

*The Growth and Development of the Palestinian
Women's Movement in Jerusalem During the
British Mandate
(1920s-1940s)*

By

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Abstract

The research discusses the development of the women's movement in Palestine in the early British Mandate period through a photo that was taken in 1945 in Jerusalem during a meeting of women activists from Palestine with the renowned Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'rawi.

The photo sheds light on a side of Palestinian society that hasn't been well explored or realized by today's Palestinians. It shows

women in a different role than what today, by some is constructed as the “traditional” or “authentic” one.

The photo gives insights into a particular constituency of the Palestinian women’s movement : urban, secular-modernity women activists from the upper echelons of Palestinian society of the time, women without veils, contributing to certain political and social movements that shaped Palestinian life at the time, and connected with other Arab women activists. Veiling or unveiling of the women, is often analyzed through the frames of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’, where for modernists unveiling women represents progress and modernity, while the veil becomes the symbolic locus of tradition, backwardness and gender discrimination¹. A shift in the way women dressed indoors and outdoors, publicly or privately might indeed be read as telling something about

¹ Abu Lughod, Lila. (Ed) *Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton University Press. NJ. 1998.

the margin of freedom women had, and hence the contradictions women encounter in the society, but the veil must not be simplistically equated with tradition or religious conservatism. Modernity and education, often represented as vehicles of empowerment, have in fact also had a regulatory and disciplinary effects on women's lives- they are not a panacea for women's emancipation.²

Consequently, analyzing women's movement in Palestine as elsewhere, must be set within a wider frame that analyses the politics of modernity, and the rethoric of binary discourses juxtaposing 'tradition', 'modernity', 'East' and 'West' by different political actors on the ground engaged in processes of modern-state building.

² Abu Lughod, Chapter 3. Afsaneh Najmabadi: Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran .

Palestinians have been doomed to face the challenges of liberation. That time was no exception. This exploration delves into those activities and the roles women helped to form in that period. Women's roles were part of a collective forgetfulness due to the brutal decades of the end of the Ottoman era—a forgetfulness that resulted in a total amnesia regarding positive acts of that era. When people remember stories of forced militarization and collective punishment, massacre, poverty, and illnesses, such negative aspects overshadow the reality of the life of that era. Hence, the thesis attempts to explore how the political disputes, national consensus effected the development of an effective social feminist agenda. The thesis will examine the question of whether the rise of women's movement was part of the rising modernist middle or /and elite class, due to the natural development of the period, including education, political activism, etc. within the mandate

period; or it was as well, a collective awareness within the society and it's different classes.

Appreciations

To my daughters, who insist on inspiring me about a future that can be rewarding through the resilience of a nation whose torch they hold proudly—the power a woman of tomorrow can enhance in the footsteps of those women who marked our history in many ways with a dream of a homeland.

And to Dr. Salim Tamari, for the invaluable support, and for a great voyage in your world of modesty filled with knowledge.

Abbreviations

AHC	Arab Higher Committee
AWC	Arab Women Council
AWA	Arab Women Association
AWU	Arab Women Union
GUPW	General Union of Palestinian Women
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PWRDC	Palestinian Women Research And Documentation Center
UN	United Nations
UNHC	United Nations Higher Commission

YWCA Young Women Christian Association

Part One

I. Problem Statement and Objectives

In a photo³ that was taken in the early '40s, an assembly made up of more than forty women from Jerusalem gathers around the renowned Egyptian feminist activist Huda Sha'rawi⁴ in the King David Hotel. In the photo we see a special aspect of Palestinian society that has not yet been entirely examined.

Prior to 1948, Palestinian engagement in civil society was channeled through charitable work and relief services. It had been a dynamic time for women's progress towards liberation, in which

³ Photo taken at the Arab Women's Union, King David Hotel, Jerusalem.

⁴ Huda Sha'rawi (1879-1947) was an Egyptian educator and women's rights activist.

both men and women were active in literary salons and artist exchanges and encounters, namely Khalil Sakakini, Ibrahim Touqan, Fadwa Touqan, Anbara Khalidi, and Kathy Antonius, the wife of the writer Antonius and the daughter of the journalist Faris Nimer, owner of the *al Muqattam* newspaper in Egypt.

My main thesis is that in many ways, whether the movement succumbed to a politics of national consensus at the expense of developing an effective social feminist agenda. Noticeable in the cultural environment of that era was a mixture of men and women, an intensive cultural facet that is often overlooked. Building on Mayer's statement in *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*, Mayer uses the protests of 1929 as an example of the transformation and defining of the woman's role, when women went to the streets in protests against the sentencing of men peasants who were hanged. The funerals became a major demonstration, with women participating and making the mourning

a national one: “men became martyrs who died for the national cause, women became the mothers of martyrs, a position which would give them importance and visibility in the national struggle. Such activities took Palestinian women out of the isolation of home, family and community and out of her regional isolation, and made them part of the greater national struggle.”⁵

Dressing always is political. Unveiling can become a symbol of ‘modernisation’, as the example of the Shah’s unveiling policies in Iran, or Qasim Amin’s modernist pamphlet *Tahrir al Mar’a* so vividly demonstrated. Unveiling women, for modernist nationalists meant progress of the nation. Palestine is no exception. Early modernizing, Sha’rawi included.

While wearing the veil or removing it, is not what defines women in a specific society, it may reveal to some extent the texture and the margin of freedoms in the society. How this is connected with

⁵ Mayer, *Women and the Israeli Occupation*, The Politics of Change. Routledge 1994.p. 65

gender and nationalist modernity will be a part of the discussion in this research.

Hence, the heterogeneity of Palestinian society underlies my choice of the photo as a cultural expression representative of the period of the British Mandate. In the photo, we see women of different age groups, projecting diversity. Diversity in looks and appearances from one side, and involvement in political activism portrayed within the women's movement from the other side.

The research will examine the origins and growth of the women's movement in Palestine, with particular reference to Jerusalem, and especially in the ranks of the rising urban middle classes. The core of this involvement by women was centered in the educational field, in charitable work (orphans, welfare, and the education of girls), and, in the latter part of the Mandate, in national politics. During this time the women's movement adopted a liberal ideology not far from that of early Western feminism,

though circumstances dictated that it lacked the same language⁶ of the latter.

Lila Abu Lughod, questions “the familiar dichotomy that has opposed the tradition to modernity, relegating women’s domesticity to the realm of conservatism and tradition and labeling women’s emergence into the public sphere, whether in politics, employment, or education, as radical and new.”⁷ Abu Lughod puts in discussion her suspiciousness on the way modernity is equated with progress and empowerment of women. She also discusses the role of the West and the postcolonial complexity that by all

⁶ The first wave of feminism took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emerging out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The goal of this wave was to open up opportunities for women, with a focus on suffrage. The wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (d. 1902) drafted the Seneca Falls Declaration outlining the new movement's ideology and political strategies.

<http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/four-waves-feminism>

⁷ Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey. 1998. Preface p.vii

means affected the societies and women as a result. As with Abu Lughod, the attempt of this research, by projecting the development of the Women's movement in Jerusalem and hence, in Palestine, through the political and social contexts regardless to how and who initiated and promoted the development that was emerging in the different building phases of the society. This goes in line with Abu Lughod methodology by not placing the development "along a trajectory of liberation from patriarchy but squarely within the messy situations of state building, anticolonial nationalism, changing social orders, and the emergence of new classes."⁸ Abu Lughod research is a helpful tool to work in line with the question of modernity in this context, especially that her research deals with different countries: Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. We can understand more how this aspect in Egypt has effected the Palestinian movement; especially that Egyptian Huda Sha'rawi

⁸ Ibid . Preface p.viii

was an important trigger to the shaping and emerging of women's movement in Palestine and the Arab region.

The research as a result will address questions that also explore: Who were those women? Which civil societies or organizations did they belong to? Where were they educated? What was the relationship between those women and the Arab women's movement, particularly in Egypt? And should we read their representations in the photo as a sign of 'modernity', 'progress', and 'women's freedom'? By trying to find answers to these questions, the thesis can help understand the core of the development of the women's movement, and whether it is a question of class or a natural development of a movement that fitted as a result, with the circumstances that those women lived in. And how modernity and nationalism are a crosscutting that shaped Palestinian women's movement.

By no means the research tries to claim comprehensiveness, either in the coverage of the different questions in line with the names and numbers of women and organizations, or all those who worked on the issue.

II. Research Tools and Methodology

The photo reflects the cultural expression of the period. This is why a synchronic versus a diachronic approach will serve as the methodological base of this research. "A synchronic analysis usually overlooks longer historical transformations in order to concentrate on a specific period of time. This allows the focus on particular stages of development, which makes it possible that the identity of something will alter not only with relation to how we look but when we look. A diachronic approach takes into account longer historical transformations in which the specific findings in the synchronic approach are appreciated with relation to a wider chronological view."⁹

The study will include a literature review on previously written biographies and memoirs of Palestinian women and men, and

⁹ Walton, *Cultural Studies*, p. 288

previously conducted research about Jerusalem women in the era specified. Because the women in the photo are no longer alive, previously conducted interviews with men and women from the older generation, as well as their daughters, sons, and other relatives, will be used to construct a clearer picture of the lives of the women in that photo.

Photos also contribute greatly to the examination of the Palestinians' culture in that period.

III. Boundaries and Limitations

Palestinian women's history is still largely unwritten, and the attempts to write it are complex, given its innate diversities.

Narrative history, though, is a tool that has been used in the last two decades as a way to preserve this larger history. However, when it comes to women, as E. Fleischmann puts it:

“The relationship between Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian women is historically complex. All too often has been dismissed, and the women involved during this period relegated to marginal footnotes in the national narrative, if that. The seemingly endless national crisis has resulted in massive dislocation, imprisonment, death and dispersal of family members, as well as wholesale economic, political and personal deprivation. Women, of course, have been deeply affected by all of this. One of their responses early on in

history was to energetically organize on their own.”¹⁰

According to Fleischmann, previously written researches relied mainly on documents archived by the British government, and that are located at the public office in Britain, as well as in the different publications of newspapers and journals of that time. This by itself provides a shortcoming in available information, because the data is limited to what the British wanted to collect and say about Palestinians in that period, giving the whole of the material a biased perspective, and one in which women were not often within their range of interest.

The fact that use of narratives has been an important tool in many ways in the last two decades remains, though, of great importance. However, it doesn't really give a full view and truth of that history, given the old age of the interviewed women and men,

¹⁰ Fleischmann, *Jerusalem Women's Organizations*, p. 6

and the distorted memory of that period. The view that was given is largely basic and not necessarily effective when it comes to revealing much insight regarding women's status. One of the major shortcomings of the conducted interviews is the lack of analysis.¹¹

Whether the interviews¹² were conducted with the actual persons or people who were close or knew them, the other problem is the "romanticizing" echo of their memories of that period. Younger relatives and family members tend to give a narrative of what they think, imagine, or sometimes wanted to take place.

This leaves the personal biographies and memoirs as an important reference, whether written by women themselves, or men at that

¹¹ Dr. Faiha "Abdel Hadi and her research team contributed thoroughly through oral history the political contributions of Palestinian women from the 1930s to the 1950s in three big volumes. Despite this, it still remains that the early intellectual contributions of Palestinian women have not yet been fully studied. The fact that such work is more documentary than analytic gives room for more explorations in a research such as this.

¹² Ibid.

period, or by peers and family members. The fact that a memoir is written is an important indicator of the presence of a different status than the one we know of or are bound to think of. It shows a dynamic movement of the society through the writer's name, and brings people closer to an understanding of how life really was in that period. A Palestinian woman having the "luxure" of writing a memoir is by itself an indicator of the type of women we are discussing. As Nur Masalha says: An important move has been made towards reshaping the narrative and bringing it to life through women writers and women voices. Such voices and oral histories provided inspirations to novelists such as Elias Khoury, who used such major material for his novel *Gate of the Sun*, where he was critical of the male-dominated structure of Palestinian society.¹³

¹³ Masalha, Nur. *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*. Zed 2012. p. 226-228

In this research, the memoirs and biographies of ‘Anbara Khalidi, Khalil Sakakini, Serene Husseini, Rabiha Dajāni, Fadwa Touqan, Mai Ziyadeh, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Hussein Fakhri Khalidi, and others will be among key search components and sources of knowledge. The biographies offer not just the memories of the given person but also the surrounding lifestyle and people. It also unveils other names that are yet to be discovered by researchers of that period.

Between a history that we are told existed and photos that show a certain lifestyle and class, there remain a lot of unanswered, unfocused questions to be answered, and women to be discovered as well.

