

after 1967), the descendants of the Palestinians of the first wave had already achieved full assimilation and the highest degree of economic, social, and political success. But the more recent flow of immigrants made an important contribution to the established community; they reconnected it to Palestine and awakened it to the Palestinian national identity that had been emerging.

Today, most Palestinian descendants born in Central America, whether part of the earlier wave of immigration or the later one, identify themselves as citizens of their adopted countries. But as Gonzalez observed, “the additional Palestinian identification has never ceased to be important.”<sup>272</sup> John Nasser Hasbun, a Palestinian-Salvadoran and a member of the San Salvador City Council in 2007, explained his identity by saying, “I am proud to be Salvadoran, but I am also proud to be Palestinian.”<sup>273</sup>

## **A Century of Palestinian Immigration to Chile: A Successful Integration**

*Nicole Saffie Guevara and Lorenzo Agar Corbinos*

Thousands of Arabs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries decided to leave their homeland in hope to find a better future. This was motivated by the persecution set forth by the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which recruited young Christians in their ranks to fight on the battlefield. Added to this were the poor living conditions and lack of opportunities for Christians who, according to the prevailing law, were not allowed to serve in public office. Having been considered a constitutive and privileged minority, this allowed them to live relatively better, and yet this status was also frowned upon by their Muslim neighbors. All of these factors led many Christians to undertake the long journey to an uncertain fate that could be as promising as America: a continent which, at that time, was a preferred destination for thousands of European immigrants who arrived thanks to the settlement acts a matter that did not favor the Palestinian immigrants.

Despite their eagerness to start a new life, the Arabs who were leaving their homeland did not know exactly what to expect in these distant lands. This notion is manifested in this small fragment from the novel “The Turks”:

- *Tell me Hannah, will you go far with me?*
- *Far? Where?*
- *To America.*
- *America?*
- *Yes, like the son of the baker Yuma. He has written to his brother and says he has made a fortune* <sup>274</sup>

In the case of the Palestinians in Haifa and Jaffa, the adventure began when they boarded a boat carrying them to a European port, which was usually Genoa or Marseilles, and that was where they had their first contact with Western culture. It could be weeks or even months before they were able to buy a ticket to the much-coveted American continent, with little or no care as to where exactly they would arrive. The important thing was to get on board.

The journey was hard. The migrants had to buy a third-class passenger ticket or board cargo ships, where they were accommodated in between luggage. Despite the precariousness of the jour-

ney, however, this time allowed them to establish contacts and obtain useful information on their destination. New York in the U.S. and Santos in Brazil were the two ports where most of the passengers disembarked, although some continued south to the last stop of the continent: Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital.

One account of this long journey is told by Kamel Jarufe Jadue, who emigrated to America from Beit Jala:

*We first went to Lebanon to take the boat. We slept a night there. We boarded the boat, but not the one we had to make for the long trip, this boat was small, it was Turkish, and it went to Greece. There we took the other ship, it was gigantic, it was called "Bretain," it was an Italian ship, it was immense. The first couple of days we could not eat anything, we were all seasick. The first port we came to was Marseille, there we stayed about five days, then to Barcelona, Spain. Spain is beautiful, everything changes, even the color of the people, customs, language, people are more loving, not like the Italians or the French. There were few Palestinians on the boat, and from our town it was just us. After Spain, we arrived to Dakar, in the north of Africa, there, they are all black. In Palestine we had never seen a black man. In Dakar, we stayed one more day, then on to Brazil. The boat stopped in Santos, a very old city. We slept a night there. Then we went to Rio de Janeiro, just in time for Carnival. I had never seen these things before, I was amazed, the music is different; my music is soft, you feel it. From Rio de Janeiro we continued to Buenos Aires, it took five days. That completed the 45-day trip, with stops included .<sup>275</sup>*

There was a daring group of travelers who decided to go to the end of the world: Chile. That crossing was a challenge. It began in the city of Mendoza, Argentina, in the foothills of the Andes, where the adventurers had to wait for the weather to settle down before crossing the mountains. Then they undertook the journey on mules, challenging for about four days dangerous cliffs and the cold Andean mountain range in order to reach the city of Los Andes on Chilean soil. Only in 1908 did the railroad come to the mountain range of Puente del Inca and in 1912, to the station of Las Cuevas, and down to the Chilean station, Caracoles. From there, the passengers continued on mules to Juncal, where they boarded the Chilean Trans-Andean train .<sup>276</sup>

This group was the first to do that in the second half of the nineteenth century. There is no certainty about the origin or identity of those that crossed in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1854 census, two people are identified as "Turks." Then, in 1865 and 1875 three more are also referred to as "Turks." Only in 1881 was there a record of the first Palestinian. Four years later, 29 Arabs were recorded. The first travelers with known identities were Abraham Saffe, a Syrian, and Santiago Beirutí, a Lebanese, who arrived in 1888. Between 1905 and 1914 Palestinian

immigrants reached 56%. By 1920, there have been a lot of immigrants of Arab origin, distributed as follows: 1,164 Palestinians, 1,204 Syrians, 15 Lebanese, 1,282 Turkish and 1,849 "Arabs."<sup>277</sup> In 1941, the Social Guide to the Arab community had a total of 2,994 Arab families, approximately 15,000 people, of whom 85% were immigrants and 15% were their first offspring born on Chilean soil. Half of them were of Palestinian origin.

