

E. Mills, B.A., O.B.E. Assistant Chief Secretary, CENSUS OF PALESTINE 1931, VOLUME I, REPORT Page references are to Vol. I of the report; when the term Subsidiary Table is used, it refers to Volume II, and the tables of the census contained in that volume.

These are summaries of the Census which will enable a better understanding of Palestine's population in 1931 and the changes enumerated since the first census was done in 1922.

POPULATION –GENERAL

The population enumerated as at midnight on the 18th of November, 1931, consisted of 1,035,821 persons, including, 66,553 Bedouin. For the enumeration of the census the total used excludes the Bedouin since they did not respond to the census takers. (p.18) Thus the settled population of Palestine totalled 969,268 persons (491,258 males and 478,010 females.

There were 693,159 Moslems, 174,610 Jews, 91,398 Christians, and 10,101 others.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Regarding Palestine as a whole, 41 percent of the population resides in towns and 59 percent in villages.

The statistics by religious confession for the total population show interesting variations. In Palestine as a whole 25 percent of the Moslems live in towns, so that at least three quarters of the Moslem population follow rural occupations; 74 percent of the Jews live in towns and 76 percent of the Christians, so that only about one quarter of each of these communities can be assigned to the rural populations. The Northern district shows considerably higher proportions of rural population for all communities, 59 percent of the Jews living in towns, 64 percent of the Christians and 21 percent of the Moslems. (p.27)

In order to interpret these statistics it is well to keep in mind the main causes affecting the movement of population in the natural divisions. Broadly speaking, changes in the maritime Plain are due to natural increase and immigration: changes in the central Range are due to natural increase, immigration being a negligible feature except in Jerusalem Town; changes in Esdraelon and Emek are due to natural increase and immigration: changes in Galilee are due to natural increase and additions to populations by transfer from Syria.

In 1922 the rural population of the Maritime Plain was 31 percent of the total rural population: in 1931 it was 37 percent. The Central Range accommodated nearly 37 percent of the rural population in 1922, and in 1931 nearly 36 percent. On the other side, the rural population of the Maritime Plain increased during the intercensal period by

nearly 52 percent, while that of the Central Range by less than 25 percent. Now the rural population of the Central Range is to all intents and purposes Arab, mostly Moslem but in very small part Christian, and, if there were no cause of change other than natural increase, there is a legitimate expectation of an increase of about 28 percent during the intercensal period. Since the increase in the Central Range is only 25 percent, the inference may be drawn that emigration from the Central Range has taken place. Further evidence supporting this conclusion is given by the change in sex proportions. The following table illustrates the point: -

Number of females per 1,000 males, 1931

\	1931	1922
Moslems	968	958
Central Range	1017	989

The fact that the number of females now exceeds the number of males in the Central Range, while there has been a marked deficiency in females in the settled Moslem population throughout the period, points to the emigration of males.

Now, it is known that there is Christian emigration from Ramallah and Bethlehem to other countries; this emigration is of importance to the very small populations from which the emigrants are drawn, but is insignificant in relation to the total population of the Central Range (373,000 persons). It is also known that the number of Moslem emigrants is so small as to be negligible. Consequently it may be concluded that emigration from the Central Range is almost entirely to other parts of Palestine. The relatively small intercensal increase in Esdraelon and Emek (19.6 percent) rules out, in all probability, the possibility of significant movement from the Central Range to that natural division; the increase in Galilee is about the same as that of the natural population if allowance be made for the increase due to transfer of population from Syria; it follows that the emigration from the Central Range is towards the Maritime Plain. This is in complete obedience to economic laws: development attracts productive labor from areas where development is not anticipated, or where livelihood is stationary.

