interest European loans to strengthen and modernize their military technology. The frantic effort by the Ottomans to modernize their military was not enough to stop Russia from defeating them. When the Ottomans lost the Crimean War, their economy plummeted and they defaulted on their loans. Defaulting on the loans allowed foreign lenders to directly penetrate the Ottoman economy to protect their

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<sup>43</sup> For more about the modernization of Lebanon and the formation of gender and the middle class, see Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2001)

foreign investments. European powers directly collected taxes on certain commodities like tobacco and silk. Modern European financial institutions were constructed to collect taxes for European lenders. The European collection of Ottoman taxes continued until the nation-state of Turkey finally repaid the European lenders in 1923. In the meantime, European control of taxation and its ability to recover loans encouraged further foreign investment in the Ottoman Empire.

In Mount Lebanon, foreign capital took its shape in the growing silk industry. For centuries, sericulture, or the raising of silkworms, had been a component to the Mountain's economy, along with olives, wheat, and grapes. The mountains became the site of economic opportunities by 1711. Silk made in the mountains were demanded inland to sell to the European merchants. This left less land for peasants to farm crops and wheat, so they relied on grain from inland Syria and Egypt.<sup>44</sup> This delicate economic balance crashed in 1838 after the Anglo-Turkish Convention. Sultan Mahmud of Ottoman Empire made treaties with Great Britain, France, Russia and Austria to abolish local monopolies and protectionist trade for European merchants, in order to hurt the Egyptian economy.<sup>45</sup> This made European goods cheaper than the goods produced in Syria, which hurt the Syrian agricultural sector, but allowed the silk sector to prosper. The inhabitants of Mount Lebanon came to rely on the European market for livelihood. The Lebanese economy transformed into an export-economy, existing on the whim of the demand for silk. To curb European

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<sup>44</sup> Engin Akarlı, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 20.

<sup>45</sup> Mohamed Ali Pasha was the ruler of Egypt at this time and was the sultan's bitter adversary. He had economic connections with France and Great Britain, but offering the same treaties would cause his economic policy to collapse. He relaxed his tariffs to appease these powers.

influence and modernize the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdulmeçid passed the Edict of Gülhane in 1839, which abolished tax farming, imposed universal military conscription and secularize law to eliminate the millet system. The edict also allowed for the reform of Ottoman educational, financial, and bureaucratic infrastructures. In 1856, the Ottoman government passed the Hatt-i Humayun or the Imperial Reform Edict to promise freedom of religion. These reforms abolished the millet system and gave Ottoman Christians greater rights, allowing them to become civil servants and rise politically. Ussamma Makdisi argues that these edicts led to competition between the Ottoman Empire and foreign powers over the loyalty of the sects in the Syrian province, allowing the sects greater political power.<sup>46</sup> Increased power for the sectarian groups allowed for intrasectarian competition to attempt to monopolize their political power over the other sects, a trend which migrants eventually took with them throughout the diaspora.

Foreign intervention and inflation caused by the capitulations and reform edicts led to sectarian tensions against the Ottoman Christian benefactors. Maronite peasants in Mount Lebanon were able to prosper and buy honorary titles. Maronite peasants vied for greater political power. Khater suggests that the emergence of the silk-export economy led to the making of the middle class in Lebanon.<sup>47</sup> Sectarian strife in the Mount Lebanon region was inter-sectarian until these political aspirations pitted Maronites against their Druze neighbors in Mount Lebanon, eventually leading to mass migrations. Sectarian tensions between the Druze and the Maronites brewed

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<sup>46</sup> Ussama Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate: The Revolt of Tanyus Shahin in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000).

<sup>47</sup> Khater, 21

for about forty years prior to the 1860 massacres. Both the Druze and Maronites vied for political dominance in the Lebanese mountains and disputed over land and harsh tax-farming tenancy regulations.<sup>48</sup> The Druze were considered Muslim brethren of sorts, because the Druze sect was a sect of Twelver Shi'a Islam. This sect was tolerated by the Ottoman Empire, which promoted Muslim interests above those of their *dhimmi* subjects. Druze inhabitants did not have to pay the jizaya tax and were treated preferentially due to their Islamic beliefs. When additional taxes were imposed by Abdullah Pasha, the Akka governor, in the 1820s, skirmishes erupted along the mountains. The Maronites felt that the tax distribution was unequal. Druze landlords appeared to be favored over Maronite tenants. Maronites believed that they suffered from overburdening taxation and resented the preferential treatment towards their Druze landlords, and they imported this mentality to the. However, Ottoman preferential treatment towards Druze did not prevent Maronites from becoming successful, nor did it prevent peaceful neighborly relations with the Druze prior to the nineteenth century. The class struggle assumed a sectarian coloring as European governments became more involved in Mount Lebanon's economy. Maronites remembered their treatment and unfair taxation as proof of Ottoman oppression. The collective memory of Ottoman oppression and European salvation remained with Maronites even years after migrants settled in other countries. In Little Syria, Maronites justified their migration by blaming Ottoman oppression, as they did throughout Europe.

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<sup>48</sup> For more about early relations between the Druze and the Maronites see Iliya F. Hakik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society, 1711-1845*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

The combination of harsh Ottoman and Druze taxation to fund the reform projects and resentment of privileges caused sectarian solidarities and clashes in the mountains. The Europeans were seen as allies with the Christians due to European extension of berat certificates to Christian merchants; thus Muslim merchants bankrupted by European commercialization were resentful of the Christian Syrians. After the French invaded the Mount Lebanon silk economy, the French Consulate influenced regional politics. The French Consulate would only consult with Maronites, so the Maronite Church was able to gain a central role in the politics of Mount Lebanon. The Church's new political role created a new sphere of political life beyond the Amir and chiefs. The Druze resented French intervention in regional politics. In reaction, many Druze landlords in the mountains imposed harsh conditions for their Maronite tax-farmers. The Maronite Church and French Consulate became more active in defending its constituents. Meanwhile, Druze kinsmen rallied together to defend themselves, financed by the British Consulate. The tension in the region escalated to civil war in 1860. The 1860 massacres were the most brutal sectarian confrontations in the mountains to date, embedded in the minds of the immigrants who sought emigration to escape these violent confrontations. Inhabitants of Little Syria retold the horrors of the 1860 Massacres to justify their emigration from the oppressive Ottoman Empire.

## Sectarian Tensions Erupt: The 1860 Massacres

The most immediate cause of the 1860 massacres was a dispute between a Druze boy and a Maronite boy in Beit Miri in August 29th, 1859.<sup>49</sup> The parents of the children disputed over parenting skills and respect. Feeling threatened, the Maronite inhabitants of Bayt Miri recruited Maronite kinsmen from neighboring villages. They took up arms against their Druze neighbors the following day. On August 30<sup>th</sup> 1859, the skirmish more Druze than Maronites were killed. That winter, the Druze planned their revenge. Using British funding, the Druze chiefs secured arms through Khurshid Pasha of Beirut and rose in April of 1860. The massacres spread throughout the Syrian province and lasted until July 1860.

These massacres erupted along the coast of Greater Syria: from Kisrawan to Damascus, leaving 360 villages and 560 churches burnt to ashes. While many lost their homes, Syrians realized the necessity of emigration to escape this oppression and violence. British Consul of Damascus, Colonel Charles H. Churchill, lived in Bahwwarah at the time. As an eyewitness to the massacres in Syria, Churchill described brutal scenes from the massacres in his diary:

*"The Druzes rushed upon them sword in hand, and cut down every man they met. The women and children fled in dire consternation. With a wild cry of despair the whole population hurried down the nearest ravine, leaving their village behind them already in*

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<sup>49</sup> The dispute between the children is questionable. Missionary Henry Jessup details it in his memoirs, claiming that the dispute was over a chicken. See Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co, 1910), 170. Philip Hitti believed it to be a common "brawl" which can be presumed as a wrestling match; See Philip Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962), 437. However, Beirut children in the 1970s were taught it erupted after a dispute between children over a game of marbles. Samar Sakr, in discussion with the author, October 2014.



*flames. Twelve hundred men were massacred over the space of two miles, so rapid had been the pursuit. Many took shelter in caves and holes in rocks, where they remained for days in a state of starvation... upwards of 300 bodies strewed and the sea-beach and the gardens round about. The shrieks of the women and children rent the air.”<sup>50</sup>*

This scene occurred in May of 1860 along the route to Sidon, as Christians fled their villages to save themselves from Druze rage. Meanwhile, Druze soldiers laid siege to Deir al Qammar for twenty-two days, against the Maronites who had fled their homes. Maronite homes were torched and turned to ashes. Unsuspecting Maronites were ambushed by the Druze soldiers and torn apart, limb-by-limb. Maronites fled for their lives and sought refuge in the Deir al Qamar, the site of an important Maronite Church, Saidat al Talle (Lady of the Hill).<sup>51</sup> The city had barracks to protect the Maronites, but the Druze broke through the barracks and laid siege to the city. Two thousand Christians were massacred, as the Druze burned down the city. In total, the highest estimate of Christians that were killed during the 1860 massacre in Greater Syria reached 20,000.<sup>52</sup>

The sectarian war of 1860 did not escalate into a religious war, but it did affect other sects beyond the Druze and the Maronites. Although only the Maronites were in conflict with their Druze neighbors, Maronites were not the only Christians targeted in 1860; the Greek Orthodox community in Wadi al-Taim did not escape the rage of the

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<sup>50</sup> Charles H. Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites: Under the Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1862), 156-157. Colonel Churchill was an eye witness to this event; he spent the past twenty years living in Bahawwarah, Syria as a British consul.

<sup>51</sup> Located in South West Modern Day Lebanon. Translation of the city's name is Monastery of the Moon. The city has a long religious and political history,

<sup>52</sup> Philip and Joseph Kayal, *The Syrian Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation* (Boston: Twayne, 1975).

Druze Syrians. On the other hand, few Sunni and Shi'a Muslims joined the Druze. The Maronites saw this incident as Ottoman persecution because the Ottoman soldiers did nothing to stop the Druze militia. In fact, some Ottoman soldiers lured Maronites into an ambush, by offering Christians asylum in order to disarm them.<sup>53</sup> Khurshid Pasha was blamed for supplying the Druze with arms, and the Turkish irregular cavalry was reported by Churchill to have "joined vigorously in the pursuit" of the Christians and raping Christian women.<sup>54</sup>

Maronite migrants throughout the Diaspora retold the horrific events of the Massacre as proof of Ottoman persecution against them. Although they had not lived it, memories of the Massacre passed from parents and neighbors to the migrants, who retold the tale of loss and persecution in the Diaspora. In fact, the Ottoman consul in Barcelona in 1889, Yusuf Bey, reported his embarrassment of the Lebanese Maronite migrants who dressed in rags telling stories of Ottomans massacring their wives and children.<sup>55</sup> Arsan argues that Syrian migrants were not above manipulating their position as Eastern Christians "to play upon the piety and pity" of natives in their adopted homelands.<sup>56</sup> However, Syrian migrants who retold the stories of the massacres did believe that they were oppressed by the Ottoman Sultanate. Syrian migrants reported the history of Syrian Christian persecution to New York

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<sup>53</sup> Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History* (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 58

<sup>54</sup> Churchill, 145.

