International Journal of Middle East Studies (2025), 1–18
doi:10.1017/S002074382500008X

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Recovering Palestinian Lives: Qudsiyya Khurshid from Mandate Palestine to Postwar Pennsylvania

Andrea L Stanton

Religious Studies, University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, USA
Email: andrea.stanton@du.edu

Abstract

This article works to recover the life story of Qudsiyya Khurshid, a once well-known Mandate Palestinian intellectual and educator, who wrote essays for publication and for broadcasting on the Palestine Broadcasting Service, while working as a principal at girls' schools in al-Bireh and Jerusalem. One of a number of educated women active in the Mandate public sphere, she disappeared from public consciousness after the Nakba. But in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, where she had moved with her husband, a naturalized U.S. citizen, she became a prominent figure in civic work and as a community speaker on Palestinian and Middle Eastern life and culture. Recovering her full life story makes it possible to better appreciate the opportunities available for Palestinian women during the Mandate period and to similarly appreciate the efforts and impact of early Palestine activism among displaced Palestinians in the United States.

Keywords: Mandate Palestine; Palestinian women; radio; Arabic literature; women and Islam

In September 2018, the online magazine *Ma`araka* (Battle) published the second of a six-part article series on the history of the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS), the government-run radio station that operated from 1936 until the end of the mandate in 1948. "Scientific, literary [*al-adabiyya*], artistic, religious, and historical talks had an important role in the history of Palestinian radio broadcasting," it stated. Further, because these talks included women as both broadcasters and a frequent topic, they "helped Arab Palestinian women play a major role in societal, national, and political life." The magazine provided short overviews of the lives and major contributions of some of the prominent women intellectuals who broadcast on the PBS, including those still well known today, such as Mary Sarrouf Shihadeh and Henriette Siksik.

For one of its profiled figures, however, the article had little information. The article identified Qudsiyya Khurshid as the author of a well-known essay – originally a broadcast talk – titled "Woman's Personality" (Shakhshiyyat al-Mara') but added: "we did not find the biography of Miss Qudsiyya Khurshid, to present an honest glimpse of her life and struggles." Unable to provide details about her life, the article instead offered quotes from the published version of that talk, starting with its opening: "Everything in life develops [in line] with the development of the age, and progresses with human progress. And since

the pillars of life are based on two pillars, namely woman and man, the progress of one is linked to the progress of the other."[1]

This depiction of Khurshid as an unknown yet once-prominent figure echoed what Emtiaz Zourob, a Palestinian writer, stated in her 2013 compendium on renowned Palestinian women. Drawing from that book in a 2014 blog series on "My Predecessors," she described Khurshid as a "distinguished" broadcaster on the Palestine Broadcasting Service. "Unfortunately," she continued, "I did not find sufficient information about [Khurshid], her life, and her education," so for the rest of the blog post Zourob quoted from "Woman's Personality."[2] More recently, a 2022 article on Mandate Palestinian literature similarly mentioned Khurshid as someone known for her essays and broadcasting during that time, but with even her "birth and death unknown" today.[3] Several works of mandate history mention her in passing, drawing on period newspaper radio broadcasting schedules or mentions of her broadcast talks, but say nothing further about her work during the mandate or her life afterward.

In this article I endeavor to resituate Qudsiyya Khurshid in the historical narrative, addressing her role and impact on broadcasting, education, and literature during the mandate, using a collection of papers from her personal archive – radio station contracts, letters with station officials, and typescripts of talks broadcast on air, all of which Khurshid took with her when she left Jerusalem in January 1948 and preserved throughout the following six decades of her life in the United States, through to her death in December 2009. This article uses these materials alongside period newspapers, magazines, government archives, and relevant secondary sources for context (Unfortunately, due partly to the limitations of period recording technology and partly to budgetary limitations, few programs broadcast on the Palestine Broadcasting Service were recorded – so most extant records are written). Here, I present and analyze Khurshid's role in and contributions to the intellectual and cultural life of Mandate Palestine, and, in doing so, highlight and contextualize the distinctness of her contributions among the various examples of Palestinian women intellectuals active in this period. As such, this article helps expand scholarly and popular understanding of Palestinian women's roles during the mandate – and perhaps particularly Muslim Palestinian women's roles – as integrally contributing to public intellectual life.

In this article, I interweave primary-source documents from Khurshid's personal papers with mentions of her and essays by her in mandate-era Palestinian newspapers and magazines, archival sources, and other published sources. These sources highlight the connections between education and radio during the mandate, the role of Islam as a thread connecting Palestinian and Arab identity, and the inclusion of women in mandate-era conceptualizations of intellectuals and literary figures (*udabā'*). The important roles of Palestinian women during the mandate period have been highlighted by other scholars, including Elizabeth Brownson, Ellen Fleischmann, Ela Greenberg, and Laura Robson.[4] But Khurshid's life as a public figure did not end with the Nakba nor in Palestine; it continued

[1] "Tarikh al-Idha`a al-Filastini Huna al-Quds: al-Halqa al-Thaniya," *al-Ma`araka*, 13 September 2018, http://www.alma3raka.net/spip.php?page=article&id_article=213.

[2] See "#حوليات(222)هؤلاء أسلافيقدسية خورشيد", http://emtiazalnahhal.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post_7.html (last accessed 10 June 2024).

[3] See Mahfouz Abdou, Ismail, and Refqa Abu-Remaileh, "A Literary *Nahda* Interrupted: Pre-Nakba Palestinian Literature as Adab Maqalat," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 51, no. 3 (2022): 23–43.

[4] See, for example, Elizabeth Brownson, *Palestinian Women and Muslim Family Law in the Mandate Period* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019); Ellen Fleischmann, *The Nation and its 'New' Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920–1948* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Ela Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow: Education and Islam in Mandate Palestine* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009); Caroline Kahlenberg, "New Arab Maids: Female Domestic Work, 'New Arab Women,' and National Memory in British Mandate Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 3 (2020): 449–67; and Laura Robson, *Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, where she lived for another six decades. These documents and articles from American newspapers connect her life and work in Palestine to her later life and work in the United States, showing how she built a life of civic engagement that gave her a public platform to assert her identity as a Jerusalemite and a Palestinian, as well as speak to church and other community groups about Palestinian culture and identity. Restoring Khurshid's work to the historical record highlights both the typical and atypical elements of her life, while also highlighting the importance of recovering such singular lives for our understanding of Palestinian identities and experiences in the 20th century.

