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CYPRIOT EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (1910-1930)

NICOLAS MANITAKIS¹
MICHALIS N. MICHAEL²

Cyprus and the new era of mass transatlantic emigration

Ioannis Tserkezis, born in 1874, in Mazotos, a village in the Larnaca district of Cyprus, came from a poor family and was sent by his father to Smyrna, in 1888, aged 14, to seek employment to strengthen the family’s income. The young Greek Cypriot’s family was counting on help that would be provided to the young immigrant by his uncle (on his father’s side), who had been living in that multicultural Ottoman city for a considerable length of time. Despite his uncle’s efforts, the search for employment proved fruitless, and thus, after a brief period of time, Tserkezis was forced to return to his native country. He was not disheartened, though. He continued his efforts to find employment abroad during the years that followed. In 1899, he made efforts to settle in Alexandria and in 1902 went back to Smyrna, but both ventures proved unsuccessful. Up until then Tserkezis had chosen to emigrate to the most common destinations for the Cypriots of the time. That is, to Egypt or countries within the Ottoman Empire (Tserkezis 1988: 13-101).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Tserkezis started – according to his autobiography – to consider the idea of travelling to New York “to visit America to acquire wealth” (Tserkezis 1988: 102). In other words, during this period of time he reconsidered his migratory plans, turning his focus away from more familiar neighboring southeastern Mediterranean countries towards places on the distant and mostly unknown American continent. In 1907 he tried to materialize his plans to cross the Atlantic Ocean. He travelled

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from Smyrna to Piraeus in order to gain a place aboard a British transatlantic liner destined for New York, but was diagnosed during medical examination, as suffering from trachoma, and thus, removed from the passenger list (Tserkezis 1988: 131). The aforementioned, unfortunate event was not enough to discourage Tserkezis, who remained attached to the idea of fulfilling the "American dream". New attempts to join a transatlantic voyage followed, this time with Latin America as a final destination, via the great European ports of Marseilles, Antwerp, Liverpool and others. Finally, in 1908 following numerous adventures he managed to arrive to the United States illegally and stayed there, working on and off as a shoemaker. He remained there until the Balkan Wars broke out. Following the 1912 large-scale wave of repatriation he decided to return to Europe to enlist as a volunteer in the Greek army along with several thousand other Greek and Greek Cypriot emigrants. After the end of the wars he emigrated yet again for a short period, to Australia, and then to the U.S.A. He finally returned and settled in his country in 1923.

The case of Tserkezis is in many respects emblematic of the new migratory tendencies. On the one hand it depicts, in the most vivid way, the increase in emigration from Cyprus during the last decades of the 19th century, when principle destinations included neighboring countries under the Ottoman Empire as well as Egypt. On the other hand, it shows the emergence, at the beginning of the 20th century, of new destinations, mainly that of the U.S.A., and, to a lesser extent, Australia. During this period a trend towards increasing emigration began to appear in Cyprus, and could be traced back, as will be examined in more detail below, to a series of factors, such as the chronic crisis in agriculture, economic underdevelopment, and constraints enforced by the British administration. This migratory trend was reinforced by improvements in sea transportation which took place during the first decades of British rule in Cyprus and led to an increase in movement to and from the island. This latter development was due to effective activity on the part of a number of foreign, Greek and even Cypriot shipping companies in the southeastern Mediterranean network of maritime operations. It would not be an exaggeration to state that never before had travelling from the island by sea been easier than it was during the first decades of the 20th century.

Cypriots' links with people from neighboring countries, especially those in Europe and others under Ottoman rule, in conjunction with more frequent travel abroad, led them to become familiar with the new European migratory trend: transatlantic emigration. Since the mid-nineteenth century,
the tendency of Europeans to cross the Atlantic and head towards the New World, in search of a better life had taken on great dimensions and had gradually spread to almost the whole of the European continent, from its northwestern to its southwestern limits (Bade 2003, Moch 2003). At the end of the 19th century and even more so during the first decade of the 20th century, “American fever” – a term often used by the European press to depict the mania for emigration to the United States (Wyman 1996: 41-42) – began to spread quickly to the Balkans, Greece and the Ottoman Empire. During the second decade it finally affected Cyprus too.

However, emigration to the U.S.A. was not simply a new migratory choice, an alternative destination. This transatlantic emigration was a new, and in many ways different migratory experience. The most obvious difference lies in the very nature of the journey. The crossing of the ocean which lasted several days, strict border controls, medical examinations carried out in advance, the high cost of journeys, travelling to an unknown country where there were no established networks of relatives or fellow-countrymen, constituted just a few of the new challenges Cypriot emigrants were faced with. Transatlantic emigration does not therefore simply mark the beginning of a new emigration trend. It marks the beginning of a new period of emigration in the history of Cyprus. Cypriots started venturing forth on long transatlantic journeys towards far-away places, thus familiarizing themselves with the risks and dangers of a transatlantic journey and widening their geographical horizons beyond Euro-Afro-Asiatic continental regions. It is also indicative that during the same period, according to available evidence, and as Tserkezis’ testimony demonstrates, the wave of emigration towards Australia became larger.

In general, during this period a type of ‘Europeanized’ migratory experience on the part of the island’s inhabitants was observable. Cypriots headed towards major European ports, boarded enormous luxury, transatlantic liners owned by the great European shipping companies, travelled together with thousands of other European emigrants, and shared the “American dream”. In other words, Cypriot emigration became part and parcel of a wave of European migration bound for the New World, one that started during the second half of the 19th century and continued to increase in number until the first decades of the 20th century.

The available quantitative research data indicates that during the first half of the 20th century the United States of America was, for Cypriot emigrants, the most popular destination after Egypt. According to one survey,
which still remains to be verified, as well as other sources, the total number of Cypriot emigrants to foreign countries in 1946 had reached 40,000, of whom 12,000 lived in Egypt, 10,000 in the U.S.A., and 8,000 in Great Britain (Papapolyviou 2007a:490-491). In reality, though, the momentum with which the migratory wave towards America developed was much stronger than the above mentioned classification indicates. The strength of the attraction and increasing prestige of the U.S.A. as a destination for emigrants during the first decades of the 20th century contrasted with the diminishing importance of Egypt as a magnet for Cypriot emigrants.

Indicative of the above point of view is an article in a Cypriot newspaper of 1916 which states that because emigrants’ “golden dreams” cannot be fulfilled in Egypt, America is emerging as the destination with greatest attraction for the would-be emigrant. From references in the press one may conclude that Cypriot immigrants faced problems in the aforementioned neighboring country. The newspapers mentioned, inter alia, the appearance, during the first decade of the 20th century, of many Cypriot beggars in Egyptian towns, who were not even able to cover the expenses of their repatriation (Salpix 1916: 19 January). At the same time the Cyprus Brotherhood of Egypt announced that it was not possible for them to offer any financial or other kind of assistance to the great numbers of destitute Cypriots seeking help (Enos 1910: 23 June). The inability of Egypt to facilitate migratory plans made by Cypriots and the latters’ orientation towards transatlantic emigration, was commented upon in 1916 by newspapers published by Cypriots in the U.S.A. (National Herald 1916: 17 April). Yet, despite the clear preference of Cypriot emigrants for America, the transatlantic wave did not develop the momentum that seemed to be in evidence at the dawn of the 20th century. Adverse circumstances, in the field of transport in the first decade of the 20th century, and the restrictive measures imposed by American immigration authorities on emigrants arriving from Europe at the beginning of the 1920s, were discouraging factors.

“Whose subjects are we, finally?” British or Ottoman travelling subjects? The nationality and passport issue

Before the basic characteristics of the wave of transatlantic emigration are examined, it is worth looking into the legal status of Cypriots who wished to travel abroad at the beginning of the 20th century. Bearing what nationality
did Cypriots travel abroad during the peak period of emigration to new transatlantic destinations - as Ottoman or British subjects? The increase in the tendency to emigrate coincides with the change in political sovereignty of the island during transfer from Ottoman to British administration. The Anglo-Turkish convention of 1878 provided recognition of the Sultan’s suzerainty by the British administration, a provision which resulted in, inter alia, the creation of a particular legal status for the inhabitants of Cyprus, who, on paper remained the Sultan’s subjects and yet were answerable to the new colonial authorities. In practice, this meant that they travelled as Ottoman subjects, though also in possession of British travel documents.