<sup>55</sup> Engin Arkali, "Ottoman Attitudes towards Lebanese emigration, 1885-1910" in Arsan, *Interlopers*, 29.

<sup>56</sup> Arsan, 29.

newspapers, to give reasons why they migrated and why Syria should become a separate nation-state from the oppressive Turkish Empire.<sup>57</sup>

Although Syrian Christians felt as though the Ottomans did nothing to stop their persecution, the actions of the Druze and the Ottoman soldiers who aided them did not go unpunished. The French Consulate, British Consulate, Russian Consulate and the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Druze authorities clamored against their injustices. To pacify them, Ottoman Foreign Minister Fouad Pasha blamed Ottoman officers for failing to prevent the attacks and punished them severely. Furthermore, forty-eight Druze leaders were condemned to death, twenty-four imprisoned and 249 exiled.<sup>58</sup> Some of these punishments were not executed because sentenced Druze chieftains fled the mountain. Many Druze migrated south to Houran, Syria. The Maronite Church was left as the most powerful institution in Mount Lebanon. To monopolize its influence, the Maronite Church built schools, hospitals, and monopolized the land to render services to the inhabitants.

The Ottomans joined Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia in creating a special Ottoman governorate, *mutasarifiyya*, in Mount Lebanon under the leadership of a Maronite governor. The *mutasarifiyya* officially ended the previous rule of a local Amir and created a confessional government in Mount Lebanon. The *Reglément* required that the Administrative Council and the judicial system of Mount Lebanon have councilors and justices to represent each sect in Mount Lebanon, elected by the majority leader of each province. Maronites made up the majority of

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<sup>57</sup> "Young Syria Holds a Meeting: An Open Air Demonstration to Aid Their Cause for Freedom" *The New York Daily Tribune*, August 11, 1899.

<sup>58</sup> Hitti, *Lebanon*, 440

most of the Lebanese provinces. Thus, sectarian leaders amiable to the Maronite Church were elected. While the Maronite Church increased in political dominance, more Druze inhabitants of Mount Lebanon migrated to Houran. Houran was renamed *Jabal al- Druze*, or the Druze mountains to accommodate for the growing population of migrants. Many of the Druze landowners in Shuf were forced to sell their lands to Maronites during Franko Pasha's governorship of the mutasarifiyya.<sup>59</sup> The Druze's influence in the mountain had been forcibly replaced by the Maronite Church and the French consulate. The Druze who could become elected to administrative had to be amicable to the Church, thereby increasing Church influence. After Franko's governorship of the Mountain in 1873, governors tried to weaken the Maronite Church without success. The Sublime Porte feared another civil war in the Syrian province because they did not want further European aggression into Syrian economy and politics.

While Ottoman governors were appointed to check the power of the Council, the Porte checked the power of the governors. As the governors pushed reforms to weaken the domination of the Maronite Church, the Porte prevented the governors from interfering in Lebanese politics, for fear of further foreign aggression. For the next fifty years, the Porte maintained a policy of peace in Mount Lebanon using its personal treasury. The Administrative Council vetoed every measure of increasing taxation and invoked Porte to repay tax deficits. The Porte's peace policy allowed an autonomous Lebanese government to develop.

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<sup>59</sup> Akarli, *Long Peace*, 53. Franko Pasha was renowned for his alliance with the Maronite Church.

The 1860 Massacre was the immediate cause of a new Ottoman governorate. The restoration of stability and peace in the wake of the Massacre gave European capitalists greater access to the Levantine markets, in a time where the demand of silk increased due to the decrease of American cotton during the American Civil War. The massacres also provoked Syrian migration to other parts of the Ottoman Empire. With the horrors of the massacres fresh on their minds, Syrian Christians boarded boats to escape the sectarian conflict and created the first mahjar site in Egypt. Egypt had economic ties to Greater Syria since the eighteenth century. After the construction of the Suez Canal, Egypt promised economic opportunities for migrants. Sectarian tension increased as politics began to depend on sectarian representation in the *mutasariyya*, so Druze and Greek Orthodox inhabitants decided to migrate to escape.

There were other causes in the nineteenth century that paved the way for Syrian emigration, such as the decline in economic opportunities in the Greater Syrian area. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869, the silk market faced competition with cheaper Far Eastern silk. Depression in silk prices affected Levantine markets, since forty percent of the Mountain's population earned a living through the silk trade. The transformations in the Ottoman financial infrastructure were mirrored in political and legal infrastructure as the Sultanate sought reforms to industrialize and modernize. The increase in reforms were aggravated by foreign powers who invested in their Ottoman markets. Modernization created social displacement and discontent during the transition of traditional infrastructures to modern ones. Families were displaced as the family economies declined, reconstructing social values and constructing a modern

notion of gender.<sup>60</sup> The uprooting of traditional structures encouraged Syrian peasants to seek education and to progress in the industrialized world. Many decided to migrate to European countries to seek a modern education.

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<sup>60</sup> For more information see Judith E. Tucker, "Decline of the Family Economy in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt" in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. Albert Hourani et al. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993).

## **America: The Land of Opportunity**

The United States was not an initial destination for Syrian emigrants because the American Civil War was underway at this time. Also, the United States was not yet an economic world power. The American Civil War and the decrease of American cotton in international markets created a greater demand for Lebanese silk in Europe, actually strengthening the economy in Mount Lebanon. After the Massacre of 1860, the Syrian silk industry soared as European powers forced their way into the economy and politics. The *mutasarifiyya* created by the *Règlement* of 1861, allowed for greater European interventions into the Mount Lebanon inexpensive labor market. Article X of the *Règlement* stated that “all commercial litigation in the Mountain under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Commercial Tribunal in Beirut.”<sup>61</sup> The tribunal was constituted of European and Maronite merchants who held *berat* certificates exempting them from duties.

Article X allowed for European monopolization of the Lebanese economy. The direct degree of control European investors had made the region attractive for European investments. European financiers invested in the improvement of Syrian transportation technology. Connecting the mountains to the deep-water port cities allowed for bigger, quicker, cheaper and more regular shipments of silk. The road system increased three-fold between 1851 and 1912. European-financed steamboats reduced freight costs by twenty-five percent. Europeans also financed Lebanese ‘owned’ silk factories in Lebanon to guarantee themselves yearly supplies of silk

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<sup>61</sup> John P. Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon: 1861–1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), 42.

thread and receive interest on their investments. By 1893 there were one hundred forty-nine silk factories in Mount Lebanon. The citizens of Mount Lebanon prospered, limiting migrations until the silk market collapsed in 1875. The prices for silk remained depressed after the Suez Canal had finished construction. The Suez Canal allowed for China and Japan to more feasibly join the world market and provide competitive prices for silk. The market depression combined with the population boom and lack of arable land in Syria encouraged Syrians to look towards the United States for economic amelioration.

By 1880, the United States had established itself as a desirable destination for quick riches for Syrian migrants who wished to ameliorate their financial situation as fertile land became scarce and population boomed. The early wave of Syrian migration prior to 1900 was a result of Syrian exposure to American missionaries and the world fairs in Philadelphia (1876) and in Chicago (1893). In 1866, American Presbyterian missionaries constructed the Syrian Protestant College, now known as American University of Beirut. Syrian notables sent their children to foreign schools to provide the best modern education, especially after their disillusionment with the decline of Ottoman education. The Presbyterian missionaries unintentionally encouraged Syrians to immigrate to the United States by describing the country as Christian-friendly. Given the collective memory of the 1860 massacres and sectarian tension, a wealthy Christian-friendly nation appeared ideal. The missionaries shared attractive American ideologies and showed photographs of the wealthy cities.<sup>62</sup> Syrians in the American missionary schools were taught grammar, algebra, geometry,

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<sup>62</sup>Randa Kayyali, *The Arab Americans*. (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 28-29.



American geography, and Western notions of liberalism through secular texts. The missionaries also did humanitarian work and provided medical relief, which made the Americans appear to be hospitable and charitable people.<sup>63</sup> Missionary teachings and tales of prosperity glorified the United States and prompted the earliest Syrian migrants to venture to New York.

The Syrian traders who travelled to the United States for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 also reported upon the display of American wealth. The news from the traders reinforced the promise of American prosperity throughout Syria, as silk prices depreciated. Many emigrated with the intention to make enough money to return home richer, like the Italian and Polish immigrants at the same time.<sup>64</sup> Syrian migrants were not economically, religiously, or politically displaced peasants, but were looking for financial amelioration. Migrants sent nineteen million dollars in remittances to their families in Syria in 1924.<sup>65</sup> The news of these immigrants' prosperity traveled back to Syria through kin and trade networks became more reliable reports. The regularity of remittances created the image of the United States as the land of opportunity and encouraged the first wave of Syrian immigration.

Najib Arbeely reminisced on the friendly interactions with the kind and generous Presbyterian missionaries in the first Arabic newspaper printed in Little

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<sup>63</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American and the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 35

<sup>64</sup> For more about Polish migration patterns see Brian McCook, *The Borders of Integration: Polish Migrants in Germany and the United States, 1870-1924* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011). For more about the effects of return migration for the modernization of Italy see Linda Reeder, *Widows in White: Migration and the Transformation of Rural Italian Women, Sicily, 1880-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1982), 86.

Syria, *Kawkab America*. Arbeely describes the friendly interactions between Syrians and American Protestant missionaries and the hospitality shown to the Americans in Arbeen, Syria in the 1860s.<sup>66</sup> Arbeely's testimony to his American audience was an attempt to ease American unease and xenophobia against the new Syrian migrants. He created his newspaper, *Kawkab America*, to bridge the gap between Americans and Syrian migrants, and teach his readers the parallels of both cultures. Arbeely's article is influenced by his personal experience with the missionaries sponsored by his family. Arbeely believes that the missionaries had the same interactions with other Syrian families in Arbeen, which impacted the migrant's decisions to migrate to the United States.

Arbeely's father, Joseph Arbeely, was a professor who taught the American Presbyterian missionaries Arabic.<sup>67</sup> Joseph later described to the *Public Ledger* that he was forced to give the missionaries their Arabic lessons in secret at night, because the Ottoman government were hostile to missionaries.<sup>68</sup> Joseph bought lands in his own name to allow the Presbyterian missionaries to build their churches. Joseph was disillusioned with the Ottoman Empire before the massacre because the authorities were blocking all foreign mission efforts. This disillusionment transformed into the decision to leave his homeland following the 1860 massacres, in which he survived by hiding himself in a secret room.<sup>69</sup> As he watched Druze inhabitants burn down the

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<sup>66</sup> Najib Arbeely, "Local News" *Kawkab America*, April 15, 1892. Translated by the author.

