Women in diaspora: the arab-palestinian presence on the Brazil-Uruguay border

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Abstract: This article analyzes the migratory flows of Palestinian women to the border between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, taking as its research locus the dry border of the twin cities of Chuí/Chuy, separated by the same avenue. It focuses on analyzing the migratory flow or migration and gender relations based on the protagonism of Palestinian women. To this end, in addition to the bibliographical review on international migration and its relationship with women's visibility, a total of seven in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with women from three migratory generations of the flow from Palestine, which began in mid- 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel. Therefore, this is a case study, based on qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research.

Keywords: Migration. Palestinian women. Multiculturalism. Border.

Mulheres em diáspora: a presença árabe-palestina na fronteira Brasil-Uruguai

Resumo: O presente artigo analisa os fluxos migratórios de mulheres palestinas para a fronteira entre a República Federativa do Brasil e a República Oriental do Uruguai, tendo como lócus de pesquisa, a fronteira seca das cidades gêmeas de Chuí/Chuy, separadas por uma mesma avenida. Tem o foco em analisar o fluxo migratório ou de migração e as relações de gênero baseadas no protagonismo das mulheres palestinas. Para tanto, além da revisão bibliográfica sobre migrações internacionais e a sua relação com a visibilidade das mulheres, foram realizadas sete entrevistas semiestruturadas em profundidade com mulheres de três gerações migratórias do fluxo oriundo da Palestina, que teve início em meados de 1948 com a criação do Estado de Israel. Portanto, trata-se de um estudo de caso, a partir de uma pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, exploratória e descritiva.

Palavras Chave: Migração. Mulheres Palestinas. Multiculturalismo. Fronteira.

Introduction

This research resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the reality and singularities of the migration of Palestinian women currently residing on the Brazil-Uruguay border, encompassing the unique characteristics of living and coexisting in a binational town separated by an avenue and recognized for the harmonious coexistence and integration among different nationalities, including Brazilian, Uruguayan, and Palestinian.

With this main question, the research aimed to analyze the migratory context of Palestinian women currently residing in the border under study. Through the identification of migratory flows of Palestinian women, we constructed a cartography of their motivations and perceptions, as well as their spaces of sociability within the border territory. In addition, we aimed to find out to what extent gender, identities, and immigration categories are articulated.

Neide Patarra (2005) highlights the importance of studies on international migrations that "in the context of globalization has indeed been the subject of a significant number of important theoretical and empirical contributions, attesting to its diversity, meanings, and implications" (2005, p. 23). We underscore that given the current global scenario, it is important to develop studies that intensify and improve migration policies. Therefore, through the analysis of the Arab-Palestinian migratory flow, it is justified that this study seeks to understand the immigration of women who migrated from their country of origin to the destination country, in this case, the border between Brazil and Uruguay.

The gender issue is emphasized based on the importance of studying the migratory flow of women. According to Assis (2007), this importance arises because, in the last century, their migratory experiences were not treated as objects of analysis. However, the data not only demonstrate the female presence in the flows of the early 21st century but also the growth of participation in international migrations in the second half of the 20th century, pointing to a crucial factor for understanding this invisibility: the theoretical perspective present in migration studies until the early 1970s ignored gender, race, and ethnicity differences.

The increased participation of women in the migratory context stems from the growth of international migrations in the last century and highlights differences between migratory flows. For example, contemporary migrants benefit from a cheaper and more efficient system of communications and transportation than their predecessors, reducing distances and making contact between the society of origin and the destination society more frequent.

Considering the research findings of Esteves de Calazans (2009), the author identifies, within her analytical category of migrations, the level of involvement, integration with communities, the degree of internal cooperation, and relations with the community of origin in the formed network. Thus, the established relationships, developed activities, and processes of identity construction are highlighted.

Through an approach to the field, it was observed that Palestinian migration began with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. During this period, the Palestinian community left its country of origin, and some members migrated to Brazil and Uruguay. A portion of them moved to the border, settling in the twin cities of Chuí-Chuy. The library of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) emphasizes that from 1970 onwards, a significant influx of Arabs, mainly Palestinians, began at this border, which currently integrates the economic, social, and political life of these towns.

It was identified that there are around 400 people from the Palestinian Arab community at this border, including about 150 women among migrants and descendants. The Municipal of Council of Chuí also portrayed that in this town, there is an Arab club as a space for the sociability of this community, and at this moment, a mosque is under construction. Another peculiarity of this migration is related to the issuance of passports, which mostly occurs through Jordan. Regarding this, Denise Fagundes Jardim explains that:

> Immigrating meant facing certain paths. [...] the documents to leave Palestine were either Israeli (which did not grant access to the labor market in Arab countries) or, at best, Jordanian. [...] We do not have precision on the bureaucracy, even for cases of paperwork regularization in Brazil. To illustrate, behind the regularization of papers for a Jordanian in Brazil, there may be a story of a Palestinian family's escape that went to Jordan and then sent their son to America. [...] An experience referred to by informants, by experts in Palestinian immigration, as a diaspora. (Jardim, 2006, p. 172)

The Brazil-Uruguay border has peculiar characteristics. In the words of Pucci (2010, p.30), which gave rise to the common term to describe it, it is a "live border." The Brazil-Uruguay border is the most open, dense, and homogeneously populated land border. However, Jardim (2006, p.174) asserts that all border towns register the presence of Palestinians and their significant relevance in local commerce.

