

## Landed Property, Palestinian Migration to America and the Emergence of a New Local Leadership: al-Bireh 1919- 1947

Saleh Abdel Jawad

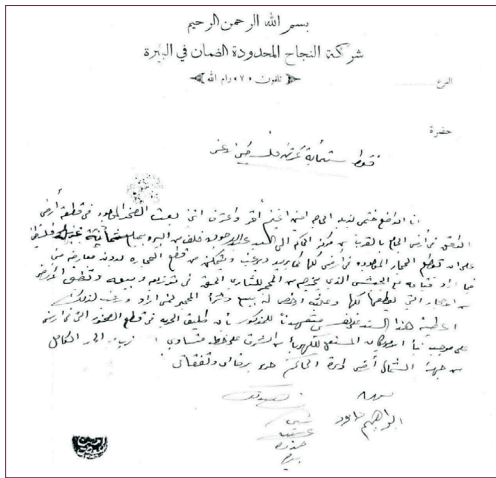
Abdul Jawwad Abu 'Alaise from al-Bireh was sent this family picture from al-Bireh during his American absence. *Photograph: Studio Diana, Jerusalem, November, 1947.*



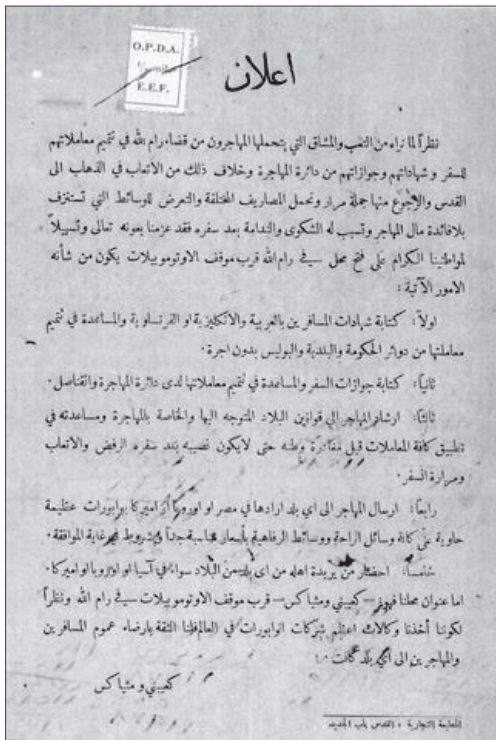
### Introduction

Numerous books and scores of articles have appeared on the topic of Syrian and Lebanese emigration to the United States. The overwhelming majority of these works have been in English, and have mostly focused on the motivations for such emigration, its circumstances, and how the migrants adjusted to their new societies, as well as the issue of identity. They have often overlooked the effects of emigration and diaspora on these migrants' home countries.

This article takes the opposite approach, for it addresses two important effects of emigration from the West Bank Palestinian town of al-Bireh to the United States on local al-Bireh society. The first was the changes that took place in land ownership during the British Mandate. These changes, which were fundamental by all standards, involved the transfer of a significant



Receipt issued by al-Najah Company, the first incorporated company established by al-Bireh immigrants and undertook, without success, to create a number of department store chain. Main investors were immigrants Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh from al-Bireh. 1928.



Kaibni and Mithakis Travel Bureau in Ramallah, advertising services to potential emigrants from the area, 1919. The revenue stamp issued by the Egyptian Expeditory Force, the British military government which occupied Palestine after WWI.

proportion of land from the peasant farmers living in the town, both poor and well-off, to former peasant farmers who had emigrated to the United States. These migrants had been successful in the United States and saved capital that they then invested in their motherland in the form of land and property. The second direct effect of this emigration was related to social mobility and the rise of a new local leadership.

The time frame of this study spans about half a century, from 1909, when the first emigrants left al-Bireh for the United States, until Palestine's *nakba* of 1948 [the founding of Israel and its occupation of Palestine]. This time frame covers two waves of emigration separated by WWI (1914-1918), which temporarily paralyzed migration and travel between Palestine and the United States.

To what extent can the outcomes of this study be generalized to the rest of Palestine? Local diversity in Palestine certainly prevents generalization to all of the villages and towns from which early emigration to North and South America took place, commencing with Bethlehem and its surrounds in the 1870s. Each location had its own special circumstances and characteristics (related to its population, economy, education level, commencement start and target of emigration, sectarian composition, and nature of relations with the regional center). These factors affected the experience of migration from each place and produced migration-related dynamics specific to it. Yet we cannot overlook the fact that some shared factors and similar effects related to emigration did exist,

especially in studied areas such as Ramallah and its surrounding villages. This study shows, incidentally, how Ramallah was affected during the same time by some of the same conditions found in al-Bireh. I hope that this article, which is part of ongoing research on the history of al-Bireh and its people, can contribute to the efforts being made to write a modern social history of Palestine launched by the late Alexander Scholch, and which bring ordinary Palestinians into the picture, undertaken more recently in the work of Rosemary Sayigh, Ted Swedenburg, and Beshara Doumani.

## Sources

My study has relied primarily on the personal papers of a number of families of al-Bireh, the most important of which are the private collection of the brothers Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh of the al-Tawil clan, and the collection of the brothers Othman and Saleh al-Ata of the al-Hamayel clan.<sup>1</sup> These two collections are rich, containing more than 100 documents including land deeds, receipts, and records of various financial transactions from 1880 to 1946. My study has also drawn on oral interviews recorded between 1989 and 2008 with a number of the city's elderly residents, as well as interviews conducted in New York, Virginia, Washington, Florida, and North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> I have further relied upon a diverse collection of primary sources such as newspapers, and secondary sources such as books and studies that have addressed the topic of land ownership and Syrian migration to North and South America, or rather migration from the countries that form the overall geographic and cultural area known as the Levant (*Bilad al-Sham*). Although this study could not have been completed without these family papers, its use of diverse sources shows once again how important multiple sources are in writing credible and realistic history.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to many sources (oral, written, official, and private) used in the study of social history, I believe that contracts and deeds recording the sale of land, tax receipts, marriage contracts, and financial transaction papers are less susceptible to bias, forgery, or the projection of the present onto the past, as is the case with many secondary written sources, oral interviews, and autobiographical papers.

This explains the increasing importance of such papers as a source in social history research. Such a question is pressing in the case of Palestine, given its political instability and the destruction or confiscation of written sources. These include family papers, as well as the lack of awareness over the importance of documentation and the absence of state institutions that can undertake the process of preserving oral and written heritage. I know for a fact that many family and personal papers have either partly or entirely disappeared with the passage of time and changing circumstances.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, some papers are kept hidden from researchers due to their owners' wariness that they might tell undesirable stories about their families. Each of these factors limits the scope of information that could be uncovered and places the researcher within boundaries that are essentially selective.

This study is divided into several parts: a brief introduction on the methodological challenges in studying land and its ownership in the Ramallah area, and which can be generalized to all of the Palestinian territories; the biographies of the owners of these family papers--the brothers Abdullah and Ali al-Judeh Khalaf and the brothers Othman and Saleh al-Ata; emigration to the United States and the changes this wrought to land ownership; and the effect of these changes on the political economy of the city and the resulting rise of a new leadership that ousted the old, traditional leadership.

