The Canadian Arab press as historical source and object of study, from the late 19th century to the 1970s.

Houda Asal, PhD
Centre de Recherches Historiques, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
(EHESS), Paris.

Abstract :

Within the framework of historical research on the Arab minority in Canada since the beginning of the migration (late 19th century) to the 1970's, the press produced by the group represents an important archival source. This study, centered on Arab minority's processes of visibilisation and identity discourse changes overtime, is interested in the formulation of a collective voice. The media produced by the Arab minority are at the same time both an important archival source and an object of study. Little research exists on ethnic minority press, its role, functions, its place in the Canadian society and in the life of groups. Although the field of ethnic studies relies in many cases on the minority group's media production, it rarely considers the press as an object of study.

Introduction

An analysis of the Canadian arab The press, print media, including bulletins, newspapers and periodicals, produced by the Arab minority in Canada represents an important archival source and an object of study for historical research into that group, from the beginning of their migration in the late 19th century to the 1970s. This empirical analysis, focused on the Arab minority's processes of becoming visible ("visibilisation") and on changes in their identity discourse, examines how a collective voice was formulated. The publications produced by the Arab minority are both a means of communication and a privileged site for speech production. They allow the activities, discourses and internal dynamics of the Arab minority in Canada to be documented.

This article aims, in the first place, to show that the ethnic minority press is

1

an archival source of unexpected wealth for the historian. The publications provide a record of the evolution of identity expressions used by members of the Arab group to evoke "the community" to which they claimed to belong. Secondly, the article will show that the press is an actor in its own right, with its own organizational dynamics. The newspapers are places of memory, cohesion and debate, contributing to the group's visibility in the Canadian public sphere.

1. Background: Arab minority media in Canada

The "Arab" minority in Canada : definition and profile

The difficulty of selecting an appropriate name to designate this immigrant minority is intrinsic to the research question. The "Arab group" was classified into different categories by Canadian officials - Turk, Syrian, Lebanese, Arab - and adopted different self--denominations according to the period. The adjective "Arab" is used here as a generic term, seemingly the most appropriate across the entire period of study, from the end of the 19th century to the 1970s. It refers to those originating from the Arab world; a fluid entity which nevertheless corresponds to a strong geographic, historical, linguistic and cultural reality.

The "Arab" minority in Canada before 1975 was mainly from the *Machrek*[1] ; Arab--speakers and Christians, recognizing a common heritage. While different denominations were used to qualify the community (Syrian, Lebanese, Arab-- speaking, Oriental, etc.), the adjective "Arab" is used by the actors to refer to their own language, history and culture.

The difficulty of naming is exacerbated by the fact that "Arabness" is a fluctuating concept and that the minority which formed in Canada did not emerge from a national group. When emigration began at the end of the 19th century, those in the

Machrek lived under Ottoman rule, which explains their classification as "Turks"[2]. Beginning in 1920, they became citizens of new states under European mandates before obtaining independence (1946 for Lebanon and Syria)[3]. The absence of nation states with defined borders at the beginning of emigration and the historical upheavals in the *Machrek* throughout the period of study make it more difficult to name this minority in Canada. An analysis of the newspapers published by the group highlights the evolution of the denominations and identity expressions privileged in each era.

The history of Arab immigration to Canada can be divided into several periods. The first wave, at the end of the 19th century, was part of a sizeable trend of departures from the *Machrek* for the Americas (North and South). These first migrants, who began arriving in Canada in 1882, are considered "pioneers". For the most part, they were Christian peasants from areas that are now part of Syria and Lebanon; under--educated, they often worked as peddlers and later shop--keepers in Canada.

There followed a "period of establishment" from 1930 to 1950, characterized by the permanent settlement of Arabs in Canada, with generations born in the country. The Arab population is estimated to have been around 10 to 15 000 during this period. It was a relatively homogenous group, mainly composed of migrants who had arrived before the First World War and their descendents, because Canada applied a restrictive immigration policy which limited the number of new arrivals. The pioneers became citizens and their Canadian--born children integrated into Canadian schools.

A third period, from 1950 to 1970, saw the progressive arrival of new

migrants of greater diversity. Estimated at around 50,000 people, the new migrants joined those previously established, first through sponsorships, then independent migrations. The migrants originated from a larger region: Egypt joined Lebanon and Syria as one of the main source countries, but Jordan, Iraq and the Gulf countries also took their place. For the most part, the new arrivals were Christian, though the proportion of Muslims had increased. They were better educated, often spoke English or French when they arrived, pursued diverse occupations and had stronger links to the Arab world.