<sup>67</sup> In some articles his name is spelled as Yusuf, which is the Arabic translation of Joseph. Since he seemed to prefer the American spelling in the rest of the newspaper articles, I will stick with the Anglicized version of his name.

<sup>68</sup> "Professor Arbeely: a Learned Christian Syrian and His Family Emigrate to Tennessee" *Public Ledger*, October 30, 1883.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

houses of his neighbors, Joseph Arbeely knew that he had to leave his village. Dressed in Druze garb, he escaped to the English Consul, who helped his entire family relocate to Beirut to teach at the Syrian Protestant College. Moving to Beirut was not enough for Joseph Arbeely, who was determined to leave the “retrograde civilization and a tyrannical government” of the Ottoman Empire for good.<sup>70</sup> Joseph Arbeely used his American connections to secure a teaching position in the United States and migrate.

The Arbeely family’s connection with the American Presbyterian missionaries and their disillusionment with the Ottoman Empire prompted them to immigrate to the United States in 1878. Joseph “desired freedom of speech and action and education for [his] children.”<sup>71</sup> The Arbeely residence in New York was short-lived. Joseph accepted a chair at the University of Tennessee in Maryville Blount County as Professor of Greek Theology and a professor of the Arabic language. However, Najib and Ibrahim returned to New York by the 1890s and created the first Arabic newspaper for the mahjar, *Kawkab America*.

The Arbeely family was considered to be the first Syrian family to immigrate, but not the only.<sup>72</sup> The Arbeelys were the most prominent family, but many more Syrians migrated to the United States in pursuit of a better life in the 1880s. Syrians were impressed by the American Presbyterian missionaries and the news of success that the Arbeelys incurred in the United States. There were already nine hundred Syrians in the city when a reporter of the New York Tribune recorded his surprise at the ease the Syrian immigrants in Little Syria conversed with him in English in 1894.

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<sup>70</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1881.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*

It was implied that the Syrian immigrants had learned English prior to immigration, probably taught by the Presbyterian missionaries in Beirut's "celebrated colleges."<sup>73</sup> The missionaries had not only shown their students the promise of American liberty, but prepared them for migration by teaching them English. This article exemplifies the small, but significant, impact the missionaries had on the first wave of immigration.

The Presbyterian missionaries were not the only American connections to prompt the wave of Syrian immigrations. The United States' first World Fair, the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, was attended by Ottoman-Syrian subjects. Syrian merchants displayed everything Ottoman; from coffee, to cotton, to relics from Jerusalem. These merchants returned to Syria with news of American economic prosperity and opportunities, displaying America as the one big "Souq al-Hamidiyah" or Damascus Bazaar.<sup>74</sup> Souvenirs of the Philadelphia International Exposition were kept by Syrian merchants. Iskandar Kort was one of these merchants and he kept mementos, passing it down as an heirloom to his children, and is now in a family archive.<sup>75</sup> Mementos from the Exposition were shown to relatives and neighbors to display the economic opportunities in the United States. The visual proofs further spread the promise of United States immigration. While merchants in the Centennial Exposition and the early immigrants continued to send back news of their experiences and success in the Americas, more families were prompted to immigrate to the United States, believing it to be the land of opportunity. News of the 1889 decision in to set a

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<sup>73</sup> "Colonists from Lebanon: Ways of Work and Living of the 900 Syrians in the City" *The New York Tribune*, April 22, 1894.

<sup>74</sup> Orfaela, 64.

<sup>75</sup> Mementos can be found in the *Laila Kort Family Archive* in Jerusalem.

world fair in Chicago in 1893 encouraged more migration. Syrian immigrants began saving up to take a steamboat from Beirut port to London then to the United States. Syrian migration to the United States reached a high in 1891, as merchants moved down to prepare for the Chicago Exhibition of 1893.

The United States seemed much more favorable to the Syrians as the land of opportunity compared to the deteriorating conditions within the Ottoman Empire. It was promised to be a safe haven for Christians, who were disillusioned by the sectarian tensions and Ottoman decline. The Arbeely family and other Syrian migrants fled sectarian tensions in the Ottoman Empire. Many migrants were also hoping for financial amelioration. While Syrian migrants adopted new American identities, they retained their traditional sectarian identities. As the early immigrants settled in Little Syria, they pursued their old ways of life: keeping their distinct sectarian identities while trying to build their independent churches.

### **Xenophobia and the Creation of a Syrian Identity in the Mahjar**

Syrian migrants did not necessarily consider themselves as “Syrian” until after the experience of migration and discrimination within their host countries. Identity and pride were based upon family names and sectarian affiliations in the Syrian province. The Syrian migrants were forced to superficially unite as a national group to survive. To unite the migrant community, the cosmopolitan elite members of the Syrian migrant community reproduced nationalist pride in their communities through cultural means. In the 1890s, physical attacks from neighboring Irish immigrants in Manhattan, New York led to the need for unity. In reaction to the Irish animosity and American neglect, members of the migrant’s elite created the first Syrian newspaper in

neighborhood, although most shared the same Catholic belief. Stories of Irish immigrants filling stockings with flour to beat Syrians with it on Halloween are still remembered by Irish immigrants.<sup>78</sup> The harassment the Syrian immigrants suffered at the hands of the Irish immigrants of Washington Street united them against these aggressors. New York newspapers only picked up on the most heinous of these incidents, usually resulting in hospitalization. The first article to describe one of these fatal incidents was in October of 1891, when an Irish trucker, Joseph Cunningham, tried to run a wagon off the road which contained two Syrians, Abdo Namnam and Habib Wahby. Cunningham swore at the two Syrians, then began severely beating Namnam. He “slashed Namnam across the face with his whip” then “pounded him severely, blackening his eye, and knocking him about the street.” When Wahby attempted to intercede to protect his assistant, Cunningham used a heavy oak cart-rung and hit Wahby with it, fracturing Wahby’s skull and killing him.<sup>79</sup>

There was no evidence of how the Syrian community felt about this incident, because there were no publications to show the Syrian side of the situation. The *New York Daily Tribune* and the authorities seemed to side with the Syrians as the Irish immigrants indiscriminately attacked them. The American public displayed the Syrians as a monolithic community without any sectarian divisions in this incident. The second fatal incident reported in the New York newspaper was met with a published reaction from the united Syrian community, who were appalled by the continuance of unrestrained harassment by the Irish community.

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* page 85

<sup>79</sup> “He Crushed in Wahby’s Skull: The Fearful Force of the Blow Which a Driver Aimed With a Cart-Rung at a Syrian” *New York Daily Tribune*, October 24, 1891.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1892 around five o'clock in the afternoon, a Syrian teenager was walking down the intersection of Rector Street and Washington Street in New York. On the intersection, a drunken Irish immigrant yelled "Damn Syria!" and proclaimed that Washington Street was for Ireland. The Irish immigrant then knocked the Syrian immigrant on his back and began repeatedly punching him. Another Syrian immigrant was passing by when he witnessed this sight. The newcomer tried to defend the Syrian boy by prying the Irish man off of him. Events escalated quickly, as more Syrian and Irish immigrants heard their screams and attempted to help their "countrymen." Badre Hallaby, a Syrian woman who lived on this intersection, ran out of her apartment to see what the commotion was about. Nellie Whalen, an Irish prostitute, attacked Hallaby with a brick, causing her hospitalization from near-fatal injuries. The street fight ended with black eyes, broken noses, and teeth loss.<sup>80</sup>

A group of Syrian immigrants went to the New York Police Department immediately after the skirmish. The group claimed that the Irish policemen were also drunk and let the Irish "ruffians go." The Syrian immigrants demanded protection for all of the Syrian inhabitants of Washington Street. The Police Officers on duty, Flynn, Lyons, Carey and Campbell, claimed to have not seen the fight. Collee David, representing the Syrians, said that these policemen were drunk and let their countrymen go. The justice who listened to both sides and advised that "Syria and Ireland sign a treaty," since it was clear that "Ireland arose and asserted herself" while "Syria objected."<sup>81</sup> The American public and the New York Police Department

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<sup>80</sup> Najib Arbeely, "Local News" *Kawkab America*, April 15, 1892. Translated by the author.

<sup>81</sup> "A Woman Threw the Brick: First War Between Syrians and Irish- One of the Injured May Die" *the Sun*, April 5, 1892, 5.

encouraged the maintenance of these nationalist identities as exemplified by the justice's snarky remarks and the *Sun*'s title of the event: "The First War Between Syrians and Irish." The national implication of this article shows how the divisions of the Syrian community faded away for the defense of the community and the Syrian country. The policemen who pretended not to see anything were also Irish, siding with the Irish immigrants, and led to an outrage in the Syrian community.

This incident did not receive an immediate published reaction by the Syrian immigrant public since the first Arabic newspaper was not published until April 15, 1892. However, in their first issue of *Kawkab America*, the Arbeely brothers addressed these abuses by the Irish immigrants. The article presented the Syrian account of the events, through the words of Najib Arbeely. The article ended with an appeal for the Americans to treat the Syrian community with the same respect and hospitality that was given to the American missionaries in the Syria.<sup>82</sup> The united Syrian community wanted protection against this "certain class of ruffians infesting the neighborhood," from the police. Najib Arbeely claimed that Irish migrants tortured them with "molestations and persecutions that could hardly be expected from Barbarians." The diction Arbeely utilizes to describe the events of the street fight and the attacks by the Irish migrants creates a juxtaposition between the disruptive monolithic Irish migrant community and the peaceful monolithic Syrian migrant community. Arbeely achieves the creation of a juxtaposition between the two communities by describing the Irish as worse than barbarians and how the Irish "thugs" are harassing a peaceful Syrian community, who had been nothing but friendly. The juxtaposition Arbeely creates was

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<sup>82</sup> Najib Arbeely, "Local News" *Kawkab America*, April 15, 1892. Translated by the author



an attempt to present the civility and respectability of a monolithic Syrian migrant community in order to demand American protection.<sup>83</sup> Arbeely finds it ironic that the American justice system would protect barbaric thugs rather than a peaceful community and highlights this irony within the first issue of *Kawkab America*. The publication of *Kawkab America* was a reaction to the injustices towards the whole Syrian community, while the barbarous Irish were protected by the American justice system.

Arbeely recognized that the injustice the Syrian migrants faced in New York was due to nativist anxiety toward new migration and industrialization. The American public believed that Syrians are uncivilized and dirty, unworthy of the American justice system. Thus, Arbeely utilized *Kawkab America* as a tool to reconcile xenophobia by running articles in English to teach the public about Syrians, since “it is an undoubted fact that the western man does not understand the oriental.” The newspaper attempted to reconcile the native’s anxiety by bridging the “wide gulf [that] has separated the nations of the East from those of the West,” or between Americans and Syrians. Arbeely’s publication of the newspaper was an attempt to prove to the American public that Syrian migrants were civilized and worthy of the American respect and protection via the justice system.<sup>84</sup> The events of discrimination and lack of justice in the diaspora created the need for the Syrian migrants to unite to give voice to their imagined community and to quell Orientalist discrimination.