The Palestine diaspora

Cultures in diaspora, as explained by Hall (2006), are not and will never be unified because individuals are products of various interconnected histories and cultures, belonging simultaneously to more than one place. They belong to what Hall (2006) terms "hybrid cultures", which have been forced to give up the dream or ambition of rediscovering any kind of "lost" cultural purity or "ethnic absolutism" (p.52). Thus, these cultures become irrevocably translated.

Palestinian immigration is an experience of diaspora. The effects of a conflict that spans the 20th century make Palestinian migration more sui generis, as they do not have a nation-state. In other words, they lack documents related to belonging to a national state. Hence, the use of the expression "self-proclaimed Palestinians."

However, the Palestinian diaspora occurred for a reason: the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The Israel-Palestine conflict is not simply a territorial conflict. It is a political, violent, and exclusionary conflict. To approach the Palestinian issue, the theoretical framework used was based on the teachings of Edward Said. To briefly contextualize this conflict, three key dates will be used: 1947, 1949, and 1967. However, it is known that the conflictual political circumstances involving Palestine have existed since 1917 when the British Arthur Balfour, during World War I, signed the Balfour Declaration, committing the British crown to create a national home for Jews in Palestine. From this Declaration, the first conflicts between Palestinians and Zionists began. In 1922, the League of Nations approved the British Mandate for Palestine, in which the British crown assumed responsibility for the Palestinian territory, initiating its plan to create a home for Jews.

It is noteworthy that since the early 20th century, the Zionist idea has been based on the expulsion of the Palestinian people and consequently considers the Palestinian people as inferior and preferably outside Palestinian lands (Said, 2013).

The formal creation of the State of Israel, according to Said (2012), occurred on May 14, 1948, but effectively began the previous year, on November 29, 1947, when the United Nations (UN) through Resolution 181 approved the partition plan for Palestine, creating a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international territory, which would be Jerusalem. It should be emphasized that this resolution does not refer to Palestine as a state; it only separates the Palestinian territory, creating an Arab state.

Therefore, the year 1948 is marked by the Independence of the State of Israel when Israel is recognized as a state. One day after Israel's independence, neighboring Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia) promoted the creation of this new state by attacking it. This was the first conflict for the Jews, which ended in 1949, not only with their victory but also with the expansion of their territory. In 1967, the Six-Day War.

What Said (2012) wrote is that many Palestinians sought refuge/migrated to Brazil, acquired Brazilian naturalization, set up businesses, and currently inhabit the southern borders of Brazil. Therefore, after this historical context of the Palestinian diaspora, Palestinian immigration, in the words of Jardim (2006), is a particular, singular immigration, a contemporary immigration phenomenon. This is because the author observed an interest among the children of immigrants in continuing their traditions, even far from their country of origin or descent.

The arab-palestinian immigration to Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY

The first migratory flow is mainly composed of Syrian-Lebanese who arrived at the border through the ports of Santos and Montevideo, motivated by the idea of finding a prosperous region for commercial activities. From this first cycle, few Syrian-Lebanese are still alive, as this migration occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The second migratory flow also began in the 20th century but intensified from 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel and later in 1967 with the start of another armed conflict between Israel and Palestine. This second flow, historicized by Jardim (2016), consists precisely of Palestinian families who migrated forcibly, known as "Nakba". The immigration from Palestine initially pointed to neighboring countries and, in the following years, to even more distant places, such as the choice of many Palestinian families to settle in the town of Chuí, bordering Chuy, finding an opportunity for commerce on the Brazil-Uruguay border.

In both migratory flows, Syrian-Lebanese and Palestinians started their professional lives as peddlers. Working as peddlers was part of the routine for most Arab immigrants newly arrived in Brazil and was present in the border regions of Rio Grande do Sul. According to Alves (2014), peddlers went to houses and farms, offering various products such as clothes, hygiene products, kitchen utensils, and others. This work was arduous but was the first step to save a small amount of money to open a fixed store. These businesses established by Arab communities, mainly Palestinians in this case, marked the beginning of settlement in the municipality of Chuí and, consequently, its creation and independence from the neighboring municipality, Santa Vitória do Palmar.

