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"IN TRUTH, I WAS REALLY A PIONEER": FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELFHOOD FORMATION IN BETHLEHEM'S DIASPORIC MERCHANT COMMUNITY, 1900–1940

Abstract
This article explores girlhood, marriage, and female entrepreneurship in Bethlehem's diasporic merchant families in the early twentieth century, focusing on the lives of two women whose transition from girlhood to womanhood overlapped with their diasporic experiences in the Americas. Focusing on oral history interviews with Katrina Sa'ade and the memoir of Victoria Kattán de Hirmas, this study examines the outward expansion of Bethlehem's merchant middle-class from the perspective of women whose lives were indelibly shaped by these ventures. This piece argues that transnational migration and marriage equipped women with essential skills for commercial success and highlights their self-perception as pioneers who forged new paths in the *mahjar*. Flexible roles for women in Bethlehem's merchant community, underpinned by Ottoman cultural transformations and the innovative and outward-looking values which underpinned the community's bold business enterprises, also played a significant role in fostering female entrepreneurship. By tracing the journeys and entrepreneurial endeavors of Katrina and Victoria, the study underscores the transformative impact of migration on understandings of womanhood, work, and identity within diasporic communities, and emphasizes the agency and resilience of women who redefined possibilities for Palestinian women in the diaspora.

خلاصة

يستكشف هذا المقال مرحلة الطفولة والزواج وريادة الأعمال النسائية في العائلات التجارية المهاجرة من بيت لحم في أوائل القرن العشرين، مع التركيز على حياة امرأتين تداخل انتقالهما من الطفولة إلى الأنوثة مع تجاربهما في المهجر في الأمريكتين. من خلال التركيز على مقابلات التاريخ الشفهي مع كاترينا سعادة ومذكرات فيكتوريا قطان دي هيرماس، تبحث هذه الدراسة في التوسع الخارجي للطبقة الوسطى التجارية في بيت لحم من وجهة نظر النساء اللواتي تشكلت حياتهن بشكل لا يمحى من خلال هذه المشاريع. يجادل هذا المقال بأن الهجرة والزواج عبر الحدود الوطنية يزودان النساء بالمهارات الأساسية للنجاح التجاري، ويسلط الضوء على تصورهن لأنفسهن كرائدات صاغت مسارات جديدة في المهجر. كما لعبت الأدوار المرنة للنساء في مجتمع التجار في بيت لحم، والتي تدعمها التحولات الثقافية العثمانية والقيم المبتكرة والمتطلعة إلى الخارج والتي قامت عليها المؤسسات التجارية الجريئة في المجتمع، دوراً مهماً في تعزيز ريادة الأعمال النسائية. من خلال تتبع الرحلات والمساعي الريادية لكل من كاترينا

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وفيكتوريا، تؤكد الدراسة على التأثير التحويلي للهجرة على فهم الأنوثة والعمل والهوية داخل الجاليات في المهجر وتؤكد على قوة ومرونة المرأة التي أعادت تحديد إمكانيات المرأة الفلسطينية في المهجر.

This article is a dual investigation into two interconnected trends: firstly, girlhood and youth in Bethlehem's diasporic merchant families in the late Ottoman period; and secondly, the pioneering working lives and selfhood formation of Bethlehem's first female entrepreneurs in the Americas from 1900 to the 1940s. I center the oral histories and written testimonies of two Bethlehemite women, Katrina Sa'ade (b. 1900) and Victoria Kattán de Hirmas (b. 1908), whose early lives, marriages, and economic independence were fundamentally shaped by Bethlehem's merchant middle-class outward expansion. Their testimonies shed light on family life in late Ottoman Bethlehemite communities, particularly the opportunities, limitations, and expectations of girlhood; the lived experience of transnational endogamous marriage; and women's crafting of pioneering careers and entrepreneurial identities in the *mahjar*.

As they traveled to, and around, the Americas, they acted as agents of modernity transporting progressive Bethlehemite social norms regarding gender, marriage, and work to new contexts. To argue this case, I make three key interventions in this piece. Firstly, I argue that Katrina and Victoria's commercial activities resulting from their diasporic experiences reflect the flexible understandings of women's roles and capabilities in Bethlehemite merchant communities. These understandings were influenced by several elements of late Ottoman cultural transformation in Palestine: an emerging middle class, expanded girls' education, substantial attention in the press on the question of women's roles, and a growing number of women working outside the home. They were also shaped by the outward-looking, innovative, and dynamic character of Bethlehem's transnational merchant community whose pioneering business practices demonstrated a strong desire to innovate, adapt, and embrace new ideas and opportunities.

Secondly, I argue that although transatlantic migration was not *intended* to provide women in middle-class families with the opportunity to work, Katrina and Victoria's testimonies attest that the

intertwined experiences of migration and marriage equipped them with resilience, language, communication, and practical skills that were essential for beginning their commercial activities. Transnational, endogamous marriage underpinned Bethlehem's outward expansion and the formation of transnational kin and commercial networks. Strategic marriages had long been arranged between young men and women of merchant families across Greater Syria, yet at the turn of the twentieth century, expectations placed on girls and women underwent a transformation. Transatlantic contexts such as Mexico, Honduras, and Chile increasingly replaced destinations such as Beirut or Jerusalem for marriages to young merchants of a similar or higher social standing.

Thirdly, I focus on self-perception and narrative-crafting to focus on the ways Katrina and Victoria present themselves as pioneers in their testimonies. They were among the first generation of women who forged successful entrepreneurial careers as shop and property owners in the *mahjar*. Because middle-class women of their mothers' generation in Palestine rarely worked outside of the home or their family's land, Katrina and Victoria created their own blueprints for how to manage work, family life, and the gender norms they encountered in their host countries. Their narratives attribute their success to their own initiative and their ability to harness and maximize their education, skills, and experiences. These individuals express a proud entrepreneurial identity rooted in their business skills and their dedication to work. Their commercial successes were integral to the development of their self-confidence, personal development, and independence. Consequently, their pioneering drive for economic independence and personal satisfaction further expanded the boundaries of womanhood for their own and future generations and significantly contributed to the economic success of Palestinian communities in the *mahjar,* which supported their permanent residence once return was no longer possible.

This article seeks to contribute to the body of literature on late Ottoman Palestinian social life by highlighting the lived experiences of Palestinian girls and women, a group often overlooked in the historiography, who negotiated and exploited radically new forms of courtship, marriage, and migration to chart pioneering paths. It seeks to add to the literature on how migration changed the terms about womanhood, women's work, and respectability in diasporic Greater Syrian communities by highlighting how women from Bethlehem's merchant community constructed their working lives and how work became a central part of their multifaceted diasporic identities. Finally,

it adds further evidence to a rich body of work which shows that Palestinian (and Greater Syrian) societies were both cosmopolitan and key actors in processes of globalization and mobility of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The structure of this article is as follows. I first briefly outline several considerations when using oral histories and memory writing as sources for writing Palestinian histories. Secondly, I show Katrina and Victoria's reflections on the opportunities and limitations of girlhood in Bethlehem's merchant communities to contextualize merchant family life. Thirdly, I focus on their memories of marriage and migration to understand how they negotiated new forms of courtship and marriage arrangements, departure and travel, and the roles and expectations of young women in newly settled Bethlehemite merchant communities in the Americas. Fourthly, I trace the construction of their working lives and the development of a pioneering entrepreneurial identity.