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<sup>83</sup> “Outrages on the Syrian Colony” *Kawkab America*, April 15, 1892.

<sup>84</sup> “Introduction” *Kawkab America*, April 15, 1892.

*Kawkab America* constructed a collective national Syrian identity in Little Syria, as the immigrants faced many challenges in the diaspora. The lived experience of these immigrants were contoured by discrimination and violence due to the prejudices fueled by Orientalism in the United States. It was necessary for the Syrians to unite under a collective national identity against the Irish “ruffians” and the American public who viewed them as uncivilized and unworthy of protection. *Kawkab America* became the tool to construct this united nationalist identity and voice the community’s concerns against the injustices it faced in the mahjar. The Arbeely brothers became the representatives of the Syrian migrant community in order to protect the community from foreign threats, giving rise to the cosmopolitan literary elite within the mahjar. The newspaper also kept Syrian migrants connected to their heritage and the events occurring in Ottoman Syria to maintain the connection of their ancestral homeland. In these incidents, sectarian attempts to rebuild and strengthen their sectarian churches/identities were set aside to unite as Syrians against thugs who attacked the community and prejudiced policemen who neglected their safety. However, the Syrian migrants were not unified under one national identity. They continued to build and strengthen their respective churches, fragmenting their community by reproducing sectarianism in the diaspora.

### **Reproducing Sectarianism in Little Syria**

Until the 1890s, the Syrian immigrants did not have churches of their own, so they had to adopt existing churches near Little Syria to service their spiritual needs. All of the Syrian Catholic immigrants, Maronites, Melkites, and Roman Catholics, attended services at St. Peter’s Church on Barclay Street. The Greek Orthodox Syrian

migrants were scattered in different Russian and Greek Churches. This may appear that the earlier wave of immigrants united in common cause of adopting a church, but the immigrants maintained their sectarian and ritual distinctions in these American Churches. Hitti stated that “clannishness or factionalism is therefore the most pronounced feature of the Syrian character,” and not even migration would change this.<sup>85</sup> Although they may have prayed in the same church as each other, the immigrants reconstructed their distinct services and their distinct identities in the mahjar.

In 1891, Syrian migrants highlighted their distinct identities and fragmentation to the American public through the media. This was first seen when *the Sun* published an article about the “three unusual masses” that took place at St. Peter’s Catholic Church. Instead of holding one service for all the Catholics, mass services were split up for each Catholic rite; at nine o’clock in the morning the Roman Catholics held their mass service, then the Maronites held their service at ten o’clock, proceeded by the Melkite mass at eleven o’clock. Apparently this arrangement with the Church was common for 1890, since Maronite migrants used the basement of St. Peter’s Church for their weekly Sunday services for the past year. The journalist distinguished the difference between the immigrant sects, describing the Melkites as 300 “dark-skinned and curiously attired” Syrians in this article, whereas the Maronites are identified simply as Maronites.<sup>86</sup> The description of the two rites displays the stark differences in identity between the two sects as its members made it a point to clarify their

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<sup>85</sup> Hitti, *The Syrians*, 24

<sup>86</sup> “The Unusual Masses: Roman Catholic, Syrian, and Maronite Services in One Day in St. Peter’s Church” *the Sun*, January 7, 1891.

differences to the journalist of the *Sun*. The Melkite immigrants described themselves as Syrian Catholics, probably shortened to “the Syrians” for this article, whereas the Maronite immigrants maintained their distinct identity. The Maronites maintained their distinct identity because of the political dominance of the Maronite Church in Mount Lebanon and Beirut. The strength of the Church gave them more confidence in their identities. Also, it is noticeable that neither of these sects indicate that they are Catholic, during a time of Catholic xenophobia in North Eastern Cities.

Although both the Melkite and Maronite sects had been holding services in St. Peter’s Church, they remained separated. Each sect refused to part with their rituals, forcing St. Peter’s Church to accommodate all three services in tight time slots until they could build their own churches. The Melkite community made St. Peter’s Church their own, led by the first Syrian priest who immigrated to Little Syria to lead the congregation in 1889. *The Sun* reported that the Maronite immigrants were already making plans of constructing a church on Rector Street, but they needed a leader to enforce these plans.

Before the Syrian immigrants could construct their own churches, they had to pave the way for their Syrian priests and bishops to migrate to New York and lead their individual sectarian communities. Father Peter Kurkamaz and Father Joseph Yazbek were summoned by the community in 1890 to create a Maronite congregation and make plans to construct the first Maronite church on Rector Street.<sup>87</sup> Kurkamaz and Yazbek migrated to Little Syria in 1890, when the head of the Maronite

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<sup>87</sup> This church came to be called St. George’s Church and it still stands on the intersection of Rector Street and Washington Street as one of the very few remnants of Little Syria.

community was commissioned to “minister to the spiritual wants of his countrymen in this city,” by uniting the Maronite immigrants under one congregation and church.<sup>88</sup>

The Greek Orthodox community attempted to unify under one congregation and church, but it did not take effect until 1895. Meanwhile, the Syrian Orthodox migrants had to choose between Greek and Russian churches in the diaspora, which divided the Syrian Orthodox community. There had been Syrian Greek Orthodox priests who tried to establish themselves as unifiers and leaders of the community in Little Syria prior to 1895, but the Syrian Orthodox migrant community could not support a permanent priest due to its relatively small size and lack of funds. The first Archimandrite, Constantine Tarazy, immigrated to New York in 1892 on his own initiative, but the community could not fund him nor build a church. Thus, Tarazy was forced to return to Damascus later that year.<sup>89</sup> Another Archimandrite, Christopher Jabara, attempted to establish himself in Little Syria the following year and was able to establish a temporary church at the intersection of Cedar and Washington streets. Jabara’s failure at unifying the Syrian Greek Orthodox Community was due to a scandal he caused in the Archdiocese. He preached that Judaism, Christianity and Islam were all part of one religion and published these sermons in *Unity in Faiths and Harmony in Religions: Based on the Ordinances of the Old and New Testaments and the Koran*. Jabara went too far when he gave an address at the Chicago Exposition of 1893, in the Parliament of Religions, to spread this belief. He hoped to “remove all causes of dissensions and antagonisms between the professors of faith in the Bible, the

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<sup>88</sup> “The First Maronite Priest” *the Sun*, March 2, 1891.

<sup>89</sup> Andre G. Issa, “The Life of Raphael Hawaweeny Bishop of Brooklyn, 1860-1915”(MA diss., St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1991), 16.

Gospel and the Koran.”<sup>90</sup> In an interview with *the Sun* in 1893, he argued that Christianity was the continuation of Judaism, and that Islam purified and fulfilled Christianity.<sup>91</sup> These heretical views led to Jabara’s exile to Egypt.

Jabara’s episode could be seen as a radical attempt to unify the Syrian immigrant community beyond sectarian divide. Jabara may have also been trying to fight Western xenophobia, which at this time had manifested in anti-Semitism and Orientalism. Jabara was educated in Russia and was the head of the Antioch metochion in Moscow, which had been subject to anti-Semitic pogroms and islamophobia in the wake of the Crimean War. There he witnessed Western imperialism into Africa and the Ottoman Empire justified by religion. To cease further imperialist violence, Jabara advocated for a World Council of Churches. He explained how intertwined the three Abrahamic religions were, against the backdrop of religious genocide and exilic migrations. His views caused him to be exiled from Russia by the Metropolitan of Moscow. Jabara brought these views to Little Syria under his adopted title of Patriarch of Antioch in attempt to establish sectarian unity amongst Syrians and create the World Council of Churches, but Syrian immigrants rejected Jabara’s message after the humiliating episode in Chicago. Jabara’s rise exemplifies how the lack of established leadership in the small, dispersed Greek Orthodox Syrian immigrant community allowed for an obscure radical priest to rise through the ranks to leadership. If the congregation were larger and more concentrated, no priest deemed as

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<sup>90</sup> “Father Jibara of Syria: A Sojourner in the Syrian Colony of This City in Trouble with the Authorities of the Greek Church of Which He is an Archimandrite, Because of His Views- What He says of Christianity and Islam” *The Sun*, September 17, 1893.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid*

a radical would have been able to establish himself as the leader of the congregation. Jabara's exile also shows the Syrian determination to maintain sectarianism in their adopted homeland, with their refusal to accept the notion that all religions run parallel to one another. After exiling Jabara, the Syrian Greek Orthodox community remained scattered and without a leader.

There would not be a centralized Greek Orthodox community until 1895, when Ibrahim Arbeely used his influence within the Orthodox Church to advocate for the appointment and migration of a strong Syrian Archimandrite educated in Moscow. Although the Arbeely family had much contact with the American Protestant missionaries, they never put aside their sectarian Greek Orthodox identity. Hitti says that this was common among Syrians who migrated because "the constituency of the churches is so fossilized [in Syria], and the conception of church membership as a social, or rather group affair, is so entrenched in the popular mind that no realignment could be achieved with any degree of facility or ease."<sup>92</sup> Ibrahim had become a doctor since immigrating to the United States and was elected President of the Benevolent Syrian Orthodox Society. Hearing of Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny's achievements in Moscow, Ibrahim was impressed. Ibrahim wrote to Hawaweeny to request his services in uniting and pastoring the Orthodox Syrian flock in Little Syria. Members of the Benevolent Syrian Orthodox Society also wrote to Hawaweeny to request his services in the mahjar for a monthly salary of fifty dollars.<sup>93</sup> Ibrahim also connected with the Russian Bishop of Alaska, who became interested in the growing

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<sup>92</sup> Hitti, *The Syrians*, 46

<sup>93</sup> *The Official Pronouncements* 1.3 (1905), pp. 28-29, 45.

Orthodox community in New York. At both Ibrahim and Bishop Nicholas' requests for a Syrian Bishop for the United States, the Russian Emperor agreed to appoint Hawaweeny "to account for American churches and missions."<sup>94</sup>

Hawaweeny was born on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1860, only months following the conclusion of the 1860 Massacre. His parents were from Damascus, but had sought refuge from the sectarian violence in Beirut, where Hawaweeny was born. The Hawaweeny family and the Arbeely family and many others had sought refuge in Beirut during the conflict, but the Hawaweeny family returned to Damascus to raise their son. The conflict had greatly affected his family upon their return to Damascus, where his father was a merchant. In the late 1870s, Hawaweeny's family was affected by the downturn of the economy and were unable to pay for his tuition. Due to his reputation in the parochial schools, Hawaweeny received sponsorship to study for priesthood. Ironically, Jabara had arranged for Hawaweeny to attend the Patriarchal seminary to study in Moscow. Hawaweeny actually replaced Jabara as the post of head of the Antiochian metochion in Moscow, foreshadowing his takeover in Little Syria.<sup>95</sup>

At the time of his appointment, he was teaching Arabic as a professor at the Kazan Theological Academy in Moscow. Before leaving Moscow in November, Hawaweeny gathered relics from Russia to furnish a new church in the mahjar. He found the Syrian Greek Orthodox community fragmented in Little Syria: some had

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<sup>94</sup> "Minister for Syrians: Christian Church to be Filled by a Damascus Preacher" *The New York Times*, September 15, 1895.