The movement from the Central Range is, of course, in part due to the increasing density of population. In 1922 there were in this division 41 persons per square kilometer, in 1931 the number had risen to 51; but the density in the Maritime Plain had increased during the same period from 52 to 78 persons per square kilometer. That is, in the former case the density had increased by 25 percent, and in the latter by 50 percent. No doubt the soil of the Maritime Plain is more fruitful or fructifiable than that of the

Central Range; it has also been shown that the proportion of cultivable land is very much greater in the Maritime Plain than in the Central Range; but these features are also features of Esdraelon and Emek, where the increase in density per square kilometer is not as high as 25 percent. It is, therefore, legitimate to infer that development is the main attraction of emigration from the Central Range, and that the closer “packing” of the population in the Maritime Plain, so far from driving people away either from Palestine or to the other parts of Palestine, has had the effect of attracting people from the hill country and so relieving the population and soil pressures in that area. (p.50-51)

General Concluding Observation

In so far as growth of population is a measure of prosperity the past decade is witness to the effects of British administration on a population depressed by the lack of initiative characteristic of the pre-war Ottoman Empire. That this depression had not devitalized the people is clear from the remarkable natural increase of the population. That this remarkable increase is concomitant with an increase due to an effective immigration from outside Palestine is perhaps an indication that the two movements are not uncorrelated. This immigration itself stimulates production and a more effective utilization of natural resources so that a larger population may be supported; and associated with this immigration is an import of valuable commodity by means of which the population as a whole has enlarged its capacity of purchase, and consequently, it prospects of supporting its own growth. On the other side, the experience of the world shows that this process is not capable of indefinite extension in time; and, within a future that is measurable, there will be required in Palestine a much greater rate of growth of production, and a much more intense utilization of natural resources combined with invisible import of value if the present dual process in the growth of the population is to continue. (p.52)

Religious distribution

The following table shows the distribution by main religious confessions of the population of Palestine in 1931 and 1922 together with the variation in each religious confession during the intercensal period: -

Religious Confession				Number percent in		Increase percent
				<u>1931</u>	<u>1922</u>	<u>1922-1931</u>
Moslems	...	...	...	73.34	78.04	28.6
Jews	...	...	...	16.86	11.07	108.4
Christians	...	...	...	8.82	9.64	25.2
Other confessions	...	...	...	0.98	1.25	0.7

As to be expected, the increase in the Jewish community during the years 1922-1931 has augmented the proportion of Jews in the total population in such degree that the proportions of all other religious communities have diminished. . The changes in

distribution since 1922 are most marked in the Southern district where the Jewish proportion has increased from nearly 11 percent to nearly 22 percent, that is, has been doubled.

THE MOSLEMS

The Moslems number 759,712 persons of whom 4,100 are Shi'as. That is to say that the great majority of the Moslems of Palestine are orthodox – Sunnis, so-called because they observe the Sunnahs, that is, precedents or traditions. The Druzes in Palestine number 9,148 persons: but the total Druze population must be about 120,000 persons so that the Druze population in Palestine is only a small fraction of the polity identified as Druze in its “national” – religious aspect. p.85)

During the years 1922-1931, the Jews increased from 83,794 persons to 174,610 persons and now form nearly 17 percent of the population of Palestine. (p.85)

Age Distribution by comparisons and religion – General

The following table and Subsidiary Table No. III give the proportional age distributions in quinquennial age-periods for Palestine as a whole, the three districts, the three main religious confessions.. p. 125)

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE OF POPULATION OF PALESTINE BY LOCALITY AND RELIGIOUS CONFESSION.

MALES

AGE	DISTRICT				RELIGION				ratios M:J
	Palestine	Southern District	Jerusalem District	Northern District	Moslems	Jews	Christians	Others	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
All ages	491,258	155,983	128,536	206,739	352,172	88,100	45,896	5,090	4.5:1
0-5	86,014	27,463	22,531	36,020	66,483	12,044	6,607	880	6:1
5-10	70,470	21,623	19,129	29,718	53,510	10,259	6,029	572	5:1
10-15	42,879	12,568	11,784	18,527	31,817	6,787	3,783	495	5:1
15-20	33,570	10,201	9,119	14,250	22,829	6,568	3,891	282	3.5:1
20-25	44,305	13,994	11,178	19,133	28,262	9,775	5,915	378	3:1
25-30	46,566	15,036	10,949	20,581	30,534	11,241	4,299	492	3:1
30-35	35,757	11,911	8,506	15,340	23,440	8,741	3,177	399	4:1
35-40	30,480	9,850	7,421	13,209	22,194	5,364	2,611	311	4.5:1
40-45	22,973	7,450	6,008	9,515	16,759	3,985	1,960	259	4:1
45-50	18,909	6,983	4,837	7,989	14,181	2,812	1,706	210	7:1
50-55	16,777	5,686	4,416	6,676	12,156	2,796	1,662	163	6:1
55-60	10,127	3,428	2,822	3,876	6,756	2,097	1,137	137	

