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FROM THE PAMPA TO THE MASHRIQ: ARAB-ARGENTINE PHILANTHROPY NETWORKS[1]

Abstract
This article analyzes the sphere of institutionalized charity operated by Argentines with heritage ties to the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century. This study places women's work at the center of an analysis of local and transnational networks, as well as the fostering of cultural production within the diaspora. In doing so, it reveals women's work as a lens for delineating important connections between diasporic populations in the provinces and the federal capital of Argentina. The philanthropic projects that generated these links also provide insight into the lives and financial choices of other groups—such as rural and proletarian Arab-Argentines—who are often peripheral to *Mahjar* historiography.

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the practice of institutionalized charity enacted by Argentine women with heritage ties to the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century. The fundraising networks that they cultivated provide insight into the links between rural and urban nodes of this diaspora community. In addition, this study calls attention to the realm of women's work, and the gendered dynamics of philanthropy in the Arab-Argentine heritage community. This research contributes to a growing field of scholarship on minority ethnic communities that formed in Argentina following its population boom in the late-nineteenth through early twentieth century. Between 1860 and 1930, some 6.5 million people arrived in Argentina, making it the recipient of more immigrants in proportion to its pre-boom population than anywhere else in the world. While less than three percent of total arrivals (some 100,000 individuals) hailed from the Middle Eastern territory of Ottoman Syria, members of this heritage group could be found in every single Argentine province and territory only a decade into the twentieth century. Through the analysis of periodicals and financial records from philanthropic campaigns, I map a network of

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intercommunicating Arab-Argentines from the federal capital to remote outposts of unincorporated national territories. This article employs a gendered perspective of Arab women's work to link Argentina's cities and countryside.

This perspective is important because in both the fields of Mahjar and Argentine historiography, the city is often rendered in opposition to the "interior" in a way that marginalizes those individuals whose livelihoods are staked in the movement between these spaces. As women in an immigrant minority group, the subjects of this article are doubly marginalized. By contrast, in this article I highlight three distinct facets of Arab women's involvement in the economy and politics of both their diaspora community and the diasporic homeland. First, I examine their role in the construction of ethnic institutions, with particular focus on the example of the Hospital Sirio Libanes (est. 1937) of Buenos Aires. Second, I discuss the role of these women in fostering cultural production within their ethnic community through hosting radio programs and cultivating venues for Arab-Argentine artistic performances. Last, I turn to transnational beneficence projects undertaken by Arab-Argentine women in order to demonstrate that many of these organizations operated across multiple geographic planes in their philanthropic work. I argue that the prestige that women accrued through building national philanthropic networks provided them with the ability to subtly engage with transnational politics in the homeland.

CENTERING ETHNIC DIASPORAS IN LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION HISTORY

The last twenty years of historiography and ethnic studies of Latin America's great immigration boom has moved steadily in the direction of emphasizing the diversity of that human influx. This scholarship laid the foundation for an expanding vision of the ethnic map of Argentina as a "country of immigrants." Studies of ethnic minorities in Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Chile, and Argentina have created new venues for contemplating migration within the Southern hemisphere—processes that I will refer to as "South-South circuits."[2] In the field of Middle East Migration Studies, the past decade rendered a new generation of Middle East Diaspora (or *Mahjar*) scholars who defined important aspects of the reciprocal relationship that connects the Middle East and the Americas in a larger "transnational public sphere." This transnational public sphere can be characterized as a series of overlapping networks of continuously circulating bodies, assets,

cultural production, and political activism that was born out of an era of mass migration.[3] The following article builds on both of these fields of scholarship, but brings new attention to both the specific role of women, and the mechanics of rural-urban relationships amongst ethnic diaspora communities who participate in these transnational networks.

As a case study, Argentina stands out as the most popular Latin American destination for individuals emigrating from the Levant prior to World War I. This nation's expansive territory contained a network of human mobility that connected Arab-Argentines in the most remote frontier spaces to provincial and federal capital cities. Circuits of human mobility, underpinned by a robust circulation of capital, formed a powerful network of artists, intellectuals, journalists, and industrialists who routinely traversed the South American region of the *mahjar* map. By the second decade of the twentieth century, this map was filled with a profusion of associational spaces, including mutual aid and philanthropic societies, social and athletic clubs, hometown associations, and other voluntary clubs. These spaces, which we might think of as "associational nodes" in the larger diasporic map, served as gravitational centers in *mahjar* communities—especially those far from the larger diasporic hubs such as Buenos Aires, Cordoba, or Tucuman. Associational nodes, in the form of institutions and gathering spaces, set the rhythm for communal celebrations of holidays, served as venues for artistic and cultural performances, and were powerful engines with the ability to rapidly mobilize humanitarian aid if the need arose. Studies of the *mahjar* (and other ethnic diasporas) attest to their centrality to local milieus, and also to their ability to engage transnationally with political and economic panoramas of the homeland.[4] This article builds on the extant literature, but also asks the following questions: How did these associational nodes link diasporic citizens from diverse regions of a single host country? How can we gender our perception of some of the most prominent institutional projects that arose from this network?

Beginning in the early twentieth century, Arab-Argentine journalists, intellectuals, and businessmen firmly ascribed to the notion that an "enterprising spirit" [*espiritu emprendedor*] drove their community, and ignited the spirit of immigrants from the Levant who sought to make it in (both North and South) America. As a result, this same trope of the "enterprising spirit" appeared frequently in early historiography of the Argentine *mahjar*. This is only logical, seeing as the very ethnic organizations that shared this foundational narrative of the "enterprising spirit" were themselves the institutions that

generated and encouraged early scholarship on this group's history. Left unexamined, however, this trope can become problematic. A rigorous survey of Arab-Argentine publications, press organs, and secondary literature makes it clear that the notion of the "enterprising spirit" is an implicitly gendered set of qualities used most often to account for the business acumen of men. It is an explanation for collective advancement in the realm of political, social, and economic insertion that obscures the role of women in these projects. This article offers an alternative vision of the sort of political and financial perspicacity that drove the advancement of community projects by centering the narrative on women's work.