The question of ‘modernity’ in such a study that uses women modern looks and clothing as a first insight for a research remains a real challenge. “How the notions of modernity have been produced and reproduced through being opposed to the non

modern in dichotomies ranging from the modern/primitive of philosophy and anthropology to the modern/traditional of Western social theory and modernization theory, not to mention the West/non West that is implied in most of these dichotomies”.¹⁴ Thinking of modernity can undoubtedly help in reassessing the projects of modernizing the Middle East as Abu Lughod puts forward in her *Remaking of Women?* The whole discussion around the roles of women as mothers, managers of the domestic realm, as wives of men and as citizens of the nation, can take us as far as Plato¹⁵ and Aristotle¹⁶ in their view of constructing the State and how they perceived the role of women in different set ups, and continue to discuss it in reference with “Foucault¹⁷’s provocative exploration of the dark underside of the modern state and its

¹⁴ Abu Lughod, Lila. *Remaking of Women*. Poststructuralist critiques of modernity. P. 8

¹⁵ Plato’s *Republic*

¹⁶ Aristotle’s *On Politics*

¹⁷ Foucault’s first volume of *The History of Sexuality*.

institutions like schools, hospitals, and prisons where the everyday practices of normalization and disciplining that now have spread throughout society were developed.”¹⁸

The confusion that Abu Lughod draws is also of importance to the problem of this research: “ What seems so confusing about the calls for remaking women at the turn of the century and into the first half of the twentieth century is that they included advocacy of both women’s greater participation in the public world-through education, unveiling, and political participation- and women’s enormous responsibility for the domestic spheres.”¹⁹ The main issue remains as she points out that nationalism and visions of modernist national development were essential to both arguments.²⁰ It is important to also note that the understanding of nationalism can have many faces , in which the early modern

¹⁸ Abu lughod, lila. P.7

¹⁹ Ibid. p.8

²⁰ Ibid.

nation-state building , were characterized by struggles between modernist (secular) and conservative (often religious) political actors.

Resources remain limited despite their availability. Resources are inconsistent and contradictory on many occasions, which create confusion, and the information on certain issues and topics often differs. Sometimes, the same names could be given to different people, as well as organizations and events. Fleischmann has stated in her work *The Nation and its 'new' Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948* that part of this problem is the fact that resources of information are in both Arabic and English, and that “the British were often slipshod about translating. For example, they often used different names to refer to the same group. But also, not surprisingly, perceptions varied

widely as to the groups' objectives and histories."²¹ For these reasons, personal biographies often can serve as a provider of more accurate events and names.

The different forms of sources she used were problematic, especially due to the generalization of certain issues, such as those in the press. There are also limitations in government documents, since they are selective in nature. The British documents, for instance, were in accordance with the interests of the British government in Palestine. Their choice in mentioning women or dealing with them was limited and in alignment with the personal prejudices of government officials and their own attitudes towards women. That is why "there tends to be a ghettoization of women in files about education, health, and religious affairs."²²

²¹ Fleischmann, Ellen. *The Nation and its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948*. University of California Press. 1997. P.260

²² Ibid., p. 9

Conversely, Fleischmann considers interviews with women who lived during that period as the richest sources of information.

Despite this, there were problems in interviewing, among them being the following: “memory impairment, different interests or focuses between the interviewer and the narrator, and individuals’ personal or political agendas that influence their interpretations or recollections of the past.”²³

Photos and information from social media and different Internet resources are also not a reliable source, but yet remain an important source for collecting information. Photos and documents from the Israeli archives also served to bring in more light to the information.²⁴

²³ Ibid., p. 9

²⁴ Prof. Ahmad Natour , former Head of Shari’ court in Jerusalem (Israeli controlled) provided me with the documents provided later in the annex.

IV. Literature Review

Anbara Khalidi's biography, *Memoirs of an Early Arab Feminist*, captures flawlessly the experience of a Muslim Arab woman in the beginning of the twentieth century. The work is an important description of the inner Palestinian being, including the sense of identity, cause, and struggle.

Anbara gives an important testimony of her last years living in Jerusalem, which she did until 1948, detailing the living images of the Zionist threat, fear, and terror. She also discusses how the British empowered and supported their growth as terror groups in the first place by arming them and organizing them, while safeguarding the locals by imprisoning them in their own homes. Their sorrowful exodus that still leaves their house, inhabited today by the UNHC, and the Arab College that is currently hosting the headquarters of the UN, keeps the place haunted, with her last

words bidding farewell to every room in the house, thus marking another tragedy of a Palestinian life.

Together with the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center, Dr. Faiḥāī 'Abdel Hadi provides an invaluable documentation of the oral history of the Palestinian feminist and women's movement in three volumes (1930s, 1940s, and 1950s). Interviews that have been conducted included women who were still alive during the time, and are the major actors of this research. The work tries to track certain movements that involved women as well in that period. A lot of the information required was not easy to access, considering the loss of memory and other old age effects afflicting the book's subjects. But yet, those testimonies remain invaluable to the Palestinian oral history and to researchers on the topic. The work also has very little analytical revisions, a shortcoming that points to the lack of the

analytical previews that could be a result of the amount of emotions Palestinian still encounter when discussing the Nakba period.

'Ayda Al-Najjar brings the memory of the place and the relation between man and the land in *Al-Quds wi al-bint al Shalabiya* (*Pretty Girl*), and from the perspective of someone who was born in Jerusalem. Al Bint Al Shalabiya is the witness to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is a witness to that girl. By choosing the word "Shalabiya" (Arabic slang for pretty) for the title, she attempted to reflect a cultural code that connects from one side and is understood from the other side within the culture of this place in particular. A cultural code that brings Palestinians in this sense with the same set of behaviors and traditions that dignifies them from others, such as songs, food, and dressing style.

Ellen Fleischmann's *Jerusalem Women's Organizations During the British Mandate (1920s-1930s)* tries to focus on Palestinian women's participation in the political arena during the Mandate period, in an attempt to "provide a corrective to the usual historical narrative that presents history as a universal human story exemplified by the lives of men."²⁵ According to Fleischmann, women have been noticeably absent in almost all accounts of Palestinian history as a result of historical traditions that give men precedent over women, and consider women largely irrelevant to the major events of time. Her book is an attempt at acquiring knowledge of the past in order to help broaden context and deepen understanding of the current situation.²⁶

Additionally, according to Fleischmann, it is not the insignificance of women's roles that made their participation marginalized. Palestinian women, as she puts it, "have always been active

²⁵ Fleischmann, *Jerusalem Women's Organizations*, p. 6

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6

participants in the making of their own history, despite common misperceptions that they didn't do anything."²⁷

Promoting women's rights was among the worries of Palestinian scholars and intellectuals such as Khalil al Sakakini, who emphasized the importance of considering women's status on a given occasion in his thought and discussions.

All previously written researches and literature undoubtedly provide important milestones in the development of the Palestinian women's movement in the first half of the twentieth century. The amount of emotions expressed in the writings of the Palestinians are a good source for analyzing beyond the expressed emotions that still clearly affect the Palestinians to this day. The Nakba and the two decades that preceded it remain a very tough period in

²⁷ Ibid., p. 7

Palestinian history that in many ways contributed in the lack of analytical and systematic contributions.

The work of Western researchers remains bound with orientalist ideals that are preset, which also leaves a place for more analyzing into the provided information.

Bringing all the different views together may contribute in a more fact-based analytical research that understands both the importance of the strong emotional expressions in Palestinian literature, and the need to look at Palestinian history in a more critical manner that enables us to understand and learn from the lessons of the past.



Part Two

1. Preface

The idea for this research came from a photo.

This is an attempt to show that through a photo we may reveal what we may not understand about our past. A photo can mirror certain realities that differ from our imagination of the past. Field research turned up more photos, providing similar glimpses of a life that was different from what we knew existed. Not to mention that none of the women existed, and relatives of those who are still surviving are too old. The memories of people in this case are more of an imaginarily mixed reality of a certain glorification of the situation that is also too unreal to document. The photo has affected this research in a manner similar to what Sarah Graham-Brown describes in her book: “when historical photographs are

used in a book such as this, they acquire another layer of meaning ascribed to them by the author and, whatever care is taken in the selection of photographs, the power of the images as well as conceptual considerations make the choice a personal one.”²⁸ It is absolutely true that “even if it is possible to resist the beguiling sense which these photographs often give the viewer of gazing into the past like Alice through the looking-glass, there is still the unpredictable arresting of the eye, and the emotions — by a detail in a photograph.”²⁹ In the case of this photo, and with the selection³⁰ I found throughout the research, it was with no doubt, “sometimes it is an incongruous detail, or an item of clothing which makes the photograph memorable and appealing, demanding to

²⁸ Graham-Brown, Sarah. *The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950. Images of Women.* Columbia University Press 1988, p. 3

²⁹ Ibid. p.3

³⁰ See Annex

be chosen in preference to other photographs showing the sense of theme,”³¹ together with the looks as well.

The search took me on an interesting path through personal biographies written by men and women of that era. In such research, finding a woman’s name created another path of research. Biographies offer a far-reaching portrayal that a photo can’t necessarily convey. A biography can explain the history behind the photo and the people it portrays, not necessarily those identified names or faces.

Such a photo breaks the stereotypical image of Palestinian women of the past. Our views are likely built on orientalist stereotypes of women in traditional and cultural images, which limits our imagination of other ways of life.

It has been such an overwhelming and rich exploration into a lifestyle that I, as a Palestinian, did not know existed. The

³¹ Graham-Brown, *Women in Photography*, p. 3

experience revealed facts beyond a photo and a biography, as the research expanded.

Romanticizing an era, or demonizing it, is easier than trying to find the truth within the facts. My perspective remains a naïve one. My judgment and my analysis have definitely been influenced by my own background as a woman growing up in a middle-class non-elite background.

Through examining photos, relatives' memories, biographies, and narratives, a certain normalization of women in the Palestinian structure occurred. In the end, whether photos reflect a modern Palestinian society or show peasant, rural Palestinians on donkeys, both perspectives and images form for the observer part of what reflects a reality of Palestinian society.

It is important to realize that the impression this research's photo gives is only half of the reality. The very same women are the women in the photo used by Ellen Fleischmann, mentioned earlier.

From an outsider's view, one represents a progressive image of how women were, and the other shows traditional images of Arab women. Both photos were real, and of the same women in more or less the same time. Yet one showed what women were like inside their own houses, how they wanted to be, how they wanted to be seen, and the other showed how they had to look when they were in the streets. Neither undermines or diminishes or increases their value. In both photos, the impression is what counts, and what makes it valuable.

The normalcy of a society, regardless of how we perceive its traditions toward secularism or religious behaviors, is what makes our views more sensible. It remains that the researches in general are bound to promote one view or another, either suggesting that the Palestinian woman was a liberal, modern, progressive woman, or that she was part of a conventional Arab backwardness. The insistence on doing either of these two perspectives made reality

lose its own space.

2. Introduction

Palestinians have busied themselves since the occupation of 1948 in a daily struggle for survival. That day-in day-out struggle succeeded in eliminating many of the memories of their actual history, which also became, in time, limited to certain people and names and events that eventually women were excluded from. The exclusion of women comes as a result of aspects ranging from historical prejudices against women in high business and political positions to the rejuvenation of Islamic fundamentalisms that view women as subordinate to men. As in the majority of neighboring Arab societies, Palestinian women were subject to the dominance of a patriarchal Arab culture, which prevailed in the

urban and rural areas. Palestinian women, in the words of Masalha, “continue to be excluded, even within the subaltern narrative and the relatively more democratic new global media.”³² He continues with affirmations through Palestinian female scholars such as Kassem³³ (2011), Hammami³⁴ (2003), and Khalili³⁵ (2007), who have shown that gender narratives and women’s voices and contributions to collective Nakba memory and Palestinian historical consciousness are doubly marginalized within the Palestinian refugee story. Often women’s memories are silenced because they are perceived as undermining Palestinian nationalist discourse, and this is an issue that Palestinian

³² Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, p. 226-228

³³ Kassem, Fatma. *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory*. Zed 2011

³⁴ Hammami, Rima. *Gender, Nakba and Nation: Palestinian Women's Presence and Absence in the Narration of 1948 Memories*. 2003.

³⁵ Khalili, Laleh. “Places of Memory and Mourning: Palestinian Commemoration in the Refugee Camps of Lebanon”, in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2005. Duke University Press 2005

subaltern studies have failed to address adequately. Despite the interviews with women and the recording of women's voices, men are presented as the main protagonists³⁶.