60-65	11,837	3,930	3,433	4,474	8,427	2,164	1,119	127	
65-70	6,411	2,043	1,963	2,505	4,383	1,,303	733	92	
70-75	6,256	2,103	1,945	2,208	4,406	1,147	626	77	
75 -	7,541	2,420	2,462	2,659	5,961	834	631	115	
Not record ed	286	194	33	59	67	208	10	1	

The Jewish population just after the war was estimated to be about 56,000, less than one third of the enumerated population in 1931. The interesting feature of the sex distributions is the remarkable parallelism generally manifest throughout life between the proportions of males and females at each age to males and females at all ages respectively. As at present composed the Jewish community is remarkably well balanced in the association of age and sex. The proportion of females in the pre-nubile years is slightly less than the similar proportion of males; in the early reproductive years that proportion is slightly greater up to the age of 25 years and is met by the slightly greater proportion of males between the ages of 25 years and 42 years. This is an interesting distribution making for that form of sociological harmony which may be expected when biological needs are so naturally satisfied by conditions of age. Govern favorable economic circumstances, the Jewish community, composed by age and sex as it is at present, is almost ideally constructed to fulfill social purposes. The main features of the Jewish distributions are the comparatively great deficiency in children of early ages and the emphatic excesses in the immigration period from the ages of 15 years to 35 years.

Literacy- Only one fourth of the male and less than one thirtieth of the female Moslem population have been returned as literate: over 90 percent of the Jewish males and nearly 80 percent of the Jewish females have been returned as literate: the proportions for the Christians are about 90 percent for the males and rather more than two fifths for the females: while for the Druzes the proportions are about one third for the males and one tenth for the females.

Literacy per thousand

Age in Year s	Literate per thousand														
	All religions			Moslems			Jews			Christians			Others		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
5 & over	309	404	211	135	234	32	834	903	765	555	683	427	199	343	101
7 & over	326	428	221	144	251	33	861	934	787	577	715	441	233	362	104

It has already been recorded that the proportion of literacy in Palestine is highest among the Jews, of the males of whom 93 percent are literate, and of the females 79 percent.

The Moslem population is four times the Jewish population while the number of illiterates among Moslems is thirteen times the number of illiterates among Jews. The correlation between Moslem literacy and age reveals that the largest proportion of literates is in the age group 7 – 14 years. The British Occupation had lasted thirteen years by the time of the census so that, for all practical purposes, the surviving population aged 14 – 21 years was born either in the years of the war or in the four years preceding it. The fact that the proportion of literates is higher in the age group 7 – 14 years than in the group 14 – 21 years is an indication that progress has been made in granting educational facilities since the war, since the decline in literacy with advancing years is not likely to be emphatic between the ages of 14 and 21 years. This improvement is more marked in the rural population for males and in the urban population for females, although, in the case of girls, allowance must be made for a concentration in the towns due to residential institutions in which education is given to girls from various parts of the country. The proportion of literacy is a minimum in the age group 21 years and over indicating clearly a lack of educational facilities for the population born before the war, and also a probable decline of literacy with advancing years.

Taking the population aged 7 years and over, only 23 percent of the Moslem males and 3 – 4 percent of the Moslem females have attended school. The similar proportions for Jews and Christians are 88 percent and 75 percent for Jews, and 66 percent and 42 percent for Christians. In both the Jewish and the Christian communities the highest proportion of education at school is found in the age group 14 -21 years, while in the Moslem community the maximum proportion is in the age group 7 -14 years.

The following table shows the distribution per thousand who have attended school for

stated periods of years: -

NUMBER PER 1,000 WHO HAVE ATTENDED SCHOOL FOR CERTAIN PERIODS OF YEARS.