The question of nationality and passports was of great importance to the emigrant travelers, because it gave them the right to request the protection of the country which was to be their political guardians and thus enabled them to tackle dangers and risks involved in a long journey. In relation to these long transatlantic destinations, assistance offered by the authorities of their country often replaced the network of protection afforded by the presence of friends or relatives in nearby destinations. It seems that in some cases Cypriot emigrants abroad asked for the assistance and protection of the British Consular authorities and carried their British passports as proof of their bond with the Empire. According to criticism made by the Greek Cypriot press the colonial administration often refused to offer its assistance. “Whose subjects are we, Turkey’s or Great Britain’s?, perplexed Cypriots ask themselves”, a Greek Cypriot newspaper columnist wonders in 1903. The author denounced the fact that Cypriots remained deprived of nationality and those travelers in need of government protection found the gates of both the British and Turkish consulates “hermetically sealed” (Alitheia 1903: 23 May). During the decade beginning in 1910 when foreign travel and emigration by Cypriots increased, the aforementioned criticism began to appear even more regularly in the local press. It also seems that Cypriot representatives brought the matter up at the Legislative Council, but were unable to secure any promises from the Chief Secretary (Enosis 1910: 27/29 November, Enosis 1913: 26/28 February). “The British Authorities deny us any protection while we are in a foreign country”, an editorial in a newspaper stated in 1916. The fact that the British administration received money on issuing passports, which carried the “British coat of arms”, rendered the refusal to offer protection, in the eyes of the islanders, even more inexcusable (Alitheia 1916: 23 December).
In other words, transatlantic emigration helped raise the question of the relationship of Cypriots with the new colonial administration and their ties with the Ottoman suzerain. The “unsolved question” of the passports and of nationality, as this was referred to by a Cypriot journalist, began to gradually resolve itself following the annexation of Cyprus by the British Empire in 1914, as a consequence of the siding of the Ottoman Empire with the enemy alliance, i.e. the Central Powers. In 1915 and 1917 all inhabitants of the island who were Ottoman subjects became full British subjects with the exception of those who lived abroad (SA1 1348/1914: 5th December, 1916).

Travelling to the U.S.A.

Judging from various articles in Greek Cypriot newspapers, one may safely conclude that Cypriots began emigrating to the U.S.A. before the second decade of the 20th century (Neon Ethnos 1912: 23/6 July). Everything, though, points to the fact that they were few and isolated cases. However, in the decade beginning in 1910 limited individual departures gave place to more collective journeys involving scores of people, indicative of the increasingly significant growth in migratory trends. “Positive” proof of the above is the account given by a Cypriot newspaper of the departure of seventy Cypriots from Famagusta bound for America in September 1912 (Salpix, 1912: 20 September). In the same article mention is made of the fact that three weeks earlier 200 other emigrants had left for the U.S.A. In general, during the decade beginning in 1910 more and more accounts of transatlantic emigration are reported in the local press.

Two reliable sources from that period refer to the rise in emigration to the New World. In a letter to the American authorities, in 1916, the Caruana Fils travel agency mentions the fact that the wave of Cypriots travelling towards America was growing steadily and that during the period 1914-1916 the numbers had risen exponentially in comparison with previous years (SA1 1083/1916: 2 September 1916). Moreover the British Embassy in Athens in a memorandum issued in 1920, informed the British High Commissioner in Cyprus that a significant number of Cypriot emigrants had arrived in Greece with the intention of travelling to the U.S.A. (SA1 1083/1916: 16 June 1920).

The rise in migratory movement during this period is also more securely
verified by reference to records of arrivals of Cypriot emigrants kept by the American emigration authorities. On the passenger lists of transatlantic liners arriving at Ellis Island, 259 Cypriot passengers/emigrants – according to supplied names, surnames and places of birth – were identifiable (www.ellisislandrecords.org). Processing this information, we present the fluctuation of Cypriot transatlantic migratory movement between 1903 and 1924 in the following graph:

According to the above random sample, the first recorded arrival of a Cypriot emigrant to America took place in 1903 and from then on arrivals continued uninterrupted until 1924. However, migratory movement towards the U.S.A. saw considerable fluctuation and change during this period. During the first decade of the 20th century it fluctuated at low levels, became stronger at the beginning of the following decade, and reached its peak during the second half of the decade. It reached an extremely high point in 1916, but subsided significantly over the following years only to surge again in 1920. In other words, emigration by Cypriots to America grew apace during the First World War and again, with even more intensity, during the first postwar years.
The rise in migratory movement in 1916 and generally the strong presence of Cypriots in the USA is also verified by the appearance of Greek Cypriot expatriate associations during the war years. These associations constitute, as is known to this very day, the first efforts to set up organized bodies and collective organizations of Cypriots in America. The Cypriot overseas community press mentions, for example, the foundation, in January 1917, of the Cypriot Brotherhood – a name which reminds one of the association founded by Cypriot emigrants in Egypt. Following the end of the First World War, the Cypriot associations focused their activities on the ideal of Enosis (Union of Cyprus with Greece) by sending petitions to the British Prime-Minister, Lloyd George and the President of the U.S.A., Woodrow Wilson (Papadopoulos, 2008: 396).

Despite the rise in emigration from Cyprus during the first years of the Great War, the negative consequences of worldwide conflict for international mobility were soon felt on the island too. The tension caused by submarine warfare during the following years made crossing the Atlantic a very dangerous venture. Moreover, the High Commissioner adopted restrictive measures for recruiting purposes which led to a drastic decrease in the number of arrivals during the war years. It might have been the case that the decrease in emigration to the U.S.A. was caused by the possibility of paid enlistment in the British army after 1916 (Papapolyviou 2007b: 299). It also seems that the many difficulties involving the length of journeys such as that to the U.S.A. turned Cypriot emigrants away from transatlantic travel and in the direction of safer European destinations. According to evidence provided by one travel agent, in 1916, Cypriot Emigrants turned their attention to France (SA1 1083/1916: 2 September 1916). It is quite possible that interest focused on this new emigrant destination was related to the massive recruitment of Greek workers by the French authorities during the years 1916-1917 in order to secure human resources for their war industry. It is estimated that more than 20,000 emigrants went to France from the Aegean islands and Macedonia in 1916-1918, the majority of whom were Christian refugees from the Ottoman Empire who had taken refuge in the Dodecanese and Crete (Manitakis 2000, Korma 2009). Some of the Cypriots who emigrated to France were later able to proceed to America. As noted in a letter to the British Consul in Chicago, George Toulis, from Tymbou, Nicosia, left Cyprus for France in August 1916 and from France to the U.S.A. in March 1917. In July 1918 he was preparing
to return to his fatherland (SA1 667/1918: 3 July 1918).

Following the end of the war, sea transportation to America was restored and with the lifting of travel restrictions on those liable for military service, the number of arrivals surged yet again, exceeding the considerable numbers recorded in 1916. Almost half of the Cypriots who emigrated to the U.S.A., according to our available sample, travelled in 1920. That particular year is undoubtedly a landmark in the history of Cypriot transatlantic emigration.

All the events point to the fact that at the beginning of the 1920s, transatlantic emigration had become a well-established practice among the people of Cyprus. Yet, the postwar glamour of migratory practice proved to be short-lived. Starting in 1921, the number of arrivals drastically decreased and never increased substantially thereafter. In his annual report on the situation in Cyprus, the High Commissioner notes in 1922 that emigration to the U.S.A. had practically come to a standstill. He also added that emigration had yet again been directed mainly towards Egypt (Colonial Reports 1921:6). European restrictive policy on migratory movement and restrictions on the unimpeded entrance of European emigrants to American territory under legal measures adopted in 1921 and 1924, affected, as was expected, migratory trends from Cyprus too. These measures actually marked the end of a century-long mass European emigration to the U.S.A. (Pratt Fairchild 1924: 653-661, Baines 1991: 67-69).

During the 1920s American authorities imposed annual limits on the numbers of all nationals who could be accepted in the U.S.A. The annual number of British passport bearing Cypriot emigrants who were allowed to enter American soil, did not exceed 40 (SA1 1083/1916: 5 June 1926) (for migrants of Greek nationality the number was limited to 300 (Saloutos 1973:424). This maximum figure was usually reached in the first months of the year, thus those who were late in applying for an entry visa were forced to wait until the following year (SA1 1083/1916: 23 June 1926). Furthermore, American authorities became extremely strict about granting entry visas to their country (Pratt Fairchild 1924: 661-663). The American Consulate in Cairo, under whose jurisdiction Cypriot travellers were placed, had received orders as early as October 1920, to issue visas only to people falling into special categories: those who wished to be reunited with close relatives i.e. fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, husbands or fiancés; and those who were travelling on business or to study (SA1 1083/1916: 11 October 1920).
is clear that the intention of the American authorities was to exclude emigrants who sought gainful occupation with the exception of those who would be reunited with family members. Finally, in the 1920s, circumstances enabling movement to and settling, even on a temporary basis, in the U.S.A. changed drastically and led to a sharp decrease in the number of arrivals.

How many Cypriots did in fact finally emigrate to the U.S.A. during the first decades of the 20th century? In the General Registrar’s office records, and in the local press of the time it was not possible to access any statistics which would enable one, even by proxy to make any quantitative assumption as to the rate of emigration. Thus, determination of the exact magnitude of emigration towards the U.S.A. remains a question to be answered. Only fragmented information allows one to understand the extent of people’s exodus from the island, especially during the peak period of emigration. In 1920, the British administration issued 1968 passports to Cyprus’ British subjects (Colonial Reports 1919-1920: 4).

