

The Hadchiti Diaspora: A Re-Territorialized Lebanese Village in Western Sydney

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This is the text of her presentation at the 2005 Annual General Meeting*



Figure 1: A recent picture of the Village of Hadchit

village and its Diaspora communities.

The aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of mass emigration from the village of Hadchit, in Northern Lebanon, to Western Sydney. Hadchit will be located within the broader Lebanese Diaspora and it will be shown how globalization is reshaping Hadchiti identity and creating the possibility for an intensified transnational interaction between the Diaspora communities and the home village. The "return visit" is a case in point. It can be understood as rite of passage and a pilgrimage (Baldassar, 2001), which solidifies the relationship between the

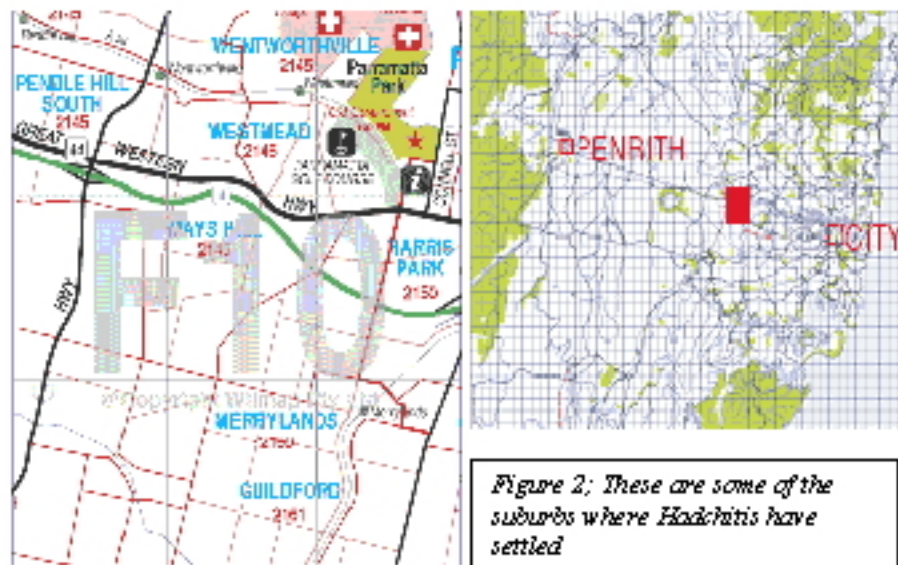


Figure 2; These are some of the suburbs where Hadchitis have settled

Globalization has transformed the boundaries of the village contributing to its de-territorialization and integration globally into a re-constituted Hadchiti Diaspora community which exists in multiple locations, including Western Sydney. Consequently, home and belonging are now possible for Hadchitis in places beyond the geographical boundaries of the traditional

village. For example, a virtual "global village" could be said to exist on the internet, where Hadchitis from multiple arms of the Diaspora converge and meet. The persistent connection of Sydney Hachiti's to their home village challenges us to understand the significance of kinship and homeland in an increasingly globalized world.

Diaspora and cultural continuity in Sydney

There are approximately 84,321 Lebanese born residing in Sydney today (2004 ABS Statistics). Hence, the Lebanese are a substantial minority in modern Multicultural Australia warranting study and understanding

The population of Hadchit has been emigrating for about 120 years (Kepler-Lewis, 1968). The first wave of emigrants went to the United States at the end of the 19th century. The second wave has been arriving in Australia mostly since the 1960's. Today the village of Hadchit has around 600 households and an additional 500 households of Hadchiti immigrants reside in the Parramatta area of Western Sydney. They are part of a much larger Lebanese community that revolves around the Harris Park Maronite Church. They are a well organized migrant community with their own community Hall, Village Association, Youth Association and telephone directory. Thus, the Hadchiti population in Sydney provides an excellent opportunity to study the process of mass emigration from a single village to another destination, how their community has been reconfigured in Australia and the ways in which the relationship to their homeland has been transformed by the forces of globalization.

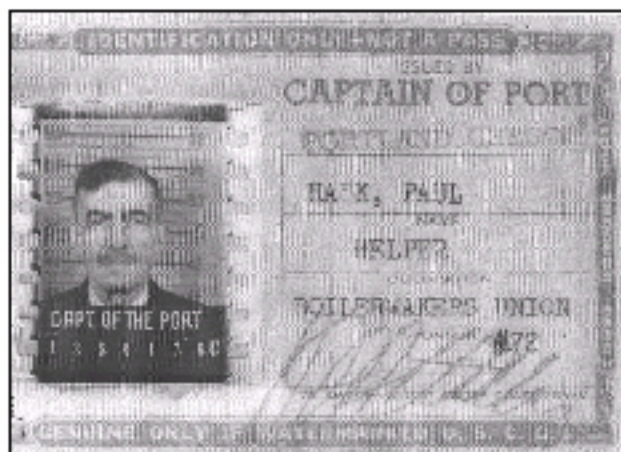


Figure 3

Methodology

I have decided to undertake a study in which I am both an "insider" and an "outsider" (Altorki, 1988). I have chosen to focus on the Hadchiti Diaspora because I have kinship links, through my Lebanese ancestry, to both to the villagers in Hadchit and to their descendants in Western Sydney. ¹Thus, this research project offers an opportunity to undertake a study in "Anthropology at Home" (Jackson, 1987, Marcus, 1986). On the other hand, since I have

grown up outside of both communities I won't be a "native anthropologist", as such (Fahim, 1982). The experience of field work, in this case, will help me to explore my own Lebanese background and to return to the village of my Great-Grandfather.

There are advantages in this type of approach. For example, Clifford (Clifford, 1986) argued a purely "objective" account leaves out a substantial element of reality. By including a reflexive component, my ethnography will be more interpretive than empiricist. Hence, I intend to allow a confluence between the personal and the professional and blur the boundaries of researcher and researched. In part, therefore, the research approach will be an autobiographical experience (Okely, 1992).

The project will be based on ethnographic research involving Participant Observation fieldwork, Interviews and Life Histories amongst Hadchitis in Sydney and Hadchit. I will attend cultural and community events and religious festivals. I will also engage the internet to look at how different arms of the Hadchiti Diaspora interact. Lastly, I will go back to

¹ Figure 3: A Picture of Salah Rizik (changed name to: Paul Rask), my Great-Grandfather from Hadchit, taken during the WWII in the USA

Hadchit in August-September 2006 to participate in a "return visit" during the St. Raymond's Festival, the Patron Saint of Hadchit.

Conclusion

This study will address several important contemporary themes in Anthropology. These include doing Anthropology at home, which blurs the traditional distinction between the researcher and the researched. Identity, place and belonging in the Hadchiti community will also be explored. By studying the process of mass emigration to Australia from Hadchit it will be an opportunity to understand in greater depth the process of mass emigration from a single village to another destination. Furthermore, it will provide an insight into the inner workings of a Lebanese migrant community residing in Australia today. This will be important considering the common misrepresentation and misunderstanding of Australia's Arab Community, which dominates the media today.

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