What makes the Chuí and Chuy border even more peculiar, besides being a binational town, is the presence of other communities that arrived in the border region during the 20th century, mainly from Palestine. Despite maintaining a strong connection to their culture and customs, the Palestinian community adapted to the economy and culture of the border. The Palestinian community, upon settling in the studied border, integrated into the border community, resulting in cultural pluralism in the towns of Chuí and Chuy. Nevertheless, the good relationship with the locals was not always immune to misunderstandings or stigma and prejudice.

> Many entrepreneurs also faced some form of prejudice, whether due to their religion – mostly Muslim – or the success of their popular enterprises and diverse products that attracted a loyal clientele. From the 1990s onward, another element

was incorporated into this scenario with the U.S. invasion of Iraq and after September 11, 2001 (ASEFF, 2014, s/p.).

In the universe of this research, based on empirical observations, all Palestinian families with whom there was contact were traders, whether in the clothing, footwear, or food sectors, for example. It is worth noting that these businesses are also recognized for having a wide variety of products. Arab commercial establishments also have their own aesthetics, with products all in view for consumers and with images and flags that identify their culture and origins.

Cinara Alves (2014) emphasizes the interweaving relationship between Arab culture present in the economic behavior of Arab immigrants and descendants and the regional development of the neighboring border – Santana do Livramento/BR and Rivera/UY. This analysis between culture and development reflects on the question of how values, beliefs, and customs influence the economic relations of this border. The border of Santana do Livramento and Rivera, like that of Chuí and Chuy, is predominantly formed by Arab-Palestinian immigrants who migrated due to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

The relationship with commerce is not something that Arab immigrants brought with them in the migratory process. In their homeland, the vast majority earned their livelihood from agriculture, but upon arriving in Brazil, with the established agrarian situation and the need for short-term financial returns, they became traders and consolidated themselves in this field. The large number of Arab immigrants involved in commerce is justified by the networks of contact and solidarity among them: upon arriving and establishing themselves in profitable locations, even as peddlers, they indicated to their families and acquaintances the paths to follow for stability (Alves, 2014).

Finally, regarding the Palestinian flow from the Santana do Livramento/Rivera border, it resembles that of Palestinians residing in Chuí/Chuy. In agreement with Alves (2014), Palestinians started working as peddlers to open their fixed businesses then; furthermore, the first generation of immigrants is still a reserved generation that gradually integrates into the border community and values the principles acquired in Palestine. The second generation of this descendant flow is different. They integrate into society, participating in the social, political, and economic life of the borders. The third

generation, still being born since they arrived and settled in the Rio Grande do Sul borders, has adapted and contributed to the economic development of the border municipalities.

Multiculturalism and Identities

We will begin this section with the definition of multiculturalism and then its connection to culture and identity principles. Seeking a single definition for the term "multiculturalism" is a challenge, since, as Professor Bas'Ilele Malomalo (2017b) teaches us, multiculturalism tends to mean a theory, a philosophy, a public policy, a social doctrine, or even a cultural movement. Malomalo (2017b) and Hall (2003) share that multiculturalism has a variety of articulations, ideas, and practices.

Multiculturalism is plural. Hall (2003) identifies various types of multiculturalism: conservative multiculturalism, which seeks the assimilation of cultures; liberal multiculturalism, which aims to integrate different cultural groups into a majority society; pluralist multiculturalism, which assesses cultural differences by groups and grants rights to these groups from different communities within a community political order; commercial multiculturalism, which presupposes that if cultural diversity is recognized, the problems of these differences will be resolved; corporate multiculturalism, which aims to manage cultural differences of minorities; and critical or revolutionary multiculturalism, which focuses on power, privilege, and the hierarchy of oppressions and resistance movements.

From this perspective of Hall (2003), multiculturalism is a questioned idea. It is essential to emphasize that "multicultural" is not synonymous with "multiculturalism". Hall makes this distinction (2003, p. 52) by stating that "multicultural" is a qualitative term that describes the social characteristics and governance problems presented by any society in which different cultural communities coexist and try to build a life in common while retaining something of their "original" identity. The term "multiculturalism" is a noun and refers to the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage problems of diversity and multiplicity generated by multicultural societies.

Another premise for there not to be a multicultural society is if this universalistic principle judges a conception of social and cultural organization as normal or superior. "The appeal to the free construction of personal life is the only universalistic principle that does not impose any form of social organization and cultural practices" (p.200). Therefore, it is necessary to oppose various forms of cultural colonization and oppose the

imposition of a dominant way of life in the world. We can no longer accept this multiculturalism loaded with discrimination, intolerance, which treats those who deviate from the colonial model as inferior.

This way, the multiculturalism discussed here is the existence of three distinct cultures in the same territory, in other words, Palestinian culture, Brazilian culture, and Uruguayan culture at the Brazil-Uruguay border. Culture, according to Hall (2003, p. 44-45), is a production; that is, it is not a matter of ontology, of being, but of becoming. Consequently, in this process, migration has been nuancing cultural identities. Thus, around the globe, the processes of free and forced migrations are changing in composition, diversifying cultures, and pluralizing cultural identities of former dominant nation-states, old imperial powers, and thus, of the globe itself.

