Palestinian Emigration to America -1876-1945; The Effect of Push Factors

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Abstract

This article deals with the Push factors propelling and supporting emigration, such as Americanmissionary activity in Palestine and its contribution to Palestinian emigration, the burden ofOttoman rule, and. the heavy taxation of the village populations in Palestine. There are also other factors that fostered emigration of Palestinian intellectuals to the United States, such as the transformations in marine transportation and the establishment of travel agencies in Palestine Between the years 1840 and 1920, which have not been examined in academic research.

**Keywords**: Emigration, Palestine, Fellahin, Push Factors.

Introduction

Emigration is not a new demographic phenomenon in the Middle East. For thousands of years the peoples settled along the coasts of Syria and Anatolia developed commercial ties overseas. The period under examination begins at the end of the 19th century on account of the emigration of young merchants from Bethlehem who wished to establish an economic base for themselves in the United States at that time. Subsequently many families followed their example. This immigration was brought to a stop by World War II and the Nakba too, as after the war a new type of immigration manifested, which was characterized largely by emigres who had acquired higher education, i.e., a Brain Drain.

Emigration from Palestine to the United States increased not only during periods of economic hardship but at times of social and political hardship as well. An analysis of emigrants’ place of origin (according to the newspaper Filas*ṭī*n and the periodical al-Hil*ā*l show that the first wave of emigration departed for the United States from Bethlehem in Palestine. Most of them did not return to their place of origin, but instead remained and settled in the new country, and established successful Arab communities that constituted a hire for additional Palestinian emigrants.

To date, this subject — the push factors of Palestinian emigration to the United States — has not been researched. Historians dealing with Syrian emigration during the period under discussion by and large have not related to the push factors; they mainly discuss the Emigres after their resettlement, as in the books of Philip Hitti, namely The Syrians in America, (New York, 1924); Alixa Naff, Becoming American: The Early. Arab Immigrant Experience, (Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), Elie Safe, L'emigration Libanaise, (Beyrouth, 1966); Gregory Orfelea, Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans, (Texas Press, 1988); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, (University of California Press, 2001).

The origin of this emigration lies in the combination of economic, demographic, cultural, political, religious and even psychological factors all of which can be categorized as either push or pull factors. (See Figure 1). The subject of this article is a survey of the complex of push factors prevalent among people living in the mountainous region of Jerusalem and adjacent villages (Bethlehem, Beit-Jālā, Rāmallah, al-Bireh, Bir Zeit) as well as in Nazareth and Safed and their adjacent villages (al-Jish, Fassuṭa, Kufur Yasīf and others).

**Figure 1: Main Push Factors of Emigration from Palestine to America**

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| --- |
| **Push Factors** |
| Economic situation and high taxation |
| Political reasons |
| Demographic density |
| Missionary activities |
| The effect of travel agencies |
| Traditional tendency towards emigration |

**Methodology**

Until now, the historiography of the causes that drove and/or attracted Palestinians to immigrate to America during that period was inadequate. It dealt mostly with Palestinian immigration to America and other countries after the war of 1948. It did not generally attach sufficient importance to the subject matter we shall discuss here. Their major focus was on the Arab Israeli conflict, or on the causes for the Syrian and Lebanese immigration to America, and not on the causes for Palestinian immigration to America, be it the rush towards it or the attraction to it.

The newspapers published at the time, Filastin and al-Karmil offered information for potential immigrants, including articles, advertisements, and letters published by the emigres to the United States. the newspaper “Filastin” in Jaffa (1911), covered information about sailing benefits and western shipping agencies that were founded in Palestine to facilitate the immigration of Palestinians to America. The Haifa newspaper Al-Karmil (1908) carried similar information for potential immigrants from Palestine. Popular literature at the time re-Palestinian immigration is thought to be an important and reliable source about the causes that encouraged Palestinians to immigrate to America.

These Elementary sources were supplemented by contemporary Arabic periodicals, written by Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, graduates of the American University of Beirut. For example, “al-Muqtaṭaf” which was published in Beirut in 1876, “al-Adīb” (Beirut 1942) and “al-Abḥāth” (Beirut 1948). These periodicals, both primary and secondary, contain articles that refer indirectly to the impetus for the emigration of Palestinians to America. Alongside the use of the press and popular literature, a variety of important secondary sources were also used for the purposes of this paper in order to reach an understanding of the factors for the rush and/or attraction for Palestinian immigration to America.

The purpose of this article is to refresh the Palestinian memory and to enhance awareness of the issue under consideration for fear of forgetting, especially at a time when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in a state of stagnation and there is no comprehensive solution. We shall shed light once again on the factors for the rush and/or attractions that caused the Palestinian immigration to America.