Minority Arab press in Canada as an archival source

An examination of Arab organizations and the Arab press in Canada allows an analysis of the links between these different periods. Although the field of ethnic studies often relies on the media production of minority groups, it rarely considers this material as an object of study in its own right. Starting in the 1980s, several studies were undertaken to analyse the existence, development, impact and content of minority media, both in general (Lacroix, 1988 ; Black & Leithner, 1988 ; *Canadian Journal of Communication,* 34 (4), 2009) and of specific ethnic groups (Lam, 1980 ; Sourice, 1997 ; Sherry & Murray, 2007 ; Hassanpour 2001). This research examined the role alternative media (as opposed to mass media) played in the inclusion/exclusion of minorities in/from public space, in power relations, questions of citizenship and political participation and in representations (Cottle, 2000 ; Karim, 2003 ; Downing & Husband, 2005 ; Mattelart, 2007).

For the most part, these studies focus on the current period and rarely examine the role these publications played in the history of a particular minority group, its construction, the ties between old and new arrivals, or the formulation of a

4

collective identity. Historical analyses are lacking, particularly for under--studied ethnic minorities such as the Arabs. Except for a reference book on the history of Arabs in Canada that dedicates a chapter to the press and the history of Arab organizations before the 1980s (Abu Laban, 1980), these areas of research in Canada have never been studied (Aboud, 1992 ; Labelle, Rocher, Antonius, 2009).

In this context, an historical study based on archival sources including Arab publications before 1975 becomes important. It allows a structured analysis of how this minority organized and expressed itself. The alternative press produced by groups with little access to mass media allows the words of these actors, lost to history, to be recovered. Complemented by oral testimonies gathered at a later time, this source avoids the pitfalls of the "re--writing" of history by its actors, of anachronisms, and of the failings of memory. The identity expressions used, and the ways writers designated the community they addressed constitute a faithful reflection of these voices of the past. However, since historical research depends on the accessibility and nature of the archives, the limits of the press as a source must also be taken into account. Some publications have been kept only by their former editors or by readers; it thus becomes difficult to obtain access or even to discover their existence in the first place.

These publications, often informal and produced with limited financial resources, leave scant trace of their readership, dissemination and impact. Analysis of the press depends on the size of the minority during the period of study, available resources, active members wishing to organize and the profile of potential readers. At the beginning of the history of Arab presence in Canada, the media produced by the group remained limited. There were two newspapers at the beginning of the century,

three between 1930 and 1950, and a dozen between 1960 and 1975. Moreover, ethnic media was limited to the press, few other means of communication being available to the Arab group (although an Arab radio programme was broadcast in the 1960s).

Since Arab immigration to Canada remains under--studied, a close reading of the Arab press in Canada yields important information. Through the act of publishing newspapers, the minority writes its story and leaves its marks. Sociologist Baha Abu Laban drew on these publications in writing the first monograph on the Arab minority in Canada. For example, he relied on an article from a 1930s periodical which has become a reference point for historians. Written by Elias Karam, a descendent of the pioneers and an important figure in Arab associative life, it tells the story of Ibrahim Abounadere, the first Arab migrant to lay foot on Canadian soil, in 1882 (Karam, 1935). Other newspaper articles draw up a list of Arab associations at the time, announce cultural activities and supply the names of community dignitaries who are hosting dinners, meeting political leaders or creating foundations. Some churches and organizations regularly published newsletters in which they clarified their goals, provided information on community life, its concerns and the debates which animated it.   The Arab press constitutes a valuable historical source which can reveal the evolution of identity expressions and the formulation of a collective voice.

2. Choices of self--denomination via the press: giving voice to migrants.

The significance of the adjective "Arab" from the point of view of the actors can be examined by analysing the content of their publications. How did the Arab minority define the contours of its collective identity throughout the period of study?

Such an analysis can also highlight the different self--denominations chosen to refer to the "community" (Syrians, Lebanese, Arabs, Canadian Arabs, Middle Eastern) as well as the evolution of the identity discourse.

Beyond a source of information, the newspapers served as a platform and mode of collective expression. Above all, they provide unique testimony to an era, difficult to recover from other sources. The choice of terms in the process of naming an organization or a newspaper is an important marker to analyse the evolution of self--denominations privileged by the actors of each period. A reading of the newspapers allows closer analysis of these choices, the underlying issues and the debates they raise. While the Arab publications reveal the discourses used by their writers, they do not allow us to know whether their positions were shared by the readership or the entire population concerned. The predominance of certain expressions in different newspapers and their continuity through time are nevertheless important pieces of information. In addition, political concerns, the vocabulary used and ideologies are expressed in the newspaper columns of each period.