Available statistics and quantitative data referring to the repatriation tendency of those Cypriots who emigrated to the U.S.A. during this period of time are also insufficient. Fragmented evidence indicates the existence of a wave of repatriation which seems significant enough. The impression given is that it began in the 1910s but grew considerably during the following decade. It so happened that the repatriation of emigrants was recorded in the social columns of the newspapers. One good example is the reporting in July 1912, in the Neon Ethnos newspaper of the repatriation of Loizos Hallari who had lived in California for twelve years (Neon Ethnos, 6 July 1912). Many such examples support the assumption that during the following decade the tendency towards repatriation grew significantly. Apart from Savvas Tserkizis, one may mention Kostas Katsellis and Georgios Kamidris (Coudounaris 2005: 159, 179). One may also mention the fact that the general characteristics of transatlantic emigration by Cypriots are very similar to those of the Greeks and the Ottomans. It has been observed by migration historians that the emigration of men from the Mediterranean, usually of young age, and those who travelled alone but within the framework of a family migratory strategy, intended only to stay temporarily in the U.S.A. and thus a great number of them eventually returned to their homeland (Saloutos 1973: 418-423, Baines 1991: 42-43, Kitroeff 1999: 138-141, Karpat 185). They aimed at saving money through hard work during their short period of stay abroad
and returning home and reuniting with their families. Such intentions are clearly illustrated by the life of Michalis Georgiou from the village of Komi in Famagusta who had emigrated to the U.S.A. Georgiou, accompanied by one of his sons, left for the U.S.A. in November 1913, leaving behind his wife and five children. Five years later in July 1918, father and son were preparing to return to Cyprus (SA1 667/1918: 3 July 1918).

As one may conclude, the wave of migration towards America lasted for at least three decades, but reached its peak over a period of only a few years. According to our sample, two out of three Cypriot emigrants left for the U.S.A. in either 1916 or 1920. The rather late – in comparison with the rest of Europe and other southeastern Mediterranean countries – migratory movement of Cypriots coincided with the outbreak of war and the first postwar years. The particular, unfavorable circumstances of the time (recruitment, interruption of transportation, restrictions on migration policy), did not allow Cypriots’ transatlantic emigration to become a large-scale phenomenon, as happened in other countries in continental Europe.

**Increasing economic interests: Local Travel Agents and Foreign Steamship Companies**

Despite the relatively limited extent of Cypriot transatlantic emigration Cypriots acquired all the symptoms of “American migratory fever”, among which were the development of local emigration services as well as the appearance of phenomena such as the financial exploitation of emigrant travellers. Steamship companies and travel-agents, as well as various middlemen (lawyers, ex-civil servants etc.), developed business activities offering services related to the selling of tickets and the issuing of travel documents. In all such activities one encounters cases of exploitation.

The involvement of Cyprus in the period of transatlantic emigration during the second decade of the 20th century, is verified by, inter alia, the appearance for the first time, of professions which dealt with emigration. These included, in addition to travel agents, all those who offered their paid services to emigrant travelers so that the latter could complete administrative procedures in order to acquire necessary travel documents. Indeed, the great demand for travel documents in Cyprus during this period of time created a new
field of economic activity. Thus, British ex-civil servants and local lawyers, occasionally offered their intermediary services related to bureaucratic matters in reference to transatlantic journey. A British ex-policeman was responsible for applications for British citizenship and passports, while the legal office of Georgios Peristianis played the role of intermediary. The above – mentioned services were advertised in the local press (Alitheia 1920: 28 February, Salpix 1920: 4/17 May).

The increase in migratory movement towards the New World, since the beginning of the 20th century had raised the interest of local travel and shipping agents. One of the first to take active part in transporting emigrants from Cyprus was George Mavroides, an active businessman from Larnaca who had been cooperating with a number of foreign steamship Companies. In 1907, he established “The Office for Emigration to America” and cooperated with the Greek transatlantic company “The National Greek Line” (Georgis 2004: 24). Travel offices which specialized in offering their services to emigrants appeared in other towns in Cyprus during the following years, as, for example, “Kirzis and Co”, which had its head office in Limassol (Alitheia 1920: 10 April). Local agents cooperated with large transatlantic companies and were often responsible for their being advertised in the local press, so that the latter might become more familiar to the Cypriot community. Thus, in April 1920, Kirzis placed an advertisement in the Alitheia newspaper on behalf of the National Greek Line, which offered regular direct journeys from Piraeus to New York. Everything points to the fact that in 1920 - the year, as noted before, in which emigration to America reached its peak - the National Greek Line reinforced its advertising campaign in Cyprus by multiplying the number of its announcements in the local press. For instance, readers of the newspaper Salpix were informed on the 1st June 1920 that the transatlantic liners ‘Great Hellas’ and ‘Themistocles’ were to depart from Piraeus to New York, the former on the 19th and the latter on the 31st July (Salpix 1920: 1/14 June).

How was a transatlantic journey arranged? What route did Cypriot travellers follow prior to arriving ashore the American continent? To be able to reach the U.S.A. Cypriot emigrants needed first to travel to ports in the northern Mediterranean or on the Atlantic coast of Northwestern Europe where transatlantic liners commenced their journeys. Throughout the period of transatlantic emigration there was no direct communication by sea between
Cyprus and America, since Cyprus’ ports were not included on the itinerary of large European transatlantic companies. Thus, a shorter or longer journey according to circumstances, within Europe itself, was necessary before the actual long transatlantic one. The table below lists the ports where transatlantic liners began their journeys and carried Cypriot emigrants to America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Port</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piraeus</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patras</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Havre</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordeaux</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Liverpool</td>
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<td>Cherbourg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marseilles</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genoa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bologna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constantinople</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaga</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nantes</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puerto Cortes</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tampico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ports of departure for Cypriot emigrants to the U.S.A.*
(random sample of 240 known cases).
Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records

As is evident from the table above, Cypriots had 20 different ports from which to commence their transatlantic journeys, most of which were European. The great number of ports indicates the choice of ports and route a Cypriot traveller had at the beginning of the 20th century. After six to seven decades of continuous expansion of mass emigration to the American continent, there were many European steamship companies that offered their services to emigrants (Manitakis 2007: 64-67). There were also a great number of European ports which were used by the transatlantic liners as points of departure.

Cypriot travellers/emigrants started on a journey that would take them on a crossing of the Atlantic mostly from the ports of Piraeus and Patras. In other cases, they had as departure points the ports of Naples and Genoa in the Mediterranean and those of Le Havre, Bordeaux, Southampton and Liverpool in France and England. As indicated in the table below, the ports of preference for Cypriot emigrants were mostly in Greece.
Greek 67 %
French 21 %
English 5 %
Italian 4 %
Ottoman 2 %
Other 2 %

Ports of departure according to geographical location
Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records

Greek ports were favored by Cypriots travellers for various reasons some of which included their geographical proximity, the feeling of familiarity and security offered by a Greek environment, and, finally, their preference to Greek shipping companies (Manitakis 2007: 70). Indeed, almost half the number of passengers going to the U.S.A. chose to board transatlantic liners belonging to the National Greek Line owned by the Empirikou Brothers.

National Greek Line 48 %
Compagnie Generale Transatlantique 16 %
Ancor 14 %
Austroamericana 8 %
Compagnie de Navigation France Amerique 4 %
Cunard line 4 %
Transatlantica Italiana di Navigazione 2 %
White Star 2 %
Fabre 1 %
La Veloce 1 %

Distribution of Cypriot emigrants – passengers per transatlantic shipping company
Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records

In the cases in which Cypriot emigrants chose to use French steamship company liners, they needed to cross almost the whole of the European continent, from its south-eastern to its north-western extremities, heading initially for the port of Marseilles, usually through Egypt, and from there, by train to the ports of Le Havre or Bordeaux. There, they would board enormous transatlantic liners of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique
and Compagnie de Navigation France Amerique. The benefit afforded by French transatlantic steamship companies was mainly in terms of their lower freight costs.

The fact that Cypriot emigrants began using Greece for their intermediary ports before commencing their transatlantic journey, was due mainly to the preference they showed towards the National Greek Line, the only Greek transatlantic company in which, after 1914, liners travelled regularly from Piraeus to New York. The company was owned by the ship-owner Leonidas Empeirikos from the island of Andros (Tzamdzis 1996: 42-55). Having firstly secured its dominant position in the Greek world, the National Greek Line, from the mid 1910’s strove to expand its clientele by turning to the Greeks of the diaspora. Mindful, inter alia, of emigrants from the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Cyprus, its owner tried to attract them by developing a network of local agents and, through the local press, to regularly advertise its itinerary. According to available data, more than half the number of Cypriots who emigrated to the U.S.A. at the beginning of the 20th century travelled in liners belonging to Greek Companies. At Piraeus and sometimes Patras, they boarded the enormous liners “King Constantine” (which was renamed “Great Hellas” in 1919), “ Themistoclis” and “Ioannina”, which crossed the Atlantic in seven to ten days, taking between 1,700 -1,800 third class passengers.

The expansionist plans adopted by the National Greek Line were greatly assisted by the development of sea communications in Cyprus and generally in the south-eastern Mediterranean during the first decade of the 20th century. Regular communication between the Cypriot ports of Larnaca and Limassol with the large ports of Egypt, Alexandria and Port-Said, which were communication centres on the itineraries of companies whose ships sailed in the Mediterranean in conjunction with the setting up, for the first time, of a regular maritime connection between Cyprus and Greece made it easy for Cypriot travellers to reach the ports of Piraeus and Patras.