### *The First Years in Chile*

In the early twentieth century, Chile offered good economic conditions, mostly due to the nitrate boom in the northern territory. However, the policies had already been completed in support of migrants and were especially favoring the Germans, who were offered land to colonize the south. The Palestinians did not meet the requirements given forth by the Chilean State. They had no profession or money, and had to fend for themselves, which they did quite successfully. As an immigrant recounts, "when leaving their homes to a place where they knew nor the language or customs, and could hardly even pronounce its name, they faced a huge challenge."<sup>278</sup>

These were usually young single men. According to the Social Guide, 40.2% of Arab immigrants who arrived to Chile were 10-19 years old, while 26.7% were 20-30. In other words, over 60% were younger than 30 years old. Men accounted for 76.6% of all immigrants, with a total of 2,656 persons in 1940. Women, meanwhile, came as dependents, either as wives or daughters, and were a much smaller number; only 495 for the same date, equivalent to 14.2% of the total.

Most came from the same places. Beit Jala and Bethlehem were the towns that contributed the most to the migration population, with 18% and 17% respectively. Palestinian immigrants that came from Beit Jala were 35.7%, and from Bethlehem, 34.6%.<sup>279</sup> The remainder came from Beit Sahour and Beit Safafa, within the limits of Jerusalem. Immigrants tended to settle in the cities or neighborhoods where they had relatives, acquaintances, or members of their own town. They had a fundamental role to play as they helped find places to live; they found jobs and passed on some basic cultural information of their new homeland. They even taught them their first words in Spanish.

*The first young people who came to Chile told their family and friends who remained in Palestine, that this was a blessed land of opportunities and possibilities. They talked about good people comparing them to Arabs, a pleasant climate, delicious fruits and many employment opportunities. This image was transmitted from one family to another and by word of mouth which helped and encouraged young people to do the same, increasing the number of Palestinian immigrants<sup>280</sup>*

The great amount of Palestinians settled in provinces, like Ovalle in the north, San Felipe, La Calera, and Curicó in the central zone, and Chillán, Concepción, and Los Ángeles in the south. This phenomenon is known as “chain migration.” The territorial spread was characteristic of the Arabs, unlike other immigrant groups like the Jews, who concentrated more in the capital. In 1940, 62% (1,866 families) of the total Arab population settled in different locations in Chile, preferring secondary cities than major urban centers. Only 36% of Palestinian families settled in Santiago.<sup>281</sup>

The main profession of the Palestinians, like the Syrians and Lebanese, was trade. The “falte” (door-to-door salesman) or street vendor, who traveled the countryside on foot or by wagon, was the typical image selling a series of household items. The name comes from the phrase they repeated over and over again, often in mispronounced Spanish, “¿hay algo que le falte?” (Is there something you need?).<sup>282</sup>

As written by Olguín and Peña in “The Arab Immigration to Chile”:

*With their baskets overflowing with the most heterogeneous goods —scarves, socks, mirrors, pins, spools of thread, soap, buttons and combs— they constituted a figure too picturesque to pass unnoticed. They roamed the streets shouting their products in rudimentary Spanish with the familiar cry of “store thing”, that is, things in a store.*<sup>283</sup>

But these individuals not only fulfilled a purely commercial role. As Allél writes:

*(...) On those routes they carried more than just their various products. They carried with them civilization and progress, indirectly helping raise the social status of the inhabitants of those remote regions. They were the link between progress and ignorance.*<sup>284</sup>

Those who brought some resources or managed to collect enough money would set up their own shop. The Palestinians, like the rest of the Arab merchants, quickly gained fame. Many stores sold everything from food, toiletries, and household items to even farming tools. In Santiago, most of the Arab population living there in 1940 worked in trade and commerce: 49% were in “various branches of commerce”, 18% in “stores and packaging”, and 19% in “factories”.<sup>285</sup>

Their work style contrasted with that of the average Chilean. They would open their doors early and close late at night. Hard work, a sense of responsibility and perseverance, are values that remain important in the Palestinian families to date.<sup>286</sup> Their life was simple and limited to spending only what was necessary. “Their expenses were low: rent and food. The thought of buying clothes and other extras was unthinkable. They didn’t spend on anything that they could make themselves.”<sup>287</sup> They were also described as “(...) austere, with high morals, respectful of the law, and hard working (...).”<sup>288</sup>

Many times they lived above or at the back of their business stores. The newcomers settled in very precarious housing. “They lived in the rooms in “cités” (houses shared by many families); there were four, six, or even more to a room. If the room was not in use, it became the kitchen.”<sup>289</sup>

Many came looking to make money and then return home. However, the vast majority ended up settling for good in the country, as one Palestinian immigrant recounts:

*Young people who came only intended to stay two or three years in this country. This was enough time to collect a few pounds to help the household finances back home. To the newcomer, none even sounded set on staying in this land of mystery nor be buried in it, unless those who, years later, came to meet with their children or grandchildren. Instead of returning to their countries, the immigrants, almost without noticing, were practically living in Chile; again and again extending their stay because they had found a place to work and progress. So instead of leaving, they brought their parents, siblings, even grandparents. Almost all formed their own families in the new homeland.*<sup>290</sup>

So, those who met with hard work and minimal expenses managed to bring their families. One by one they arrived, parents and siblings, wives and children, all of whom were then integrated to life in the new country. The newly arrived countrymen were also welcomed until they could go their own way.