Edward Said, in his introduction to Serene Husseini's biography, writes: "for an Arab girl in between the two world Wars, education was limited (she went to the Friends School in Ramallah, and graduated from The American University in Beirut). Education, as such, was unfamiliar but we can see in that an alerting signal of a super energy that pushed the Palestinians and especially women, to revolt against submitting to accepting the role of a lazy or negative viewer. This energy pushed them to contribute to the cooperative campaign in development and collective resistance. A situation that reflects on many of the Palestinians, education and learning self-independence induced Serene to continue what

³⁶ Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, p. 226-228

politics and geography obstructed. This, after half a century, became one of the qualities of the Intifada: the formation of a unified front of civilians, men, women and children, uniting in harmony against the Israeli forces across the occupied lands, as a result of their organization, their innovative thinking, intelligence and optimistic will.”³⁷

As many of the distorted events and memories in the Palestinian narrative are fading away, so too is the woman’s part in that narrative. This research is an attempt to explore women from an angle that takes them outside their typical household roles, and to check the reality of women’s roles in that period.

In a world that is conquered by veils, narratives and photos show a different reality. This research will be an attempt to dig into the narratives of women who were active and had a participatory role

³⁷Husseini, Serene. *Jerusalem Memories*. Naufal 2000.
Introduction by Edward Said, p. 17

in the society, by forming the women's movement in Palestine and by being part of a regional and international women's movement.

The photo that instigated this research is part of what comprises a relation between photography and social history:

“The triumphant announcement of photography as the universal language of the future was the first of many grandiose claims made for photographic realism. The notion of a documentary form, which would supersede the frailties of human observation, fitted well with the positivism, which characterized much Western thought in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although many doubts have since been raised about the veracity of photographic images, there is still a lingering sense that a photograph has a documentary value different from, and perhaps superior to, other forms of representation.”³⁸

Artworks, as Heidegger explains, are things, a definition that raises the question of the meaning of “thing”, such that works have

³⁸ Graham-Brown, *Women in Photography*, Intro.pg.1.

a “thingly” character. Within that broad concept, Heidegger chooses to focus on three dominant interpretations of things, which are as follows: things as substances of properties, things as the manifold of sense perception, and things as formed matter. Heidegger is famous for using the study of shoes as an example for the analysis of a culture, as he explains the viewer’s responsibility in considering the variety of questions about shoes, for instance, and not just asking about form and matter. He wants the viewer to ask questions that can relate to purpose and reason, source and belonging. For Heidegger it is about us, the viewers, who in this way can get beyond corresponding truth in a “form” representation, but to reality “matter.”³⁹ Many questions can be asked as a result, and hence, we can relate in our research on this photo. The question of purpose and reason, can be delved in the question of the veil or unveil of the women in the photo . Why the

³⁹ Heidegger, Martin. *The Origin of the Work of Art (Der Ursprung Des Kunstwerkes)*. Trans: David Farrell Krell (2006). HarperCollins 2008, p. 143-165

same women seen in the photo unveiled are the same who are seen in other photos in the same period veiled in public areas.

This takes us to the question of contradiction women live and face.

The controversy of modernity and tradition in the behavior of the same set of women.

The view of Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, in his essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, situates such arts explicitly within the context of history. Whereas his criticism is charged with the task of revealing what he calls the "truth content of a work of art," which is intimately bound up with its 'material content'. Historically anachronistic features of the content aims in criticism to the destruction of this outer layer in order for the work's inner truth content to be grasped. According to Benjamin, the fundamental philological error of commentary is merely to situate the work in relation to the "lived experience" of its author's biographical life, instead of the broader medium of historical reception through

which it has passed down to the contemporary critic. The research perceives the photo in this sense, it is the content of what the photo has represented , it shed the light on the modernity, and the controversy of the women themselves and the society they live in . It allowed an observation that can fill in the gap of overseeing the society in a certain set of images that filled in certain interests of researchers. Benjamin's Romantic theory of immanent criticism insists that the work must contain its own inner criterion, such that the critic proceeds from the work itself and not from the life of the author.⁴⁰

As a result , “truth content, in contrast, is not to be sought in the conspicuous features of the work's technique, but in the unity of its

⁴⁰ Osborne, Peter and Charles, Matthew. “Walter Benjamin”, in: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/benjamin/>. First published Tue Jan 18, 2011; substantive revision Wed Jul 22, 2015

distinct form. The task of criticism is to make this truth content an object of experience.”⁴¹

Photos represent a preservation of a memory of the past. In the Palestinian case, photos may represent more than a sentimental personal memory of the lived past, but a proof amid the disturbed history of identity under occupation. The photo in this research may be a good example to show, as well as, understand the contradictions that continue to face women in the Palestinian society specifically and the Arab society at large. The veil as an instrument of reflection on dominance on women within what seems to be a traditionally accepted control. While the majority of women in the photo do not wear the Hijab, it is undoubtedly that many of those women are seen in other photos⁴². Such photos have been circulated in their time in newspapers and different societal and political settings. This means that the women in the

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Please see Annex (Photos)

picture, without the veils were aware that the photo will not be privately used, knowing they would leave the room wearing their veils in some cases.

Dressing relates to certain aspect of modernity that connects societies together globally. In societies as the Palestinian, the change in dress codes can relate to many indications to help understand the society and the specific surrounding of a setting.

While wearing the veil or removing it, is not what defines women in a specific society, but it undoubtedly reveals the texture and the margin of freedoms in the society. How this is connected with gender and nationalist modernity will be a part of the discussion in this research. The notions of modernity that were produced and reproduced effectively as a result of examinations within modern dichotomies that range from modern/primitive of philosophy and anthropology to the modern/traditional of Western social and modernization theories.

3. The Photo

The memories of the Palestinian past have been so distorted by all of the catastrophes and defeats Palestinians have lived on a personal and popular level.

The collective memory in times of catastrophe seems to become personal, and memories are wisely hidden or in many cases diminished. It is not a coincidence that a Palestinian narrative is not properly collected. Years of silence as a result of defeat and helplessness resulted in an unsaid silence in what turned out to become the Palestinian voice. And this silence and distortion is perhaps corrected by photography, which, in its way, can capture things as they are, not ignoring the fact that photos continue to show a selective reality of the society and people that cannot be definitive of the society at large.

The attempts of many scholars as well as individuals in preserving the Palestinian narrative in the last three decades is a genuine effort to discover the truth of a society that is buried under the rubble of occupation and caged into denial and defeat. It was not until the 1970s, confirms historian Nour Masalha that “published Palestinian oral history began to offer a picture of events from the perspective of the ordinary refugees who had experienced dispossession and dispersal.”⁴³ Masalha confirms as well that this “was before the opening of the Israeli governmental and institutional archives –in the late 1970s –and at least a decade before the emergence of the Israeli ‘new historiography’ in the mid-to late 1980s.” Historian Masalha brings out an important point of confirmation here in regards to the historical Palestinian narration process that the current Israeli propaganda tries to promote as being driven and promoted by Israeli historians, in an

⁴³ Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, p. 215

attempt to make Israel look like a liberal country that promotes liberal thinking.

Photos of the lived past remain an important source, if not the only source, after the deaths of most people who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century. The official archives of that period are Ottoman and whatever is left of the British Mandate, and even though used, they haven't expressed the real and genuine aspect of Palestinian society. The context of social history when looking at photographs produces a number of other forms of meaning that have to be taken into consideration, as Sarah Graham-Brown describes in her *The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950*. Such forms "include the context in which the photograph was taken; the relationships of power and authority between photographer and subject; the aesthetic and ideological considerations which affected the photographer's choice of subject

and the way the photograph might be interpreted by its viewers in a particular historical period.”⁴⁴

Many aspects of Palestinian life have been distorted amid the occupation and the struggle for survival that turned, year in and year out, into a struggle to prove an identity that has been shaped in the last decades with the agendas of politicians and the occupier.

Going through old family photos and albums unveils hidden treasure in the Palestinian memory in its search for identity.

In our specific photo lies a clear reflection of a style of living that has not been expressed in general. Palestinian memory is occupied with the scenes of the diaspora and the fleeing of people during the Nakba.

The photo provides an instructive to myths about the Mandate period, such as the one that states that the veil was universal.

⁴⁴ Graham-Brown, *Women in Photography*, p. 3

There is also something about the women in the photo that shows a proud attitude, in the way they sit or the way they stand. They are dressed in a fashionable manner that suits an official lunch or gathering, and particularly an official gathering that was women-centric in nature.

The way they are all dressed is a combination of chic and casual, so they probably knew the difference, and knew how their attire fit in with customary dress codes. In this way, we can presume that many of them probably belong to a higher class, and are likely of at least an educated middle class.

Viewing the look, the faces, and the figures, the women do not seem to be only young graduates from universities, but wives and mothers.

Somehow this photo breaks another main taboo, in what the society generally perceives on women in that period. Education

didn't seem to be restricted to a certain age, and hence, working and involvement in civil society seemed normal in the reflection of this photo. In this sense, the photo also reflects an important controversy, especially when we look at other photos for this woman. It can shift us from thinking of modernity to controversy, when we realize that the same women are veiled in other locations, mostly public outdoors occasions. Hence, this brings in the question of how modernity was really practiced, and how genuine it has been.

The photo is on the occasion of an official visit by Huda Sha'rawi to Jerusalem, a key moment within the region's women's movement. The photo took place in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, a hotel whose prestige makes clear these women's higher class in society. To have a meeting or a convention in the King David Hotel became restricted to leaders and high-profile organizations. Contrarily, however, it is also important to note that

not many hotels existed in that time, and the King David was a landmark for visitors from the region.

As the research developed, names of activist women whose contribution to that period of time and circumstances were starting to be recognized. As much as one cannot point exactly to every single face and declare, "This is who she is," there is no doubt that the women who were actively known in the creation of the Palestinian women's movement are shown in this picture.

Despite the distraction and inconsistency of information, as well as the lack of a chronicle of consistent data, the Arab Women Council and the preparation for that event that started in Jerusalem, through researching, the women participating eventually became clear.

According to the tagging in the British Mandate Jerusalem Photo library, a site set by Mona Halaby, the women in the photo are: Madiha Nusseibeh, Nabiha Nasser, Madeleine Rahel Albina,

Zahiya Nashashibi, Catherine Berouti Gelat, Georgine Attalla
Calis, Fadila Duzdār, Shahinda Duzdār, Hilda Azzam, Katie
Aboussouan Salāmah, Lucy Gress, Pauline Mantoura, Matiel
Mughannam, and Mrs. Boulos Said and Mrs. Nashashibi, as well
as Huda Sha'rawi.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Other documents mention the participants as follows: Huda Sha'rawi and (two Egyptian women); Zleikha Shihābi, Tarab 'Abdel Hadi, Milia Sakakini, Adele Azar, Anbara Khalidi, Wajiha Hussein, Kokun Tuleil, Qudsiyeh Seif Eddin, Nuzha Darwish, Salma Hussein, Badrieh Hussein, Fatimah Abu Suoud

4. An Overview on the Political Context

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Balfour promised Jews a home in Palestine, marks the beginning of what later became the Palestinian tragedy. Even though the declaration included the preservation of the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities, Palestinians didn't trust the declaration, and found in the British position a clear betrayal. Palestinians were, however, not entitled to make decisions, as the ruling Ottoman Empire was in charge, and was struggling through its final days of power. Masalha argues "the Israeli state owes its very existence to the British colonial power in Palestine, despite the tensions that existed in the last decade of the British Mandate between the colonial power and the leadership of the European Yishuv. With the Ottomans being left in control of Palestine after the First World

War, it is very unlikely that a Jewish state would have come into being.”⁴⁶ After the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Palestinians aligned themselves with the pan-Arab national movement that was led by Sharif Hussein. The Mandate period proved the British failure to fulfill its promises of independence to the people of Palestine. Walid Khalidi describes the Palestine view of the Mandate as “an Anglo-Zionist condominium and its terms as instruments for the implementation of the Zionist program; it had been enforced on them by force, and they considered it to be both morally and legally invalid.”⁴⁷ The British started their Mandate by dismissing the mayor of Jerusalem, who was opposing the Zionist program. The application of the British Mandate led to the rise of Jewish immigration, namely by the appointment of first Higher

⁴⁶ Masalha, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Khalidi, Walid. *Before Their Diaspora: Photographic History of the Palestinians: 1876-1948*. The Institute for Palestine Studies 1984.p. 85

Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, who was a Zionist propagandist. May 1921 saw riots among the Palestinians in protest against Zionist mass immigration. At that time, Palestinians started to organize themselves. Christian-Muslim associations were formed throughout the country. The formation of the associations led to the election of delegates and a call for a national congress, which elected an executive committee. Between January 1919 and August 1922, three congresses were conducted, and they expressed the fear of Zionist political objectives and continued to reject the Balfour Declaration.⁴⁸ At that time, the Jewish population, living mainly in Jerusalem, was a small minority that didn't exceed one-sixth of the population. The waves of immigration from Europe aroused unrest and fear, accompanied by hate toward the Jewish growth in the area. From 1918 to 1929, according to Walid Khalidi, "some sixty new

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 85

colonies were established, Zionist landownership rose from 2.04 percent to 4.4 percent in 1929, and the proportion of the Jewish population rose from 9.7 percent to 17.6 percent during the same period.”⁴⁹

The existing Palestinian leadership was composed primarily of notables from specific families, whom have eventually molded the first Arab Palestinian political parties like the Palestine Arab Party, the National Defense Party, and the Independence Party, which formed the first strains of democratic development, out of which remained a manifestation of a continuous debate since the leaders of those organizations came from traditional rivalries inside those families.⁵⁰ Dr. Hussein Fakhri Khalidi, the Mayor of Jerusalem in the 1930s, expressed explicitly his feelings and awe about the split and rivalry between the two families (Husseini and Nashashibi) that transgressed the interest of the nation. Often, the rivalry

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 86

⁵⁰ Ka'war, Amal. *Daughters of Palestine*. SUNY Press 1996, p. 6-7

between the two families led each to conspire with the enemy in attempts to harm the other.