Early Life and Work in Mandate Palestine's Constricted Education Space

Qudsiyya Khurshid was born in Jerusalem to Khurshid Holozadah and Jamila Abbood in August 1912. According to the family, her father had worked as an assistant to the Ottoman governor of the Jerusalem *mutasarriflık* and, during the mandate, for Cook's Travel Agency. Khurshid was one of six children, with three sisters – Nimati, Su`ad, and Najdat – and two brothers, `Abd al-Rahman (known as `Abed) and Lutfi. According to family members, Khurshid and her siblings attended British-run schools and at least one sister also graduated from high school – setting them apart from the majority of mandate Palestinians and suggesting a particular family commitment to education. Her nephew recalled that Khurshid and her sister Najdat loved poetry. "They used to have poetry competitions where one would recite a famous poetry verse and the other had to recite a verse beginning with the ending letter of the previous verse."[5]

In April 1935, Khurshid graduated from the Women's Training College in Jerusalem with a certification to teach elementary-level classes in girls' schools (Fig. 1). The college was a highly competitive, tuition-based residential institution with a reputation for attracting students from elite Muslim families. As Greenberg states, the Department of Education (then under pre-mandate British military administration) founded the Women's Training College in 1919, with the intent to train Palestinian women teachers. As the "only government institution that offered a full secondary program for girls," it attracted students looking for a comprehensive education as well as teacher training. During Khurshid's time there, the college offered a four-year program that focused on "pedagogy and practice teaching" in the final year. Until the late 1920s, most students were Christian, which Greenberg relates to the school's requirement that students live on site as well as headmistress (and government inspector of girls' schools in Palestine) Hilda Ridler's belief that Christian Palestinians were "more liberated" and would thus make better teachers.[6]

By the time Khurshid entered the Women's Training College, however, most students were Muslim. The school was highly selective, with only a dozen students admitted for matriculation each year. And although the college provided some scholarships, most students paid – 70% in 1930, according to Greenberg. The college charged LP14–21 for annual tuition, room, and board; the average farmer in the 1930s earned LP25–30 per year, while a teacher with a secondary school certificate could earn LP96–192. Hence, while a Women's Training College degree could be a financially sound investment, its relatively high

[5] Personal communication with Maher Ahmad, 6 April 2023.

[6] Ridler apparently envisioned the Palestine government focusing on girls' primary education and teacher training, while leaving any secondary education efforts to the Anglican mission schools. See Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *The Quality of Heroic Living, of High Endeavour and Adventure: Anglican Mission, Women, and Education in Palestine: 1888–1948* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

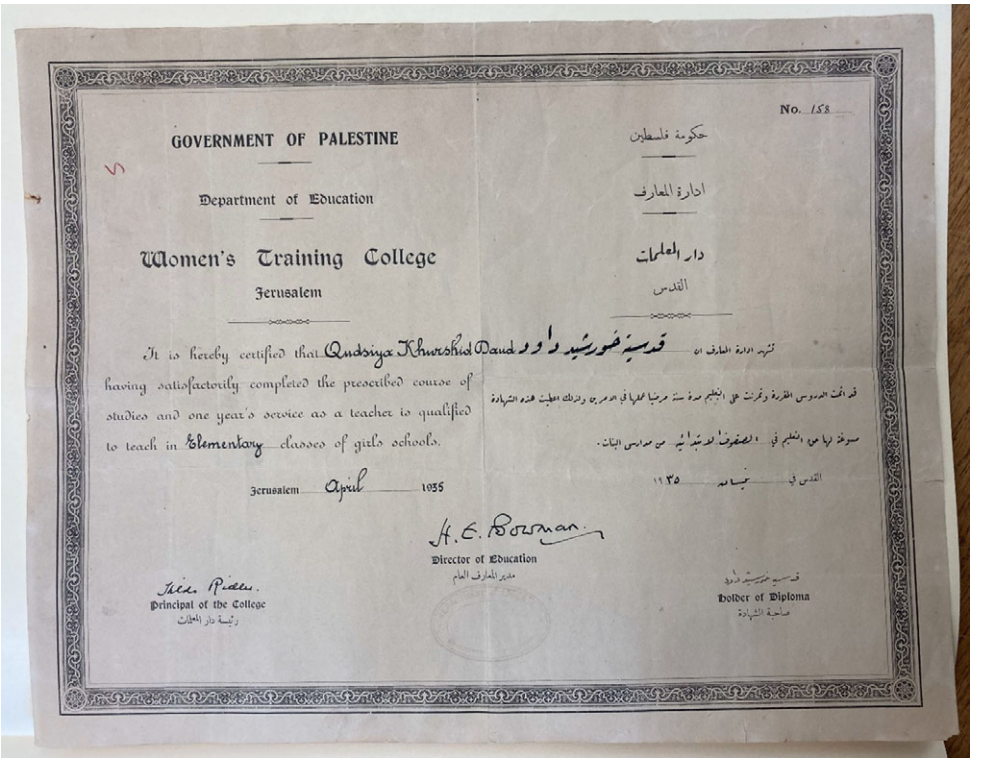

Figure 1. Khurshid's diploma from the Women's Training College, 1935. Box 17, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

cost meant that it developed a reputation as an institution for privileged families.[7] In Khurshid's case, it is unclear whether she received financial support from the college, although family members recall that her father could only afford to send one of his six children to college, so scholarship support might have been welcome.[8]

Once Women's Training College students graduated, they entered the constrained world of mandate-era girls' education. The British Mandate government severely under-funded public education, leaving nearly 60% of Arab Palestinian children with no access to public education by 1948. It operated gender-segregated schools and prioritized boys' access. Suzanne Schneider notes that in the 1945–46 school year, there were 35 town and 55 village schools for girls, "in contrast with 47 town and 377 village schools for boys." Further, the curriculum for girls' schools – in government-run and Supreme Muslim Council-run religious schools – focused on subjects suitable for future mothers, "like housewifery, infant welfare, and sewing." The domestic sciences were promoted while the "dreaded literary education was to be avoided," including minimizing time spent on subjects like history or classical Arabic.[9] Girls' education, while considered important, was framed narrowly – along

[7] See Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow*, 53–55. For the average farmer and teacher salaries in the 1930s, see Yoni Furas, *Educating Palestine: Teaching and Learning History Under the Mandate* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020), 8.

[8] Personal communication with Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, 5 April 2023.

[9] See Suzanne Schneider, *Mandatory Separation: Religion, Education, and Mass Politics in Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 61–62.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the lines of the "educated housewife" and mother model noted in scholarship on the late 19th and earlier 20th century in Bengal, Iran, Egypt, and other countries navigating colonial or similar pressures to "modernize" along Western European lines.[10]

Despite the inadequacy of mandate-era girls' educational institutions, Khurshid thrived professionally. After graduating, she worked as a teacher at and later director of the government school for girls in al-Bireh, then a town near Ramallah. She also worked for a time as a school principal in the city of Jericho, and at the Ma'muniyeh Girls School in Jerusalem, which was under the supervision of the Supreme Muslim Council.[11] The historical record does not indicate what subjects she taught, nor her views of the schools' curricula. However, her successful career as a teacher reflected not only her own skills but also the larger context. Despite the limited number of girls' schools in Palestine, the number of qualified teachers was even more limited due to the small size of the Women's Training College's student cohort and the government's reluctance to open another women's teacher training school. Government provisions, which prohibited men from teaching at girls' schools and required women teachers to resign their jobs if they married, further reduced the pool of potential teachers.

Although Khurshid's trajectory from student to teacher was representative of Palestinian women teachers during the mandate, it made her experiences distinct from those of most Palestinian women of her generation. However, her work with the Palestine Broadcasting Service as well as her publications in literary and cultural publications set her apart from most of her fellow women teachers, while linking her to the circle of prominent Palestinian male educators whose work similarly moved between the spheres of education, print media, and radio broadcasting. At the same time, it placed her among other Palestinian women similarly engaged in public intellectual life, on and off the air.

