FROM PRESS BOOM TO CONSOLIDATION: 
THE CIRCULATION OF PALESTINIAN ARABIC 
PERIODICALS IN THE LATE OTTOMAN ERA 
(1908 – 1914) 
https://doi.org/10.31577/aassav.2024.33.1.01 
CC–BY

Emanuel BEŠKA
Institute of Oriental Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (P.R.I.)
Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia
ORCID: 0000-0002-1579-4208
emanuel.beska@savba.sk

This article examines private Palestinian Arabic periodicals established during the Second Ottoman Constitutional Era, shedding light on the shifts and transformations within the press market during this dynamic period. Its aim is to piece together the circulation and distribution patterns of these publications. The research explores various facets, such as subscriber statistics, the geographical distribution of readership, and the pricing strategies. Following the Young Turk Revolution, there was a great expansion in journalistic endeavours, resulting in the establishment of numerous periodicals based in the three urban centres of Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. However, the ensuing years witnessed a gradual consolidation, so that by the outbreak of World War I, only a fraction of the Arabic periodicals founded earlier continued operations. These publications followed diverse trajectories: some folded quickly owing to the fierce competition and the multitude of challenges plaguing journalistic activities, while others experienced a gradual decline but managed to sustain operations for an extended period. By contrast, the most successful among them strengthened their position by attracting prominent advertisers, actively engaging with the crucial issues of the era, introducing innovative practices, and consistently expanding their readership base, ultimately reaching their peak at the outbreak of WWI.

Keywords: newspaper circulation, Ottoman Palestinian Arabic press, Filasṭīn, al-Karmal, al-Quds

1 This research article was written thanks to the support of the following grant projects: VEGA 2/0014/22, MVTS SAV COST PIMO and MVTS SAV COST CORENET.
In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire underwent a profound transformation. Its rulers instituted modernising and centralising reforms, along with expanding communication and transportation infrastructure across its domains. With the establishment of telegraph and steamship connections, the empire became increasingly integrated into a global economy dominated by the European colonial powers, ultimately assuming a peripheral role in this international landscape. Many towns and cities saw dramatic changes, with their populations surging and new suburbs arising outside the confines of the walled historical settlements.

The periodical press began to develop in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. The first to be established were official journals. They were later followed by the private periodical press in Istanbul and other parts of the empire. In the late 1850s, private Arabic periodicals began to emerge in the Arab territories. From the 1870s, more enduring publications were established, some of which lasted until WWI and beyond. For instance, al-Ahrām was established in Alexandria in 1876, initially as a weekly before transitioning to a daily format in 1881. Although Egypt was technically under Ottoman rule, it was governed by the descendants of Muḥammad ʻAlī (1805 – 1849). In Beirut, al-Bashīr was founded in 1870 and Lisān al-Ḥāl in 1877, starting as weekly and twice-weekly newspapers respectively. In mid-1894, Lisān al-Ḥāl increased its publication frequency to four times a week.

By 1908, the Ottoman Empire had been under the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II for three decades. This period was marked by strict censorship that imposed significant limitations on the development of the periodical press, resulting in the absence of privately owned Arabic newspapers in Palestine. Jurjī Ḥabīb Ḥanāniyā, in his inaugural editorial published in the newspaper al-Quds, recounted the numerous unsuccessful attempts he had made at the turn of the 20th century to obtain permission for publishing an Arabic newspaper in Jerusalem. Due to these obstacles, the only printed (Turkish-)Arabic periodical in Palestine

---

3 The region I refer to as Ottoman Palestine comprises three administrative districts: Acre, Nablus, and Jerusalem. The equivalent Arabic term Filasṭīn was increasingly used from the second half of the 19th century by the Arab inhabitants of Palestine referring to a region with fluid borders. Some meant by it the mutasarrifiyya of Jerusalem, others included the sanjaqs of Nablus, Acre, and even the southern part of today’s Lebanon. See FOSTER, Z. How the West Invented the Palestinians. In Academia Letters, 2021, p. 4.
4 al-Quds, No. 1, 18 September 1908, pp. 1–2.
prior to the Revolution was the official gazette *al-Quds al-Sharîf* (Arabic for The Noble Jerusalem). A German consular report indicates 1902 as the commencement year of the periodical, whereas Yehoshua and de Tarrazi mark September 1903 as the start date. ISA 67, peh-457/4 (Old Number 482), Zeitungen und Presse, AXXX, 4, p. 43; YEHOSHUA, Y. *Tārīkh al-ṣahāfa al-ʿArabīya fī Filasṭīn fī al-ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1908 – 1918)* [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 34; DĪṬARRĀZĪ, F. *Tārīkh al-Ṣahāfa al-ʿArabīya* [History of the Arabic Press], Vol. IV, p. 67.

The Young Turk Revolution in July 1908 ushered in a seismic shift in the periodical press landscape. Erol Baykal, whose primary focus is the Ottoman Turkish press, dubs the ensuing months up to February 1909 as the “press boom.” Aspiring journalists from the Palestinian *sanjaqs* quickly followed suit and set up their own newspapers and journals. In the ensuing years, about thirty Arabic periodicals, varying in quality and longevity, emerged in Ottoman Palestine. While several works discuss these developments, none of them examine the course of this momentous transformation through the prism of the rapid expansion and gradual contraction and consolidation of the press market.

There were three centres of the periodical press in late Ottoman Palestine: Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa. These cities had several characteristics in common as all of them had experienced rapid demographic expansion and economic development during the previous decades. Out of the three hubs of journalism, Jerusalem stood out as the most important during the first post-Revolution year. The infrastructure there was ideally suited for such activities owing to the presence of a large number of printing presses. However, in the long run, the newspapers established in Jaffa and Haifa, both economic powerhouses and transportation hubs of their respective regions, proved to be more resilient, successful and long-lived.

---

5 A German consular report indicates 1902 as the commencement year of the periodical, whereas Yehoshua and de Tarrazi mark September 1903 as the start date. ISA 67, peh-457/4 (Old Number 482), Zeitungen und Presse, AXXX, 4, p. 43; YEHOSHUA, Y. *Tārīkh al-ṣahāfa al-ʿArabīya fī Filasṭīn fī al-ʿahd al-ʿUthmānī (1908 – 1918)* [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 34; DĪṬARRĀZĪ, F. *Tārīkh al-Ṣahāfa al-ʿArabīya* [History of the Arabic Press], Vol. IV, p. 67.


Baykal has compiled a list of periodical publications registered in the Ottoman Empire in 1908 – 1909. This comprehensive list provides detailed information such as the name of the periodical, the name and religious affiliation of the applicant, date of registration, language, location and periodicity. While it is also useful for understanding the periodical landscape in Palestine, two points merit careful consideration. Firstly, the data on Arabic publications, is often incomplete or inaccurate. Secondly, the registration date of these periodicals does not always align with the publication’s commencement date. For instance, some newspapers never began operations; while others were apparently registered long after they started publication. A case in point is al-ʿAṣmaʾi, which apparently received its permit in late March 1909, even though it had been published since 1 September 1908 and, by spring 1909, it had ceased publication. In particular, this list highlights the surge in journalistic activities across Palestine. Besides the three major cities, it also mentions a successful application for an Arabic periodical (al-Hāṣib) from Ṣafad in mid-1909, although this periodical apparently never launched.