Between Syrian, Lebanese and Arab: the period of establishment (1930--1950)

Before the 1960s, Arab minority media was rare. Research has uncovered the traces of six newspapers. The first two, dating from the 1910s, were *Al Shehab* and *Al Alamein*, of which no copies have been recovered. Alone among the newspapers of this period, they were written in Arabic, aimed at the first generation of migrants to arrive in Canada. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Arab minority produced four publications, each of which lasted only a few years. New immigrants being few, the readership of these publications was undoubtedly composed of long--established

7

migrants and their descendents. Arabic was little understood by the generations schooled in Canada and thus the newspapers from this period were published in English.

Table 1. (See Appendix)

The first migrants coming from the *Machrek* tended to designate themselves according to the name of their town or province of origin. From the beginning of the century until 1950, Canadian statistics and the migrants themselves privileged the term "Syrian" to name the entire group. This designation referred to an historical region which its inhabitants called *Bilad el Cham* (Greater Syria). The migrants who arrived in Canada came from this vast area, which included modern--day Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and South--East Turkey (Aboud, 2003). Historiography uses the qualifier "Syrian" until the 1930s (Hitti, 1924), then "Syrian Lebanese" or "Arab" for the entire period of establishment, between 1930 to 1950 (Aboud, 2003). The historiography of the Arabs in Canada and the United States thereafter alternates between "Syrian", "Arab" and "Syrian Lebanese" (Kayal & Kayal, 1975 ; Hooglund, 1987).

Names of associations, titles of newspapers and their contents provide more direct evidence of the terminologies chosen by members of the group when they formally met and expressed themselves. The oldest secular organization, some of whose members participated in the newspapers of this era, is the Syrian Canadian Association[4]. In the bulletin of St. Elijah Church in Ottawa, *The Syrian Canadian National Review* (1935), only "Syrian community" and "Syrian Canadians" are used.

8

In the only edition of the *The Voice* to be recovered, the authors also used the qualifier "Syrian" to designate the group, even though the publication is much later, dating from 1946 (*The Voice*, 1 (4), 1946). "Lebanon" is present only as a geographical referent, to clarify that the pioneers arrived from a village on Mount Lebanon. This region enjoyed a semi-autonomous status during the Ottoman Empire, but constituted only part of what was later to become Lebanon. In 1920, the European powers drew up the borders which separated Lebanon and the Republic of Syria. The two countries were held under a French mandate but had state structures with borders and distinct passports for their nationals[5]. It seems that, initially, the Arab population established in Canada took little notice of these changes. The new Lebanese state, encompassing the region from which the vast majority of migrants originated, did not correspond to a national identity which the pioneers and their descendents knew or recognized.

For its part, *The Syrian Lebanese Mercury* defined itself as the "newspaper of Syrians and Lebanese in Canada". It systematically juxtaposed the two referents. In a 1937 article entitled, "Lebanon and Syria are Two", *The Mercury* explained this choice, which indicates that the question had been posed within the newspaper or among its readers. The argument is historical: although they were previously part of a single historical region (Greater Syria), these two countries are now distinct, and failing to name the two entities would be to refuse the reality of their future independence. The *Mercury* explained the issues surrounding recognition of the two states and the different positions taken within the community living outside the region. It rejoiced that an Arab newspaper in California (the *Syrian-American News of Los Angeles*) had at last taken on board the fact that there were two entities,

9

Lebanese and Syrian. Previously, this newspaper had written "Beirut, Syria" and "Mount Lebanon, Syria", and such confusions were embarrassing (*The Syrian Lebanese Mercury,* 1 (8), 1937). A letter from the University of Beirut, published in the newspaper, reiterated this idea: "Thus although originally all the people of the country were generally known as Syrians, yet now the term "Syrian" is being restricted to those who live in the Republic of Syria, the capital of which is Damascus, and the term "Lebanese" is being used for those who live in the Republic of Lebanon, the capital of which is Beirut" (*The Mercury,* 2 (5), 1938).

Up to this point used to refer to the culture of origin, the term "Arab" came into its own with *The Canadian Arab* (1945--1947). In the columns of this newspaper, the terms "Syrians" or "Lebanese" were never used to describe the migrants or their descendents; instead, it was "Canadian Arabs" or "Canadians of Arabic--speaking origin". *The Canadian Arab* thus proposed another choice of identity. The year 1945 constituted an historical turning point for the Arab world, with the birth of the League of Arab States, the development of Arab nationalism, and the primacy of the Palestinian question. Choosing the term "Arab" over "Syrian" and "Lebanese" allowed the newspaper to convey a stronger political message of unity and identity. While its defense of the "Arab cause" (Palestine) was front and centre, the main identity asserted by this publication resided in the duality constituted by its title: Canadian Arab. The affirmation of Arab identity, defense of the Palestinian cause, and critique of Canadian foreign policy in no way affected the loyalty and double--identity which the authors of the newspapers claimed. This evolution in the identity discourse, privileging a "Canadian Arab" identity, prevailed in the following period.