## **Methodological Challenges Pertaining to Land Property**

When researchers address changes in land ownership during the British Mandate, which is a relatively short period despite the fundamental changes it brought, they are forced to compare the situation of land with that of the previous Ottoman era, and this brings them face to face with numerous methodological and technical problems. The most significant of these are the following.

**The nature of sales deeds and problems related to land registration and transactions:** The regulation of the sale and transfer of land, including the format of sales documents, did not take place until late in the British Mandate period. Many sales deeds that I have scrutinized from the years following the occupation of Palestine (1917-1918) maintained the format of sales deeds from the Ottoman period, for example they fail to specify in detail the site and area of the designated piece of land. In addition a great deal of land was not even registered under the Ottoman *tapu* system. In any case, the sales deeds of Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh and Saleh and Othman al-Ata, which were written in the later years of the Ottoman period and the beginning of the British Mandate, lacked any specification about the area of land. Moreover, specification of the land's location in these deeds only made reference to the borders of the neighbors' land, which in itself may be the object of dispute or lack of clarity. Many of these deeds include the phrase, "it being well-known makes mentioning its borders unnecessary." Only in the later stages of the British Mandate was the area of land specified in detail for sale transactions. This occurred after the Mandate authorities had conducted a survey of most of Palestine, which allowed the drawing of detailed maps and the unification of registration measures, putting an end once and for all to informal systems of registration.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that "Before a land settlement survey can commence, it is necessary to have a triangulated framework of fixed points, accurately determined and permanently marked. this was completed in Palestine, excluding Beersheba, [only] in 1927."<sup>6</sup>

Although not made public, the real aim of the "survey and settlement" measures was to facilitate the transfer of land to Jewish owners, and to improve the collection of taxes.<sup>7</sup>

**Writing in the colloquial and the use of non-standardized measurements:** Most deeds from the late Ottoman period and the beginning of the British Mandate were written in colloquial Arabic, which makes the researcher's task more challenging. It is difficult to determine the meaning of many terms used in these deeds, particularly as no dictionary of the Palestinian colloquial exists. And inconsistency is found in the meaning of local colloquial terms relating to the area of land plots, such as *al-hakura*, *al-feddan*, *al-hableh*, *al-mariss*, *al-hariqeh*, and *al-khilleh (khillet)*.<sup>8</sup>

**The problem of the currencies used in sales transactions:** The numerous currencies common in Palestine and their variable exchange rate makes it difficult for researchers to compare and value the price of land and the rate at which these prices rose. Western political, economic, and cultural penetration of the Ottoman state in the second half of the 19th century, and decreasing confidence in Ottoman currency due to swindling in the percentage of gold and silver used in coins, facilitated the circulation of various foreign currencies. In addition to the gold Ottoman lira which was also known as *al-'usmaliyeh*, or *al-mejidiyeh* in reference to Sultan Abdel Mejid. The gold English pound and the gold French pound fell into wide circulation, and after the fall of Palestine (1917-1918), the gold English pound was the standard for transactions in land deals.<sup>9</sup> Yet Egyptian currency--gold, silver, nickel, and paper--became the official currency of Palestine from 1st February 1921 up until a Palestinian currency was issued in 1927, and remained the official currency in East Jordan until 1949.<sup>10</sup> Use of Egyptian currency fell into decline, and its use was ultimately outlawed in Palestine on 31st March 1929.<sup>11</sup>

**Problems related to the names of sites:** The names of places change with the passage of time, which makes it difficult to determine the location of land plots. By way of example, an area in al-Bireh known today as al-Balu' was known until the 1940's as Mekebb al-Maya, and what used to be known as al-Baqi' is today known as al-Maydan because it was used as a field for horse racing during the British Mandate. The problem of changing names is not specific to the Ottoman period, but rather remains an issue until this day. Nor is it limited to the names of sites and areas, but rather includes the names of landmarks, squares, and alleys, for example. Today there are only a few elderly residents of al-Bireh who know the names of the locations of the old alleys such as al-Zayd Alley, al-Hiri Alley, or al-Sharaqa Alley, all of which have been given new names and whose landmarks have been almost totally erased and have been replaced by new streets and neighborhoods.

The lack of adherence to old names often stems from a lack of awareness about the importance of preserving historical names, particularly in village communities. Other reasons include the fact that new names may reflect the new roles of places or new events, or the rise of personalities whose names override the old names of a place. An example of the latter case is found in the use of the name 'Ain Zalikha a water spring in Jebel Qurttis, which was given its new name of a woman named Zalikha who

cared for the land around the spring. Still other reasons include ideological or national overtures, such as when the main mosque in al-Bireh, which was named the Grand al-Bireh Mosque in the early 1960s, was renamed the Gamal Abdel Nasser Mosque by the municipal council following the death of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in September 1970. In recent years, with the rise of Hamas, Islamists have renamed it again the Sayyid Quttub Mosque. Today there is confusion over its name as people use three names for the same mosque, although the Gamal Abdel Nasser Mosque remains the most common.

**The changing names of individuals and families:** This is a matter that makes it very difficult for researchers to follow land ownership and trace the history of landowning families. The problem of family names occurs even in cities in which old families of established social standing retain the same family names for extended periods.<sup>12</sup> Yet the phenomenon of changing family names in the Palestinian countryside--as in al-Bireh--is much more common than in large, well-established cities. Family names change rapidly in the countryside, and most of the families who arrive in a village seek to place themselves under the protection of stronger families, whose names and distinction they borrow. There is also a strong tendency in the countryside to give nicknames, and with time they become new family names. In many cases, the death of the father or the rise of a woman with a strong personality leads to the rise of a new family name taken after the woman, such as the Shamseh, Hawa, and Madaniyeh families.

The fact Palestine has fallen under different political regimes has exacerbated this phenomenon in the countryside. Since its occupation of Palestine in 1967, Israel has insisted on registering clan names as family surnames so as to identify and categorize residents in a way that facilitates monitoring and control, and in an attempt to cause conflict between them (the policy of divide and rule). The documents of the Islamic law courts in Jerusalem from the 19th century specific to al-Bireh do not show any use of clan names to mark a family designation or serve as a family surname. Yet the problem of names in al-Bireh is not limited to family names but also to individuals' for example names, that are mixed with nicknames, and different family names used for brothers in the same family. These cases cause numerous difficulties, and yet it is beyond the scope of this article to look further into this interesting subject that casts light on an important aspect of social relations and local cultural environments.

**The problem of accessing documents in research centers, government offices, and municipal councils related to land and land transactions:** Most institutions do not allow for their archives to be studied. If they do, they either limit or complicate the process of benefiting from the archived documents, or impose tight restrictions on copying.

