

The exodus of Macedonians in New World Countries (1880-1940)

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Abstract

During the second half of the 18th century, adverse political realities emerging from the Ottoman Rule, natural catastrophes, continuous warfare, insufficient cultivable land and absence of large urban centres compelled thousands of Macedonians to emigrate. Their primary destinations included the main commercial centres of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and Constantinople, the flourishing ports of South Russia, the trading centres of the Black Sea and the rich cities of Austria and Hungary. They built there their ethno-linguistic and religious outlets, amassed substantial wealth and several of them were proclaimed benefactors of their native lands. From the last quarter of the 19th century, Macedonian immigrants settled in the Americas; primarily the English-speaking U.S.A. and Canada and the Spanish-speaking Uruguay and Argentina. The Macedonian settlement in the Americas did not have the temporary character of the preceded European exodus: its main occupational patterns, its social mobility, its socio-economic organization and its acculturation process were determined by the fact that the host countries were immigrant countries themselves. Since 1924 Macedonian migrants discovered Australia and commenced their settlement initially in its vast countryside. As from 1935 they settled in the large urban centres building their regional ethno-specific brotherhoods and social networks and disseminating their national legacies.

The European exodus

During the eighteenth century the *Great Porte* allowed the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate and the officials of Phanarion, Constantinople (*Phanariotes*) to gain control and ecclesiastical supremacy equal to which they enjoyed during the Byzantine period, and began a process of Hellenization of Slavs of the upper zone of Macedonia (Tamis, 2013:22ff). Consequently, in the years that followed the Greek element flourished and impacted upon the area with the support of the Greek clergy and the affluence of its returning immigrants. The Christian masses of Macedonia adopted Greek cultural influences and gradually acquired a consciousness of a cultural Greek identity. Many Slavophone Macedonians sent their children to the Greek schools and fought alongside the other Hellenes against the Ottoman Empire, and later, throughout the nineteenth century, in all risings in Macedonia for the unification of Macedonia with the free Greek State.

Political insecurity created by the adverse political situation, economic instability caused by the restricted cultivable land, natural disasters, famine, the absence of large urban centres and the indifference of central government, the *Great Porte*, were the main reasons for the emigration of almost entire adult male population of certain regions of Macedonia as early as the 1500s. The immigration process was intensified during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Vakalopoulos, 1958:35ff) and became epidemic for the Macedonian and Epirotic populations, involving not only the profession of *mastoroi* (stone-masons) but a wide range of occupations. In certain regions of Western Macedonia (Florina, Kastoria and Kozani) the emigration assumed the character of an exodus *en mass*, transplanting almost entire villages to Moldavia, Vlachia, Transylvania and central Europe with particular settlement concentration in Austria-Hungary.

During the Ottoman period Macedonian emigrants (*gourbetchis*), mainly from Western Macedonia, had the tendency to emigrate annually or for a short period of time within the domains under the jurisdiction of the Sultan. Each region of Western Macedonia was assigned to a particular area of occupational activities and their emigrants were engaged almost exclusively within these defined assignments. Gourbetchis from Kozani district were engaged in skilful professions related to masonry, bakery and carpentry; Florinian and Kastorian emigrants were employed as market-gardeners, carpenters, timber cutters and day labourers. The emigrants were mainly men, between 16 and 40 years of age, who were usually accompanied by their male children. Estimates based on information from shipping companies and Consular estimates, indicate that most peasants who immigrated to the U.S. were Slavophone Macedonians involved with agriculture.

Nevertheless, economic and social developments in Macedonia, caused mainly by the impact of emigration, were strong during the centuries prior to its liberation from the Ottoman rule. This immigration, in its particular political context, was mainly responsible for the economic survival of the region, which became as we have noticed the centre for the competing national ideologies of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. The type, shape and various stages of emigration and its mechanisms, its political, socio-economic and cultural repercussions and the massive development of Macedonian Christian immigration to the European countries and to a lesser extent to the English speaking counties of the New World, during the Ottoman rule period were discussed and analysed by a comprehensive number of writers. More recent research attests that during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries thousands of Macedonians settled mainly in the wider region covering urban centres in the northern Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, including Asia Minor and the numerous cities around the Black Sea. The new research focuses on the settlement patterns, the socio-economic and political mobility, the type of integration and the shape of acculturation of Macedonian immigrants; emphasis is also placed on specific communities, for example the Greek colony and the National School of Hellenes in Vienna, the Macedonian communities in Rumania, and particular leading families, i.e. the families of Georgios Lassanis, Georgios Zaviras, Anastasios Michael and Vassilios Bakirtzoglou.

The pioneer immigrants originated from urbanised rural centres in western Macedonia, where lack of adequate land facilities and security forced them to seek employment in the

greater urban and commercial cities of the north-western parts of the Balkan Peninsula and central Europe, as early as the sixteenth century. The main sources of immigration apart from the wider Florina region, which was primarily Slavophone, were Siatista, Kleisoura, Selitsa, Pelka, Dolos, Pentalofos and the mountainous villages of Kastoria. Initially the immigrants moved towards the regions which were later to be named Serbia and Romania, where they established permanent settlements, forming this time small Greek townships and even small cities. For example, the city of Stambatch, close to Belgrade, was almost entirely comprised of Greek immigrants, with their own primary and secondary educational establishments for boys and girls (Natsinas, 1939:7). In Belgrade itself, by the turn of the nineteenth century, there was a strong Greek community, comprised of 109 families with a Greek Orthodox daily school administered by the Macedonian Greek headmaster, Demetrios Kleidis. In the same city the primate of the Orthodox Church was Metropolitan Dionysios, a Macedonian Hellene born in Servia of the Kozani district.