**The Origin and Scope of the Emigration**

The Emigration from Bethlehem

Most of the historians who wrote about Palestinian emigration from the Holy Land take note of the fact date that it began in 1876 from Bethlehem. But Maik George Salman mentions in his article that that the first emigrant to depart for North America was from Rāmallah by the name of Ḥannā Khalīl Murqus in 1851.1 It appears that this was an isolated incident, and that emigration from Bethlehem, began, as stated earlier, in 1876 when a group of merchants set out from Bethlehem (including a few from Zahle in the Lebanon Mountains) to America in order to visit the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.2 Some of them settled there and acquired American citizenship.3

Those that traveled to the exposition brought with them oriental perfumes, olive wood carvings, gold filigree, amber beads, clay vases and olive wood beads as well as religious artifacts and objects made in Bethlehem. Thus, the religious-commercial connection between residents of Bethlehem and the tourists and pilgrims4 who visited the Holy Land encouraged the residents of Bethlehem to export their goods to the markets of Europe and the United States.5Missionaries were also involved in the holy land to the United States.

Many Palestinians were forced to emigrate from Palestine to other lands for commercial purposes between 1904 and 1914. Many of these left their wives and children behind, but eventually these Palestinian women were obliged to follow their husbands to the lands of emigration because they were not able to support themselves and their children6 on account of their poverty. Thus the phenomenon of Palestinian emigration, especially from the towns of Bethlehem, Rāmallah, and Beit-Jālā between 1899 and 1924 acquired a pronounced social- familial dimension.

The Filasṭīn newspaper also reported in 1913 on the emigration of Palestinians for similar reasons;.7The spread of tuberculosis in the Old City of Jerusalem,8 mainly from the following areas: Khān al-Zeit, and Sūq al-ʿAṭṭārīn and Sūq al-Kabīr was another motivating factor for healthy young people to depart for the New World.

In another example the Arabic newspapers mention the flight of 35 Palestinian emigres, mainly *fellahin* (rural-s) for the North American continent; they were forced to emigrate due to economic backwardness, lack of employment and the poverty reigning in Palestine. Unluckily for them, they were apprehended at the mouth of the *Nahr al-ʿŪja* (Yarkon) before their departure from Palestine to their hoped- for destination, and returned them in handcuffs to Jerusalem to be interrogated by the authorities about their illegal escape.9 Muṣṭafā Murād al-Dabbāgh notes that in light of the above-mentioned circumstances, we are witness to the emigration of young Palestinian villagers at the start of the 20th century especially from the villages north of Jerusalem such as Beit Dako, Beit Ḥanina, Turmus-ʿAyya, al-Mazraʿa al-Sharqiyya, In Yabrūd, In Jarir, Bitin, Deir Debwan, 10 Bitūnya (mainly the clan of Dār al-Ḥaddād, some of whom settled in Chicago). These departed for the continents of North and South America in search of economic circumstances better than those they endured in Jerusalem and its environs.

Moreover, the Palestinian Encyclopedia adds, there was also urban emigration from Rāmallah and Beit-Jālā to North and South America for the same reasons.11

The Emigration from Rāmallah

The Jaffa Arabic newspaper Filasṭīn adds that Rāmallah’s residents began to emigrate to the American continent in the footsteps of the of Beit-lahm’s residents, starting in 1888, in order to seek additional sources of livelihood.12Many recall the emigration from this town to the United States.

Yusuf Jiryis Qaddūra, a past mayor of Rāmallah, tells us how the American Friends played a role in encouraging emigration to the United States.13 As early as the 1860s the Quakers (Society of Friends) began to establish a center of operations the town of Rāmallah. First of all, they set up a primary school for boys and then in 1889 they began building a school for girls. They commissioned builders and draftsmen from Bethlehem in order to accomplish this because of the dearth of skilled workmen in Rāmallah. As the school was being built, workers from Rāmallah overheard the workers from Bethlehem discussing at length the “remote land” called America, to which residents of Bethlehem had traveled in order to conduct business. They aided their relatives financially, and later returned home with a great deal of money.  14  Qaddura mentions an additional reason for the emigration of Palestinians from Rāmallah when he states that most of the residents of the town of Rāmallah were simple fellahin, living in such poverty, ignorance and naivety that the illiteracy rate was high relative to the educated population (which numbered only ten) while the city’s population was 3,000.15 This description of Rāmallah remained accurate until the start of the 20th century, when the emigration to North America began in earnest.

As a result of the decline of agriculture in Rāmallah, the landowners were forced to transfer their land to farmers from the township, but on condition that they implement the al-Mush*āṭ*ara system.16 According to this system, the produce was divided equally between the landowner and the tenant. The landowners, who were for the most part wealthy, preferred to immigrate to America and settled primarily in Chicago. Subsequently many of them moved to New York and invested their capital in commerce. Indeed, many succeeded in establishing businesses. There were those less fortunate who became peddlers, competing among themselves to send money to their relatives.

