



Our Culture ... Our Rooted Identity throughout History



In Palestine, culture is a mix of rich and varied components that combine history, literature, thought, politics, religion, economy, and identity. Culture is one of the most important factors that affect the development of societies and nations, and it is the main reason for the advancement of a nation's political, economic, and scientific core. We typically judge a nation based on the factors listed above, which constitute its culture, a vital component of the civilization of any people or place.

The name Palestine is enough to inspire the intellectual wealth of the world because it alone is home to all identities, nations, countries, religions, and historical eras. Palestine is the first civilization where prophets from all religions lived, and it is the last refuge for people before the end of life on this earth. Hence, all people have a duty to preserve the culture of this land.

Bank of Palestine (BOP) is one of the most important institutions that has remarkably contributed to the development of Palestinian culture and to the preservation of its national identity because it is the bank of culture and economy. BOP has strengthened the fundamental features of the Palestinian scene and preserved the historical civilization of Palestine throughout time.

Although the term "culture" includes human and life trends that we see in a particular country, its interpretation has become dominated by the social scene and the behavior of people, practices, and thought. The BOP takes seriously its social responsibility to develop Palestinian culture through its commitment to a group of projects with very specific objectives and according to various parameters, some of which are named below.



The Palestinian Wedding, Birzeit. One of the forty cultural heritage festivals Bank of Palestine has sponsored this year.

Culture as identity, music, and humanitarian practice

The Bank of Palestine has engaged in cultural partnerships with a number of groups that have beautifully represented it, including Trio Gibran, a Palestinian band known for its *oud* music. These groups have achieved great success around the world and have garnered a great number of fans. Trio Gibran accompanied the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish for over thirteen years and was the only Arab band that played in Olympia Hall in Paris, which hosts top artists from around the world.

The band has wonderfully represented Palestinian culture all over the world through its art and music shows in various countries. What distinguishes its art is that it transcends all language and has enabled the *oud* to enter the hearts of musicians, thus gaining a large number of fans around the world. Their fame was also gained through their creativity in writing various musical pieces with a Palestinian flavor that is consistent with the nature of Arab culture yet an inspiration to foreign cultures.

The BOP has also worked on the establishment of a cultural partnership with the Popular Art Troupe, which is

an art school that teaches *dabke* and Palestinian dance, and aims to preserve Palestinian folklore and cultural heritage as pillars of Palestinian identity. The band is inspired by artistic humanitarian heritage in general and Arab and Palestinian folklore in particular, in order to construct folkloric and contemporary works of art, and to effect change in human society through aesthetic presentations.

The BOP participates in engaging young people in the development of Palestinian culture, and it helped create

Layali Birzeit Festival (Birzeit Nights) sponsored by Bank of Palestine.





Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, cultural partner with Bank of Palestine.

a national youth orchestra through a partnership with the National Institute of Music, which was renamed after the late Palestinian writer Edward Said. The orchestra has made its mark through the formation of a high-caliber balanced cultural program for Palestine and its youth.

It is important to mention the cultural partnerships that the BOP has forged in order to strengthen Palestinian cultural identity in Jerusalem, through the support of several projects for the Yabous Cultural Center. In addition, it has also provided major support over the years to several cultural projects that were designed by multiple civil

society organizations and that have contributed to strengthening Palestine's reputation and image in the community.

Culture as history, heritage, and civilization

Bank of Palestine plays a vital role in preserving the architectural form of old buildings and structures in several cities in Palestine, through an agreement with Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation, which aims to preserve and conserve historical buildings in multiple cities and villages in Palestine. The center often handles buildings on the verge of collapse and restores their



Preservation of Palestinian architectural heritage, in cooperation of RIWAQ.

beautiful old shape and form. These projects have revived multiple buildings that have become cultural and literary centers, and some that still house their original occupants. Palestine is one of the oldest countries in the world and is rich in historical cities and villages with distinct architectural identity, which need to be restored and preserved.

The BOP is the only banking institution in the region that hosts an exhibition in one of its branches (Bethlehem) of a range of art collections that exhibit 400 years of Palestinian heritage and history in the fields of art, heritage, and society. The gallery contains

Culture as science and education

Since culture is a science and an understanding of the level of societal education, the BOP has contributed to many educational projects that find their inspiration in worldly science, experiments, and experience. Palestine has become richer in science, education, and culture through the BOP's launching of the Academic Fellowship Program that has allowed a number of Palestinian experts and academics to be introduced to various experiences around the world and share them with future generations.



Bank of Palestine has also sponsored the Trio Jubran for three years.

Palestinian antiques at an estimated age of some four hundred years, which were collected by the Palestinian scholar George Al-Ama. The exhibition includes paintings and cutouts of the most prominent religious and historical landmarks in Palestine, which represent a unique cultural and archaeological treasure.

In addition, the BOP is always keen on supporting Palestinian artists who portray creative excellence and great ideas. This support has been made tangible through the BOP's acquisition of artists' paintings, art objects, and collectibles that reflect the culture and identity of the Palestinian people and their customs.

Finally, culture is composed of civilized scenes from various aspects of life that shape the identity of a society as viewed by the observer. Therefore, cultural progress of one sector to the exclusion of others does not constitute real cultural progress. For this reason, the BOP aims to support various fields within society, offering them advancement and emphasizing their existence as part of one, complete culture that is thriving and beautiful. This culture begins with the individual and his/her educated vision and daily life, and ends with the financial means that can be maintained in order to contribute to the progress of society.

Photos courtesy of Bank of Palestine.