Following the collapse of the Greek War for Independence against the Ottomans in Macedonia (1821-1822), the waves of emigrants increased dramatically, especially towards the wealthy towns of the semi-independent Serbia. Oppression and widespread terrorism compelled many Macedonians to flee their native lands and to seek refuge in the cities of Serbia, including Nice, where a large concentration of Greek families from Siatista and Kleisoura settled permanently (Papandrianos, 1990:126). Macedonian Hellenes from Siatista, Pissoderi, Selitsa and Millovitsa, with commercial interests and fine artisans (mainly tanners, shoemakers and masons) settled in the Serbian city of Krakouyevatz in the 1820s. Significant Macedonian communities were formed by the mid-1850s in other smaller towns, including Kerouyevatz, Kozarevatz and Valiero (Papandrianos, 1993:126ff). The city of Zemoun (Semlin) was settled by Macedonian immigrants in the middle of the eighteenth century and quickly developed into an important commercial centre under the jurisdiction of the Hapsburg Empire (Tamis, 2012a:12ff). Western Macedonian Hellenes emigrated and some of them settled permanently establishing small clusters of colonies in the city of Novi Sad and the Croatian cities of Karlovac and Zagreb itself. Several of those immigrants rose within the socio-political hierarchy of these cities and stood out for their immense contribution to the economic life of their adopted countries. The emigrants travelled with the assistance of caravans which carried the commercial products of Macedonia, via Monaster and Skopje, to Belgrade, Zagreb and the Hungarian and Austrian cities.

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was a massive move of Macedonians, Slavophone as well as Grecophone, to Bulgaria, Romania, Constantinople and the annexed part of Greek Thessaly, assisted by the developing railroad network. Todorov (1983:372ff) estimated that in the late 1880s the number of immigrants from the Vilayet of Monaster was thirty thousand annually, whereas Schopoff, the Bulgarian travel agent, claimed that in the period between 1880 and 1900 some 200,000 Slav-speaking migrants from Macedonia had travelled to Homogloss Bulgaria in search of work and some of them had settled down in that country permanently; several thousands immigrated to Constantinople by the turn of the nineteenth century. Following the Turkish persecutions against the Macedonian community of Constantinople, many left for North America. The situation was aggravated drastically by the political instability that followed the Greco-Turkish War

of 1897 and by the irregular bandit activities of Greek and Bulgarian nationalist bands. The difficult financial conditions coupled with adverse political developments, exerted more pressure on the Christian population of Macedonia to emigrate. Bulgarian interference by the turn of the century became more apparent with their organised armed committees (the *Exarchists*) infiltrating and invading Ottoman territories and terrorising the local populations who remained loyal to Ecumenical Patriarchate (*Patriarchists*) and who had developed a certain Greek identity. This led to the *Macedonian Struggle* (1904-1908), a fierce warfare with irregular rebel activities between the members of the *Bulgarian Macedonian Komitaton* and the Greek *Ethniki Etaireia* (*National Society*). The Bulgarian objective was to proselytise the Slavophone communities in the Bulgarian Exarchate and thus form a Bulgarian national conscience, whereas the Greek bands attempted to protect the *Patriarchist* villages, or to bring those who became *Exarchists* back to their original loyalty.

The armed activities intensified in the Vilayets of Thessaloniki and Monaster and evidently affected immigration within the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. It was then that the possibility of immigrating to the United States became an adequate solution to the gradually deteriorating financial position of the Christian Macedonian population. As was the case in Australia in 1924, Florinian goubetchis were the first to settle in America between 1895 and 1901. The transatlantic immigration of Macedonian Christians increased sharply as a consequence of the *Ilinden* rising against the Ottoman rule in the summer of 1903 and in the apparent reprisals taken by the Turkish Army. In 1904 armed Bulgarian bands invaded Macedonia, attracting a reaction from the Greek bands manned by Slavophone and Grecophone pro-Patriarchist Christians. The constant warfare, particularly in the mountainous region of western Macedonia forced many from the Vilayet of Monaster to immigrate to the USA. The local people suffered numerous attacks on their villages, their houses ransacked by Bulgarian bands that were depending on them for financial support, food and accommodation. By the end of 1906, under pressure from the Bulgarian bands, approximately 7,000 Macedonian immigrants from the Vilayet of Monaster alone entered the U.S. and around 2,000 from the Vilayet of Thessaloniki. In 1907 another 2,500 from Monaster fled to America and some 7,000 from the other two Vilayets. Evidently, under the pressure of the Greek bands a great number of Exarchists from the district of Kavala and Serres were forced to immigrate to Bulgaria (Ferenczi, 1969:94).

The Transatlantic Exodus

Available archival and demographical data ascertain that Macedonian Hellenes commenced exiting Ottoman Macedonia to settle in the USA as early as 1840. According to the U.S. record figures for alien passengers arriving there were no passengers from Greece or Asian Turkey during the decade of 1820s. The first significant Greek community to develop was in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the 1850s. By 1866, the community was numerous and prosperous enough to have a Greek consulate and the first Greek Orthodox Church in the United States. During that period, most Greek immigrants to the New World came from Asia Minor and those Aegean Islands still under Ottoman rule. By 1890, there were almost 15,000 Greeks living in the U.S. Until then, the pace of exodus of Hellenes to USA and Australia remained almost negligent. This kind of expatriation was sporadic and incident-

stricken. Most of those exiting Hellas were curious fortune hunters, sailors and merchants. There was a surge of expatriation of islander Greeks during the 1850s to Australia as a direct result of the gold rush epidemic, which lasted for almost thirty years. Systematic emigration of Hellenes to USA and Australia commenced from Hellas in the early 1880s by means of chain migration.

