

Migration as a necessity

Migration and the need to travel took on an extreme importance for the citizens given their business interests and the need to work abroad. This need was not due, as one might surmise, to the poverty of the country but to lack of work and livelihood for the Lebanese. The Great Council had deprived them of any chance of work in their country and denied them salt and fishing. Anyone filling a crock with sea water was roundly insulted and had to pay a fine; furthermore public servants followed him and broke the crock he had filled. On the other hand, there was not a profitable plot of land left in Lebanon, there were only the cracks in the rocks to tile and eke out enough for bread and tobacco. This worthy council finished off Lebanon when it took from it the cracks in the rocks which it handed over to public corporations, when it declared that the sea belonged to the government and that the State had the monopoly of these outfits. One may well ask whether Lebanon was not entitled to its sea as well as its government. Did not Lebanon have a right to these monopolies? The destruction of the country and the wreckage of the people's property are crimes the council committed against the State.

Those are the reasons why the Lebanese left their country. The Lebanese government which restricted the means of survival and work opportunities, made travel even more difficult. Sometimes a passport had to be made in the *Mutassarifyah* offices, sometimes in the *Kaimakam*'s. Those who wanted to travel were put through the mill and had to pay dear; furthermore they had to travel from one end of the country to the other to visit the village Sheikh, the mayor, the priest [...] then report to the *Kaimakam* where they would be asked to come back the following day, then in the evening, then another day [and to pay backhanders].

If the government brings in some reforms, every administrator, *Kaimakam*, will earn the government and the people's trust, and what's more, there will be fair trials, busy administrations that will favour work – and passports will always be delivered in the districts' offices, as today and that will be to the advantage of the people and the government. Yes indeed, the government: for it has much to lose by making it difficult to obtain passports because the Lebanese who want to travel will go to Beirut to get a passport, even if it is not allowed, or else, they will flee without one, as often happens. The Lebanese government must take into consideration how much it loses, in order to realise how much it would earn from effecting the reforms that were mentioned.

Kunûz Lubnan al-Marsûda [*Lebanon's Treasures*], Egypt, 1907, p. 120-121. (translated from the French)