When early journalistic activities are considered, Baykal’s list indicates that in 1908, five permit applications to establish an Arabic periodical were submitted for Jerusalem, one for Jaffa, while no applications were made for Haifa. Another list, compiled by Philippe de Tarrazi, details printed and handwritten Arabic newspapers in Palestine (excluding journals). According to this, in 1908, 9 newspapers were established in Jerusalem (including 3 handwritten), 2 in Haifa, and none in Jaffa.

Upon examining available sources, Jerusalem’s predominance in the months following the Revolution is clearly evident, with at least nine periodicals established by the end of 1908 (ten, if al-ʿAṣmaʾi is also counted, as it was printed in Jerusalem but had its editorial office in Jaffa). Concurrently, Haifa saw the establishment of three periodicals (al-Karmal, al-Nafāʾ is al-ʿAṣriya, and al-Nafīr al-ʿUthmāni) and Jaffa two (including al-ʿAṣmaʾi). Thus, this data highlights Jerusalem’s significant lead over its two rivals in terms of published newspapers in the early months of the press boom.

---

The Press in the District of Jerusalem

On 1 September 1908, Hannā ‘Abdallāh al-‘Īsā established the first printed private Palestinian Arabic periodical in Palestine, the semi-monthly literary journal al-‘Asma’ī (1908 – 1909) of which only eleven issues were published.\(^{14}\) Its editorial office was based in Jaffa, but much of the work on the journal, including the printing, was done in Jerusalem. In the same month, Jerusalem saw the founding of its first newspaper, al-Quds, by Jurji Ḥābīb Ḥānāniyyā. This was quickly followed by several others, including al-Insāf and al-Najāh, in the subsequent months. Among the ten periodicals that emerged in Jerusalem before the end of 1908, three were handwritten. However, this period of significant growth was followed by a long hiatus. No notable newspapers were founded in the next three years, with the sole exception of al-Dustūr, a handwritten school newspaper, while many periodicals disappeared. Nevertheless, the journalistic scene in Jerusalem received a boost with the relocation of the newspaper al-Nafīr al-‘Uthmānī and the literary journal al-Nafā’īs al-‘Ashrīya to the city in March 1910 and January 1911 respectively.\(^{15}\)

Three years into the Second Constitutional Era, the state of journalism in Jerusalem was bleak. Ahmad Kurd ‘Ali, the responsible manager (Arab. al-mudīr al-mas‘ūl) of the Damascus daily al-Muqtabas, spent over a week in the city and provided a succinct yet vivid account of the dismal state of the periodical press in the district capital. By the end of 1911, he remarked, “Arabic newspapers enjoy little esteem among the people of this region [ahālīḥādhihi al-diyār], and the number of those reading them has diminished […].”\(^{16}\) He observed a conspicuous absence of reputable newspapers in the city, with the sole respected periodical still in existence being the monthly literary journal, al-Nafā’īs al-‘Ashrīya. By the time of his visit, two out of the four established local newspapers, al-Insāf and al-Najāh, had ceased publication. Regarding the two remaining newspapers still in circulation, he stated, “al-Quds remained in the service of the Orthodox monks and al-Nafīr began to strongly endorse the Zionists due to pressing need”.\(^{17}\) Al-Quds backed the religious establishment of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem,

\(^{14}\) YEHOSHUA, Y. Tārīkh al-ṣahāfa al-‘Arabīya fī Filasṭīn fī al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1908 – 1918) [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 86. Previously only two newspapers were published in Palestine, the official gazette al-Quds al-Ṣarīf and a handwritten newspaper Sīḥaywān produced at the Bishop Gobat School (Arab. Madrasat Sīḥaywān al-Inklīziyya); DĪ TĀRĀZĪ, F. Tārīkh al-Ṣahāfa al-‘Arabīya [History of the Arabic Press], Vol. IV, p. 67.


\(^{16}\) al-Muqtabas, No. 701, 6 December 1911, p. 2.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
opposing the popular movement that sought greater rights and influence in Orthodox affairs for the native Arabic-speaking inhabitants. In addition, with the exception of one 1909 discussion, it largely ignored the issue of Jewish immigration to and colonization of Palestine. Conversely, al-Nafrī, was widely perceived as pro-Zionist, and many believed it received financial backing from the Zionists. Endorsing such unpopular causes was hardly a recipe for establishing a popular and thriving periodical in an era defined by political mobilization. Indeed, the visiting Syrian journalist astutely highlighted the critical shortcomings of the remaining Jerusalem newspapers, as they advocated causes at odds with the interests of the local Arabic-speaking populace in the district of Jerusalem.

Ahmad Kurd ‘Ali’s observations align with other available data. At the time of his visit, the longest-running Arabic newspaper in Jerusalem, al-Quds, which had maintained operations since the Revolution, was showing clear signs of decline. One evident indication of this regression was its shift from twice-weekly publishing schedule to a weekly one by the end of September 1911. Two years later, by the close of September 1913, its frequency reduced further, appearing roughly every ten days. Despite these changes, its title page consistently claimed to be a “daily, temporarily published twice a week on Tuesday and Friday of every week” right up to its final issue.

The start of 1912 saw a temporary revitalization of Jerusalem’s journalistic landscape with the debut of the weekly newspaper al-Munadī. Owned and edited by Muslims, this publication sharply contrasted with the existing periodicals in the city by taking a firm anti-Zionist stance, thereby aligning more closely with the sentiments of its target audience. The editor-in-chief boldly proclaimed, “We launched al-Munadī at a time when people despised journalism”. Reportedly, by the third issue, a surge in subscription requests demonstrated its growing

---

18 Al-Nafrī was initially established in Alexandria by Ibrāhīm Zakā. Later, his brother Ilyā Zakā took over the publication, relocating it first to Haifa in 1908, then to Jaffa, and subsequently to Jerusalem at the beginning of 1910. Three years later, it returned to Haifa; see YEHOSHUA, Y. Tārīkh al-ṣaḥīfa al-‘Arabīya fī Filasṭīn fī al-ʻahd al-ʻUthmānī (1908 – 1918) [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 51; al-Quds, No. 130, 15 March 1910, p. 2. In March 1913, in an article entitled “Awd Jarīdat al-Nafr ilā Hayfā” [The Return of the Newspaper al-Nafrī to Haifa] al-Quds reported that al-Nafrī, after being published in Jerusalem for three years, returned to Haifa. Publication resumed there on 15 February 1913, which corresponds to 28 February 1913 in the Gregorian calendar, see al-Quds, No. 337, 7 March 1913, p. 3.
19 al-Munadī, No. 15, 14 May 1912, p. 4; al-Munadī, No. 31, 4 September 1912, p. 2.
20 The publication frequency was altered after issue 264 (dated 22 September 1911). Subsequent issues were printed on a weekly basis.
popularity. As outlined in an article entitled “The secret of the success,” the paper’s triumph stemmed from its commitment to addressing local concerns in the district of Jerusalem, specifically those affecting the “Palestinians [al-Filasṭīnīn],” while steering clear of banal, redundant and repetitive news. Its unwavering criticism of the establishment, affordable subscription rates, and adoption of plain, straightforward language also played pivotal roles in its ascent.22

By mid-1914, however, Jerusalem was devoid of any significant Arabic newspapers. This absence was all the more striking given the heightened demand for news, fueled by a series of international events involving the Ottoman Empire from 1911 onwards. Despite this backdrop, Jerusalem-based newspapers failed to seize the opportunity presented by these unfolding developments. Ilyā Zakā, the proprietor of al-Nafīr, had already relocated back to Haifa in early 1913 and al-Munādī ceased operations in mid-1913. The last notable newspaper, al-Quds, ceased publication at the end of May 1914. Its owner, Jurjī Ḥabīb Ḥanāniyā, weighed down by mounting debts, left Palestine for Egypt.