According to Xenides (1922:38) Greeks began to arrive in the U.S. in great numbers in 1891. They were settlers mainly from Peloponnesus, especially from Tripolis but also from other areas of Greece including Macedonia and the wider Asia Minor. During the first twenty years of massive settlement (1890-1910), a total of 216,962 immigrating Hellenes in the U.S., most of them (88 per cent) unskilled common labourers, found as their destination the large industrial urban centres of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and the industrial urban centres of Massachusetts. There were amongst them less than five per cent skilled labourers and the rest were farm workers, farmers, servants and professionals. Upon their arrival their destination was defined by the type of immigration and trade. Most of them followed the pattern of chain immigration; they settled in communes with their relatives or sponsors, usually four or five families living under one household. In broad terms, they scattered in all States, including Alaska and Hawaii, where in 1910, there were nine and 13 settlers correspondingly. Xenides (1922:73), based on the preceding works of Fairchild (1911), Burgess (1913), and Canastas (1918), claims that the number of Hellenes “*varies between 300,000 and 500,000*” whilst according to the Massachusetts Bureau of Immigration the actual number was standing to 350,000, of which at least 95,000 were Macedonian Hellenes.

Hellene settlers managed by 1885 to build in the large urban centres of the two countries their own small business, mainly restaurants and cafés administered by family staff; some brought their trades from the old country: gobblers and stonemasons were employed immediately together with the miners, sponge-divers and timber cutters; some opened small bakeries, shoe repairs and shoe shine parlours, barber-shops, cigar and fruit stands, hair dressing saloons; several of them acted as peddlers selling fruits and food products and pool-rooms; fewer established their own importing and exporting businesses importing raisins and dry fruits from Greece. A couple of them were involved in the tobacco industry farming, producing and importing tobacco from Macedonia and Thrace via Egypt. Yet, there were also those who failed to become accustomed into their new environment; persisting racial attitudes, severe communication barriers and lack of proper employment compelled many pioneers to depart from the U.S. repatriating or seeking refuge to another Balkan or European city. For example, during the fiscal years 1908-1910, a total of 21,852 Hellenes left the U.S., most of them (89 per cent) unskilled common labourers, skilled workers (5 per cent) and the rest farm labourers, farmers, servants and people with no occupation. There were also 40 professional amongst them.

The pace of Greek immigration to USA accelerated after 1888 and the beginning of the 20th century. During the thirty years from 1880 to 1910 more than 260,000 Greeks settled in the USA and Canada, of whom approximately 70,000 were from Macedonia. During the same period approximately 5,000 Hellenes, mainly from the Aegean and Ionian islands set-

tled in Australia. Available written sources attest that Greek settlement created serious gender instability and socio-psychological hardships as only less than five per cent of the settlers were females – the fourth smallest after the Turks, the Bulgarians and the Chinese. During the period 1899 to 1910 the *US Bureau of Immigration* compiled data relative to immigrants by race or people as well as by country of birth or origin. This departure was necessitated by the fact that among immigrants from Southern and Eastern European countries as well as from Canada the country of birth did not afford a satisfactory clue to the actual racial or ethnical status of such migrants. This time, the number of those immigrants who identified as Turks was reduced to a mere 12,954 settlers, whilst nobody declared any race or people as “Macedonian”.

The number of Greeks from the non-emancipated Greek-speaking areas in European and Asian Turkey drastically increased in U.S. after 1908 as a result of the compulsory Turkish military service. Another cause of the emigration from Turkey was religious, due to the conflict between Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, the number of those identified with Greek ethnicity or ancestry was increased to 216,962 of whom only 10,656 or 4.9 per cent were females. Increasing number of Macedonian Hellenes began to arrive after 1870 as a result of the turbulent political climate created in the southern parts of the Balkans because of Bulgarian nationalism and their irredentist aggression in the region. It was a period of deep gloom and alarm. Moreover, it was a period of political instability and neglect. The country site was totally abandoned and infested with numerous gangs of bandits; the urban centres were without resources, infrastructure or employment. Thousand of Macedonian Hellenes remained anxious about their socio-economic welfare and not without reason. They were experiencing continuous warfare and insurrectionary attacks in Macedonia. The number of Greek settlers in the U.S. began increasing as from 1907 to an average of 17,162 settlers annually for the next ten years. This influx was apprehended after March 1921, when the American Congress passed a legislation restricting the number of immigrants entering the U.S. to a maximum of three per cent of the people from any given country. The new ceiling of migration entry allowed only 3,283 persons to be admitted from Greece. Furthermore, the application of the new law worked great hardships on those Greeks from Asia Minor fleeing persecution and oppression and seeking shelter in the United States, as a refuge for the oppressed and downtrodden. The applied restrictions in U.S.A. and the massive exodus of over one million Greeks from Asia Minor diverted the stream of emigration for the U.S. to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Macedonian peasantry mainly from the Florina and Kastoria districts began immigrating to Toronto and Richmond, large urban centres of Ontario, Canada, at approximately the same period as their fellow countrymen of Australia began to settle in the hinterland of Western Australia and Victoria. The occupational and settlement patterns, however, as we shall examine below were different. Macedonian immigrants in Canada, having spent some time in seasonal occupations in the cities and the countryside, settled permanently in Toronto, entering the restaurant and food industries. This mass immigration created a panic and the Ottoman authorities in 1909 were compelled to ban the exodus of all men under the age of thirty, while they persuaded the American immigration authorities to reject applications of prospective immigrants from Macedonia (Karpas, 1985:196). However, the

sophisticated ways of sending immigrants out to be employed by over thirty immigration agencies and travelling organizations who were involved with the immigration market in Macedonia kept the number of immigrants arriving to America high.