The fears of Palestinians rose with the August 1929 establishment of the Jewish Agency, which included world-famous Jewish figures in its membership. This was the first event that raised fear in Palestinians' minds, because such an agency would also increase the British influence on the Zionist movement. The other event that constituted a cornerstone in that period was an unprecedented political demonstration held at the Wailing Wall, where militant right-wing secular members of the Zionist Revisionist Party called for a revision of the Mandate to include the forcible colonization of the Transjordan area and Palestine. This resulted in clashes with Palestinians, and was proof that Jewish immigration was not just an innocent affair, but was one that expressed a vision of ruling the future.^{51 52} "A general consensus was emerging that political

⁵¹ Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*, p. 86

and diplomatic efforts were ineffective and only an armed rebellion directed at Britain could yield results.”⁵³ In December 1935, the British failed to form the local legislative council that they had suggested, in the face of the threats from pro-Zionist members who believed that such a council would hinder the development of the Jewish national home. The Palestinians received this as the last proof that the British role was far from fair.⁵⁴

May 1936 saw open rebellion by Palestinians. The five established political parties united to form the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) under the leadership of Haj Amin Al Husseini. In the same month, a conference was summoned and called for civil disobedience and

⁵² By 1933, Jewish immigrants numbered 30,000. In 1934, they numbered 42,000, and in 1935 they numbered 61,000. The escalation produced panic and desperation among the Palestinians, which resulted in the formation of five political parties from 1932 to 1935.

⁵³ Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*, p. 87

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87

a general strike to protest the British pro-Zionist policies. The rebellion endured for three years.^{55 56}

Jerusalem benefited from the progress that the Ottoman Empire had tried to accomplish in the Levant, particularly after the Egyptian “occupation” from 1830 to 1840. The challenge that resulted in providing progressive attempts inside the different regions of the empire. Among which, Jerusalem became a central city. Kamel Asaly, in his book *Jerusalem in History*, describes Jerusalem as “transformed from a relatively minor provincial town into the biggest city of Palestine and the political cultural center in the country.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 189

⁵⁶ The AHC was dissolved on October 1, 1937, when four of its members were sent into exile in the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean (Dr. Hussein Khalidi, Ya’qub al Ghussein, Ahmad Hilmi, and Fuad Saba). Haj Amin al Husseini and others escaped arrest and took refuge in neighboring Arab countries. Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*, p. 269

⁵⁷ ‘Asaly, Kamel. *Jerusalem in History*. Olive Branch Press 1990.p. 233

Tariff Khalidi⁵⁸ calls the period from 1900 to 1948 the beginning of the “second period of intellectual history.” According to Khalidi, the period that proceeded witnessed the first Arab *Nahda*, or cultural renaissance. He finds this period, within the Mandate promises, as one of stunted intellectual growth.⁵⁹ Khalidi believes that the conventional image of Arab culture is still being revised; “from such adjustments of focus one gains an empathetic awareness of the cultural equidistance of all generations from a supposedly ideal pinnacle. Brilliance or decadence are no longer adequate descriptions of the intellectual contributions of one era as compared to another. The Arab past speaks to us in many voices

⁵⁸ Tariff Khalidi was an associate professor of history at the American University of Beirut.

⁵⁹ Khalidi, Walid. “Palestinian Historiography: 1900-1948”, in: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 10 No. 3 1981. University of California Press 1981.p. 59-76

rather than in an alternating sequence of eloquence and triviality, renaissance and decline.”⁶⁰

Jerusalem’s share in the progress movement had an effect on education.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 59

⁶¹ The Egyptians during Ibrahim Pasha’s time (some of Mohammad Ali Pasha) enforced education from early childhood. That progress, which increased toward the end of the nineteenth century, during Sultan ‘Abdel Hamid’s time, included state-founded elementary schools in villages and secondary schools in cities such as Jerusalem. According to Adel Manna’, girl students remained limited in numbers during that period. At the same time, that was a period in which missionary institutions started and grew to include the establishment of private schools. In Haifa, for instance, six private schools were established, one of which was for females.

5. Education and Professional Development

Education and professions are linked together as topics that lead to one another, or /and affect one another. The more educated people are, the more job opportunities increase and evolve. In the Palestinian case, this was not an exception. As education became accessible and was not limited to a specific class in the society (the rich) , the needs and demands started to change and the education of women and thus her involvement and participation in different professions became noticeable. It is important not to forget that the modernization towards the end of the nineteenth century is “identified with the emergence of enlightened patriarchs, modernizing upper-class elites, and liberal families.”⁶² One can

⁶² Abu Lughod: Chapter 2 : ‘Aisha Taymur’s Tears and the Critique of the Modernist and the Feminist Discourses on Nineteenth-Century Egypt. Mervat Hatem. p. 74

relate to modernity partly in women's rejection to their only roles in domestic duties, education helped women in transforming their gender roles. Whereas, women became change agents in the society.⁶³

After the announcement of the constitution in 1908, a major change occurred in schools and the education system. The number of compulsory educational years before university became twelve. The community established more schools. This resulted in a new movement and an increase of cultural development that included the spread of libraries and printing houses and media. Printing had remained prominent in Jerusalem since its first establishment in 1846 with the Franciscan Fathers Printing House, and it spread in 1908. Media entered Palestine in 1876, when the Ottomans published the official paper, *al Quds Al Sharif*, in both Arabic and Turkish. In the same year, Sheikh Ali Rimawi published

⁶³ Ibid.

another monthly newspaper, *al Aza*, in Arabic. From 1908 to 1917, around thirty papers were published in different cities, among them Jerusalem. This resulted in increased literacy and scientific as well as religious production.⁶⁴

This opening of the city resulted as well in new job opportunities in the government for both men and women. “The British were interested in establishing a corps of capable government civil servants who could administer efficiently to their own political and strategic interests in Palestine, while in general maintaining the social status quo.”⁶⁵ However, the increase in the educational level acted as an agent of social and economic change, which resulted in challenges to the British attempt to maintain the status quo.

⁶⁴Sheriff, Maher. “Palestine Ottoman History.” www.ppp.ps, 16-10-2013.

⁶⁵ Fleischmann, Ellen. *Jerusalem Women's Organizations During the British Mandate (1920s-1930s)*. PASSIA 1995 ,p. 12

'Ayda Najjar speaks about schools in Jerusalem in that period, with an interesting analysis about how they affected girls' education. According to Najjar, what marked the emergence of a "class" aspect of the Palestinian structure was the economic situation that prohibited poor families from sending their children, especially girls, schools, and the emergence of educational aspiration among the rich. The emergence of private and missionary schools enabled girls as well as boys to obtain better educations, and opened the option of education abroad, which ultimately resulted in providing that sector of the society with better job opportunities, especially since such schools provided education in languages other than Arabic. At that time, the Turkish government was neglecting Arabic as a language, and students were forced to learn Turkish. Competition among schools started at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas missionary schools competed in providing better services and education and

promoting their languages. Among schools that were opened for girls were Schmidt's for the Germans, Salesian Monastery for the Italians, and St. Joseph for the French. Consequently, the Friends school was founded, from which 'Isam 'Abdel Hadi, Serene Husseini, and others graduated. The competition among schools expanded to the Islamic Council, which established the Muslim Girls School within the Aqsa mosque in the old city. In that period, a female "sheikh," Sheikha Zahra Al Saleh, was known as a Qur'an teacher in the Abu Suoud *Zawiyeh* (corner) in the Aqsa mosque. She taught several girls, among them Najjah and Na'eemeh al Saleh, who later became a teacher at *Rawdet al Ma'aref* school (est. 1896), which was headed earlier by their father. Other public girls' schools were established in Jerusalem, including the New *Ma'muniyyeh*, the Old *Ma'muniyyeh*, and *Dar al Mu'allimāt* (teachers college).^{66 67}

⁶⁶ Najjar, Bint al Shalabiya p. 135–141

The education of women allowed, as well, the opening of more opportunities for women in the work field, in an attempt to improve upon family income in less-privileged areas in the urban part of the country. Consequently, more women left the general devastation and poverty that resulted from the First World War to work in Jerusalem. This gave an active form of life inside Jerusalem and to women. Women started to challenge the traditions that secluded them from public life. Among the upper and middle classes in Jerusalem, education allowed women to actively participate in job-seeking, both on a voluntary basis and for employment.

Serene Husseini Shahid offers an important documentation of and reflection on education among Jerusalem families. It is undoubted

⁶⁷ Even though girls' education wasn't recommended and popular in the villages, Arifa Najjar established Banāt Lifta School in the mid-1940s. 'Arifa got her education in the Silesian Italian School in Jerusalem. Later, her sister Rifqa Najjar, who graduated from Schmidt's school, became the principal of Al Zarqa Girls School directly after the 1948 Nakba. *Ibid.*, 145–147

that the opportunities and lifestyle that Husseinini describes were mostly limited to society's elite class, but it is also undoubted that those opportunities were there. Husseinini went to the Islamic New Institute in the old city of Jerusalem until the British forces closed it in 1930. The institute was an educational resource for Palestinian girls.⁶⁸

In her testimony, Serene Husseinini speaks also about Hind al Husseinini, who was a few years older than her.

Urbanizing of the country increased work-seeking; during that period, poverty and deforestation led people who had relied on farming in rural Palestine to seek different kinds of work. This resulted in the founding of charitable organizations that provided

⁶⁸ When the institute was closed, S. Husseinini speaks about the choice of schools made by her parents, which, according to her, were many. At that time Jerusalem was filled with missionary schools and local ones. Schools converged from German, Italian, French and American. Toward the end, her family chose the Friends School in Ramallah. The director of the school was a woman. She mentions in her biography her Arabic teacher, Eva Bader. Husseinini, *Jerusalem Memories*.

relief aid to those in need. On the one hand, the pressure of the war forced women in the lower class to seek jobs. On another hand, those from a higher level began to develop leadership roles for women through relief and charitable work. In Fleischmann's book, she mentions a Palestinian woman's testimony on that situation: "Saīda Jārallah's father, an eminent judge in the Islamic courts, was unusually progressive regarding the education of his seven daughters. He recognized that providing them with the ability to earn their own living reduced their vulnerability in insecure times."⁶⁹ Saīda Jārallah was the first Muslim woman to travel to England on her own to complete her education, in 1938. Another account of such testimony is mentioned in 'Anbara Khalidi's biography, describing her father encouraging her

⁶⁹ Mrs. Jārallah recollected: "He would say that a woman should have her diploma like a bracelet in her hand. For if she did not get married but was widowed or divorced, she would be independent and have her own job and life, and not depend on her father or brother to support her." Fleischmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s* .p. 15

education, and later allowing her to get involved in work and complete her education.