In Jaffa the situation was markedly different. Journalism had a much slower start in this coastal boom city. However, in mid-1909, the Arabic press began to pick up there, thanks to the establishment of al-Akhbār and al-Taraqqī. Yehoshua describing the latter as “the first newspaper with a modern character [dhāt al-tābi‘ al-‘aṣrī]” in Palestine.23 Even though it did not last long, it was followed by a more accomplished successor, the newspaper Filasṭīn. Founded at the beginning of 1911 in Jaffa by the cousins ʻĪsā al-ʻĪsā and Yūsuf al-ʻĪsā, this twice-weekly publication steadily grew stronger over the next four years. Moreover, the gradual and continuous decline of the press in Jerusalem opened up a space for Filasṭīn, a newspaper based in Jaffa, the twin city of Jerusalem, to expand geographically and gradually to emerge as the dominant periodical of the mutaṣārīfīya by 1914. Thus, the publishers of Filasṭīn managed to capitalize on the weakening of the press in Jerusalem and the piecemeal disappearance of their regional competitors.

### Circulation and Subscriber Numbers

Subscription fees were the primary source of revenue for late-Ottoman Palestinian Arabic periodicals. All newspaper publishers aimed to increase the

---

22 al-Munādī, No. 12, 24 April 1912, pp. 1–2.
number of subscribers and ensure they paid the fees. Increasing the subscriber base was crucial to making the newspaper viable in the long run. Although for most newspapers it is difficult to establish precise numbers, some scattered data are available, which makes it possible to partially reconstruct the changing situation.

During the press boom, the founders of the initial newspapers grappled with determining their periodicals’ print run. In the absence of any private Arabic newspapers in the district of Jerusalem, and with the official bilingual Turkish-Arabic newspaper al-Quds al-Sharīf serving as the sole precedent, it is probable that the post-Revolution era pioneers looked to it for guidance on establishing their print runs. According to German consular reports, al-Quds al-Sharīf commenced with a circulation of 1,230 copies in 1902, which dwindled to 400–500 copies in subsequent years.24

Al-Quds, based in Jerusalem, had various circulation numbers reported, with one source suggesting a figure of 1,500 copies.25 However, data from the German consulate archive offer a more measured perspective. According to these records, al-Quds initially garnered 500 subscribers, but this number had shrunk to 300 by mid-1909,26 purportedly owing to internal disputes within the Greek Orthodox community in the mutaṣarrifiyā of Jerusalem.27 Nevertheless, it is more plausible to attribute this decline to the nature of the subscription model, given that subscriptions lasted a year and a full year had not yet elapsed when these numbers were recorded. Thus, early periodical publishers, launching their ventures in the months after the revolution, commenced with circulation numbers of 400–500

24 ISA 67, peh - 457/4 (Old Number 482), Zeitungen und Presse, AXXX, 4, p. 43.
25 Yehoshua does not mention the source for this figure. See YEHOSHUA, Y. Tārikh al-ṣaḥāfa al-ʻArabīya fī Filasṭīn fi al-ʻahd al-ʻUthmānī (1908 – 1918) [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 44.
26 Of al-Quds’s 300 subscribers, 220 resided within the Ottoman Empire, while the remaining 80 were based in the Americas. ISA 67, peh – 457/4 (Old Number 482), Zeitungen und Presse, AXXX, 4, pp. 27, 45. Apparently, this report was written in mid-1909 and it was drawn up in response to a letter from the German Embassy addressed to several German consulates in the Ottoman Empire (in Aleppo, Alexandria, Baghdad, Beirut, Constantinople, Haifa, Konia, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Mosul, Salonik and Smyrna) soliciting structured information regarding the relevant periodical press. ISA 67, peh - 457/4 (Old Number 482), Zeitungen und Presse, AXXX, 4, p. 23.
27 The owner of al-Quds, Jurji Ḥabīb Ḥanāniyā, was regarded as a party in the dispute, siding with the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre. Evelin Dierauff provides the most comprehensive analysis of the controversy during the Second Constitutional Era. See DIERAUFF, E. Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine, pp. 175–276.
copies per issue. These copies were distributed to both confirmed subscribers and prospective individuals whom the publishers believed might show interest. These individuals were sent copies of the periodical in the hope of securing their subscription. If these potential subscribers did not return their introductory copies, they were automatically added as subscribers and were expected to pay the subscription fee. The subscriber count’s subsequent dip can arguably be ascribed to the gulf between the owner’s initial aspirations and the reality that emerged during al-Quds’s debut year.

None of the Arabic periodicals assessed in the 1909 consular records being deemed particularly influential, al-Quds was recognized as “Jerusalem’s most significant Arabic newspaper.” Despite the editor’s sporadic optimistic proclamations in the subsequent years, it is doubtful that al-Quds experienced...
any marked surge in its subscriber base. Moreover, given the frequency of grievances regarding non-paying subscribers and ensuing appeals to them, it seems that al-Quds was apparently the newspaper that suffered more than its contemporaries from this prevalent phenomenon.

The most complete picture is available regarding the newspaper Filasṭīn, founded in Jaffa in early 1911. It stands out as the sole Palestinian Arabic periodical with sufficient data that make it possible to outline the gradual development in its subscriber and reader base. Although the initial subscription numbers remain unknown, the situation becomes clearer by the end of the second year of Filasṭīn’s operation. In December 1912, Yūsuf al-ʻĪsā reported in a commentary 1,121 subscribers. This figure, notably more than twice the initial circulation of post-Revolution newspapers in the district, signifies Filasṭīn’s burgeoning success at the close of its second volume.