In most cases exorbitant commissions were claimed, increasing the fees for immigration to an amount of twelve British pounds, which represented the actual annual savings for an ordinary skilled labourer. This amount included the fees for their Piraeus-New York or Thessaloniki-New York tickets, usually eight British pounds, and the expenses for the issue of the passport and visa expenses which were paid to the American authorities. The French were the first to establish and operate their transatlantic shipping lines from Macedonia as early as 1898. Appointing agents in the main immigration centres of Florina, Kastoria, Kozani and Thessaloniki, they advertised excellent working conditions in the New Countries. These travelling networks claimed an average annual transportation of some 5,000 immigrants (Gounaris, 1989:142), while according to the records of the French *Transatlantique* from 1902 to 1907 this company sent away as many as 20,000. The profits from the immigration industry in Macedonia prompted other British and Italian shipping lines to join the venture. The British *Cunard White Star Line* entered the industry with a number of sub-agents in almost all major urban centres of Macedonia. The prospective immigrants were told by these cunning travel representatives, in the pages of the local newspapers, of comfortable trips through central Europe (Antwerp, Hamburg, Bremen), or France (Le Havre) or England (Glasgow, Liverpool), to New York or Canada. In 1915, the *Cunard White Star's* sub-agents in Thessaloniki, A. Papamosis and M. Tettos were advertising:

Macedonians!

Departing to America, do not forget to visit our agency. It is the oldest Macedonian agency. Most of you have travelled via our offices. Daily departures from Piraeus, Marseilles and by train to other European ports; with our colossal liners *Majestic*, *Berengaria*, *Aquitania*, *Olympic* and *Mauritania*.

There were no particular concentration centres for Macedonian immigrants in the U.S. or Canada. They were scattered from east to west of every state with trades which were more or less familiar from the old country. Their occupational patterns were, however, different from those of their compatriots twenty years later in Australia. Most tradesmen like shoemakers, carpenters and masons settled in the major urban American and Canadian centres, while unskilled labourers were popular as shop assistants, factory workers and seasonal labourers. Tanners, stone-masons and coal miners were in great demand and were paid enormous wages, sometimes six and seven times more than they could expect to earn in Macedonia. Only a few survived as market gardeners, timber cutters and farm labourers, the main occupations of their Australian counterparts. Those who were employed in the hinterland were occupied in the minefields because of the high risk factor involved and the consequent satisfactory wages.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, another large number of Macedonian immigrants moved to the countries of America Latina and in particular to Peru, Brazil and Ar-

gentina. These pioneer immigrants initially moved to Panama from North America and later on (1923) entered South America. The characteristic of their migration was the constant mobility in search of employment and their seasonal occupational patterns. Most of them settled in the large urban centres of Argentina, Uruguay and Peru and after WWII they arrived in larger number in Brazil. Several Macedonian Hellenes after amassing some wealth opened their own small business or commercial ventures; skilful migrants practiced the trades that they brought with them in Latin America. Available data attest that loads of Macedonian Hellenes in Argentina and Uruguay, although they had a distinguished presence as businessmen and community leaders, they did not set up any organized entity. In Buenos Ayres a fur industrialist from Siatista, Stephanos Tsingas, established his own fur and leather business and exported his goods in Europe and Russia. Tsingas also became the undisputed leader of the Greek Community of Buenos Ayres during the years 2004-2008. A significant number integrated into the local societies and their children soon were distinguished as high ranking government officials and politicians. For example, Siatistan brothers Ioannis, George and Christos Patsias settled in Lima, Peru; Demetrios Patsias studied geology in the State University of Peru and served for eight years as a conservative parliamentarian before becoming Minister of Mineral resources of Peru (Tamis, 2006:603ff).

In the more recent past, these factors encouraged by a vigorous and efficient travel agent network, both local and international as we shall see below, facilitated a more sophisticated migration, initially, from 1880 to the Americas and then from 1920 to Australia and New Zealand. The major difference between the Macedonian immigrants in the countries of Central Europe, Romania and the trading centres of the Black Sea, and those settled in the Americas and Oceania could be identified in the area of the mechanism of immigration. The former, after escaping financial indigence and terrorism in their native lands, were in fact returning immigrants. Their sojourn in their host countries was ephemeral and parochial, lasting usually for a short period of time. The latter were emigrating to settle permanently in the Americas and the Oceania regions. Some of them, having amassed a small fortune, repatriated and emerged as a new powerful social class in Macedonia. Once back, most of them settled down permanently, particularly after 1923. They were responsible for applying a new social order on the traditional peasant society, utilizing their experiences from the American and Australian phenomenon. Yet a substantial number of them, particularly those who returned only for the Balkan Wars, attempted to re-enter America during a period when its immigration authorities applied restrictions on immigration (1923). When Macedonian prospective immigrants found America's doors closed, they turned, with the assistance of the inventive, however mostly corrupt travel agents, to Australia.

The *padrone* or *patron* system imposed in the U.S., Canada and Australia from the middle of 1880s until the inception of government controlled migration, following the termination of WWII (Tamis, 2005:17ff), arguably has been detrimental for the welfare of underage and lack of English language impeded Greek and Macedonian Hellenes migrants. Thousand of migrants from the liberated kingdom and the rest of Hellas found themselves prisoners of this system of labour. Greek immigrants, who began to arrive in large numbers from the beginning of 1990 in the English speaking countries, found themselves prisoners of their patrons, who invited them from their native lands. The patrons were usually compatriots

or even relatives who acted as labour brokers, recruiting for large employers and then acted as overseers on the work site. In practice, many of them were like slave holders. In certain cases the padrone offered to pay the tickets of the migrant, in addition to lodge and boarding facilities, and then exploiting his age and his inability to communicate with the host authorities, he controlled his wages, contracts and even food supply. Underage and English language-impaired migrants under the padrone system were compelled to live generally under insanity conditions, to work long hours, without breaks from dawn to sunset.