The experience of Fadwa Touqan, years later, was harsher. She gave a different, as well as traditional, testimony in her biography. She was secluded, being a girl, and not allowed to get any education. It was the attention of her renowned brother, Ibrahim Touqan, many years later, that helped her get out of that seclusion and allowed her to write.⁷⁰

Nimra Tannous was another example of a woman who became renowned, as the telegraph operator linking communications between the Arab armies in 1948, having come to Jerusalem from a village in the north with her mother and sister so that the girls could continue their educations and later work for the government.

⁷⁰ Touqan Fadwa, *Rihla Jabaliya Sa'ba* (a difficult mountain journey) . A biography . Dar Al Shurouq for publishing and distribution . Ramallah, 2nd Ed., 2005

Nimra later became a major contributor to the Palestinian resistance in the 1940s when she assisted 'Abdel Qader al Husseini in assuring calls that were received through the mailing system. She became a liaison officer between the Arab troops and the international mediator, Count Bernadotte, who was assassinated by the Zionists in 1948. She also worked as a volunteer in the Jordanian army, where she wore the military outfit.⁷¹

Another woman is Nahed 'Abdu Al Sajdi, who came from Nablus and attended the secondary school run by the government, the Women's Training College in Jerusalem.⁷²

In another phase of the British Mandate period, education proved to help women at a different level, which resulted in an important political account. Indeed, the increased education of women was a subject of controversy as well as a liberalizing influence in

⁷¹ Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 41-42

⁷² Fleischmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s* p. 16

Palestinian society. The role and status of women stimulated lively discussions and debates in the press, for example.⁷³ Women were contributing to articles and were, as well, the subject of discussions regarding the veil and women's rights. In short, “people managed in that period to work, go to school, and survive. This and social and economic changes provided a period in which Palestinian Arab women could develop and grow into expanding roles.”⁷⁴ ‘Ayda Najjar mentions in her book, *al Quds and al Bint al Shalabiya*, women who participated in different roles in the society.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., p. 17

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 18-19

⁷⁵ Among other names are: Najla Nassār, a graduate of Schmidt’s Girls College, and Mary Anton ‘Attalla, a woman who worked in the tourism business in Jerusalem and received a master’s degree in social studies from Harvard University in the 1930s. Among such women was also Sultana Halaby (1901–1985), who received a university degree in business in the United States of America in 1934 and established one of the first commercial libraries in Jerusalem, which included the “artistic section,” to which Mary Attalla contributed. See: Najjar.

Among the women who were active in Jerusalem life in the 1930s was Kathy Antonius, the wife of the Lebanese writer Antonius and the daughter of the journalist Faris Nimer, owner of *al Muqattam* newspaper in Egypt.⁷⁶ Kathy was among the women who participated in Huda Sha'rawi's invitation to the conference in Cairo in 1938. She was a member of the Palestinian women's movement.

In education, the Palestinian society seemed to have inherited the same passion toward educating the younger generation. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, in his autobiography, *Al Bi'r al Oulā (The First Well)*, expresses his strong anguish and that of his generation in the push toward education. Jabra was born to a poor family and went on a scholarship to Britain, where he acquired higher

⁷⁶ After the death of her husband in 1942, Kathy used the Mufti's Palace (the house of Amīn al Husseini) as a center for international exchange among journalists and diplomats, and which served as a cultural venue for years to come. The Antoniuses rented the palace from the owner, who was their close friend. See: Najjar.

degrees and later served as a teacher in Jerusalem and Iraq. Even though it was definitely easier for members of the higher classes to obtain education and send their children abroad, education wasn't limited to the elite level of the society. Khalil al Sakakini wrote extensively in his biography on the difficulties and challenges of education and his role as a teacher. Education was a consistent challenge, one that Palestinians strived to promote. This affected the status of women in approaching education. A generation of educated women in many ways promoted the education of more generations of women. Teaching was a career that remained acceptable for females to work in. The establishment of the private missionary schools led to the establishment of more schools by the government to create balance and fulfill demand, among which was *dār al Mu'allimāt*, established in 1919.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The number of students in the years 1924–1925 was 54, rising to 154 in the

Medicine, as a field of specialization, remains an aspiration in the Palestinian family; parents aspire to have a doctor in the family, a desire that seems to have been prominent in the Palestinian mind since the early twentieth century. Women took over the midwifery positions, which had been the societal norm in the previous decades. Jerusalem had tens of midwives, who expanded throughout the neighborhoods inside and outside the old city of Jerusalem in the first decades of the twentieth century. In

years 1945 and 1946. The graduates of that institute reached more than three hundred until the Nakba. Among the teachers in the institute were: Saïda Jārallah, Jawhara Kamar, Ester Khouri, Mrs. Qattān, Yusra Salah, and ‘Adawiyah al ‘Alami. Among the graduates were: Saba Fahoum, Yusra Barbari, ‘Isam Husseini, ‘Abla Nassir, Rene’ Matar, lawahez ‘Abdel Hadi, Wasīlla ‘Abdel Hadi, Nuha Milhes, and ‘Aisha Tjāni, who became a well-known radio broadcaster after the Nakba. Ma’muniyyeh School comprised many female teachers, including: ‘Ayda al Khadra, Ni’mati Qmei’, Leila Khalidi, Sabiha and Kamirān al Masri, Nadiyyah Rassas, Ni’meh al Saleh, Basima Fares, ‘Aliyeh Nusseibeh, Zakiyya Budeiri, ‘Itaf Hammād, Amal Medawar, Lam’ah Ghosheh, Alice Kashishian, Īkram Khalidi, and others. Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 161

medicine, women were present as well—a remarkable fact in a time when medicine wasn't even widely open to men.⁷⁸

Among the professions to which women contributed were radio broadcasting; some women participated in radio shows in the 1930s and 1940s. Fatimah Mousa Budeiri was a well-known name as a news broadcaster. She worked with Isam Hammād, who later became her husband. After the *Nakba*, she and her husband started *al Sham* Radio in Damascus. Her name echoed the sentence “*Huna al Quds*” for generations to come. Al Budeiri also participated in women's and children's shows on the radio and literal related topics. Salwa Khammash, Nuzha Khalidi, and Samiha Samara were three names that young adults and children

⁷⁸ In the 1930s, Jerusalem knew Dr. Abla Fawzi, who worked in the government hospital. Dr. Laura Mughrabi was a gynecologist and a pediatrician. Dr. Mughrabi had a private clinic, Damascus Gate. Dr. Salwa Khouri 'Utaqi also worked in the government hospital. In Ramallah, Dr. Charlotte Nicola Saba was known, and was a graduate of London. In Ma'man Allah (mammilla), Dr. Naheel Dajāni operated a dentistry clinic. Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 104–107

grew up on, listening to their children's shows. Henriette Siksik, who was also known as Miss Suād, was a writer and presenter of educational shows.⁷⁹

Women's organizations became active in mother and child care, providing free services, and daily papers such as *al Difa'* and *al Carmel* contributed by publishing articles that promoted women's education and health-care issues.⁸⁰

Among the exceptional professionals in that time was also the female photographer Karimah Abboud, who was born in Nazareth and lived in Bethlehem. Karima had a studio in Jerusalem and was very well-known among families.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Palestine also knew other women who presented radio shows and sections with women: Salwa Sa'id, Wadi'ah Shatara, 'Aziza al Hashimi al Saleh under the supervision of Mufida Dabbagh. Journalists including Asma Toubi, Samira 'Azzam, Najwa Ka'war, Sadjij Nassār, Samīra Abu Ghazaleh, Poet Fadwa Touqan, Mary Sheḥadeh and others were also often hosted on radio shows. Najjar, Ayda, *Bin al Shalabiya*, p. 171-172

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107–108

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122

6. The Emergence of Charitable Societies and Rise of Women Movement

As discussed earlier, access to education allowed the emergence of a society that moved more towards modernization, whether urbanized or ruralized. Between an elite class and a peasant class of a society, an emerging middle class was created. This became visible in the new professions that started to be created and practiced, as well as the emergence of charitable organizations led by women, and thus, a women's movement was in the formation. The women's movement in Palestine may have been connected with the first appearances of women's organizations around the world. This, however, cannot be accurately pointed out. At the same time, the arguments about feminism, and what is related to the redefining of women's rights, including clothing, and roles in and beyond the family, as Abu Lughod discusses, were lively

topics for men and women who were interested in social reform.⁸² Abu Lughod also raises the question of what really went on? And she later tries to explore the “ historical moment when “new” women and men were talking about remaking women.”⁸³ The connection of women’s movement cannot be reviewed without relating to feminism in this regards, and feminism in Palestine has a complex history ,as that in the Arab world, and other places n the world such as India, when women movement began with nationalism and moved into post-independence concerns about the improvised.⁸⁴ We can notice that the Palestinian women’s movement took this direction. One important note should not be ignored when discussing women ‘s movement in Palestine is the fact that “wherever Christian missionaries and European colonists

⁸² Abu Lughod, Lila. Remaking Women. P. 4

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

set down, and wherever nationalist movements sought to shape new nations, marks were left on gender ideals and possibilities”.⁸⁵ The earliest association that is agreed upon, about the emergence of women’s organizations, was the Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa, which was founded in 1910.⁸⁶ Adele ‘Azar helped found The Orthodox Women Society with the intention of helping orphaned and disadvantaged girls receive education. Adele ‘Azar served as the president of the society, and she was also the principal of the Orthodox Girls’ School.⁸⁷ Among the teachers who worked at the school were Najla Mousa, Souria Battikha, and Liza Butros. Olga Andraus al ‘Isa supervised the teaching of sewing.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Palestine :Information with Provenance(PIWP database). Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa.

<http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/php/authors.php?auid=45842>

⁸⁷ Robson,L. *Colonialism and Christianity*, p. [ADD PAGE NUMBER]

⁸⁸Najjar, Ayda. In Memory of Nakba: Palestinian Women Struggle was bigger than years of Naakba(ar) .Al

of Katherine Shukri Deeb, and operated until 1947. This society encouraged the education of girls, and sent them for higher education to Schmidt's College and the English College. Katherine was also active in the establishment of the Women Union and participated in the women Council in Egypt in 1938 and in 1944. Katherine Siksik was also among the active women in the "Orthodox Girl society". She also worked in "Society of Poor Sick Relief" before she devoted herself to helping disabled children. She established a society for the disabled in Beit jala, where she also established a shelter and a maternity home named Virgin Mary. Her work expanded in a very impressive way; she was in charge of four such societies, which eventually merged under "the Society of nonprofit Arab Orthodox Shelters for the Sick and the Disabled."

Such societies increased in Jerusalem and throughout the country in the 1920s. Among them was also "Santa Terez Society", which

had branches in Nazareth, Haifa, and Jaffa. A nun from Nazareth headed this society and became the head of the Catholic Nuns in Jerusalem, before dying in 1929.

Salma al Himsi Salāma established *Jam'iyyet hāmilat al Tīb* in 1926. This society included a clinic and supported the poor and refugees in the Nakba. Badi'ah Khouri Salāmeḥ established the Women *Nahda* Society in 1923. She worked on fighting illiteracy. In 1929, Ni'mati al Alami established the "Arab Women Society" after the "Buraq demonstrations". Many women participated in this society, hence, this marked the beginning of the formation of Women's Unions. After 1938, the participation of women spread throughout the different Palestinian cities, and women started different branches throughout cities such as Ramallah, Jaffa, Nablus, Acre, Haifa, and Gaza. Among the active women were 'Andalib Al 'Amad from Nablus; Adele 'Azar; Wajiha Tawfik Dajāni from Jaffa; Zleikha Shihābi; Katherine Siksik; Milia Sakakini from

Jerusalem; and Lydia A'raj from Bethlehem. The Jerusalem branch kept the name and worked together with the Women's Union, which stopped working during the Nakba, but re-registered in 1965 and was headed by Zahiya Nashashibi.⁸⁹

In Jerusalem, charitable organizations were similarly focused on empowering women by educating young mothers in the principles of parenting, and offered training aimed at self-sufficiency and home improvement. Diana Saïd was a graduate of the Girls College of Beirut in the 1940s, and was among the first special trainers in this domain.⁹⁰

In 1919, the "Arab Ladies Association" was founded in Jerusalem. It was followed by the Palestine Women's Union in 1921.⁹¹ The

⁸⁹ Najjar, *Bint Al Shalabiya*, p. 203–207

⁹⁰ Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 123

⁹¹ Fleischman. Jerusalem and Jerusalem Women During the Early Mandate Period.

http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J_wom_org_british_man_txt.htm

regional sentiments toward the British occupation were the same, and women were encountering the same difficulties and challenges. Thus, the courage and the initiative of the women in Egypt must have led to a spread of courage among the women of Palestine.