Radio in Mandate Palestine

As earlier scholarship has shown, radio played an increasingly central role in the interwar Arab world starting in the mid 1930s, as states, whether independent or under colonial control, began launching national broadcasting stations. In Mandate Palestine, the state-run radio station, the Palestine Broadcasting Service, operated from March 1936 through the end of the mandate in May 1948. The PBS operated in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, broadcasting between three and eleven hours per day over the course of its operations, with Arabic-language programming receiving the greatest amount of on-air time. Most of the station's programming focused on cultural and music broadcasts, with entertainment, educational, and religious broadcasting as secondary categories and news receiving the least air time. Palestinians often viewed the station's news with suspicion, sometimes referring to it as "the Government radio," as did Khalil Totah, a well-known Palestinian educator who gave talks on the station, in 1943.[12] Yet listenership increased steadily, due in large part to the leadership of the Arabic section, which worked to both

[10] See, for example, Afsaneh Najmabadeh, "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 91–125; Omnia Shakry, "Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child-Rearing in Turn-of-the-century Egypt," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 126–70; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The difference-deferral of a colonial modernity," in *Tensions of Empire*, ed. Ann L. Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 373–405.

[11] See "DAR Chapter Luncheon on Monday," *Times-Leader*, 9 November 1966, no page number.

[12] See Totah's account of a 1943 visit to a rural *mukhtar* in Joy Totah Hilden, *A Passion for Learning: The Life Journey of Khalil Totah* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2016), 154.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

build its own credibility and harness the power of radio to build and strengthen Palestinian identity.[13]

The Arabic section was directed first by Ibrahim Tuqan, then `Ajaj Noueihed, and finally `Azmi Nashashibi, three well-known intellectual and political figures active in nationalist and cultural circles. These men brought related visions of the station as a modern, national institution and engaged a range of Palestinians – from local musicians to intellectuals, religious officials to poets – as on-air broadcasters, helping to showcase and further build a sense of Palestinian and Arab identity. Arabic listeners often criticized the station's news broadcasts for what they considered anti-Palestinian or heavily censored coverage. However, they appreciated its cultural, educational, musical, and entertainment programming, which made up the bulk of the broadcasting time and was less controlled by government officials.

Like the directors of the Arabic section, other station officials also saw their on-air work as articulating and advancing modernist, nationalist views, even though most programs were subject to pre-broadcast censorship approval. Consequently, the PBS attracted many well-known Palestinian luminaries as broadcasters, who delivered talks or developed programs for the station on contract, not as full-time employees. These figures lent the PBS some of their own professional and personal credibility, playing critical roles in building the station's reputation among Arabic-speaking listeners. Among them was Qudsiyya Khurshid, whose contributions throughout the 1940s illustrate the important role played by women broadcasters in this process, as well as her own distinct role as a woman intellectual.[14]

Palestinian Educators on the Radio

Like many Palestinian intellectuals, musicians, and educators, Khurshid worked on contract with the PBS as a broadcaster and writer. From at least 1940–1947, she played a key role in editing and writing scripts for many literary, educational, and children's programs as well as wrote and delivered talks focused on Islam, women, or both. In this work, she joined several well-known male Palestinian educators who regularly appeared on the PBS. For example, Nicola Ziadeh, the prominent Palestinian historian who obtained his BA in ancient history from the University of London and taught at the Arab College in Jerusalem, spoke on the PBS multiple times. He delivered a four-part talk on "The Arab East and Europe" in March and April 1940, and gave a fifteen-minute talk reviewing Constantine Zurayk's book *al-Wa`i al-Qawmi* (On National Awakening) on Saturday, 9 August 1940.[15] As Yoni Furas notes, Wasfi `Anabtawi and Ahmad Khalifa, the former of whom had also taught at the Arab College and worked for the Department of Education, while the latter worked for the department as a district inspector, among others, also gave talks on the PBS. Perhaps the best-known example of these on-air intellectuals was `Abd al-Latif al-Tibawi, who served as an education inspector until departing for England in 1947 to pursue his doctorate, where he also worked as assistant editor of the *Arabic Listener*, the bimonthly publication of the BBC's Arabic service. He gave talks on topics such as "Arab Muslim Thought in the 10th Century" and

[13] See Andrea Stanton, *This is Jerusalem Calling: State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013; and Andrea Stanton, "Can Imperial Radio be Transnational? British-affiliated Arabic Radio Broadcasting in the Interwar Period," *History Compass* 18, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12602.

[14] Other well-known women broadcasters on the PBS included Salwa Sa`id and Mary Sarrouf Shihadeh. For a brief discussion of Sa`id, see Stanton, *This is Jerusalem* Calling, 140–45; and Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016). For Shehadeh's work on radio, see "Mary Shehadeh, retired journalist," in *Portraits of Palestinian Women*, eds. Orayb Aref Najjar and Kitty Warnock (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1992), 228–42.

[15] See "Wireless Programs," *Palestine Post*, 14 March 1940, 4; 11 April 1940, 4; 18 April 1940, 4; and 9 August 1940, 7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Army Organization in Islam," typically foregrounding the role of the Islamic context in various historical developments in the Arab world.[16]

As speakers, these educators addressed a range of topics.[17] Recognized as educators and intellectuals, their broadcasts worked to raise awareness of and pride in Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim cultures, histories, and identities. In working for the Palestine Broadcasting Service (and, to a lesser degree, the British Foreign Service-operated Near East Arab Broadcasting Service, better known by its Arabic name, Sharq al-Adna), Khurshid participated in this rich interplay between education and radio as one of many women broadcasters, but few women educators. Recognized as a fellow intellectual with educator credentials, she participated in, but also disrupted, this category, as she was but one of a few (if not the only) women.

The connections linking the sphere of education and public intellectual life with that of print and broadcast media were evident in other ways. As Furas argues, the Haganah's survey of Arab villages, begun in 1940, suggested that the availability of newspapers and radios in a village depended largely on whether a government school had been established there. For example, "in the village of Sa`sa`, a radio set was located in the mukhtar's house [likely as part of the government's village receiving set program], *Filastin* (Palestine) and *al-Difa`* (Defense) were read regularly; and there was a government school with two teachers."[18] Together, these government-run institutions – education and radio – and government-regulated print media sector fostered the development of a multi-modal communications ecology. Although grounded in coloniality, it afforded local actors constrained but meaningful agency, providing them opportunities to craft a sense of Palestinian and Arab history and identity. On the radio, this happened primarily through the kinds of programming put on air, the content of specific programs, and the identities of those broadcasting. Children's and school programming – programming intended to reach children in their family home or other community setting, and programming intended to reach students in classrooms during the school day – provided one such opportunity.

Khurshid's Work on Children's Programming

Children's and school broadcasts, along with musical programming, seem to have provided the earliest opportunities for women to appear on air on the Palestine Broadcasting Service. Yet Khurshid's involvement with PBS school programming, including the series of talks delivered in 1940 on Arab women writers mentioned above, appears to have stemmed from her work as an intellectual able to write on other women literary figures. Greenberg suggests that the subjects of Khurshid's talks were considered well-suited for school broadcasts and as "having appeal to young schoolgirls" in particular.[19] However, Khurshid's work for the PBS children's programming – which primarily included story hours, intended to be heard at home – was much less visible. The stories she wrote or edited, including children's radio

[16] "Army Organization in Islam" was a multi-part, bi-monthly talk that began airing in November 1940. See "Wireless Programs," *Palestine Post*, 15 November 1940, 2. For "Arab Muslim Thought," see "Wireless Programs," *Palestine Post*, 24 March 1939, 10. For a brief biography of Tibawi, see "Abdul-Latif Tibawi Collection", https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/gb165-0284-abdul-latif-tibawi-collection.pdf (last accessed 10 June 2024).