In the modern world, as Hall (2006) argues, the national cultures in which we are born constitute one of the main sources of cultural identity, but they are formed and transformed within representation. Regarding this research, Hall asserts (2003) that in a diaspora situation, in this case, due to the expressions of Palestinians and the preservation of their identity even with the distance from their homeland, identities become multiple. Malomalo understands that culture, in this context, "is defined from the point of view of social and racial relations and their historical contexts" (2017a, p.166).

Modern societies are constituted based on constant and rapid changes, distinguishing them from traditional societies. Globalization has also impacted national cultures in the construction of cultural identity. "In the modern world, the national cultures in which we are born constitute one of the main sources of cultural identity" (Hall, 2006, p. 29). However, for the author, this is imagined; it is not something we are born with but is formed and transformed within our representations. In this sense, "national identities do not subordinate all other forms of difference and are not free from the play of power, internal divisions and contradictions, loyalties, and overlapping differences" (Hall, 2006, p. 38).

Esteves de Calazans (cited in Mead, 1963; Goffman, 2000, 2003; Dubar 1997a, 1998) acknowledges that identity incorporates the subject's representations of themselves and others; in this sense, it is built in a dynamic of permanent interaction in which the subject's representations and the gaze of the other intervene.

Finally, we can identify that both individuals and society are constantly changing, creating and recreating their identities, influenced by the environment in which they are inserted. In this case, by promoting the encounter between diverse cultures at the Brazil-

Uruguay border, multiculturalism gives visibility to ethnic differences. The concepts of culture are the plays of identity politics of "small societies," that is, understanding the social mobilization of ethnic communities. Therefore, in this approach in the light of Hall (2003, 2006), Malomalo (2017a), and Rolnik (1997), culture and identity are viewed from a sociocultural perspective.

Gender Intersectionalities

Gender is a concept related to social, historical, and cultural constructions that are considered feminine or masculine characteristics, based on perceived differences between sexes related to other categories such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. The issue of gender arises from how all these characteristics are constructed and their place within a sexist and misogynistic society. All characteristics related to women are devalued compared to men.

Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (2002) uses the term "intersectionality" to designate the interdependence of power relations, race, sex, and class. Intersectionality, according to Crenshaw (2002), is a conceptualization of the problem that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination, based on how racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create basic inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes, and others. The intersectionality of Palestinian immigrant women can intersect with xenophobia, sexism, religious choice, and patriarchal violence.

The increase in female migration, from 1970 onwards, occurs in a context of the growth of international migrations from the second half of the 20th century. Understanding the migratory process through social networks demonstrates the importance of solidarity relationships built by migrant women between the society of origin and destination, which helps them in the early moments of life in a new place. Gender studies contribute to understanding the migratory flow of Palestinian women because migration, in the words of Assis (2007), has ceased to be seen solely as a rational choice, involving social network relationships, becoming a strategy for family groups, friends, or people from the same community.

Palestinian women are historically recognized as transmitters of culture, national values, and protectors of the family nucleus. However, these same women are also victims of prejudice and stigmatized for their beliefs, the hijab (Islamic way of dressing), and

other paradigms of vulnerability that characterize their identity. Monzón (2017) emphasizes that the entire human experience has differentiated impacts for women and men and for a diversity of gender identities that intersect in historical, sexual, socio-racial, ethnic, age-related, disability-related, and other conditions of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. The gender category constitutes an analytical tool to explain phenomena in social reality, particularly in the case of Palestinian migrant women, whose sociocultural, historical, economic, and political issues are intrinsically linked to the reasons for their migration.

Results e discussion

The influences of migration in the towns of Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY were observed even while walking between these towns along Avenida Internacional, which separates these municipalities, and in the municipality of Chuí/BR, where the majority of Arab commerce is concentrated. Many demonstrations of nationalism were identified, with flags hanging and expressions of faith, such as passages and proverbs from the Quran. Above all, Arabs move about peacefully in their attire, which, to the naked eye, differs from the clothing of Brazilians and Uruguayans, but it is evident that these three populations contribute to the integration between the two towns.

It is emphasized that all the interviewees are of the Muslim faith. With seven interviews conducted, it is concluded that the narratives and insights acquired at different moments of migration were sufficient for data analysis. Therefore, for a better understanding, a table was prepared using codenames (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, and E7), considering the year of birth and the year of migration.