The official reports of the U.S. Immigration Commissioner in 1911 clearly refer to the exploitation of underage Greek and Macedonian Hellenes immigrants by their patrons; numerous incidents of massive exploitation of immigrants from the entire Macedonian region, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia are reported to the American authorities, providing the names of the padrones and the victims, who “*do not even know that they are being sent to America as commercial ware and so are being exploited in Europe and also in the United States*”. Here is how another report describes the padrone system:

Among Macedonians the system for the most part affects peddlers of fruit and candies in many of the larger cities. Of the Bulgarians, Turks and Macedonians who are under the control of padrones, the majority are adults. Among the Greeks the padrone system is in operation in every city of the United States of over 10,000 populations, with few exceptions, and is confined in the main to shoe-shining establishments, although it is to a considerable extent prevalent among railroad labourers in the western States and among flower, fruit and vegetable vendors in Chicago. The aliens utilized by the system in peddling and in shoe shining are as a rule from 12 to 17 years of age, while those employed on railroad work are generally adults.

Greeks employed under the padrone system as flower vendors are few in number and are found principally in the city of New York. They are boys under 16 years of age, hired by florists and sent to park Row and other points in the city to sell flowers, principally old stock that cannot be sold at the stores...They usually live in basements or in filthy and unsanitary rooms; their quarters are sometimes located over stables in the same buildings in which are kept the horses and wagons used in the business...The bedrooms are small and poorly ventilated, and each is furnished with one or two beds; no sheets are used, no pillowcases and no pillows at times, but only rough, woollen blankets brought from Greece. These are seldom washed, and their odour is offensive owing to the filth and perspiration that permeate them. In these ill-smelling rooms occupants are crowded at the rate of two, three and sometimes four in one bed, with windows closed tight to permit no ventilation...The breakfast of the boys consists of black coffee and bread. With few exceptions they fast through the day until evening...

The Exodus to Terra Australis

Greek settlement to Australia commenced in 1829 with the arrival of seven patriots convicted of piracy against the British Navy, west of Crete in the Mediterranean. They were brought to Malta where they were condemned to imprisonment and were sent as convicts

to the colony of New South Wales (Gilchrist, 1988:2; Tamis, 2005:11). Then, a few years prior to the Balkan Wars (1912) a small number of stonemasons and peasants from the Balkan countries under Ottoman rule, mainly Greeks, Albanians and Bulgarians settled in Western Australia. Existing data attest the arrival of approximately thirty Bulgarian labourers and forty Albanians who struggled to survive carrying on various seasonal occupations. They were concentrated initially in North Perth and were employed as construction labourers. According to Charles Price (1963) there were approximately thirty Macedonians in Australia by 1921 and 1,900 by 1947. It is plausible to argue that the first Macedonians may have arrived in this continent before the turn of the nineteenth century, possible via America, France or Constantinople. However, extensive research could not identify the first recorded arrival prior to 1914; a group of five Macedonian Hellenes from Kastoria settled first in Far North Queensland working in the sugar cane plantation outside Innisfail; by 1917 these pioneer settlers, taking advantage of the scarcity of labour in the market, arrived in Darwin seeking high paid remuneration and were employed at the *Vesteys Meatworks*. This massive abattoir was built by the Vestey's brothers at Bullocky Point to supply meat for the Australian army; it was a period of immense labour shortage as a result of WWI. The Macedonian Hellenes clustered together with other thirty Hellenes, who had arrived from the south eastern states of Australia, close to the meatworks at a location which was appropriately named "*Thessaloniki*". Soon after, the interconnecting street adjoining the meatworks with the railway was named "*Thessaloniki Crossing*". By 1920, when the work at the *Vesteys Meatworks* began to decline as a result of a demand for outrageous wages and the interference of the NT Workers Union, there were approximately eighty Hellenes in Darwin.

In July, 1924, approximately 250 immigrants arrived from Greek Macedonia, particularly from the district of Florina, which then included the Kastoria district, and to a lesser extent the Kozani district to settle in Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide. From the Kastoria district, there were several immigrants of Slavic background who identified with the Bulgarian national ideology. They sought employment in the small businesses of the Bulgarian pioneer settlers in Perth, mainly in Barrack Street, where they were employed as building construction assistants. A smaller number of those Bulgarophile Macedoslavs worked as market gardeners in the district of Fulham, West Adelaide, where some were also employed in dairy farms in the Gippsland area of Victoria. In broad terms, Macedonians, irrespective of their ethnic or national origin, more or less retained their old occupations in the new country. As it had been already ascertained about Macedonian Greek settlement in Australia most of these settlers travelled in small groups in the hinterland carrying on whatever work they could find- clearing farms in Manjimup, cutting railway sleepers in Greenbushes and Bridgetown, and deforesting land north of Geraldton in Western Australia. Many settlers in the rural parts of Victoria close to the urban centres of Melbourne, Werribee and Geelong, as small farmers, gardeners and timber cutters. A wave of fifty Florinian Macedonians settled in South Australia, by means of chain immigration. Most of them seized the opportunity to work as market gardeners in the areas of Fulham Gardens and Flinders Park on the farms of Bulgarian settlers, consequently, some became an integral part of the Bulgarian community, establishing the Balkan Club in the late 1930s, as we shall see below.