SOURCES & MEMORY

The rich archive of letters, photos, and oral histories which preserves Katrina's life story has been a valuable resource for historians of early twentieth-century Palestine and its diaspora.[1] Nadim Bawalsa employs a collection of eighty letters documenting a family conflict taking place between Ramallah and California as a lens onto the social lives of non-elite residents of Bethlehem and Ramallah, attitudes towards Palestinian national identity, and the renegotiation of gender roles in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s.[2] Sarah Gualtieri opens her study on Arab California with an overview of Katrina's life, depicting her as emblematic of "a new kind of transnational immigration history" which sheds light on "the mutability of the concept of home, the attachment to multiple national identities, and the processes of Arab-Latino/a interaction."[3] Gualtieri draws on oral history interviews with Katrina conducted by her daughter and granddaughter in the 1970s as she reflects on the way "state documents efface women's complex work lives."[4] Gualtieri notes that while Katrina's border-crossing card stated "none" next to occupation, her oral histories reveal "her crucial involvement in the family store."[5] I draw on these interviews to extrapolate her memories of girlhood and youth in Bethlehem's diaspora in Kyiv and Saltillo, and trace her construction of an entrepreneurial career and identity. I present this in parallel with Victoria's memoir *Mis 100 Años De Vida: Chilena Nacida en Belen* [My 100 Years of Life: A Chilean Born in Bethlehem], written in Spanish at the age of one hundred in 2005. My analysis of this testimony marks

the first academic study of Victoria's memoir, illuminating a rich life history that significantly contributes to our understanding of girlhood and family dynamics in 1910s and 1920s Bethlehem, and the pivotal social and economic roles Palestinian women played in the diaspora. As a woman's account of the transnationalism that underpinned many merchant families lives before the Nakba, Victoria's memoir is a notable addition to the canon of memoirs of Palestinian individuals who lived through the late Ottoman and/or Mandate periods, such as Ibrahim Abu Lughod, Salman Abu Sitta, Wasif Jawhariyya, Hala Sakakini, Edward Said, Fadwa Touqan, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Yusuf Sayigh.[6]

My reliance on memoirs and oral history interviews requires discussion of how we understand memory when using it to construct historical knowledge and its contemporary significance. The question of memory is particularly pertinent in the Palestinian context, as the Nakba of 1947–49, when at least 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee and around 15,000 were killed by Zionist militias, brutally changed the course of Palestinian lives, collective identity, and memories of pre-1948.[7] Zionist settler colonial dispossession, violence, and ethnic cleansing—ongoing since the Mandate years[8]—have prevented the return of Palestinians to their ancestral lands and properties, making "Palestinian memory . . . particularly poignant because it struggles with and against a still much-contested present."[9] Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di argued that "Palestinian memory is, by dint of its preservation and social production under the conditions of its silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident memory, counter-memory. It contributes to a counter-history."[10] There is also the question about the power of Palestinian memory at the individual and collective level, as "making memories public affirms identity, tames trauma, and asserts Palestinian political and moral claims to justice, redress, and the right to return."[11]

In 1977, Sherna Gluck made the case for oral history as a form of feminist practice and resistance, reflecting that, "Women are creating a new history (and) affirming that our everyday lives are history."[12] While Palestinian girls' and women's subjectivities, spoken and written in their own words in the early twentieth century in both Palestine and its diaspora, have traditionally been elided from top-down history writing, they form a substantial part of the oral history record of the Nakba due to the approach of historians, sociologists, and anthropologists such as Nahla Abdo, Lila Abu-Lughod, Diana Allan, Rochelle Davis, Nafez Nazzal, Nur Masalha, Ahmad Sa'di, and Rosemary Sayigh.[13] Describing knowledge production in the face of

erasure, Nur Masalha contends that the preservation of memory through the recording of oral histories served as an "emergency science" by substituting material knowledge destroyed and stolen during the Nakba.[14] Rochelle Davis also advocates for the value of oral histories, arguing that "writing history requires understanding not just what happened, but also what it meant and means to the people who experienced it."[15]

GIRLHOOD IN BETHLEHEM'S MERCHANT COMMUNITIES

In his seminal social history of peasant and merchant communities in Jabal Nablus between 1700 and 1900, Beshara Doumani traces the rise of merchants and their impact on rural-urban integration and the emergence of a diverse political landscape underpinned by new social relations. By establishing non-elite Palestinians as agents of transformation in Palestinian history, he presents a vibrant society driven by innovative merchant enterprise to refute the "stagnation" narrative of late Ottoman Palestine as the passive recipient of modernizing outside forces. Bethlehem has largely evaded attention from Doumani, Khalidi, and Tamari's social histories of late Ottoman Palestine which tend to focus on larger towns such as Jerusalem, Nablus, Yaffa, and Haifa due to their religious, political, and economic importance.[16] While Jacob Norris's study of Jubrail Dabdoub is the most substantive inquiry to date into family and community dynamics in Bethlehem's merchant community in the late Ottoman period, it focuses exclusively on the male migratory experience.[17] This article thus shifts focus to *women* in Bethlehem's transnational merchant community as drivers of change whose migratory and commercial enterprises transformed social and economic life in the diaspora. My focus on the family environment is rooted in a social history practice which sees small units of society, such as the family, as microcosms of their surrounding culture which, as articulated by Iris Agmon, make them highly "sensitive to social change and cultural conventions."[18]

Katrina and Victoria were both born in the Farahiyya quarter, close to the Church of the Nativity, and into a community of merchant families which transformed Bethlehem economically and culturally through their transnational business ventures from the 1860s onwards. Of the six hundred thousand people who had left Greater Syria for the Americas between 1860–1920,[19] ten thousand came from Palestine, predominantly from Bethlehem and surrounding hill towns such as Beit Sahour and Beit Jala.[20] As Norris has shown, the intracommunal competition for untapped markets, creation of new transnational family constellations and trade networks, strategic crafting of the holy

land brand, and liberal immigration policies led them to pioneer early trade routes and play "a central role in forging the first Arab diaspora."[21] In a relatively short space of time, migration became central to the political economy of Bethlehem and part of the everyday experience.

The expansion of the Sa'ade and Kattán businesses overseas is representative of how Bethlehemite merchant families restructured their commercial and marriage strategies at the turn of the century. Sometime before 1905, Katrina's father, Abdullah, and uncle, Yacoub, moved to Kyiv to join a community of Orthodox Bethlehemite merchant families whose social and business networks were closely interwoven with the church. Elias Kattán pioneered the route to Kiev and in 1882 opened a store selling olive wood and mother-of-pearl. He also secured a high-value contract to "supply all the churches in the whole of Ukraine with incense (*bakhour*) . . . from Singapore and Yemen."[22] Katrina's father Abdullah traded products such as zaatar and incense wholesale,[23] while Yacoub, who owned a souvenir store in Jerusalem, opened a branch in Kyiv selling religious articles such as rosaries and icons to churches and monasteries, in addition to oregano oil from his mill in Palestine.[24] The brothers obtained success quickly and brought both families over the following year to live in separate apartments in the same building. Yacoub's sons "alternate[d] staying in Russia and taking care of the store in Jerusalem," illustrating the economic and physical presence diasporic merchant families maintained in Palestine.[25]