Table 1

Presentation of the seven interviewees

Interviewee	Year of Birth	Year of Migration
E1	1969	1991
E2	1980	2015
E3	1961	1968
E4	1963	1978
E5	1956	1967
E6	1944	1968
E7	1961	1968

The transcription of these interviews and the results obtained will be presented below, through the main categories found, considering the migration periods based on their regularities and differences. Categories of analysis were established from

recurrences present in all interviews, encompassing the migration of Palestinian women to the Brazil-Uruguay border, including: the reason for migration, integration in the studied border, regularization in Brazil, combating prejudice and xenophobia, and the return to Palestine.

Reasons for migration

Regarding the reasons for migration, two main justifications for the migratory act, or we can say, confirmation of diasporic motives, were identified. Five interviewees (E3, E4, E5, E6, and E7) migrated as children due to the Six-Day War[1] that occurred in 1967. Interviewees E3, E5, E6, and E7 migrated in 1967 or 1968, precisely during the critical period between Israelis and Palestinians. Only E4 migrated in the subsequent decade, in 1978; however, at that time, Israelis and Palestinians were still in conflict - one could say that the conflict persists to the present moment. All migrated with their parents because of the life-threatening dangers they were facing. It was confirmed that the Arab-Palestinian flow to southern Brazil was not a planned migration. When asked about the planning of coming to Brazil, all responded that there was no planning; there was indeed expulsion by the Jews. In some cases, parents came first, worked as peddlers, and only then brought their families, as reported by one of the interviewees:

> - The planning was that the Jews expelled us. My father was already in Brazil. In fact, my father, I was 2 months old when he came to Brazil. I met my father for the first time when I was 9 years old. He stayed for a while and went back to Brazil. After a few months, my mother came to Brazil with all her children. (E5)

The other account is similar to this:

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[1] Conflicts between Israel and Palestine have extended since the 1940s, driven by a territorial dispute for control of Palestine. The root cause of these conflicts is the emergence of the Zionist movement. In 1967, the Six-Day War was initiated after Israeli attacks against Syria. In just six days, Israelis took control of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights from Syria, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. Despite a later UN resolution calling for Israel to return these territories, they remained under Israeli control for a considerable period.

- I came here when I was little because of my father, as I was telling you before, no one leaves a place because they want to; they leave for a reason. So, the reason that made my father leave his country, his lands, because of wars, so he left Palestine. And Palestine was dominated in 1948, then in 1967, they took the rest, so there's the Nakba, the return, and so on. It's still happening today; I don't know if you follow the Palestinian cause problem, it's still happening. So my father thought it was better to come to Brazil because we were at risk of death due to the war, so we left there. He came and started working here in 1962 or so, 1960. And then he asked my mother to come here in 1964, but my mother came but didn't want to stay because there were 3 children there, she wanted to return. So I came with her at the age of 4, we went back there, but unfortunately, there was the 7-day war, so during that war, my father decided to bring the whole family here. So, the 3 children who stayed and me, we came to Brazil. (E7)

In both cases, in addition to the accounts given by interviewees E3, E4, E5, E6, and E7, the wars between Palestinians and Jews, especially the one in 1967, can be observed in the narratives of these Palestinian mothers. They resisted and took care of their children in Palestine while their husbands worked in Brazil with the intention of bringing them to live in Brazil. In other words, family relationships, the family nucleus, are a predominant category in the lives of Palestinian women, influencing all their decisions. The interviewed Palestinian women are mothers and demonstrated a combination of zeal, care, and dedication to their children and family. In all interviews, the children were mentioned. The other reason for Palestinian mobility is present in a more recent migratory flow, especially because the issue of Palestine continues in a contemporary diasporic movement. Therefore, the interviewees who migrated in 1991 and 2015, comprising interviewees E1 and E2, respectively, came to southern Brazil for marriage. Both migrated from Palestine to Brazil, directly to the border, due to their marriages with men who already lived in Chuí/BR. When we asked about the planning and the reason for leaving Palestine:

"-Well, because I married an Arab who was already in Brazil, and he was working here, so I arrived with him. (E1)"

And the other interviewee reported the same reason: "- For my family, I got married, and my husband was working here, so he brought me here with the family. (E2)"

However, this migratory reason was not unique. E6 migrated for two reasons: the conflict that took root in Palestine in 1967 and her marriage. E6 migrated with a scheduled marriage, landing in São Paulo, and in 15 days, got married. A curiosity is that the marriage in 1968 was done with Arabic documentation. Due to this, they were having difficulty with naturalization, so the notary office in Santa Vitória do Palmar/RS sympathized after many attempts and sent the certificate to be translated, and then they got married in Brazil and obtained naturalization.

Another interesting analysis is that the marriages of the interviewees have been going on for some long years: for example, E1 has been married for 27 years, E6 has maintained the marriage for 50 years, and E7 has been married for 32 years. All portrayed this characteristic of marriages taking place in a short period and being long-lasting. However, upon realizing this observation, none could explain this phenomenon, except that for them, it is natural even though they are aware that they meet and get married in a short period.