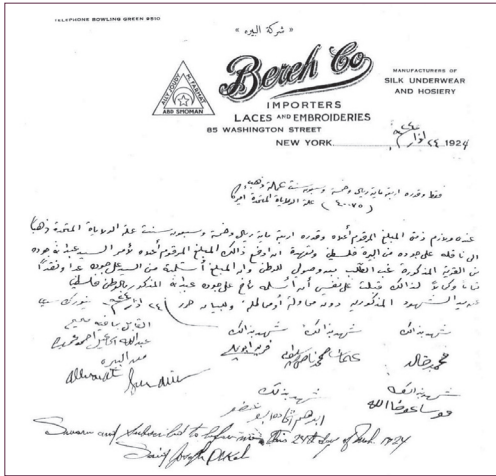
## Biographies of the Possessors of the Family Papers

Brothers Abdullah and Ali al-Judeh were both born in al-Bireh around 1890. Abdullah al-Judeh died and was buried in al-Bireh in 1967, and his brother Ali died and was buried in Damascus eight years later. Each of the brothers was exceptional, not only due to the immense wealth they amassed abroad, but also due to their contribution to the public service and their political activity in al-Bireh and abroad, in addition to Ali al-Judeh's enlightened views. Through his special standing and generosity, he was able to befriend liberals and intellectuals throughout the Arab world, both abroad and in the Levant, including Amin al-Rihani, Shakib Arsalan, Abdel Rahman al-Shahbandar, Shukri al-Quwetli, Rashid Tali', Suleiman al-Nablusi, and Abdullah al-Rimawi.<sup>13</sup>

The two young brothers emigrated to the United States, shortly before WWI and after they had worked as itinerant salesmen (*kusha* sellers, as they were called at the time by Syrians, or "peddlers" as they were called in America). Ali, the more skilled of the two brothers in business, established a company called al-Bireh Company that sold ladies' lingerie, carpets, and novelties in the heart of Manhattan (85 Washington Street), which was one of the main areas that attracted Syrian immigrants to New York.

The brothers split duties between them, and Abdullah returned to al-Bireh for good following WWI. Ali saved up money through the al-Bireh Company and Abdullah oversaw family interests in al-Bireh, the most important of which was buying thousands of dunums (an acre is 4 dunums) of land in their names in al-Bireh and other areas of Palestine. Another of the family interests he undertook was to play a primary role in the leadership of political and social life in al-Bireh in the 20th century. Starting in the early 1920's, he held on several occasions the position of the head of the local council and earned from the British the title *effendi*<sup>14</sup>, an exceptional gesture to a local leader in the countryside. He was the first elected head of the al-Bireh municipality when it was transformed from a local to a municipal council in early 1952.<sup>15</sup> Abdullah al-Judeh was known for financial integrity and generosity, which allowed him to assume a position of leadership, although it also earned him the jealous envy of some.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1920s Abdel Hamid Shoman, who later established the well-known Arab Bank joined Ali al-Judeh al-Bireh Company as a partner.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that part of the capital Shoman later invested in establishing the bank came from this company, which formed an important stage in the accumulation of his wealth. Yet the biography of Abdel Hamid Shoman makes no mention of al-Bireh Company. Nor does it mention Ali al-Judeh or Shoman's advice to his partner to leave the United States for good and to join him as a contributor in the bank project, advice that was rejected.<sup>18</sup> It was advice that Ali al-Judeh later regretted, for he didn't believe in the project's future success and saw the proposition of his partner--who was a self-made man and a man before his time--as being based on nothing more than dreams and wishes.<sup>19</sup>



Receipt issued by al-Bireh Company. The letterhead indicates that Abdul Hamid Shoman, who was later one of the founders of the Arab Bank and was a main partner. March 1924.

In 1921, Fuad Shattara established the *Jam 'yot al-Nahda al-Filistiniyah* (Palestinian Renaissance Association) in New York. Ali al-Judeh was among its most prominent members, alongside Jamil al-Salatti, Ibrahim Habib Katbeh, Butrus George Shehada, and Father Ibrahim Rahbani.<sup>20</sup> Like the *aljam 'ya al-Filistiniyah limoqawamt al-Sohioneya* (Palestinian Association for Resisting Zionism) (established in 1918), it was one of the first and most important Palestinian associations abroad (*fi al-Mahjar*) that countered Zionist influence in the United States. It also sought a goal seldom shared by Arab associations *in al-Mahjar*, which was to facilitate the permanent return of “Palestinian migrants who

want to go back to Palestine.”<sup>21</sup> In September 1924, Ali al-Judeh was elected as the president of the association in succession to Fuad Shattara, who became its treasurer.<sup>22</sup>

Ali, like his brother Abdullah, was politically a supporter of the Arab Executive Committee led by Musa Kazim al-Husseini and the head of the Supreme Islamic Council Haj Amin al-Husseini.<sup>23</sup> Abdullah soon became one of the most prominent representatives of the Ramallah and al-Bireh area in the national conferences and councils of the British Mandate period.<sup>24</sup> The two brothers established a number of projects and share-holding companies in al-Bireh that duplicated American experiences, such as the al-Najah Company that was a copy of an American department store. The al-Najah Company was a failure, however, as was all of the other companies established by the expatriates of Ramallah before them.<sup>25</sup>

As for the al-Ata brothers, Othman was born in al-Bireh in 1898, and his brother Saleh was born two years later. Othman died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1953, and Saleh died in al-Bireh in early 1974. The two brothers lost their father Ata when they were young, and their mother died soon afterward. Greedy relatives tried to get their hands on their father’s inheritance, which official Ottoman records show was at least partly registered under the *tapu* system. They lived a difficult life with their sister Fatima, working laboriously from a young age.

Yet, as in the case of Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh, a solid working relationship developed between the brothers Othman and Saleh. They split duties between themselves, whereby Saleh continued to work the land and undertake *al-khattara* between the al-Bireh area and East Jordan, while Othman emigrated to the United



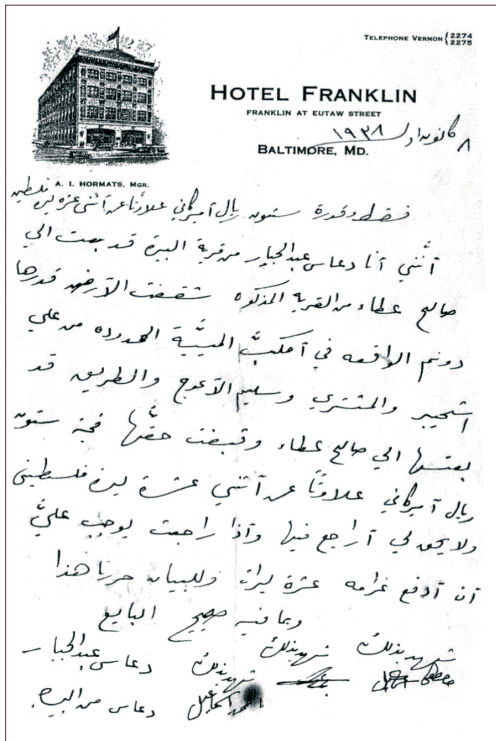
States following WWI.<sup>26</sup> When Othman returned to al-Bireh in 1919 with the first wave of migrants to return to the homeland after years of work in the United States, the brothers married on the same January night the sisters Aziza and Mitha. This marriage, as I will explain later, was a sign of the social mobility that emigration to the United States facilitates.<sup>27</sup> Several years following this marriage, Othman returned to the United States and provided the primary source of income for the family while Saleh took care of the affairs of both of their families and continued to buy land for them both. Saleh emigrated to the United States in 1937, and due to his skills, provided the main income for the family alongside his brother Othman. From that point on, their wives saw to the affairs of the family and the lands.