Katrina's second cousin, Mary Sa'ade, who was born in Bethlehem in 1926, recalled a story passed down to her that attests to the social ties between Bethlehem families in Kyiv and their prominent social position and their economic standing. "Once the Greek Patriarch from Syria came to Kiev to crown or install the Patriarch of Russia. The Kattáns had a big party for him, attended by the Sa'ades and all the families."[26] The Kattáns financial ability to host the party and their connections with religious figures indicate that the Bethlehemite community in Kyiv enjoyed a substantial degree of material and cultural capital. It also suggests that merchant families in the diaspora reproduced forms of religious patronage that, as Norris has shown, were a central part of the rising merchant class's economic and civic activities in Bethlehem.[27]

Several studio portraits taken in Kyiv between 1910 and 1913 capture the material evidence of the Sa'ade family's wealth and ascendant class position. As portrait photography boomed in late Ottoman Palestine among the new urbanized middle classes,[28] it also

served a critical point of connection for those in the diaspora. Houda Kassatly has described how photographs enabled family members back home to "see" loved ones in the diaspora, easing anxiety and sadness about the unknown and the distance between them.[29] Studio portraits served to "give shape to [migrants'] lives" and crafted "smoothed-out" narratives of success in which "any difficulties [were] erased or placed out of frame."[30] Photography was also a source of leisure and creativity for men and women across the region, and the diaspora as seen through what Lucie Ryzova terms as the "specific visual genre" of dressing up was ubiquitous in young women's photo albums in early and mid-century Egypt.[31]

Figure 1: Katrina and Na'ame Sa'ade, Kiev, ca. 1910. Source: The Katrina Sa'ade Collections, PBA.

The photograph of Katrina and her sister Na'ame, taken in 1910 when Katrina was ten years old, presents them as young fashionable women, though their height indicates their young age (fig. 1). Their physical closeness is emphasized by the narrowness of the frame, and their closely intertwined arms communicate the intimacy and companionship of sisters. Katrina's lace collar trim, jeweled broach, the ribbons in her plaits, and bows on her shoes, along with Na'ame's

parasol and hat, their handbags with elegant chain handles and the ornate furniture pushed into the frame, nod to early twentieth-century women's bourgeoise styles of dress and interior trends, and signal the girls' inclusion in a refined social milieu in Kyiv. Two other photographs from this period exist in the Planet Bethlehem Archive: a group family portrait and a portrait of Katrina's three brothers, dressed in three-piece suits and sitting/standing with their parents. In the latter image, Katrina's mother Mariam is dressed comparatively simply in a white shirt and long skirt with a necklace as the only embellishment, emphasizing the "dressed up" feel of Katrina and Na'ame's portrait.

Katrina's memories of her childhood in Kyiv dwell mostly on the family's prosperity, leisure activities, and her schooling. She stated, "I really enjoyed Russia, really. It was nice."[32] Everyday life was smoothed by the presence of servants who helped maintain their "big, beautiful house,"[33] and she and her siblings and cousins played outside, as they "jumped rope and ran," often near Saint Nicholas Church, which was near to their home. Long days were spent at school where she learnt Russian: "We used to go in the morning and didn't come back until four or five in the evening."[34] Girls and boys were taught separately with "the girls up the stairs and the boys down the stairs. We didn't see each other. The boys played on one side of the school and the girls played on the other."[35] In their leisure time, she recalled skiing and ice-skating in winter and spending summers at their beach house in Northern Kyiv.

> [W]e used to go down by the beach and the big, big markets there. My father had a big home there. . . . We would go swimming in the water. They had boats to take you around from one little town to another with those boats. We used to have fun, but I don't know; it's hard to remember when you leave a place for long time. You know what I mean?[36]

Katrina's honesty about the nebulousness of memory in an interview from 1971 touches on the issue of reliability when using oral histories and memoirs, given that "the passing of time creates distortions, fosters nostalgia, makes repression easier, and threatens us with forgetfulness."[37] Immediately following this reflection, she reflects on the family's departure from Kyiv in 1913 amidst political turmoil, inflation, and several assassinations of foreigners in Kyiv. From one sentence to the next, the Sa'ade family dramatically loses their wealth

and assets, saved only by Katrina's father's property in Bethlehem, which prevented them from starving. Katrina recalled,

> When we were in Russia, we were wealthy, oh yes they had lots of money alright. When the family ran away from Russia they left all of the money, all of the property and the business they used to have. They just run away without anything but a little money they have in the trunk, paper money. But, it didn't do them any good because after they killed the king [tsar] the money wasn't good any more. They lost lots, if my father didn't have any property in Palestine we would be starving in Palestine. . . . After you leave the town everything belonged to Russia now. Don't forget Palestine, everyone believed in Palestine, now they lose their property if nobody from the family stay there to take care of it. If it wasn't for my sister Na'ame living in the house my father have, we would have lost it a long time ago. After the Jewish come to the country, really you know, it's not yours anymore. It belongs to the people who come in.[38]

In this oral history recording, memories of her family's departure from Kyiv flow immediately into the repercussions of 1948, when Na'ame's decision to live in the family home resulted in the house staying within the family. In contrast to the details of the family's departure from Kyiv and impoverishment on the eve of World War I, the subsequent personal tragedies Katrina would endure in Mexico—her first marriage, economic challenges in the 1920s and 1930s, a divorce from her second husband—along with her knowledge of the Nakba, her memories of Kyiv read as a time of learning, play, happiness, safety, and security. It is notable that her memories are not idealized, as she also mentions trouble at school, family disagreements, and curfews in Kyiv. In other interviews, she also speaks generally about the weight of parental power in Palestine: "You know, the girls in our country always stays with her family and listens to them. Whatever they want, she agrees with."[39]

While Katrina's oral histories attest to a childhood shaped by the diaspora, the memoir of Victoria Kattán provides insights into girlhood in early twentieth-century Bethlehem. She wrote warmly of her parents, recalling that they created an atmosphere of "respect and love" at home for their ten children.[40] She described her father as "a tender and . . . just man" who "loved very much every one of his

children, especially the youngest ones, to whom he would give a lot of gifts."[41] Victoria's father's firm specialized in chamois leather, incense, and mother of pearl for the production of rosaries sold in Europe, and the export of oranges to England from his land in Jaffa.[42] Victoria's older brothers established a branch of the family business in Omdurman, Sudan, in the first decade of the twentieth century, before Victoria and her sister Josephine's marriages in the 1920s extended the family's network into Cairo and Santiago de Chile.

A substantial part of Victoria's childhood took place during World War I, though her memoir only briefly attests to this. Describing the shelling of the town in 1918, she recalled, "I was ten years old and those sensations of noise, uncertainty, and fear were recorded in my mind forever."[43] Her description of her upbringing focuses predominantly on post-war Bethlehem as a cocoon in which education and the family sphere formed the contours of her world and source of entertainment.

> For those years there were no cinemas in Bethlehem, neither theatres, nor other enjoyments apart from home. The center of our daily life was the school and the family. The only thing that could have marred my childhood and teenage age was the rigidity of the education and lack of freedom; something that, in the end, I don't remember having affected me then. However, now from the distance and after a long time I become aware. Especially by the contrast that comes by comparing that time with the present time, in which almost a hundred years later, live my grandchildren and great-grandchildren.[44]

Victoria's memoir provides key details about the ways girls of her class experienced their education and spent their free time. Recalling daily life at the age of fifteen, she wrote, "In 1923, we were young and happy. We went to school with our uniforms with the skirt below the knee and the socks touching the skirt; hair long and free with braids."[45] Like all of her sisters, she attended the French Sisters of Saint Joseph school where she was a "very good student."[46] She recalled, "I liked to study and be the first one in the group, especially in French and Arabic language",[47] and took pride in her aptitude for mathematics, a skill which she reflected "has been so helpful in my life."[48] After school she learnt the piano, and she and her sisters would come together "to enjoy . . . long discussions about different topics and playing the game of dice 'El-Kalat.' "[49] She described the paradox that "in spite of having

decided to start a family so young, I had no training in housework; I don't recall ever having done any cooking, although I did like sewing and weaving." The focus on play, learning, and discussion in girlhood and youth suggests that girls in Bethlehem's merchant families had substantial freedoms and opportunities to develop a range of skills, a strong foundation of knowledge and education, and self-confidence due to supportive family environments. They were not being directly prepared for domestic work and motherhood as accounts of upper-class girlhood and youth in Greater Syria have emphasized.