Furthermore, only one of the interviewees is currently not married to a man of Arab origin; however, she is the widow of an Arab man. Thus, the differences in migratory reasons occur according to the time of migration, i.e., women who migrated during critical moments of the conflict migrated as children or teenagers with their families. Especially, all the interviewees are married/have been married to Arab or Arab-origin men, thus demonstrating a uniqueness in the marital arrangements of the Palestinian community, and thus, generational marriages become a bridge between the community of origin and destination.

It is noticeable that Palestinian immigration is not exactly a free choice, nor is it solely motivated by economic reasons for family support. According to the interviewees, the State of Israel produces Palestinian diaspora due to the conflict and occupation of Palestinian territory. With this in mind, practices, customs, and traditions brought by the first generations of Palestinians who arrived at the southern border of Brazil are observed in the Brazil-Uruguay border. Families settled on the Brazil-Uruguay border act as a territory for the circulation of family ties, from other generations, in a coming and going in this triad Brazil-Palestine-Uruguay.

Multiculturalism on the Brazil-Uruguay Border

The constant movement between the states of Brazil and Uruguay is a reality for the residents of Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY. Moreover, for them, "changing" countries is as simple as taking a few steps, especially because the customs, both Brazilian and Uruguayan, are not located between these towns. As previously investigated, the municipality of Chuí/BR has an established Arab community, mainly Palestinian. The vast majority of Palestinian families reside in Chuí/BR, maintain their businesses in this municipality, and often live on the second floor. The arrival in Chuí/Rio Grande do Sul (RS) occurred through communication networks among the Arabs themselves.

Entering primarily through the Brazilian city of São Paulo/SP (the older ones via the Port of Santos and the newer ones by plane), they communicated with family and acquaintances who had already migrated. They then came to the port city of Rio Grande/RS, and with their first profession in Brazil, peddling, they traveled through the countryside, known as the Pampa Biome. They eventually arrived in the border municipality of Chuí/RS and saw a good opportunity to establish commerce and residence there. It is noteworthy that many have relatives in São Paulo/SP and Rio Grande/RS.

E6 was one of the first Palestinians to arrive at the border and followed the mentioned route. She landed in São Paulo/SP, then went to Pelotas/RS and Rio Grande/RS, and later came to the border. Initially, she resided in Santa Vitória do Palmar/RS between 1968 and 1969. When asked about the number of Palestinians at the border and the reason for this community, as well as the beginning of this Arab flow to the border, she said:

> - There are, but it wasn't like this, it was very few. There was one house here, another there. The only one with a store at that time was X and that house that sold shoes. There was nothing; it was all fields. This X was Palestinian and has already passed away, and the house that sold shoes, I don't remember the name, I think it was xxxx. He invited us for lunch when we arrived. And there was nothing there, nothing; it was very small. When I came here, in Santa Vitória, it was all sand; there were only things around the square. When I came here, they were building the road, you know? It changed a lot. (E6)

E5 had a similar journey to E6, but this interviewee lived in São Paulo/SP for some time. When asked about her trajectory and the reason for choosing Chuí/BR, she said:

- First because I lived in São Paulo, then I got married and came to live in Santa Vitória, and I lived 11 and a half years in Santa Vitória. Then, I became a widow, and my brother came from São Paulo to work here in Chuí. So, I came here, and we bought land and built where I live. (E6)

Consequently, the highlighted border was not inhabited either, perhaps with some commercial development in the 1960s and 1970s. E6 mentions that it was in the 1980s, after losing her husband and then calling her brother to start a new business in the town of Chuí/BR, that the area began to see development. They were among the pioneers of commerce in the region.

This account demonstrates that it was through the network of Arab relatives and acquaintances that the municipality of Chuí/RS was consolidating. It is worth noting that at this time, Chuí/RS belonged to the municipality of Santa Vitória do Palmar/RS, which became independent in 1995. The realization that the commercial growth of the region with Palestinian migration to Chuí occurred in the 1980s comes from the accounts of E4, who arrived in Chuí/RS in 1984, E6, who moved to the then district of Chuí/RS in 1985, and E3:

- We came to São Paulo/SP and then to Rio Grande do Sul. We came to Chuí in 1989 due to trade, as the border was booming commercially. Chuí was one of the best borders in Brazil at that time. Chuí and Uruguaiana. (E4)

With this data, we can see that the Palestinian community solidifies in Chuí/RS in the 1980s. However, decades earlier, Palestinians were already present in this territory, as mentioned earlier by E6. Regarding the relationship between all the residents of this binational town, all the interviewees gave positive accounts.

When interviewing E4, upon arriving at her workplace without prior scheduling, she was chatting with a Uruguayan friend. We asked her about how she perceived the border, the Palestinian influx, and the proximity between Brazilians, Uruguayans, and Palestinians. She commented that everyone gets along well because they coexist in the

same places. For E3, both Brazilians and Uruguayans have learned to live with Palestinians in a friendly manner.