Years at School	Moslems		Jews		Christians	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
All ages	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
0 – 4	655	651	181	262	387	454
5 – 8	275	297	422	466	349	373
9 – 12	56	49	277	216	215	145
13 and over	14	3	120	56	49	28

There are several interesting features in this table. Two thirds of the Moslems who have attended school have so attended for less than five years only; and 1.4 percent of the males and 0.3 percent of the females have attended for 13 years or more. Of the Christian population, two thirds of those who have attended school have attended for at least five years. This proportion is a little higher than the true proportion by reason of the fact that European Christian males living the conventual life have been returned as engaged in study for most of their lives. In the Jewish community about 80 percent of those who have attended school have done so for at least five years.

OCCUPATIONS

Agriculture supports 64 percent of the Moslem population, 15 percent of the Jews, and nearly 18 percent of the Christians. The Moslem community is, therefore, the agricultural community, the proportion engaged in agriculture in the other two communities being far below the general proportion for the country as a whole. Indeed, Subsidiary Table No. VIII shows that 90 percent are Jews and not quite 3.5 percent are Christians. The proportion of Moslems supported by industry is not quite 10 percent; of Jews, is 29 percent; and, of Christians, is 25 percent. Of the industrial population, 46 percent are Moslems, 37 percent are Jews, and 16.5 percent are Christians.

Commerce supports 13 percent of the Moslems, 22 percent of the Jews, and not quite 19 percent of the Christians. Of the population supported by trade, nearly 59 percent are Moslems, 30 percent are Jews, and just over 11 percent are Christians; while, of the population supported by occupations in transport, not quite 69 percent are Moslems, 19 percent are Jews, and 12 percent are Christians.

Professional occupations support 1.5 percent of the Moslems, 10 percent of the Jews, and not quite 8.5 percent of the Christians. Of the professional population, not quite 29 percent are Moslems, rather more than 49 percent are Jews, and nearly 22 percent are Christians.

Thus, the Moslem population is emphatically an agricultural population, more than half the Jewish population is supported by trade and commerce, less than one-sixth being supported by agriculture; over one-sixth of the Christian population is supported by agriculture, and rather more than two-fifths by trade and commerce. p. 284

No analysis of village occupations has been attempted. It seems to be the fact that, many years before the Great War, the dependence of each village upon itself for the requirements of life had broken down, so that, at the present day, there are few, if any, villages in which the populations provide entirely for themselves by means of their own labor. The importation of machine-made cloth, paraffin oil and other western commodities have, on the whole, made the lives of village artisans and craftsmen unprofitable. Attempts are being made to revive village crafts and industries, but, generally speaking the oriental sees no good reason why he should not, in common with the rest of the world, benefit from the developed resources of western countries; and it is only in comparatively few localities that village crafts are still maintained, not so much for the consumption of the finished products by the people of the country as for sale to the considerable number of visitors to the country during the winter and spring seasons.

The rapid growth of easy communications in Palestine has, undoubtedly facilitated an evolutionary process that has been manifested in all countries that have responded to the influences of the industrial and commercial organizations of the world. p. 284 (par. 251)

From Subsidiary Table No. 8 it appears that of every hundred of the settled population 29 have been returned as earners and 71 as dependants (working and non-working together). The table given above adjusts these proportions to the main categories of occupations in the whole country, the three districts and the three main religions. The Jerusalem district returns the highest number of dependants to earners in agricultural occupations; the Northern district in industrial occupations; and the Jerusalem district in all other occupations. The dependants to one Moslem earner in agriculture; not quite three dependants to one earner among the Christians; and just over one Jewish dependant to one Jewish earner engaged in agricultural occupations. The figures in the remaining columns show that Moslem earners support the largest number of dependants, the greatest disparities being shown always by the Jews particularly in the professional occupations. The general correspondence between the average rural Arab household and the economic familial Arab unit has already been noticed in Chapter I (Distribution population)¹. No such correspondence holds for Jewish households, and the explanation is to be found in one or both of the following reasons: -

- (ii) There are relatively fewer child dependants in Jewish households; and
- (ii) A relatively greater number of the members of Jewish households are earners, in the sense that, while they are not independent of the household for their subsistence, they augment the family income, and so enable the household to maintain a better standard of life than would otherwise be possible. p. 285