Undoubtedly, the upgrading of sea communications within the Mediterranean benefited foreign transatlantic companies which also used Greek ports. However, the National Greek Line had one undeniable advantage - that of its “Greekness”, which not only affected Cypriot emigrants emotionally, but also gave them – not necessarily justified by the facts– a feeling of security. In fact, the question of security was much sought prior to journeys that were to be so long and dangerous, as was that to the New World.
At the beginning of the 20th century, the expansion of means of transport had rendered travelling within the Mediterranean safe and easy and consequently transatlantic liners found it convenient to use south and north-western European ports for embarkation for the U.S.A. Yet, the journey of emigration to the U.S.A. for Cypriots was still a long one and involved intermediate stops and the use of other methods of transport. The journey quite often comprised longer or shorter periods of delay at intermediate stops, depending on circumstances. At intermediate stops, emigrants either waited for a new form of transport or completed procedures necessary for their journeys, such as medical examinations, or the issuing of visas. Consequently, the journey to America involved great difficulties which would turn it into a particularly expensive, adventurous and even dangerous exploit; which might not always have a happy ending.

Cypriot emigrants, more often than not, were considered “unsuitable” for travel on the grounds of health, following the preliminary medical examination they had to undergo prior to embarking on transatlantic liners. In 1916, the British ambassador to Athens noted that a number of Cypriots – British subjects – who were to travel to the U.S.A. via Greece were found, on their arrival at Piraeus, to be suffering from trachoma, a fairly common eye complaint at the time. They were forced to return to Cyprus after having, in the meantime, spent all their savings. The ambassador suggested that emigrants-to-be undergo a thorough medical examination before their departure from Cyprus; so as to avoid similar outcomes and to protect themselves from travel agencies; who were taking advantage of their ignorance (SAI 1083/1916: 17 April 1916). The measure suggested by the ambassador does not seem to have been taken seriously by the High Commissioner. Thus, emigrants in their great numbers were, in 1920, faced with the same problem. According to the British Embassy in Athens, the American Consul had repeatedly refused to grant visas to Cypriot British subjects, because of the poor condition of their health. At the same time, the Greek Cypriot press emphasised the danger the emigrants faced on not being accepted to emigrate to the U.S.A. on medical grounds (SAI 1083/1916: 16 June 1920). In other cases, the danger derived from the long periods of time travellers had to wait at intermediate stops and thus be forced to use up savings before even commencing their transatlantic journey. One correspondent, for instance, noted, in 1920, in the Alithea newspaper, that many Cypriots travelled to Egypt well before the departure
date of their ship and when the time came for them to embark; they did not have enough money to buy their tickets (*Alitheia* 1920: 3 April).

The greatest danger, however, which posed a threat to emigrants was that of being exploited by travel agents or middlemen. The high demand for transportation and the ignorance of emigrants, in combination with the lack of government protection, created circumstances that led to emigrants being deceived by agents. This was indeed a very common phenomenon that occurred throughout Europe during this period of time. In 1912, the Cypriot press was already warning emigrants-to-be of the danger of exploitation (*Salpix* 1912: 20 September). In the General Register’s Records instances of deceit and financial exploitation of emigrant-travellers are noted.

A British official mentions, in 1916, that an agent for *Hevidiki Steamship Company* – George Mavroides – refused initially to issue tickets to Egypt for 50 emigrants who were to travel to the U.S.A., because they had followed a different itinerary from the one he, himself, was offering, and had made inquiries at another travel agency. According to the same source, some emigrants had chosen to travel to the U.S.A. via Genoa, and others via Marseilles, seeking assistance from Cook’s travel agency representative in Alexandria. They had found out that the cost of the transatlantic journey via Genoa or Marseilles was much cheaper when compared to the prices the agent from Larnaca charged or even when travelling to New York via Piraeus with the Greek Company, the *National Greek Line*.

Six of the above-mentioned emigrants sent a letter to the “Registrar General of the Government of Cyprus” from Alexandria in August 1916 in which they asked the latter to see to it that those Cypriots who wished to emigrate abroad were not robbed by stealth. In their letter they accused Mavroides of issuing tickets for Egypt only to those travellers to the American continent who would “pay the money for the whole voyage to America”. He thus deprived them of the opportunity to travel first to the Egyptian ports, and from those points, to be free to choose the shipping company of their choice. They also accused the travel agent of selling tickets to the U.S.A. at much higher prices than the standard ticket price. In particular, he was accused of demanding 24 pounds for the transatlantic journey from Larnaca to New York, while according to calculations made by the writers of the letter, the cost of the journey should not have been more than 15 pounds. They also added in their letter that the government, without meaning to, was assisting
those agents by refusing to provide a passport to anyone who did not possess a ticket for the whole trip to America. Furthermore, as noted in the same letter, Mr Mavroides’ assistant, and representative of the National Greek Line in Alexandria, N. Salvagos, did not arrange speedy and direct embarkation of travellers to the U.S.A., because he waited for departures that would be in his best interest. As a result, due to delays in their departure, travellers incurred additional expenses for their stay in the foreign country and their savings were thus gradually eroded. The “Emigrants”, as they signed themselves in the letter, asked the British authorities first to control the activities of travel agencies and secondly to issue passports without demanding that travellers produce a ticket for the whole trip to America (SA1 1083/1916: 4 September 1916).

On the basis of such correspondence serious hardships faced by Cypriot emigrants are clearly indicated, some of which included overpriced tickets and long waits at intermediate ports at the expense of the travellers themselves. Exploitation and defrauding of emigrants are found in all European or non-European countries where transatlantic emigration took place (SA1 565/1916: 13/26 August). It seems, however, that Cypriot travellers were more exposed to these dangers, because they did not have direct access to a developed and competitive market offering emigration services. Furthermore, the lack of government protection of emigrants rendered the latter more vulnerable and dependent on various middlemen and “the businessmen of emigration”. This would help to explain why Cypriot emigrants wrote the aforementioned desperate letter appealing to the British authorities for government protection.

Exploring the causes of Cypriot Emigration

What were the fundamental causes that led Cypriots, during the first decade of the 20th century, to emigrate to the U.S.A.? The causes are undoubtedly many and various, sometimes connected with the political, economic and social situations prevailing on the island during that period and sometimes connected with the destination i.e. the U.S.A. The main factors that generally led Cypriots to emigrate could be separated into structural and circumstantial. In the case of the former, one may include demographic pressure, a chronic agricultural crisis, usury, the improvement of sea communications or even the
influence the American myth may have had on the islanders. In the latter case, one may mention economic pressure and difficult conditions caused by the First World War. The consequences of the war were not only felt during the actual war period, but during the post-war years, a period when, as mentioned above, the wave of emigration reached its peak.

Demographic pressure: A majority of young people on the island

While analysing the factors that brought about the wave of emigration from Cyprus, one cannot fail to notice that all references to the history of Cyprus at the beginning of the 20th century mention demographic development, especially during the first three decades of British colonial rule. According to available data, as this is documented in the official census carried out during British administration of the island, the Cypriot population experienced a great increase in a relatively short period of time (Geograllides 1979: 427). More specifically, during the period between the years 1881, the year in which the first British population census took place, and 1921, the population on Cyprus increased from 186,173 to 310,715. Population increase during the first decades of British Colonial Rule of the island amounted to a figure of 166.9% of the population recorded in the 1881 census. The birth index, as this was recorded from 1901 onwards, indicates growth until at least the middle of the 1920s. During the period 1916-1920 in every one thousand inhabitants there were 31.6 births, one of the highest rates of births throughout the period of colonial rule (Demetriades 2001: 171). Especially important is the fact that, despite the population’s growth, people did not change their life style and society remained mainly agricultural. During the first decades of the 20th century, the Cypriot population was more than 80% agricultural, dispersed among a great number of villages (738) of which only 537 included more than 100 inhabitants (Jennes 1962:163). According to this data, population growth concerned, first and foremost, agricultural areas and, to a much smaller degree, the island’s towns.

The analysis of demographic data leads one to the conclusion that a great percentage of the population consisted of young people under thirty years of age, who, it must be noted, were not familiar with living conditions during Ottoman rule. A typical account of the situation mentions that “since the time of British occupation the proportion of young people on the island
has grown by about 50%” (Kypri 1976: 131). One of the biggest problems caused by this great population growth is that of unemployment of workforce. The condition of Cyprus’ economy and its agricultural character made the employment of the rapidly rising number of young people even more difficult. The issue was often discussed in the local press. Publications of that period mention that “there is not enough space for all our country’s children” (Enosis 24/7 December 1910) and that “much of the labour force remains idle due to lack of employment, but also, many a time, due to lack of good will and an enterprising spirit” (Ethnikos Kirix, 17 April 1916).