> - We teach a lot, they have learned a lot. They respect, they are curious to know, they go to our parties, they know Ramadan, which is the sacred month that is about to begin. As I will tell you, they value and have a desire to know, they open up to anyone who comes to ask, and furthermore, their respect for our religion and customs is what matters most here. (E4).

In light of this, the spaces of coexistence and sociability frequented by Palestinian women on the border are summarized in the local Arab club, founded by a Palestinian. Alongside the Arab club, there is a Muslim cemetery, and currently, a mosque is under construction. However, the Arab club is the place where they hold their parties, weddings, and prayers. The club is frequented by all the interviewees living on the border, and when asked about the frequency:

> - Always! We have the Arab club, and there we celebrate the festivals. Our society is not exclusive to Arabs[2]; we accept Brazilians, Uruguayans, and a bit of everything. And now we are finishing the mosque. (E4).

When asked if the club was open to visits: "Yes, it is open. The Palestinian here, the Arab, welcomes Uruguayans, Brazilians, and foreigners of any kind. We are open so that they can get to know our culture and customs." (E4)

The welcoming in the destination community becomes an attribute that maintains mobility between communities. Thus, the southern region of Brazil corresponds to a multicultural territory, coexisting with various cultures in the same area.

Prejudice and xenophobia

From the interviews conducted on the Brazil-Uruguay border, it was surprising that these resident Palestinian women had never witnessed or experienced any acts of prejudice, discrimination, or xenophobia. This attitude can be justified by the fact that the municipalities of Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY form a binational town, practically founded by Arab Palestinians: they have consolidated themselves as residents with significant economic power in the region. Another possible explanation is the denial of racism and

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[2] The highlighted portions in the narratives are from the authors.

xenophobia. One of the questions in the interview script was about how Palestinian women thought Brazilians and Uruguayans perceived them, or in other words, how they perceived this relationship and recognition from them. All of them affirmed that the view of Brazilians and Uruguayans towards them is positive, although their clothing sometimes causes some strangeness among Uruguayans.

> - Sometimes only when we travel within Uruguay, they find it a bit strange, our clothes, the veil. But here, as they are already accustomed, it doesn't happen. (E1)

Among the interviewed women on the border, only one did not wear the hijab. Regarding this, we asked why some women wore it and others did not:

> - I am a Muslim, not very practicing. The fact that I am Muslim does not mean that I am obliged to wear the veil. Many people think that if you are born a Muslim, you have to wear the veil. It is not true. The truth is that a person wears the veil when she feels ready for it, that's what God says, ready to wear the veil, so you wear the veil. (E7)

Feeling ready to use the veil, according to the interviewed women, corresponds to what is written in their sacred book, the Quran. Muslim women who study the Quran and dedicate themselves to its religious teachings feel ready to use the hijab. However, according to the accounts of the interviewees, the choice to use it or not depends on the individual.

E1 was not the only one who demonstrated that, for the Uruguayan population, they cause some strangeness, especially due to their clothing. This feeling was expressed by E5:

> - With Brazilians, no, but for Uruguayans, it's something new because there are not many Muslims in Uruguay as in Brazil. In Brazil, I feel comfortable; there is no difference, and people are more educated. It is very different because in Uruguayan society, they are closed off because there is no race mixture in Uruguay; that's why it is closed off. It's not like in Brazil, where there is migration from everywhere. If you analyze everything, you will see that everyone here is a descendant of German, Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, Korean, Arab, Jewish, Spanish. You find people of all races here, so there is no embarrassment about race; everyone is equal, and people are more supportive, it seems. (E5).

These data can be understood because the border between Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY has already consolidated as multicultural, and the transit spaces of these women are places where recognition has already been achieved.

Another hypothesis for this observation that the interviewed Palestinian women are not targets of discrimination, prejudice, or xenophobia is the possibility that these women have assimilated the idea that we live in a racial democracy. In other words, they may have already assimilated the culture of the idea of racial democracy in Brazil, unlike Uruguay, which does not have this conception. According to Munanga (2018), the myth of racial democracy is part of the Brazilian's education, constructed based on the denial of racism, meaning that there is no racism in Brazil, and therefore, the interviewed Palestinian women may not perceive discriminatory, racist, and/or xenophobic attitudes.

Regarding the Islamic religion, prejudice was identified, even if not explicitly mentioned by them. All the interviewees declared themselves Muslims, adhering to Islam, a monotheistic religion centered on the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. However, according to E7, Islam is erroneously linked to terrorist attacks, especially after the global milestone of September 11, 2001, in the United States. This results in acts of religious intolerance towards Brazilian women who convert to this religion. Society "accepts" Muslim immigrants, but does not accept Brazilian women who convert to the religion:

> - What happens here too, that within this parliamentary front, we noticed, and people came to us: Brazilian women who converted to Islam. They receive prejudice; they leave their jobs because they want to wear the veil. Now, when my neighbor, the population knows that I am from Palestine, I'm wearing the veil, I have more respect, you know. Now, the people who convert, they don't accept it, they think they are joining terrorists, so the prejudice we suffer is based on this.