<sup>95</sup> For more information on Hawaweeny's life before immigrating to the United States see Issa, "The Life of Raphael Hawaweeny."



neglected their religious duties and others had converted to other denominations.<sup>96</sup> Hawaweeny had much to do to pastor his flock under one congregation. He immediately went to work teaching, preaching, counseling, and constructing plans to create a new church and graveyard site for his congregation. Within two weeks of his arrival to Little Syria, Hawaweeny constructed and blessed a new chapel on 77 Washington Street under St. Nicholas' patronage. He also became chief of the Benevolent Society. To service his scattered congregation, Hawaweeny went on tours to visit smaller Syrian Orthodox communities scattered across the mahjar, performing marriages, baptisms, confessions, and celebrating Divine Liturgies. Meanwhile, he began compiling the necessary Syrian Orthodox liturgical prayers and services in a book called *Al-taz'ziyah al-haqiqiyyah fi as-salawat al-ilahiyyah*. Hawaweeny hoped that the book would strengthen the congregation and link the other communities to Little Syria. He also began looking for priests to service the smaller Greek Orthodox communities. Hawaweeny mended the fragmented Syrian Greek Orthodox Community in the American mahjar, first in New York and then throughout the North America. His efforts in the community and the fame he received threatened the Maronite community, which led to a street riot by 1905.

The main priority for the Syrian immigrants after they began settling in the mahjar was to rebuild their churches and create a united congregation under one church. Although at first glance it may have seemed like they set aside their sectarian differences to adapt to the United States, the immigrants remained divided by sect. They tried to emulate the land they left by rebuilding their communities. First they

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<sup>96</sup> Nikolas Nahas, *al-Mirat al Antakiyya fi Amirka shimaliyya* (Beaumont: Al-Hoda Press, 1922).

petitioned for priests to lead their communities, to lead the construction of Syrian Churches in Little Syria to resemble the churches they left behind in Syria. The first Arabic newspaper for the mahjar had some sectarian connotations, as the Arbeelys sought to strengthen their Greek Orthodox community. Hitti claimed that this adherence to their sect and church was because the place of worship is where Syrians were educated; it was the center of their society, their protectorate, and their nation. Hitti states that the rebuilding of the churches in the diaspora is only natural because “the Syrians are loyal to their church because of the national aspect of its character, and it, therefore forms an integral part of the constitution of their community.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Hitti, *The Syrians*, 35.

## Sectarian Tensions along Washington Street

### Accommodating Chain Migrations

The second wave of Syrian migration began in the middle of the 1890s, when yearly recorded migrations were in the thousands.<sup>98</sup> Syrians were encouraged to migrate to the United States as successful traders and shopkeepers returned to their villages to get married and/or to visit family. Returning migrants dressed lavishly and showed off substantial profits, inciting chain migrations to the United States. The Sultanate viewed mass migrations as evidence of discontent and worried about the Ottoman image abroad, especially since Syrian beggars in Paris spoke of Ottoman despotism and oppression against Christians. The Sultanate forbade emigration, thus creating a smuggling enterprise to accommodate the chain migration of Syrians. Smugglers cooperated with foreign maritime companies. Shipping agents, bond holders, brokers, muleteers, rowers, hostel keepers and merchants created an underground smuggling ring. Shipping lines employed brokers, who sent out agents to recruit immigrants.<sup>99</sup> Diasporic newspaper articles in Cairo's *al-Muqtataf* and *Kawkab America* also fostered chain migrations by describing benefits of American citizenship.<sup>100</sup>

The movements of the Syrian migrants were more controlled as the emigration business grew, usually departing from Beirut to Marseilles. Hostels for Syrian migrants were set up in the ports of Athens, Barcelona, Liverpool, Genoa, Trieste,

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<sup>98</sup> Issawi, *Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, 86.

<sup>99</sup> Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, *So Far From Allah, So Close to Mexico: Middle Eastern Immigrants in Modern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 52.

<sup>100</sup> Alixa Naff, *Becoming American and the Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 94.

Cherbourg, and Le Havre, where tickets to North America and South America were sold. The hostel owners kept up with the news of economic opportunities to give advice on where to migrate. They sold the migrants initial trinkets to peddle in the United States.<sup>101</sup> Some migrants were misrouted to South America and Africa. Others were turned away from the United States due to trachoma and were rerouted through South America to cross the border. As immigration to the United States increased, smuggling methods became more developed and professional.

To accommodate the growing numbers of Syrian migrants in the diaspora, more Syrian newspapers were established to represent the variety of migrants. The newspaper editors entered into competition with one another to gain influence in the diaspora. The second wave of migration saw a decrease in attempting to educate Americans about the Syrian migrants, as reality settled that the xenophobic discrimination would not cease. In 1897, trachoma was classified as a loathsome and contagious disease by the United States, fueling nativist backlash against migrants. Because of the high instances of trachoma among Syrian migrants, Syrians were considered dirty and diseased. In St. Louis they were called niggers; in Charleston they were called yellow. Other diasporic sites called them Turks, camel jockeys, and dagos.

Syrian and South Eastern European immigrants were blamed for the increase of poverty and criminality all over the diaspora.<sup>102</sup> The way the immigrants dressed, ate, and decorated their homes were all scrutinized by nativists. By the turn of the

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<sup>101</sup> Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014),79

<sup>102</sup> Alfaro-Velcamp, 20

twentieth century, Panama and Costa Rica excluded Syrians from migrating to their countries. In Haiti, Syrian storeowners were stoned on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1905 and forcibly expelled from the island. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1905, *the Sun* printed a letter to the editor from Reginald Williams where he calls the Syrian migrants undesirable in the civilization progress of the United States. Williams also says the undesirable foreigners the “degeneration of the native race” and that nothing would be more patriotic than to remove the Syrian immigrants from New York. His solution was to force the migration of the undesirable immigrants to the country side where they cannot degenerate the superior race.<sup>103</sup> William’s letter is a prime example of xenophobia against the Syrian migrants. Acts of xenophobia alienated the Syrian population in Little Syria. They responded by turning inwards and focusing on the daily life of the Syrian community.

### **Early Diasporic Newspaper Conflicts**

The Syrian migrants remained cognizant of the political debates in the Ottoman Empire through diasporic newspapers.<sup>104</sup> To decrease competition, the newspapers targeted their fragmented Syrian audience by affiliating themselves with sectarian identities. The newspapers and the communities reflected the politics of Ottoman Syria and the *mutasarifiyya* in Mount Lebanon. Syrian inhabitants in the Ottoman Empire and throughout the diaspora were divided between the conservative and liberal politics, pro- and anti- Kusa politics, and Syrian-Arab nationalism versus

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<sup>103</sup> Reginald H. Williams, “The Birth Rate is the Explanation of Its Fluctuation Found in Economic Causes?” *The Sun*, September 23, 1905.

<sup>104</sup> Arsan, 13

Lebanese separatism. The pro-Kusa faction was considered to be a conservative stance, hoping for the Kusa family to remain in the governor position after Na'um Kusa's governorship from 1892-1902. The Kusa family was allied with the Maronite Church and the foreign consulates. The anti-Kusa faction were liberal Maronites and Greek Orthodox Christians who challenged foreign interference in Mount Lebanon's economy.

The pro-Kusa and anti-Kusa factions did agree upon separation from the Ottoman Empire, but the spread of nationalism manifested in different ways in Mount Lebanon. Mount Lebanon saw the fragmentation of its community over Lebanese separatism and Arab-Syrian nationalism. The Maronite Church constructed the theory of a separate Christian Lebanon by emphasizing its loyalty to France and underlining the differences between the Westernized Lebanese and the backwards 'Arabs.' The Maronite Church built a foundation for Lebanese nationalism. The Church used the atrocities of the 1860 massacres to advocate for French protection of Lebanese Catholics against the Ottoman Muslims. The Church and the mutasarifiyya also desired to expand their influence and incorporate Beirut and the Biqa'a Valley into Mount Lebanon. This desire was to receive more revenue for the government since Mount Lebanon's own ports did not generate a significant sum. Inhabitants and migrants of the Syrian province did not necessarily agree with the Maronite Church's political stance concerning Lebanon. Many in Little Syria called for a Syrian nation, protesting that there was peaceful coexistence in the region among the sects prior to

foreign interference.<sup>105</sup> These various views were all reflected in the sectarian papers in the diaspora.

As early as 1894, the sectarian affiliations of newspapers began as *Al Asr* was created by 27 year old Na'um Mokarzel and 28 year old Najib Maloof to rival *Kawkab America*. The latter did not have a sectarian affiliation, but was intended for the whole Syrian community. In Najib Maloof was a local silk merchant in Little Syria and a sort of a loan shark in the Syrian community. In 1894, *Kawkab America* published an article detailing how Maloof struck his neighbor, Habib Patrikian, for failing to repay his debts. The article reproached Maloof for his violence and encouraged Syrian migrants to handle disputes like Americans. Maloof sued the Arbeely brothers for libel, claiming that *Kawkab America's* article detailing Maloof's recent quarrels degraded his character, making him similar to "vagabonds, rogues and disturbers of the peace." Furthermore, Maloof claimed that Arbeely slandered Maloof's name because he refused to recommend *Kawkab America* to Syrian migrants in the colony.<sup>106</sup> Maloof said this to save his reputation and his business from the impacts of the article. To counter the influence of *Kawkab America*, he decided to create his own newspaper, *al-Asr*.

Maloof and Mokarzel began publishing *al-Asr* to attack the Arbeely brothers, insisting that they deceived and stole from the Syrian community. By September of the same year, Najib and Ibrahim Arbeely sued Maloof for libel. Judging from the

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<sup>105</sup> Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 182.

<sup>106</sup> "Libeled in Hieroglyphics: Nageeb Maloof Brings Suit Against the Brothers Arbeely" *The World*, July 2, 1894. In this article Maloof translated the article in question. I was unable to locate the article myself to translate it.

numerous libel lawsuits between him and various editors, the remarks to the American press was an attempt to generate business by clearing his name. Besides their business ambitions, Maloof and Mokarzel hoped to influence the growing Syrian migrant population. Mokarzel recognized the inherent differences along Washington Street, where “good industrious Syrians” and “lazy Syrians” coexisted. He noted the differences in sects, characteristics, work ethics, and thought processes.<sup>107</sup>

Mokarzel desired to civilize, Westernize, and unify the Syrian community through his own newspaper. He did not think *Kawkab America* was effective in retaining tradition Syrian values while teaching the migrant population how to become more civil. Mokarzel and Maloof recognized that press constructed the Syrian community in the mahjar through printed descriptions of political organization. The press also developed educational and financial structures and spread national narratives, creating the imagined diasporic community. Maloof understood that the diasporic press could hurt his business, so he sought to influence it to generate business by partnering with Mokarzel. Mokarzel was against the political organizations that the Arbeely brothers represented. *Kawkab America* tended to be pro-Ottoman and pro-Orientalist, which Mokarzel, as influenced by the Maronite Church, believed to be backwards and barbarous.<sup>108</sup> Mokarzel and Maloof created newspapers to rival *Kawkab America*, because they did not agree with their politics nor their sectarian affiliation. Maloof and Mokarzel were staunch supporters of the

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<sup>107</sup> “Syrians in New York” *Al Hoda*, February 26, 1904.