During the first decades of the 20th century, what is obvious on the island is great population growth and unemployment or underemployment phenomena due to demographic growth. The local press, often enough, mentions unemployment as the greatest problem faced by young people. Thus, one may rightly conclude that one of the motives of emigrants-to-be was the finding of employment. Emigrating abroad sounded like a reasonable solution in efforts to find a job. As stated by 23 inhabitants of the village of Yiolou, who requested permission to leave Cyprus at the beginning of the 1920’s, emigration offered them work opportunity (SA 1098/1923: 28 July).

Agricultural crisis in an island agrarian society

A second structural reason which led to emigration was the chronic agricultural crisis prevailing in Cyprus’ rural areas, which was especially acute during the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century. The agricultural crisis on the island was due to a variety of causes such as usury, constant droughts, heavy taxation of farmers, old-fashioned methods of farmland cultivation and business speculation relating to such farmland. The above-mentioned factors complemented each other in that it was very difficult to overcome the crisis.

Apart from taxation, one of the measures of the British administration that contributed towards the impoverishment of the rural population was the institution of forced labour, in other words, the local population had to offer their services without payment for the construction of roads and other works which would be of common benefit. The causative connection between the poverty of the rural population and their turning towards emigration is shown realistically enough in a letter from certain inhabitants of the village
of Yioulou to the High Commissioner in 1923. Having vividly described cases of usury, emphasised the fact that they were not able to repay money lenders and pointed out the danger of losing their property and finding themselves in a state of extreme poverty, the inhabitants of the village requested permission from the High Commissioner to emigrate and find a new life outside Cyprus (SA 1098/1923: 28 July 1923). This thus provides further evidence to reinforce the impression that the economic difficulties faced by the rural population created a strong tendency towards emigration at the end of the decade beginning in 1910 and the beginning of the 1920’s.

Inadequate economic modernisation

“Cyprus was first and foremost a country of agriculturalists, of peasant farmers. Its prosperity depended almost solely on its own natural products, and the success or failure of the harvest of any one year and this must and should be taken as a criterion of the island’s wellbeing” (Colonial Reports 1921: 3). The British High Commissioner, in his annual report in 1920, the year in which the wave of emigration to the U.S.A. reached its peak, had come to this conclusion. Indeed, until the beginning of the postwar era, in other words, throughout the period in which unimpeded travel to the U.S.A. lasted, Cyprus’ economy remained deeply dependent on agriculture. Industry remained underdeveloped for more than one century after the industrial revolution had taken place in Western Europe. Up to the 1920s efforts targeting industrialization were limited to the establishment of a few factories for processing tobacco where only a few hundred workers could be employed (Papapolyviou 2003a: 306). Real change occurred only when hundreds of positions needed filling when the mining industry (copper, asbestos and chromium mines) started to flourish and when the first winemaking factories (KEO, LOEL), as well as a series of specialist factories (for buttons, false teeth etc) were established, in other words, during the post war years (Papapolyviou 2003c: 335).

At the end of the 19th century and on the threshold of the 20th, many new administrative services opened up by the British and a number of local people were employed. The above mentioned development could only have had a limited effect on the chronic problem of unemployment and underemployment that affected rural areas. The new positions were insufficient to cover all those
in need of work in the countryside. Furthermore, those positions required a minimum level of literacy, which the rural population lacked at the time. Thus the dynamism which was undoubtedly shown in the services sector of the government could not redress the obvious problems which appeared in the agricultural sector at the beginning of the 20th century. The repercussions of new job openings on unemployment were limited. From the above, one may conclude that it had become evident that, due to the lack of alternative choices, the only way out for the fast growing rural population that suffered because of the long agricultural crisis, would be to emigrate.

The American myth: its powerful attraction

Another factor that should be analysed as contributing towards the forming of a wave of emigration to the U.S.A. during the first decades of the 20th century was the popular conception of America as an ideal destination for anyone who was seeking a better life, on a temporary or permanent basis, and the large, rapidly gainable earnings to be derived from hard work. The emigration of thousands of Greeks to the U.S.A., which had taken place before the wave of transatlantic emigration by Cypriots, seems to have provided a positive image for those who were considering emigration as a solution. The strong attraction exerted on Cypriot emigrants by the U.S.A. is due to, inter alia, those emigrants’ impression of that country as being the fulfilment of any emigrant’s goal.

The carriers of such an idealistic picture of life in America were the press of that time and all those who had any contact with Greece and who repeated the stories that circulated in Greek society about the better future one could have in America (Kitroeff 1999: 141). The high salaries one could earn in the U.S.A. seem to have been the main attraction (SAI 1083/1916: 2 September 1916), while the spreading of news about them seems to have helped in the creation of an American myth. Despite attempts to dissuade people from emigrating through publication of dramatic articles, the Greek Cypriot press presented the U.S.A. as being, at the same time, a country that offered satisfactory living conditions to young people. The U.S.A. is mentioned, for example, in a Cypriot newspaper as a country with vast areas of land accessible to everyone and having liberal laws (Enosis, 24/7 December 1910). It is indicative that even when there were reports of deprivation and
a hard life for those who had already been living in the U.S.A., they were usually not taken seriously. As one Cypriot journalist commented: “it is better to live under the American sky than the Cypriot one with a British government” (Neon Ethnos 1912: 4/17 August).

A controversial factor: World War I - its wartime and post-war effects

World War I with its four-year duration, seems to have aggravated not only the rural but also the entire island’s economic crisis, despite the fact that Cyprus was far from the areas of conflicts. The war, which was an extremely difficult period for the poorer rural population, as is noted in many records, together with the high prices of different products led a great number of farmers to borrow from money lenders in an effort to increase productivity. Although the British administration believed that the high prices of products could be a positive factor and bring about more general prosperity to the island, it seems that in reality, because of inflation, it became even more necessary for people in rural areas to borrow money and they were thus in constant danger of losing all their property to moneylenders.

The agricultural crisis also deepened because of the suspension of trade and a drastic decrease in exports. Due to armed conflict and also military law imposed by the British administration in August 1914, Cypriots were able to export only a very limited number of their products which were mainly provisions sent to allied forces in Egypt (Colonial Reports 1915: 39). As a result of limited trade transactions, from the very first year of the war there was a reduction in the production of certain goods and, as mentioned in the Colonial Annual Reports, there was difficulty involved in the distribution of others (Colonial Reports 1915:39). The atmosphere of decline that prevailed in commercial circles because of the war is described in the local press of that time. Newspapers mention the disruption of sea journeys made by commercial and other ships to and from the island, while other articles focused on the point that the prolonged duration of the situation was making the commercial crisis even worse. Cypriot agricultural products were accumulating with no one able to export them to foreign countries, since serious malfunctioning of regular sea communications had essentially put an end to Cyprus’ export trade (Salpix 1916: 9/22 March). At the same time the fares payable for travelling by ship became more expensive (since only rarely did any kind of
Within the framework of war and the prolonged agricultural and commercial crisis, poorer people saw in transatlantic emigration a solution to the problems of survival they were facing – if and when such a solution was within reach. Since the construction of public works on which the infrastructure of the island would be based was halted during the war, it was practically impossible for the British to offer these people any positions in other fields of employment (Colonial Reports 1917: 17). Motivation to emigrate, due to the poor living conditions caused by the war, is verified by the increase in the number of emigrants to the U.S.A. during the post-war period. In 1920 the highest number of arrivals of Cypriot emigrants to the U.S.A. is recorded and this fact seems to be related to the large-scale confiscation and sale of rural land which took place on the island immediately after the end of the war (Katsiaounis 1995: 246).

Defining the Cypriot emigrant

What are the basic characteristics of Cypriots who emigrated to the U.S.A. in terms of their age, sex and marital status? From which areas of Cyprus did they come, and to what social class did they belong? Data concerning the social profile of the emigrants can be found in the local press of that period, as well as from passenger lists which provide a number of relevant data. The aforementioned information allows one to draw certain conclusions relating to the quantitative approach to emigration on the basis of which one may be able to verify, or not, the impression formed following study of local press publications.

Male, young and unmarried

The typical age of emigrants is clearly indicated in the local press of the period. Almost all the articles refer to emigrants as young people who see emigration as their only way out of their problems. One such article describes “young people from Rizokarpaso” (Neon Ethnos 1912: 9/17 August) as thinking of emigrating to the U.S.A.; while another, in a more lyrical way, talks about ships departing and taking away the country’s youth (Enosis 1910:
17/30 November). Another journalist points out that “the finest of Cypriot youth had emigrated to a foreign country” (Alitheia 1920: 3 April). Finally, in an article that analysed emigration from Cyprus, there was a reference to a “steamship that left last week for Egypt taking away, yet again, a great number of young people who are leaving their homes to emigrate to America” (Enosis 1912: 7/20 September). The articles in the local press verify the facts that derive from other sources. From quantitative analysis of the facts included in the passenger lists the following age distribution of Cypriot emigrants may be identified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18 years of age</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 18 to 30 years of age</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30 years of age</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Age distribution of Cypriot emigrants in %*

Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records

Not only were there no elderly people or children, who would find it very hard to survive such a long journey, but there were very few mature adult males over forty, or adolescents. The great majority of cases comprised men who would constitute the work force (18-30 years of age, constituting 86% of the workforce, or 222 men out of a total of 259), while the percentage of under 18s was only 4%. As it has been observed, not only in Cyprus but also in the rest of Europe during this period, it was men at the height of their productivity who emigrated to America (Baines 1991: 39-40).