### **Emigration to the United States and Changes in Land Ownership**

In the late 1950s, when visitors to Ramallah and al-Bireh saw the attractive stone houses of migrants perched along the hills and nestled in the valleys, it was believed that they represented a story of easily-won success. The stone houses were a manifestation of the American dream in all its glory.<sup>28</sup> No one ever thought that there was another face to migration, a face that had all but disappeared from the collective memory. This was the untold story of the hundreds who traveled and did not return rich as they had dreamed, but who died, and whose traces disappeared as though they had been earth had swallowed up by the earth. They did not return because they could not afford a ticket home, or perhaps because they were unable to bear the social price of failure and disappointment. In many cases, migration did not entail traveling to Eldorado, for many migrants found that roads in America were not paved with gold as they had thought and dreamed, but that in some cases they were not paved at all.

Yet the stories of success and their “stone” testimonies are what attracted attention. Those who got lost or suffered disappointment, whose numbers reached the hundreds, were forgotten and disappeared from the collective memory, like the madmen and prisoners of Michel Foucault, marginalized who which no one wanted to think about or remember.<sup>29</sup> As for the wives and children who waited for them to no avail in the homeland, their money transfers only brought bitterness. This article, however, is not the place to discuss this aspect of migration. Rather, our focus here is on migration’s successes.

In contrast to its twin town of Ramallah, from which some families left in the first wave of emigration prior to WWI, the first wave of emigration from al-Bireh took place primarily on an individual (male) basis. While Ramallah had a second wave of family emigration after WWI and continuing until 1948, al-Bireh only had a few cases of family emigration, (not more than five), and only in the late 1940s. The restriction to individual (male) emigration from al-Bireh had important demographic and economic ramifications, including the amassing and usage of capital. Limiting



The American dream was not for everybody. Migrant Salesman from al-Bireh was compelled to sell land to a fellow al-Bireh immigrant Saleh al-Ata. The deal took place in the Franklin Hotel in Baltimore 1938.

emigration to men allowed migrants to significantly limit their expenses in the United States and to direct their savings and capital to the homeland. In turn, this helped to strengthen the effects of migration on local life.

Successful migrants were those who were able to make a good profit and transfer it to the homeland. This included those who worked as “*kusha*” (peddler) salesman, traveling from one place to another, rather than those who worked in factories and on farms or in paving roads, jobs with limited income that did not allow them to save much money.<sup>30</sup> As one sector of Syrian migrants in American society, Palestinian migrants formed a closely-knit community, a phenomenon found in most immigrant societies. Abdel Wahab al-Messiri defines *al-jama'at aliwathifieh* (functional groups like peddlers), as being a group that a society imports or recruits from within and which is known for its work, and to whom society entrusts jobs that most other members will not

do because they are either shameful or lowly (prostitution, usury, door-to-door sales). This is in contrast to jobs requiring special skills (medicine or translation), security and military jobs (eunuchs, mamlukes) or jobs that require total neutrality (commerce, tax collection).<sup>31</sup> Members of the migrant community are known having a contractual, and beneficial relationship to the society they have migrated to. Typically they are mobile and have no connection or identification with the society, and live on its margins in a state of alienation and the host society isolates them in order to protect its social fabric.<sup>32</sup>

In the period under discussion, the United States did not have the kinds of department stores and malls that you find everywhere today, and so the role of peddlers were extremely important to the American social fabric and to the growing American economy. On the one hand, the network of peddlers allowed the best possible marketing and distribution of goods, especially setting isolated areas and farms. Yet on the other hand, institutionalized racism limited the movement of blacks and their interaction with whites and their trade centers. Blacks thus felt a sense of pride when “white” salesmen came to sell to them in their neighborhoods and isolated farms.<sup>33</sup>

The income accumulated from itinerant sales was considerable for new migrants to American society, especially as the living expenses of these peddlers were extremely low due to their frugal life style. They lived in crowded apartments or rooms and worked long hours, and some were entirely cut-off from normal, everyday life. As such, they were able to secure incomes in America that were high in comparison to their relatively low incomes in the homeland. Successful peddlers made about three to five dollars a day in 1910, and some, such as Abdel Jawad Abu Alis, who was more talented than most, was able to make as much 20 dollars on some days in the early 1930s.<sup>34</sup>

Most of these salesmen left their homelands with the intention of returning and investing in them. Some traveling salesmen who amassed wealth and were blessed with a business mind were able even before WWI to evolve from peddlers to the owners of wholesale companies in major American cities such as New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco. Among them were Abdel Hamid Shoman from Beit Hanina; Hamdan Ghannam and his brothers, the owners of the Deir Dibwan Company; and Abdullah and Issa al-Batih, Hanna Hishmeh, and Aziz Shahin from Ramallah. As for al-Bireh, there was Abdullah and Ali al-Judeh, who established the al-Bireh Company, and brothers Ali and Judeh Ismail Jadallah and their partners Mshushir al-Na‘ura and Dahdul Hamdan, who established the more important Palestine Company. Both of these companies were in the heart of Manhattan, the former at 85 Washington Street and the latter based first at 72 Madison Avenue but which later moved a further three times.<sup>35</sup>

They became wholesale distributors to “*al-kusha*” peddlers and their companies formed important networks of support and provisions for new migrants. These individuals in particular amassed significant wealth even by American standards. We do not have precise numbers of their gains, just as we have no solid data on the working conditions of these traveling salesmen, even though the author met their sons, including those who worked in these companies. Yet we can form an approximate idea of their wealth gains by calculating some of the contributing factors and by looking at the marks they left on the homeland. Depending on their skill, peddlers made between \$80 and \$150 a month. Successful traders for wholesale companies were able to make an income of about \$1,000 a month, and both salesmen and traders were thus able to amass capital that was used in their home villages and cities.

The circumstances of WWI prevented migrants from returning home and forced them to continue residing abroad.<sup>36</sup> The only means of travel was sea travel, as commercial passenger airplanes did not yet exist, and sea travel halted during the war due to the paralysis of global sea transport and mail, especially across the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean. This forced the early migrants to stay in the United States, which allowed them to increase their capital.

When the war ended, oral testimonies tell of how many of the successful wealthy al-Bireh migrants decided to return together on the same ship (late December 1918 or the first days of January 1919 )after years of absence from their country. They returned wearing their Western hats and suits that had replaced the kuffiyehs and traditional dress they had worn when they had left home. Aboard the ships, as they looked into the expansive, endless horizon, they dreamed about how they would exploit their wealth in the homeland and turn it into power and glory.<sup>37</sup>

Many of these successful migrants invested their money in land, not only in their original villages and towns, but in other areas of Palestine. Land was so important that its common peasant term in al-Bireh was *rizq*, meaning “living”, similar to the way that bread is called *aish*, meaning “life”, in Egypt. It is not difficult to infer the financial power of the successful migrants when they returned to al-Bireh at the end of 1918. The price of land in al-Bireh and in the hilly areas that had not yet been penetrated by Zionist settlement was inexpensive when compared against the sums they had amassed. The circumstances that Palestine underwent during WWI drove prices further down, for many died during the war years and Palestine and al-Bireh witnessed a period of such suffering and deprivation that it had not seen for centuries.