While she did not recall experiencing it as such at the time, in hindsight she reflected that the social and cultural boundaries created by the family and her strict Catholic education resulted in a lack of personal autonomy. She does not expand on what that lack of freedom felt like, or what it prevented her from doing, but it chimes with the point made by Katrina about the lack of girls' independence in decision-making. While the statements have a different emotional register, Katrina's statement suggests personal suffering because of these dynamics, while Victoria's is a reflection in hindsight. We can ascertain that girls' behaviors, desires, and ambitions were, like elsewhere around the world in the early twentieth century, confined by their parents' outlooks and interests.

Women's capabilities and responsibilities, access to education, participation in public life and nation-building projects, and the dynamics of family and marital life were key elements of Nahdawi[50] debates about social reform, modernization, and nationalism in Greater Syria and Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The image and meanings of "the new woman" that emerged out of these debates has been the subject of considerable study since the 1980s.[51] Writing on the elite women's movement in Palestine, Ellen Fleishman described the production of modern womanhood as a "fluid, contradictory, multiple and complex" concept anchored in nation-building responsibilities vis-a-vis maternalism, marriage, and domestic science.[52]

A comparison of Katrina and Victoria's memories of home and their upbringing, with those of Anbara Salam Khalidi (b. 1897) and Wadad Makdisi Cortas (b.1909), both born in Beirut in the same period as Katrina and Victoria, show that while debates about womanhood permeated upper-class households, they were not mentioned in Katrina and Victoria's memoirs. Both Anbara and Wadad cited the home as a positive and formative space for their personal and political development, with Wadad writing that "the flow of visitors and conversation in my parents' house"—which included prominent

female writers, teachers, doctors and advocates of women's liberty, such as May Ziadeh and Julia Dimechkie—was where she "first learned of the emancipation of women."[53] Such messages do not come through in the memoirs of Katrina and Victoria, thereby reflecting the fact that these were largely elite debates that were not taking place in upwardly mobile middle-class merchant communities. This said, we can identify different markers of a progressive, transnational social environment which gave young girls the tools, education, and confidence to build lives abroad and become economically independent.

MARRIAGE AND MIGRATION

Not long after the Sa'ade family's return to Bethlehem in 1913, Katrina's parents arranged for her engagement to Emilio Kabande, the eighteen-year-old son of a Bethlehemite merchant family settled in Saltillo, Northern Mexico. Attesting to the new transnational endogamous marriage patterns among Bethlehem's merchant families, the Kabande family's move to Saltillo in 1903 was instigated by the engagements of three Kabande sisters to men from the Dabdoub family.[54] The family's great economic success in cotton and textile production led to the Kabande family legend that "if they dropped a gold coin, they wouldn't pick it up."[55] The Kabandes' success was emblematic of the promise and myth surrounding Latin America. Pastor noted that "if Amrika was a land of plenty, Latin America, Amrika al Jnubiya, was narrated as a place to discover and conquer."[56]

This match came at a critical time, as the Sa'ade family struggled economically due to the loss of their wealth and assets in Kyiv and the dire economic situation in wartime Palestine. In arranging this upward economic match for Katrina, Katrina's parents spared her the experience of wartime Palestine, recorded in the diaries and memoirs of Palestinian soldiers and civilians as a time of "extreme poverty, famine, and disease"[57] caused by the Ottoman policy of *seferberlik* (forced conscription) which led to "the breakdown of communal solidarities."[58]

Cecilia Baeza shows that endogamous marriage played a significant role in the socialization of Palestinians in Honduras, Brazil, and Chile at the turn of the century, stating that "until the early 1930s, more than 90 percent of the marriages within the Palestinian community in Latin America were ethnically endogamous, that is, between Arabs."[59] Bawalsa argued that these marriages served as much to reinforce social and cultural cohesiveness in the diaspora as being financially beneficial (in the form of remittances, the transference of financial responsibility of children, and in some cases, through the

formation of business partnerships).[60] He argued that "re-creating the *hamula* (tribe) and the *haara* (neighborhood) in the diaspora through marriage within the extended family or religious community meant that patrimonial ties expanded and persisted."[61]

Katrina saw photos of Emilio before she was accompanied to Saltillo by Emilio's brother and wife who were returning after a visit to Bethlehem. They were married in August 1914 in a large wedding Katrina described as

> very wonderful . . . like [an] Arabic wedding. Many Arabic people were there. Many of his uncles, aunts, cousins, were going back home to the old country, but because of the wedding they decided to stay. It was good they did because there was trouble in the old country. The war was in our country and spreading everywhere.[62]

Diasporic families like the Kabandes contributed to the formation, on both sides of the Mexican-Californian border, of what Gualtieri has described as a "Syrian American culture that was Arabized and Latinized—a culture that was highly flexible and mobile, one that revolved around family networks, religious practices, work, and leisure."[63] This is evident in the Kabandes' reproduction of Palestinian wedding traditions in a Mexican context, their fortified family networks and sociability, their choice of Spanish over Arabic as their main language (including the Latinization of names), and their adoption of Mexican foods (*frijoles*),[64] fashions, and crafts as displayed in the portrait below (fig. 2).

Figure 2: Katrina Sa'ade (far left) with members of the Kabande family, ca. 1916. Source: The Katrina Sa'ade Collections, PBA.

Shortly after the wedding, the Kabandes moved to San Pedro de las Colonias, Coahuilia, where Katrina lived until 1919. She described them as a "good family . . . well known over there" and recalled a warm and sociable environment with many relatives and children and "a lot of parties and social events."[65] She stated that they took "good care" of her and made lasting relationships with the women in the family, including her "mother-in-law [who] used to fight with everybody, but not with me. If she started complaining, I wouldn't pay attention."[66] Female socialization was a central part of her daily life as Katrina and Emilio's female relatives raised their children at home. She learnt Spanish in these five years, which enabled her to conduct business in Mexico later in her life, and also learned to crochet and embroider, crucial skills that served as a springboard to begin her commercial activities in California years later. "How did I learn how to crochet and knit? When I was in Mexico, I used to have a slip or nightgown that had crochet all around, and . . . someone was doing it. So, I started with it. The family would s[it] and talk all the time."[67] She explained how she learned from observation and was motivated by her enjoyment of learning the skill. "Everything that I put in my mind, I do it, crochet and all. . . . I watched what they did and learned to crochet. You have to have the desire to do it."[68]