As far as marital status is concerned, four out of five emigrants declared themselves to be single (194 out of a total of 244 known cases):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marital status of Cypriots emigrants: distribution percentages*

Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records

Apart from the young age of the emigrants the fact that in the majority of cases they were single people is explained partly by the very nature of the
transatlantic journey which was long and dangerous and may have put off married men who were, as a rule, the main source of income and support for their family. Furthermore, on the basis of passenger lists one may conclude that most of the married emigrants travelled without their families. The above mentioned fact reinforces the impression that Cypriots emigrated to America, initially at least, on a temporary basis. The same can be said, as studies have indicated, of the Greeks, the Italians and, generally, south Europeans who emigrated to the U.S.A. (Bade 2003: 113). Emigration did not involve as its ultimate aim permanent settlement in the American continent and was thus planned as a return journey. The journeys were part of framework that involved a family emigration plan according to which families sent their younger, stronger and less vulnerable members on a short stay abroad so that they could work and increase the family income in order that certain obligations could be met, such as repayment of a family loan, of a dowry for the daughters of the family, the purchase of land for cultivation and so on.

As part of the above family emigration plan, it was the male members who assumed the major role. Indeed, on the basis of available data one may conclude that Cypriot emigrants were in their majority males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gender distribution of Cypriot emigrants crossing the Atlantic*

Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.

Ellis Island Foundation Records

According to our sample, of a total of 259 Cypriot emigrants, 247 were men. As we have seen, American authorities drastically restricted free entrance to their country after 1920, but allowed families to be reunited. This fact caused a dramatic drop in the number of single men arriving and an increase in the number of women emigrating – thus the increase in this percentage of women arriving post-1921. The figure of more than half of women who emigrated (55%) in the 1920s, in other words after the emigration wave declined, dropped, while the percentage of men emigrating stood at only 11%. Furthermore, in contrast to male emigrants, female emigrants who were over 20 years old, were, in their majority, married (66%) – as a rule they either accompanied their husbands to the foreign country or followed them after they had settled there. As for single women emigrants, from passenger lists one may conclude
they did not travel alone, but were usually accompanied by the male members of their families (brothers, cousins etc). From the above one may clearly see the limited level of freedom that Cypriot women enjoyed as far as movement from one country to another was concerned, and their limited participation in transatlantic emigration in a period during which there was considerable migratory traffic with Cyprus as its starting point. In general, one may conclude that the Cypriot traveller/emigrant was a young male and mostly single. Even if he was married he emigrated without his family.

Emigrants of rural origin

On studying a variety of sources one may conclude that the great majority of Cypriot emigrants were of rural origin. As the travel agency, Caruana Fils informs American authorities in a letter in September 1916, most Cypriot emigrants belonged to the working class of the Greek Orthodox community and were mainly farmers and craftsmen (SA1 1083/1916: 2 September 1916). The rural origin of Cypriot emigrants is also verified by correspondence between the British administration and the inhabitants of the island that related to migratory issues, such as the issuing of passports and current American emigration laws (SA1 1083/1916: 5 May 1920). These letters were written by people living in the villages Yiolou and Komatou Yiialou. Lastly, the facts derived from the passenger lists indicating the geographical origin of emigrants verify the above theory. In the great majority of cases (that is, of the 138 who arrived at Ellis Island), as a place of origin, the emigrants gave the name of a village in Cyprus and gave Cyprus as their place of origin; 105 referred to villages in Cyprus (76%) and 33 referred to a town (24%), percentages which are close to those representing the population distribution across urban and the rural areas, according to official statistics. On the other hand, it is also possible that those who had given a town name as place of origin may, in reality, have meant a rural area in the district of that town. In such a case, the number of Cypriot emigrants with rural origins should be considered to be even higher.

A young Cypriot emigrant to America, usually single, mostly of rural origin, with a poor educational background, if not illiterate, was not very different from emigrants who came from countries in Southern and Eastern Europe as well as the Ottoman Empire. Thus, emigrants from Cyprus may be considered just like all South European emigrants and generally the
“Mediterranean” transatlantic type of emigrant, who, at the end of the 19th century, represented the dominant type of European emigrant to the U.S.A. and was known as the New Immigrant (Baines 1991: 44).

Emigration from Cyprus presents a unique particularity and although it does not seem to constitute a dominant type of emigration, it is worth mentioning. Cypriots who emigrated to America did not only come from rural areas with low educational attainment levels and were looking for manual work. According to the evidence, among Cypriot emigrants there were graduates of the Pancyprian Gymnasium, the English and American Schools, as well as of Turkish schools (SA1 1083/1916: 2 September 1916). The aforementioned emigrants were highly educated and apart from their mother tongue which was Greek or Turkish, they spoke English and French fluently and in the U.S.A. could be employed as office clerks, accountants, caretakers etc. It is possible that “the American dream” had influenced people who came from the more educated sector of society, despite the good prospects of finding satisfactory employment on the island at the beginning of the 20th century. It is more probable that the transatlantic migratory trend developed among those who attended English educational institutions and whose numbers increased at the beginning of the 20th century following the establishment of English speaking schools in Cyprus such as The English School in Nicosia in 1900 and the American Academy in Larnaca in 1908.

Available data related to the places of origin recorded on passenger lists allow for an analysis of the geographical origin of Cypriot emigrants. The processing of the above given information and the categorization of the emigrants into districts yield the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicosia</td>
<td>51.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larnaca</td>
<td>20.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famagusta</td>
<td>15.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paphos</td>
<td>6.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limassol</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrenia</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Place of origin of Cypriot emigrants: quantitative distribution according to district of origin*

Source: data processed from transatlantic liner passenger lists.
Ellis Island Foundation Records
By categorizing the place of origin according to districts one finds that more than half the emigrants came from the Nicosia district (51.4%), based on a total of 71 persons. It is also worth mentioning that the number of emigrants coming from Larnaca (20.3%, 28 persons) and Famagusta districts (15.2%, 21 persons) is quite high. On the other hand, according to our sample participation in transatlantic emigration of people originating from the districts of Paphos (6.5%, 9 persons), Limassol (4.3%, 6 persons) and Kyrenia (2.1%, 3 persons) is quite limited.

The primary conclusion to be made is that Cypriots who emigrated to America came from all the island’s districts. Thus transatlantic emigration acquired a Pancyprian dimension. Yet “American emigration fever” did not affect all districts to the same degree. One of the reasons why the greatest number of emigrants came from Nicosia may be due to its size, since it was the largest and the most densely populated district in Cyprus. Apart from its size, it must be emphasized that Nicosia, at the beginning of the 20th century, was still a town with a large rural surrounding area. As far as the other districts are concerned, the very small percentage of people coming from the Paphos district is worth pointing out, since Paphos was an area which was mainly agricultural and undoubtedly greatly affected by the economic crisis. The real reasons for the low participation of its inhabitants in transatlantic emigration in relation to the other districts, still remain unclear.

Two assumptions that can be analysed concern the kind of crops cultivated in that particular district and its geographical position. Annual cultivation of crops in the Nicosia, Famagusta and Larnaca districts which mainly consisted of wheat and barley were very sensitive to droughts and thus a farmer’s yearly income could easily be affected. On the other hand, in the Paphos district cultivation of perennial plants could produce yields even under difficult climatological conditions, while the cultivation of a variety of trees and plants offered relative self-sufficiency to the average household in that district. One may conclude, then, that the economic crisis affected people in Paphos to a lesser degree than the farmers in the rest of the island and thus their wish to emigrate was less intense. Moreover, Paphos was the district most isolated and remote from the large ports. It can be assumed, then, that the difficulties involved in getting to the points of embarkation and the longer duration of the emigration journey had finally discouraged Paphians who wished to emigrate.
Our sample of immigrant passengers contains 22 Turkish Cypriots, who emigrated to the U.S.A. from Cyprus between 1903 and 1920. They have been identified by their names, surnames and place of origin. Thus, the Turkish Cypriot community participated also in transatlantic emigration. Turkish Cypriots comprise a total of 12% of the sample, a percentage not greatly different from the one which represents them in the overall population of the island (20%), while it is possible that the percentage of these emigrants higher, if their identification in the passenger lists did not present certain difficulties. Migratory movement on the part of the Muslim community presents the same fluctuations as those for other Cypriots. It is spread over the two first decades of the 20th century, reaches its peak in 1916 and 1920, and in the following decade it declines. The journey of emigration itself also presents a great number of similarities since Turkish Cypriots mostly travelled to America via the Greek ports of Piraeus and Patras. Regarding the carrier, though, they chose Greek steamship companies to a much lesser degree when compared with Greek Cypriots (23% compared with 50%). The aforementioned fact seems to indicate that the National Greek Line was selected, among other reasons, on the basis of its being "the national preference" of Greek Cypriots. As far as the basic characteristics of the transatlantic emigrant are concerned, Turkish Cypriots did not differ from Greek Cypriots, since their age-range was between 18 and 35 and they were exclusively of male gender. As far as it was possible to identify their presence in the passenger’s lists by their name, surname and place of origin, Armenians and Jews inhabitants of Cyprus were not found among the transatlantic emigrants going to the USA. It should be stated, however, that they represented only a very small percentage of the Cypriot population, less than 3%, at the beginning of the 20th century.