[17] See Furas, *Educating Palestine*, 117. For a brief biography of `Anabtawi, see "Wasfi Anabtawi", http://www.webgaza.net/palestine/people_profiles/Anabtawi_Wasfi.htm and "Wasfi Anabtawi", http://www.all4palestine.com/ModelDetails.aspx?gid=6&mid=610&lang=en. For a brief biography of Khalifa, see "Ahmad Khalifa", http://www.all4palestine.com/ModelDetails.aspx?gid=7&mid=3621&lang=en (all last accessed 10 June 2024).

[18] Furas, *Educating Palestine*, 80.

[19] For a brief discussion of Khurshid and others' work on this programming, see Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow*, 172.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

dramas, were not marked in the daily radio broadcasting schedules as authored by her, nor do extant typescripts clearly indicate her role. For example, two 1944 Children's Talks typescripts, "Why?" (Limadha?) and "The Loyalty of Dogs" (Wifa' al-Kilab), are included among her papers, but do not indicate her role in writing or editing them.[20]

Yet, Khurshid appears to have regularly worked on scripts for children's and school programming, with a later newspaper article on her life describing her as the former "program director of school programs on radio for the Palestine Broadcasting [Service]."[21] In 1947, letters between Khurshid and `Azmi Nashashibi, who started as PBS Arabic section director in 1945, indicate that she was paid five Palestinian pounds to edit four stories for February weekly broadcasts, and the same amount for four stories in March.[22] Although the letters do not indicate whether these stories were intended for children, some typescripts from that period, such as the *Qussa al-Usbu`a*'s' (Story of the Week) "al-Tufula fi-l-`Id" (Childhood During Eid), which she wrote, might have been intended for child listeners.

Khurshid and other women's involvement in PBS children's and school programming was not unusual for the time. Women were primary figures in children's and educational radio programming in other national contexts in the first half of the 20th century – including in the United States and United Kingdom.[23] Nor was it unusual for the Palestine station. In the mid 1940s, "Miss Scheherazade," no last name given, was typically identified as in charge of PBS children's programs, following `Aida Shammas, Wadi`a Shatara, and others in the station's earlier years ("Children's Talks" began appearing on the PBS schedule in April 1936, within its first week of operation).[24] However, Khurshid's work in these areas was only one component of her overall work on the air – and in print. The bulk of her broadcast work came in the form of literary and religious talks, the latter often with a focus on women.

Khurshid's Literary and Religious Talks on the PBS

The literary and religious talks broadcast on the Palestine Broadcasting Service joined a rich literary culture – written, oral, and performed, individual and collective – in Jerusalem and across Palestine. Although Arab Palestinians did not enjoy mass literacy during the mandate, communal reading practices helped transmit news, information, and literary, religious, and other content to community members who could not read but might still participate in discussions. Ami Ayalon and Radwa Ashour have each described a lively print culture in Palestine's urban areas, with reading rooms and libraries appearing in the later 1800s and bookstores and newsstands emerging after World War I. Along with schools, these

[20] "Limadha?" broadcast 27 September 1944. See Box 16, Folder 1, Qudsia Khurshid Ahmad Collection, Northwestern University; "Barnamaj al-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 27 September 1944, 4; "Wifa' al-Kilab," broadcast 4 October 1944. See Box 16, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection, and "Barnamaj al-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 4 October 1944, 1.

[21] "Forty Fort Women to Hear of Jerusalem," no identifiable newspaper title, 27 December 1963.

[22] See Nashashibi to Khurshid, 11 March 1947 and 19 March 1947, Box 3 "Correspondence," Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[23] For the United States, see Michele Hilmes, "Women in Radio," in *Encyclopedia of Radio 3-Volume Set*, ed. Christopher H. Sterling (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003), 2558–68. For women's roles in school and children's broadcasting in Great Britain and Ireland, see Finola Doyle-O'Neill, "Tuned Out? A Study of RTE's Radio 1 Programmes *Dear Frankie / Women Today* and BBC 4's *Woman's Hour*," *Media History* 24, no. 3–4 (2018): 395–407.

[24] See "Barnamaj Maslahat al-Idha`a al-Filastiniyya," *Filastin*, 4 April 1936, 7. The schedule began mentioning Wadi`a Shatara by name a few months later. See, for example, "Maslahat al-Idha`a al-Filastiniyya," *Filastin*, 27 October 1936, 6. For an outsider's view, including a description of the kinds of stories broadcast and children's involvement in them, see Barbara Board, *Newsgirl in Palestine* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1937), ch. 13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

institutions collectively helped make printed materials more accessible to literate Palestinians in the late Ottoman era.[25]

With regards to printed materials, elite Palestinians, especially those in cities, likely enjoyed relatively unfettered access to imported, locally published, and regionally published books, magazines, journals, and newspapers, as Ayalon's survey of reading cultures during the mandate suggests.[26] As Kimberly Katz notes, middle-class Palestinians in the early 1940s may have also purchased books and periodicals, or accessed them via libraries, reading rooms, or literary clubs alongside working-class Palestinians.[27] Men might have had easier access to these spaces and communities, but women also participated as readers – and writers – of published material circulating in Arabic and other languages during the mandate period.[28]

In Mandate Palestine, as elsewhere in the region, written literary culture intersected with the oral and aural culture of broadcasting – as well as with the audio-visual culture of film. These cultures also connected to the interwar cultural practices of educated professionals – teachers, managers, government officials, and others – who often participated in literary and audio-visual culture as writers of short stories, essays, poems, newspaper articles, and other genres.

In a dissertation on 20th-century Palestinian women's literature, Kamal al-Fahmawi argues that this period saw the emergence of what he termed "radio literature," which in turn produced the "radio essay." Describing this genre as indistinguishable from the literary essay, aside from its mode of delivery, he describes radio essayists as adopting a "cultural [and] reformist" approach and "choos[ing] more elegant phrases," alongside highlighting the fact that many Palestinian women writers engaged in radio literature writing. Ashour agrees, suggesting that throughout the mandate period, Palestinian women writers primarily engaged in essay writing.[29] Among Palestinian women writers, Khurshid became one of the late mandate period's most prominent essayists, broadcasting topical talks sometimes later published in Palestinian periodicals as well as writing essays directly for publication. Her talks typically fell into one of two areas: Arabic literature (classical and contemporary) and Islam. In both, women were often, but not always, a focus.

Khurshid's Talks on Classical and Contemporary Arabic Literature

The talks Khurshid wrote and delivered on the Palestine Broadcasting Service covered a range of topics, although none appear to have focused specifically on her work as an educator or her views on education. Instead, these talks reflected her interests as an intellectual and cultural critic. Many incorporated her interest in literature, as in a 1940 series on Malak Nasif, Aisha Taymour, and May Ziadeh, three famous writers and social activists, that she created for PBS school broadcasts.

On Friday, 18 October 1940, the *Palestine Post*, a Zionist-owned publication and the main English-language newspaper in Mandate Palestine, praised Khurshid's talk on Aisha Taymour, one of Egypt's most well-known 19th-century poets and social activists, whose ode

[25] See Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); andRadwa Ashour, "Palestine and Jordan," in *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873–1999*, ed. Radwa Ashour, Ferial J. Ghazoul, and Hasna Reda-Mekdashi, tr. Mandy McClure (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 205–34.

[26] Ayalon, *Reading Palestine*, 43–78.

[27] See Kimberly Katz, *A Young Palestinian's Diary, 1941–1945* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009), 20–24.

[28] See, for example, the discussion of teachers and students sending letters and articles to journals and other periodicals in Greenberg, *Preparing the Mothers of Tomorrow*, 169–70.