> It even happened to my daughters, you know, because they are Brazilian, but they have Arabic names. So, in schools, sometimes their classmates, with silly jokes like "the bomb woman", "terrorist woman", and those things, you know, my work, throughout my life, has been when this happens in schools or universities, I go there and explain to these misinformed people who hear, I don't know from where, from Globo [Brazil's largest television channel] (laughs), terrorism, I don't

know what. So, I make a point of going there, explaining to these children, these adults that it's not like that. (E7)

When asked how E7 faces these adversities, she said she went to schools and explained to people who were misinformed about this issue, so that they could learn about her religion, her culture, and know the other person. It is noteworthy that E7 lives in the capital, in the central area of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and is a leader in the Palestinian Women's Movement.

Therefore, we can see in the statements and examples in this section that there is discrimination, even if veiled. We can justify this based on the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. For now, discrimination and racism exist and must be faced and fought. On the other hand, there is a search for dialogue by those who are discriminated against, as a way to establish a harmonious space for differences. Perhaps the leadership of the Movement of Palestinian Women, living in the capital, and advocating as an activist for the fundamental rights and guarantees of Palestinian women, makes it easier to identify situations of xenophobia experienced by Palestinian women.

According to Munanga (2014), the construction of a true democracy begins with the recognition and respect for differences. This theme is the focus of discussions worldwide because, for the author, both secular migrations combined with the slave trade and the colonization of invaded territories, as well as post-colonial migrations combined with the dark sides of capitalism and globalization, create problems in the peaceful coexistence between diverse and different groups, especially in cultural aspects. These problems manifest in racist, prejudiced, xenophobic, and/or religiously intolerant practices.

Munanga (2014) emphasizes the importance and urgency for all countries in the world to implement policies aimed at recognizing and respecting differences, centered around the education of all individuals. This, in turn, will form a new citizenship through a multicultural pedagogy that contributes to the construction of a culture of peace.

Final considerations

As pointed out in the course of this article, cultures are constructions that constantly transform. In this sense, both Munanga (2014) and Touraine (1998) share the idea that a society having a single culture, whether religious, ethnic, or another singularity, is not possible, as we are multiple and in constant transformation.

Munanga (2014) asserts that most Western countries practice racism towards two specific groups: anti-Black racism and anti-Arab racism. However, this racism does not rely on the concepts of superior or inferior races but rather on the conception of cultural and identity differences.

Regarding the diversity and coexistence of a state with various nations, Munanga describes: "Each of these nations corresponds to a historical community occupying a given territory and sharing, in this territory, a distinct language and culture." (2014, p.42). Thus, the binational town under study refers to a territory inhabited and shared by three distinct populations, each with a unique language and culture.

We can observe that the migratory context in which Palestinian women are inserted is a diasporic process, a result of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. The choice of the Chuí-Chuy border was motivated by social networks created among Palestinian families, calling their relatives and friends to work in this border region. From this observation, we can identify these networks built between the community of origin and the destination community, with marriage being one of these bridges. Solidarity and affectionate relationships among Palestinian women are also evident, both in the workplace and in leisure spaces.

Concerning the peculiarities experienced in the land border region of the municipalities of Chuí and Chuy, it can be noted that there is indeed a multicultural relationship based on respect and education among those who reside there. According to the interviewees, both Brazilians and Uruguayans have learned to coexist and have developed affectionate bonds with Palestinians and their culture, showing interest in understanding their customs. In addition, the strong cultural ties of these Palestinian families in this border area reinforce their connections with the community of origin, strengthening their religious ties to Islam and their cultural and personal identities.

Moreover, it is possible to identify historical, social, and commercial relations established between the municipalities in question. The Arab-Palestinian community, when migrating and settling in the studied border area, integrated into the border community, resulting in cultural pluralism in these municipalities by combining Brazilian, Uruguayan, and Arab cultures in the same geographical space. It was identified that human social interactions created in a delimited geographical space, as is the case with the twin towns on the border between Brazil and Uruguay, are perceived by the population as a single town.

The geographical border is experienced by these women as a common binational space and not as an international limit between states.

The studied border has been redefined. Thinking about culture, differences, and relationships between individuals is to understand the distinctions among the characters in this field without dissipating their differences. In other words, it is the process of conceiving differences as cultural diversities and pluralities that need to be respected for peaceful multicultural coexistence, turning into a space of respect for the inhabitants of Chuí/BR and Chuy/UY.

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