In fact, according to the testimony of the mayor of Rāmallah quoted above, the quantities of money remitted to Rāmallah generated social, economic and cultural upheavals. For example, new and elegant homes were constructed; new highways were paved; markets, resort hotels, national parks, primary and secondary schools were built. Eventually a municipal government was established and charged with maintaining public projects in Rāmallah.

Hanna Salah, the engineer who earned his degree in the United States and became the

Municipality engineer for the city of Jaffa, puts the number of Arab emigrants that left the

Above-mentioned cities in addition to Nazareth and villages adjacent to Jerusalem during 1900-1919, at 13,000."17

Emigration from Nazareth

Palestinian emigration was not a phenomenon exclusive to Jerusalem and its environs. Emigration from the Galilee (al-Jalīl) began from the city of Nazareth. Nazareth’s economy was hurt by the sale of most of Marj ibn Amr (Jezreel Valley) to Jewish settlement agents because many of the city’s residents, especially those from the eastern neighborhood, used to lease part of their lands, and merchants earned their livelihood from the land before it was sold.

Nazareth also served as the commercial center for the residents of the Jezreel Valley. The disappearance of these two resources following the purchase of the Jezreel Valley by Jewish settlement agents severely and adversely affected Nazareth’s economy, and catalyzed the emigration of young people from Nazareth to Haifa and subsequently to the North and South American continents in search of employment.18

It should be added that the rise in real estate prices as a consequence of Jewish immigration to Palestine tempted many landowners to sell their property to Jewish settlement agents. According to the estimates of the Palestinian Encyclopedia, published in 1990, more than 8,000 fellahs abandoned their land in 22 or more villages in Marj Banī ʿĀmir (Jezreel Valley)19 subsequent to its sale.

The above factors combined to drive the young, landless sector of the population of Nazareth who could find no alternate employment after the loss of their main livelihood to emigrate from the city. Some migrated to Haifa, and some headed to the United States and to Egypt. Later they migrated to North and South America. Filastin newspaper continues that while the population of Nazareth stood at more than 10,000, emigration swallowed half, or even more, i.e. 5-6,000.20

Emigration from the Western Galilee

Rafael Bulus claims that Arab emigration from Palestine to other countries also occurred in the Western Galilee (from Safed and adjacent villages) and from Kufur Yasīf during the Ottoman period, mainly during the reign of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II (1876-1908)21. This Arab emigration occurred for a number of reasons, the most important of which was the dearth of sources of livelihood and the poverty existing in Kufur Yasīf. Other reasons include oppression and subjugation by the Ottoman administration, flight from compulsory military conscription into the Ottoman army,22 and the heavy tax burden.23 Family and factional quarrels also played their part in whether to emigrate or not.

Therefore, I have attached Appendix H, which lists the names of the Arab emigrants, mostly Christian, and their origin — Kufur Yasīf— to North and South America during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II. Most of these emigrants later returned to their home village, Kufur Yasīf, but some settled abroad. One can see from the names in Appendix J that most are Christian Arabs, but after a short time these emigrants decided to return to the New World during the final days of the Ottoman Empire, the “Sick Man”24 before the outbreak of World War I.

 The American Missionaries and Their Contribution to Palestine

This Section offers a description of the American Protestant missionary activity in Palestine from the second quarter of the 19th century until the outbreak of World War I, as this activity was an important and supporting factor for Syrian-Lebanese emigrants to the American continent mainly for the purpose of seeking economic opportunities. There were also those who traveled in order to continue their education, or who departed their land because of feelings of deprivation and lack of freedom.25

Economic relations Between the Ottoman Empire and the European states were defined by the system of capitulations4 which conferred economic dispensations upon these states in the Ottoman Empire. Later, however, during the period of the empire’s decline in the latter half of the 19th century, these dispensations were extended to include the establishment of cultural institutions and the dispatch of missionary expeditions.26

In addition to their missionary activities, commercial ties were established as well Between the United States and the Ottoman Empire. In his article27 Dr. Ami Ayalon stresses that the United States began to develop a more active interest in the East, especially after signing the U.S.-Ottoman Commerce and Navigation Treaty28 with the Ottoman Empire on May 7, 1830. This treaty constituted America’s first entry into the Arab East, and the United States exploited it to the utmost by starting to expand its presence in the Arab lands under the control of the Ottoman Empire, by means of establishing American consulates in such Arab cities as Alexandria and Beirut. It also succeeded in establishing an American consulate in Jerusalem on June 2, 1857.29

In other words, missionary activity, the commercial ties Between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, and the presence of official American representatives created a convenient framework for emigration subsequent to the development of means of marine transportation to the American continent; this emigration was mainly for the purpose of seeking employment opportunities.