In conclusion, one may assert that Cypriots who emigrated to the U.S.A. at the beginning of the 20th century, came from the two main communities and originated, although not equally, from all districts of Cyprus. This fact indicates that migratory tendency had spread throughout Cyprus society, overcoming traditional geographical national and religious divisions. If one takes into consideration the fact that even graduates from inter alia Greek Gymnasiums and English-speaking schools took part in emigration, then it becomes obvious that "americanomania" had penetrated, although on a small scale only, the strongholds of education and social class.
The British Colonial Regime’s attitude towards Cypriot transatlantic emigration

What was the attitude of the British administration towards transatlantic emigration by Cypriots? How did the High Commission react to the exodus from the island of hundreds of young people at their most productive age and liable for military service? Did they favour this exodus of the islanders for which the Greek Cypriot press often criticised them or, on the contrary, did they try to prevent it and limit this migratory tendency, which, in the second half of the decade beginning in 1910 seemed to be on the increase? Did they take any measures to protect travelling emigrants from exploitation, of which, as we noted above, they were informed by travellers themselves or even by officers of their own administration?

According to our archive research it may be concluded, first, that the British administration, especially during the second half of the 1910s, received a great number of letters concerning emigration to America, letters written by travel agents, by British consuls at European ports, but also by emigrants themselves (SAI 1083/1916: 2 September 1916). They were, therefore, able to monitor the emigration phenomenon, to diagnose its importance early enough, and to comprehend its various ramifications. Despite the continuously growing tendency towards emigration to the U.S.A., from the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, the British administration tended not to pay any attention to the question of transatlantic emigration, just as it did over the question of emigration in general, until the end of the decade, in other words, until the first signs that the wave of emigration was becoming large-scale had become manifest. Not until the end of World War I does one observe a change in their attitude. Thus, starting in 1919, in his annual report in which he referred to the situation on the island, the High Commissioner began to mention the question of emigration (Emigration – Immigration) and to comment on the annual development of migratory trends (Colonial Reports 1920: 5). The change in the attitude of the administration is indicated in the official statistics, which from 1920 began for the first time to systematically record the outflow and influx of the population from and to the island (SAI 1083/1916: 19 October 1916).

As all the evidence seems to indicate that emigration by Cypriots to neighbouring countries, especially to Egypt, despite their growth even over...
the last decades of the 19th century, did not attract any special attention on behalf of the colonial authorities. On the other hand, the wave of emigration to the U.S.A. especially after its expansion during the war and post-war period, impelled the British administration to watch the phenomenon a little closer. But monitoring of migratory movement started when the tendency to emigrate had begun to weaken rapidly. Attempts to apply more systematic control of migratory trends were not accompanied by a migratory policy, which it seems, even the British Empire itself did not possess. British officials did not seem to have any decisive ideas about whether emigration was harmful or beneficial for Cypriot society and whether it should have been encouraged or discouraged. Thus, they limited themselves to taking partial and improvised measures, which aimed at the solution of problems which concerned the administration itself and not the emigrants. Thus, in 1916, a year in which, as we have seen, migratory movement to America saw its first significant increase, London sent orders to prohibit emigration from Cyprus of young people liable for military service (SA1 1083/1916: 19 October 1916). The prohibition of young people to leave the country was a common government measure during periods of war; a measure used in Greece during the Balkan Wars, and adopted by most, if not all, the countries that took part in World War I. At the same time, it also served the military purposes of the metropolis. The British administration, during the Great War, encouraged the voluntary recruitment of Cypriots, most of whom served on the Macedonian Front as muleteers (Papapolyviou 2003b: 5).

In 1920, emigration policy was yet again implemented, when a new massive wave of emigration to the U.S.A. began. The British administration of Cyprus forbade all those who worked in militarily sensitive positions, such as the railway, to emigrate. The General Manager of the Railways asked the Chief Secretary not to issue passports to those who worked on the Railways (SA1 1083/1916: 21 June 1920). During the 1920s British officials seriously examined the possibility of imposing on those who wanted to emigrate the fee of £50 as a monetary guarantee. The aim of the administration was to avoid paying for the repatriation expenses of emigrants. The monetary guarantee would also work as a social filter and discourage those people from poorer classes from trying to emigrate (SA1 1083/1916: 23 August 1927). There is no proof that the measure was actually put into practice. It is indicative, though, of the inconsistent actions taken by the administration regarding emigration.
The interests of the British administration seem to have been focused on certain issues such as the danger of losing conscripts and specialist workers, or having to pay the repatriation expenses of poor emigrants, a decision which would burden public finances. The High Commission neither took any measures to protect the emigrants, nor did they adopt an emigration policy, policy, that is, that seems to have been lacking generally in administration of the British Empire. In the case of Cyprus, the absence of a public policy should be associated with the absence of a wider plan of economic development of the island by British governors. The improvised manner in which the administration approached rising emigration may be partly explained by the fact that the transatlantic wave of emigration was not constant and one that gradually increased year on year. It was rather a wave which presented great and sudden fluctuations, and which, as has been mentioned above, was very short in duration.

Debating emigration: “By Emigrating abroad Cypriots are committing suicide” (Enosis 1914: 22/24 May 1914)

While the British administration showed signs of negligence, if not of inertia, the Greek Cypriot press of the time was persistently demanding, as early as the beginning of the 1910s, the taking of measures that would prevent emigration to America. It strongly criticized the administration for indifference and inactivity (Enosis 1912: 7/20 September). In general, the question of transatlantic emigration seems to have troubled Cypriot society and, as a result, generated issues for discussion in the newspapers. Some articles suggested that the British administration was deliberately reserved regarding this matter, for in reality they wanted to encourage mass “emigration for reasons known only to themselves”. Yet journalists failed to mention how the British government would benefit, if that was the case (Neon Ethnos 1912: 9/17 August). The strong criticism exercised by the local press seems to be related to the “national” anxiety which was caused by the fear of a massive exodus to America, while, at the same time, being the consequence of anticolonial feeling, which started to arise during the first decades of the 20th century.

The issue of emigration to America appeared in Greek Cypriot newspapers before the wave of transatlantic emigration from Cyprus became
large. Starting in the first decade of the 20th century, the press would refer constantly to mass emigration to the U.S.A. from Greece, bringing up the atmosphere and discussion that were taking place in the fatherland. Articles were printed, facts were publicized, and there was criticism over Greek transatlantic emigration (Efimeris tou Laou 1908: 20/22 February). In these articles emigration was mostly regarded as a negative phenomenon, and this is clearly indicated by the following headline: “The expatriation of Greeks is the grave of Greece” This same article presented the emigration of Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire as the greatest danger the Greek race faced, since according to the journalist, because of continuous emigration, the Greeks of the diaspora were in danger of being eliminated (Enosis 1914: 22/4 May).

When Cypriot emigration to the U.S.A. during the second decade of the 20th century became stronger, references by the press to transatlantic emigration with Cyprus as its starting point increased, in the same negative manner. The article below is a good example: “Those (Young Cypriots bound for America) are committing a double crime, for apart from destroying themselves, they are also acting wrongfully towards their families whom they should be protecting and supporting by finding work in their own country (...). Moreover, they sin against their country too, for, by emigrating to a distant country, they deprive their fatherland of their services at a time when it is in need of a labor force” (Enosi 1914: 22/4 May).

Emigration to the U.S.A. by Cypriots was criticized as harmful to the nation, because, as mentioned in a relevant article, the emigration of Greeks from Crete, Samos and Cyprus, was not only inexcusable, but “considered an offence against the Greek nation since their fatherland (Greece) would be needing them very soon”. The emigration of Cypriots was always regarded as falling within the framework of Greek national interests. Transatlantic emigration was also considered a threat to the Cyprus economy, since it deprived it of its young workforce, which in the right circumstances, could contribute to the development of the island.

Many journalists also pointed out that emigration posed a danger to the emigrants themselves. Those articles emphasized the difficulties involved in such long transatlantic journeys and the dangers facing the travellers. It also pointed out that there was the danger of the emigrants not being accepted in the U.S.A., or if they were, of their not being able to find work. Difficult living conditions in the U.S.A. were also emphasized. It is not easy to say
how dissuasive these articles were and how much they affected local people in making up their minds on emigration. It seems, though, that letters from emigrants to America and stories told by repatriated Cypriots influenced (Enosis 1912: 31/13 September) those who were planning to emigrate to a much greater degree than the patriotic rhetoric and scaremongering by newspapers.