According to census data, the total Arab population that arrived to Chile between 1885 and 1940 ranged between 8,000 and 10,000. In the 1930 census, the largest number of Arab immigrants was registered: 6,703.<sup>291</sup>

Sundus Nasser affirms:

*In Beit Jala, Bethlehem, and Beit Sahour they know more about Chile than the common Chilean knows about the Middle East. Almost every family in these three cities has a family member that immigrated to Chile, cousins, nephews, grandchildren, siblings, aunts, uncles or friends. Most Palestinian Christians are in Chile.*<sup>292</sup>

Immigration began to decline in the 1930s due to improved living conditions in Palestine after the fall of the Turkish Empire and the establishment of British rule. However, with the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent forced migration of Palestinians from their land, there was a small wave of immigration to Chile, although the vast majority remained as refugees in neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. A similar phenomenon occurred in 1967 because of the Six Day War.

Since then, Palestinian immigration to the country has been rather sporadic. The exception was the immigration of 117 Palestinian refugees from the al-Tanf camp on the border of Iraq and Syria in 2008. However, this was a Muslim group.<sup>293</sup>

### *The First Steps Toward Integration*

Without knowing much of the language and customs of the host society, in the beginning, the Palestinians gathered in the same neighborhoods and villages. They helped each other and married one another, replicating life of their native land, with the same values and social codes. However, as migrants set up in Chile and brought their families, they increasingly integrated into the country thanks to trade relations, shared beliefs, and Christian values.

The new generations accelerated the integration. Through education, wealth, mixed marriage, and the settling to various sectors of Santiago and the country in general, they became part of Chilean society. Today, their contribution can be seen in the most varied fields of economic, political, social, and cultural affairs.

The following section will analyze the different aspects that show the integration of the Palestinian community in the country by: religion, commerce, marriage, media, and geographic location.

#### ♦ *Religion*

The key element that the Palestinians and Chilean immigrants shared was religion. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was estimated that almost all the inhabitants of Bethlehem and Beit Jala, where most of the Palestinian immigrants came from, were Christian Orthodox. Thus, the newcomers shared the same values and religious beliefs like most Catholics who lived and to this day continue to live in the country. Moreover, many decided to change to the Roman Catholic Rite.

It is possible that one of the reasons for this change was the lack of churches of worship. The first Orthodox priest who arrived in Chile was Father Paul Jury in 1910 from Syria. In 1914, during a visit to Latin America, Elias Dib, Archbishop of Tyre and Sidon (Margeyioun Nazareth, south of Lebanon), ordained Yuri Solomon, a native of Beit Jala. Only on 24 October 1917 did the first Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch Church open St. George's Cathedral in Chile, in honor of a saint revered for centuries by Arab Christians. In a Byzantine style and with typical spatial characteristics

of the Orthodox churches in the Middle East, it was situated in Patronato, an emblematic neighborhood of Arab immigrants, which then converted itself into the main hub for the community.

But probably the main motivation for this change in Palestinian immigrants was to join their newfound country and establish new relationships with Chile, which also favored mixed marriages. According to a survey conducted in 2001 by Daniela Lahsen, of 306 Palestinian families from Beit Jala, 72% of first immigrants were Orthodox and 28% were Roman Catholic. However, with the second generation, born in Chile, this relationship reversed and was now 70% Roman Catholic and only 30% Orthodox. The Encuesta a Población de Origen Árabe (Arabic Origins Community Survey), EPOA 2001, confirmed the phenomenon: 69% of respondents claimed to be Catholic and only 14% Orthodox.<sup>294</sup> Moreover, a survey of students at the Arabic School of Santiago in 2006, which included young people between the ages of 16 and 18 of Arab origin, confirmed the difference, but in another ratio: 46.5% were Catholic and 34.9% Orthodox. There was also one Muslim student counted.<sup>295</sup>

Currently, it is important to mention that the largest Palestinian Christian community in the world is in Chile.

#### ♦ *Trade*

Trade allowed the Palestinian immigrants to quickly establish relationships with the Chileans and to learn the language and aspects of their culture. It was also an important factor to move away from the capital and settle in the provinces, traveling to rural areas with their goods, settling in cities and small towns.