Forms prepared by the German vice-consul in Jaffa J. W. H. Brode, a year later, offer a concise view of Filasṭīn at the conclusion of its third volume. The collection contains various German and Arabic documents detailing Filasṭīn’s background, editorial line and circulation. Apparently, the German vice-consul tasked Serafeen J. Murad with gathering intelligence on Arabic newspapers within the mutasarrīfiya of Jerusalem. On 7 December 1913, the latter submitted a report written by one of the al-ʻĪsā cousins, most probably Yūsuf al-ʻĪsā. While I could not pinpoint the original Arabic document, the form appears to echo al-ʻĪsā’s report. A note by S. J. Murad indicates that it was “accompanied by the detailed response of al-ʻĪsā to the questions 11 – 15 […] on the form”. Question 12 asks about the total print run, listed as 1,600 copies, showing an

32 In response to an article published in the Hebrew newspaper ha-Ḥerut, which claimed that Filasṭīn gained most of its income from Jewish subscribers and advertisers, Filasṭīn’s editor-in-chief refuted this claim. He emphasised that only 20 Jews subscribed, representing a negligible fraction of the total, and of these, half did not pay the subscription fee. See Filasṭīn, No. 198–97, 18 December 1912, p. 3.
33 I found these documents thanks to two scholars who refer to the file in their publications. BÜSSOW, J. Mental Maps: The Mediterranean Worlds of Two Palestinian Newspapers in the Late Ottoman Period. In KOLLUOĞLU, B., TOKSÖZ, M. (eds). Cities of the Mediterranean: from the Ottomans to the Present Day, p. 108; CAMPOS, M. U. Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine, p. 282n18. Additionally, I would like to thank Michelle Campos for sharing with me the electronic copy of some of the documents from the Israel State Archives.
34 ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, pp. 146–147.
36 German (Grösse der Gesammt-Auflage).
impressive annual growth of over 40 per cent in overall circulation. This form states that 1,200 copies of Filasṭīn were distributed in the Ottoman Empire, with 465 in (the sub-district of) Jaffā. That would leave the remaining 400 copies for overseas readers. The gradual addition of agents in Palestine and internationally (which will be discussed later) also hints at a rising subscriber count.

In particular, a previously overlooked handwritten Arabic document from the same file offers insights into Filasṭīn’s circulation during the latter half of 1914. This document briefly profiles three Palestinian Arabic newspapers: al-Akhbār, Sawt al-‘Uthmānīya and Filasṭīn, highlighting the press presence in Jaffā, which emerged as the undisputed journalistic centre of the district of Jerusalem, as World War I began. What stands out is the document’s mention of Filasṭīn’s three suspensions. The initial suspension took place in late 1913, followed by a seven-week hiatus from mid-April to early June 1914. The third suspension probably occurred sometime between 15 August 1914, the date of the last issue (345–48) available to me, and the end of October 1914. The document therefore dates back to the autumn of 1914. Importantly, it reveals that Filasṭīn had 1,500 subscribers at that time and a total print run of 2,500 copies. This indicates a significant growth in Filasṭīn’s readership, with its print numbers surging by an impressive 56 percent compared to late 1913. It seems that Filasṭīn effectively capitalised on the departure of its competitors in the district of Jerusalem. The last of these, al-Quds, ceased publication in late spring of 1914, creating a void within the mutaṣarrifiyya. Consequently, Filasṭīn emerged as the sole remaining significant Arabic newspaper in the district. It is essential to note that the social, cultural and economic ties between Jaffa and Jerusalem intensified at the turn of

37 ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, p. 150.
38 The form indicates that the newspaper had subscribers in the following countries: Egypt, France, Italy, Switzerland, the United States, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Columbia. These countries were certainly not listed according to the number of subscribers, as those living in Europe must have been numerically marginal compared to those in the Americas. ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, p. 150.
40 The document mentions the Ottoman Empire’s neutrality, suggesting it was crafted prior to the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the Great War on 29 October 1914. An additional document suggests the newspaper briefly resurfaced before ceasing publication at the turn of 1915. A significant detail to note is the transition of Filasṭīn to a thrice-weekly publication during its final Ottoman-era months, a fact echoed by Yehoshua. ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, pp. 159, 163; YEHOSHUA, Y. Tārīkh al-sahāfa al-‘Arabīya fī Filasṭīn fī al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1908 – 1918) [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], p. 23.
41 ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, p. 159.
42 The last extant issue is No. 391, 29 May 1914.
the 20th century, given their strong connectivity through road, railway and telegraph. Together, these two cities formed a crucial interurban axis\textsuperscript{43} which was further strengthened during the Second Constitutional Era. The periodical press played an important role in that development. As a result, in 1914, \textit{Filas\text{"u}n} became, albeit for a short time, the main voice of the \textit{mutas\text{"u}rri\text{f}i\text{a}}.

This rise also points to the successful adoption of a single copy sales strategy, initiated at the beginning of the previous year. Significantly, an additional 1,000 copies were printed on top of those distributed to subscribers. So far, historians have assumed that, unlike in Egypt and in the neighbouring provinces of Syria and Beirut, newspapers during the Late Ottoman Era in Palestine were not sold on the streets. However, the considerable number of extra copies printed in 1914 challenges this notion. The most plausible explanation for the substantial disparity between the number of subscribers and printed issues seems to be street sales of individual copies. In contrast, the prolonged suspensions of \textit{Filas\text{"u}n} might have contributed to a slower growth in the number of subscriptions in 1914. The uncertainty regarding the newspaper’s continuity may have deterred potential subscribers. Nevertheless, the escalating demand for current news and up-to-date information heightened the interest in direct newspaper purchases. The outbreak of the Great War further accelerated this trend, resulting in a more frequent, thrice-weekly publication of \textit{Filas\text{"u}n}.

These statistics validate \textit{Filas\text{"u}n}’s ascending trajectory, a trend further corroborated by its expansion from 4 to 6 pages and the consistent, robust interest from advertisers.\textsuperscript{44} These advancements, occurring in mid-1914, significantly bolstered the newspaper’s revenue.

Moreover, another significant factor probably played a role in \textit{Filas\text{"u}n}’s rise as the dominant newspaper of the \textit{mutas\text{"u}rri\text{f}i\text{a}}. In its first three years, \textit{Filas\text{"u}n}’s editors championed the Orthodox Renaissance, a cause primarily affecting a major part of the Christian community. However, by the beginning of 1914, the editors markedly reduced their focus on this matter.\textsuperscript{45} Conversely, in the preceding year, they vigorously embarked on another cause, opposition to Zionist colonisation.\textsuperscript{46} By 1914, they amplified this stance, making anti-Zionism their

\textsuperscript{43} Cyrus Schayegh demonstrates the growing ties between these cities and their populations, see SCHAYEGH, C. \textit{The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World}, pp. 80–85.

\textsuperscript{44} The advertisements covered the entire page 6 and accounted for 40 percent of the space on pages 3 and 4.

\textsuperscript{45} DIERAUFF, E. \textit{Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine}, p. 391.

\textsuperscript{46} This was a gradual process which is detailed and analysed in the following works: BEŠKA, E. \textit{From Ambivalence to Hostility}, pp. 33–64; DIERAUFF, E. \textit{Translating Late Ottoman Modernity in Palestine}, pp. 277–395.
primary focus. This issue resonated with a much wider segment of the population, including the Muslim majority, consolidating Filasṭīn’s status as the medium of the emerging Palestinian community.