<sup>108</sup> The Arbeely family was reported to throw celebratory parties and invited Ottoman diplomats in the *Kawkab America* office on Sultan Abdulhamid II’s birthday. See “Abdul Hamid’s Birthday” *The Sun*, February 23, 1894.



Maronite Church and the French Consulate.<sup>109</sup> In fact, when discussing Arab history, Mokarzel contributes the Arab's knowledge of science to the French missionaries rather than discussing the Islamic Renaissance during the Middle Ages.<sup>110</sup>

Mokarzel was the main instigator of many newspaper wars in the mahjar in the first decade of the twentieth century and instigated the newspaper war which led to the 1905 riots. Whenever the views he presented in *Al-Hoda* were not accepted by others, he fought his opponent until they were defeated. This mentality was troublesome for the minority community.<sup>111</sup> Mokarzel immigrated to the United States in 1890 and created his own newspaper, *Al-Hoda*, when his brother, Salloum, joined him in 1898. The newspaper did not determine a sectarian affiliation when it was first created. In its' first issue, Mokarzel presented *al-Hoda* as an independent paper for all Syrians, to rival newspapers editors loyal to competing empires for influence in Syria (i.e. British, Ottoman, Russian, France).<sup>112</sup> Since *al Hoda* was meant for all Syrians in the diaspora, Mokarzel made his newspaper competitive by publishing it bi-weekly, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. To compete with the Egyptian press which Mokarzel considers the "mother of the mahjar," *al-Hoda* reported on Syrians migrants in Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia.<sup>113</sup> However, impartiality did not last long as Mokarzel maintained close relationships with French officials, particularly George Picot, who

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<sup>109</sup> Naff, 320

<sup>110</sup> In an article in *Al Hoda*, February 26, 1904

<sup>111</sup>Michael Suleiman, "The Mokarzels' Contribution to the Arabic-Speaking Community in the United States," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21 (1999): 72.

<sup>112</sup> "Articles Section" *Al-Hoda*, February 22, 1898.

<sup>113</sup> In an article in *Al Hoda*, February 27, 1904.

later helped publish the Sykes-Picot Treaty.<sup>114</sup> Although Na'um tried to keep *al-Hoda* on an “independent path,” his competitive nature led to his decision to affiliate *al-Hoda* with his Maronite sect four years after the establishment of his newspaper. This was due to the publication of a rival Maronite paper, *Al-Sakhra*, created under the leadership of Bishop Yazbek for the Maronite Syrian community. To defeat this rival newspaper, Mokarzel printed articles accusing that the staff of *al-Sakhra* were not true representatives of Maronites, but were Greek Orthodox. He accused the “dishonest” staff of intending to split the Maronite community.<sup>115</sup>

To further overcome the competition with *al-Sakhra*, Mokarzel decided to publish his newspaper daily by August 1902. Mokarzel was brutal in his attempts to decrease competition in newspapers and the influence of the community, slandering his competition, even if they were former colleagues. When one of his writers, Amin al- Gharib, decided to create a Syrian nationalist newspaper, *al-Muhajir* (the Immigrant), he became subject to Mokarzel's attacks.<sup>116</sup> Mokarzel's intentions were to destroy the integrity of the competition, so that he could continue to influence the Maronite Syrian community. By 1905, this mentality reproduced sectarian tensions in the diaspora when he attacked the Greek Orthodox Syrian migrant community, after first attacking their bishop, Rafael Hawaweeny. The three main enemies of *al-Hoda* in

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<sup>114</sup> I do not have enough research to show if Mokarzel's relationship with George Picot was a major aspect of the decision to create a separate Lebanese nation under French Mandate after World War I, though it is worth noting.

<sup>115</sup> “Every Syrian Should Read This” *al Hoda*, February 15, 1902.; “Three Fortresses of Patriotism” *al Hoda*, February 15, 1902.

<sup>116</sup> Hani Bawardi, *The Making of Arab Americans: From Syrian Nationalism to U.S. Citizenship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 63.

the first decade became *al- Muhajir*, *Mira 'at- al Gharb*, and Syrian nationalist Bishop Hawaweeny.

### **The Reproduction of Sectarianism in Little Syria**

The Syrian migrant community was described as peaceful prior to 1905, with the exception of the few court cases. The year 1904, in particular, was a peaceful time for the Syrian migrants in the United States, as both the Maronite and the Greek Orthodox sects supported the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War to promote the prevalence of Christendom. *Mira 'at al-Gharb*, *al-Hoda* and the Bishop allied themselves with the Russians, and raised money for the Russian Christians to defeat the Japanese pagans.<sup>117</sup> Good spirits were furthered by Hawaweeny's appointment to Bishop of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Church of the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada.

There appeared to be peaceful relations among the bourgeoisie of the Syrian migrants and their newspapers, as they commandeered the influence of their respective communities. Mokarzel had noted that *Mira 'at al-Gharb* was a colleague of *al-Hoda* when he congratulated Hawaweeny on his appointment to the American Bishopric. He called the appointment "a rare and wonderful occasion" for Hawaweeny.<sup>118</sup> However, the peace between the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox Syrian migrants did not last into 1905, as the cosmopolitan elite began resenting Hawaweeny's growing influence in the community. Businessmen used the fragmentation of the Syrian migrant

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<sup>117</sup> "Syrians and the War" *al-Hoda*, February 26, 1904

<sup>118</sup> "Thoughts of the Colleague *Mira 'at al-Gharb*" *al Hoda*, February 27, 1904

community to destroy their competition. They paid the newspapers to publish slanderous articles to crush their business rivals.

Bishop Hawaweeny created his own bi-monthly journal, *al-Kalimah*, in January 1905, using print capitalism to unite the Syrian migrants in the diaspora. Hawaweeny justified the publication of *Al-Kalimah* to transmit the word of salvation and “love of the spiritual ministry to all Syrians, especially to the children of our community that are spread over our entire God protected Archdiocese. For because we cannot perform this spiritual ministry verbally towards our spiritual children due to their diffusion over places far away from the center of the Archdiocese.”<sup>119</sup> The magazine was intended for primarily Greek Orthodox Syrians scattered throughout the mahjar, but Hawaweeny also intended it for all Syrians in the diaspora. He hoped to forge a collective identity with even those further away in the mahjar through the journal’s “spirit of love.”<sup>120</sup> Unlike the other Arabic newspapers at this time, Hawaweeny emphasized in print that *al Kalimah* would avoid “personal allegations/ridicule and avoid all political matters.”<sup>121</sup>

Hawaweeny kept his word and remained neutral in political matters. Instead, he kept busy for most of the year building a Greek Orthodox Church for Syrian migrants in Massachusetts, the first Russian Orthodox Church. He travelled throughout the United States to perform wedding ceremonies. As the figurehead of the Greek Orthodox community in the Americas, Hawaweeny easily wielded the greatest

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<sup>119</sup> Hawaweeny, Raphael. “The Purpose of the Creation of the Magazine” *al-Kalimah*, January 1, 1905, 1. Translated by the author of this thesis.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 2

influence in the diaspora. Businessmen tried to manipulate that influence to further their business and political ambitions, but Hawaweeny refused to aid these men. Some elite members in the mahjar saw Hawaweeny's resistance as snobbery and it created enemies in the diaspora. These enemies were determined to defeat his influence in the diaspora, with the same methods they used to undermine their business rivals.

Slanderous newspaper articles to promote business and political interests in the diaspora continued until a circular in Little Syria demanded that editors and publishers stop publishing paid articles attacking Syrian personalities. According to the American newspapers, the circular was published by the Champagne Glass Club (*Jami'at al-Akdh*), a group of fifteen business men in Little Syria led by Maloof who wanted to protect their businesses. *Al-Hoda* supported these attempts, denouncing *Mira'at al-Gharb* for printing unnecessary slanderous words which disgusted the Syrian community.<sup>122</sup> Some diasporic newspapers agreed to stop publishing slanderous articles, but Hawaweeny refused to get involved or sign the petition. His refusal slanderous articles about Hawaweeny published in *al-Hoda*. The earliest attack on Hawaweeny's character came in August 1905, where *al-Hoda* published that Hawaweeny was leading his followers down the evil path and called him a snob.<sup>123</sup> Hawaweeny refused to respond to the articles, attempting to maintain his stance that as Bishop, his "paths do not lead [him] to politics."<sup>124</sup>

Although Hawaweeny refused to respond to the slander, members of his congregation did not stand idly by. The editor of the weekly journal *Mira'at al-Gharb*,

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<sup>122</sup> In an article in *Al-Hoda*, July 27, 1905

<sup>123</sup> "Reflections" *Al Hoda*, August 7, 1905.

<sup>124</sup> In an interview with Hawaweeny in "Syrians Blame the Bishop" *The Sun*, August 27, 1905.

Najib Diab, responded to the articles to protect Hawaweeny's reputation. Diab's response led to a series of slanderous articles about Maloof, Mokarzel, Hawaweeny and Diab in both newspapers. The slanderous contents of newspaper articles had gotten so out of control that Syrian migrants in New York told American reporters that they had forbidden their wives and daughters from reading the diasporic newspapers altogether.<sup>125</sup> Hawaweeny spoke against the newspaper fight after friends of *al-Hoda* begged him to put an end to the squabble.<sup>126</sup> On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, Maloof wrote a scathing article in *al-Hoda* in response to Hawaweeny's demand to end the newspaper war. Maloof reminded Hawaweeny of his "obligation as a servant to the people," and that he is no better than the people he serves and needs to stop acting like it. He accused Hawaweeny of being two-faced with double standards and that Diab is Hawaweeny's parrot, contending that *Mira'at al Gharb* is run by the Bishop. Among the accusations listed against Hawaweeny, Maloof blames Hawaweeny for ruining his enemies, such as Hana Abdulnoor and Na'um Mokarzel.<sup>127</sup> Maloof claimed that Hawaweeny stated that he wanted to prevent the people from reading *al-Hoda*.<sup>128</sup> Maloof's claims were attempts to reverse the Bishop's influence in the mahjar, using the same methods he attempted a decade previously with the Arbeely brothers.

Maloof's desperation was transparent to Hawaweeny. Hawaweeny hoped to calm his churchmen, who saw Maloof's article as an attack upon the entire Greek

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<sup>125</sup> "Syrians Stirred Up" *New York Tribune*, August 28, 1905.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>127</sup> Abdulnoor was a prominent Greek Orthodox merchant who lived in Staten Island. Hawaweeny assisted his wife with divorcing him. Maloof used the situation to claim that by assisting in the dissolution of the marriage, Hawaweeny was attempting to 'ruin' Abdulnoor. He does not specifically state the divorce in the article, but it is implied.