If men dominated the vast majority of this community's purchase power in traditional markets through their control as business owners, professionals, and even industrial magnates, women presided over the sphere of institutional charity—the world of "beneficence" [*beneficencia*]. Men served on the boards of numerous mutual aid societies, social clubs, and heritage organizations, but by the late 1920s the most widely reported-on religious and lay organizations filling the pages of Arab-owned newspapers were women's organizations. Many middle and upper-class ladies made careers of philanthropy, and proved adroit at leveraging their social capital to gain financial support for their projects. They interfaced with an array of donors and collaborators—rich and humble, urban and rural, Christian, Muslim, and Druze alike. Analysis of some of the most prominent beneficence campaigns from the 1920s through the 1940s reveals that Arab-Argentine women played a critical role in the wealth and welfare of their ethnic collectivity. This analysis also leads us toward a more globalized vision of the wider web of immigrant philanthropy and humanitarian aid in Argentina in the twentieth century.[5]

WOMEN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC INSTITUTIONS

In order to shed light on the inter-provincial scale of beneficence projects undertaken by various female-run Arab-Argentine associations in the twentieth century, I turn now to the example of one of the longest-running secular institutions in the Arab-Argentine community: the Hospital Sirio Libanes. One can still visit this medical facility today at its original location in the northwestern Villa Devoto neighborhood of the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires. Evidence of numerous additions and efforts to modernize its medical facilities are visible from the street. Inside, however, the tiled courtyard and the

converted mansion that housed the original physicians' offices and dispensary remain perfectly intact. What is not immediately visible to the twenty-first century visitor, or patient, is that this physical space embodies the protracted effort of thousands of donors and organizers throughout the better part of the first half of the twentieth century.

The women responsible for the 1937 establishment of the Hospital Sirio Libanes initially organized to advocate for a community hospital in 1917. At that time, a group of Arab-Argentine women came together to discuss the need for better medical service for their community, and subsequently formed a secular association that they named "The Society of Merciful Works" [*Sociedad de Obras de Misericordia*]. While they were certainly not the first voluntary association to form within this ethnic community (the establishment of Arab-Argentine mutual aid and hometown associations dates back to the last decades of the nineteenth century), they were one of the earlier associations whose mission was to openly provide service to individuals beyond those who paid monthly dues to the organization. The hospital was the product of one of many female-led "instrumental associations," to use the terminology of Argentine immigration historian Jose Moya, within this heritage community.[6] Other instrumental associations included those linked to religious institutions, such as the Women's Syrian Orthodox Association (established in 1915)—an organization that frequently mobilized humanitarian aid for victims of natural disasters. The philanthropic activities of groups such as the Society of Merciful Works or the Women's Syrian Orthodox Association resulted in South-South circuits of charitable remittances that geographically mimicked the South-South migratory circuits that gave rise to this diaspora community.

Although their original impetus for organizing was the establishment of a local hospital, in its first incarnation the Society of Merciful Works was principally a venue for international humanitarian aid. The women on its board of directors focused their fundraising events on generating donations to remit to disadvantaged populations in the Middle East. On several occasions they collaborated with another Buenos Aires-based instrumental association, the Central Committee for Aid to Syria and Lebanon [*Comite Central de Ayuda a Sfria y Lfbano*], to raise money for causes such as the Tuberculosis Hospital of Beirut. International philanthropy was already a path well-trodden by other Arab-Argentine instrumental associations, and perhaps this accounts in part for the Society for Merciful Works' early participation in these South-South charitable remittance circuits. When the Society decided

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to renew its commitment to a local project that would serve the diaspora community rather than the homeland, they also shifted their focus to building interprovincial—rather than international—networks of donors for the hospital project.

By 1923, the vision of domestic medical services for Arab immigrants and their progeny in Argentina once again became the group's main focus, and the board of directors renamed their organization the "Pro-Hospital Syrian Lebanese Beneficence Association" (PSLBA). They ratified official statutes, and by 1927 the municipal government legally recognized them as a charitable organization with the express mission of building a hospital.[7] Eight years of concerted fundraising followed, at which point the women set their sights on purchasing a villa situated on almost an acre and a half of land on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Once occupied by a wealthy family, the home was spacious and well-appointed, and the parcel of land would provide ample space for building new wings for the future clinic as the operation grew. The sale price was 140,000 pesos, and the PSLBA quickly set to the task of raising money toward a down payment and initial mortgage payments.[8] Their methodology for raising this prodigious sum relied on inspiring Arab-Argentines across the nation to buy in to the functional and symbolic importance of the larger hospital project. To do this, the Pro-Hospital group ran a savvy fundraising campaign based on the notion of collective ownership of a community resource.

The women of the PSLBA offered donors the opportunity to become "Member Owners" of the new institution. They calculated the property area to be approximately 7,100 square *varas* of land (the *vara* being the customary measurement unit for measuring Spanish properties and land grants since the nineteenth century), and then proceeded to announce the "Grand Varas Sale" [*Gran Venta de Varas*] of 1935. Each *vara* would be "sold" for the accessible price of 30 pesos, and in return the "buyer" would receive an official-looking certificate stating their status as an honorary member of the PSLBA, as well as a title declaring their ownership of a piece of the land from the hospital grounds. This symbolic bequeathing of ownership to donors aligned with the overall rhetoric of their campaign, which often described their project as, above all, "Collective: By the People and for the People" in speeches at fundraising events, or open letters to the press.[9]

From the beginning of their campaign to build the hospital, the PSLBA pointedly appealed to Arab-Argentines on a national scale,

rather than focusing on the local Buenos Aires community. They employed a system of "Honorary Delegates"—women and men throughout the provinces and national territories (as well as neighboring countries) whom they tasked with spreading the word about fundraising drives, and acting as liaisons to remote provincial communities of Arab-Argentines. The official job description of an Honorary Delegate was to "traverse their surrounding towns, visit co-nationals, and get them interested in [the] project" on a volunteer basis, paying out of pocket for their travel expenses.[10] The PSLBA also paid a modest salary to a small corps of employees whose sole purpose was to travel throughout the country, drum up enthusiasm amongst the "Honorary Delegates," and collect funds already raised by said delegates. From a fundraising standpoint, it was an extremely effective system. The intricacies of the delegate system also provide insight into the ways in which philanthropic projects in the nation's capital could be intimately tied to rural efforts, and provincial buy-in to sentiments of collective ownership. Furthermore, careful study of the fundraising data revises notions of philanthropy, and charitable giving, as strictly the purview of the more privileged sectors of Arab-Argentine society. It is the mechanics of this delegate system—and the fiscal results that it yielded—to which I will now turn.