[29] See Kamal Mustafa al-Shakyh Ahmad al-Fahmawi, *Adab al-Mara' al-Filistiniyya al-Hadith: 1914–1974* (PhD diss., al-Azhar University, 1979), 20, quoted in Ashour, "Palestine and Jordan," 208–9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

mourning the early death of her daughter Tawhida is considered one of her best works.[30] Khurshid had given a fifteen-minute talk on Taymour at six the previous evening, following a talk on "religious praises."[31] "After some moving passages from an elegy written on the death of her daughter," the paper stated, "the speaker gave a brief outline of her life."[32] The talk seems to have come shortly before Khurshid was commissioned to develop the series of talks on Taymour, Nasif, and Ziadeh mentioned above, suggesting that her work on the first inspired the series for schoolgirls.

The regularity with which Khurshid was hired to broadcast on air and the scope of the talks she wrote is suggested by the four contracts in the collection. They date from October 1940 to May 1941, and cover talks of ten to fifteen minutes – all scheduled for the station's main, evening broadcast. Topics ranged from Sari` al-Ghawani (discussed below) to "Muhammad and Women," a selection of spring poetry and "selected weekly readings." For this work, she was paid between 1.5–2.5 Palestinian pounds.[33] The contracts suggest her engagement with topics both as someone familiar enough with contemporary Arabic literature to choose the selections being read and frame them for listeners, and also as someone able to read aloud those selections effectively on air. This latter point might be understood as a question of voice, but also as one of education and training in modern, literary Arabic. It points again to Khurshid's position as a woman educator in Mandate Palestine, and as one whose own education exceeded the mandate government-run and Supreme Muslim Council schools' vision for girls' education, which prioritized subjects useful to future mothers over those for more intellectual or professional pursuits.

Khurshid's Talks on Islamic History, Holidays, and Women and Islam

As a non-staff member, each time Khurshid worked with the PBS, she signed a written contract, which traveled back and forth via the postal system. The first in the collection, dated 11 September 1940, was signed by her and Ibrahim Tuqan, director of the Arabic section at the time. She was contracted to broadcast a fifteen-minute talk on Saturday evening, 5 October 1940, on "Sari` al-Ghawani," one of the pen names of the early Abbasid poet Muslim ibn al-Walid (approximately 748–823).[34] Like many Abbasid poets, he was known for his "depictions of wine-drinking and debauchery" – although, as Tuqan noted, Muslim ibn al-Walid's reputation was better than that of some of his contemporaries. Khurshid and Tuqan considered this an important consideration since this talk would broadcast during Ramadan, when discussion of a licentious poet might appear inappropriate to listeners.[35]

We do not have any existing copies of Khurshid's letters to Tuqan or others at the radio station. However, his letters to her in September 1940 suggest the two engaged in a lively back-and-forth discussion on the topic of her talk, focusing on what might be appropriate during Ramadan and for listeners around the region. Ultimately, they seem to have agreed that she would write and deliver a talk on another topic: "The First Fitna in Islam: The Killing of `Uthman ibn Affan," the third caliph. In his letter, Tuqan cautioned that the topic could be contentious, as would a talk on `Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph. He noted that some,

[30] For a brief biography of Taymour, see Marilyn Booth, "`A'isha Taymur", https://accessingmuslimlives.org/profile/aisha-taymur/ (last accessed 10 June 2024).

[31] See "Barnamaj Maslahat al-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 17 October 1940, 1.

[32] "Listener's Corner,"*Palestine Post*, 18 October 1940, 2.

[33] See Box 16, Folder 3, Khurshid Ahmad Collection, Northwestern University.

[34] See "Muslim Ibn al-Walid," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1999), 557.

[35] See Box 16, Folder 3, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

presumably Shi`i listeners in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere might have different views on these subjects than those of the "ahl al-Sunna" – an acknowledgement of the sectarian diversity of the Levant as well as for listeners outside Palestine.[36] Yet the talk, broadcast on 5 October, appeared directly before a recitation of part of Surat al-Baqara', the second and longest chapter of the Qur'an.[37] Its placement within the broadcasting schedule suggests the Arabic section considered the topic appropriate as a lead-in to the recitation of scripture as well as for broadcasting during a religious month. Further, there seems to have been no concern, or even discussion, about Khurshid speaking on religious topics as a woman. The apparent acceptability of her regularly writing and delivering talks on Islam, as detailed below, highlights the expansiveness of Muslim religious norms in 1940s Palestine.

In January 1941, Khurshid signed a contract with the PBS's new Arabic section director, `Ajaj Noueihed. She agreed to deliver the talk "Muhammad and Women" on Tuesday, 28 February 1941, for ten minutes starting at 6:35pm. Many of Khurshid's talks were broadcast during religious holidays, and sometimes addressed topics of Islam and women specifically, such as "The Muslim Woman During Ramadan", a multi-part, fifteen-minute talk that aired during Ramadan in October 1941, with at least one broadcast airing just before the call to Maghrib prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an, just before observant Muslims ended their fast.[38] On other days, music, a talk on the poetry of Ramadan, and a talk on sports each preceded the Maghrib prayer, suggesting that listeners and station officials alike expected "secular" programming to precede religious programming. The placement of Khurshid's talk suggested that women's voices, as well as women speaking authoritatively on religious topics, were considered appropriate sounds and contexts to precede the call to prayer and a scriptural reading.

Including women as expert speakers on religious topics during religious holidays was an intentional decision by Noueihed, the Arabic section director. In his memoirs, he wrote about the importance of engaging Islam in station broadcasts, as he considered it a central aspect of Palestinian and Arab identity.[39] However, Khurshid's work with Noueihed's predecessor, Ibrahim Tuqan, suggests that the station's commitment to engaging religious topics in its broadcast talks pre-dated Noueihed's tenure as Arabic section director (although he worked at the station for several months with Tuqan before the latter left in late 1940, so these talks may also show Noueihed's early influence on cultural programming).[40] Again, as noted above, it also suggests that both directors consciously included women as expert speakers on religious topics. Further, there are also some indications that Khurshid herself proposed such talks. In February 1941, Noueihed wrote to thank her for a talk she had sent entitled "From the Revelation of the Hijra: Woman's Impact and Her Struggle [jihad] on the Path of Islam." Unlike other letters, which discussed pay rate and when a submitted talk would be broadcast, this one simply expressed his hope that the talk might air on and "appropriate occasion in the future."[41] Khurshid's proposing of talks on religious subjects, rather than simply accepting the station's requests to develop such talks, suggest that these were topics of regular interest to her and on which she considered herself a qualified authority. Yet the frequency with which her talks also focused on women suggests that her gender was a salient component of the topics she chose.