A rather large number of Macedonian Hellenes settled in rural south West Australia carrying from the old country their vast experience as tobacco growers and labourers, whilst



several unskilled immigrants were employed as timber and sleeper cutters in central New South Wales (N.S.W.). As in most urban centres the employment of southern European migrants was opposed by union action; many Macedonians were forced to work in unhealthy jobs and carry heavy posts in the steelworks of Port Kembla and Newcastle and the smelters of Port Pirie. Most of them were Macedoslavs from Polypotamos, Poimeniko, Makrohori, Akritas, Skopia and Anno Kalliniki of north Western Macedonia. In 1928 another large wave of four hundred Macedonian immigrants arrived in Australia. The new settlers sought shelter in the business and small communes of the 1924 migrant intake. However, the con-

sequences of the Depression forced many of them to move to country areas of Victoria, N.S.W. and S.A. Living in pairs in small tents, they found scrub-clearing in a few towns of the Great Australian Bight and on the west coast of S.A., as well as timber-cutting in Crafton and areas of Coffs Harbour and Wauchope in central N.S.W. In most cases the settlement pattern involved groups of peasants from the same family and/or village creating small closely-knit, self-contained male clusters. These pioneer settlers were instrumental in bringing friends and relatives from the same village and creating larger concentrations in the urban centres.

From existing records, personal interviews and written sources, it is possible to ascertain that the first settlers to Australia from mainland Greece were the Macedonians. A stream of Macedonian settlement took place during the inter-war period and consisted mainly of immigrants from western Macedonia, particularly from the districts of Florina, Kastoria and Kozani. By contrast to the islander Hellenes, who moved into the food trades and small business, Macedonian Hellenes turned to farming-related occupations. During the first ten years of their settlement (1924-1934), almost eighty percent of them were dispersed in the countryside and bush. The few Macedonians left in the cities were stonemasons who were employed in the construction industry and some worked in the major ports of the country as dockside workers. A number of Macedonians became cane-cutters in Queensland, a few worked in the mines of N.S.W., particularly in the Broken Hill area and Coober Pedy. Most of these pioneer immigrants lived nomadically. Their life was monotonous and dull. On Sundays they looked after their tools, washed their clothes and bathed under very trying conditions. Sometimes they exchanged visits with compatriots, walking long distances to get to the nearest camp for *tavli* or a game of cards.

In Melbourne the Macedonians, irrespective of their Greek or Slavic origin, were often refused the opportunity to seek or to obtain work. Many immigrants, including southern Europeans particularly Yugoslavs, Albanians, Bulgarians, Italians and Hellenes, complained of discrimination and ill-treatment. Their protests are evident in statements to their honorary consuls as well as in the form of letters to their home governments and their press both locally and in their old country. They protested against the hostile attitude of the Australian press, the persecution and isolation of the southern Europeans, the denial of opportunity to seek or obtain work and the lack of consular protection. They also referred to the various cases of ill-treatment and assaults, as well as to the stoning incidents at Broken Hill on 16 December 1924 and Sydney in October 1924 when the victims were Greek, Italian, Yugoslav, Bulgarians and Albanian immigrants (Tamis, 1994:108-109).

The arrival of the first wave of Macedonian Hellenes in 1924 coincides with the Australian Government's application of its second control on the immigration and settlement of southern Europeans. The first restrictions had been imposed on Greek and Maltese immigration by means of prohibiting their entry completely, on the eve of the Australian Government's Referendum for conscription for military service overseas in 1916. This was a result, perhaps, of the public outcry that the government was importing cheap labour against Australians fighting on the European fronts. British, native-born and naturalized Australians were protesting that southern Europeans were undermining the Australian

quality of life and thus lowering the living standards. Following the wartime embargo on Greek immigrants entering the country (1916-1919), the Australian Government applied quota restrictions during the immediate post-war period. By the year 1924 only 1,200 new settlers a year from Greece were allowed into the country and it was mandatory for them to produce 40 pounds landing money to meet the initial basic settlement costs and the possibility of temporary unemployment, without burdening the already weakened economy of the country. However, the latter restriction became the subject of manipulation by many southern Europeans entering the country. In certain cases faked certificates were issued, at the cost of 1.10 pounds by Greek travel agents:

“My Greek informant tells me in confidence that a way in which the difficulty of showing 40 pounds Landing Money is overcome is by the production of a Bank Draft, usually in London, for the face values of 40 pounds. He states that Agents in Greece issue Drafts to prospective migrants on payment of a fee ranging from one to ten pounds, and that the said drafts are of no monetary value.”

(Inspector A.D. MacLennan's Report, Perth Investigation Branch, Attorney-General's department, *Australian National Archives*, ACT A367, *Dardalis Archives*)

By 1927, the Australian Commonwealth imposed the anti-migrational *Landing Money* obligation, requiring each prospective migrant to present 40 pounds on arrival in addition to other restrictive mechanisms introduced by the States. Immigrants from Macedonia mortgaged their family properties in their old country in order to secure the appropriate bank draft of 40 pounds. In certain instances the difficulty of showing the 40 pound *Landing Money* was overcome by travel agents in Greece who issued drafts of no monetary value to prospective migrants on payment of a fee ranging from one to ten pounds. In November 1927, the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board, acting on a decree issued by the Ministry of Labour, ceased to advance money for clearing or other improvements on holdings to farmers and employers generally, unless the work was done by Australia-born citizens or naturalised British subjects. Exceptions were granted only in isolated instances and when it was adequately proven that British labour was not available. In December 1924, the eighth Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce (1883-1967), announced as a policy that the number of Greeks, Macedonian Hellenes and Yugoslavs immigrants for Australia will be kept at a maximum of 100 per month. Access to employment was a constant problem. The fact that most Macedonian Hellenes were not naturalized excluded them not only from the public sector but also from business supported by the Industries Assistance board in all States. Certain Macedonians were disqualified from working in the mines by the mining wardens when they were found to be unfamiliar with mining terms. Labour unions objected to the employment of foreigners “*whose ignorance of English precluded even the barest interchange of messages and in certain trades this disability was an absolute bar to their employment*”.