Years of war, locusts, and blockades significantly decreased the population and contributed to the disintegration of the traditional structure of the Palestinian family largely due to poverty and want. Fathers and husbands were unable to provide for their families what the traditional division of labor demanded--food and protection. Want and hunger were so fierce that people were willing to relinquish a piece of land for a small bag of flour. Men fled their families and responsibilities, and women begged and even in some cases prostituted themselves.<sup>38</sup>

Al-Bireh fell into the hands of the British forces in late December 1917, while the North of Palestine did not fall until the end of 1918. Although all sources concur that living conditions improved gradually following the arrival of the British, economic and psychological conditions remained unsettled for years after the war. This led people to sell, their already inexpensive land, at cheaper prices than usual.

It was under these circumstances that the migrants returned with their money and new suits, and married into families of high standing and wealth. Abdullah and Ali al-Judeh married the sisters Fatima and Safiyeh, the daughters of Mustafa al-Amer, one of the town’s most prominent people. Othman and Saleh married the sisters Aziza and Mitha, the daughters of Hajj Amin Ghuneim, the wealthiest of the al-Ghazawna families that had founded the town centuries earlier. Their mother, Haijer, was the daughter of ‘Amer Muhammad al-’Amer, the *mukhtar* of the al-Tawil clan, the second most important leader of the town, and the grandson of Amer al-Sham’a, a local leader whose name was mentioned in official Ottoman and church records. These marriages and others took place just a few weeks or months following the arrival of the first

wave of migrants, and reflected the beginning of new transformations in the town's power balances. They took place before the new houses were built and before a new leadership came to power as a reflection of these transformations.

The new arrivals soon bought land in al-Bireh and elsewhere in Palestine at extremely low prices. At that time, the Egyptian pound had replaced the Turkish currency which had lost its value following British occupation.<sup>39</sup> After 1927, the Egyptian pound, or the Palestinian pound, was worth five dollars. In the mid-1930s, the value of the Palestinian pound fell and came to equal about four US dollars.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning of the 1920's the price of a dunum of land outside the crowded, built-up area of the village in al-Bireh was fluctuated three to five pounds depending on the land's attributes. These included its proximity to the village, its level of fertility, the amount of trees, etc. The price of the thousands of dunums that were bought in villages and distant hamlets such as the village of Shelta and the hamlet of Karkur, that were practically bought in their entirety by Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh from Muhammad Is'af al-Nashashibi was even lower. In other words, the monthly income of a successful peddler allowed him to buy several dunums of land. So one can imagine by comparison the situation of the owners of wholesale companies, or those like Dahdul Hamdan, who sold his share in the Palestine Company and with the money bought land in Louisiana in which an oil field was later discovered.

In sum, the first wave of migration led to the beginning of important changes in land ownership and in the redistribution of wealth and the restructuring of the economy and local society. This process continued with the second wave of migration (1920-1948) despite the steady rise of land prices due to the increase in the number of migrants, speculation, and the beginning of Jewish settlement in the area. These migrants became the primary landowners in al-Bireh. This extreme and swift change in land ownership affected all aspects of the town's economic conditions, particularly after these migrants decided to express their new economic power in political and social terms.

The developments in land property that took place in al-Bireh were also found in many migrant villages in the Ramallah area that had similar circumstances. Author Said Abul Saud from Deir Dibwan (nine km north east from al-Bireh) explain a case which remind us of the al-Judeh brothers in al-Bireh

*“Those who succeeded in the first generation from Deir Dibwan and returned to the homeland included Eid Hussein Alur, who returned in 1920. The wealth he had amassed abroad was only about 7,000 dollars, but at that time that amount represented a huge fortune in this country. He constructed the necessary buildings for himself and his family and bought a great deal of agricultural land and land planted with fig and olive trees, and bought sheep. He had the largest flock of sheep in the town. Through shares or*

*partnership, he established mills and the first mechanical olive oil presses in the 1920s. Even though these works were intended to gain personal profits, they contributed to the flourishing of the town and its physical and economic development.”<sup>41</sup>*

Before moving on to the topic of how the transfer of land ownership and the rise of a new social sector affected leadership in al-Bireh, I would like to address the topic of the Shelta land that Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh purchased. This issue highlights a new, unprecedented orientation with regard to land ownership in Palestine. Shelta was in its entirety the property of Othman al-Nashashibi, a member of the Ottoman al-Mab‘uthan Council [parliament] for the Jerusalem province. Through his influence and that of his family, he was able to take possession of wide stretches of land in Palestine, including the village of Shelta. Othman al-Nashashibi was known to be miserly and accumulated a great deal. His son Muhammad Is‘af al-Nashashibi, the famed writer, didn’t have good relations with him and had no interest in the land. When he inherited the land from his father, he sold them in large deals including the Shelta transaction. The case of Shelta, like the case of Herbyah (near Gaza), in which large swathes of land were sold to Ali and Abdullah al-Judeh, was a new phenomenon in Palestine. Since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the class of effendiya, city merchants, moneylenders, and top state employees were able to exploit peasants and turn their land into large areas of private property. But in this case, the tables were turned: rich migrants of peasant origins were reversing the patterns of ownership by acquiring large property that had been in the hands of the urban effendiya. As part of this orientation, al-Bireh migrant Ali Ismail Jadallah (of the Palestine Company) was able to buy land and property in the heart of Jerusalem near the current post office in East Jerusalem which was an early sign of the ruralization of cities that became more obvious in later years.

## **New Migrants and a New Leadership in al-Bireh**

When the British occupied al-Bireh, the town had two recognized leaders. Rashid al-Ali (who was also called Rashid al-Ibrahim or Rashid al-Fawz), was the *mukhtar* of al-Bireh and the leader of the al-Qur’an clan, the largest family in al-Bireh. Amer Muhammad al-Amer was the other *mukhtar* of al-Bireh and the head of the important al-Tawil clan. In addition to them, there were the heads of smaller families such as the *mukhtar* Hassan al-Hussein, head of the al-Hamayel family, and Hajj Amin Ghuneim, the head of the small al-Ghazawneh family that fell under the patronage of the al-Tawil clan.

Leadership in al-Bireh was like that elsewhere in the hilly countryside. It centered upon social standing that was inherited paternally, and on strong support from a large family that allied with the leading al-Yemen and al-Qais peasant factions. Also important were good relations with the administration and the Ottoman authorities and

its representatives, factors critical in the selection of a *mukhtar*. As for the economic base of this leadership, its most prominent factors were land ownership and large flocks of sheep, which allowed owners to exhibit the signs of leadership (expensive fine clothes, and generosity at feasts and to guests).