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CLASS I. – PRODUCTION OF RAW MATERIALS

As has already been pointed out Palestine is dominantly an agricultural country. Over 440,000 persons are supported by ordinary cultivation of whom 108,765 are earners and 331,319 are dependants. Of the earners 5,311 derive their livelihood from the rents of agricultural land, 63,190 persons cultivating their own land in whole or in part or

¹ Approximately,

-10 Arab households = 45 Arabs persons of both sex
= 11 earners and 34 dependants – E.M.

cultivating lands which they hold as tenants.²²

It is impossible to distinguish between cultivating and non-cultivating land owners; and between landlords who only receive rent, that is, who are land owners, and landlords who both pay and receive rent, that is, who are tenants from a land owner and who have sub-let their tenancies to third parties. By far the greatest number of rent-receivers are Moslems, for out of the total number of 5,211 only 10 are Jews and 236 are Christians.

The farmers, that is, the persons who cultivate either their own lands or the lands of a landlord, number 63,190 earners of whom 3,669 are Jews and 2,376 are Christians. The agricultural laborers number 29,077 earners, of whom 2,582 are Jews and 512 are Christians. There are thus two farmers for every one agricultural laborer among the Moslems, four farmers for every ten agricultural laborers among the Jews, and 45 farmers for every ten agricultural laborers among the Christians³. In England and Wales, 1921, there were 17 agricultural laborers for every one farmer. In Bengal, 1921, there were five farmers for every one hired agricultural laborer. In India as a whole there were, in 1911 four farmers for every one agricultural laborer. Palestine, therefore, is definitely, oriental in its agricultural system. The reasons are twofold. In the first place, as has been seen in Chapter I of this Report, agricultural holdings are small and do not require more than the labor of the cultivator, assisted as he may be by his wife and children; and, secondly, the agriculture is primitive, so that skilled labor for machinery and scientific agriculture is not required⁴. In general, the life of the Arab peasant is one of inactivity. Agriculture is dependent on the rainfall, except in a few localities in which perennial irrigation is available; and, beyond the exertions of plowing, sowing and reaping for winter and summer crops, the cultivator has little with which to occupy himself. Barley and wheat of not too good a quality: and inferior form of millet and an occasionally successful and valuable crop of sesame provide the means of subsistence of the greater part of the population. A restricted area of the country benefits from a usually successful crop of watermelons; and olives provide a fairly valuable adjunct to the means of subsistence of Arab agricultural families. On the other side, no skill or scientific experience is applied to these forms of agriculture, which is maintained at the present day very much as it was during centuries past. It will take a long time before this traditional inertia can be dissipated and more valuable forms of agriculture instituted. In the meantime, it would seem necessary to develop organized industry in small groups in order to utilize the man-power available in villages which, at present, is only partially absorbed by agriculture. Not only will this have the effect of creating an industrious community, but it will enrich the peasant and raise his standard of life which, on any criterion, is extremely low. The institution of the cooperative system, in existence for Jews and under consideration for Arabs,

²² While it is a matter for some regret that it was not possible to differentiate, at the enumeration, between cultivating landlords and tenant cultivators, the experience both of India and Egypt suggests that no great confidence could be placed in the results viewed in the perspective of land tenures. – E.M.

³ These figures relate only to earners and do not, of course, include the numbers of working dependants who might be considered as agricultural laborers, but are not a charge on agriculture since they are not hired laborers. – E.M.

⁴ It will be clear that I am discussing Arab agriculture in the main, but remarks as to the small size of holdings apply equally to Jewish agriculture, which however, benefits through an organization of skilled scientific advice and the facilities for using agricultural machinery. – E.M.

may accomplish much in this direction, since, effectively in operation, it leads to the organization of secondary occupations and industries that ensure that the products of the field secure a proper market.