When the Arab Women's Union of Jerusalem was founded in 1929, the association was not like its sister association, which had been previously founded solely for charitable and educational purposes. It involved political aspects that included the ongoing struggle. The agendas of these associations were focused on national objectives rather than class. Nevertheless, the founders of these associations were educated and upper-class women from families whose members were leaders of the nationalist movement. They only included women from the working class. The focus was directed toward protesting the British Mandate's policies and the Zionist entrance and settlement. Of course,

women in those organizations were coming from the urban class.

Tamar Mayer, in her book *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*, notes that because “rural women were more severely affected by British colonial settlements policies and Jewish immigration than were urban middle class women, since their access to land and thus to agriculture was threatened, their involvement in the national struggle was different.”⁹² She adds that “while urban middle class women participated through over 200 charitable organizations, rural women participated through active demonstrations and bloody riots.”⁹³ The situation on the ground naturally often brought rural women into “militant, physical, confrontation of the British and the Jews and facilitated urban women’s involvement in the struggle, while at the same time, the charitable activities in which urban women were involved focused on caring for orphaned victims of peasant rioters, the blind, and

⁹² Mayer, *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Politics of Change*, p. 65

⁹³ Ibid.p.65

the handicapped, and on educating mostly rural women.”⁹⁴ Thus, Palestinian women remained united despite differences in their immediate goals.⁹⁵ In this sense, a natural synergy occurred in the distribution of associations on the political and social levels among the urban and rural parts of the society. Because of the political situation, women’s main challenging issues were the national struggle. This, in a way, resulted in melting the social issues, especially in countering the patriarchal setup of the society. It was also undisturbing to the patriarchy of the male dominance, in a sense that the issues raised on women’s association and movement agendas were related to the national struggle. Such activities made women visible, and their voices were heard and noticed; it “took Palestinian women out of the isolation of the home, family and community and out of their regional isolation and made them part of the greater national

⁹⁴ Ibid.,p.65

⁹⁵ Ibid.,p.65

struggle.”⁹⁶ Mayer makes an important point when she discusses the Palestinian national agenda in their struggle. The absence of a clear vision of statehood, once the fight and resistance to the British and Zionist movement ended. This resulted in the same unclear future for the women’s movement. She writes: “women’s future remained located within the traditional realm even though there was an involvement in the national struggle they had become more visible in the public sphere. In fact, it seems that this was the most natural form of public activity for many Palestinian women, because they continued their involvement in such organizations from 1967 onwards in the West Bank and Gaza.”⁹⁷ As one should not underestimate women’s participation within the emergence of their movement in that period, one should also not overestimate their effect.

⁹⁶ Ibid.,p.65

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 66

Their participation in the protests of 1929 definitely brought them to the front line of the news, according to the Palestinian and regional Arab papers, as well as international ones. The occurrence of the Palestine Arab Women's Congress on October 26, 1929, was mentioned as the first time that women entered into the realm of politics. Participating women expressed loudly a sophisticated and self-conscious purpose about their specific role in political action. The media expressed the uniqueness of the women's events with fondness. It was the Palestinian women's voices that were heralded as the first in the Arab world to call for ending oppression, marking the emergence of women in the public arena. One should not forget the start of the movement within the Egyptian Women Union, but somehow the Palestinian act was more regional. It concerned Palestinian society, but at the same time it concerned the same issues relevant to other women in the region, and rang the bells of injustice that befell women and

oppressed nations. The echo of that council, however, was limited to the effect of the previous emergence of the women's movement in Palestine. This has made it more complicated to find an accurate account of the Palestinian women's movement.

Hence, the discussion of feminism and the women's movement in the Arab world cannot be complete without mentioning Huda Sha'rawi (1879–1947), an Egyptian educator and women's rights activist. Huda Sha'rawi was born in Cairo in 1879 to a wealthy administrator. In 1919, Sha'rawi helped organize the largest women's anti-British demonstration; after a women's movement that witnessed some appearance in the succeeding years of the First World War. In defiance of British orders to disperse, the women remained for three hours in the hot sun. Sha'rawi made a decision to stop wearing her veil in public after her husband's death in 1922. Returning from a trip to a women's conference in Europe in 1923, she stepped off the train and removed her veil.

Women who came to greet her were shocked at first, then broke into applause. Some took off their veils, too. This was the first public defiance of the restrictive tradition. That same year, Sha'rawi helped found the Egyptian Women Union. She was elected its president and held the position for twenty-four years. Her goal was to establish links between Egyptian and international feminism. She successfully affiliated with the International Alliance of Women. The Union campaigned for various reforms to improve women's lives. The issues included raising the minimum age of marriage for girls to sixteen, increasing women's educational opportunities, and improving health care. Egypt's first secondary school for girls was founded in 1927 as a result of this pressure. Sha'rawi also led Egyptian women's delegations to international conferences and organized meetings with other Arab feminists. In 1944 she founded the All-Arab Federation of Women.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Bois, Danuta. Huda Sha'rawi. Distinguished women of past and present.1997

Sha'rawi was committed to Arab nationalism and the Palestinian cause. As a result of the refusal of the International Alliance of Women to support Palestinian women in their struggle against Zionism, the relationship with them foundered.

“This set the stage for the launching of an all Arab effort to create a pan Arab feminist organization, culminating in establishing created two years before the emergence of the Arab league of states, this organization became a model for what Arab unification efforts can accomplish. Sha'rawi then led a delegation of Egyptian women on a tour of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan to create a federation of Arab feminist unions. By late 1944, the Arab feminist conference was convened in Cairo, and by 1945 the AFU was established, adopting an ambitious agenda of promoting Arab nationalist cause, particularly the rights of Palestinian Arabs, the AFU also echoes the demands of the EFU rejecting the patriarchal system

<http://www.distinguishedwomen.com/bio.php?womanid=288>

and calling for reforming the Islamic Personal Status laws.”⁹⁹

The first congress was held at the home of Tarab ‘Abdel Hadi, the wife of a prominent leader (‘Awni ‘Abdel Hadi) who later became important in the *Īstiqlal* Party. The congress consisted of fourteen women from notable Jerusalem families, among whom Tarab ‘Abdel Hadi held a place on its executive committee. The split that occurred in the council as a result of the rivalry among the families made for inconsistent accounts of the congress's internal workings. The account of Matiel Mughannam, according to Fleischmann’s research, confirms that it was different from that of Tarab ‘Abdel Hadi. The two women provided detailed and divergent information about the preparatory phase of that

⁹⁹ Talhami, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 36

congress.¹⁰⁰

The congress remains invaluable to the women's movement and a counterpoint in its future. The congress also made them visible to the British officials, who tried at the beginning to be part of the congress through their wives. An important historical record to follow is the meeting of the women's representatives at the high commissioner's house within a delegation to deliver the congress resolution to the British government that had protests against the Belfour declaration, Zionist immigration, the enforcement of collective punishment, the mistreatment of Arab prisoners, and the donations to the Jewish refugees without the allotment of funds for Arab refugees. In that meeting, the women wanted to tend their majesty to the British government itself, and they had demands concerning the release of prisoners. When the meeting ended, the

¹⁰⁰ Fleischmann, III. The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s .
http://www.passia.org/jerusalem/publications/J_wom_org_british_man_txt.htm

women refused to drink coffee, as a sign of protest to illustrate the bitterness of the British governance. The women went back to the congress that was still held.¹⁰¹

The report of the Higher Commissioner is worth quoting, as Fleischmann did in her research on this, because in many ways it explains clearly the real problems, and intentions as well, of British thinking and tactics toward maintenance of the status quo. The very important and dramatic fact is that the British attempted to threaten women, put their efforts down, and silence them through the very traditions of patriarchy that the British both accused the Arabs of and denounced regularly. The commissioner's report included the following: "Attempts were made to induce some of the Muslim leaders to dissuade the women from making the demonstration. At first they declined to intervene; but when it was explained to them that the demonstration would be stopped by

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

force if necessary, and that they would have only themselves to thank if their women came into collision with the police, the arrangements were altered. It was arranged that the main body of the conference should drive from the meeting to the al Aqsa mosque where they would await the members of the delegation... the arrangement was duly carried out.”¹⁰²

That meeting also resulted in a lot of media coverage. The October 30, 1929, edition of the newspaper *ṣawt al Sha'b* published the names of the participating women and complimented their courage and resilience.¹⁰³

The delegation comprised twenty-seven women. It is perhaps also important to mention that during that meeting, disturbances and protests resulted in the killing of sixty-seven people, among them

¹⁰² Fleischmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s* .p. 25–26. From confidential letter, Oct. 31, 1928, from Sir John Chancellor to Lord Passfield, Secretary of State for the Colonies, personal papers of Sir John Roberts Chancellor, Rhodes House, Oxford.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

speculation with the fact that none of the founding members of either group were alive by the time she conducted her research to help clarify the situation. She adds: “one can only conclude that the women were not 'above' politics, and, as we shall see, most of their activities were infused with politics, even when they engaged in charitable work. After the split, there were two groups: the Arab Women’s Union and the Arab ladies society.”¹⁰⁶

Fleischmann also notes that the “plethora of names in the sources confuses attempts to reconstruct the history of the women’s movement during this period, particularly when one tries to trace the origins and effects of the split into two organizations.” For instance, many references in written sources indicate different names for organizations that seem to have been one group. The “Arab Women’s Committee,” the “Arab Ladies Committee,” the “Arab Ladies Society,” and the “Arab Women’s Society” seem to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.28

refer to the same group. There have been references in the press mentioning the presumably identical “Executive Committee of the Arab Women” (or “Ladies”) and “Women’s Executive Committee.” The “Arab Women’s Executive in Jerusalem,” according to Matiel Mughannam, replaced the “Arab Women’s Committee.”¹⁰⁷

The term *Éttihād Nisā’* (Women’s Union) was not used until after 1938, Fleishmann confirms.¹⁰⁸

One can determine that, in reality, there was one major women’s organization in Jerusalem that “operated under all of the various names.”¹⁰⁹ The Women’s Executive Committee was the first nucleus of this movement, and it was later transformed into a broader organization that continued to be dominated by the more prominent members of the Executive Committee.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.28

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.28

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 29

¹¹⁰ Ibid.,p.29

The Arab Women's Association was directly focused on written appeals and protests to the Mandate governors. The appeals were "composed of long, detailed memoranda dealing with the current, urgent issues."¹¹¹ Women sent appeals about education, discrimination against Arab employees in the civil service, taxation, and relief for the peasantry.

The Arab Women's Association "was founded in 1929 as the first organization bringing Arab women together, following *al Burāq* riots of the same year. The AWA emerged from the Palestinian Women Congress which emerged on 29th October 1929, with an ambitious set of goals enunciated in its bylaws."¹¹² It became active in its written protest mostly during the 1930s, when people were detained and imprisoned. The 1936 revolution resulted in extensive written appeals and protests. Women worked on the

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 30

¹¹² Talhami, Ghada. *Historical Dictionary of Women in the Middle East and North Africa*. Rowman and Littlefield 2013, p. 36–37

ground, on the other hand, on relief and support to prisoners and their families. They collected donations and raised funds for clothes and food for prisoners, the wounded, and their families. The intensity of the women's movement and its activities was directly affected by what was happening on the ground in Palestine. The deterioration of the situation resulted in increasingly politicized activities by women, which later became militarized. Women participated in large numbers in 1933 in nationalist demonstrations in major cities in Palestine. The British government tried to shut the women's movement out of such protests by putting the same "traditional value" pressure on men. They had used the same tactic with earlier protests, when men convinced their women not to take to the streets after British pressure and threats. This time, according to a confidential letter from the Higher Commissioner to the Secretary of State dated October 23, 1933, "a new and disquieting feature of this

demonstration (in Jerusalem) was the prominent part taken by women from good families as well as others.” The police complained that women were troublesome, screaming, kicking against the gates of government offices, and waving handkerchiefs. Women not only participated in Jerusalem demonstrations on that occasion, but also travelled to Jaffa for another demonstration the week after.¹¹³

The activities that women conducted during the eruption of the rebellion in 1936 took a similar form to what Palestinians as a society today would do, and to what they have conducted in previous confrontations, such as the first intifada. Women took direct roles in the revolution, including militarizing and joining demonstrations. Due to their intellect, women participated in meetings with British politicians and contributed written protests.