The ostensible reason for this embargo was to protect the interests of British labour against the foreigners. The restrictions which the Government placed on settlers receiving state assistance were intended in addition to preventing price cutting to the detriment of

British labour. It was, however, generally recognized that clearing was performed more efficiently and in a shorter time by the Southern Europeans than by the British. The official policy of the Government regarding southern Europeans, including Macedonian Hellenes, was clearly restated by the Premier of Western Australia, P. Collier, who, speaking at the Primary Producers' Conference in August 1928, claimed it was fair to give Australian and British migrants preference in the selection of land, in the clearing of that land and in other necessary development works. Three years earlier (1925) the Victorian-born Premier of South Australia, John Gunn (1884-1959) protested against so many foreigners entering the Commonwealth. The *Soldiers' Fathers' Association* reminded the employers and the Commonwealth Government that they "*resent the insult offered to Australia's 59,330 dead soldiers sons by the Commonwealth Government filling their places with Jugoslavs, Italians, Greeks, Macedonians and other Mediterranean races now migrating to Australia.*"

The restriction of the 40 pounds Landing Money was considered to be a farce also by WA authorities "as the same money was sent back to Italy for the next migrant". Certain Macedonian immigrants were met by their respective community agencies and compatriots at the docks at Fremantle and were sent directly to jobs in the south-west part of the State where they were employed as timber-cutters and gardeners. The restrictions applied during the years 1924-1929 were followed again by the complete prohibition of entry to all southern Europeans by the labour Government which took office in 1929. Only close relatives and dependants for family reunion purposes and prospective foreign business were admitted. The embargo policies on southern Europeans in effect continued well after the downfall of the Labour Government in 1932 and its succession by the Joseph Lyons Government, which even imposed a land money restriction of 500 pounds until 1936.

Macedonian Hellenes upon their arrival in Western Australia sought refuge in the country areas during the period of the Australian Depression period (1922-1935), since the problem of unemployment was more acute in Perth and in Sydney. During the 1930s, in Perth tens of starving unemployed Macedonians, Greek and Slavs, had been trapped destitute, seeking the assistance of the State to be sent back home. In a plea published in Perth's mainstream papers, their representatives publicly outlined that they were deceived by travel agencies under false pretences to migrate to Australia and were left to starve without any support of employment:

"Many of us were induced to immigrate under false pretences, the conditions prevailing having been grossly exaggerated. When restrictions were placed upon the entry of our nationals into America, immigration harpies, finding their sources of income menaced, inciting us to emigrate to Australia, by telling us that we could get wages there at the rate of one or two pounds per day, and that living was cheap, just like it was in our country. And to get us into their clutches more tightly, they offered such inducements as the advance of the passage money and landing fees. For these advances we had to promise reimbursement, paying interest, also, at the rate of 50 and even, sometimes, 100 per cent...

As a result of the crisis, we find ourselves in deplorable conditions. No money, no food, no clothes and no beds! Although we are registered at the Government Labor Bureau there are

not any jobs for us, and because we were not born under the Union Jack we cannot obtain employment relief. The consular representative has no funds at his disposal to aid us. We have been sober, honest and industrious citizens. By hard tool we have earned hundreds of pounds in the quarries, as sleeper-cutters and in the farming industry. But much of this money has not been paid us. Only recently some of us came down to Perth from Yandanooka, having had to leave behind 700 pounds, which we cannot collect. We would willingly give the right to the federal Government to collect this money, if they would repatriate us and supply us with the necessaries of life until such time as we leave Australia. Hundreds of us are starving and we want to go away. Please help us, in our dire need, to obtain what is only a human right.”

Isolated from government institutions they turned for assistance mainly to islander Hellenes, who were involved in the tobacco and timber cutting industry, relatives and compatriots and the *Salvation Army*. Furthermore, the insecurity of employment for those who were in the city of Melbourne led most Macedonians to move to the country areas on foot. The settlers from Kastoria and Florina were occupied largely with wood chipping and market gardening; many cut sleepers for the railways and most of them leased large farms, in the areas of Werribee, Gippsland and Shepparton. By contrast, the immigrants from Kozani, following the chain immigration system, remained in Melbourne and the large urban centres and were employed in shops owned by islander Hellenes. A large number of them, in the 1930s, were self-employed, selling fish and fruit on carts to their customers in the various suburbs. During the years 1928-1931, Macedonian Hellenes in Melbourne were forced to increase membership of their communes to survive the severe economic crisis. Many considered it an insult to accept charity such as common meals or to be taken in by the *Salvation Army*. In 1928 certain sections of the society, unions, Labour press, RSL branches, timber workers and parliamentarians were applying strong pressure on the State governments to prohibit the entry of southern Europeans. The WA government of Philip Collier was particularly hostile:

“...The solution of the problem of immigration of Southern Europeans to Australia lay in their total exclusion. The only other alternative was to admit those races on a quota system which would maintain the predominance of the British stock. If they were lawfully admitted, they should not be prevented by statutes from earning a living. They should be employed in work for which they were most suited. The majority of the Italian immigrants were accustomed to farm work, and they should be employed in the clearing of millions of acres of land which had to be opened up in this state. If they opened business in town they could generally undersell the Australian, who was accustomed to a higher standard of living...”