The entrepreneurial spirit of the Palestinians led them to make major contributions to the Chilean economy. It was the Arab immigrants and their descendants who helped found many of the companies in this country. Allél (1937) realized the contribution of Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese businessmen in the country. He says:

*Following tradition, members of these conglomerates dedicated themselves to trade. Their ignorance of the language was not a problem for the normal development of their daily activities, and despite the fundamental difference between their customs and those of the country, they adapted quickly, as if they were in their own homeland.*<sup>296</sup>

*(...) The members of the Arab family, from their arrival to Chile, played an important role in business development; and in this country, it was in need of a strong push. These men contributed greatly and devoted all their strength*



*to conquer a place that allowed them to develop their high ingenious and progressive aspirations.*<sup>297</sup>

According to this author, the first immigrants to establish their own companies were the Schain Brothers, in perfumery, and Abdala Manzur, in the manufacturing of leather articles, in 1910. However, it was only in the following decade when the Palestinians dared to take the plunge and began to establish businesses in greater numbers. The pioneers were the Hirmas, Valech, and Cadi families in hosiery, and Hasbún in the manufacturing of silk.<sup>298</sup>

Textile was undoubtedly the main industry in which the first immigrants flourished and advanced. In just 15 years, 80% of the textile and spinning mills in Chile were owned by people of Arab origin. In 1937, the opening of the formidable spinning mill of the Palestinian Yarur Brothers took place, “which is the most outstanding and superb exponent of the progressive spirit of the Arab race. It immediately placed this national industry above their South American counterparts.”<sup>299</sup>

However, the Arabs ventured into almost all areas of the national economy: agriculture, livestock, mining, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, services, and much more. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Schain Brothers soap and perfume factories appeared; as did the Distillery Spirits of Chile S.A. of the Toumani and Nacrur families; the thermo-plastics factory of Emilio Yazig, Fred Haleby, and Fadul Mehech; Talcon Minerals “San Carlos de Corral” of Jorge Chamy; manufacturing of rubber articles of Salomón Saffie; combs and toothbrushes manufacturing company of Schain, Betinyani and Namur; and Karmy Brothers Jewelry, among others.

By 1941, according to the Social Guide, most people of Arab origin worked in the commercial sector (823 surveyed), meanwhile the professionals represented a very minor number (108). According to Allél, Arab industries were allowed to hire between 9,000 to 10,000 workers, a significant labor force for the time when unemployment soared in the country and the economic crisis of the 1930s had left its mark. The state also contributed directly through taxes and increased domestic consumption, encouraging domestic investment.

The entrepreneurial spirit was transmitted to new generations that followed the path of their parents in setting up new businesses and enterprises. However, the textile industry was no longer the dominant trade, as they were moving into other areas according to their own studies and interests. In the early 1980s, 23% of all companies engaged in clothing manufacturing had an owner of Arab origin, while the category, specifically textile, rose to 48%. However, in 2000, the Arab population increased its stake to 33% in the clothing apparel field, but decreased to 36% in textiles.<sup>300</sup>

Currently, Palestinian surnames are among the wealthiest in the country: Said, linked to retail and banking; Sahié, owner of one of the largest newspaper in the country, along with retail

and financial services; Abumohor, in banking, textile, agricultural, and real estate; Kassis, in food processing, and Yarur, linked to the banking sector, among many others.

## • Marriage

Marriage is a good indicator that shows the level of integration of a community. At first, the Palestinians who arrived in the first half of the twentieth century as well as their children married people of their own community. The couples were predominantly “endogamic.” The Palestinians, (and Arabs in general,) saw the Chilean women as very liberal, with “relaxed” habits especially in poor neighborhoods. As explained by Olguín and Peña:

*The first immigrants experienced a strong culture shock to see a new relationship between the sexes. While Chilean men and women kept unequal power within the relationship, the immigrants perceived the behavior of the women from the poor sectors as very different to that of the Arab woman. The distrust felt by the Arab men towards Chileans was because, in these sectors, the women were more “liberal” than they were used to.*<sup>301</sup>

The idea of marrying a person who did not share the same values and culture and, in fact, who was not of the same community, was unthinkable. Thus, when the men were of marrying age, they sought out a partner within their own community. Those who had the resources to make the long journey back to their homeland traveled with the sole purpose of finding a wife. In other cases, efforts were made with the families of their hometown, who sent their daughters to marry a suitor installed in America.

Olguín and Peña describe this process very well:

*In its early days, the Arab man tended to marry within the same community, and who for various reasons did not relate to the Chileans: they had little command of the language, mutual distrust and perhaps most importantly because they couldn't conceive the idea of marrying anyone other than from their homeland, even more, from outside their own village and whose family they knew(...). At family councils, they proposed the likely candidates to the young men. In the case that they did not accept any, meant little options for finding others... One of them was to attend the activities of the Arab community, where boys and girls of a marriageable age attended. Another custom that spread throughout America was one in which deserving young men of age went to the ports where ships carrying Arab families disembarked. Among the offspring, one could find a future mate. When none of these ways worked, there was the last option of travelling to the homeland in search of a wife.*<sup>302</sup>

Between 1910 and 1919, 88.4% of spouses were of Arab origin. Between 1920 and 1929, the phenomenon decreased, but slightly, to 83.7%. The reasoning behind this was probably the desire to preserve the deeply embedded traditions and roots.

However, the new generation that was born in Chile and more integrated into the society began to marry Chileans, initiating a process of mixed marriages that increased over time. This was due to the decline of Arab immigration into the country and to a growing acceptance of Chilean society and customs. In addition, the idea of returning to Palestine began to either fade or simply was not in the minds of the children born in this country, because many embraced their early years of life in Chile.