According to Henry Jessup’s testimony, Between the years 1819-1908 the number of American missionaries working in Greater Syria reached 153.30 Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, the first American missionaries sent by the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions31, Parsons headed for Jerusalem in 1821 and Fisk headed for Beirut in 1823.32

The principal intention of the missions of all the sects was to win souls for their faith and to spread the gospel..33 To this end the American missions worked extensively in education, first by bringing printing presses to Lebanon and Syria, and second, by establishing schools for boys and girls, mainly in Lebanon and Palestine. Eventually they fulfilled their missionary aim by establishing colleges, including the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, which later became the American University of Beirut.

American missionary activity in the field of education was clearly based on interests other than the extension of education for its own sake, interests which were, in retrospect, beneficial to the United States: the propagation of the English language and of Protestant religious education also could be seen as preparing the students for a future in the United States. According to Henry H. Jessup, "the establishment of a school is a prerequisite for the success of the mission and through it the gospel can be spread in a given area"34.

American Protestants belonging to a different sect, the Quakers, began to operate in Palestine during the second half of the 19th century. For the first time they succeeded in establishing two modern schools with separate dormitories for girls and boys in Rāmallah and more specifically in 1899 Eli Jones established the Friends School and Dormitory for Girls in Rāmallah.35 This Friends School was one of the long-standing, important private schools in Palestine and continues to exist until today. Also, they continues to ran elementary schools in other villages surrounding Ramallah.

Another reliable source noted that the Quakers, by establishing schools in Rāmallah and the surrounding area, directed the attention of Palestinians to the idea that there was a marvelous country in the New World, and that they could continue their higher education in American universities.

The American missionaries succeeded in transmitting values and messages of universal interest prevalent in the United States to those who studied in their schools in Greater Syria. The American mission school teacher made a great contribution towards creating awareness of America among Palestinians, taking away its Alien quality and removing the cultural barrier between himself and the population who studied in the schools established by American missionaries.

The historian Philip Hitti quotes the words of one of the Syrian Emigres in New York, taken from the editor of the periodical “Independent”:

“The teacher (in an American mission school in Syria) had a great many pictures of American cities, streets and scenes and I could see that life in that land was very ^different from ours. I heard about the telephone, the telegraph and the railroad and as I already knew about ships on account of seeing them go by on the water”.36

The American missionaries’ transmission of values and universal messages to the residents of Greater Syria made the United States a sought-after place for those who fell under their influence. Consequently, the United States enjoyed much sympathy and support in the East, and became a catalyst for Arabs to emirate to its free states.

According to Philip Hitti there was a strong tendency among many American mission school graduates to emigrate westward, i.e. the mission school served as the first stage in the preparation for emigration, though the missionaries themselves did not foresee this possibility. These Emigres were motivated by the possibility of realizing cultural aspirations or achieving a higher living standard and assuring opportunities for their children, as well as a life of freedom.37

It should equally be noted that many of the Palestinians emigrating in order to continue their education subsequently found employment in the field of commerce. In most cases, those continuing their higher education did not return to their country of origin.

Ottoman Authorities and the Tax Burden

Folk literature about emigration casts the blame on an additional factor: specifically defined by taxation and compulsory military conscription which found expression in lines such as the following;38 “*Yā niyyālak yā halquṭṭ, yallī cal-ḥīṭān bi-tnuṭ - Māl mīrī mā* ʿ*alīk wa-nizāmiyya mā bi-tḥuṭṭ*”, (O’ lucky cat jumping and leaping upon the walls – You pay neither land tax nor tax to the army recruiter).

In addition to the tax burden, compulsory military conscription (for Muslims, and after 1909 for Christians as well),39 was a significant factor motivating many young people to immigrate to the New World.

Most emigres were young men age 15-5440 seeking to evade compulsory conscription into military service. Initially only Christians emigrated, but later Moslems followed their example. During a period of four years, starting from the moment the government subjected all young men to the Compulsory Military Service Law in 1914, the numbers of emigres increased dramatically among all the religious communities.

Basing himself upon an American newspaper, (The New York Sun, March 2, 1913), Philip Hitti adds that the American correspondent in Haifa reported that Every steamer bound for North or South America has been crowded, mostly with Christians anxious to evade military draft.41

In all cases one can identify one of the significant factors accelerating the process of emigration of Lebanese-Syrian Christian Arabs from Palestine to the New World. The heavy taxes imposed by the Ottoman government on the fellah and peasant population during the period of the Hamid regime (1876-1909) and later with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its mounting economic problems over the course of the 19th century, were the decisive factor driving many of them to abandon their villages and emigrate to the North and South American continents hoping to improve their standard of living.42

 Palestine’s Arab population, especially the impoverished fellah classes were forced to pay many taxes, including:

1. Al-*ʿ*Ush*ū*r tax:43 the tithe tax of which, by the end of the century, reached 12% or more of net income.44 According to another estimate by the economist Saeed Hamada, at the start of the 20th century the al-*ʿ*Ush*ū*r tax absorbed more than 30% of the fellah’s net income.44Even according to Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī statistics it reached 35% in Al־Sham (Syria).45 Moreover, according to an estimate from Filastin, the al-*ʿ*Ush*ū*r \_ consumed35% of the Palestinian fellah’s production there as well.46
2. *Wirku* Land tax:47 Iterate was between 0.004 and 0.01 per mil.
3. Al-Aghn*ā*m (herd tax).48
4. Al-Badal *ʿ*an-Jundiyya or al-*ʿ*Askariyya (military service exemption law):49 This tax, amounting to 28 grush per annum,50 was imposed on non-Moslems.
5. Al-Tamattu*ʿ*(tax on annual income):51 at a rate of 2-10%.
6. Al-Karr*ū*sa; This annual fee of 6 grush was imposed for paving highways.
7. Al-Ma*ʿā*rif: For services for the school system.

These and other agricultural taxes and custom duties on essential commodities can be interpreted as implementation of a policy to intentionally bankrupt the fellah and force him to sell his land to the large landowners on essential commodities. In the final analysis the high taxes constituted a factor that drove them — after abandoning their land — to sail from Jaffa to the New York and other lands such as Australia, Brazil and West Africa.

The Growth of the Palestinian Population

In a study recently published, an expert on Palestinian demography writes “Starting in 1870, the population of Palestine began a period of accelerated growth. This was a common phenomenon in the Ottoman Middle East, throughout the Ottoman Empire, a consequence of a long period without war and of a developing economy.”52

The declining population would lead to emigration, as in the case of Beit Jala as Yosef Washitz describes in his book The Arabs in the Land of Israel.,

From Table 1 we can see that far-reaching changes took place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Jerusalem and the surrounding villages. Interestingly enough the population increased fourfold or fivefold between the years 1800 and 1922 despite the emigration.

 As is evident in Table 1 the Encyclopedia Bil*ā*dun*ā* Filas*ṭī*n notes that in 1912 the number of residents of Beit-Jālā was placed at 4,500 but this declined in 1931 to 2,731, caused on the whole by emigration mainly to North and South America for economic reasons.

Table 1: Population Increase in Jerusalem and Surrounding Villages Between 1800-1922

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Years | 1800 | 1840 | I860 | 1880 | 1922 |
| Jerusalem | 10,000 | 13,000 | 20,000 | 30,000 | 62,500 |
| Rāmallah | 2,000 | 2,500 | 3,000 | 3,500 | 7,400 |
| Beit-lahm | 1,500 | 2,500 | 3,570 | 4,750 | 6,658 |
| Beit Jālā | 2,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 4,500 | 3,102 |

Sources

Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, (New York, Routledge,1982), l.

Yehoshua Ben Arieh, ״The Population of the Large Towns in Palestine During the First Eighty Years of the Nineteenth Century According to Western Sources,” in Ma’oz, Moshe (ed.): Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period (Jerusalem, The Hebrew University Magnes Press,1975) 68.

Yusuf Jeryis Qaddura, T*ā*r*ī*kh Mad*ī*nat R*ā*mallah, (New York, Matba'at Al-Huda, 1954) p. 136. He notes the population of Rāmallah between the years 1905-1910 as it appears in the records of the city of Rāmallah, reached 3,214.

Tūmā Bannūra, T*ā*r*ī*kh Beit-La*ḥ*m. Bay-J*ā*l*ā*. Beit S*āḥū*r. (Jerusalem,Matba'at al-Ma'aref, 1982) 147

Most of the emigres chose to immigrate to the United States but, following the enactment of laws in 1921 and 1924 limiting immigration to the United States, the emigration to Latin America increased. In the latter years the proportion of those heading for North America increased because the available means at their disposal in their homeland were limited, the sources of employment in Palestine itself were not adequate to offer a livelihood for their families. 53

Transformations in Marine Transportation and the Establishment of Shipping Agencies in the Region of Palestinian Emigration

After the appearance of the combined factors driving the wave of emigration of Palestinians to the American continent the question arises: what were the means that transported the Palestinian Emigres to the New World?

From the middle of the 19th century until World War I and later, world marine transportation underwent transformations and western shipping companies established shipping agencies in Palestine. These changes helped Palestinians to immigrate to the North and South American continents. From the 1840’s steam ships began to appear in Syria’s Mediterranean ports, mainly in Beirut, Haifa and Jaffa, whose principal goal was not only the transport of goods, but also of passengers.54

From the year it was founded (1911) Filasṭīn continuously published such advertisements as: ‘To sail to America aboard the fastest French ships on Messageries Maritimes, contact the company’s office in Jerusalem near Jaffa Gate.”55 This advertisement was repeated in every edition until 1945.