Evolution of self--denomination and identity assertion in the 1960s and 1970s

Several organizations were born in the 1950s. However, since a publication requires considerable resources and investment, it wasn't until 1960 that a new Arab minority publication appeared. In the 1960s and 1970s, the newspapers multiplied and became more stable.

Table 2. (See Appendix)

This period was marked by a renewal of the Arab population in Canada. A diachronic study can bring to light the evolutions in the construction of identity as well as the role played by the newspapers in structuring the Arab community between the two periods. Older organizations, founded during the period of establishment or sometimes before, had to take on board the arrival of new migrants from the Arab world. Sponsored migrants, originating from the same regions and sharing family ties with the older migrants, came from an Arab world which had changed greatly. Other migrants, particularly those coming from Egypt (the largest wave), came from a reality unfamiliar to Canadian Arabs. Arriving in large numbers after 1960, Egyptians were rarely involved in the organizations and publications of this era[6]. While they often joined Oriental churches, for the most part they don't seem to have participated in existing Arab organizations.

The new organizations, press included, favoured broader denominations to evoke the "community". Newspaper titles chose the referent "Arab" or referred to a larger geographic area: "the Middle East". These two qualifiers allowed the inclusion of new migrants from different countries as well as older generations, who called themselves Syrian and Lebanese but did not reject an Arab identity and sense of

belonging to a larger geographic region. It became more difficult as collective identity seemed to grow more closely aligned with political questions. The *Middle East Digest and Newsletter*, published in 1962 by the The Canadian Arab Friendship Society, expanded its focus to the entire Arab world, including the *Maghreb* (*Middle East Digest and Newsletter,* 1 (3), 1962). This assertion of a pan--Arab identity also appears in the way the publication treats the Algerian question, comparing French colonization to the occupation of Palestine (*Middle East Digest and Newsletter*, 1 (2), 1962). *The Arab Dawn*, a publication of the Canadian Arab Federation, which tried to bring together all the Arab organizations in the country, also articulated a discourse based on Arab consciousness. "Syrian" and "Lebanese" gave way to the "Canadian Arab community" or "Canadians of Arab origin". The newspaper insisted on a sense of belonging to the Arab nation, responding in the affirmative to the question: "Are the Lebanese Arab?". It rejected all religious divisions, demonstrating that the Lebanese shared, with all peoples of the region, a common Arab heritage. They must therefore defend the Palestinians as they defend themselves (*The Arab Dawn*, 1 (7), 1969). These discourses shared a certain continuity with those of the *The Canadian Arab* twenty years previously, especially the link between Arab identity and solidarity with the Palestinian people. However, *The Arab Dawn* emphasizes the double--belonging of Canadian Arabs and their loyalty to Canada.

The other newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s display goals similar to those of the newspapers of the 1930s: uniting the community, keeping alive the memory of the first immigrants while maintaining links with the country of origin. They tried to demonstrate a certain unity among Arab countries and used the denomination "Canadian Arabs" while still relying on national referents, particularly "Lebanese".

The Palestinian question was of concern in all the publications, assuming a more or less central place. *The Canadian Arab World Review* asserted an Arab consciousness and more decided political positions on the Palestinian question than *The Canadian Middle East Journal,* which seemed to want to maintain greater neutrality. For its part, the bulletin of St. Sauveur church, *Trait d'union*, rarely raised the issue of Palestine, and then often in a fairly neutral way.

The question of the denomination of the "community" was raised by a reader of the *Canadian Middle East Journal*: challenging the qualifier "Arab" to designate the newspaper, he thought "newspaper of the Syrian--Lebanese community" or "of the Orientals" of Canada would be more appropriate. The same reader accused *The Canadian Middle East Journal* of bias for spreading a vision of Arab consciousness corresponding to Nasser's. In its response, the newspaper proclaimed its desire to address "all Canadians of Arab origin". In the same issue, the newspaper supported a name change for the oldest secular organization in Montreal - the Syrian Canadian Association, which became the Lebanese Syrian Canadian Association - on the grounds that the Lebanese formed a majority in the organization (*Canadian Middle East Journal*, 2 (30), 1967). In 1968, this organization, created by the pioneers and their descendents, decided to add "Lebanese" to the term "Syrian" in its name. This relatively late change probably resulted from too great a discrepancy between the older, broad definition of "Syrian", referring to Greater Syria, and the new one, referring to the Republic of Syria and excluding Lebanon.

The identity discourses developed by the Oriental churches were also different from those of the secular organizations which emerged in the 1960s. *Trait d'union*, the newsletter of the Melkite church in Montreal, was interested in unifying

the Christians of the Orient, across national origin. The newspaper emphasized religious unity and described immigrants as "Orientals" or "people from the Near Orient" ("*Proches Orientaux*"). Unity was located in the perspective of a broad region of origin and of the Oriental Christian rite (*Trait d'union*, 3 (4), 1966).