Between 1960 and 1969, the number of marriages between people of Arab origin fell to 47%, while the marriages with Chileans reached a significant 53%.<sup>303</sup> The EPOA survey<sup>304</sup> shows how this phenomenon has evolved. Respondents (137 people of Arab origin, of which 62 are descendants of Palestinians), were divided into three groups: businessmen, academics, and students. When asked about the origin of their parents, only 14% of businessmen had a parent whose origin was not Arab. However, among the academics this percentage increased to 47%, and amid the students, the majority of which are second or third generation, rose to 72%. This illustrates the gradual increase of mixed marriages in the new generations born in Chile. On the other hand, it also shows that those in business, for more endogenous economic reasons, tend to marry within the same origin.

Palestinians tend to marry within their own community. The same EPOA survey<sup>305</sup> shows that 62% of Palestinian respondents have both parents of the same origin, whereas in the case of the Syrians, those who have parents that share the same origin decreases to 50%. According to the survey conducted at the Arabic School in 2006, 90% of surveyed youth have parents of Arab origin, and in 60% of the cases the mother is of the same origin. Just over half have both parents of Arab origin.<sup>306</sup>

One can see here an increased integration of Palestinians and Arabs in general in the Chilean society. At the same time, however, there is still interest in maintaining and safeguarding their identity, as well as in preserving the values and customs handed down from generation to generation. That is to say, the paradox of our globalized world is on the one hand, to share as a whole, but on the other, to differentiate oneself from another. This was the case for those with Arab roots.

## • *Media*

Shortly after installing themselves in the new world, the first immigrants created their own media to maintain a sense of community and strengthen cohesion. Its use was with the purpose to find out about new marriages, births, new arrivals, and various events to promote their products and services, and to express their own views on the most diverse events. As Ruiz and Saiz explained,

“the Arabs in Chile seem concerned about protecting their cultural identity, linguistic, and religious diversity in a society still unknown that they perceived as hostile, whose language and customs were totally strange.”<sup>307</sup>

The list of newspapers and magazines was quite considerable. The first was al-Murchid (The Guide), founded in 1912 in Santiago by Father Paul Jury. It was written entirely in Arabic and was funded by Jorge Hirmas, an immigrant born in Bethlehem who managed to become a successful businessman in Chile. Although the idea was to have a weekly issue, they accomplished to print, although in an irregular manner, over the following five years. His goal was to create an Arabic publication in the country to advertise the business community and to discuss events and news on the homeland from their perspective while also working as a link for the Christian Arab Orthodox community. When it came out, it only had two hundred subscriptions, but it served as a model for other papers that came later. Between 1944 and 1950 it reappeared as a bi-monthly magazine under the direction of Juan Zalaquett, a businessman and writer born in Lebanon, with a strong nationalist tinge. Although the first attempt was published in Arabic, Spanish increasingly gained ground.

Additionally, the magazine al-'Awatif (Feelings) was created in 1916 by Antonio Yamal, a Syrian-born businessman, and was published in the capital. The same year in Concepción, the newspaper al-Munir (The Torch) was released by Louis Sa'd. There was also al-Chabiba (The Youth, 1918) of Yamil Subhi, and al-Watan (The Nation, 1920) and al-Islah (The Reform, 1930). Oriente (The East, 1927) founded by Solomón Ahués, and Mundo Árabe (Arab World, 1935) from Jorge Sabaj, were both written entirely in Spanish. As Mercedes del Amo writes in her article, *The Literature of the Arab Newspapers in Chile*, these texts are “an invaluable source of written historical chronicle, wherein values are recorded, lifestyles, customs, concerns, nostalgias and how to relate with the new Arabic media.”<sup>308</sup>

One of the longest-running and influential Arabic newspapers in the community was al-Watan, founded and led by Palestinian Issa Khalil Daccarett. Although economic issues had appeared since the beginning, the publication circulated for nine years. Arabic was its dominant language, but there were some sections in Spanish. The contents were political, social, and cultural, but after selling to Father Jury, the news and religious articles increased.

Another influential newspaper was the weekly al-Islah, owned by Jorge Sabaj, which ran for twelve years, from 1930-1942. Sabaj defined it as a social, cultural, and literary media, although it focused on the Palestinian conflict and the European settlement in the area. It was separated into two parts, one in Arabic and one in Spanish. Mercedes del Amo explains, “although the increase in space devoted to the Arabic language may seem contradictory due to loss of knowledge of the language by a large proportion of the immigrant population, the fact is that it was precisely this fear that led us to pay attention to the preservation of the native tongue.”<sup>309</sup>

As stated by Ruiz and Saiz, with respect to the Arab press published in the first half of the twentieth century in Chile:

*“Some of these newspapers opt for the dissemination of religious principles and teaching Arabic. Sometimes they combine these functions with those political and ideological, with international news, local information, social and of course, also cultural and literary activities.”*<sup>310</sup>

There are still some newspapers in circulation, created and written by the descendants of the first, second, and even third generations born in Chile. The first is Mundo Árabe, founded by Jorge Sabaj Zurob in 1931 and taken up today by Elías Sabaj Chamy. There is also the magazine al-Damir (The Conscience), a publication of the Palestinian Bethlehem 2000 Foundation, founded in 2001. Both are written in Spanish and seek to keep the spirit of community alive for the new generations.