<sup>128</sup> Najib Maloof "Response to a Response" *al Hoda*, August 23, 1905.

Orthodox congregation. An attack upon the character of the Greek Orthodox Bishop reignited underlying sectarian tensions in Little Syria. Hawaweeny called a meeting that night in the basement of his church in Brooklyn to prevent violent reaction to Maloof's article. He told the *New York Tribune* that he asked his churchmen to forgive Maloof and Mokarzel, and not pay attention to the attacks.<sup>129</sup> The Maronites feared that the gathering was a conspiracy. On August 26<sup>th</sup> Maloof and a group of Maronite businessmen from the Champagne Glass Club submitted a formal appeal to Police Commissioner McAdoo to protect them from Hawaweeny and his violent Syrian Greek Orthodox followers. They claimed to have received threatening letters after Hawaweeny's meeting. The Champagne Glass Club members also claimed that this meeting was to demand the churchmen to defend their Bishop's honor and the churchmen took up "Oriental custom" for the congregation to swear to lay down their lives for their Bishop. Maloof manipulated Orientalism among the American Press in order to counter Hawaweeny's influence in the diaspora, alienating the Syrian population further from the American public.

These events led to more newspaper articles slandering Maloof, Diab, Mokarzel and Hawaweeny in the next couple weeks. Sectarian differences were manipulated to motivate their readers to choose a side in the newspaper battles. Maloof was a main advertiser in *al-Hoda*, and was Mokarzel's partner in their last newspaper. Naturally, Mokarzel sought to defend Maloof's reputation to the Maronite population. Mokarzel reminded his readers that Maloof is known throughout the United States as respectable, moral, and peaceful. He states that Mokarzel was unfairly

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<sup>129</sup> "Syrians Stirred Up" *New York Tribune*, August 28, 1905.

attacked for asking newspaper editors to print solely honest and just articles. Mokarzel's article indicates that Diab and the Bishop were corrupt in their refusal to get involved with Maloof and the Champagne Glass Club. In the same article, Mokarzel accuses Diab of debasing himself by publishing articles which disrespect Syrian women.<sup>130</sup> Mokarzel calls for *Mira'at al- Gharb* to be shut down for Diab's abusive attacks on Syrian families.

The tensions between the newspapers' editors were reflected in the Syrian community while acts of sectarian violence began to simmer. Hawaweeny had been threatened with assassination as well. He reported that he did "not dare to leave [his] home unaccompanied at night" for a couple of weeks.<sup>131</sup> On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1905, tensions led to potential violence when three migrants from Zahle drew weapons upon Maronite men. The guns were taken by other peaceful Zahle men, but they were not able to prevent one of these angry men from assaulting a "generous Maronite" member of the community, who was not named. Mokarzel placed the full responsibility of these actions upon Hawaweeny, for encouraging "idiots to consider themselves brave vigilantes."<sup>132</sup>

By September 18<sup>th</sup>, skirmishes turned into a full riot between two hundred Maronites and Greek Orthodox on Pacific Street. That day a skirmish took place on Washington Street as three Maronite merchants from the Champagne Glass Club attacked the Greek Orthodox Merchant Nicola Abu Samara. The police arrested Maloof, Awad, and Gazal for disturbing the peace. Abu Samara was a close friend of

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<sup>130</sup> In an article in *Al Hoda*, September 16, 1905, 2

<sup>131</sup> "Assassins are After Him, Says Bishop in Riot" *The World*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*



Hawaweeny, so rumors spread about an assassination on the Bishop.<sup>133</sup> The skirmish of that day gave way to a full out riot on Pacific Street that night. Mokarzel reported that the shooting began around 9:30 pm with forty-five to fifty shots fired on the intersection of Clinton and Pacific Street. He described that the residents left their houses crying and shouting on the street due to the commotion. Men began fighting while the perpetrators ran away from the scene. Not too long after the sound, a wounded Abdo Diab Ashkouti knocked on Mokarzel's door for sanctuary. A bullet had scraped the side of his left thigh, leaving two wounds. Mokarzel explained to have welcomed him "as a brother and friend" and cared for his wounded left thigh, until a doctor showed up to dress the wounds. The police appeared and arrested six men, among them was the Bishop.<sup>134</sup> Police deputy Mallon chased after Hawaweeny in full sprint for a block.<sup>135</sup> Policeman Butler reported that Hawaweeny threw aside a pearl handled revolver before Mellon caught him.<sup>136</sup>

Afterwards the police asked for Ashkouti's report of the incident, who claimed to have been walking to Mokarzel's house alone with his cane. As Ashkouti turned onto the intersection of Pacific Street and Clinton Street, he saw two Syrian men walking up to Mokarzel's house on 137 Pacific Street and another three men passing by behind them, one of the men having a long beard. When the men saw Abdo, the bearded man proclaimed him to be an enemy and yelled for his companions to kill Ashkouti. Shots were immediately fired. According to Ashkouti, at least ten more

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<sup>133</sup> "Bishop a Prisoner" *The New York Daily Tribune*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>134</sup> Na'um Mokarzel, "Rafael Hawaweeny and his Followers in Jail" *al Hoda*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>135</sup> "Greek Bishop's Party Attacks Syrian Editor" *New York Times*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>136</sup> "Syrian Bishop in a Cell" *The Sun*, September 19, 1905

armed men walked by with guns and also began shooting. Ashkouti goes on to narrate a heroic tale of his survival; he told reporters that he broke his cane after hitting three men with it. Afterwards he began grabbing men from the mob to guard himself, only to toss them aside and replace his human shields. His goal was to get to Mokarzel's doorstep. Ashkouti did not confirm that the bearded man who initiated the attack was Bishop Hawaweeny, since he "did not know the Bishop personally," but suggested that it could have been him.<sup>137</sup>

Mokarzel admitted to not knowing the full details of the incident, since he remained in his house during the riot. He used the American newspapers and Ashkouti's report to try to piece together what happened. Mokarzel even translated the newspaper articles from the *Times*, *the Sun*, *The New York Tribune*, *The Herald*, and *the World* concerning the incident, to allow his readers to determine what happened themselves.<sup>138</sup> McAdoo misinterpreted the incident as an attack on Mokarzel's house in his police report, allowing the American press to believe that Mokarzel was involved. Mokarzel believes McAdoo's misunderstanding of the events were due to rumors that had been circulating the past month that the Greek Orthodox Syrians threatened to kill Mokarzel and other Maronite members of the Champagne Glass Club. The police report and the American press believed Hawaweeny led an armed attack against Mokarzel.

In the police report, Hawaweeny and a few of his friends appeared upon Mokarzel's door step on 137 Pacific Street, where the Champagne Glass Club was

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<sup>137</sup> Na'um Mokarzel, "Rafael Hawaweeny and his Followers in Jail" *al Hoda*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*

holding a meeting. According to the *New York Times*, “the minute the Hawaweeny party entered the fight began” in the parlor and then out into the street.<sup>139</sup> *The Sun* reported that the two factions held an hour long meeting before the fight broke out.<sup>140</sup> The *New York Daily Tribune* reported that no one entered Mokarzel’s residence, and as soon as he saw and heard the men coming, Mokarzel “fled down the backstairs to safety,” while his friends prepared themselves to receive the aggressive visitors.<sup>141</sup> Mokarzel contends that no conference was held between the two factions and no one entered his residence during the incident. Although Mokarzel denied that Hawaweeny and his followers attempted to assassinate him, he still blamed the riot on Hawaweeny’s bad rationale in his teachings. A follow-up article in *al-Hoda* insisted that Hawaweeny’s “hissing” created the factionalism and animosity between the Maronites and the Greek Orthodox Syrians, splitting the Syrian migrant community.<sup>142</sup>

Hawaweeny denied any part in the incident, believing that it is just another way for his enemies to attempt to hurt him. Hawaweeny claimed that he and a group of his parishioners went to visit Samara to pray with him after the earlier attack.<sup>143</sup> When the shooting began, the Bishop claimed to have been peacefully passing by, unarmed. According to his sister-in-law, Hawaweeny saw the gathering of men who passed and insulted him, but he kept walking until they shot at him.<sup>144</sup> Hawaweeny explained to reporters of *The World* that he ran because he believed that the riot was a

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<sup>139</sup> “Greek Bishop’s Party Attacks Syrian Editor” *The New York Times*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>140</sup> “Syrian Bishop in a Cell” *the Sun*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>141</sup> “Bishop a Prisoner” *New York Daily Tribune*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>142</sup> In an article in *Al-Hoda*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>143</sup> “Cop Says Bishop Had a Gun” *The Sun*, September 20, 1905.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*

“feigned pistol duel” with the hope of assassinating the Bishop with a stray bullet.<sup>145</sup> He claimed that he had no idea how to use a gun since he had lived in a convent most of his life. Hawaweeny spent the night in Butler Street Station, after the magistrate refused him bail to maintain the peace and protect Hawaweeny.

The next day the officer who caught Hawaweeny, Mallon, claimed that the Bishop shoved the revolver in his face and snapped it twice after he saw the Bishop fire the gun at others. This new declaration contradicting his police report that all he saw was Hawaweeny running and tossing aside a weapon.<sup>146</sup> The contradiction in Mallon’s reports shed some public sympathy for Hawaweeny. Police Commissioner McAdoo reported to have deemed Mallon’s charge “preposterous.”<sup>147</sup> The New York newspapers changed their minds about Hawaweeny, believing that a bishop could not be capable of such violence after interviewing the Greek Orthodox residents of Little Syria. *The Sun*, *The New York Daily Tribune*, and *the World* detailed the libel case against Mokarzel, Maloof, and three others from the Champagne Glass Club that followed Hawaweeny’s night in jail. McAdoo and Inspector Cross found Maloof and Mokarzel’s August appeal that the Bishop had incited his followers to attack them baseless. The American newspapers and public now saw Mokarzel and Maloof’s actions as “Oriental” to ask for protection against a man they planned to attack.<sup>148</sup> Orientalist against the whole Syrian community is clear throughout the American press. New York newspapers first believed that the Bishop would call a meeting to

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<sup>145</sup> “Assassins are After Him, Says Bishop in Riot” *The World*, September 19, 1905.

<sup>146</sup> “Cop says Bishop had a Gun” *The Sun*, September 20, 1905.

<sup>147</sup> “Bishop Appeals to McAdoo” *The Sun*, September 22 1905.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid*

incite an “oriental” ritual to ask his followers to give their lives for him and then saying that lie was an oriental custom. The sectarian strife had been attributed to orientalism on both sides due to xenophobia.