By the close of 1915, only one minor Arabic newspaper, al-Akhbār, remained in Jaffa. It capitalised on the disappearance of Filasṭīn and (to a much lesser extent) Ṣawt al-‘Uthmāniya, “which made it possible, for some time […] to appear rather more regularly” in spite of its mediocre quality.47

The Arabic Press in the Northern Districts

The Arabic press market was less developed in the northern part of Ottoman Palestine. There were no periodicals in the sanjaq of Nablus and only a few in the district of Acre. Two periodicals of note which were originally printed in Haifa, the distinguished literary journal al-Nafā‘is al-‘Aṣrīya and the newspaper al-Nafīr al-‘Uthmāni, moved to the mutaṣarrifiyya of Jerusalem after a few years of publication. Several other newspapers were printed in the city for a short time, including al-Ṣā‘īqa, the pro-Zionist al-Maḥāba, or temporarily moved to Haifa from elsewhere, like the humoristic newspapers al-Ḥimāra and al-‘Aṣā.48

One of the earliest newspapers in Palestine, and arguably the most important in northern Palestine, was al-Karmal. Initially a weekly, it became a twice-weekly publication in 1910, and was published in Haifa by Najīb Naṣṣār.49 Its circulation figures are only available for its later years. In the latter half of 1913 al-Karmal printed 1,000 copies per issue.50 The same number was also reported at the beginning of 1914 when almost 1,000 readers subscribed to it: “If you asked about the oldest and best newspaper you would not find more than 1,000 subscribers to it and one third of them do not pay the subscription fees

50 al-Karmal, No. 364, 12 September 1913, p. 2. In this piece the author speaks in general terms but it is likely that he has al-Karmal in mind: “[…] and a newspaper that prints one thousand copies […]”. At that time single issues of the newspaper were apparently not yet sold. This system was only introduced half a year later.
whereas the newspaper is read by tens of thousands (for free).“\textsuperscript{51} This positions \textit{al-Karmal} as the second most influential and widely read Palestinian Arabic newspaper and undoubtedly the main newspaper of the district of Acre. One point warrants mention in this context: the district of Acre was part of the province of Beirut, whose capital was a major hub of journalism, home to several influential Arabic newspapers. Many of these publications regularly reported on events in northern Palestine and had correspondents there. As a result, local newspapers in Haifa faced stiff competition from these well-established outlets.

\textit{Filasṭīn}’s influence in the northern districts was much smaller. This can be observed by comparing its subscriber figures in the predominantly Christian towns of Nazareth (district of Acre) and Bethlehem/Bayt Jālā (district of Jerusalem).\textsuperscript{52} In one of his editorials, \textit{Filasṭīn}’s editor-in-chief states: “We have in Bayt Laḥm and in Bayt Jālā and among the thousands of emigrants from these two towns hundreds of friends and subscribers”.\textsuperscript{53} Even though the number is not precise and acquaintances and emigrants are included, the subscriber numbers in and around Bethlehem must have been considerable. On the other hand, by the summer of 1911, \textit{Filasṭīn} only had 3 subscribers in Nazareth – Bishāra Qaʻwār, Yaʻqūb al-Samʻān and Mikhā’īl al-ʻAwda.\textsuperscript{54} The editor-in-chief of \textit{al-Karmal} also gives the number of subscribers in this town. In an article he emphasises the developed educational infrastructure of the town, the high level of literacy and growing interest in reading the periodical press and receiving up-to-date and reliable news. As \textit{al-Karmal} was based in the sanjaq of Acre it predictably had a much larger audience in Nazareth than \textit{Filasṭīn} with the number of subscribers between 50\textsuperscript{55} and 70\textsuperscript{56}. In a recurring trope found in the contemporary press, Najīb Naṣṣār voiced his discontent by pointing out the high literacy rate in the town and asserting that the number of subscribers should be ten times higher. Initially mentioning the number 500, he later emphasised that is should be “at least 600”.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{52} During the Second Ottoman Constitutional Era, Nazareth and Bethlehem were of similar size with between 8,000 and 10,000 inhabitants living in each of them. Bayt Jālā was much smaller; BEN-ARIEH, Yehoshua. \textit{The Making of Eretz Israel in the Modern Era}, pp. 124–126.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Filasṭīn}, No. 247–45, 21 June 1913, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Filasṭīn}, No. 62, 23 August 1911, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{al-Karmal}, No. 324, 11 April 1913, p. 2. In the article the author specifies that the figure pertains to the number of subscribers from the town itself. Later he also writes about “the rest [of the 50 subscribers] and many among the subscribers from the sub-district [of Nazareth]”.\textsuperscript{56} It is likely that the number 70 denoted the total number of subscribers in the whole of the sub-district of Nazareth. \textit{al-Karmal}, No. 268, 20 September 1912, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{al-Karmal}, No. 324, 11 April 1913, p. 2.
There was another successful periodical in Palestine, in term of the subscription numbers, the literary journal *al-Nafā‘ is al-‘Aṣrīya*, which reportedly had 1,800 subscribers.\(^{58}\) One possible way to determine the number of subscribers are announcements regarding backdated subscription fees received from subscribers in arrears that can be found in the journal. For instance, the June 1913 issue mentions the “subscriber number 1545” from Chile who recently settled the subscription fee for years four and five. So, at the very least, there must have been more than 1,500 people subscribing to the journal by the fourth year of its existence.\(^{59}\)

If we look at the figures of the major Arabic newspapers in Syria and Egypt during that period, the most influential Arabic newspapers enjoyed larger readerships. For instance, *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, reportedly the newspaper with the highest circulation in the Levant, printed approximately 3,500 copies per issue. Even higher circulation rates were reported for the leading Egyptian newspapers. In early 1912, *al-Mu‘ayyad* reportedly printed 14,000 copies, while both *al-Ahrām* and *al-Muqṭṭam* printed 5,000 copies each.\(^{60}\) However, *Filasṭīn*, experiencing a continuous year-on-year increase in its print run which reached 2,500 copies by late 1914, was rapidly catching up with major regional periodicals.

**Newspaper Subscription Fees\(^{61}\)**

During the first years of private Arabic newspaper production in Palestine, most of the periodicals were only available in the form of an annual subscription.\(^{62}\) The periodicals were then distributed to subscribers by the postal services. The prices varied as the subscription was usually geographically tiered. The cheapest rate

---


\(^{59}\) *al-Nafā‘ is al-‘Aṣrīya*, Vol. 5, No. 6, June 1913, p. 296+1.

\(^{60}\) *al-Mufīd*, No. 912, 19 February 1912, p. 1. Two years later, a German consular document estimated *Lisān al-Ḥāl*’s print run to be 3,000 copies. Uebersicht über die Presse des Konsulatsbezirks Beirut. 16 April 1914, Die Türkische Presse, Türkei 167, Bandummer 8, RZ 201/13902, p. 129.


\(^{62}\) Some newspapers in the neighbouring regions also offered subscriptions for a shorter – half-year – period, among them *al-Muqṭṭam*, *al-Ahrām* (Cairo) and *al-Muqtabas* (Damascus).
applied in the sub-district or district where the periodical was based. A higher level covered a larger region or, most frequently, the entire Ottoman Empire. Most expensive was usually access to periodicals from abroad.

Al-Quds, the oldest twice-weekly Palestinian Arabic newspaper, offered several subscription rates. In the first two years (1908 – 1910), there were three geographical tiers, and the fees were 3,5 Mecidi riyals (70 piasters) in the Jerusalem district, 4 Mecidi riyals (80 piasters) in the Ottoman Empire and 20 francs (about 80 piasters) abroad. This was a considerable price, which was only slightly lower than subscription fees of the major daily newspapers in Beirut and Damascus. To increase its appeal and expand the pool of subscribers, in September 1910 al-Quds’s subscription fees were lowered. Only two rates remained, one for the Ottoman Empire, 2,5 Mecidi riyals, and the other for foreign countries, 15 francs. The editor mentioned the reduction of the subscription fees as one of several improvements to be implemented during the third year of the newspaper’s existence. Other newspapers also reduced their fees. Al-Taraqqī was perhaps the first to do so; in August 1909, it lowered its subscription rate from 15 to 10 francs after publishing 14 issues. The major newspaper from Beirut, Lisān al-Ḥāl, also took a similar step in 1910.