[36] Tuqan to Khurshid, 16 September 1940, Box 16, Folder 3, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.
[37] See *Filastin*, 5 October 1940, 3.
[38] "Maslahat al-Idha`a al-Filastiniyya: al-Qism al-`Arabi," *Filastin*, 4 October 1941, 1.
[39] See `Ajaj Nuwayhid, *Sittun `Amman ma` al-Qafila al-`Arabiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Istiqlal, 1993).
[40] For more on Tuqan and Noueihed's work at the PBS, see Stanton, *This is Jerusalem Calling.*
[41] See Noueihed to Khurshid, 12 February 1941, Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

From Air to Page: Khurshid's Participation in the PBS *Broadcasting Talks* Book

The intersections between religious, intellectual, and broadcast cultures came together in an edited collection of broadcast talks, helping realize the literary promise of "radio literature." In 1942, the Palestine Broadcasting Service published *Hadith al-Idha`a* (Broadcasting Talks), a collected volume of broadcast talks, via the government's Commercial Press; the cover described the talks as having been delivered "by a number of religious scholars [`ulama'] and literary figures [*udabā'*] from Arab countries." Intended to launch a series of similar publications, *Hadith al-Idha`a* included an introduction by Noueihed, who called the book "the first of its kind." With extensive use of Islamic religious expressions as well as poetry references, Noueihed described the book as a "sacred message" for spreading "true [or correct] culture," in which historians, scientists, actors, singers, and others could participate, indicating the book's projected impact on Palestine and the Arab world.[42] A reviewer in the *Palestine Post* described the book as containing "talks of permanent value," stating: "this volume merits unqualified praise."[43]

Hadith al-Idha`a included talks by thirteen speakers, three of whom were women – Khurshid (Fig. 2), Mary Sarrouf Shihadeh, and Asma Touba. The women's essays – all focused on women, mothers, and/or families – were grouped together at the end of the book, alongside an essay on young men by writer and teacher Khalil Beidas, who also served as the book's editor.[44] Khurshid's published talk, "Women's Personality," focused on perceptions of women in contemporary society and was five pages printed – a typical length for the talks in the book, which covered a range of topics relating to Arab history, Islam, women's roles in society, and other social issues. Through this book and subsequent republication in Arabic journals and magazines, "Women's Personality" became her best-known talk.

Khurshid's contribution to *Hadith al-Idha`a* seems to have helped solidify her image as an intellectual with a particular focus on women among Palestine's reading public. However, a review of her various talks suggests her focus was broader. While women were a frequent subject of Khurshid's talks, she also wrote and spoke on Islamic history and Arabic literature. Further, the titles and content of the typescripts in her collection suggest she did not typically address women listeners as her exclusive or even primary audience.

Work as a Writer and Intellectual

As noted above, broadcast and print media in the interwar Arab world often overlapped and amplified one another, as did broadcast and recorded media such as live or recorded music broadcasts, music records, and films. Khurshid regularly participated in this multi-modal media ecology, with several of her broadcast talks published as magazine or newspaper articles or essays. For example, "Muhammad and Women," which the PBS broadcast in January 1941, was printed in *Huna al-Quds* (This is Jerusalem Calling), the cultural magazine published as a PBS affiliate. In other cases, her printed work seems to have been commissioned without a corresponding radio broadcast. As an example, in February 1945, the editor of *al-Muntada* (The Forum), the Arabic-language cultural magazine published by the Government Press Bureau from 1943–1947, invited Khurshid to write a 700–1,000-word article

[42] *Hadith al-Idha`a*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Commercial Press, 1942).

[43] See "Books in the News," *Palestine Post*, 29 December 1942, 4.

[44] In an August 1942 letter from Noueihed to Khurshid in which he asks for a photograph to include with those of the other contributors, he confirmed that three of the published talks would be by women – "two by Christian speakers" and the third by Khurshid. He added: "Your photograph [will be] the sole one of a Muslim woman in the book." Religious and gender identity markers remained central to Noueihed's efforts to use the PBS as a means of developing a strong, self-consciously modern Palestinian and (as appropriate) Muslim identity for listeners. Noueihed to Khurshid, 3 August 1942; see Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

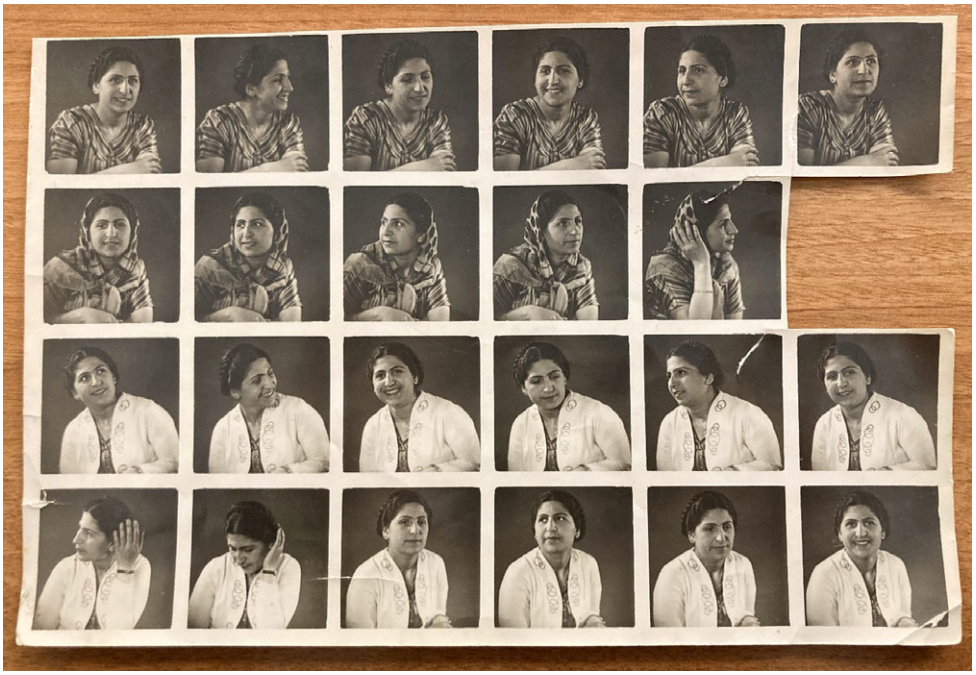

Figure 2. Headshots of Khurshid, taken in Mandate Palestine around 1942. Box 9, Folder 9, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

on "The Arab Woman in the New World."[45] The magazine typically included a "women's section" with a domestic focus and often highlighted relevant PBS radio programs, although this invitation did not mention a corresponding radio broadcast.[46] Published in July 1945, the article stretched across two pages, accompanied by a number of photographs depicting Arab and European women engaged in various activities, including nursing.[47] It appeared between an article on the "social and cultural future of the world" after fascism and before one on "our economy after the war," rather than being placed among articles more typically associated with mid-century women's sections. In other words, Khurshid's article was understood by the magazine as a piece of social analysis rather than a "women's interest" piece.

As the *al-Muntada* example suggests, Khurshid was also known in Palestine for her critical essays published in Palestinian periodicals, such as the short-lived but influential weekly *al-Mihmaz* (The Spur), the literary journal *al-Dhakhira* (The Treasure), and the station-affiliated magazines *Huna al-Quds*, *al-Muntada*, and *al-Qafila* (The Caravan). In this, Khurshid joined a larger cohort of women writers and activists involved in Palestinian literary, political, and social movements. Palestinian newspapers and periodicals, generally male owned and operated, provided platforms for their writings. For example, Boulos Shehadeh's *Mirat al-Sharq* (Mirror of the East) started a regular column in 1921 entitled "Ladies' Pens." Mary Shehadeh (later Boulos's spouse) recalled that her father would point her toward this

[45] See `Abd al-Rahman Bushnaq, *al-Muntada*, to Khurshid, 25 February 1942, Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[46] See Isa Boulos, *Palestinian Music-Making Experiences in the West Bank, 1920s to 1959* (PhD diss, Leiden University, 2020), 134.