¹¹³ Fleischmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s* p. 30–31

On the ground, women joined a boycott campaign against non-national goods and enforced a boycott on merchants. They raised money for weapons by selling their jewelry, and in some cases donated private funds. In villages, women directly participated as fighters. Some young women students participated in revolutionary activities by strewing nails in the streets in order to puncture the tires of military jeeps.¹¹⁴

Within the villages on the military fronts, women's participation included providing the fighters with food and smuggling weapons and equipment. Some women worked as informants. Some women actually participated in the fighting, using guns. Among the famous names that earned a place in women's memories was Sabha al 'Ali, famous for tying bullets around her chest and her back and around her waist during the 1936 revolt. Among the stories that entered legend were those about a group of women

¹¹⁴ See Photos:

called *Rafikāt al Qassām* (Companions of al Qassām), who fought with al Qassām in the 1930s. Other groups were called *Kufūf al sawdū'* (the black gloves) and *Al-Futuwwāt* (the masculine). Women were part of the *Najāda* military party. Another female military group was called *Zahret al Aqhawān*¹¹⁵, which formed in February 1947 in Jaffa. The movement started as a social change and interfaith movement and later changed into armed struggle during the Jewish assaults and massacres against Palestinians. Among the women fighters were the founders Muhiba Khorsheid and Nariman Khorsheid, Abla Fatāyer, Yusra Touqan, Fatima Abu al Huda, and Yusra al Barbari. Another group was later founded under the name *Munazzamet al Ard* (the Land Organization), and was led by Najla al Asmar and Juliette Zakka.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ See Photos:18,19,20

¹¹⁶ Testimonies of women: 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥāī. *Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties*, Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005, pg.69-94

In some schools, girls joined scouts in order to be trained for military fights. Isam Hamdi Husseini, who lived in Jaffa, Nazareth, and Gaza, was among the activists in Gaza schools to work on the scout training camps.¹¹⁷

Revolutionary activities in the 1930s generated a lot of local and regional media attention. Part of the Arab women's activities were aimed at connecting with other Arab women activists in the region, such as Huda Sha'rawi in Egypt and women's organizations in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

This period marked an important evolution in the Palestinian women's movement, from a local Palestinian affair to a regional Arab movement. The support and unity, either in words or in actions, helped unify women's positions and enhance their role. In that decade, several Arab women's conferences took place, in Beirut (1930), Syria (1932) and Baghdad (1932), and The major

¹¹⁷ 'Ibid. pg. 69-94.

conference, though, was the Eastern Women's Conference to defend Palestine , which was held in Cairo October 15–18, 1938, under the direction of Huda Sha'rawi. On the occasion of the conference, twelve Palestinian women comprised the Palestine delegation, joining delegations of women from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt.

After the visible achievements of the movement during the conference, the Arab Women Association (AWA) split officially into two groups. Political factionalism was the result of that split, with the Arab Women Union (AWU) allying with the Husseini faction, and the Arab Women's Association with the Nashashibi faction. Competition between Zleikha Shihābi and Zahiya Nashashibi for the presidency of the AWA also contributed to the split. The Jerusalem branch of the AWA kept its name and worked alongside other women's unions that were formed as a result of the split of the AWA. Consequently, the Arab Women Union led by Zleikha

Shihābi was more of a political organization, while the others focused on charity.¹¹⁸

Another organization, which started in the early 1940s but became visible after the Nakba, was *al tadāmon al nisāi*. It is not known who started the organization and when. Women interviewed in Faiḥāi ‘Abdel Hadi’s investigation on *Palestinian Women’s Role in the forties and fifties* gave differing testimonies regarding its establishment. What is certain is that the association had multiple branches, and women in each branch knew details of the branch she came from. Jārallah sisters, Sara, Samia and Rifqa started the society in Jaffa at the beginning. The main office was in Jerusalem, and was affiliated with the prominent female Egyptian doctor Duriya Shafik. The society worked on women’s empowerment mainly through lectures and workshops focused on raising awareness and developing skills. Among the women who

¹¹⁸ Fleishmann, *The Women's Movement in Jerusalem, 1920s to 1930s* p. 33

headed the society were Lulu abu al Huda from Jerusalem and Nadiyyah Rassas, a teacher who recruited other teachers to join. Duriya Shafik was a leading figure of the Egyptian women's movement.

The photo used in this research, as mentioned earlier, was taken, when Huda Sha'rawi came to Jerusalem to mobilize for the conference in 1945.

One can come to an understanding from the above mentioned demonstration to the formation and development of the different societies, and later the evolvement of the women's movement , that the women's movement was a consequence of an eventual strong build up of charitable societies that worked and focused on different needs to the Palestinian society with a clear focus on women. The awareness of the needs women required in that time, as well as the society at large , helped create a strong mindset in the women leadership that was as well evolving as a consequence

of such work , that also required involvement in different societal needs, that naturally included the changes in the political situation.

The political situation forced a growth in the national sentiments and consequently made the women more involved in the needs that were encountered as the political situation continued to go towards unknown directions and results.

The extensive work in charitable societies, gave the women a more realistic sense of needs ,and created a better connection with the society between it's different classes. Women who were leading such societies have seemingly realized the capacity that was inside women themselves, which entitled the societies to move adequately towards the steps of women's movement that fitted the criteria of emerging movements. With a political situation that was leaving the society with no options but a continued state of occupation and despair, women in such positions found their

roles to become more meaningful to the general societal need in the face of the unknown political agendas in preparation.

As a result, from the beginning of the formation and development of the women's movement, women have decided to claim their rights on two inseparable lines within what will remain a Palestinian plight for liberation; moving forward modernity with an increase of education and openness to the region and the world, but yet preserved the cultural and traditional customs of the society. And Aligning with a national political agenda, in which they proved that their involvement was positive and important, but yet continued to align themselves with men's political activism.

7. Women's Writers and their contribution

Beyond the educational field, and later the effective participation in charitable societies and political activism, Palestinian women began to play a notable role in the press and other media toward the end of the Ottoman period and the beginning of the British Mandate.

Focusing on women's writings, and, as Abu Lughod puts it: "the rediscovery of women's writings and the analysis of the active women's press, ...have enabled feminist scholars to shift their attention from the prominent male reformers to the many women who were active participants in the shaping of the new discourses on women."¹¹⁹ Undoubtly, such studies allow us "to see women more clearly as a diverse group of individuals who thought about, argued for, and managed to transform women's lives in colonial

¹¹⁹ Abu Lughod, Lila. P.6.

ambiguities and contradictions that rendered any simple story impossible”¹²⁰.

The press in Palestine started in 1908 after the formation of the Ottoman Constitution. Prior to that, the population had relied on the media outlets in Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo.

In 1908, *al Carmel* was among the pioneering newspapers in Palestine. Najeeb Nassār from Haifa headed it. Isa al Isa, from Jaffa, created *Falastin Paper* in 1911. The Palestinian media played an important role in reflecting the Palestinian and Arab attitudes toward the Arab awakening, the Zionist threat, and the British Mandate. Another pioneering publication was the magazine *Al Asmaʿī*, started by ‘Abdullah al Isa in 1908 and edited by Khalil Sakakini. In the same year, *al Nafaʿes al ‘Asriyā* was started by Khalil Beidas in Haifa, and recruited many journalists.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 233–235

Women's participation in Palestinian media was influenced by pioneering women writers and activists in Cairo and Lebanon. *Al Carmel* was a major outlet for women while Sadhij Nassār, the wife of Najeeb Nassār, served as the editor in chief between 1941 and 1944. Mary Sarouf Sheḥadeh, wife of owner Boulos Sheḥadeh, wrote and edited for *Mirat al Sharq*. The *Falastin Paper* established a “social affairs” section that focused on societal and women's issues until 1948. There were also; Paper of *al Jāmi'a al 'Arabiya* (The Arab University), *al Jāmi'a al Islāmiya* (The Islamic University), *Al Sirāt al Mustaqīm* and *al Difā'* (The Defense). Magazines such as *al Zahra* discussed women's affairs in the context of Arab culture and social change.¹²²

Jerusalem during the Mandate period was the capital of Mandate Palestine, and was the country's most socially and politically active city. During that period, more than ninety-nine newspapers

¹²² Ibid., p. 237

covered politics, literature, economics, and youth affairs. Early on, women wrote anonymously. Fikriyeh Sidqi, from Al Quds school, wrote for the *Palestine Paper* under the pseudonym *Qariah* ("a reader"). Sidqi also wrote under the pseudonym "a searcher in the desert." May Ziyadeh, Huda Sha'rawi contributed with articles in Egypt, together with Manara Thebī and others. Female Palestinian writers encouraged Palestinian women to work on their own advancement step by step and empower themselves. Fikriyeh Sidqi was the first woman to attend a lecture at the YMCA for the author Amin Riana, who resided in Haifa. Her presence at that lecture as the only woman, sitting next to men, made a daring example, and became the topic of newspaper attention. Fikriyeh was described as the liberal Palestinian girl.

Another woman who was revolutionary was Fatima Fahmi, who called for women to write in the newspaper *al Jāmi'a al 'Arabiya*.¹²³

¹²³ Ibid., p. 239–240

Julia al Soūl were active participants and contributors to the newspapers of that period.¹²⁵

Orjwan al Fār, Asen Nicola Shamāt, Olga Malīk, Henrietta ‘Azar, Vera ‘Azar, René Habayeb, and Alice and Angel Sayegh were also prominent writers.¹²⁶

The outspread of press, and presence of women’s writers should not also be reflected or understood as a mark of modernization.

On the contrary, in some areas, as in the case of Egypt, women writers were used as a tool to maintain traditions and Islamic culture used by Islamist press. Islamist press indicated how “ the sphere of women was localized as a sphere of backwardness to reformed, regenerated, and uplifted for the benefit of the nation.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵bid.

¹²⁶bid.

¹²⁷ Abul lughod, Lila. P.10.

We can note that women's participation in the press and writing, was in line with the evolving need of the society. Women's writers did not seem to be disillusioned from the situation, both political and social. They demonstrated their role in that of a constructive elaboration on the needs of women in society that was as well reflective and critical.

As mentioned earlier, the intellectual culture was taking a good shape in the Palestinian literary Saloons. Intellectuals, as we note from the amount and diverse backgrounds of the women writers were not restricted to those women known to the intellectual saloons that were mostly hosting and attracting a specific class in the society.

In the index of the literary texts (*fahras al Nusous al Adabiya*) in *Falastin Paper (Jarīdet Filastīn)* from 1911 to 1967, Q. Shomali tracks all the poetry, literature, prose, cultural articles, critical

articles, and novels written by writers for *Palestine Paper* from 1911 to 1967.

As mentioned earlier¹²⁸, after the announcement of the constitution in 1908, a major change occurred in schools and the education system. As a result, a new movement occurred that included an increase in cultural development that included the spread of libraries and printing houses and media. With printing remaining prominent in Jerusalem since its first establishment in 1846, and its spread in 1908. Media which entered Palestine in 1876, with the publishing of the official paper, *al Quds Al Sharif*, in both Arabic and Turkish, triggered the birth of more than thirty papers between 1908 and 1917 around the cities including Jerusalem. Effectively, the production of scientific and literacy as well as religion material were promoted.

Press, media and writing required libraries, printing houses, as

¹²⁸ Development of Education section.

well as Newspapers. Libraries in that period were present in a noticeable way. 'Ayda Najjar, in her *Bint al Shalabiya*, writes about libraries and culture in Jerusalem. Among the libraries were the Arab College Library (est. 1920), al Aqsa mosque library (est.1927), the library of the broadcasting affairs in the government of Palestine (1936), the French Institute library (1937), the British Council library (1944), and the library of Qalam al Matbou'at in Government of Palestine. Among the libraries of families were al-Khalidiyyeh library, which belonged to Sheikh Khalil Khalidi; Is'af Nashashibi library; Musa Ishāq al Husseini library; Jaralla's library; Budeiri library; Turjmān library; Qutteineh library; and al Fakhriyā library, which belonged to the Abu Soūd family. Among the recorded recollections was the memory of Bayān Nuweihed, who witnessed the theft of her father's library in Baq'ā during the Nakba.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Najjar, *Bint al Shalabiya*, p. 61–62

It is important to note that, one cannot determine if all of the writers were Palestinians, since the Arab world was part of the larger Ottoman Empire.

In the “Index of literary texts of *Falastin Paper*,” women are represented. One wouldn’t say that their presence was overwhelming, but they were undoubtedly present, and, surprisingly, no less so than today.

Almost forty women writers in different fields of literature actively participated in *Falastin Paper* between 1910 and the 1940s.¹³⁰

Such participations and articles can give us a better look into the question of modernity. The topics women used and discussed can express the reality between what might be understood as a colonial modernity affect and genuine transformation within the women’s movement and the society.