Thus, in parallel to the new identity expressions and pan--Arab politics promulgated by most newspapers, some organizations and individuals seemed to prefer other denominations, national or religious. National denominations nevertheless remained in the minority: until the 1970s, there were few "Lebanese" organizations[7] for example, most organizations choosing broader, more inclusive qualifiers such as "Arab", "Middle Eastern" or "Oriental". The evolution of identity discourse and the resulting debates demonstrate both the desire of the actors writing in the newspapers to unite the "community" around common referents, and the difficulty in doing so. The evolution and alternations in discourse disclose the political meaning of identity choices according to the period. Finally, the newspapers reveal a continuity between old and new generations, while contributing to maintaining those links.

3. The press, an actor in the organizational dynamics of the group

In general, ethnic minority media plays a role in transmitting information about the community (such as associative, religious, and economic activities) and life in Canada (rights, politics, society, government services). It helps maintain links within the group and with the country of origin (Lacroix, 1988). These publications are mainly aimed at a specifically immigrant audience or at minorities established in

the country for a more or less long time. Minority newspapers can also be sent to others (political officials, for example) and addressed to the whole of Canadian society. In this sense, they participate in the public sphere.

Our research perspective considers the Arab minority press to be an object of study in its own right. The newspapers constitute a structured form of collective organization, like associations. In addition to reflecting the identity discourses of the era, these publications are themselves producers of identity. The members of the Arab group who decided to publish newspapers chose different strategies according to the goals and the readership they sought. The press becomes a place of memory, a vehicle of unity or a tool of communication. In some cases, the newspapers also participated in political mobilizations.

Newspapers, places of memory and unity

During the years of establishment (1930 to 1950), Arab minority newspapers developed discourses emphasizing community solidarity and the desire to preserve their culture of origin. Some articles exhibit fear of a loss of culture and mother tongue - generations born in Canada go to Canadian schools and contacts with the country of origin are rare. A consciousness of the history of migration is displayed; for example, in the celebration of fifty years of Arab presence in Canada. The newspaper is perceived as a means of resisting the tendency to forget. The will to preserve the memory of the first migrants led some members of the group to write their own history, passing it on it for educational and memorial purposes. Many articles retrace the life journeys of migrants, recount the history of the pioneers and describe the occupations they held. *The Syrian Lebanese Mercury* even asked its readers to keep a copy of the newspaper, so that it could remain as a reference, a kind

15

of biography of Syrians and Lebanese in Canada (*The Syrian Lebanese Mercury*, 1 (2) 1936). Emphasis is placed on recognizing the value of the culture of origin, which tends to be forgotten or neglected by the descendents of immigrants.

The newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s display a desire to revive the memory of the first generation, allowing new migrants to situate themselves in this history of migration. *The Canadian Arab World Review* (1969) devoted many articles to describing the history, profile and community and religious life of the Arab community in Canada, noting that no study of the group existed. The newspaper's purpose was to preserve the culture of origin and community memory, while deploring the lack of unity among Arab institutions (*The Canadian Arab World Review*, 1 (1), 1969 ; 1 (2), 1970 ; 1 (3), 1970. The question of the unity of the Arab community in Canada seemed to concern the active members of the group throughout the entire period studied.

By publishing a newspaper, the authors of the *The Syrian Lebanese Mercury* aimed to contribute to group cohesion, encouraging the creation of organizations and preserving their language, culture and heritage. The newspaper saw itself as an actor effectively engaged in community social work, in addition to its journalistic work (*The Mercury*, 1, (6), 1937). One of its main objectives was to foster unity within the community, maintaining that this would reinforce the feeling of belonging to the Canadian nation (*The Mercury,* 1 (5), 1937). *The Syrian Canadian National Review* also affirmed the link between a unified community and integration into Canadian society. The efforts of Syrian Canadians to build their churches was an accomplishment for all Canadians. While testifying to the success of Syrian Canadians, the buildings would also contribute to national unity (*The Syrian*

Canadian National Review, 1938). These newspapers were also concerned with Christian unity, beyond the different churches, Greek orthodox, Greek--Melkite Catholic, Maronite, etc. (*The Mercury*, 1 (3), 1936 : *The Syrian Canadian National Review,* 1938). *The Voice* (1946) lamented the division between the two orthodox churches in Montreal: in such a small community, a single institution would allow better organization of social activities. *Trait d'union*, the bulletin of St. Sauveur Church in Montréal, wanted to unite all Oriental Christians and to act as a "hyphen" between Canadians from the Orient and other Canadians, particularly the French (*Trait d'union*, 1 (1), 1964): "It is of utmost importance, particularly between Quebeckers and people from the Near Orient, to develop an active friendship; a promise, for tomorrow, of a great work built together" (*Trait d'union*, 3 (3), 1966, p. 3).