The advertisements for steam ships, which appeared in the local Arabic press, might have contributed to motivating Palestinians to leave for North America.

Steam ships of six passenger ship companies appeared in Jaffa port during the period preceding World War l.56 They were, according to their frequency and nationality, as follows:

1. The French line Messageries Maritimes, operated from the ports of Egypt to Jaffa, Haifa and Beirut and every week its steamships transported many Lebanese merchants and emigrants.57
2. The Austrian line Lloyd from Trieste sailed from the ports of Egypt, Jaffa, Haifa, Sidon, Beirut and other Lebanese־Syrian ports down to Alexandria. Western and Central European travelers considered this line the fastest.
3. The Russian line from Odessa sailed via Constantinople, Izmir, Marseilles and other ports down to Beirut, Haifa and Jaffa and the ports of Egypt.
4. The Khedival Mail Line58 was an English line that operated from Alexandria via Port Said to Jaffa, Haifa and Beirut. Once every two weeks ships from this line continued on to Tripoli, Alexandretta, Marseilles and to Istanbul.
5. and 6: Two Italian shipping companies, Maritima Taliana and Servizi Maritimi, each of which maintained a bi-weekly line from Venice and Genoa via Alexandria, to Jaffa, Haifa, Beirut, and from there to Tripoli, Alexandria and Marseilles.59

After World War I three more shipping lines operated in the ports of Jaffa, Haifa and Beirut:

1. The German Kusilich Line,60 offering regular transportation between Jaffa and North and South America via Batras every 15 days from Jaffa to Batras on ships of Triestino Lloyd. There was a direct line from Batras to New York and North America aboard luxury liners.
2. At one point the British passenger line, Byron Line docked in Jaffa on September 5, and sailed on the same day to New York via Alexandria and Biria. For more information on this company, refer to the general travel agencies in Palestine and Transjordan. This company maintained offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Jaffa and Amman".61

Another British line, Faber Line,62 operated fast steamships such as “Britannia,” “Canada,” and “Braja" from Jaffa to North and South America. It is clear then that between 1840 and 1930 nine shipping lines sailed from Palestine on regular weekly or monthly schedules and their announcements appearing in the Arabic newspapers from 1908 onwards attracted the interest of the urban Palestinian population (in places like Jerusalem, Jaffa, Beit-lahm, Rāmallah and Beit-Jālā) who were considering migrating to the New World.

The very multiplicity of these announcements in Palestinian newspapers is evidence of an emigration movement, even as they contributed to its intensification. It is clear to me that the shipping agencies and the announcements they advertised in the local newspapers directly influenced the increase in emigration. The shipping agents, in Sac1d Hamada’s opinion, were excessive in their encouragement of the Lebanese and Palestinians and their extravagant descriptions of destination countries and reiterations that the New World was a “paradise” where one could easily achieve happiness... .63

According to Hitti’s testimony46, the shipping agents made prodigious efforts to encourage the Arab population to immigrate to destination countries. They traveled from village to village throughout Palestine on donkey or horseback to spread this attractive propaganda, offering many inducements including loans to cover the fare to America.

The historian Gregory Orfalea notes that at the close of the 19& century the Syrians {Lebanese, Palestinians) would travel by donkey or on foot to the ports — Beirut, Haifa and Jaffa — to meet the shipping agents. These agents tended to render as much assistance to the new arrivals as they could; at first by bribing the Turkish emigration officials, later by insuring the purchase of a steamship ticket at a reasonable price (about $30-50־ US) and finally helping them to board one of the boats ferrying passengers to the steamship anchored far from the port.64He adds that besides bribing fee Turkish emigration officials, the emigre had no choice but to pay three more bribes before he could reach his ship anchored in Beirut harbor:65

1. Half a *majīdiyya* ($1.50) to the official who stamped the boat tickets;
2. $0.50 to the captain of the boat anchored in the harbor for the service of transferring the emigre onto the boat anchored outside the harbor,
3. $0.50 more to the official standing next to the boat’s ladder.

 The Decline of Emigration after World War I

The periodical al-Hil*ā*l quotes one of the articles that appeared in the periodical North American Review, which relates that the American government set limits on immigration at the start of the 20th century in order to stop the stream of mass immigration from all over the world. The following are the restrictions:66

1. The enactment of a head tax of $2-$5 on people entering the United States;
2. The prohibition from entering the United States of Aliens who, upon undergoing a medical examination, were found to be ill or suffering from mental or physical retardation that would prevent them from supporting themselves;
3. The prohibition from entering the United States of all those under the age of 17 and unaccompanied by their father. With the outbreak of World War, I the stream of emigration from Palestine was stopped by the circumstances of war and the difficulty of securing the exit of Lebanese Syrians and Palestinians from the ports of Lebanon and Palestine to the northern and southern American continents.