Filasṭīn’s subscription fee was 10 francs in the Jaffa sub-district and 3 Mecidi riyals in both the other parts of the Ottoman Empire and abroad. The prices did not change throughout the pre-WWI period and stayed at the same level even after Filasṭīn’s size expanded from four to six pages in mid-June 1914. Al-Karmal, cost 2 riyals all over the Ottoman Empire. Customers living in “Egypt

---

63 The nominal value of one Ottoman lira was 100 piasters and of one riyāl was 20 piasters, but their prices often fluctuated. The value of a franc was 4 piasters, and one piaster was equivalent to 4 metaliks (in 1910). For more information regarding the value of individual coins, see BÜSSOW, J. Hamidian Palestine: Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem, 1872 – 1908, p. 563; al-Quds, No. 158, 1 July 1910, p. 4.
64 The reduction in subscription fees in 1910 was prompted by a decrease in postal rates to 2 para for every 50 grams of newspapers. al-Quds, No. 158, 1 July 1910, p. 4.
67 The subscription fee for readers living abroad was not stated but it is likely that the higher tier also applied to them.
68 Filasṭīn, No. 328–31, 17 June 1914, p. 1. There are several possible reasons why the editors chose not to raise the subscription fee. Firstly, since the advertisements occupied nearly two pages, the non-commercial content did not increase sufficiently to justify a price hike. Additionally, the editors may have intended to compensate subscribers for the extended period of suspension.
and foreign countries” paid a higher price of half a French lira.\(^6^9\) \textit{Al-Nafîr} had two price tiers, one for “Jerusalem and the Ottoman lands” of 10 francs and another for “other countries” of 15 francs.\(^7^0\) These newspapers were twice-weekly, which meant that readers could expect approximately 100 issues for the price they paid. In reality, the situation was more complex. Some newspapers, such as \textit{Filasṭīn}\(^7^1\) and \textit{al-Karmal},\(^7^2\) were able to print such a number of issues per year, as long as their efforts were not impeded by official bans. Other newspapers, like \textit{al-Quds}, did not reach such figures even during their best years.\(^7^3\) The owner of \textit{al-Quds} repeatedly acknowledged that the number of issues published the previous year had fallen short of his plans and made promises to improve in this aspect, but he was unable to fulfil them.

Throughout the Second Constitutional Era, subscription fees in Palestine remained largely stable, with occasional reductions either in response to competition or in order to attract more readers. Likewise, the subscription fees of Arabic newspapers published in Beirut and Cairo remained notably consistent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with infrequent price changes. For instance, in Egypt, the price of \textit{al-Ahrām} remained at 25 francs from its founding in 1876 until 1889. In 1890, the price increased to 212 piasters, and six years later, in 1896, it decreased to 150 piasters. Remarkably, at the end of 1918 the price had remained unchanged. Likewise, \textit{Lisān al-Ḥāl}, established in 1877, maintained an unaltered yearly subscription fee of 14 francs in Beirut and Lebanon and 18 francs in the rest of the Ottoman Empire until the end of 1894. The following year saw a price increase to 20 and 25 francs. Then, in 1910, there was another adjustment, lowering the fee to 17 francs in the Ottoman Empire, while setting it at 25 francs internationally.

The affordability of newspapers can be gauged by comparing the subscription fees to the salaries of literate employees in Palestine. At that time, a postman working for the Ottoman postal service earned between 250 and 400 piasters monthly. A teacher in a village school received between 100 and 350 piasters monthly.

\(^{69}\) \textit{al-Karmal}, No. 396, 6 January 1914, p. 1. In its beginnings, while it was a weekly newspaper, the subscription fee was apparently lower, 1,5 Mecidi riyals. \textit{Lisān al-Ḥāl}, No. 5987, 6 April 1909, p. 3. In early October 1909, one French lira equalled 88 piasters. \textit{al-Quds}, No. 95, 23 October 1909, p. 3.


\(^{71}\) 101 issues during the first year (1911) and 102 issues in the second year. Thereafter the number of issues decreased owing to occasional suspensions imposed on them by the authorities.

\(^{72}\) The only completely extant volume (1913) consists of 98 issues (Numbers 297–394).

\(^{73}\) Out of six volumes only in the second year did \textit{al-Quds} reach more than 90 issues, twice (years 1 and 3) over 80 and from the fourth year on it became a \textit{de facto} weekly with about 50 issues per year.
while a teacher in an intermediate school (Arab. al-maktab al-i’dādi) in Jerusalem received 500 piasters.\textsuperscript{74} A policeman’s wages were 400 piasters.\textsuperscript{75} In the Ottoman army, the lowest ranking officers, al-mulāzim al-awwal and al-mulāzim al-thānī (equivalent to first and second lieutenant), earned 700 and 800 piasters in 1914, respectively.\textsuperscript{76} In contrast, the head of the criminal appeal court in Jerusalem was paid 3,500 piasters, while court members earned 1,500, the prosecutor 3,000, and clerks 500.\textsuperscript{77}

In mid-1913, the editors of Filastīn initiated an innovative distribution policy by sending complimentary copies of the newspaper to the village headmen in the sub-district of Jaffa. While this approach was short-lived and its precise impact remains undetermined, it underscores the editors’ commitment to broadening their readerships and reaching new segments of the population, notably peasants, who formed the majority of the inhabitants. This outreach probably stemmed from growing concerns about the repercussions of Zionist activities in Jaffa’s hinterland.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, such a venture is indicative of the newspaper’s financial stability, as the editors would not have pursued this costly policy if they had been facing financial strains.

**Single Copy Sales**

As previously mentioned, initially most Arabic periodicals published in Palestine during the Second Ottoman Constitutional Era were not sold as single copies, and the readers had to subscribe to them on a yearly basis. Only a few exceptions existed in the early post-revolution years, among them: al-Insāf and al-Aṣma‘ī. For al-Insāf, non-subscribers could purchase single issues priced at one metalik each.\textsuperscript{79} Additionally, al-Dustūr, a weekly school newspaper, published at the Constitutional School (Arab. al-Madrasa al-Dustūrīya) was also selling single copies for one metalik each. It was founded in December 1910 and edited by Aḥmad Khālid Afandī al-Khālidī. Moreover, its subscription was on a monthly

\textsuperscript{74} al-Quds, No. 220, 7 March 1911, pp. 3–4; al-Quds, No. 229, 14 April 1911, p. 4; al-Quds, No. 384, 24 March 1914, p. 3; al-Quds, 1909, No. 107, 17 December 1909, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{75} al-Quds, No. 96, 26 October 1909, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{76} al-Quds, No. 386, 3 April 1914, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{77} al-Quds, No. 186, 18 October 1910, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{78} For more details, see BEŠKA, E. From Ambivalence to Hostility, pp. 19–20.