The newspapers of the 1960s and 1970s further expanded the concept of community unity, including older generations and new migrants, and from all Arab countries. Despite the debates over identity denominations evident in some newspapers, the discourses were always inclusive, aimed at all Canadians of Arab origin. The Canadian Arab Federation, in its attempt to unite all Arab organizations, old and new, from East to West, is the most emblematic of this drive towards unification, which was a feature of the entire period. Deploring the divisions, the lack of collective organization and a certain disinterestedness in associative and political life, several newspapers hoped to play a role in remedying the situation.

The press, a political actor

Starting in the 1930s, the press assumed the function of transcending community cleavages, of simultaneously playing a role in passing on the memory of

migration and aiding integration into Canada. *The Canadian Arab* professed to speak to the community as well as to all Canadians. It wanted to acquaint Canadians with Arab civilization and counter prejudices against Arabs. More than a simple matter of cultural promotion, this form of national pride is justified by the desire to inform Canadians. The fight against disinformation is a way for the newspaper to provide an Arab point of view on the Palestinian question. According to this newspaper, the Palestinian cause is of concern to Canadian Arabs as Canadian citizens because it affects fundamental human rights.

In 1962, the editorial of the *Middle East Digest and Newsletter* explained that its purpose was to foster understanding between the people of the Middle East and the people of Canada. "Continued alienation of Arab feeling for the West must be arrested, (...) by presenting to Western readers (and to Canadians especially) the normalcy of Arab aspirations and efforts for self--determination (...). We hope that in the wake of increased understanding, cooperation and aid will take the place of traditional suspicion and hostility" (*The Middle East Digest and Newsletter,* 1 (2), 1962, p. 1). The objectives of the newspaper reveal that members of the minority felt the need to create alternative means of communication and information aimed at Canadians. The link between Middle East politics and the negative image Arabs suffer abroad was denounced in several newspapers, more or less explicitly. The Canadian Arab Federation's desire to increase visibility stemmed from this way of thinking: the bias of the mainstream media in favour of Israel encourages negative stereotypes of Arabs in general. Attempting to speak with a single voice, the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) communicated with the rest of Canadian society in order to be better heard and understood. *The Arab Dawn*, CAF's newspaper, was thus

a communication tool and a go--between. As well as making the Arab point of view known, the objective was to influence Canadian policy decisions.

The Canadian Arab (1945--1947), like *The Arab Dawn* (1968--1986), lamented the fact that the Arab perspective on the Palestinian question was ignored in Canada generally and by big media in particular. These newspapers attempted to address the imbalance by creating their own spaces of expression in opposition to the mass media. Recent research has shown how ethnic minority media allows perspectives ignored by mass media to be expressed. In addition, the content of the ethnic media serves as an indicator of social tensions through which the various groups are living (Mattelart, 2007, p. 13--56). In a work examining Canadian policies in the Israeli--Arab conflict, *The Canadian Arab* is cited as the sole voice of the Arab minority defending the Palestinians in 1945. During the same period, numerous Jewish community newspapers reflected a Zionist point of view, favouring the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine (Hassan—Yari, 1997, p. 22—23). Parallel to the alternative press, Arab organizations tried to achieve visibility in the mass media and to address political officials. CAF sent press releases, organized press conferences and met with Canadian ministers. Important figures in Arab associative life, who contributed to the newspapers, often wrote in the national or local media and corresponded with Canadian officials[8]. Some newspapers, such as *The Canadian Arab*, were sent directly to political officials.

It is difficult to know whether the writings, opinions and positions expressed through these various means received broad support from members of the Arab group in Canada. The efforts nevertheless reveal a will to collective expression and to acquire visibility in the media and in the political sphere. The goal of this process

of becoming visible is to change the negative image of Arabs and influence Canadian foreign policy towards the Middle East.

The *Middle East Digest and Newsletter* (1962--1968) took a stand in support of the Palestinian cause, in favour of the boycott of Israel, against Zionism and for Arab unity. It also condemned Canadian politicians it identified as Zionists (*The Middle East Digest and Newsletter*, 1, (7), 1964). The *Canadian Middle East Journal* of Montreal, though less focused on the Palestinian question, raised the problem of Zionist propaganda relative to the weakness of large Arab media. After 1964, its editor--in--chief, Joseph Lahoud, directed Canada's only Arab radio show, the "Voice of Lebanon"[9] in addition to the publication of the newspaper. He explained that these two projects were encouraged and supported by the community while the formal offices of Arab countries neglected the effort. In his opinion, the weakness of the Arab media and the lack of official support for alternative media overseas explains the difficulty of defending Arab causes (*The Canadian Middle East Journal,* 2 (39), 1968). In 1968, CAF decided to launch a front to change the negative image of Arabs and defend the Palestinian cause. A committee mandated to fight defamation was established. The columns of *The Arab Dawn* often carried CAF's protests against newspapers which had expressed racist ideas or carried false information about Arabs. Organizations specifically dedicated to the defense of the Palestinian cause multiplied (particularly in the 1970s) and sometimes published their own newsletters. For example, the Quebec Palestine Association in Montreal had a bilingual news bulletin, *Fedayin*, devoted to the situation in Palestine and mobilizations for this cause in Canada.