However, with the end of World War I a massive wave of immigration once again reached the United States. In reaction a phenomenon known as nativism made its appearance, which later became a movement of isolationism67 and xenophobia, a trend to enforce American Protestant values and way of life throughout America: This trend reached its peak during the 1920’s when it succeeded in locking America’s gates against unwanted immigration of Catholics, Jews and people from southern and eastern Europe, and attempted to force puritanical Prohibition laws on the entire country.68

Under the influence of this trend, laws were enacted in 1920-21 that put an end to the traditional policy of welcoming new immigrants to the United States, and controls on both the quantity and quality of Aliens entering the United States were implemented. Thus, the annual numbers of immigrants entering the US were reduced.

The movement for restricting immigration began with the law of 1882 under the stewardship of the Federalist movement. The movement developed in a frightening way during its peak years of 1896-1897: according to these laws, entry was forbidden to the insane, idiots, the illiterate, and individuals who could not support themselves, as well as Aliens that were unacceptable to American society. To limit the number of low-paid workers of foreign extraction, Congress enacted a law according to which workers could be brought into the country only by contract.69

Eventually the entry of new arrivals to the land of unlimited opportunity was limited by the law of 1921, which fixed an annual quota of 3% of the number of immigrants that had arrived from that country during the year 1910. Subsequently a tougher law was enacted which reduced the number of immigrants entering the United States from each country to 2% of those who had entered in 1910.70

The movement favoring limits on immigration continued to flourish against a background of isolationism that demanded a restriction on the number of immigrants, the criteria being country of extraction. Article 13 (c) of the law of 1924 prohibited all immigration of Aliens ineligible to become citizens of the United States; i.e. Asians. Although the article’s text 1was intended to prevent Japanese immigration, immigration of other Asian peoples had already been prevented by the Chinese Exclusion-Act of 1822 and the Asiatic Barred Zone of 1917. With this article, America unilaterally abrogated the gentlemen’s agreement according to which Japan reduced the number of its immigrants to the United States since 1908; and the Japanese referred to this article as the Japanese Exclusion Clause.71

In short, the numbers of immigrants to the United States rose and fell over time, for the following reasons:

1. As a consequence of the laws of 1921 and 1924 the annual number of immigrants of Lebanese Syrians fell to 227 in 1926 and in 1928 to 341;
2. The economic depression of 1929 that completely thwarted the personal aspirations and ambitions of immigrants who were primarily economically motivated. According to Table 2 we learn that after the 1929 economic crash in 1929, only 442 Arabs entered the United States. In 1930 332, and in 1931 180 Syrian Lebanese left for the North American continent until the annual average reached 100 between the years 1921-1939.
3. The immigrants’ traditional character greatly hindered their assimilation and integration into the absorbing society and impeded their ability to adapt to the new social conditions and deal effectively with the dilemmas and difficulties, both social and economic.
4. Another factor leading to the sharp decrease in immigrants was the improvement of social and economic conditions in the lands of their origin.

The reduction of Palestinian Arab immigration to America is characteristic of the period after the First World War. Starting in 1920 the number of immigrants fell from about 3,000 a year to about 1,400-2,006 a year.

Table 2: Number of Palestinian Immigrants to America during the Period of British Mandate (1922-1941)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | No. of Immigrants |
| 1922T | 1,436 |
| 1923J | 1,481 |
| 1924 | 604 |
| 1925 | 1,949 |
| 1926 | 2,064 |
| 1927 | 1,907 |
| 1928 | 954 |
| 1929 | 1,089 |
| 1930 | 1,324 |
| 1931 | 680 |
| 1932 | — |
| 1933 | — |
| 1934 | — |
| 1935 | 387 |
| 1936 | 405 |
| 1937 | 639 |
| 1938 | 716 |
| 1939 | 977 |
| 1940 | 492 |
| 1941 | 790 |

From Table 2 it is apparent that the number of Palestinian emigrants who came to America declined during the period of the British mandate in Palestine. Starting in 1922 the numbers of emigrants reached 1,348 and in 1923, 1,481; but in 1924, the year that the Quota Law was legislated the number fell to 604. In 1926, 2,064 emigrated; in 1927, 1,907; in 1928, .954; and in 1929 (the year of the world economic depression) 1,089; in 1930, 1,327; and in 1931 only 680 Arabs emigrated.

From 1931 until the outbreak of World War II in 1939 only a few hundred emigrants left the country each year, as can be seen from Table 2; In 1948 1,492 and in 1941 790 people emigrated.