Two years into her time in Mexico, Katrina was faced with two tragedies, the deaths of Emilio in a train crash in 1916 and of her one-

year-old daughter Elena just six months later from the flu. Her recorded memory of events is hazy, remembering this period as "seem[ing] like a dream; like it didn't happen to me."[69] She mentions the circumstances of the train crash several times throughout the five interviews but gives no details about her relationship with Emilio, speaking instead about life in the family home (entirely omitting details of the outside environment or social life in the town) and relationships with his female relatives. It is unclear exactly what this silence reflects (grief, repressed emotion, or the remnants of a dissatisfaction with the union), but Kathy Kenny, Katrina's granddaughter, recalled that Katrina kept Emilio's watch chain for the rest of her life—likely a sign of the significance of their relationship and her continuing attachment to him and this period of her life.[70] Katrina continued to live with the Kabandes until 1919, when she left for Long Beach, California, to live with her sister Jamila and her husband Jamil Afana. Kathy Kenny believed that the years of her marriage in the Kabande home "must have been a very happy time" in Katrina's life, as she remained very close to the family, returning to visit several times throughout her lifetime including with her grandchildren in later years.[71]

In Palestine, in 1923, at the age of fifteen, Victoria met Nicolás Hirmas, a young man from a Bethlehem family living in Chile. Nicolás's father Pacífico had made a fortune in Chile in the late nineteenth century and was returning to Bethlehem for the first time in thirty years to introduce his sons to the wider family.[72] Victoria and Nicolás met at the large and "modern" Hirmas family house as Victoria visited her friend and neighbor Emilia Hirmas.[73] Their initial meeting was underscored by anxiety for Victoria, as "our family was Catholic and I knew that my mother would get upset if she knew I had been in a house with an Orthodox tradition."[74] This reflects Baeza's contention that endogamous marriages of this time were designed to be so intricately compatible that marriages between two different religious denominations were rare.[75] Victoria's anxious visit to an Orthodox household reveals cultural and generational tensions surrounding the strict norms around religious boundaries and endogamous marriages of the time. Despite her awareness of her mother's disapproval, Victoria's willingness to visit the house demonstrates a strong sense of autonomy and critical thinking about social norms. She left the house in a rush after meeting him but recalled that "I liked him from that first moment" of their meeting, further underscoring her individual agency in this encounter.[76]

They crossed paths at the daily mass held at the Church of Santa Catherine where both families were in attendance. Victoria's sister told

her that "one of those American young men" was "looking at me [Victoria] closely every day" at the service.[77] Nicolás proposed shortly after, but the perceived problem of Nicolás's Orthodox denomination, assumed on the basis that the Hirmas family branch in Bethlehem was Orthodox, led Victoria's father to turn down the proposal. Evidence was quickly gathered to prove that Nicolás had been baptized as a Catholic in Chile, and once photos of Nicolás taking communion were provided the proposal was accepted.[78] Victoria recalled feeling happy, delighting in his attractive looks, their closeness in age, and his kind demeanor:

> I was very lucky; many young girls were married off to older or unattractive men, but that was not my case. . . . My husband was very good looking, a young man of nineteen, only three years older than me. He had finished high school and was very pleasant and cultured.[79]

Attention to her emotional life and references to mutual attraction and love comprise a significant part of Victoria's account of her courtship with Nicolás and their wedding.

They spent time together during their engagement, but their communication was limited because he did not speak French or Arabic and she did not speak Spanish, meaning, "It was hard for us to understand each other."[80] They married in Bethlehem in 1924 and set off for their honeymoon after a month of celebrations. She was "excited, although a little bit anxious about the imminent separation from my family and the place I had lived all my life."[81] Their first stop was Cairo for a month-long stay with Victoria's sister Josephine and her husband Nicolás Barbagallo before their onward journey to Paris and finally Chile. En route to Cairo, Victoria's trousseau, containing "several skirt suits for everyday wear and for travelling," which had been made specifically for the trip by "the best dressmakers in Jerusalem," was stolen.[82] Josephine made her a set of new clothes which Victoria recalled were "almost sleeveless," which caused a stir when she arrived in Santiago.[83] When she arrived, she found that "Everyone was saying, 'Look, she has come from Palestine wearing sleeveless clothes. It was something too modern for Chile, where women only wore long sleeves."[84] In this reflection, she frames herself as an agent of modernity, transporting Art Deco fashions and notions of female respectability from Cairo to Chile.

It is unclear if those who remarked on the style perceived its "modernness" positively or negatively, but their exclamation about her coming from Palestine shows how Victoria's presence shaped local understandings of Palestine as a "modern" country. The fact that it was an unremarkable style for Victoria in Cairo suggests that she may have been accustomed to seeing this style in Bethlehem, which was plausible given the merchant community's experimentation with state-of-the-art styles in architecture and interior design.[85] What it certainly shows is that in the eyes of her older sister, an almost sleeveless style was suitable for Victoria as a young married woman traveling through Europe on her way to Chile and who would meet members of Bethlehem's diasporic community along the way. Perhaps Victoria had not worn this style in Bethlehem, but her status as a newly married woman traveling to the "new world" offered the opportunity to craft a contemporary aesthetic identity that drew on circulating global styles.

Josephine also encouraged Victoria to cut her long hair in order to "arrive in America with a more modern hairstyle, like the women of Egypt and Europe," equating Cairo with European cities in setting and diffusing trends.[86] Her attempts to persuade Victoria to construct a new visual identity *before* her arrival is not framed in terms of "catching up" with modern styles in America but rather to set them herself. Josephine's enthusiasm was not shared by Victoria's husband Nicolás, who advised her against cutting it, stating that "in Chile all the women have long hair."[87] In Cairo, Victoria agreed with him, but in Paris a striking scene at the theater in which a man cut a woman's hair changed her mind. She noted that "after going to the Folies Bergère show, I mentioned to my husband that I should have cut my hair in Egypt," demonstrating that, through travel, exposure to new styles changed her tastes.[88] Her change of mind exemplifies her independence of thought and open mindedness, and her ability to express it to Nicolás reveals that at this early point in their marriage, they discussed differences of opinion openly. The memoirs of Wadad Makdisi Cortas and Anbara Salam Khalidi, who traveled to Cairo, Paris, and London from Beirut in the 1920s, similarly described the impact of travel as instigating reflection and comparison of previously held and newly encountered gender norms and roles.[89]

Victoria depicted their time in Paris as a carefree experience and the first significant period of time they spent together.

> We were young, and the most important thing was to get to know each other and enjoy that period of our lives. I really enjoyed my stay in that city. I knew the language and I could

> understand everything wherever I went, whether at shows, in the street or in the shops. Nicolás did not understand as much, but it is impossible not to have a good time in Paris.[90]

Her command of French enabled her to engage with the city in a way that her husband was unable to, and it is probable that Victoria handled more of the day-to-day communication for this reason. We get a sense of her pride in her skill and delight at her capacity to communicate on behalf of them both. As the couple traveled on from Paris, the Kattán family's transnational network of friends and family infused unknown places and cultures with a sense of familiarity, which went some way in alleviating Victoria's increasing homesickness. In France, the couple stayed with the Abuphele family in Versailles and the Dabdoub family nearby.