An analysis of the publications from the 1930s up to the 1970s reveals

a continuity between the different periods. Recurring themes and a certain constancy in the way of formulating the collective identity can be noted in many of the different newspapers. The emphasis on the double--belonging as Canadian Syrian or Canadian Arab, the will to unite the community, and desire to assume a place in society are evident in publications from the entire period of study. A sense of suffering from a negative image in the mass media and a desire to make the Arab perspective on the Palestinian conflict known is found in publications after 1945.

The Arab minority press is also marked by certain figures, present throughout the years. James Peters is the most striking example. Editor of the *The Syrian Lebanese Mercury* in 1936, he took charge of publishing *The Middle East Digest and Newsletter* in 1962. With the creation of the Canadian Arab Federation, he became editor--in--chief of *The Arab Dawn* in 1968. Mohammed Massoud, based in Montreal, was another such figure, present from the 1940s to the 1970s. Although he stopped publishing after *The Canadian Arab*, he continued to write in the mainstream media in the name of his organization until the 1970s, fighting against disinformation and for the Palestinian cause.

More generally, *The Arab Dawn* spoke to an inter--generational continuity, situating the creation of the Federation within the history of Arab presence in Canada. CAF was born at a time when the Arab presence in Canada had become relatively strong; it brought together those from the new, post--1945, wave of immigration and old organizations, with a prior presence in Canadian cities (*The Arab Dawn,* 1 (1), 1968). In this way, the newspapers attempted to provide some continuity between the generations born in Canada and the new migrants, who had grown up in the post--war Arab world.

Conclusion

During the period of study, the Arab minority press promoted an inclusive discourse, in which everyone from the Arab world could recognize themselves. In this way, the newspapers acted as vehicles of unity for the Arab community and connected old and new migrants. As alternative press, they also played a role of communication with Canadian society. In parallel to creating spaces of alternative information with their own publications, active members of the Arab group sought to make their voices heard in the mass media. Beyond these attempts to disseminate a different point of view, other forms of collective mobilization to defend the image of Arabs and support Palestine multiplied. Meetings with Canadian political officials, protests, press conferences and public gatherings with invited speakers were organized. The Arab minority media took part in these mobilizations. In this way, Arab minority newspapers went beyond the community, entering into the public sphere and participating in the Arab group's process of *visibilisation* in Canada.

Notes

1. *Machrek*: Arabic word, literally meaning "Orient" or "Levant", where the sun rises; in contrast to *Maghreb*, meaning where it sets. We prefer using this very ancient term in Arabic as less anachronistic than "Middle East". By *Machrek* we understand the entire majority Arab--speaking region from West Asia to Egypt. This is precisely the region of origin of the migrants studied.

2. Holders of Turkish identity--documents, these migrants were primarily classified as "Turks" in Canadian statistics. After 1901, the census contained a category "Turk and Syrian" and then "Syrian" after 1911.

3. Syria and Lebanon were the two main sources of emigration to Canada. After the British mandate ended, Palestine, on the other hand, did not obtain its independence after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Egypt gained independence in 1922 but remained under British influence until the 1950s, when numerous migrants left the country, heading for Canada in particular.

4. In 1933, the SCA federated three Syrian organizations born in the 1910's and 1920s: The Syrian National Society, The Echo Club and The Syrian Canadian Society.

5. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, this was dismantled. The League of Nations placed Syria and Lebanon under French tutelage.

6. In the 1950s, the first wave of immigration from Egypt was mostly composed of European, Jewish and Armenian minorities. It was only after 1960 that the number of Arab--speaking migrants from Egypt increased.

7. There were several "Lebanese" organizations during the period of

establishment: the *Canadian Young Lebanese Club*, created in 1933, the *Lebanese Liberal Association* in 1935 and the *Canadian Lebanon Society* in 1938. The *World Lebanese Union* (at an international level), founded in 1964, had a Canadian branch which didn't play a very important role in the life of the group during this period.

8. This was true of James Peters (editor of *The Syrian Lebanese Mercury,* the *Middle East Digest and Newsletter* and The *Arab Dawn),* Mohammed Said Massoud (editor of *The Canadian Arab* and president of The Canadian Arab Friendship League from 1944 to 1975), and leaders of the Canadian Arab Federation.