Although at first the newspapers and magazines were published entirely in Arabic, Spanish gradually took over more and more pages until it became the predominant language. This tells us a lot about the integration of new generations. In general, immigrants did not teach their language to their children, so they would learn Spanish as their native tongue, thereby avoiding some forms of discrimination due to the misuse of the language that they had suffered when they were new immigrants. They basically wanted their descendants to not be regarded as foreigners but as “genuine” Chileans.

### ♦ *Geographic Location*

At first, those of the Palestinian immigrants that settled in Santiago did so in poor areas such as Recoleta, San Pablo, and San Diego. The Palestinians were localized mainly in Recoleta (37%), being the migrating group that showed the highest concentration in a specific neighborhood of the capital. The immigrants and their descendants identified themselves with these neighborhoods because of its strong presence in the area.<sup>311</sup>

This occurred especially in the emblematic sector of Patronato, the poor outer boundary area of Santiago in the mid-twentieth century and is now the central business district of the middle-income class, where many Palestinian merchants settled into. Stores quickly surfaced, especially clothing and textile workshops. Kamel Jadue Jarufe recalls the beginnings of the Arab settlement in this part of the city:

*When I arrived from Palestine, there were only six stores in the neighborhood, those stores were mostly paisanos [slang for Arab people] who came from Palestine. Then little by little they began to arrive, many from Bolivia. When one tells another that the neighborhood is good for business, they start to*

*arrive. That’s how this neighborhood came about. Everyone knew each other because this guy is married to the sister of that guy, another guy with another sister, etc... and so they began to bring their people. At that time there were many who were in Calera, Quillota, and San Javier (outside Santiago); but these places had deteriorated in terms of trade, so, those in Santiago began to bring their families from the outside towns.*<sup>312</sup>

As the Palestinians began to increase their income thanks to factories, clothing manufacturing, and trade, they were settling in more affluent neighborhoods, such as Ñuñoa and Las Condes. “Although there was a majority presence in the center of Santiago, the trend was to abandon the poorer sectors in which the first immigrants dwelt and move to other more affluent sectors.”<sup>313</sup> Of course, their business acumen led them to keep their old properties and use them solely for commercial purposes.

*(...) When they left Patronato as a residence and not at all interested in selling the properties, many families preferred to take advantage of them as a retail location. (...) Patronato was particularly suitable for this purpose. The continuous facade allowed for an easy transformation from residential to commercial fronts, demolishing or enlarging the doorways and windows, and adapting them as showcases. The rooms and backyards, in turn, served as workshops and warehouses.*<sup>314</sup>

This process of migration to more affluent neighborhoods is not only evidence of a higher standard of living of future generations, but is also considered a process of social integration. The descendants left the predominantly Arab neighborhoods, and settled in diverse parts of the city, sharing it with their Chilean neighbors.

As remembered by Kamel Jadue Jarufe:

*Over time, the Palestinians began to spread. They began to move from Patronato, buying homes in other neighborhoods. No more business was done at home. They began to sell their homes for business, because it was much more profitable. With the sale of a store in the neighborhood, they could buy four houses. They went to Irarrázaval, Providencia, some to Ñuñoa and Kennedy Avenue.<sup>315</sup> There is no more trade on Perú Avenue. There are only restaurants. Others bought land in Lonquén, Buin, Paine,<sup>316</sup> also in the south: Villarrica, Pucón, Osorno, La Unión, Valdivia, etc.<sup>317</sup>*

Over the years, this tendency increased. According to the EPOA survey,<sup>318</sup> the current geographic distribution of the Arab population was heavily concentrated, up to 53%, in upper-middle class communes and districts (such as Lo Barnechea, Vitacura, Las Condes, and Providencia) on the



east side of Santiago. In communes typically considered middle-class (La Reina and Providencia) it is 15%, while 29% is found in other sectors.

Even today there are still some remnants of Palestinian immigrants in Patronato, such as shops, restaurants, the St. George Orthodox Church, and there are even some retailers who sell hollowed potatoes and grape leaves <sup>319</sup> on the street. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, the area started changing and welcoming new immigrant groups, especially Koreans, who had a strong presence on the streets engaging in the same business activities as the Palestinian community.

### ***Discrimination: A Problem for the Early Immigrants***

At first, the Palestinian immigrants were not viewed favorably by the Chilean society in general. Their different appearance, customs, and mispronounced Spanish contrasted and shocked the average Chilean, inciting discrimination. That most lived in the poor sectors and their expenses were limited to the most basic needs also added insult to injury.