A national argument and anti-colonial criticism

Analysis of the Greek Cypriot press of the time indicates that one particular characteristic of Cypriot emigration during the first decades of the 20th century was its use in exercising anti-colonial but at the same time national patriotic policy. In almost all articles concerning emigration, the British administration was considered to be responsible for the poor economic conditions prevailing in Cyprus, which in turn were considered to be the reason why so many young people wanted to emigrate. The British were accused both of the measures they took and of those they failed to adopt and which resulted in a worsening of the population’s living standards. The rise in transatlantic emigration movement during the war and in the first post war years led to anticolonial criticism by the press becoming even more acute.

Criticism was also directed against the practice of emigration in the name of “national interests”. It was felt that due to the outflow of young Greek Cypriots to foreign countries, emigration was tantamount to the loss of a considerable portion of the national income. Newspapers emphasized the point that the continuous outflow of emigration constituted a serious long term national problem. In the only possible hope of averting national peril precipitated by the tendency towards emigration by Greeks, the press suggested the enactment of laws that would prohibit emigration as well as assist all those who wished to be repatriated to the Greek world (Enosis 1912: 31/13 August/September). In a general atmosphere of growing nationalistic feeling among Greek Cypriots, emigration was presented by the Greek Cypriot press, at least occasionally, as the greatest danger threatening “the Greek nation”. It is worth mentioning that Cypriots were always included in discussion of Greek emigration practice and this greatly encouraged the idea and prospects of a Union of Cyprus with Greece.
Conclusions

In relation to other European countries and even to neighboring areas such as the Italian peninsula and the Balkans, Cypriot emigration towards the U.S.A. continued for a considerable length of time before developing into a larger scale trend, as it reached its peak period as late as the second half of the decade beginning in 1910. Due to its short duration and its limited extent, transatlantic emigration from Cyprus did not greatly influence the population’s expansion, neither caused severe social and economic problems, as occurred in other European countries. This, perhaps, could explain the reserved attitude on the part of the British administration towards transatlantic emigration. Even so, Cyprus experienced the after-effects that followed the so-called “American fever” in most European countries, such as the development of financial interests focusing on emigrant travel, the appearance of cases of exploitation of would-be emigrants and the conducting of heated public debates on the issue of emigration. Thus, although delayed, the participation of Cyprus in the last phase of mass emigration to the New World links Cyprus, indissolubly, to the contemporary history of the European continent. The collective experience of transatlantic emigration determined the formation of today’s European identity.

Moreover, South and North-Western European ports functioned as stop-over points on the long journey undertaken by Cypriots emigrating to America. As a consequence, transatlantic journeys contributed towards the strengthening of the bond the island had with other European countries. To an even greater extent, they helped in making the relationship between Cyprus and Greece stronger, since Cypriot emigrants, in their great majority, began their crossing of the Atlantic from one of the Greek ports, on transatlantic liners that belonged to Greek steamship companies.

On the other hand, one finds it difficult to differentiate between Cypriot and Ottoman transatlantic emigration, not only because of coincidental events occurring within the same period, the common characteristics and geographical proximity of the two migratory currents, but also because the distinction of a “Cypriot” from an “Ottoman” emigrant is extremely difficult to make during this period of transition from Ottoman to British rule. Until the second decade of the 20th century, the islanders’ legal status, especially in terms of administrative relations with their old and new colonial rulers,
remained extremely confused and indeterminate. Transatlantic emigration added urgency to, inter alia, the case surrounding sovereignty exercised by the new political rulers as well as their obligations towards their new subjects, as, for example, in the practice of issuing passports and providing consular assistance to those travelling abroad.

Transatlantic emigration also illuminates another important aspect of Cyprus’ contemporary history during the first period of British rule: the serious problems of survival faced by a large number of local people, especially in rural areas during the second and third decade of the 20th century. The large-scale tendency to leave the island for other countries in 1916 and again in 1920, and a turning towards the dangerous undertaking of crossing the Atlantic in the direction of hitherto unknown American destinations, clearly indicate the scale of adversity and, to a degree, desperation which prevailed, during this period, especially amongst farmers. The multitude of signs of "crisis" in the 1910’s and 1920’s, indicating the growing tendency to emigrate to neighboring Egypt, a common destination for emigrants from the island, further limited available alternatives in tackling current severe economic difficulties. Since the solution offered by emigration to the New World proved to be short-lived, pressure within Cyprus society became dramatically more intense during the 1920’s.

The island found itself, for the first time in many decades, without the outlet afforded by emigration. In other words, it was deprived of the alleviating function offered by the periodic exodus of Cyprus’ unemployed rural population. Meanwhile, hardship caused by the war added to pre-existing structural problems that had troubled Cypriot society and its economy (usury, droughts, natural disasters unemployment, underemployment etc) since the end of the 19th century. The considerable worsening of living conditions during the 1910’s and later the 1920’s does not seem to be unconnected to the outbreak of the anti-colonial uprising of 1931. One may suggest that a study of transatlantic emigration helps in better understanding the deeper social and economic causes of the uprising.

Cypriot emigration to the U.S.A. at the beginning of the 20th century constitutes, if not the starting point, certainly a significant point in the development of American-Cypriot relations. For instance, the establishment, of a Cypriot diaspora in the U.S.A. can be dated back to that period. Indeed, the roots of many Americans of Cypriot origin trace back to the transatlantic
arrivals of that period. One such example is that of the most well-known Cypriot in the U.S.A., the legal expert Charlie Crist, who was elected governor of Florida in 2007. His grandfather, Adam Christodoulou, was a poor shepherd from Cyprus, who emigrated to America, aged 15, in 1912. As mentioned in the American press, Crist, in his speeches, often refers to his humble ancestor, who came to the U.S.A. without knowing a single word of English, and who worked hard, initially as a shoe-shiner, then as owner of a dry cleaning service, before serving in the American army during World War I. The Cypriot origins, migratory experience, and the true-to-life story of an emigrant Cypriot ancestor may be collated, for the purpose of the present study, to reinforce the documenting of successful integration within American society of an emigrant family for a period of more than one generation, of an example of a “success story” involving self-made, non-native Americans, of a story so much liked by voters in the American nation, which is, after all, in the main, “a nation of emigrants”.

At the heart of American-Cypriot relations one finds not only Cypriot emigrants but also those repatriated from America. During their lifetimes one often sees interaction and interchange between the country of origin and the host country. For example, Adam Christodoulou’s contemporary, Costas Katsellis, from Kyrenia, initially emigrated for a short period of time to Egypt, but later, in 1907, at the age of 19, went to the U.S.A. - yet another indication of the significant migratory shift away from “traditional” and nearby destinations towards transatlantic journeys that took place during that period of time. In the U.S.A., where he remained until 1921, that is, for a length of fourteen years, Katsellis worked as a chef. On his return to Cyprus, he established the ‘Sea View’ and ‘Dome’ hotels (Coudounaris 2005: 170). In his case, the experience and professional skills he had acquired during his stay in the U.S.A., together with mastery of the English language, served him well in developing business activity in the tourism sector in his home town.

Broad understanding of the new era of mass emigration linked to employment, which started to manifest itself in Cyprus over the last decades of the 19th century, would probably help in better comprehending the great importance of Cyprus’ transatlantic emigration and its place within a broader migratory context. Up to World War II, which temporarily marked the end of mass emigration, one could identify three basic periods in the history of Cyprus emigration:
a) an initial period, extending from the end of the 19th century through the first decade of the 20th century, during which emigration by Cypriots to Egypt marked its peak; b) a second period covering the second decade of the 20th century when the U.S.A. replaced Egypt as the most popular migratory destination; and c) a third period, when during the 1930’s the majority of emigrants headed for Great Britain. The decline, starting in the decade beginning in 1910, in emigration to Egypt and the forced disruption of emigration to the U.S.A. in the 1920s as discussed above, greatly favored the development of a new wave of emigration, this time towards the colonial metropolis.

The change in direction of mass emigration towards Great Britain was reinforced, to a degree, by the serious nature of administrative difficulties faced by emigrants who wished to travel to Greece. Following the implementation, in 1928, of legislation on emigration, Cypriots who wished to travel to Greece to study or to work, were faced with a plethora of bureaucratic obstacles. As British subjects they were subjected to the same strict restrictions as any other foreigner of non-Greek origin (e.g. on the issuing of visas and the acquisition of residence permits). An example of the current situation would be that of Ezekias Papaioannou, who, unable to have his residence permit renewed by the Greek police authorities, was forced, at the beginning of the 1930s, to leave an ‘inhospitable’ Greece and emigrate to Great Britain, where his status as a British subject greatly simplified both his entrance to the country, procedures involved, and the legalization of his stay there (Papaioannou, 1988: 22-28). The solution, as seen above, to the problem of citizenship as well as the official declaration of Cyprus as a British colony in 1925 made travel by Cypriots to the metropolis much easier. Thus, one may distinguish three major reorientations in migratory destination from Cyprus becoming prominent, in successive stages, during the first half of the 20th century. These were Egypt, the U.S.A., and Great Britain. It would be even more correct to distinguish three different types of emigration, and to summarize the emigration history of Cyprus of this period as a transition from neighboring regional emigration to transatlantic, and from then onwards, inter-colonial, emigration.

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