

Distinguished Professor Dr. William Clarence-Smith delivers lecture on Migration to the Philippines

Wednesday 10th November 2010, YCC, Zouk Mikael

Reported by Aurelia Eid, LERC Intern

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center in cooperation with the Department of Management and Marketing of the Faculty of Business, Administration, and Economics at Notre Dame University, Louaizé, hosted a lecture delivered by Dr. William Clarence-Smith, Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London in the United Kingdom, entitled: *Migrants from the Ottoman Empire and its Successor States to the Colonial Philippines, 1860s to 1940s*. The event was held as part of LERC's ongoing lecture series at the Youth and Culture Center (YCC) at Zouk Mikael Municipality on 10th November 2010.

Present at the event were H.E Mr. Gilberto Asuque, Ambassador of the Philippines in Lebanon; Professor Hidemitsu Kuroki, Director of the Japan Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Beirut; Mr. Nohad Nawfal, President of the Municipality of Zouk Mikael, and Ms Eliane Fersane, Director of Programs and PR at the Youth and Culture Center (YCC)-Zouk Mikael; Dr. Maroun Masaan and Mr. Elie Zgheib, members of the municipality of Zouk Mikael, and other distinguished guests from the municipality; Ms. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center and members of the LERC team.



LERC welcomes the guests to the event (from left to right) Ms. G. Hourani, Ms. E. Fersane, Mr. N. Nawfal, H.E. G. Asuque, Dr. W. Clarence-Smith (Nov 2010).

Ms. Eliane Fersane was first on the podium to welcome all and to warmly introduce Ms. Hourani. Ms. Hourani then welcomed the invitees, especially H.E Gilberto Asuque, the Ambassador of the Philippines in Lebanon, and Dr. William Clarence-Smith.



The audience sit in rapt attention: (from left to right) Dr. M. Masaad, Ms. G. Hourani, Dr. W. Clarence-Smith, H.E. G. Asuque, Mr. E. Zgheib, Mr. F. Salamouny (Nov 2010).

From the podium, Dr. Clarence-Smith explained that while conducting research in the Philippines, he came across several names of Lebanese migrants who had emigrated to the country. The story has it that Lebanese emigration to the Philippines happened by accident, but he believed that this was not the case. In 1855, markets opened up and foreigners were allowed to trade in the provinces. The opening of the Suez Canal, too, eased the way for commercial exchanges between the Arab world and Philippines. In the 19th century, he went on to explain, the export business in Manila was booming with products like Manila hemp, tobacco, coconut products, and sugar.

The Middle Eastern influx to the Philippines started in 1860s with the first known Ottoman peddler arriving in 1869. In 1871, four “Turkish subjects” were registered as residents. In 1877, Manuel Santiago from Jerusalem applied for a passport to travel between Manila and Port Said. It was during this period too that a number of Armenians and Assyrians went to the Philippines. Individuals from Bethlehem arrived in 1881 while the Lebanese started traveling from Singapore to Manila in 1885, the first registered arrival being Nasif Elias, born in Cairo, who arrived in the Philippines in 1885. The devoutly Catholic Filipinos provided a vibrant market for religious objects and artifacts produced in the Holy Land and sold by Near East Christians.



Dr. Clarence-Smith at the podium delivering his lecture (Nov 2010).

In 1896, migration to the Philippines underwent a change and although there were fewer immigrants conditions improved and Ottomans subjects were once again allowed to enter the Philippines. Ottoman Jewish immigrants, speaking Turkish and Judeo-Arabic, arrived from Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Thrace.

The first to properly establish themselves were traders who had set up shops in Manila supplying goods to peddlers that included rosaries, hardware, textiles and other products.

Dr. Clarence-Smith went on further to talk about the main Lebanese immigrant families settling in the Philippines: these included ones from the village of Baakline in Lebanon and families such as the Takieddine, the Sharrouf family, the Hamadi and the Khodr family among others. From Besharre in North Lebanon the Kayrouz and the Karams among others. From Shwayfat came the Jureidini and the Abou Rjaili families, from Kfarshima the Salibi and the Hashem families. And from Bikfaya the Gemayels (known as the Ismael family in the Philippines).

H.E. Mr. Asuque thanked the Notre Dame University and the Lebanese Emigration Research Center for organizing the lecture, saying that it would contribute to strengthening the link of the Lebanese diaspora with the Philippines and with other countries in South East Asia. He expressed his hope that the researches and other academic projects of the LERC would provide the impetus for the Lebanese government to expand its relations and strengthen its ties, whether cultural, economic, or social, with South-East Asia, the Philippines in particular.



Dr. W. Clarence-Smith listens to H.E. G. Asuque addressing the audience (Nov 2010).

The event ended with the Municipality presenting H.E. Mr. Asuque, Dr. Clarence-Smith, and Director Hourani with an illustrated book of the town of Zouk Mikael.