As explained by Ruiz and Sáiz:

*The Arabs aroused great suspicion for many reasons, among which was language, since the vast majority of these immigrants only knew Arabic or were illiterate. Furthermore, their customs were totally alien to those of the host societies.*<sup>320</sup>

A passage quoted by Olguín and Peña that reflects the Chileans resentment on the newcomers:

*You will have noticed that the Turks... open early. They close when not a single soul passes. If no one comes, they remain motionless saving in energy and clothing. They live in large houses. How many live there? Only God knows. Have you seen them enter? They are like ants. After a few years, they open their factory and nothing changes: they wear the same clothes, their appearance is the same, their manner is the same. Only by what is in their factory one realizes that they are rich.*<sup>321</sup>

The Arabs in general were often treated derogatorily, both in daily contact and through the local press. For example, one of the leading intellectuals of the time, Joaquín Edwards Bello, expressed concern that the immigration of “Arabs, Syrians, and Jews,” was the cause of the Chileans “darker skin color” in neighborhoods such as Recoleta, San Pablo and San Diego, but in reality the mixed and indigenous traits had always been present in the local population. “The intellectual group

of the early twentieth century, a paradigmatic representative of the oligarchic class, often manifested in a derogatory manner in relation to Arab immigrants, but also about all sectors that had no central European origin.”<sup>322</sup>

Even when they began to acquire economic wealth, they still suffered discriminatory treatment. As Daher recounts, “one of the traditional clubs, once an aristocratic bastion, lost its distinction precisely due to the need to maintain a lavish location in the heart of the capital, granting admission to some very rich Turks.”<sup>323</sup>

Paradoxically, the Palestinians were aware that they had reached an equally underdeveloped country as their homeland, and that it did not even possess a fraction of the splendor of the Arabic culture that has made notable contributions to the world in various disciplines. So, feeling discriminated against by people who they in no way considered better socio-culturally, they opted to retreat.<sup>324</sup>

However, the Palestinian immigrants had complete freedom to develop trade and business, study, and settle in the country. Although they suffered some social exclusion, they were not subject to any action or deliberate campaign of persecution of any kind.

Since the first immigrants of Arab origin entered the continent with Ottoman passports, they were treated as “Turks” by the host societies. Latin Americans knew little about the different nationalities in the Arab world, so they grouped Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern immigrants under the same name. Undoubtedly this adjective was used primarily in a pejorative sense. Of course this nickname hit hard to those who had just arrived fleeing the Ottoman Empire.

Their descendants also received the same appellation, particularly at school, and since school is key in the process of socialization, it was difficult to integrate. According to the EPOA survey <sup>325</sup> (Agar, 2009), 81% of businessmen and 62% of academic respondents (most first or second generations born in Chile) admitted to being called “Turk” by their peers. However, only 36% of the students surveyed, (many from the third generation born in the country,) claimed to have received this nickname, reflecting the integration process of the descendants over time.

### ***Integration and Roots Rescue***

After more than a century of Palestinian immigration to the country, we can say that their descendants – either paternal last name, maternal, or both – are estimated at about between 150,000-200,000 people,<sup>326</sup> and actively participate as part of the Chilean society. Although the first



immigrants had no formal education, they insisted that their children should study. They wanted to have a better future and with more opportunities. Many of them benefited from quality public education offered by the State in the mid-twentieth century, with its emblematic institutions like the National Institute and the University of Chile, where many of the country's leaders have been formed.

Not only did their descendants study, but it was during school and university where the majority of the integration occurred. This is where they learned to speak the language properly and they often served as "interpreters" to their parents. They shared with their Chilean colleagues, made friends, and even married. They were seen as part of the society, not as foreigners but as Chileans.

The fruits of this process are abundant. The entrepreneurial spirit of the Palestinians and their descendants has allowed for an invaluable contribution to the Chilean economy. The new generations of Palestinians contribute with much success in various areas of society such as the exact sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts. In politics, the unusual number of area representatives and senators from Middle Eastern backgrounds formed in Congress in what is known as the "Palestinian caucus", or in groups composed of parliamentarians from different political parties yet united by their roots and their interest in Palestine.

In fact, it is important to highlight as a major achievement the Chilean government's recognition of the Palestinian State in January 2011.<sup>327</sup> The Chilean government has supported permanently and consistently the rights of the Palestinian people. It recognizes the Palestinian existence as a free, independent, and sovereign state. In that statement, it also recognizes the Palestinian community in Chile "for its valuable contribution to the social, cultural, political, and economic development over many decades and its full integration into our society."

This was reaffirmed by Kamel Jadue Jarufe:

*Eminent doctors, lawyers, teachers, politicians, and athletes that have given prestige to Chile at the international level, are of Arab descent. Just as important industrialists, bankers, and traders. (...) And in their heart they hold a heartfelt remembrance of respect and affection for the wonderful example of dignity and strength that their grandparents and distant homelands gave so they could advance. They do not forget that thanks to the sacrifices of their ancestors, they can look calmly to the future.*<sup>328</sup>

However, the successful integration has also meant a process of assimilation of cultural elements of the Chilean society, with consequent loss of some distinctive features. The loss of the language is the most obvious indication. As shown, Marcela Zedán, director of the Center for Arab Studies at the University of Chile, says the number of people who have a command of the language in Chile is only 2,000. This is due to their being born in an Arab country. It is estimated that a similar

number of offspring learned the language in their households, so their domain is oral. At the same time, there are about 5,000 people studying Arabic at various levels that exist in the country, reaching different levels of knowledge.<sup>329</sup>

Moreover, many immigrants changed their last names to facilitate both business and personal relationships. "With the change, the following Arab families were born: Campos, Flores, Martínez, Pinto, García, Díaz, and Tapia. They also changed their first names; Issa changed to Salvador, Hanna to Juan, Muhammad to Manuel, Jalil to Julio, among many others."<sup>330</sup> With this, many families lost their Arab roots forever.