In his seminal essay, “*Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables*”, Albert Hourani listed the characteristics of urban leadership as: first, a high social standing that is usually inherited; second, a good economic status that allows one to show this standing and uphold Palestinian customs that place a high priority on the generous hosting of strangers and others; and finally, the ability to mediate between the general public and the ruling authority.<sup>42</sup>

Social standing as a factor of social mobility and leadership is not limited to Arab societies, nor is it dependent only on financial superiority. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, showed in *Les Heritiers* (1964) that the educational system in French schools and universities functioned as a social selection agency favoring the upper classes to the detriment of the middle class children and even more so in relation to the popular classes. They noted that the bright pupils who attained the highest degrees and who studied in the top educational institutions, and who were able to reach positions of power, were mostly, and not by coincidence, members of the upper class whose social advantage derived from the fact they were born into and raised in wealthy environments. These inheritors did not depend on economic power alone, but also, and perhaps even more so, on cultural and social standing.<sup>43</sup>

We think that these special characteristics noted by Hourani and Bourdieu also apply to local leadership in the Palestinian countryside at that time. Shortly following the British occupation, the most important two leaders of the town, Rashid al-Ali (Al-Qur‘an) and Amer Muhammad al-Amer (al-Tawil) were exiled to Egypt. Amer and Rashid al-Ali had bravely continued to show allegiance to the old Ottoman authority and rejected the occupation authority in defiance of Ronald Storrs, the British governor of Jerusalem, when he had visited al-Bireh.<sup>44</sup> That position turned them into local heroes.

*“When the English governor entered al-Bireh, they summoned the mukhtars Rashid al-Ali and Amer and asked them, ‘How do you see life [under the British in comparison to under the Ottomans]?’ They told him ‘the shoe of the Ottoman soldier, is more honorable than the head of King George.’ So he exiled them to Camp Fayed in Egypt.”<sup>45</sup>*

Ahmed al-Shemseh, who was 14 years old when he witnessed this event, provides a more realistic picture. He, like others, affirms that the two Al Bireh leaders were exiled from Palestine for their deeds.



Land sale contract written by al Bireh scribe Ibrahim Rafidi and signed by a number of Mukhtars from the village. The contract shows the problem of border delineation in land sales from that period. 1901.

*“This land was under the Ottoman rule, Except for the Hashemites, our sympathy went to the Turks. A governor called Storrs [Ronald Storrs] asked all The mukhtars of the area to meet him in al-Bireh, our town which was not yet a municipality. All the mukhtars came to meet him at the entrance of the company [Al-Najah Company]. When the governor asked them ‘Do you want to tell me who hates the Turks and loves the English?’ All of them bowed their heads and were silent, all the mukhtars of our town and the entire district. Only Rashid al-Ali raised his finger. Storrs said, ‘Come here. What do you say?’ He said, ‘I say I hate you and I love the Turks.’ Storrs asked him, ‘Why?’ and he replied because of my religion, my culture, my principles. You are our enemies, how can I love you?’ Storrs patted his back; he patted Rashid al-Ali’s back. He thanked him, I mean.”<sup>46</sup>*

The position of Rashid al-Ali was incongruent with the British and Arab nationalist narratives that espoused the notion that all Arabs hated the Ottoman Turks and revolted against them with their allies. Yet Rashid al-Ali’s position was surely more in line with the feelings of the silent majority in Palestine at that time (the Muslim peasant majority). In a lecture given in Harvard University to discuss how Turks were viewed by Arab Palestinians during first world war. I argued that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians had pro-Turkish sentiments, before, during and even after the First World War. This general view is nuanced by differences in religious, social and cultural basis. Muslims were pro-Turkish, compared to Christians (only 10-12 percent of the population); the rural population compared to city dwellers; poor compared to the nascent and more prosperous middle class intelligentsia.<sup>47</sup> After decades of British rule The anti-British position was later adapted even by those Palestinians fooled by the British promises to the Arabs, only to discover that they had jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire.

The deportaion of al-Bireh *mukhtars* which is only revealed when memories rise to the surface in oral interviews, shed light on the fact that even local leaders in Palestine



were exiled following the British occupation as a direct result of their loyalty to the old regime. It also shows how direct British intervention in the rise, development, and firm establishment of a new leadership took place not only on a national but also on a local level. This process continued throughout the Jordanian period and took on unprecedented dimensions under the Israeli occupation.

When the two leaders were deported, al-Bireh underwent a short period of leadership transition that we could call technocratic. Ibrahim Hanna al-Rafidi undertook administration of the town's affairs. He was a prominent member of a small Christian family that probably arrived in al-Bireh from Rafidia (Nablus) in the 19th century following a blood feud. The family rented property and settled among the Muslims of al-Bireh, who showed a readiness to accept them after they had been rejected by Christian Ramallah. They fell under the patronage of the al-Tawil clan and became an inseparable part of it. The story of the al-Rafidi family, and the rise of Ibrahim Hanna al-Rafidi, is important to understand Christian-Muslim relations at least in the hilly countryside around Jerusalem.

Ibrahim al-Rafidi, who died without leaving any heirs, had won the respect of most the village's Muslim residents. He was mild-mannered and educated in comparison to the overwhelming majority of his illiterate peers. He was well known for his fine handwriting with which he penned many of the residents' documents, such as deeds registering the sale of property, land mortgages, inheritance and wedding documents. Regardless of the incongruence between oral testimonies that claim that Ibrahim was chosen by the elders of the population, and others that say he was appointed by British authorities, this appointment showed the respect that both parties --the residents and the British administration had for him. His appointment also formed a transitory stage and compromise between the competing interests of family and personal authority.

Following several years of exile in Egypt, Rashid al-Ali and Amer returned. Although they were greeted like heroes, their exile had affected their status. They lost their status as *mukhtars* and became incapable of playing the role of mediator between the town's residents and the authority, one of the essential components of leadership, as mentioned above. Exile also negatively affected their economic position that had already declined as a result of the rise of the new economic powers that had arrived from America. What was the value of their dunums of land when the rich migrants were able to buy hundreds of dunums in a single deal? What was the value of large sheep herds, compared to the flow of dollars that allowed the rich migrants to buy their likes tens times over if they wished? How could Rashid al-Ali's purebred horses, which he used to flaunt before al-Bireh compare to the Ford automobiles of Abdullah al-Judeh!

Amer died defeated shortly after his return from exile after one of his followers was killed by a stone thrown in a fight by a supporter of Abdullah al-Judeh, the symbol of

the new rising power. For the first time, he found himself impotent before the British authorities' bias in favor of the new leadership represented by Abdullah al-Judeh, who excelled in the art of "feeding the mouth so that the eye remains respectful" and in forming relations.<sup>48</sup> Only days after the death of his follower, Amer died from a blood clot. As for Rashid al-Ali, he lived the rest of his life both honored for his past and insulted by his present status. He died as an impoverished peasant.

From the early 1920s until the end of the period under investigation (the late 1940s), the town's affairs were run by returning emigrants, and particularly by Abdullah al-Judeh. With the financial and moral support of his brother Ali al-Judeh, and despite his oscillating position, he was the primary leader of the town for 35 years. He was the first head of the local council in al-Bireh in the 1920s and the first president of the municipal council (January 1952), and in between he held the position of the head of the local council several times. Yet this phenomenon was not restricted to Abdullah al-Judeh, for every head of the local or village council during this period was a former emigrant to the United States (Abdullah al-Judeh, Eid al-Musa, Eissa al-Sarsur, and Aqel Mahmud). In Ramallah, Elias Odeh al-Dabini was the first head of the municipality (April 1910) thanks to the funds and influence of his brother Yusef Odeh, the first emigrant from Ramallah. He sponsored the first organized smuggling network that transported men from Ramallah and al-Bireh, and who the women of al-Bireh often cursed in their sad songs about their husbands and sons who never returned.