Between 1935 and 1946, the number of Honorary Delegates recruited by the PSLBA and their small corps of traveling employees increased steadily from 215 in 1935, to 340 in 1937, to 400 by 1946.[11] To become a delegate represented a chance for Arab-Argentines living in remote rural spaces, or cities with miniscule percentages of Middle Eastern immigrants, to gain visibility and assert membership in the broader Argentine *mahjar*. The PSLBA saw to it that collaborators received accolades for their contribution in multiple venues—both in print, and via the airwaves. From the outset of the campaign in 1935, the distinguished president and founding member of PSLBA—Estela Chacar de Chacar—dutifully read long lists of names of delegates and donors on her weekly radio show titled "The Voice of the Hospital" [*La Vaz del Hospital*]. Every three months, the board of directors published a news bulletin that listed names and locations of donors and delegates alongside updates on hospital fundraising and construction progress. The PSLBA's commitment to regularly publishing information about collaborators in their newsletter allows for a detailed accounting of the provenance of the capital that went into this major institutional project. These records attest to the fact that their delegate system was highly

efficient, and that it generated a nationwide effort to build the Hospital Sirio Libanes.

In preparation for on-the-ground fundraising campaigns, PSLBA worked to cultivate moral and material investment in the hospital project across the provinces. In 1934 they decided to allocate 150 pesos from their monthly budget to short segments and advertisements on two bilingual radio shows. After six months of regular advertising on the radio programs "Arab Voice" [*Vaz Arabe*] and "Syrian-Lebanese Hour" [*Hora Sirio-Libanesa*], the PSLBA elected to invest in their own radio program, the aforementioned "Voice of the Hospital" [*Vaz del Hospital*]. The show aired every Sunday on the L.R.9 Radio Fenix Broadcasting station for thirty minutes.[12] In turn, radio stations in the provinces re-broadcasted these transmissions on local stations such as Radio Callao in Tucuman.[13] Thus, many provincial Arab-Argentines would have already been familiar with the hospital project before the PSBLA's fundraising corps and "Honorary Delegates" began mobilizing throughout the country. Because their radio show also acted as a space for hosting Arab-Latin American and Middle Eastern musical performances, this may have helped Arab-Argentine listeners to associate this project with a cultural mission from the outset. At any rate, performances by artists such as comedian Gibran Trabulsi, opera singer Selim Zeitun, or the band "Los Orientales" on PSLBA's radio show allowed for an audience from multiple provinces to tune in and become a part of this ethnic space (see Figure 1).

PSLBA's first major fundraiser was the 1935 "Grand Varas Sale," in which individuals from across the provinces chipped in thirty pesos each, and in turn became "Member-Owners" of the future hospital. The first round of *varas* donations went exceedingly well. In 1935 the PSLBA was able to make their first 35,000 peso mortgage payment a full three months prior to its due date, and on top of that saved 13,000 pesos in their account to be used toward their second mortgage payment.[14] The capital for these payments came solely from 1,600 *varas* "purchases" that rolled in from across the country. In February of 1937, they published a special edition of *La Vaz del Hospital* to announce that they had officially paid off the rest of the mortgage. On the cover of the special issue they featured a copy of the notarized property title in their name before launching into a long letter of thanks and congratulations. They credited the provincial delegates with their success, announcing that five thousand individuals contributed to the completion of their mortgage payments. With this many donors, the

PSLBA not only paid off their mortgage, renovated the property, and equipped it as a medical facility, but they also ended up with a surplus of 10,000 pesos cash and 11,000 pesos worth of stocks in their account. Relentless, they immediately began soliciting donations for the construction of an entire new wing—named the "Monoblock"—that was to be constructed adjacent to the existing hospital building.[15]

Donation records prove that rural areas were often the highest per capita contributors to the Monoblock project. This demonstrates that philanthropy was not solely the purview of urban Arab-Argentines who moved in the exclusive circles of charity balls or fundraising galas. Traditionally, these organizations acted as venues in which the performance of beneficence was as much an altruistic act as a status symbol for women across the ethnic and religious spectrum in twentieth-century Argentine society.[16] This was certainly the case for Arab-Argentine women such as those on the PSLBA board of directors—as much as it was for Euro-Catholic Argentine women, Argentine-Jewish women, and many others.[17] In the case of the Arab-Argentine community, the Hospital Sirio Libanes fundraising records allow us to move beyond exclusively focusing on the well-to-do women at the helm of a major philanthropic project. The fundraising records enable us to excavate information about who these women targeted as an audience (i.e. their business rationale). In addition, records shed light on the question of who comprised the population that monetarily fueled the philanthropic engine devised by the women of PSLBA.

Honorary Delegates across the provinces and throughout neighboring South American nations used their local knowledge to guide fundraising officials from the Federal Capital who were in the employ of the PSLBA. Individuals such as wool salesman Mariano Abdenur guided Buenos Aires-based fundraising employee Jorge Dial through the Argentine-Bolivian border region immediately surrounding the town of La Quiaca, where they secured twenty-six donations to the hospital that totaled 350 pesos.[18] In the Rio Negro territory, a grocer named Jose Sede and his brothers guided Dial to the tiny Patagonian village of Maquinchao where they helped to facilitate his contact with twenty-one donors for a total of 877 pesos. The Maquinchao donation was actually a substantial contribution in comparison to much larger provincial capitals such as Mendoza (2,138 pesos), San Luis (594 pesos) and San Juan (1,942 pesos) that boasted wealthy circles of elites, and active Arab-Argentine mutual aid and

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beneficence societies with sizable contributions to bolster their city's total.[19] With a population of 12,382 people in the entire department of 25 de Mayo surrounding Maquinchao, it was a backwater in comparison to cities like Mendoza, whose core capital area alone boasted 97,476 people in that same year.[20] Maquinchao is emblematic of dozens of small towns across Argentina whose contributions to the hospital far exceeded what might be expected on account of their small size. Arab-Argentine residents of tiny towns like La Quiaca and Maquinchao were generally not wealthy—they ran small grocery stores, and dry goods or fruit stands. They were mechanics, hairdressers, leatherworkers, butchers, bakers, and smalltime farmers.[21] In fact, the fundraising records from PSLBA provide us with a rare window into the ways that Arab-Argentines with modest incomes chose to spend their money every month. Their participation in the hospital project also gives clues as to the value that they placed on participating in *mahjar*-wide projects for institutions that they would likely never visit themselves, yet clearly held symbolic meaning for them.