One of the most important factors contributing to the indifferent character of ordinary cultivation as practiced by Arab agriculturists has been the system of tenure known as *mesha'a*. Under this system relatively large groups of persons hold cultivable land in personal shares in undivided ownership, and each owner changes his holding at regular periods which vary with different localities. As a general rule, occupancy of a specific holding changes once in two years. This primitive tenure is, of course, not peculiar to Palestine: the theory of the tenure seems to be that the group of co-owners have common dominion over the whole land, each owner receiving as his holding the amount of land corresponding to his undivided interests of ownership; but, in order to assure equality of treatment to all co-owners, so that all have the same chance of good and bad land over a course of years, the occupancies are varied in rotation at stated periods. It is not difficult to believe that such a system of tenure is a democratic expression of the benevolence of a patriarchal system of social organization characteristic of eastern peoples. It will be comprehended that it is a system that is disastrous to efficient agriculture. The cultivator cannot, in such a system, develop his temporary holding because, if he do so, some other co-owner will later reap the fruits of his enterprise. In these circumstances it is satisfactory to learn that the system, once fundamental in the organization of the social group of the village, is rapidly breaking down by the voluntary agreement of the various co-owners: and it may be anticipated that the standard of cultivation will rapidly improve, particularly if it be found possible to provide the means by which cultivators can obtain capital on fairly easy terms. Since I wrote this paragraph I have been informed that, in the Gaza sub-district where patriarchal organization of villages is strongest and where the *mesha'a* system of tenure has been most firmly established, cultivators, who have partitioned the common holding, have already purchased the means of or a more intense utilization of the soil. Moreover, these cultivators do not appear to have obtained facilities from money-lenders. It is also significant that the Land Settlement Officer at Gaza has, of late, noticed that peasant women have been frequently seen purchasing jewelry and bangles of gold. This phenomenon may represent distrust of currency, but it is of interest as showing possession of wealth in the form of money, and as diluting belief in the complete destitution of the peasant class. - E.M. p. 284 (par. 251)

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growth of easy communications in Palestine has, undoubtedly facilitated an evolutionary process that has been manifested in all countries that have responded to the influences of the industrial and commercial organizations of the world.

The population of 51,476 persons is supported by the growing of special products. About one quarter of these derive their livelihood from the cultivation of oranges, and the remainder from the cultivation of other fruits, vegetables, vines and the maintenance of nursery gardens. In orange cultivation there are 3,578 earners of whom 1,917 Moslems, 1,493 are Jews and 165 are Christians, there being three other earners in the minor religious confessions.

The agricultural population has been taken to consist of rent-receivers, actual farmers engaged in ordinary cultivation, and agricultural laborers. The earners in this population number 108,376 and of these earners 26,240 or 24.2 percent have returned a subsidiary occupation, this proportion comprising 1.9 percent who returned an agricultural subsidiary occupation, and 22.3 percent who derived a secondary livelihood from some activity not concerned with agriculture. It is thus clear that nearly a quarter of the agriculturists would be unable to maintain their present standard of life if they were unable to find a secondary means of subsistence. Many small landholders live partly on rent and partly on cultivation particularly of the market garden variety; and some cultivators obtain a secondary means of livelihood by working on the fields of their richer neighbors.

It will be seen that the three main classes of agriculturists have very much the same habits and customs. Indeed, the only difference between them is a mutable degree of prosperity. Indebtedness to the money-lender may quickly reduce the ordinary cultivator to the status of the agricultural laborer, the money-lender tending to become the receiver of rents of agricultural land. It is worthy of notice that the principal source of livelihood of a number of persons in Palestine is usurious money-lending. This occupation is not prominent in the census returns being disguised under "income from rent of agricultural land" and other dignified sources of income.

No very definite inference can be drawn from the fact that, while 24 percent of the earners who have returned agriculture as their principal occupation are partially supported by some other occupation, only 3 percent of those whose main occupation is non-agricultural have been returned as partially dependant on agriculture. The difference may reflect the inadequacy of primitive agriculture as a means of subsistence for the normal household, but it would be unwise to be categorical on the point. Other influences may, perhaps, be traced to the post-war political differentiation between Palestine and Syria and the hinterlands, all of which formed one economic unit in the years prior to the war. These post-war arrangements necessitated a new orientation in economic affairs: new channels for disposal of agricultural produce had to be found: and, in the meantime, a certain amount of dislocation as a result of war conditions was inevitable. In such circumstances, it is natural to suppose that agriculturists would seek additional economic security in a variety of secondary activities not endangering their principal form of subsistence derived from agriculture. p. 292