*The Sun* reported that the attacks upon Hawaweeny’s reputation was due to the Maronites’ jealousy of Hawaweeny’s success with the construction of his church and cemetery.<sup>149</sup> It was more than Greek Orthodox structures that fueled Maloof and Mokarzel’s jealousy; they were threatened by Hawaweeny’s influence over the diaspora. Maloof and Mokarzel were unable to pass their circular without his signature. Hawaweeny made enemies through his neutrality in the social, commercial and political fights among the elite men. Maloof emphasized that Hawaweeny’s stance of neutrality was an indication of his being two-faced. Maloof and Mokarzel had extensive experience with the American press and the police. They used this experience to manipulate the American public and try to break the Bishop’s influence over the Syrian community. In attacking the Bishop, Mokarzel and Maloof reproduced sectarianism among the Greek Orthodox and Maronites in their communities. Men like Abdo Ashkouti fought to defend these elite leaders and their sect.

The factionalism that the diasporic newspapers sparked caused tension and more riots throughout the next three months in Little Syria. Hawaweeny appealed to McAdoo for protection against the threats of the Champagne Glass Club. The Russian Consul General also asked for protection for the Bishop in the form of a guard.<sup>150</sup> Interestingly, while Hawaweeny and the Greek Orthodox Syrian migrants had the

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<sup>149</sup>“Cop says Bishop had a Gun” *The Sun*, September 20, 1905.

<sup>150</sup> “Syrian Churchman Pushing Suit for Libel Against Enemies” *The New York Daily Tribune*, September 22, 1905.

Russian Consul General advocate for them, a French lawyer, Charles Lebarbier defended Mokarzel. This court case reflected Syrian politics, with the Russian consulate interfering in Ottoman affairs, claiming protection over the Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects and the French claiming protection over the Maronites. Ottoman sectarianism and international politics had been reflected in Little Syria due to a feud fueled by merchants trying to protect their businesses. Whether Hawaweeny or Mokarzel were directly involved with the shooting on September 18th is not as important as the fact that their strife in the Syrian diasporic media led to a sectarian conflict in Little Syria. Syrian men were willing to kill for their sectarian group and leader, even if not directly asked to. Sectarianism was imported and reproduced in the Syrian diaspora, as more important than a Syrian ancestry.

The court case only fueled sectarian violence in Little Syria, as the newspapers continued to attack each other. By October, Hawaweeny was presented as a murderer in *al-Hoda*. Mokarzel claimed that Hawaweeny hired assassins to kill him and Maloof throughout the month. These articles kept fueling the tension in Little Syria, continuing the skirmishes and charges among the residents. On September 21<sup>st</sup> 1905, three Greek Orthodox migrants residing on Washington Street attacked Maronite John Bontross on Rector Street with three-foot clubs.<sup>151</sup> On October 11<sup>th</sup> 1905, Maloof sued Diab for libel. More charges and counter-charges between the Syrians continued to trouble Magistrate Wahle's court. Wahle became impatient with the constant skirmishes by October 23<sup>rd</sup> during Maloof's countercharge that a Syrian assaulted him. Wahle interrupted the case and lectured the three hundred Syrians who appeared in his

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*

courtroom to make charges and/or represent their faction. He advised the men to settle the complaints among themselves and make peace with their neighbors.<sup>152</sup> Maloof replied that he is afraid for his life because the Bishop had put the price of five thousand dollars on his head. Wahle invited Maloof to stay with him to calm him down and adjourn the court. Officer Oscar Finn helped file the men out of the court room. Unfortunately, as soon as the men filed out of the court room, another riot took place on Washington Street.

Twenty-five year old Hafez Abdulmalek left his job at the *Mira'at al-Gharb* office at six o'clock that evening. Due to the neighborhood tensions and his occupation, Abdulmalek requested that Officer Finn escort him to his residence. Maronite grocer Moussa Abalan stopped them on Liberty Street and called another Patrolman over to arrest Abdulmalek for possessing a whip. This scene attracted an angry crowd, as Patrolman Moran arrested Abdulmalek and took him to the Church Street Station, where he was discharged. As soon as Abdulmalek was discharged, revolvers and knives were drawn and chaos erupted. The fighting among the Syrian migrants ensued for an hour and four men were stabbed, including Abalan. *The New York Times* described the rioters as "wild-eyed" and "baring teeth," as if they were barbarians rather than humans.<sup>153</sup>

Although this was the last major riot in Little Syria, it led to more charges and counter-charges. Abalan charged another grocer, Greek Orthodox Tony Sabi with stabbing him. Other businessmen hurt their competitors in the same fashion. What

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<sup>152</sup> "Wahle Tells 300 Syrians to End Feuds" *The World*, October 23, 1905

<sup>153</sup> "Syrians Riot in Street and Many are Hurt" *New York Times*, October 24, 1905.

started as a war of words between literary cosmopolitan elite figureheads had reconstructed itself as a sectarian battle for merchants. The merchants used the chaos to also try to eliminate competition in the mahjar, justifying their actions through sectarian languages. Maloof, Mokarzel, and Diab may not have been present at the two riots that took place, but their battle of words had precipitated and caused the migrant community to faction. When Hawaweeny became involved in the newspaper attacks, the factions justified themselves through sectarianism. Sectarianism was reproduced through print capitalism and divided the Syrian community. Skirmishes and rows continued in Little Syria, with the American newspapers constantly viewing the violence as a continuation of the September 18<sup>th</sup> riot.

Although it seemed that the newspaper editors made their peace with each other and with Hawaweeny, they continued to represent their sectarian factions up until 1920, when Diab and Mokarzel both attended the Paris Peace Conference to advocate for two different visions of nationalism. Diab hoped to influence the Western leaders to help construct a separate Syrian nation-state, whereas Mokarzel petitioned for the creation of a separate Lebanese nation-state with a Maronite majority and French protectorate. Mokarzel's desire to influence the Maronites in the diaspora shifted to trying to create a separate nation for the Maronites, led by the Church and influenced by the French.

The migrants claimed to have left the Ottoman Empire and sectarian strife, only to reproduce it amongst themselves in their adopted homelands. The reproduction of sectarianism was fueled by print capitalism in the diaspora. The cosmopolitan literary elite migrants competed for influence in the Syrian mahjar through newspaper



articles. They slandered their enemies to wield their influence. When Hawaweeny was appointed Bishop of the Americas, he became a target. When Hawaweeny became a target, the attacks took a sectarian coloring, causing riots in the streets between Maronite and Greek Orthodox merchants and peddlers.

Sectarian-based riots in the United States was not a new phenomenon by the twentieth century. Philadelphia had seen riots in the 1844 Kensington riots, when native Evangelical Protestants attacked Irish Catholic immigrants. Newspaper wars were also common in the United States and was prominent in the Arabic newspapers of Little Syria. New York itself was riddled with factional riots in other migrant communities. The Catholic and Protestant Irish fought among themselves; the Chinese migrants were torn between the feuding On Leong Tong and Hip Sing Tong families. The Italian migrants were divided between their place of origin (Northern Italian vs. Sicilians) and Sicilian mafia gangs. However, rioting was rare for “friendly” Syrian community.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw a shift from the façade of a national Syrian diasporic community to the further fragmentation of the Syrian immigrant community along sectarian along, fermented by the competition of Arabic sectarian-affiliated newspapers. The reproduction of sectarianism in Little Syria was a reaction to the xenophobia confronted in the diaspora. The violence of its reproduction further proved to the American public that Syrians were uncivilized. *The New York Times* referred to the Syrian migrants as “wild-eyed” and frenzied.<sup>154</sup> Violence in the immigrant communities reinforced the American xenophobia of its South Eastern

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<sup>154</sup> “Syrians Riot in the Street and Many Are Hurt” *New York Times*, October 24, 1905.

European and Asian migrants. It justified their beliefs that these new migrants are barbarous and would degrade the population. When reporting upon the riots, American newspapers made the Syrian migrant population look to be uncivilized, led into moral decay by an uncivilized Bishop. American newspapers agreed that the rioting in the Syrian colony was worse than the Tong family feuds. American reporters employed orientalism and described the Syrians as dark-skinned and animal-like, showing their bias about the Syrians. The violent sectarianism in the diaspora only justified nativist xenophobia which ultimately led to exclusionary laws to prevent further Syrian migrations to the United States.

## **Conclusion**

Syrian migrants escaped religious economic inequality and sectarian tensions by immigrating to the United States, “the land of opportunity”. Syrian migrants were lured by the promise of American economic opportunities and safety for Christians that the American Presbyterian missionaries and the expositions of 1876 and 1893 presented to them. These opportunities appeared more favorable than the land-and-crop-deprived Mount Lebanon regions, the burden of heavy taxation, and the competition against cheaper European goods that the immigrants had experienced in the Ottoman Empire. The deprived economic conditions of Syria combined with the memories of the brutality of the 1860 massacres were pivotal for the Syrian decision to immigrate to the United States, a land in which Christians can prosper. The Arbeely family’s immigration is the prime example of how the conditions of the Ottoman Empire allowed the Arbeelys to be lured by the promise of economic opportunity and lack of sectarian strife that the American Presbyterian missionaries presented to them. Other immigrants listened to these promises, and were convinced by the letters from migrants and merchants who attended the 1876 and 1893 United States Expositions. The letters confirmed that the United States was the land of opportunity.

The Syrian migrants were welcomed with xenophobia when they arrived in the United States. The migrants experienced Irish-American harassment in their colony, causing them to unite together for the first time as Syrians, or an imagined community which connected them with the Syrians in the Ottoman Empire. They put aside their differences to demand protection from the authorities for their entire community in

Little Syria in 1892. The experience of xenophobia led to the creation of an imagined Syrian diasporic community as newspapers and family networks kept the immigrants connected to Syria. The community turned inwards to focus on itself and daily life in Little Syria, to survive the xenophobia their host colony received them with. By the twentieth century, the small colony of three hundred Syrian migrants increased tenfold, increasing the need for more newspapers to better represent the diverse population.

Although the Syrian immigrants sought to escape the sectarian strife that they experienced within Syria, under Ottoman governance, they reproduced the same sectarian tensions they escaped through print capitalism. Immediately after settling in Little Syria, migrants began works to recreate the life they left behind. They united and strengthened their congregations, financed for the immigration of priests to tend to the needs of these congregations, and built churches to represent their different rites. They refused to intermingle, even when attending the same church for religious observance on Sundays, remaining fragmented in the mahjar.

The cosmopolitan literary elite manipulated sectarian loyalties, and reconstructed a different sort of sectarianism in the diaspora as they fought amongst each other for influence over the diaspora. Maloof and Mokarzel worked together to slander their enemies, to defeat them. These sectarian divisions led to newspaper wars, which escalated to street riots between merchants and two hundred Syrian men on the precept of sectarianism when *al-Hoda* attacked the Greek Orthodox Bishop of the Americas, Raf'ael Hawaweeny in 1905. For three months, tensions between the Maronite and Greek Orthodox were high as both factions sought to defend their

sectarian leaders and their businesses. The riots of 1905 fragmented the Syrian population along sectarian lines permanently in the diaspora, although they presented themselves to the xenophobic public as united Syrians.

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