[47] See Qudsiyya Khurshid, "al-Mar'a al-`Arabiyya wa-l-`Alam al-Jadid," *al-Muntada*, 1 July 1945, 30–31.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

column, "which ran articles by pioneers in the women's movement such as Asma Toubi and Kudsiyyeh Khursheed," encouraging her to submit her own articles for consideration.[48]

Although Khurshid did not always focus her written or broadcast essays on women, she was recognized as a woman writer and broadcaster – one of several gaining visibility in the early 1940s. *Filastin*, in early 1941, praised the PBS for several recent broadcasts by women, including Salwa Sa`id's series of talks on "The New Arab House" and Khurshid's talks on Aisha Taymour and the wives of Muhammad. *Filastin* attributed the increased on-air opportunities for women to demonstrate their "knowledge and talent" to Nuwayhid, who had recently become the PBS Arabic section director and, in January, had organized a "special program" of broadcast talks solely by Arab women.[49] The publication described the speakers as part of a "modern women's literary movement" – although the term used for "literary" was *adabiyya*, a resonant term that suggests a rich intermingling of intellectual and humanistic concerns – and positioned the speakers within the long tradition of cultured engagement, described by Karim Mattar as a "culture of writing that encompassed all the genres of humanistic, scientific, and theological inquiry as distinct yet interrelated sources of knowledge and of the public good," reduced in many colonial contexts to "literary writing."[50] Although Khurshid, in her published articles, was generally identified as "Miss," in one article published in *Mihmaz* in 1946, she was identified as "Adiba," a literary woman, suggesting growing recognition of her position within Palestinian literary and intellectual circles.[51]

Khurshid and the Role of Insider Outsiders

Khurshid was one of many recognized Palestinian figures who worked for the PBS and Sharq al-Adna while also holding positions outside the station. These figures' on-air work gave them a broader and different kind of reach to Palestinian audiences, while their existing professional reputations helped build the PBS's credibility with those audiences. The station, and perhaps the mandate government, recognized their importance. In Khurshid's case, in recognition of her work at the PBS, she was sent to train at the BBC headquarters in England.[52] While different from on-air educational programming, Khurshid also worked as a lecturer in the Arabic section's 1947 "training course" for new broadcasters, suggesting that, by that point, the station considered her an experienced broadcaster.[53]

Alongside other key PBS women broadcasters, Khurshid's broadcast work allowed her to argue, in a different medium, for a distinct Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim form of religious and cultural modernism focused on women's rights. The scripts she wrote and broadcast demonstrate how she communicated her arguments across Mandate Palestine's media

[48] See Salim Tamari, *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War* (Beirut: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2008), 44, quoting Orayb Aref Najjar and Kitty Warnock, *Portraits of Palestinian Women* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1992).

[49] See "Barnamaj al-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 25 January 1941, 1; "Barnamaj Ra`I wa Juhud Muwafiqa li-l-Qism al-`Arabi bi-l-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 26 January 1941, 1, 4.

[50] See "Sawt al-Mar'a fi Mahatat al-Idha`a," *Filastin*, 7 February 1941, 3. For a discussion of *adab*, see Karim Mattar, "Adab as World Literature: Sir William Jones, Orientalism's Chiasmus, and the Making of Worlds," in *The Cambridge Companion to World Literature and the British Empire*, ed. Baidik Bhattacharya (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[51] See "Ta'amalat al-Rabi`," *al-Mihmaz*, 21 April 1946, 4.

[52] Libby Brennan, "Mrs. Hassan Ahmad Combines Beauty and Charm of Middle East with Demands of New Living," *Sunday Independent*, no date (likely 1962). Although no date was given for this training, it likely came after the end of World War II and before her marriage. `Azmi Nashashibi spent six months at the BBC in 1946, for example. See `Azmi Nashashibi, *Min al-Quds ila Lundun* (Jerusalem: Commercial Press, 1946).

[53] See Nashashibi to Khurshid, 11 March 1947, Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

ecology, publishing some in cultural magazines and delivering them to a broader audience via the radio. These scripts also shed light on what cultural and religious messages the station broadcast. Like her peers, Khurshid's position as someone who broadcast on the station but was not a permanent employee allowed her to play a bridging role. Her reputation, like that of other Palestinian intellectuals who broadcast for the station, helped listeners distinguish between the Arabic section as an authentic Palestinian institution, the Hebrew section as an authentic but competing Yishuv institution, and the British government offices and officials overseeing the institution as a colonial enterprise.

Women broadcasters like Khurshid played an important bridging role both on air and in their writing, but seem to have been less likely to participate in another form of public engagement: public lectures, such as those given by Tibawi, ZIadeh, and others in Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities. As Shehadeh later recalled, public speaking was unusual for women, especially in front of men, into the 1930s.[54] However, women still may have spoken publicly and engaged in activism in other settings, such as meetings of women's organizations – including the Jerusalem Arab Women's Organization – or as part of public demonstrations against the British mandate government and, later, against its plans to partition Palestine.[55] Khurshid appears to have engaged in some of these more shielded public activities: an August 1946 letter from Amin Dajani, secretary of the "Dajani Scientific Committee," thanked her for giving a lecture to a group of women in Jerusalem the previous week, on an unspecified topic.[56]

This professional mobility was reinforced, in Khurshid's case, by geographic mobility. Between 1940–1947, the letters and contracts Khurshid received from the PBS were sent to several different locations, alternating between Jerusalem and al-Bireh. In October 1947, the PBS staff list identified her residence as "Indian Hospice, Herod's Gate" in Jerusalem.[57] Perhaps her address depended on whether she was resident at the school or visiting family, the immediate political situation, or whether she had meetings with journal editors or broadcasting sessions at the PBS or Sharq al-Adna. This geographic mobility, echoed in varying ways by broadcasters, musicians, and other figures who resided outside Jerusalem but came to the city for their on-air work, helped reinforce that the voices of the PBS Arabic section belonged to well-known Palestinians, anchored in a range of community and professional contexts, as well as full-time station employees.

The Nakba and a Life Rebuilt: Marriage and Emigration to the United States

Khurshid's work on the Palestine Broadcasting Service, in print media, and in education might have continued had she continued her life in an independent Palestine. However, her future trajectory, like that of many Palestinians, shifted with the end of the mandate. What later scholars and journalists understood as Khurshid's disappearance from Palestine's historical record began with her marriage, just a few months before the end of the mandate. In November 1947, Khurshid married Hassan Ahmad, another Jerusalem native (born in 1905), who had emigrated to the United States in 1924 but returned to Palestine for a visit in April 1947. According to Khurshid's children, her family did not approve of the marriage due to their different education and class backgrounds; wedding photos show Khurshid and Ahmad alone in front of a municipal or other institutional building, as well as a

[54] See Najjar and Warnock, "Mary Shehadeh," 233.

[55] See Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its New Women*; Islah Jad, "Re-Reading the Mandate: Palestinian Women and the Double Jeopardy of Colonialism," *Review of Women's Studies* 3, no. 3 (2005): 8–29.

[56] Amin Dajani to Qudsiyya Khurshid, 17 August 1946, Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[57] "Staff Addresses," Israel State Archives, RG 14 1879 2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

photo of Khurshid hugging a younger woman.[58] By this point, she appears to have taken a new job, or at least a new position, within the mandate education system. An English-language typed letter in her personal papers requested "ten days casual leave" starting on her wedding day, 22 November, noting that she had not yet accrued any vacation time. Another, dated 3 December, gave her resignation, as she planned to "leave the country with my husband for the U.S.A. about the 1st of January 1948."[59]

The visa and entry stamps in Hassan's passport show that the couple traveled to Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon after leaving Palestine, then from Beirut to France, and finally to the United States by ocean liner in August 1948. At this point, the violent expulsion of Palestinians during the first few months of the state of Israel – the key events comprising the Nakba – was in full swing. Khurshid was pregnant during this time, giving birth to the couple's first child, Imad-ad-Dean, on the ship.[60] The three settled in Pennsylvania, where Hassan had established a small business, and Khurshid became a US citizen in November 1953, giving birth to three more sons (Maher, Nabil, and Hani) over the following decade.[61] Although she returned to Jerusalem several times to visit family from 1962, she spent the rest of her life in the United States.