9. This radio programme was broadcast on CFMB. Founded in 1962 in Montreal, it was the first licensed multilingual station in Canada.

Works Cited

Aboud, Brian. (1992). *Community Associations and their Relations with the State. The Case of the Arab Associative Network of Montreal*, Sociology Masters Thesis, Montreal, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Aboud, Brian. (2003). Min Zamaan/depuis longtemps. La communauté syrienne--libanaise à Montréal de 1882 à 1940. *Bulletin du Centre d'Histoire de Montréal,* n°44, 2ème trimestre.

Abu Laban, Baha. (1980). *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Black, Jerome H. &Leithner, Christian. (1988). Immigrants and Political Movement in Canada: The Role of the Ethnic Media. *Canadian Ethnic Studies.* XX (1),

1—20.

Cottle, Simon (ed.), (2000). *Ethnic minorities and the media,* Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Downing, John & Husband, Charles. (2005). *Representing "Race": Racism, ethnicities and media.* London: Sage Publications.

Eric J., Hooglund (ed). (1987). *Crossing the Waters. Arabic speaking communities in the United States before 1940*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, London.

Hassanpour, Amir. (2001). Homeland and Hostland: Iranian Press in Canada, *ISIM Newsletter*, 8, 1--34.

Hitti, Philip K. (1924). *The Syrians in America*, New York : St George Doran Company.

Karam, Elias. Syrian Immigration to Canada. *The Syrian Canadian National Review*, published by The Syrian Canadian National Committee of St Elijah's Church Society, Ottawa, August 1935, 19--37.

Karim, Karim H. (ed.). (2003). *The Media of Diaspora.* London: Routledge.

Kayal, Philipp & Joseph. (1975). *The Syrian--Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation,* Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Labelle, Micheline, Rocher, François, Antonius, Rachad. (2009). *Immigration, diversité et sécurité. Les associations arabo--musulmanes face à l'État au Canada et au Québec*, Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Lacroix, Jean Michel, (1988). *Anatomie de la presse ethnique au Canada*, Talence, Centre d'études canadiennes de Bordeaux.

Lam, Lawrence (1980). The Role of Ethnic Media for Immigrants: A Case Study of

Chinese Immigrants and Their media in Toronto. *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* (XII) 1, 80.

Mattelart, Tristant (dir.). (2007). *Médias, migrations et cultures transnationales*, Bruxelles : De Boeck.

Race, Ethnicity, and Intercultural Communication. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, (2009) special issue, 34, (4).

Sherry S. Yu,. Murray, Catherine A. (2007). Ethnic Media under a Multicultural Policy: The Case of the Korean Media in British Columbia. *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* 39 (3), 99--124.

Sourice, Nicolas. (1997). La presse ethnique dans les grandes métropoles canadiennes : L'exemple de la communauté juive à Montréal. *Études canadiennes*, 23 (42), 53--69.

Canadian Arab Newspapers :

The Syrian Canadian National Review (1935--1939)

The Syrian Lebanese Mercury (1936--1938).

The Voice (1946--...)

The Canadian Arab (1945--1947)

Middle East Digest and Newsletter (1960--1968)

The Arab Dawn (1968 --1975 ; 1977--1986).

Canadian Middle East Journal (1966--1982)

Trait d'union (1964--1980)

The Canadian Arab World Review (1969--1986)

Table 1.

Publication	Date	City	Language
Al Shehab - Al Alamein	1908 – 1910	Montreal	Arabic
The Syrian Canadian National Review	1935 - 1939	Ottawa	English (3 issues)
The Syrian Lebanese Mercury	September 1936 - February 1938	Toronto	English (first editorial in Arabic)
The Canadian Arab	May 1945 - December 1947	Montreal	English (editorials in Arabic and English)
The Voice	1946 -	Montreal	English

Table 2.

Publication	Organization	Date	City	Language
-The Middle East Digest *-The Middle East Digest and Newsletter*	Canadian Friends of the Middle East Canadian Arab Friendship Society	1960-1962 1962-1968	London, Ont. Toronto	English
Trait d'union	St. Sauveur Church	1964-1980	Montreal	French
Canadian Middle East Journal		1966-198?	Montreal	English-French-Arabic
The Arab Dawn	Canadian Arab Federation	1968-1986	Toronto	English-French-Arabic
The Canadian Arab World Review		1969-1986	Montreal	English-French-Arabic
Arab Community Newsletter	Arab Community Center	1973-?	Toronto	English-Arabic
-The Arab Case *-Arab-Canada*	Arab Information Center	1968-1969 1969-1970	Ottawa	English
Fedayin	Association Québec Palestine	1973-	Montreal	English-French