The women of PSLBA recognized donations from these compatriots in small, rural communities as the backbone of their fiscal success. Time and again, they framed their project as one whose true engine was the solidarity of Arab-Argentines in the provinces—whether they be donors, Honorary Delegates, or humble families donating a single peso per month. Even those that donated a single peso per month were given the fanfare of having their names read aloud on the radio, or printed in the newsletter. "What started out as a project endorsed by a small group of people is now fed by the zeal of thousands of co-nationals from all corners of the country. . . Everyone contributed their grain of sand," wrote PSLBA President Wacila de Adre and General Secretary Estela Chacar de Chacar in an enthusiastic letter that they penned jointly after making their first mortgage payment. "They are columns of gold that majestically sustain our vision, true pillars of our institution," gushed Adre and Chacar to the readers of *La Vaz del Hospital* in 1935.[22] That the PSLBA was invested in cultivating lasting ties between this Buenos Aires institution and its rural donors is also evident in the services that they offered to members who purchased *varas*, or who donated a monthly quota.

In exchange for monetary support, the PSLBA determined that the Hospital Sirio Libanes would offer special medical services to donors located in remote provinces and unlikely to travel to Buenos

Aires due to the long journey and/or limited financial means. These included rosters of laboratory analyses of blood, urine, spit, and fecal matter. Advertisements in *La Vaz del Hospital* encouraged readers to mail in their first "sample" for free analysis, as a perk of being a "member-owner" of the institution. Over the years they expanded the range of tests offered as medical technology advanced, but the prices remained consistent at between two and five pesos per test throughout the 1940s. In other words, they kept prices accessible to a humble grocer-, butcher-, or fruit seller-donor in distant regions like Patagonia, or the Chaco.[23] The extension of their laboratory services to mahjar communities in the provinces was, I argue, much more than a gimmick to encourage further donations. The provision of these services must be situated in the context of the Hospital Sirio Libanes as a nation-wide project within the Arab-Argentine community. In this context, it follows logically that the board of directors would create a roster of medical services available to members in geographically remote locations. Long-distance analyses of blood or other bodily fluids brought the hospital's medical care to La Quiaca, Maquinchao, and beyond. Members who elected to participate in these fluid analysis and biopsy services in turn mailed small pieces of their physical constitution—knowing that even if they never made the journey to Buenos Aires, their cells still occupied petri dishes and test tubes in the hospital's laboratory. In a sense, albeit on the smallest possible scale—despite the thousands of kilometers separating their hometown from Buenos Aires—their bodies were handled with care by medical professionals from their ethnic community. At a time when Arab-Argentine press organs often printed heated debates about the need for unity of purpose across the diverse communities and institutions that constituted the *mahjar* map, the women of PSLBA constructed a robust economic network of donors throughout the Southern Cone region. At a more metaphorical level, their mail-order medical services literally pumped the circulation of Arab-Argentine blood throughout the nation.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CREATION OF CULTURAL SPACE

Arab-Argentine women's work in the realm of philanthropic organizations often played the multifaceted role of promoting and preserving cultural production within their ethnic community. In the first half of the twentieth century many of these women's groups used the power and status that they accrued through these campaigns in

order to promote and preserve Arabic art, literature, music, and language within the diaspora. Whereas numerous editorials by male journalists expounded upon the importance of preserving Arabic cultural forms and language, women's beneficence organizations from Tucuman to Mendoza to Misiones did the fundraising work to open schools and act as patrons of the arts. Similar to women's groups in other immigrant colonies, Arab-Argentine women became involved in efforts to preserve their community's heritage language—in this case Arabic. In the early twentieth century, the Argentine landscape was dotted with immigrant institutions dedicated to preserving ties to the homeland through language instruction—German, Italian, Yiddish, and others. By the late 1920s, Argentina's *mahjar* press regularly reported on the activities of numerous beneficence organizations run by women throughout the country who had the common goal of constructing a school where the children of the Middle Eastern heritage "collectivity" [*colectividad*] could learn Arabic. Women founded beneficence organizations in order to raise funds and gain the moral support of their communities in their efforts to open schools in Buenos Aires (est. 1916), San Juan (est. 1919), Santiago del Estero (est. 1926), Tucuman (est. 1926 and 1929), Entre Rios (est. c. 1929), Salta (est. 1930), and Corrientes (est. 1931) Provinces. While editorials in *mahjar* press organs often commented on (and at times ranted about) the importance of maintaining the Arabic language in their ethnic community, beneficence groups tackled the issue in a real, pragmatic way.

In one instance, the women of Sociedad Zaharat-el-Ihsan of Corrientes Province sought to open an Arabic language school in the city of Paraní "for the descendants of Arabs in Argentina." Their mission statement articulated the cultural goals that the organization embodied: In 1929 they reported that that they wished to create "a totally laic environment that would conform to the official educational standards and guidelines of the Argentine Republic but also including Arabic language and history in order to forge in the spirit of these children love for their race and respect for the homeland [*patria*] of their progenitors."[24] Thus in a very direct way these women positioned themselves as custodians of Arabic language and history. In other cases, women's organizations created venues for the preservation and promotion of Arab artistic and cultural production. Similar to the PSLBA's "Voice of the Hospital" radio program that provided airtime for traveling Middle Eastern and Arab-Latin American musicians, many women's organizations acted as hosts for traveling artists and musicians.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Argentina's *mahjar* press reported several events sponsored by women's groups in the provinces, and neighboring Southern Cone nations, meant to showcase the work of traveling artists, musicians and intellectuals. When cinematographer Jose Dial of the Oriente Film company traveled to Santiago, Chile in 1932 it was the Ladies Auxiliary of the Syrian Palestinian Club [*Club Sirio Palestino*] that hosted the filmmaker and his crew of young artists as their guests of honor. Dial gratefully thanked the Ladies Auxiliary for their hospitality, acknowledging they went out of their way to be gracious hosts despite what he referred to as the "latent economic crisis" that Chile was experiencing during that period. "The Ladies Auxiliary is a patrician social institution, similar in importance to the Jockey Club of Buenos Aires, with the only difference being that it is a club only for women, distinguished by its excellence," reported Dial upon his return to Argentina.[25] In Buenos Aires, the Women's Syrian Orthodox Association (AFSO) chose to sponsor and promote the work of prominent Lebanese playwright Najib al-Haddad, member of the *Nahda* cultural movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Arabic-speaking Eastern Mediterranean. The production chosen by the AFSO, titled *Hamdan*, exemplified al-Haddad's method of breaking the mold of traditional Arabic literary forms and sat squarely in a *Nahda* cultural renaissance canon characterized by an innovation of lyrical and poetic reform. In this case, we see an Arab-Argentine women's organization acting as cultural interlocutor between an artistic-cultural movement of Egypt and the *mashriq*, and the Latin American *mahjar*.