As the length of the journey and the imminence of arriving in a new context set in, Victoria found the month-long passage from to Buenos Aires a challenging time. She recalled feeling "happy, but at the same time I was thinking a lot about Bethlehem and my family. I was getting further and further away from them and really missing them."[91] Her homesickness was compounded by a sense of alienation from on-board cultural festivities, such as when Nicolás and a large group of Chileans celebrated the National Day of Chile. She described how the group "wanted to 'baptize' Nicolás with champagne and I got upset because I did not understand what was going on."[92] Her emotional response to this scenario indicates her apprehensiveness about arriving in a destination so far from home and the task of adapting to a new context, culture, and family environment. She also felt "melancholic and dizzy," as she was unknowingly pregnant.[93]

Once in Santiago, the couple moved in with Nicolás's family and Victoria immersed herself in family life and motherhood in the Palestinian-Chilean community. In contrast to the Kabande family in Mexico, she recalled that the only initial negative outcome "was that it was hard for us to learn Spanish because the Hirmas wives and other families originally from the Holy Land, would speak Arabic among us."[94] This barrier was surmounted later to the extent that she wrote her memoir in Spanish rather than Arabic, reflecting her fluency and reconstitution of her identity as Chilean, conveyed by the memoir's subtitle, *A Chilean Born in Bethlehem*. Her choice of wording illustrates the contentions of Cecilia Baeza, Manzar Foroohar, and Nancy Gonzalez, all of whom have described the high degree of assimilation of Palestinian emigrants in Central and Latin America following their economic success which came after anti-immigrant sentiment and

legislation through the 1930s. The fact that her national "Chilean" identity took precedence confirms Baeza's statement that "Hyphenated identities do not exist in the multi-racial, multi-ethnic societies of Latin America; national identification comes first."[95] By asserting her Bethlehemite birthplace, heritage, and lineage alongside her Chilean identity, she evidences Gonzalez's point that "the additional Palestinian identification has never ceased to be important"[96] for Palestinians in Latin America who have experienced the continued colonization and devastation of Palestine by the Israeli regime from afar, including its attempt to erase and deny Palestinian identity.

Victoria and Katrina's writings of this period afford us a glimpse into the transnational marriage arrangements for Bethlehem's merchant community in the late Ottoman and early Mandate period. That both women reflected positively on this transition and recounted that they were welcomed into warm extended family environments in Mexico and Chile indicates that this was a supported process which sought to ensure the well-being of girls. Far from being solely an economic transaction, Katrina's marriage enabled her to escape an impoverished wartime Palestine for a dynamic and economically stable context which brought new opportunities and set her life on a different course. Both accounts highlight the transformative effects of travel and migration. For Katrina, this involved her immersion in an "Arabized and Latinized"[97] culture that fused Bethlehemite social norms and structures with the adoption of Spanish as the main language and consumption of Mexican food. Her account focuses on the family home where she raised her children, formed strong female relationships, and learnt to embroider and crochet in the ample leisure time that the family enjoyed, presumably earned by the work of the Kabande men (who are largely absent from her account of daily life). Victoria's account of her honeymoon gives detailed insights into how she experienced joy, homesickness, and apprehension over the course of the journey. It shows how she negotiated new freedoms and autonomy as a married woman away from the structures of home, and how she asserted herself with confidence within their early relationship dynamic. She also depicts herself as a carrier of "modern" styles to Santiago de Chile from Cairo as she refined her image ahead of her arrival.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY

Writing predominantly on emigrants from Mount Lebanon and Syrian localities, Naff, Khater, Shakir, Fahrenthold, and Gualtieri have shown how migration changed the terms about womanhood, women's work,

and respectability as financial necessity in the *mahjar*, which led to women work outside of the home as peddlers, factory or domestic workers, or joint or sole owners of businesses.[98] Alixa Naff's vast oral history study shows that shop-owning was central to the creation of an assimilated Syrian middle class in inter-war America[99] and that for female entrepreneurs, "immersion in the working world and a taste of assertiveness slowly eroded the conventions that restricted women."[100] Addressing the elision of women from migratory economic success stories, Evelyn Shakir reflects on her mother's work as a Lebanese textiles factory owner in Boston by asserting that "as an entrepreneur, my mother was true to an immigrant tradition, but one usually associated with men."[101]

Katrina's move to Long Beach, California, marked the beginning of her working life. She worked in her sister Jamila's store, the Holy City Bazaar, which she ran with her husband, selling devotional objects, textiles, and other objects from Palestine (fig. 3). Katrina also shared household responsibilities with Jamila who bore a heavy workload, evidencing Naff's observation that working emigrant "Syrian" women's lives in North America were "characterized by daily toil."[102] "She [Jamila] had to do all the work and I went to help her wash the floor. Her mother-in-law said, 'There's work to be done, you have to do it.' "[103] Reflecting the stark contrast between her lifestyle in Mexico with the Kabandes, she noted, "We didn't have servants, there was work to be done and we did it."[104]

Figure 3: Jamil and Jamila Afana, George Afana at the Holy City Bazaar, Long Beach, CA, ca. 1915. Source: The Katrina Sa'ade Collections, PBA.

A chance encounter at the store led to Katrina increasing her contribution to the family's finances and developing her sewing and craft skills which became in demand.

> A lady came in with a hand-embroidered blouse that was torn in several places. Having never used a needle and thread before, I threaded a needle and figured out how to stitch it back up for her. To weave it like the fabric was woven I just got it from my head – nobody taught me. My gosh, when she saw it, she was crazy about it. No foolin'. She paid $12 (real) and the lady said I should have charged more. I thought 10 reals was plenty, but they paid me more. [105]

This episode led to more paid work as her neighbor Yacoub Hanania, who owned the store across the road from the Holy Bazaar, requested her to make "knitted clothes for the dolls and other knitted things. . . . I could make dozens of things. I don't know how he could sell that much." [106] Katrina also took on work from an American neighbor to make beaded designs. Although she had no experience working with beads, she recalled that she just "put them on the table and started doing it," working around the clock.[107]

> "I did it at the store and when I got home, I would start doing it. He paid me for dozens and dozens. Really I worked all the time. I always found something that needed to be done. Frankly I surprised myself. . . . Everything that I put in my mind, I did it, crochet and all."[108]

She describes herself in this period as highly capable, energetic, and determined to learn new skills, indicating that in addition to economic gain, she took satisfaction in expanding her skill set.

In 1921, Katrina married Suleiman Farhat, a young peddler from a farming background in Ramallah, to whom she had been introduced by Jamila and Jamil. "She talked me into it. They thought it was a good idea to marry him. They said he's from our country, it's better than marrying someone we don't know. So I decided, well everything would be all right."[109] Plausibly due to the difference in their background, her parents sent a letter advising against the marriage, but it was already done by the time the letter arrived. The couple and their growing family embarked on what would be a highly

mobile decade, moving between Hermosillo, Baja California, Jerome (Arizona), Los Angeles, and South San Francisco, setting up and closing down grocery and five and dime stores as opportunities arose and waned.[110]

Katrina's account of managing their first store in Hermosillo emphasizes that Katrina was the enterprising business mind of the couple and therefore responsible for buying merchandise at the border, as Suleiman "did not know what to do."[111]

> The customs people would ask me why are you doing this? It's the man's job to do that. Well, I say, I have to do it because there is nobody else to do it for me. And I would not have the proper papers but they would take pity on me and let me bring it in anyway.[112]

Katrina criticized Suleiman's lack of business acumen and the assumption that he would have taken the leading role in the business given his gender, asking, "Do you think he made the money? No. He came from New York, he didn't know about business. He was there only for a short time because he didn't make it."[113]

Katrina described the time in Hermosillo as frenetic as she juggled shop work and childcare, supporting Naff's observation that "store and home were commonly a staircase or door apart and there was much shuttling back and forth"[114] as women fulfilled care-taking and commercial responsibilities simultaneously. Describing her workload and responsibilities to her daughter in one interview, she remembered