Conclusion

This article deals with the period of the end of the 19th century until World War II, with 1913 constituting the peak year for emigration, mainly from Palestine and Lebanon. The starting point in the last quarter of the 19th century marks the process of massive emigration, in which the phenomenon reached considerable proportions. Subsequently the area can serve as a good model of the general phenomenon of emigration to the United States at

the end of the 19 century.

At first the emigrants were young people who wanted to establish an economic base for themselves in the United States in the light of the economic opportunities offered there. Subsequently many families followed them. This emigration ended with the outbreak of World War II. After the war a new type of emigration began, characterized by educated emigrants. (Brain drain). The reason for this is probably to be found in the economic growth in the region, apparently the result of oil exploration, and emigration to the oil producing countries, although in most cases it was temporary emigration for the purposes of work. Thus, in its wake the migration to the United States is of a selective nature.

The Palestinian migration to the New World, mainly to the United States, which took place primarily in the period under discussion, integrates push factors that worked simultaneously. These are: economic, political, compulsory conscription into the Ottoman army, high taxes, and demographic. Likewise, exposure to western culture as a consequence of missionary activity both on the educational and religious level as well as a religious affiliation to Protestantism in some cases eased the difficulty of assimilation and greatly reduced the feeling of alienation between the emigrants and the residents of the new counties and allowed for increasing economic possibilities. In addition, the target country attracted and encouraged immigrants from all over the world to come and settle following its accelerated industrialization and the development of the American cities.

The Palestinian Christian emigrants were treated as a religious minority by the Ottoman Government, while in the United States they felt no such disability. It appears to us that after the first generation of emigrants, their connection with the homeland has attenuated and they have assimilated into the target country despite attempts of the Bethlehem periodicals Al-Jama and [Arabic] to establish ties between them and the Palestinian homeland and encourage their return to their homeland.

This emigration has many implications for Palestine today. The number of Christian Palestinian emigres abroad is greater than the number of those who elected to remain in Palestine. The picture in Palestine is different from many other countries such as Lebanon. Palestinian Christians were never a majority in their place of residence nor did they enjoy political autonomy as did the Maronites and other sects in the Lebanon Mountains, though they too also assimilated into the target countries to which they emigrated for identical or similar reasons. During the last two generations, as a result of the loss of places of residence after 1948, many Palestinians, both Moslem and Christian, found their way to the United States, but in the period under discussion here, 90% of the Palestinian Emigres were Christian, and only 10%. Moslem.

It is possible that emigration would have reached larger proportions in Palestine if not for World War I and the American anti-immigration legislation of 1921 and 1924 (the quota) and the depression of 1929 that took place as a result of the crash of the New York stock market in the United States. All of these factors combined together to limit immigration from all over the world, including Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian emigration.

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It is noteworthy that the principal travel agents that brought these tourists were Cook, Tharas, Clark, Horn burg, Barakat wa-Farajalla. Most of the tourists came from America and Europe during the second half of the 19th century (1856- 1900) To them must be added, of course, the pilgrims who arrived with organized tours before World War 1. Their numbers have been estimated at between 15,000 and 25,000. This information is taken from the following sources: Filasṭīn 29.6.1912. See also: Dispatches from United States Consuls in Jerusalem, Palestine, 1856-1906, vols. 8 and 9, Jan. 2, 1893. Aug. 20, 1906 (Washington, 1969). See also: Shaṭāra, 116-139.

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Al-dabbāgh*,* vol. 8, 284, 296, 300, 340, 350, 352.

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1. Filasṭīn, 21.8.1913.

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18 Palestine Commission on the Disturbances of August 1929, vol. 1, Colonial No. 48, London, 1930, pp. 453-454. See also, Mahmoud Yazbak, The Arab Migration to Haifa between 1933 and 1948, (Haifa, University of Haifa, 1986).

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49 Granovsky, A.,64.

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Min ajl al-safar Li-jihat Amrīkā fī bābūrāt Messegerī al-Fransāwiyya al-mukhābara fī maktabat al-Sharq fī al-Quds khārij Bāb al-Khalīl, (Bawwābat Yāfā).

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58 Sulaymān Khāṭir al-Bustānī, ʿIbra wa-dhikrā aw al-dawla al-ʿUthmāniyya qabla al-dustūr wa-baʿdahu, (Cairo, Hindāwī Instituate,1908), 107.

Appendix, the Royal Mail Line. This company was willing to carry most passengers to all parts of America on the ships of the English ״Royal Mail Line” well known for their speed, size and luxury.

59.Avitzur, Shmuel, 30.

60 .Filasṭīn, 15.5. 1923..

An advertisement from Filasṭīn, 15.5.1923

company had offices in Palestine and Transjordan, both of which attracted and encouraged potential emigres. The brevity of the journey as well as its distance were mentioned.

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