In anticipation of the debut of the play, women from the AFSO sold tickets in Arab-owned storefronts throughout the city, advertising the charity projects that they were engaged in alongside logistical information about tickets sales.[26] On the night of *Hamdan*'s debut, the AFSO hired the Lebanese journalist Rafael Lahoud to provide the opening act for the play. In this introductory act, Lahoud sang passionately "in favor of independence of the Arab States, exhorting all Arabs to unite in order to achieve this ideal," reported the press afterward.[27] In choosing this particular play and this particular opening message, the AFSO was clearly participating in both the cultural ripples of the *Nahda* in the diaspora, and also rising twentieth century discourses of anti-imperialism and self-determination that took shape during the Mandate Period in the Levant. The women who organized this event conscientiously placed themselves well within the realm of charity and the arts—arenas of public action that were

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palatable to elite and middleclass gender norms. From within that arena, however, they made calculated political statements and unambiguously associated themselves with Middle Eastern intellectual currents. If the PSLBA used the notoriety of their fundraising events and their radio transmissions to create space for Arab cultural production, the ladies of the AFSO went a step further, and used their sponsorship of al-Haddad's play as a platform to engage with timely political debates surrounding nationalism and political sovereignty.

While Arab-Argentine women did not often contribute overtly political diatribes to the ethnic press (as did their male counterparts), they found alternative ways to position themselves politically through what historian Donna Guy refers to as the "performance of charity."[28] This performance allowed groups such as the AFSO and PSLBA to accrue social capital—after all, these organizations "worked for free but demanded respect," as Guy notes in her study of the Argentine welfare state.[29] Arab-Argentine women took advantage of the respectability that they gained from these campaigns and good works, and relied on it in order to exert pressure on their conationals to collaborate financially, or to participate in the fray of intellectual and political debates in their community. In the wider context of female philanthropy, Arab-Argentine women deployed strategies to accrue patronage and social status that were strikingly similar to not only Euro-Argentine women, but also philanthropists in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.[30] Archival materials from organizations such as the PSLBA and AFSO provide evidence of Arab-Argentine women as powerful, often politicized philanthropists in their local communities. As I will now argue, some of these philanthropic organizations leveraged the respect and financial networks that they built within the national context of beneficence work, in order to simultaneously operate on a transnational scale. This perspective brings new dimensions to current historiography of the transamerican landscape of the *mahjar*, and its connections to a globalized landscape of philanthropy and political activism.

BEYOND THE PROVINCES: TRANSATIONAL BENEFICENCE

Groups such as PSLBA and AFSO were experts at activating the inter-provincial network of associational nodes and individual donors in order to fund institutional projects, or generate funds to ameliorate the plight of needy Argentines (Arab and non-Arab alike). Having given

examples of their contributions to bolstering an interprovincial network of Arab-Argentines, as well as their efforts to create and preserve cultural production in the *mahjar*, this section attends to their ability to operate philanthropic projects on a transnational scale. In this light, we are able to view women's work as another dimension of the *mahjar*'s "transnational public sphere."

In many cases, the women of Arab-Argentine beneficence organizations did not confine the scope of their projects within national, or even continental, borders. Sometimes they remitted money in a one-time donation, such as the AFSO's 1922 donation of 50,000 pesos to Russians suffering the Povolzhye Famine, or their 1923 donation of 4,000 pesos to victims of the Japanese Great Kanto Tsunami.[31] But in many cases, the aid and correspondence was ongoing. Upon examining the range of projects that groups such as the PSLBA and AFSO undertook, it becomes obvious that these groups' members were also deeply concerned with long-term political and social panoramas in the Middle East.

While the premise for their donations was almost always the provision of aid in the aftermath of natural disasters, groups such as the AFSO utilized the arena of charity as an avenue for making contact with key political actors in the Middle East. A notable instance of this sort of politicized performance of charity came after a string of seismic activity rattled the southern Syrian region including the Palestinian Mandate and Transjordan in July of 1927. In the months following the deadly quake, ladies from the AFSO collected donations for the victims of the disaster, and sent a check for $1,000 to the Ottoman Bank of Cairo. In an open letter sent to numerous Arab-Argentine press organs, President and Secretary of the AFSO Nagibe Abud and Zahia Farah announced that they had sent the money directly to Prince Michel Lotfallah, along with instructions on exactly how the aid money should be disbursed.

The fact that they elected to advertise their choice of Lotfallah as the courier of their check from Cairo to its final destination in Mandatory Palestine is significant. In the AFSO's open letter describing their donation to the "destitute victims" [*damnificados*] in the southern region of the Levant, they reported that Lotfallah was the president of the "Pro-Palestine Victims Aid Commission."[32] By announcing to the public that they were corresponding with (and sending money to) the director of another beneficence organization, they stayed well within a gender-normative realm of acceptable conduct.[33] They framed their

communication with Lotfallah as simply correspondence between one philanthropic organization and another. What they left out of their communique (but was well known to any Arab-Argentine marginally interested in the *mashriq*'s current events) was Lotfallah's role as a key agitator on the post-World War I geopolitical stage.