> I was like a crazy nut helping, selling and doing things because he didn't understand the language at all. I had to be in the store and back at the house. . . . Every day I was in the store at 8 o'clock. I was up at 6 o'clock. I used to call [George], fix the bed and give him his breakfast. Trying to fix something for lunch, give you [Mary] a bath and give you something to eat and put you to bed. At 8 o'clock I go to the store. About 10 or 11 o'clock, maybe you wake up but you play. You don't holler and you don't cry, you get used to it. . . . Other people would try to feed you and do for you, but you said, "I don't want it. I want my Mommy." No fooling, I go down and I feed you and I ate a little bite so quick. I change your diaper and put you in bed.[115]

Recalling the transient and financially challenging lifestyle with Suleiman in the early 1920s, Katrina repeated the comparison of her life with the Kabandes and with Suleiman stating, "In Mexico we had a maid and a babysitter, but in the US we were our own servants."[116]

Victoria's working life began a decade later, as her husband became ill with Multiple Sclerosis and by the late 1930s was unable to continue running the family textiles business. His illness served as the catalyst that propelled Victoria into her career as an entrepreneur. She recalled her instinctive feeling that "nobody had to tell me anything. Nobody asked me to do it; but at a certain moment I saw clearly that I had to help, and I did so."[117] A the age of thirty, with a loan from her father-in-law, she opened Hirmas' Silk Business, which sold silk by the meter and enabled her "to take control of my life and provide for the economic needs of my husband and children."[118]

Victoria cited her education in Bethlehem and immersion in a business environment in the Kattán and Hirmas family homes as preparing her for entrepreneurial activities. "I had a fondness for mathematics from my school days and I had heard conversations about business all my life, as all the men of my family in Bethlehem and later in Chile were dedicated to such activities; this helped me to get started in the world of commerce."[119] She also stated that "the hard time I lived through when I was just sixteen years old" of leaving Bethlehem "strengthened my capacity for facing adversity." Because of her resilience, the challenge of supporting her family "brought out new faces of my personality that up to that moment I did not have the opportunity to develop: being a businesswoman."[120]

She attributed a substantial part of her success to her habit of saving. She had saved since her arrival in Chile and had opened a bank account to aid her in this endeavor. "I was not working but I liked to save. I put into that account some of the money my parents had gifted me on different occasions, or what was left over from the household budget."[121] Her savings of "13,000 pesos" plus the "a three-year loan of 400,000 pesos" resulted in her purchase of "4,000 meters of material at a very good price," as she was able to pay with cash upfront rather than with credit.[122] This proved the turning point in her career which "established [her] in [the] industry" and led to the expansion of "six locations for customer service, selling silk by the meters." [123]

Victoria recalled that she "put all [her] enthusiasm, youth and intelligence into that first business. . . . My shop was always the first one in the neighbourhood to open in the morning."[124] She found that

she took immense pleasure from her new role and responsibilities: "I was working for the first time in my life and I was so happy."[125] She further expanded the business by stocking a new fabric produced by the Said Kàttan branch of the family which featured a unique form of embroidery, later securing exclusive rights to produce the fabric and sell the thread. Reflecting on the position of women at the time in both Palestine and Chile, Victoria noted that

> in truth I was really a pioneer, as a woman working outside the home. In those days women simply didn't work. Among the people I knew, both in Palestine and Chile, it was very odd for a woman to assume the responsibility of maintaining her family, in the 1930s and early '40s – never mind the idea of women working for "personal fulfilment" which would only come to be recognized many years later.[126]

Naff observed that, for women in the *mahjar*, "perhaps nothing effected a change in their lives more than their economic role, both as peddlers and shopkeepers. From it, they gained greater confidence and self-esteem than they had known. They found new strengths to meet new circumstances and developed skills of strategy and execution."[127]

Figure 4: Victoria Kattàn de Hirmas with her husband and children, Santiago, Chile, ca. 1940s. Source: The William Victor Kattan Collections, PBA.

Victoria's acknowledgement of the role of contingency in her unusual situation among her community indicates a willingness within the Hirmas family to adapt to an uncharted model of family life. She did not describe any animosity from friends or family in response to her subverting the usual marital division of labor, and indeed her husband's family network was a crucial source of childcare and capital for starting the business. She rooted this in the "tradition of relying on family support," which "helped a lot in allowing me to work in the business; my children were looked after by a group of family members who loved them, for all the hours their mama was not there."[128]

Her family's encouragement and shared childcare illustrate that achieving prosperity in the diaspora necessitated collective effort: Victoria worked when her husband could not provide, and when she stepped into this role, his family took over her caregiving duties. This dynamic was evidently reinforced by the endogamous nature of family structures in the diaspora which fostered a sense of mutual investment in each other's achievements, ensuring the overall success of the *hamula*, both within the diaspora and in Palestine. Her socioeconomic position was also crucial, as it enabled her to employ Maria Gonzalez, a domestic worker from Southern Chile who stayed with the family for twenty-eight years handling housework and childcare, a luxury that Katrina emphasized she did not have.[129]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the life histories of Katrina Sa'ade and Victoria Kattán illuminate the intersecting dynamics of girlhood, marriage, migration, and entrepreneurship within Bethlehem's diasporic merchant families. I have argued that Bethlehem's merchant class was dynamic, progressive, and socially malleable, in great part due to migration and their experiences abroad. Katrina and Victoria's experiences and agency not only reveal the evolving roles and expectations of women in late Ottoman and early Mandatory Palestine but also demonstrate how transnational migration and marriage served as catalysts for economic independence and selfhood formation among Palestinian women in the Americas. By tracing their journeys and entrepreneurial endeavors, this study underscores the transformative impact of migration on understandings of womanhood, work, and identity within diasporic communities. Moreover, it contributes to a deeper understanding of early twentieth-century Palestinian social life and highlights the agency and resilience of women who played pivotal roles in shaping their own destinies amidst the currents of globalization and mobility of the time. Through their stories, Katrina and Victoria

emerge as trailblazers whose pioneering spirit transcended borders and redefined the possibilities for Palestinian women in the diaspora. Were their trajectories exceptional? Though accounts of their boldness, courage, and autonomy might suggest that they were, they were among a generation of girls who embarked on similar migratory journeys and whose lives were shaped by new cultures, opportunities, and contingency. As Palestinian girlhood and women's migratory experiences deserve to be written into history, it is hoped that greater academic attention will bring their stories to light.

NOTES

[1] This archive has been constructed and preserved by Kathy Kenny, Katrina's granddaughter, and generously shared with researchers. For work on Kathy's engagement with Katrina's life history, see Kathy Kenny, "The Power of Place: Katrina in Five Worlds," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 35 (2008): 5–30. See also Sarah M. A. Gualtieri, *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 96–106.

[2] Nadim Bawalsa, "Trouble with the In-Laws: Family Letters between Palestine and the Americas (1925–1939)," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 47 (2011): 7.

[3] Gualtieri, *Arab Routes*, 3.