\textsuperscript{79} YEHOSHUA, Y. Tārīkh al-sahāfa al-‘Arabiya fi Filasṭīn fi al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmānī (1908 – 1918) [The History of the Arabic Press in Palestine in the Ottoman Era (1908 – 1918)], pp. 67–68.
basis, for a slightly discounted price of three metaliks. However, *al-Dustūr* was not a professionally produced newspaper but was handwritten.

In 1913, the editors of *Filasṭīn* introduced single-copy sales, beginning with the first issue of the 1913 volume, priced at two metaliks per issue. Advertisements in the newspaper indicated that *Filasṭīn* was available for purchase at two locations, a shop owned by *al-Khawāja* İbrāhīm Ghandūr in Jaffa, and another owned by *al-Khawāja* Mikhā’īl al-Salfītī in Jerusalem. Thus, single issues of *Filasṭīn* were also available in the district capital, demonstrating the newspaper’s aspiration to be available across the mutaṣarrīfiyya. With the significant increase in the number of copies sold directly in 1914, it is likely that *Filasṭīn* was also sold on the streets of major cities in the mutaṣarrīfiyya. The Haifa semi-weekly *al-Karmal* followed the example of *Filasṭīn* one year later and from the mid-February 1914, single issues were available for the same price as *Filasṭīn*. On the other hand, it seems that *al-Quds* and *al-Munādī* did not join them as neither was such a step publicized nor was the price of a single issue stated in these newspapers. Apparently, the more successful periodicals at a certain stage introduced this innovation, while those experiencing decline, such as *al-Quds*, disregarded it. Apparently, both *al-Karmal* and *Filasṭīn* did sell single copies after reaching the threshold of 1,000 subscribers, perhaps considering their financial situation sustainable and their subscriber base sufficiently broad and stable to venture into new territory.

To gain a broader perspective, it is worth considering the situation in the wider region where single-copy distribution had been introduced much earlier. The influential Egyptian daily newspaper *al-Ahrām*, for instance, initiated single-copy sales from its inaugural issue in 1876, priced at half a franc. Similarly, in Beirut, *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, began offering single-copy sales from its first issue in 1877 at a price of one piaster, while *al-Bashīr* followed suit in the 15th year of its existence (1884), also at the same price. *Al-Iqbāl*, launched in 1902, introduced single-copy sales from the first issue at a cost of 1.5 piaster.

---

80 *al-Dustūr*, No. 1, 6 December 1910, p. 1.
81 I had access to issues 1–5, all of which appeared on Saturdays. The issue No. 1 was published on 6 December 1910 and the issue No. 5 on 14 January 1911.
82 *Filasṭīn*, No. 204–1, 15 January 1913, p. 1.
85 Since I could not find any reference to a specific shop where *al-Karmal* was sold, it is likely that the individual copies were sold by street vendors.
86 *al-Ahrām*, No. 1, 5 August 1876, p. 1.
88 *al-Bashīr*, No. 685, 10 January 1884, p. 1.
revolution era, both al-Ittiḥād al-ʻUthmānī and al-Mufīd, were available for purchase as single copies for one metalik. Likewise, individuals could acquire single issues of al-Muqtabas, published in Damascus, for the same price.

As is evident from the above, per-issue sales were not the preferred method of newspaper marketing during the early stages of journalistic activities in Palestine. On the contrary, publishers of the most successful and long-lived periodicals hesitated to adopt single-copy sales early on. They postponed its introduction until later, when their business was firmly established. In the first stage, they focused on cultivating a dependable and reliable subscriber base that could generate a consistent and predictable income, thus putting their venture on a firm footing. As a result, they only introduced single-copy sales a few years into the newspaper’s existence, after they had secured a stable pool of subscribers and were confident about the viability of their endeavour, with the objective to generate additional income and broaden the newspaper’s reach.

World War I dealt a harsh blow to the Arabic periodical press in Palestine. It seems that only al-Akhbār managed to stay afloat for a longer time. However, the private Arabic press made a forceful comeback after the war. In the post-WWI era, selling single newspaper copies became widespread. The first post-war Palestinian Arabic newspaper Mirʻāt al-Sharq clearly stated the price of a separate issue (one piaster) above the name of the periodical on the title page from its first issue. Lisān al-ʻArab in its first available issue also indicated the price of a single issue in the same place. Its price was more affordable, costing only half a piaster. The price of a single issue (10 millīm) was also stated from issue no. 2 of Filasṭīn.

Authorised Representatives

As newspapers matured and reached more distant regions, including overseas, authorized representatives (Arab. wakīl, pl. wukalā’) of newspapers took on an increasingly vital role. Their responsibilities included taking orders, collecting

---

92 al-Akhbār, No. 495 (No. 6 in that year) on 15 October 1913 – shows that the newspaper only appeared sporadically in 1913. ISA 67, peh - 533/13 (Old Number 1493), Politisches, AIII, Vol. 3, p. 164.
94 Lisān al-ʻArab, No. 43, 17 August 1921, p. 1.
95 Filasṭīn, No. 369–2, 23 March 1921, p. 1.
subscription fees, providing receipts to subscribers, addressing issues, sending reminders, and even visiting non-paying subscribers. Through an analysis of the available information on the number of representatives, their activities and their place of residence, we can gain insights into the major subscriber hubs, prevailing trends and patterns, and the distribution policies pursued by the newspaper owners. Furthermore, by examining the chronological sequence of their onboarding, we can estimate when specific regions developed significant concentrations of subscribers, necessitating the appointment of representatives to streamline operations.

Again, the most detailed information about the wukalā’ is available regarding the newspaper Filāṣṭīn. The first representative introduced to the readers was Ḥānā Afandī Yāṣmīnā and the editors encouraged “the readers and subscribers in Jerusalem and around it to consult him and rely on him in all matters”.

The fact that Jerusalem was apparently the first location for which a wakīl was contracted underscores the importance the editors of Filāṣṭīn placed on the city and its vicinity. Soon thereafter, the editors asked subscribers from Jerusalem, al-Ramla and al-Ludd to pay the subscription fees to their representatives.

While the wakīl for Jerusalem was named, the names of those for the latter two towns were not mentioned. In addition, Filāṣṭīn’s increasing popularity beyond the mutasarrīfiya of Jerusalem is evident from their gradual hiring of representatives in more distant regions. By the end of its first year, they had already appointed Muḥammad Afandī ‘Alī al-Ṭāhir as their wakīl “in Nablus and its surrounding areas”.