Deeply concerned with the nebulousness of their trajectory toward national sovereignty as laid out in the Covenant of the League of Nations, numerous individuals from the Syrian Mandate organized oppositional political parties while in exile in North Africa and Europe. Lotfallah was one such organizer, and acted as President of the Syrian Unity Party which operated out of Cairo. Even before the League of Nations drafted the final version of their Covenant, Lotfallah had vigorously lobbied for Syrian independence. In a January 1919 letter to French statesman, and chair of the Paris Peace Conference, Georges Clemanceau, he wrote: "The Syrian Unity Party, which represents the absolute majority of Syrians residing in Egypt and abroad, without the distinction of religion or sect, solicits from the Peace Conference the recognition of complete and effective independence for Syria" before outlining a four-prong plan for the immediate concession of sovereignty.[34] Two years later, Lotfallah acted as the President of the Syro-Palestinian Congress that took place in Geneva. That meeting represented one of the earliest internationally recognized attempts at challenging the French and British Mandate systems in the Middle East. During the Congress, participants demanded independence and national rule for Mandatory Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, insisting on the concession of effective sovereignty in terms that echoed Lotfallah's 1919 cable to Clemenceau.

In both Lotfallah's letter, and the grievances presented by members of the Syro-Palestinian Congress to the League of Nations, their prominent references to the multitude of Arabs living outside of Syria in the diaspora were a common thread. In the very first line of Lotfallah's words to Clemenceau he was quick to assert that he spoke not only for Syrians living in exile in Egypt, but also for Syrians living "abroad." When the New York Times published an update on the grievances that Lotfallah and his compatriots voiced to the League of Nations in 1921, the reporter made special mention of George Youssef Salem, another member of the Congress. Salem claimed to "represent 250,000 Syrians in the United States, who, he [said], all want Syria to be entirely independent." In a cable to US President Warren G. Harding that same year, members of the Congress explained that "Syria and Palestine should form one country because they are mostly inhabited

by the same Arab race [and that] many Syrians and Palestinians in the United States. . . would be ready to return to their countries provided the latter were entirely free." They went on to decry the Mandate system as a mere "pretext for the colonizing designs of France and England."[35]

While the prospect of hundreds of thousands of Syrians abandoning their homes and business ventures *en masse* and returning to the Middle East from the United States was an exaggeration, the acknowledgment of the diaspora as a potential constituency in a future independent nation nevertheless is important. Much like Lotfallah's nod to Syrians "in Egypt and abroad," it is evidence of the transnational public sphere that stretched intercontinentally between far-flung *mahjar* communities in North Africa, Europe, the Americas, and beyond. As this example illustrates, and Stacy Fahrenthold astutely observes in her work on *mahjar* political networks in the WWI era, "with the Ottoman government's hostility to Syrian journalism during the war, emigrants living [abroad] gained increasing control over the Syrian press, gaining power to define what it meant to be 'Syrian' or 'Lebanese' in a post-Ottoman context."[36] In the post-war era, these voices continued to engage in what Fahrenthold refers to as "discursive warfare for the right to define and represent the community abroad."[37] Albeit subtly, and with a great deal of social tact, we can see that women from organizations such as the AFSO engaged with these debates.

When the women of the AFSO wrote to Michel Lotfallah, they demanded certain stipulations be observed in the distribution of their charitable donation. "These funds are meant to aid the destitute individuals in Palestine, regardless of their race or religion" they wrote.[38] At a time when Arab and Syrian Nationalist discourses were being fueled by resistance to Jewish resettlement in Palestine, the AFSO insisted in no uncertain terms that their money was meant to be distributed equally to "the destitute" [*damnificados*], regardless of race or creed. Alternatively, I argue that we can also interpret the AFSO's correspondence with Lotfallah in a different, more politicized, light. After stating the stipulations for disbursement of their aid, the language of the AFSO's letter became much murkier. They alluded to the fact that the "Pro-Palestine Victims Aid Commission" may have already been disbanded, and essentially gave Lotfallah carte blanche to utilize the funds as he deemed appropriate. Thus, without saying as much, they nevertheless tacitly acknowledged that they had remitted

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money that very well might be acting as a donation for Lotfallah's political, rather than beneficence, projects. Having remitted the money to him a full eight months after the earthquake took place, they must have had a very good idea that this money was by no means the type of first-responder aid that they had remitted in the past to tsunami and famine victims. Interpreted in this light, the AFSO's letter to Lotfallah looks much more like an encoded donation to a nationalist project rather than apolitical correspondence between the figureheads of two charitable agencies.

While there was certainly a bureaucratic process that delayed international remittances, this alone does not sufficiently account for the lag time in the AFSO's letter to Lotfallah. Once the women made the decision to mobilize, they clearly had the power to do so expeditiously. When a fire broke out in the Nasr Theater in Damascus on 20 June 1928 and destroyed a nearby hotel and one hundred houses, the AFSO promptly addressed the situation. They made the formal call for donations at an assembly on July 30, and by August 19 they were already remitting their first wave of donations to Damascus.[39] In this case it is also fruitful to read the AFSO's actions against the grain of Middle Eastern socio-political context that acted as a backdrop for the Nasr Theater fire. The Nasr was one of the first cinemas in the *mashriq* to offer sex-segregated matinee showings in order to attract audiences of Muslim women. The June 20th fire mysteriously broke out in the projection booth within an hour of one its first women's matinees. Twelve people died—presumably women who had arrived early for the matinee—but authorities were quick to dismiss the blaze as accidental. "Accidental or not, the fire was a portent. Coinciding with the controversy of women's public presence ignited by [a recently published] book on unveiling, it ushered in an era of increasingly violent conflict about female moviegoers" notes Elizabeth Thompson in her study of gender and citizenship during the Mandate period.[40] Thompson contends that the cinema was "drawn into the turf wars among male groups, becoming a gendered and spatial boundary line of their ideological differences."[41] In protest, Christian and Muslim women alike from Beirut to Hama proceeded to brave "many a battle in pursuit of their favorite movie stars, against the message that they were making a dangerous transgression into the new public and that they required a new, political kind of paternalistic protection."[42] Once again, under the pretext of charity, the women of the AFSO mobilized and intentionally involved themselves in the politicized, and sometimes violent fray of social unrest that characterized the Post-

Ottoman era in the Middle East. To accord outright a deeper significance of feminist solidarity to this episode is too far of a stretch in light of the limited documentation that the archive provides us. Nevertheless, together with other evidence such as the Lotfallah exchange, it is possible to puzzle out certain continuities in the Arab-Argentine women's propensity to mix politics with their performance of good works.