Yet this change of leadership did not mean that the old leaders lost the respect of the people. The funeral of Rashid al-Ali in January 1937 was an occasion for mourning throughout the province, according to the *al-difa'* newspaper, His body was wrapped in an "Arab flag" and carried aloft on the shoulders of his mourners. The administrative head of Ramallah attended, as did delegates from the Supreme Islamic Council and on behalf of Haj Amin al-Husseini.<sup>49</sup> The women of al-Quru'an and al-Bireh tore their clothes as a sign of their deep sorrow and sang seven rounds of dirges.<sup>50</sup> Yet this effusive sorrow merely only a farewell to a period that had ended and that no one ever wanted to recall again. After he was buried, a small and impoverished tombstone was apparently placed years later, for it incorrectly dates his death ten years earlier. Near his grave, impressive American style stone tombs were built for successful migrants. Despite the silence of the graves they eloquently, tell the tale of these new transformations.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> These papers are held in the author's personal archive.
- <sup>2</sup> I would like to extend my thanks to the interviewees for sharing their time and selves with me. I particularly thank those who hosted me in their homes in the United States, especially Sobhi Muhammad Ismail, Anwar Askar, Yasser and Fayiz Abu Alis, Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, Sa'id Hussein Sari, and those who opened up their family archives, particularly Riyad Abdullah al-Judeh and Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil.
- <sup>3</sup> On the importance of using diverse sources, see Saleh Abdel Jawad, "*durrat al-ghawas fi awham al-khawas*" in *majallat al-dirasat al-filistinya*, No. 67, Summer 2006, pg.66-72.
- <sup>4</sup> On the problem of Palestinian archives, including family papers, see Saleh Abdel Jawad, "*limadha la nastati' kitabat tarikhina al-mu'asir min dun istikhdam al-tarikh al-shafawi? harb 1948 ka-hala dirasiya*" in *majallat al-dirasat al-filistinya*, No. 64, Autumn 2005, p.42-63. On the loss of family papers, and especially those of a political nature, see Ihsan al-Nimr, *tarikh jebel nablus wal-balqa'*, Vol. 2, second printing, Nablus, 1975, p.7., *Al-Taher Press*, Nablus
- <sup>5</sup> Palestine Royal Commission Report .London, printed and published by his Majesty Stationary Office .1937. p.228-229.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid p.228
- <sup>7</sup> The source above reads "It's perhaps desirable to explain that "survey and settlement" operations distinct from, although essentially necessary to, the close settlement of Jews upon the land." p.228.
- <sup>8</sup> See Omar Saleh al-Barghouti and Khalil Tutah, *tarikh filistin, al-quds, 1920*, p.231-234; Amin Mas'ud Abu Bakr, *mulkiyat al-aradi fi mutasarafiyat al-quds 1858-1918*, history Ph.D. dissertation for the Jordanian University, 1996, p.s; Ihsan al-Nimr, *tarikh jebel nablus wal-balqa'*, Vol. 2, second printing, Nablus, p.275-283.
- <sup>9</sup> See Muhammad al-Sayyid Mahmud, *al-nuqud al-'uthmaniya*, Cairo: *maktabat al-adab*, 2003.
- <sup>10</sup> There is a belief that the Palestinian colloquial term for money, *masari*, is derived from a reference to the use of Egyptian money. Khalil Ayyub Abu Raya, *ramallah qadiman wa hadithan*, the American Ramallah Union, p.119.
- <sup>11</sup> A government decree read " Palestine currency order 1927: In exercise of the powers vested in me by article 11 (3) of the Palestine Currency Order, 1927, I, Lieutenant Colonel George Stewart Symes, Officer Administering the Government, do hereby proclaim that Egyptian gold, notes, silver, nickel coins which were declared to be legal tender in Palestine under a public notice in the Official *Gazette* of the Government of Palestine, No.36 of the 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1921, shall after the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1928, cease to be legal tender in Palestine. Issued on 9th February, 1928." (From the papers of Saleh Abdel Jawad).
- <sup>12</sup> Muhammad Izzat Daruza wrote of one of his forefathers, Fakhr al-Tujjar Khadr Bey Daruza, "Then I don't know if he died without bearing progeny, or if another family branch sprang from him that took a new name other than Daruza. This is common in Nablus and elsewhere. I don't know if the names "Fakhr al-Tujjar" and "Bey" were bestowed upon him by the writer of the report or if there was some other factual basis to them." From the memoir of Muhammad Izzat Daruza, *dar al-gharb al-islami*, Vol. 1, first printing, 1993, p.46.
- <sup>13</sup> This information is drawn from dozens of interviews and particularly those with Ali al-Judeh's son, Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, who is an anesthesiologist, in his home in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, in the United States on 4 November 1998, and with Muhammad and Riyad, the sons of Abdullah al-Judeh, in their home in al-Bireh on 12 and 17 September 1995. As for Ali al-Judeh's relationships with Arab intellectuals and politicians, this is documented in his personal papers.
- <sup>14</sup> According to a memorandum from the Palestine government dated 21 September 1940, (from the papers of Saleh Abdel Jawad) as well as the unpublished diary of Salem Za'rur, the head of the Ramallah municipality in the 1940s, the entry for 4 January 1942).
- <sup>15</sup> A memorandum from Said al-Dajani, the administrative head of the Ramallah district, number 14/37-499, dated 27 December 1952, in which he informed the acting head of the al-Bireh local council that the Jordanian minister of the interior had approved raising the local council to the level of a municipality. (from the papers of Saleh Abdel Jawad)
- <sup>16</sup> As usual when a man of goodwill becomes prominent, those envious of Abdullah al-Judeh, and his opponents in the town, who were a minority, tried to suggest otherwise and spread rumors against him. It appears that these efforts