Like many married middle-class American women in the mid-20th century, Khurshid generally did not work outside the home.[62] Starting in the early 1960s, Khurshid became active in several civic organizations, notably the women's branch of the Kiwanis Club – a volunteer-based service organization – and the YWCA, a volunteer organization that supports women and girls in the United States and worldwide. She spent eleven years as a board member of the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania YWCA.[63] She also served for several years as president of her local parent-teacher association, president of the local hospital auxiliary, and on innumerable committees for each organization through the early 1980s. Her success in this regard was recognized in 1970, when the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter awarded her the "Americanism Medal," its highest honor for foreign-born US citizens, in recognition of her contributions to the community.[64]

In this work, Khurshid blended Mandate Palestinian societal expectations for married middle-class women with those of post-World War II America (Fig. 3). The public engagement and community leadership opportunities she found in the United States built on those she found during the mandate period in Palestine, offering a new gloss on Ellen Fleischmann's argument that the mandate period provided women "an impetus to … become involved in realms of activity from which they had previously been excluded," or which, like radio broadcasting and organized volunteer associations, might not have previously existed.[65]

In addition to her formal volunteer work, Khurshid also gave talks, sometimes to the organizations with which she volunteered, but often to area churches and Sunday schools. These talks – approximately fifty across three decades – were often announced and reported on in the area's local newspapers. Through these talks and her self-presentation via the biographical sketches that accompanied such newspaper articles, she maintained a strong

[58] See Box 9, Folder 7, 1947, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[59] See Box 3, Folder 1, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[60] See Box 1, Folder 2, Khurshid Ahmad Collection; and personal communication from Maher Ahmad, 19 October 2022.

[61] See Box 1, Folder 4, 1953, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[62] She did assist Hassan both in his business and later managing rental properties they purchased, as well as worked for a short period in the mid 1960s as a part-time tailor in a local department store.

[63] See Box 12, Folder 10, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[64] See Box 4, Folder 5, 1970, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

[65] See Fleischmann, *The Nation and Its "New" Women*, 10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 3. Photo of Hassan and Qudsiyya Ahmad, likely late 1970s. Box 9, Folder 14, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

and public connection to Jerusalem, Palestine, and the region. For example, a 1954 article noted that "Mrs. Hassan Ahmad, a native of Palestine, will speak on 'Customs in Palestine'" to the Nesbitt Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.[66] Her biographical sketches remained consistent throughout the decades, emphasizing her connection to Jerusalem, to Palestine, and to her professional experiences there – including her work as an educator and radio broadcaster. A 1985 article announcing a talk at a local library identified her as "a graduate of Women's Teachers' College, Jerusalem. She was an educator and worked as principal of a girls' school in Jerusalem and as program director of school education[al] programs on the Palestine Broadcasting System radio."[67] Through the 1960s, Khurshid's bios also typically included mention of her writing, as with a 1965 article on her chairing a YWCA membership drive. Noting that she had served as an editor of the Palestine Broadcasting Service's magazine *Caravan*, the article added: "Mrs. Ahmad still writes newspaper articles for papers in Jerusalem, Cairo, Beirut, and Bagdad to promote better understanding of the American way of life."[68] Also through the 1960s, the photos that accompanied these local US newspaper articles were sometimes taken from the series of mandate-era headshots used as her author photo in *Hadith al-Idha`a*.[69]

Qudsiyya Khurshid Ahmad did not continue her work in education or radio after the Nakba. Yet these components of her professional life in Mandate Palestine, as well as her writing and identity as a Jerusalemite and Palestinian, appear to have remained a

[66] See "Nesbitt Hospital Groups List Meetings on Friday," *Times Leader*, 4 January 1954, 6.
[67] "Osterhout to host lecture Monday," *Times Leader*, 30 March 1985, 31.
[68] "Membership Drive; YWCA Names Chairman," *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, the Evening News*, 17 August 1965, 6.
[69] See Box 9, Folder 8, Khurshid Ahmad Collection.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X Published online by Cambridge University Press

consciously articulated cornerstone of her public persona in the United States. In doing so, she helped keep a distinct vision of Palestine and Jerusalem – one with a local YMCA, women's higher education, interreligious harmony, and an active broadcast and print media culture – in the public consciousness of her northeastern Pennsylvania community.

Conclusion: Recovering Lives, Re-tuning Understandings

Khurshid's story is important for both its distinct and typical components. As part of a larger community of educated Palestinian women active in the mandate-era public sphere, she was not unique – although women teachers, and Palestinian women principals, were few. As a woman essayist and broadcaster, she was similarly not unique, although her work as an editor of *al-Qafila* and the topics of her essays and talks, particularly those focused on Arabic literature and on Islam, were more unusual for women. Her story helps amplify and nuance our understanding of urban Palestinian women's lives during the mandate.

Similarly, her life as a Palestinian in the diaspora had typical and atypical components. After the Nakba, she and her family were displaced – but she left Palestine as the English-speaking, college-educated wife of a US citizen. She arrived in the US with items from home, including documents from her days as a radio broadcaster, writer, and editor, as well as a set of social norms for married women that she translated smoothly into mid-Atlantic middle-class life. Yet, while she engaged deeply in the civic work of the YWCA and other community organizations, she also created opportunities to assert her identity as a Jerusalemite and Palestinian, narrating stories of Palestinian culture and identity in person and through the pages of Pennsylvania newspapers while also continuing to write for publications in Jordan and the Levant. While carrying the echoes of many Palestinian experiences in the wake of the Nakba, Khurshid's life in the United States provided her with a distinct, local platform for her personal activism around Palestine. Recovering her full life story makes it possible to better appreciate both the opportunities available to Palestinian women during the Mandate period and the efforts and impact of early Palestine activism among displaced Palestinians in the United States.

Acknowledgements. This article would not have been possible without the gracious support of the Ahmad family, starting with Khurshid's eldest son, Imad-ad-Dean, who I met by chance at an IIIT workshop in 2015. Their willingness to donate her papers to Northwestern University in 2022 – the alma mater of her son Maher – made much of the research for this article possible. Similarly, the archival staff at Northwestern University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives, including Liz Hamilton, Matt Richardson, and Kevin Leonard, among others, provided critical research and access support throughout. Research for this article benefited greatly from a 2024 Charles Deering McCormick Library Research grant, as well as comments and feedback from the Sounding Modernism conference at King's College London and the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, both in 2023. Finally, this article was greatly improved by the suggestions of the anonymous *IJMES* reviewers, as well as suggestions and edits by *IJMES* editor Joel Gordon and the rest of the *IJMES* team. My very sincere thanks to all these people, my colleagues, and my family and friends, especially Karim Mattar and Carole Woodall. They have listened to me talk at length about Qudsiyya Khurshid Ahmad her work, and her impact, offering supportive feedback and suggestions along the way.

Cite this article: Andrea L Stanton, "Recovering Palestinian Lives: Qudsiyya Khurshid from Mandate Palestine to Postwar Pennsylvania," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2025) 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074382500008X