(J. Cornell's M.L.C. speech in the Fremantle *RSL* Branch, 16 August 1928, West Australia, p. 28)

When sufficient financial conditions prevailed in 1936 and the apparent outcry on the part of the British and native-born Australian eased, the Lyons Government relaxed the heavy restrictions on southern European immigration by reducing the 500 pound to 200 pound

and by allowing prospective immigrants with 50 pounds of their own to enter the country and be employed in occupations where vacancies existed (Price, 1963:93). Although the restrictions reduced the number of Greek islanders, they did not affect the number of Macedonian Hellenes, particularly in Western Australia and Victoria, during the period 1924-1929.

During the first half of the 20th century Macedonian Hellenes canvassed serious socio-psychological problems living mainly as bachelors; the scarcity of Greek women was augmented by the fact that mainstream social perceptions were against inter-ethnic marriages with southern Europeans. As a matter of fact it was unacceptable for a local girl to marry a Greek settler. Unmarried Macedonian Hellenes were not socially accepted by the broader Anglo-Celtic majority, and mainly Anglo-Australians, particularly in the small rural centres, considered any in-law engagement with a Greek or even a de facto relation as a social stigma. On the other hand the Macedonian Hellenic family, being strongly male centric during these years, did not allow initiatives and innovative activities by their female children. It was, therefore, inconceivable for young female Macedonians to marry outside the broader Greek community. The situation, however, changed by 1982, when the percentage of marriages outside the Greek family surpassed 30 percent, with the exception of the Greek community in Darwin, where intra-communal marriage rate was almost 92 percent. During the first fifty years of settlement, family events such as weddings and baptisms, even simple name-days, included the whole rural settlement, with relatives and people from the same home country village coming from long distances, even interstate. The first marriages involving Macedonian Hellenes began to appear after 1939, increasing thereafter.

In the 1890s and 1900s mining, fruit and grocery distributing businesses, and restaurant operations began to replace farming and sugarcane labouring as the main occupations among Greek immigrants. Sydney and Melbourne were the main centres for these employments. With the arrival of Macedonian Hellenes the occupational patterns changed. Most islander Greeks pursued commercial and industrial employments, whereas Macedonian Hellenes sought to work as market gardeners close to the metropolitan centres or as farmhands and timber-cutters. This was because the islander Greeks became urbanized more rapidly than the Macedonian Greeks. The urbanisation of the Macedonian Hellenes commenced only after 1936 for those involved in the mining, farming and railroad construction projects. The occupational structure of Macedonian Hellenes underwent another severe change after 1946 when they brought their families from Greece. Timber-cutting declined sharply due to restrictive government policies in the late 1930s, whereas market gardening experienced a steady growth, primarily because of the lack of objection by other non-British producers of vegetables- mainly Chinese and Italians.

Macedonian Greek immigration was influenced immensely by the fact that it was based on kinship, family values and loyalties. Pioneer immigrants had no choice but to follow the settlement and occupational patterns selected by the senior members of the family, to follow professions that had been followed by the pioneer settlers of their family and to safeguard the customs and tradition of their village of origin. Many young Macedonian Hellenes in Australia remained unmarried out of family obligations towards their single sisters that

they left in the old country; some decided to marry in order to provide a family environment and to look after their elderly parents. The formation of crowded communes in farmhouses and houses in the inner suburban areas of Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Newcastle and Adelaide (1924-1968) whereby single young men or families of the same kinship or compatriots shared common facilities must be seen across these lines. Companionship, security, financial advancement and easy access to accommodation were the advantages of the communal system. The main concerns of the pre-war Macedonian Hellenes were for their children to maintain loyalty to the village's customs and values, not to marry outside the ethnic group and to maintain the mother tongue.

Macedonian Hellenes working as gold-miners, sugar and timber-cutters, farm-clearing labourers and market gardeners survived the hostile conditions, the anti-foreign restrictive legislations and labour union bans and came in the 1930s with a readiness to be accommodated within the broader Australian society. During the first twenty-five years of their settlement in Australia (1924-1949), they avoided entering into direct competition and conflict with the Australian public, selecting professions and occupations which were not broadly accepted by the Anglo-Australians. However, they could not avoid the anti-foreign feeling that flared up in the country, following a sharp increase of Asian and southern Europeans immigrants settling in Australia.

Anglo Australians viewed the situation with a degree of prejudice which was inflated by the fear that Australia would be flooded with Asians and southern Europeans as a result of the restrictive immigration policies of the U.S. Available data indicate that the total number of Macedonian immigrants, irrespective of their ethnic orientation, who arrived in Australia in 1924 to 1,700, as against 4,000 southern Italians and about 88,000 British. Yet, their arrival generated a fierce press campaign against the "invasion" of non-British immigrants, involving the labour unions, the *Returned Servicemen's League (R.S.L)*, Church groups and political parties. After 1935, assisted by the islander Greeks in the capital cities and with the implementation of more liberal immigration rules by the Joseph Lyons Commonwealth Government, many Macedonian Hellenes changed their occupational patterns and their style or residence in the bush, settling in the large urban centres. Some were urbanized partly to survive certain discriminatory laws against them; several, partly as a reaction to the unfamiliar British-oriented Australian environment; finally, a larger section in order to accommodate more productively their experiences from the old country. A number of Macedonian Hellenic organizations sprang up in the 1930s not only as a result of the prevailing conditions but also because of the parochialism which characterised the Greek community of the time and the lack of their acceptance by the islander Greeks in their club rooms. A few associations emerged also to counterbalance the increasing presence of Bulgarophile Macedoslav groups in Perth and Melbourne. The struggle for an identity began.

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