CONCLUSION

Across the spectrum of projects undertaken by women's beneficence organizations—from hospitals, to natural disasters, to fostering the arts—*mahjari* women positioned themselves as guardians and protectors of their community. The scope of their endeavors suggests that these women defined their "community" by the yardstick of common ethnic heritage, and not by geographic proximity. Based in Buenos Aires, associations such as the PSLBA and the AFSO looked outward, toward the most remote peripheries of the *mahjar* for moral and material support to propel forward the projects they executed in both Argentina and the *Mashriq*. In the official statutes of the AFSO they declared their commitment to establishing schools and headquarters in the provinces and territories, and in moments of crisis they clearly mobilized this web of contacts that they built.[43] In the grandiloquent language of the PSLBA, the provinces served as their "true pillars," their "columns of gold."[44] Along with cities such as Sao Paulo and New York, Buenos Aires was one of the principal economic and intellectual hubs of the *Mahjar*. However, this examination of the activities of Buenos Aires-based beneficence makes it clear that it was this hub's dynamic relationship to diasporic nodes across the provinces and territories that enabled large-scale institutional projects and relief work in their ethnic community. While most traditional narratives of the Argentine *mahjar* depend on evidence of business and political relationships between men to establish these links, this study relied on women's work to demonstrate the relationship between central and peripheral diaspora communities.

To conclude, the following reflection from Victoria Jaule, President of the Sociedad Femenina Sirio Libanesa de Rio Cuarto, Cordoba Province makes it clear that women's groups beyond the most powerful Buenos Aires institutions such as the AFSO and PSLBA also perceived their work as having a politicized cultural mission. Jaule wrote: "Just like in other regions of this country, the formation of. . . aid

societies are the first decisive steps in the direction of a better sociability, and an undeniable indicator of a cultural rebirth which will come to erase the remnants of selfish commerce. . . [Until recently] Arabs living on Argentine soil lived completely distracted from ideological and social mobilization."[45] Not only did Jaule relate the work of her beneficence organization to the notion of "cultural rebirth," but she also saw it as an avenue for influencing a shift in the core values of her ethnic community away from what she characterized as an obsession with economic insertion into the host economy.

It is also clear that Jaule and her compatriots in the Rio Cuarto organization believed that women would play a crucial role in this cultural shift. Founded in 1931, the Women's Syrian Lebanese Society's mission was, in Jaule's words, "to unite the feminine enthusiasm in the collectivity," and to that end they proposed the construction of a social and recreational center exclusively for Arab-Argentine women.[46] Before she penned these words, Jaule contributed regularly to prominent periodicals of the Argentine *mahjar*. In contrast, her other contributions came in the form of romantic poetry or prose that tended to be confined to portions of periodicals designated as "Literary Gems," or "For Ladies." For at least one young Arab-Argentine woman in the provinces, the realm of beneficence provided her with a safe space to speak boldly about her ethnic community's values, future, and women's importance in shaping the contours of a unique, diasporic, Arab identity.

This article has argued that through national and transnational philanthropy, women in the Arab-Argentine community in turn asserted ownership of their community's "Enterprising Spirit." Their projects also allowed them to claim space in the ethnic landscape of Buenos Aires—a cityscape densely dotted with the architectural and institutional manifestations of Argentina's immigrant masses. When the PSLBA broke ground on new construction at the Hospital Sirio Libanes site in 1937, even then-president of Argentina General Agustin Pedro Justo was present—a detail that confirms the visibility and prestige that these women's organizations achieved vis a vis their philanthropy (see Figure 2). In this case, beyond forging a new institution within their diaspora community, this moment represented these women's assertion of a place in the Argentine nation as well, as they presided over a ceremony that was dutifully attended by national and community leaders alike. Similarly, when women of the AFSO engaged with political actors in the Middle East, or selected works of Nahda theater to showcase, they claimed a space in the political and

cultural milieu that bound together *mashriq* and *mahjar* at that particular moment. Much like Sandra McGee Deutsch's study of Jewish women in Argentina, I see these actions as part of a larger struggle for emancipation amongst Arab-Argentine women who sought a stake in the future of their community since the earliest generations of the diaspora.[47] This article has also posited women's work as a lens for delineating important connections between diasporic populations in the provinces and the federal capital. In some cases, the records of their philanthropic activities also provide rare insight into the lives and choices of other groups—such as rural and non-elite Arab-Argentines—who are all too often relegated to the peripheries of *mahjar* historiography.

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FIGURES



Figure 1: 1936 advertisement for "Los Orientales" and "Zuleika" musical acts on Voz del Hospital radio show. ("Zuleika," *La Union Libanesa* (Buenos Aires), 10 October 1936, I.)



Figure 2: Hospital Sirio Libanes groundbreaking ceremony, 1937. (Photograph by Lily Balloffet, Hospital Sirio Libanes, Buenos Aires, 2011.)

NOTES

[1] Special thanks to David Gilmartin and Benjamin Bryce for their input on an earlier version of this article.

[2] Key examples of this literature include: Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Ignacio Lopez Calvo, *Dragons in the Land of the Condor: Writing Tusan in Peru* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), and *The Affinity of the Eye: Writing Nikkei in Peru* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); John Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque: Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); Christina Civantos, *Between Argentines & Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Grace Pena Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[3] For examples of recent scholarship that elaborate on the concept of a "transnational public sphere" in the Arab Diaspora, see: Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Stacy Fahrenthold, *The Global Levant: Making a Nation in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1913–1939* (PhD diss., Northeastern University, 2014); Reem Bailony, "Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Community: The Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt," *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East Migration Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 9–33; Silvia Ferreira, "Turco Peddlers, Brazilian Plantationists, and Transnational Arabs: The Genre Triangle of Levantine-Brazilian Literature," in *The Middle East and Brazil: Perspectives on the New Global South*, ed. Paul Amar (Bloomington: University of lndiana Press, 2014).