[4] Ibid., 24.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *Resistance, Exile and Return Conversations with Hisham Ahmed Fararjah* (Birzeit: Birzeit University, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies, 2003); Salman H. Abu-Sitta, *Mapping My Return: A Palestinian Memoir* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016); Salīm Tamari and Issam Nassar, eds., *The Storyteller of Jerusalem The Life and Times of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904-1908*, trans. Nada Elzeer (Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2014); Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: A Personal Record* (2019, مؤسسة الدراسات الفلسطينية بالاشتراك مع مؤسسة تامر للتعليم المجتمعي); Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta, 1999); Fadwa Tuqan, *A Mountainous Journey: An Autobiography,* ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, trans. Olive Kenny and Naomi Shihab Nye (London: Women's Press, 1990); Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood,* trans. Issa J. Boullata (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995); *Yusuf Sayigh: Arab Economist, Palestinian Patriot; A Fragmented Life Story*, ed. Rosemary Sayigh (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2015).

[7] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), "Dr. Ola Awad, reviews the conditions of the Palestinian people via statistical figures and findings, on the 72nd Annual Commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba," 13 May 2020, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3734.

[8] Nadim Bawalsa has proposed a rethinking of the beginning of the Nakba, tracing it back to 1925 when the British colonial Government of Palestine rendered Palestinians in the diaspora stateless with the Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. See Bawalsa, *Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return before 1948* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022), 2.

[9] Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3.

[10] Ibid., 6.

[11] Ibid., 3.

[12] Sherna Gluck, "What's so Special about Women? Women's Oral History," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 2, no. 2 (1977): 3.

[13] Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha, *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, 1st. (London: Zed Books, 2018); Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (Columbia University Press, 2007); Diana Allan, ed., *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2021); Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, no. 49 (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978); Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2021); Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries: A People's History*, Middle East Series ; No.3 (London: Zed Press, 1979).

[14] Nur Masalha, "Remembering the Palestinian Nakba: Commemoration, Oral History and Narratives of Memory," *Holy Land Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 136.

[15] Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 129.

[16] Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Salīm Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[17] Jacob Norris, *The Lives and Deaths of Jubrail Dabdoub: Or, How the Bethlehemites Discovered Amerka* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023).

[18] Iris Agmon, *Family and Court: Legal Culture and Modernity in Late Ottoman Palestine* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 50.

[19] Kemal H. Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 2 (1985): 185.

[20] Cecilia Baeza Rodriguez, "Les Palestiniens d'Amerique Latine et La Cause Palestienne: Chile, Bresil, Honduras, 1920–2010" (Sciences Po, 2010), 97.

[21] Norris, *Lives and Deaths of Jubrail Dabdoub*, 9.

[22] Nadia Kattan Seikaly, phone interview by Kathy Sa'ade Kenny, 29 July 2008, The Katrina Sa'ade Collections, Katrina Sa'ade Interviews, The Planet Bethlehem Archive, University of Sussex (hereafter PBA).

[23] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 30 May 1975, PBA.

[24] Mary Sa'ade, interview by Kathy Sa'ade Kenny, Southern California, 30 July 2008, PBA.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Norris, *Lives and Deaths of Jubrail Dabdoub*.

[28] See Stephen Sheehi, "Portrait Paths: Studio Photography in Ottoman Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 61 (2015): 23–41.

[29] Houda Kassatly, "Photography and Emigration: A Tenuous Thread," in *On Photography in Lebanon Stories & Essays*, eds. Clémence Cottard Hachem and Nour Salamé (Beirut: Lebanon: Kaph Books, 2018), 153.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Lucie Ryzova, "Boys, Girls, and Kodaks," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 8, no. 2–3 (2015): 239.

[32] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[33] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond, Wyoming, 8 August 1971, PBA.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[36] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond, Wyoming, 8 August 1971, PBA.

[37] Abu-Lughod and Sa'adi, *Nakba*, 17

[38] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 30 May 1975, PBA.

[39] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[40] Victoria Kattán de Hirmas, *Mis 100 Años de Vida Chilena Nacida en Belen* (Santiago de Chile: A&V Comunicaciones, 2005), 17. With thanks to Jonathan Ticher for the translation.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 17, 19.

[43] Ibid., 19.

[44] Ibid., 20.

[45] Ibid., 20–21.

[46] Ibid., 20.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 21.

[49] Ibid., 20.

[50] Nahda refers to the process of Arab cultural and national awakening the occurred between the early nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

[51] These works include Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Ellen L. Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its 'New' Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[52] Fleischmann, *Nation and Its 'New' Women*, 64.

[53] Wadad Makdisi Cortas, *A World I Loved: The Story of an Arab Woman* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2009), 25

[54] Teresa Camacho de Kabande, interview by Kathy Sa'ade Kenny, Guadalajara, 24 January 2009, PBA.

[55] Afif Kabande, interview by Kathy Sa'ade Kenny, 9 February 2009, PBA.

[56] Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 5.

[57] Salīm Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 7.

[58] Ibid., 52.

[59] Cecilia Baeza, "Palestinians in Latin America: Between Assimilation and Long-Distance Nationalism," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43, no. 2 (2014): 61.

[60] Bawalsa, *Transnational Palestine*, 32.

[61] Ibid., 32–33.

[62] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part I, PBA.

[63] Gualtieri, *Arab Routes*, 5.

[64] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part I, PBA.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[67] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part I, PBA.

[68] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[69] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[70] Kathy Sa'ade Kenny, conversation with author, 18 March 2022.

[71] Ibid.

[72] 24.

[73] Ibid., 22.

[74] Ibid., 23.

[75] Baeza, "Les Palestiniens d'Amerique Latine et La Cause Palestinienne," 96.

[76] Kattán de Hirmas, *Mis 100 Años de Vida*, 24.

[77] Ibid., 25.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 27–28

[80] Ibid., 19.

[81] Ibid., 27.

[82] Ibid., 26.

[83] Ibid., 40.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Jacob Norris, "Return Migration and the Rise of the Palestinian Nouveaux Riches, 1870–1925," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 2 (10 April 2017): 60–75.

[86] Ibid., 41.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] See Cortas, *A World I Loved*; and Anbara Salam Khalidi, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist: The Life and Activism of Anbara Salam Khalidi,* trans. Tarif Khalidi (London: Pluto Press, 2013), who traveled to Paris and London in the 1920s.

[90] Kattán de Hirmas, *Mis 100 Años de Vida,* 21–22.

[91] Ibid., 42.

[92] Ibid., 43.

[93] Ibid., 42.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Baeza, "Palestinians in Latin America," 65.

[96] Ibid., 65; Manzar Foroohar, "Palestinians in Central America," 14; Nancy Gonzalez, *Dollar, Dove and Eagle: One Hundred Years of Palestinian Migration to Honduras* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 79–80.

[97] Gualtieri, *Arab Route*, 5.

[98] Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sarah Gualtieri, "Gendering the Chain Migration Thesis: Women and Syrian Transatlantic Migration, 1878–1924," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004): 67–78; Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993); Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997).

[99] Naff, *Becoming American*, 278.

[100] Ibid., 285.

[101] Shakir, *Bint Arab*, 45.

[102] Naff, *Becoming American*, 274.

[103] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond, Wyoming, 8 August 1971, PBA.

[111] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 11 July 1978, part II, PBA.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Naff, *Becoming American*, 274.

[115] Katrina Sa'ade, interview by Mary Bond and Mary Lou Bond, Colorado, 30 May 1975, PBA.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Kattán de Hirmas, *Mis 100 Años de Vida*, 69.

[118] Ibid., 81.

[119] Ibid., 64.

[120] Ibid., 57.

[121] Ibid., 69.

[122] Ibid., 69–70.

[123] Ibid., 69–70.

[124] Ibid., 70.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 68.

[127] Naff, *Becoming American*, 283.

[128] Ibid., 71.

[129] Ibid.