- found their way into the intelligence reports of the Haganah (village file number 1812/105 on al-Bireh dated November 1947), in which the following is found. “He spent a long time in the United States of America and established there an Arab association and began to collect money for Palestine and to help Arab residents and rescue them from the fangs of Zionism. After he was able to collect modest funds he fled there and returned to al-Bireh and presented himself as a man of charity. While in the country he worked in the nationalist arena and was able to form for himself a prominent reputation and personality, and to collect large sums of money. When Jamal al-Husseini returned to the country, he built a victory arch and went out with his men to greet him on the Nablus Road. He also established an association in al-Bireh called the Arab Culture Association, alongside the Boy Scouts Association and the al-Futuwa Organization, which included about 100 people. He made an officer who was a relative of his, Khalid Radwan, responsible for it.”
- <sup>17</sup> The name Abdel Hamid Shoman was on the company’s letterhead as one of the company’s three partners. Information also provided by Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, *ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Al-‘isami, sirrat ‘abd al-hamid shuman 1890-1974*, Beirut: *al-mu’assasa al-‘arabiya lil-dirasat wal-nashr*, 1982.
- <sup>19</sup> Interview with Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, *ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Fuad Shattara was a surgeon and nationalist intellectual from Ramallah who emigrated to the United States in 1914 and graduated from the Columbia University college of medicine. He was a brilliant, well-known surgeon and a prominent personality among migrants. He died in America, probably by suicide, in 1942. From several sources, including Kamel Jamil al-‘Asili, *muqaddima fi tarikh al-tibb fil-quds, mundhu aqdam al-azmina hata sannat 1918*, Amman: the Jordanian University, 1994, p.252.
- <sup>21</sup> From a letter Ali al-Judeh sent to *filistin* newspaper about the association and its goals, activities, and elections that made him president. *filistin* newspaper, 21 October 1924, p.4.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> A number of oral interviews, including interviews with Ali al-Judeh’s son, Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, and the sons of Abdullah al-Judeh, Riyad and Muhammad.
- <sup>24</sup> See Bayan Nuweihd al-Hout, *al-qiyyadat wal-mu’assasat al-siyasiya fi filistin 1917-1948*, Beirut: *mu’assasat al-dirasat al-filistiniya*, 1981, in which his name appears several times. See also the diaries of Akram Za’itar, *al-haraka al-wataniya al-filistiniya 1935-1939*, Beirut: *mu’assasat al-dirasat al-filistiniya*, first printing, 1980, p.94. In this book there is mention of a delegation from the area of Ramallah and al-Bireh to the important National Committees Conference on 7 May 1936 consisting of Abdullah al-Jawdeh, Hanna Khalaf, Eid al-Musa, Suleiman Abdel Rahman, and Najib Abu.
- <sup>25</sup> Ahmed al-Shamseh says (and his opinion is shared by Muhammad Ibrahim Suleiman–Abu Wejdi), “[Abdullah and Ali al-Judeh] established a cloth company, and people from Beit Hanina, Kafr Aqab, and al-Ram participated [in it]. Each of them had a little money, some of them sold the gold of their women for this purpose. They formed a company they called al-Najah Company, and they put Musa al-Handush in it. They sold, you know, did commerce. Commerce, then they lost, and they closed it down.” On the Ramallah experience in building economic companies like those in the United States, see Yusef Jirjis Qadura, *tarikh madinat Ramallah*, New York: *matba’at al-huda*, 1954, p.117-118.
- <sup>26</sup> *Al-khattara* is the practice of riding a donkey to neighboring villages to buy crop surpluses and then traveling on to Jerusalem or elsewhere to sell them. Aziz Shahin, *kashfu al-niqab ‘an al-judhur wal-ansab fi madinat Ramallah*, Birzeit University Research Center, 1982, pg. 48. Khalil Abu Raya believes that “the name is derived from *khatar* [danger] due to the risks of this endeavor at a time in which highway robbery was common. Khalil Abu Raya, *ibid.*, p.110.
- <sup>27</sup> According to a letter sent by the judge of Jerusalem on 17 Muharram 1338/ December 1919 to the imam of al-Bireh village, which was in in the legal bounds of Jerusalem, seeking approval for the “marriage of Saleh bin Ata to the of-age Aziza bint Haj Amin ‘Awad Ghuneim, as long as there is no jurisprudential obstruction.” Yet Aziza was not yet of-age, for she was only 12 years old at the time, and slept for several years beside the sister of her “husband” before she “washed”, meaning that she began to menstruate, and only then moved to her husband’s bed. It appears that Saleh went to the main judge in Jerusalem so as to override the objection of the al-Bireh imam to the

- marriage, and took the paper from a higher Islamic authority.
- <sup>28</sup> See, as an example, the report of Salim Zabbal, “*majallat al-‘arabi*” in the series “*i‘rif watanak*”, Vol. 32, 1963, p.66-85. This is the first photographic report of the two cities.
- <sup>29</sup> Among them was the grandfather of my mother, Safiyeh al-Attallah, who disappeared in Venezuela in the 1920’s. What is strange is that no one in the family, even my grandmother, ever mentioned him. I never heard about him or knew about his disappearance until 1995, when I began this study at the age of 43.
- <sup>30</sup> Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov and Oscar Handlin, *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1980, p.130
- <sup>31</sup> Abdel Wahab al-Messiri, *al-jama‘at al-wadhifiya al-yuhudiya, numudhij tafsiri jadid*, Cairo: *dar al-shuruq*, 2002.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview with Sobhi Muhammad Ismail, a former peddler, in his home in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, on 31 December 1997.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with the late Abdel Jawad Abu Alis, former peddler, in his home in al-Bireh on 20 February 1989.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Kamal Khalaf al-Tawil, mentioned above, and from the company letterhead. Later Palestine Company headquarters were at 115 and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets, and on 28<sup>th</sup> Street. Information provided by the late Jabar Judeh Ismail, interview in al-Bireh, and interview with Shukri Ali Ismail in his home in al-Bireh on 6 October 2008, as well as the addresses on the company’s official envelopes.
- <sup>36</sup> Abu Raya, *ibid.*, p.38. Also numerous oral testimonies.
- <sup>37</sup> Interviews with Umm Ra’fat (Khaldiyeh Mustafa Ismail) in her home in al-Bireh, 7 and 24 June 1997. Khaldiyeh’s father Musttafa Isma’il Hamad was one of these people.
- <sup>38</sup> Thompson, Elizabeth. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privileges and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. p.20-23, 30-38.
- <sup>39</sup> Qadura, *ibid.*, p.45.
- <sup>40</sup> According to the newspaper *filistin*, dated 18 May 1933, the price of the Palestinian pound against foreign currencies was, to the American dollar (3,93.), to the French franc (85,65), and to the German mark (14,66)..
- <sup>41</sup> Said Abul Saud, *‘ai memlekat kan‘an, medinatuna deir dabwan*, no publisher, Deir Dabwan, 1994, p.83.
- <sup>42</sup> p.36-66 n, Phillip Khoury and Mary Wilson eds.: *Albert Hourani: the Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, London:illan
- <sup>43</sup> [http://fr.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_941536803/les\\_H%C3%A9ritiers.html](http://fr.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_941536803/les_H%C3%A9ritiers.html)
- <sup>44</sup> Several interviews, most significantly with Ahmed al-Shamseh in his home in al-Bireh on 11 July 1995, with Fatima al-Haj Amin Ghuneim in the author’s house in al-Bireh on 14 February 1997, and with Ratib Da’as in the Islamic center of Pompano Beach, Florida on 9 January 1998.
- <sup>45</sup> Interview with Ratib Da’as, *ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> Interview with Ahmed al-Shamsaeh (number 2) in his home in al-Bireh on 11 July 1995.
- <sup>47</sup> Saleh Abdel Jawad lecture “The Arab View of the Turks during FirstWW, the Untold Story, Te Cae of Palestine” Center For Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) Study Group on Modern Turkey - Harvard University Co-Chairs Professors Cemal Kafadar and Lenore Martin, April 7, 2004.
- <sup>48</sup> Several interviews, most significantly with Ahmed al-Shamseh, *ibid.*; Fatima al-Haj Amin Ghuneim, *ibid.*; and with Zahwa al-Rafidi in her home in al-Bireh on 20 July 1995.
- <sup>49</sup> *Al-difa’* newspaper, 31 January 1937.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview with Ali al-Sheikh in the barbershop of Abu Nidal in al-Bireh 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999.