[4] For examples of literature that highlight the role of hometown associations, see for example Stacy Fahrenthold, "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in al-Nadi al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920–1932," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 2 (May 2014): 259–83; and Steven Hyland Jr. "'Arisen from Deep Slumber': Transnational Politics and Competing Nationalisms Among Syrian Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1900–1922," 43, no. 1 (2011): 547–74.

[5] For examples of literature on immigrant philanthropy, and humanitarian aid networks in Latin America and the Middle East in the twentieth century, see Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880–1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Keith Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Benjamin Bryce, "Paternal Communities: Social Welfare and Immigration in Argentina, –1930," *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 213–36, and "Los caballeros de beneficencia y las <lamas organizadoras: El Hospital Alemany

la idea de comunidad en Buenos Aires, 1880–1930," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 70 (2011): 79–107.

[6] For a discussion of the difference between and definitions of ethnic associations, instrumental associations, and immigrant institutions, see Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 5 (2005): 834.

[7] "Una Obra en Marcha," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), September 1948, 1.

[8] "Memoria y Balance," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), February 1937, 1.

[9] For an example of this rhetoric of "*por todos para todos*," see their call to arms in the following open letter to the Arab-Argentine press: "De la Asociación de Beneficencia pro Hospital Sirio Libanes, a los hombres de corazón," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 16 March 1930, 3.

[10] "La Acción Abnegada de Nuestros Delegados," *Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), December 1946, 2.

[11] Wacila C. de Adre and Estela Ch. de Chacar, "Memoria y Balance General de la Asociación de Beneficencia Pro-Hospital Sirio Libanes Correspondiente al afio 1935," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), January 1936, 2; "Suplemento Especial," *Voz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), February 1937, 2; "La Acción Abnegada de Nuestros Delegados," 2.

[12] de Adre and de Chacar, "Memoria y Balance General. . ." 2–3.

[13] Wacila C. de Adre and Estela Ch. de Chacar, "El Hospital Sirio Libanes de Buenos Aires," *El Eco de Oriente* (Tucuman), 11 April 1936, 4–5.

[14] "Memoria y Balance General de la Asociación de Beneficencia Pro Hospital Sirio Libanes," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), 31 December 1935, 1.

[15] Wacila C. de Adre and Estela Ch. de Chacar, "Asociación de Beneficencia Pro-Hospital Sirio-Libanes: Origen, Fundación y su Obra hasta el Presente," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), February 1937, 1–4.

[16] For a discussion of fundraising and philanthropy work as a status symbol in Argentine society in the twentieth century, see Donna Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity, and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

[17] See Deutsch's chapter on philanthropy and Zionism in *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation*, 210–12.

[18] "Aportes recibidos por nuestro delegado oficial en las Provincias de Tucuman, Salta y Jujuy," *Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), December 1947, 4.

[19] "Aportes recibidos. . .", 5; "Gira de Nuestro Delegado" *Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), June 1948, 6.

[20] *Población de Mendoza en las Censos Nacionales segun Departamento: Anos 1869–2010.* Dirección de Estadisticas e Investigaciones Económicas, Ministerio de Agroindustria y Tecnologia, Gobierno de Mendoza; Jorge R.

Entraigas, "La Población rionegrina durante la epoca territorial. Un Aporte al conocimiento de las principales caracteristicas demograficas: 1884–1955," *Horizontes en Perspectiva. Contribuciones para la historia de Rio Negro: 1884–1955*, *Volume 1*, Viedma, Argentina: Fundaci6n Ameghino, 2007.

[21] *Guia de Comercio Sirio Libanes* (Hemeroteca, Biblioteca Nacional, Buenos Aires: 1942).

[22] "Memoria y Balance General. . ." 1935, 2.

[23] "A Nuestros Delegados y Socios del Interior," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), December 1944, 4; "A Nuestros Delegados y Socios del Interior," *La Vaz del Hospital* (Buenos Aires), June 1948, 5.

[24] "Hablamos a los arabes," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 25 August 1929, 1.

[25] "Regresó de su exitoso viaje a Chile el conocido empresario cinematografico Don Jose Dial," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), June 1932, 45.

[26] "Hamdan: El festival del 21 de la Asociación Femenina Ortodoxa," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 15 December 1928, 2.

[27] "El festival de la Asociación Femenina Siria Ortodoxa de Beneficencia 'Hamdan' en el Capitol Theatre," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 5 January 1930, 3.

[28] Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*, 8.

[29] Ibid., 47.

[30] For examples see Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*; Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[31] "Asociación Femenina Sirio Ortodoxa de Beneficencia," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), June 1932, 74.

[32] "Bello gesto de la Asociación Femenina Siria Ortodoxa de Beneficencia," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 18 March 1928, 4.

[33] Donna Guy and Mine Ener both refer to the "acceptability" of women's philanthropy work in their studies of the Argentine and Egyptian welfare states. See Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*, 9; Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, 111.

[34] Michel Lotfallah to Georges Clemenceau, 23 January 1919, in Oberlin College King-Crane Commission Digital Archive, http://www.oberlin.edu/library/digital/king-crane/.

[35] "Syrians Present Grievances to League," *The New York Times*, 31 August 1921.

[36] Stacy Fahrenthold, "Transnational Modes and Media: The Syrian Press in the Mahjar and Emigrant Activism During World War I," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 1, no. 1 (2013): 36.

[37] Fahrenthold, "Transnational Modes and Media," 38.

[38] "Bello gesto de la Asociación. . ." 4.

[39] "Asociación Femenina Siria-Ortodoxa de Beneficencia," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), 19 August 1928, 4.

[40] Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 205.

[41] Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 206.

[42] Ibid., 210.

[43] "Asociación Feminina Sirio Ortodoxa. . ." La Gaceta Arabe (Buenos Aires), 1932, 74.

[44] "Memoria y Balance General. . ." 1935, 2.

[45] "Rio Cuarto, F.C.C.A., Sociedad Femenina Sirio Libanesa," *La Gaceta Arabe* (Buenos Aires), June 1932, 93.

[46] "Rio Cuarto, F.C.C.A.," 93.

[47] Deutsch, *Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation*, 235.