These same marriages with Chileans, which had facilitated the social integration, have also contributed to the loss of values and customs of Palestinian families. In fact, couples sharing the same origin is no longer a predominant factor when it comes to marriage. According to the EPOA survey,<sup>331</sup> 56% of the respondents stated that it is not important for the spouses of their children to be of Arab origin, while only 13% of the students said it is important to marry a person of the same origin.

However, younger generations still conserve or seek to rediscover their roots. Hence, grape leaves and hummus<sup>332</sup> can still be seen on the tables in the Palestinian homes with Arabic music playing in the background. In this regard, the survey conducted at the Arabic School of students with both parents of the same origin, 75% reported practicing Arab traditions and 25% said they do so on occasion. With students with one parent of Palestinian origin, the proportion is reversed: 21% said they practice these traditions and 68% said they sometimes do.

Chileans have also experienced some elements of the Palestinian culture. There are several Arabic food restaurants that exist in both Santiago and the provinces. Arabic dance academies have also experienced a real "boom" in recent years. Their customers considerably exceed the community's population.

When defining their identity, the majority of the descendants gave two homelands, the inherited one and the one in which they were born. According to the EPOA survey,<sup>333</sup> 65% of the respondents recognized themselves as "Chilean/Arab", although this percentage decreases in younger descendants (20%). Among the Arabic School students surveyed, 60% said they feel "Chilean/Arab" and 38% said "Arab". They also acknowledged that they inherited many of the values of their parents and grandparents, such as responsibility, hard work, determination, independence, and perseverance.

There are several organizations established in the country that seek to keep the Palestinian culture and community spirit alive, including the Palestinian Sports Club, founded in 1920. It was

the first soccer team in the world to bear the name and colors of the Palestinian flag and is currently in Chile's first division. The Palestinian Club, founded in 1947, is another organization for the community; the Centre for Arab Studies at the University of Chile, formed in 1966, holds history and Arabic courses; the Arabic School, established in 1978, educates Arab children and youth and is open to all Chilean society; the General Union of Palestinian Students (UGEP-Chile), which was created in the late-1980s by the youth seeking to support the creation of a Palestinian state. Another institution is the Palestinian Bethlehem 2000 Foundation, created in 2001, which seeks to unite the Arab community in Chile and help the Palestinian people.

In order to preserve the Orthodox worship, in the year 1978 a group of Arab youth, led by José Elías and Gabriel Salvador, decided to establish a new temple in the commune of Providencia. Thus was born the Church of the Santísima Virgen María (Blessed Virgin Mary), in what was once the Protestant temple belonging to the Union Church. The masses, unlike the Cathedral of St. George, were in Spanish. "The motto of this church was openness and integration with the Chilean community. Padre Francisco Salvador insisted that being proud of one's origins is not incompatible with being Chilean."<sup>334</sup>

Moreover, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the precarious conditions in which they find their people have reinforced the feeling of unity and solidarity within the Palestinian community in Chile. Furthermore, it should be noted that many of its members still maintain ties with their relatives living in the land of their ancestors.

According to the EPOA survey,<sup>335</sup> 90% of respondents claimed to identify with the Palestinian cause. Touzri explains, "(...) the social impact of the tragic conditions that the Palestinian people in the Middle East suffer and the appreciation of national identity have enhanced the continuity of the Arab and Palestinian communities, especially as a whole."<sup>336</sup>

The feeling of being part of the Palestinian and Arab community in general is high and, moreover, is a major contribution to the Chilean society. This is reflected in the study at the Arab School, in which 90% felt as part of the community and a nearly unanimous 97% said that this community has been a contribution to Chile.<sup>337</sup>

### *Final Words*

In conclusion, we can see that at the beginning, the Palestinian community, and Arabs in general, were discriminated against by the Chilean society due to poor language skills, their dedication to economic activities in the lower socio-economic classes, and the overall differences in their

customs. However, factors such as shared religious values, open trade relations, acquirement of financial resources, education, mixed marriages, and the settling in different sectors of the capital and the country allowed for a rapid integration into Chilean society.

In turn, this process also involved some loss of cultural elements and values. However, the new generations have remained united as a group, encouraged by the work of a number of Arab social organizations and the sense of identification with the Palestinian cause. Although the descendants consider themselves Chilean, the first, second, third, and even fourth generations born in the country somehow still identify themselves as Arabs.

Although the first settlers crossed the mountains more than a century ago, their descendants were well aware that without the work and initiative of their parents and grandparents, Chile would not be the country it is today, and so, this has generated a sense of belonging and pride. The members of the Palestinian community are known for their entrepreneurial spirit as start-up pioneers. Today, most are professionals who excel in the diverse fields of economy, politics, and social affairs. Many have lost their language and much of the traditions, but their roots remain present, reborn in every generation, making them feel part of a community with two anchors: Palestinian and Chilean.