Several months later, Filāṣṭīn expanded its presence much further afield to Chile, by appointing a representative there, proving the country’s status as one of the major hubs for Palestinian emigration in the Americas. Al-Khawāja Mikhā’il Ḥānā al-Buyūk, hailing from the town of La Calera to the northwest of Valparaíso, assumed responsibility for “everything related to the issues of the newspaper”. While the newspaper had subscribers in other parts of South America, they were more dispersed than in Chile. As a result, these subscribers were asked to communicate directly with the editorial office, suggesting that the

96 Filāṣṭīn, No. 67, 9 September 1911, p. 3. Also issues No. 68 and 69.
97 Filāṣṭīn, No. 84, 8 November 1911, p. 4.
98 Filāṣṭīn, No. 88, 22 November 1911, p. 3.
99 Filāṣṭīn, No. 92, 6 December 1911, p. 3.
100 For more on the Palestinian community in Chile, see BAWALSA, N. Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return Before 1948.
101 Filāṣṭīn, No. 131–30, 27 April 1912, p. 3.
newspaper did not have representatives in other locations in the south of the continent.\textsuperscript{102} Filasṭīn’s representative in Bayt Jālā, Iskandar Badr, was mentioned at the end of the second and third years. This is not surprising as Bayt Jālā with its large Christian community was one of the strongholds of the newspaper’s subscriptions.\textsuperscript{103} As the third year drew to a close, the editors made a significant move by outsourcing subscriber services in their hometown of Jaffa to ʻĪsā Afandī al-Safārī.\textsuperscript{104} This strategic decision may have been driven by the growing number of subscribers, allowing the editors to focus more on journalism. Furthermore, the same representative was tasked with overseeing the subscriber base in the nearby towns of al-Ludd and al-Ramla.\textsuperscript{105} In early 1914, al-Khawāja Rashīd ʻAyda assumed the role of Filasṭīn’s representative in the United States, where a substantial and increasingly organised Palestinian community was present, particularly in the cities of New York and Chicago.\textsuperscript{106}

Much less is known about the wukālā’ of other newspapers. Al-Quds had a representative, Yūsuf Ḥanānah Haṭā Allah al-Baytlaḥmī, in Pernambuco, Brazil, but he is only mentioned during the first year of the newspaper’s existence.\textsuperscript{107} Additionally, in a later period, Faḍl Afandī al-Barāmkī was reported as a wakīl who would travel throughout the mutaṣarrifiyya of Jerusalem to collect subscription fees.\textsuperscript{108} As for the texts in al-Karmal, they only mention representatives in the mutaṣarrifiyya of Acre, specifically in Nazareth (Kāmil Afandī Qaʻwar), Tiberias and Samakh (Sāmī Afandī al-Ţabarī).\textsuperscript{109} This would suggest a more regionally confined readerships of these newspapers within their respective districts, compared to the broader reach of Filasṭīn.

The situation was very different for the literary journal al-Nafā’is al-ʻAṣrīya, as it had a much broader readership among Arab communities globally, including in Europe, Africa and East Asia. Nevertheless, its geographic centres of

\textsuperscript{102} Filasṭīn, No. 194–93, 4 December 1912, p. 4. This appeal was reprinted in several other issues towards the end of the second year, namely issues 195, 197, 198, 200, 201, 202, 203.
\textsuperscript{103} Filasṭīn, No. 175–74, 28 September 1912, p. 3; Filasṭīn, No. 288–85, 12 October 1913, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{104} Filasṭīn, No. 294–91, 27 December 1913, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{105} Filasṭīn, No. 298–1, 14 January 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{106} Filasṭīn, No. 307–10, 14 February 1914, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{107} al-Quds, No. 34, 29 January 1909, p. 4. The same announcement was published in each of the following issues until No. 42.
\textsuperscript{108} al-Quds, No. 366, 21 October 1913, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{109} al-Karmal, No. 269, 24 September 1912, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{110} al-Karmal, No. 427, 8 May 1914, p. 2.
readership were the Middle East and the Americas. In the latter region, it had an expanding network of representatives. By August 1912, the journal had sixteen representatives in the Americas, with six in Argentina, five in the United States, three in Brasil, and one each in Canada and Chile. At that time the journal was rapidly expanding its network of representatives, since seven months earlier, in January 1912, it had only nine (four in Argentina, two each in the US and Brazil, and one in Canada). At the same time, Ḥabīb Afandī al-Khūrī al-Anṭākī became its representative in Egypt and Sudan. In the next year, Shukrī Afandī Khalīl al-Suwaydān became its representative in New England, Mexico and Cuba.

Conclusion

When examining the pre-WWI press market in Palestine chronologically, we can discern certain trends. Initially, Jerusalem was the epicentre of journalistic activities within the three Palestinian sanjaqs. Most of the press boom periodicals originated and were printed in this city. However, Haifa and, a little later, Jaffa began to emerge as significant players. As the initial bubble began to burst, those entering the field later on had the advantage of hindsight. They could learn from the missteps of their predecessors and acquire a deeper understanding of the requirements to establish, develop and maintain their enterprises. Moreover, there was a noticeable shift towards a higher journalistic standard, especially in Jaffa, marked by the founding of al-Taraqqī in mid-1909 and Filasṭīn in early 1911.

Gradually, the centre of gravity shifted from the interior to the coast. Economic factors played a significant role in this development. Both coastal centres of journalism, Haifa and Jaffa, were the economic powerhouses of their districts, experiencing demographic expansion, maintaining regular steamship connections to other Mediterranean cities and beyond, and being connected to the Palestinian (and, in the case of Haifa, also Syrian) interior by rail. Towards the end of the period, advertising by foreign companies emerged as another critical factor. Their advertisements generated increasing revenue for newspaper publishers, helping to establish their business on a more stable foundation.

However, this period witnessed not only a geographic shift, concentrating the most successful periodicals in two port cities, but also significant consolidation

---

111 *al-Nafā‘is al-‘Aṣrīya*, Vol. 4, No. 8, August 1912, page number not specified, but it is 2 pages after page 376, possibly on the back side of the book.
113 *al-Nafā‘is al-‘Aṣrīya*, Vol. 4, No. 8, August 1912, page number not specified, but it is 2 pages after page 376, possibly on the back side of the book.
in the press industry. This trend led to a shakeout in the print market, and by the end of that era, only two influential Arabic newspapers remained in circulation in Palestine: Filasṭīn in the south and al-Karmal in the north. As demonstrated in the case of Filasṭīn, its circulation steadily increased throughout its four years of existence. This growth was probably driven not only by the growing demand for information related to the international crises involving the Ottoman Empire but also by the continual disappearance of Arabic newspapers in the district of Jerusalem.

Despite the fact that the flourishing of journalistic activities in Late Ottoman Palestine lasted less than seven years, the major Arabic periodicals underwent a significant transformation. They successfully attracted readers from various parts of the world, with notable concentrations in Palestine, and the Americas. Moreover, periodicals such as Filasṭīn and al-NafāʿIs al-ʿAṣrīya, rivalled the circulation numbers of the most popular periodicals in the Levant. Over time, these publications diversified their sources of income, moving beyond subscription fees. They introduced single-copy sales and gained stable clients for advertisements, which had experienced considerable growth by 1914. After the Ottoman Empire entered World War I, most journalistic activities came to a halt in Palestine. Arabic newspapers were forcibly closed, and several journalists faced persecution. The transnational connections between Palestine and other regions where the diaspora communities resided were severed. Following the end of World War I, a new era emerged, as Palestine ceased to be a part of the Ottoman Empire. However, journalistic activities resumed with renewed enthusiasm. Established newspapers such as Filasṭīn and al-Karmal were revived, and numerous new publications emerged. Single-copy sales became a widespread practice, and the frequency of newspapers gradually increased, transitioning from twice-weekly to thrice-weekly and eventually evolving into daily publications by the late 1920s and early 1930s.

REFERENCES