¹³⁰ Please note that Sadhij Nassar and possibly others often wrote articles that were unsigned.

The questions about the politics of modernity, especially as the ones Abu Lughod puts: “ how new ideas and practices considered modern and progressive implanted in Europe’s colonies or simply taken up by emerging local elites might usher in not only forms of emancipation but new forms of social control.”¹³¹

Women contributed in articles that ranged from poetry to literature to politics. For the sake of space, the titles of the writings are written in the footnotes below. From the titles we can learn a lot about women and the political and social as well as cultural context. The question of modernity in this sense, can contradict writings that preached traditions and preservations of social behaviors that were related to religious and traditional customs. At the same time we could observe women who were influenced by the west and its construction of modernity, and even though we could not trace directly bold messages on certain traditional

¹³¹ Abu Lughod. P.6

customs, we can relate to such influence in the choice of translations women focused on.

The question of class in the women's writings can also be noted. It was not women from the elite class trying to add a certain polish to their lifestyles in line with modern clichés that could have been integrated as a consequence of colonialism. The speech of women in writing has a special identity that is needless to say "Palestinian" and to many extents " Arab". Women seem to be very aware on the political context. Nationalism is strongly reflected, and in many places we notice strong conventional messages from different writers. The variety of the background of the writers is an important testimony of the diversity in what became a movement within the rise of education and societies amid women in Palestine.

Thus, the tricky tasks in this, as Abu Lughod puts it , is " how to be skeptical of modernity's progressive claims of emancipation and

critical of its social and cultural operations and yet appreciate the forms of energy , possibility, even power that aspects of it might have enables, especially for women.”¹³²

In Poetry and literature writings, articles written by: Fawziyeh Salāmeḥ, Ni'meh al Sabbāgh, Fadwa Touqān, Mary 'Ajami, Ni'mat Allah Farḥat and Salma Mansūr .^{133 134}

¹³² Abu lughod.L. p.12 Thus , the tricky tasks in this, as Abu Lughod puts it , is “ how to be skeptical of modernity’s progressive claims of emancipation and critical of its social and cultural operations and yet appreciate the forms of energy , possibility, even power that aspects of it might have enables, especially for women.”

¹³³ the following names were mentioned in the Index:

- Fawziyeh Salāmeḥ 21-10-1938 (p. 61-62)
- Ni'meh al Sabbāgh 16-3-1944, 19-3-1944, 23-3-1944, 9-4-1944,13-4-1944, 27-4-1944 (p. 71-72)
- Fadwa Touqān 1-10-1933, 16-12-1934, 16-6-1935, 3-12-1941, 1-1-1943, 18-4-1943...1963. (p. 75)

-
- Mary 'Ajami 17-12-1928, 27-11-1932, 7-7-1935, 15-9-1935, 6-4-1947 (p. 83)
 - Ni'mat Allah Farḥat 19-7-1934 (p. 96)
 - Salma Mansūr 7-5-1944 (p. 113)
- ¹³⁴ the following names were mentioned in the Index (Poetry):
- 'Afaf al Jū in 26-5-1927, 4-6-1927 (p. 142-143) article title: "Respect of Woman is a Must")
 - Salwa Zayadīn 12-4-1951
 - Mai Ziyadeh 1-1-1932 (woman in the view of Taghour) (p. 158)
 - Mary Shiḥadeh 23-6-1931, 1-1-1932, 30-10-1932 (woman and her effect in social aspects, problem of marriage, woman talks to man) (p. 162-163)
 - Asma Tūbi, 10-10-1931, 28-10-1931, 19-4-1934, 7-6-1935, 19-11-1947, 27-6-1952, 13-8-1954 (a nationalist respectable woman responds, she and us, man and woman in life, women's council, between two decades, nations classes: how they celebrate their weddings, women in Arab history. (p. 168-169)
 - Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd 12-3-1939, 5-3-1944, 30-12-1947, 26-8-1956, 26-8-1956, 6-1-1966, 14-5-1966 (problem of orphans, in public life, Arab woman in the Palestinian struggle, biggest problem is the refugee problem, woman's work is a nationalist essence, through the women council in Cairo. (p. 171-172)
 - Margaret Qattān 29-9-1935 (in the land of Najashi) (p. 180)
 - Sabiḥa Miqdādi 29-5-1931 (woman's education and her upbringing (p. 186-187)
 - Widād al Khouri Maqdisī 19-5-1927 (holy lands) (p. 187)

Also in the cultural affairs, women such as ‘Afaf al Jū,
Salwa Zayadīn, Mai Ziyadeh, Mary Shiḥadeh, Asma Tūbi, Fayzeh
‘Abdel Majīd, Margaret Qattān, Sabiḥa Miqdādi, Widād al Khouri
Maqdisī, and Sara al Muhiba ¹³⁵ contributed to the different
editions of the Newspaper and were quite active writers.

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- Sara al Muhiba 7-2-1912, 28-2-1912, 13-4-1912, 12-6-1912,
22-6-1912 (p. 187-188)

¹³⁵ the following names were mentioned in the Index:

- ‘Afaf al Jū in 26-5-1927, 4-6-1927 (p. 142-143) article title:
“Respect of Woman is a Must”
- Salwa Zayadīn 12-4-1951
- Mai Ziyadeh 1-1-1932 (woman in the view of Taghour) (p. 158)
- Mary Shiḥadeh 23-6-1931, 1-1-1932, 30-10-1932 (woman and her
effect in social aspects, problem of marriage, woman talks to man)
(p. 162-163)
- Asma Tūbi, 10-10-1931, 28-10-1931, 19-4-1934, 7-6-1935, 19-11-
1947, 27-6-1952, 13-8-1954 (a nationalist respectable woman
responds, she and us, man and woman in life, women’s council,
between two decades, nations classes: how they celebrate their
weddings, women in Arab history. (p. 168-169)
- Fayzeh ‘Abdel Majīd 12-3-1939, 5-3-1944, 30-12-1947, 26-8-1956,
26-8-1956, 6-1-1966, 14-5-1966 (problem of orphans, in public
life, Arab woman in the Palestinian struggle, biggest problem is the

In critical writing, women also effectively participated. Among the active writers were May Ziyadeh, Fayzeh Abdel Majid and Margaret Qattan.¹³⁶

The index also revealed reflective writings of women, whereas, many women's names were mentioned, such as, Salwa Khalidi,

refugee problem, woman's work is a nationalist essence, through the women council in Cairo. (p. 171-172)

- Margaret Qattān 29-9-1935 (in the land of Najashi) (p. 180)
- Sabiḥa Miqdādi 29-5-1931 (woman's education and her upbringing) (p. 186-187)
- Widād al Khouri Maqdisī 19-5-1927 (holy lands) (p. 187)
- Sara al Muhiba 7-2-1912, 28-2-1912, 13-4-1912, 12-6-1912, 22-6-1912 (p. 187-188)

¹³⁶ the following names were mentioned in the Index (Critical) :

- Mai Ziyadeh 30-3-1938, 29-11-1941 (respect your language, three hours on the eastern side) (p. 278-279)
- Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd 31-3-1938, 25-3-1949, 26-2-1966 (the fabulous may, literature creates miracles, literature and the undefeatable human) (p. 292-293)
- Margaret Qattān 2-6-1927, 30-6-1935, 14-7-1935, 17-7-1935, 4-8-1935, 30-10-1935 (p. 303-304)

Antoinette Khoury, Asma Tubi, Fayzeh Abdel Majid, Naheel Farah,
Mary Ajami, Sama Mansur, Julia Elias and Jamileh Alayli.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ the following names were mentioned in the Index (reflections) :

- Salwa Khalidi 21-2-1948 (woman's voice in the holy Nidal) (p. 349)
- Antoinette Khoury 20-1-1944, 5-2-1944, 21-4-1946, 7-1-1947, 13-4-1947 (p. 353)
- (First name not given) Sheriff 22-3-1936, 2-1-1940, 14-2-1942, 21-2-1942 until 1944 (her first article is called "Thaira")
- Asma Tūbi 18-11-33, 24-6-1934, 30-6-1935, 17-7-1935, 19-1-1936, 15-3-1938, 30-11-1938, 8-2-1939, 3-5-1939, 6-8-1939, 10-7-1943, 3-10-1943, 13-11-1943, 27-11-1943, 11-12-1943, 1-1-1944 (p. 381-384) (a long list of articles)
- Fayzeh 'Abdel Majīd (p. 387-388) a good amount of articles between 1948 and 1966
- Mary Ajami 8-5-1928 (deceit of self) (p. 389)
- Naheel Farah 9-3-1942, 7-11-1943, 1-1-1944, 13-2-1944, 30-2-1944, 5-3-1944 (p. 402)
- Salma Mansūr 12-9-1943 (long list from 1943-1944) (p. 416)
- Julia Elias 12-2-1933 hidden writing on the wall (p. 436)
- Jamīleh 'Alayli 20-4-1938, 26-5-1938 (p. 457-458) (a dream comes true, the wonderer –episodes)

The topics women used were diverse and included women's issues, but were not limited to those shown in the list. We can also note that women writers were not necessarily active women in the organizations or the political movements. Women who wrote were also not coming only from the elite class. Such women were part of the formation of the new middle class in the Palestinian society that was intellectual and educated. A class that helped bridge the differences of classes in the society with an emerging need of a collective national agenda that guides the changing political realities that the population continued to encounter.

What remains interesting, and maybe worthy of investigation in the future, is the mentioning and dealing with women-related topics, which will also be addressed in the section of men's effect on the women's movement.

8. Biographical Appendix of Women Activists

The aim of this research implied a focus on the women in the Photo. The research however, encountered, in addition, women who participated and were a major part in the rise and development of the women's movement along that period, and were not in the Photo. Many women were active in the creation of the women movement and participated in related events to the Council of Women prior and after Huda Sha'rawi's visit on the occasion of the Photo.

As the research developed, the names of the following women were also mentioned on different occasions and often in more than one resource. Their contribution might not be sufficiently addressed in the following appendix. The aim is to shed light on

these women and find possible information on them when possible. There were occasions where I was not able to find any information about the women (from the Photo). The women in this list contributed to the formation of a woman movement in Palestine and were active in that period, and most of them were connected to the event of the Women Council and its preparations and results . The biographies are listed, using the age as a category of order (year of birth).

1. *Nabītha Nasser* (1880-1951), born in Birzeit. She established the first girl's high school in Birzeit in 1924, which later became the first Palestinian university to be established, Birzeit University. She participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Najjar, pg 322-326. 135-136

2. **Tarab S. 'Abdelhadi'** (1882-1970). She was an activist. The first Palestinian woman council was held in her house. She was in the leadership of the demonstration that was held in protest to the British violence and the Zionist immigration. Tarab contributed to the establishment of some of the Palestinian women organizations to save Jerusalem that was headed by Suleiman Nabulsi.¹³⁹ Tarab was among the founders of the Palestinian Women Union¹⁴⁰. Tarab was the wife of 'Awni 'Abdelhadi, a prominent leader who participated in the Palestinian revolution. She was also the daughter of Salim 'Abdelhadi who was executed by

¹³⁹ from: Filisteeniat. Emtiaz Zurob , contemporary Palestinian women face http://emtiiazalnahhal.blogspot.com/2012/07/blog-post_12.html

¹⁴⁰ 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the Thirties*. Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation, 2005.

Jamal Pasha in 1915 Tarab was a renowned activist who was known for her resistance to the British occupation and the Zionist expansion and led the first demonstration against Belfour Promise in 1929. She was involved in smuggling weapon and food as well as clothes to the revolutionists on camels through the mountains. She was also active in collecting funds for revolutionist during that period (, 1933,1936) She headed the Palestinian delegation to the first Arab council that was held in Cairo, in 1938 ¹⁴¹.

3. *Mai Ziyadeh* (1886-1941), born in Nazareth and moved with her parents to Lebanon. A renowned writer who lived in Cairo and was a pioneer in women's outspoken feminine figure. She is known also for her exchange letters with Jubran Khalil Jubran. She spoke six languages, and wrote

¹⁴¹ Emtiaz Nahhal Z'rob, http://emtiyzalnahhal.blogspot.com/2012/07/blog-post_12.html

in both Arabic and French. She was the editor in chief of her own newspaper.^{142 143}

4. ***Fatima Al Yashratiyah*** (1890-1979), born in Acre. A renowned woman in Sufi traditions. She had her own Sufi tract and followers, and left many books as a source to Sufi tract.¹⁴⁴¹⁴⁵ Fatima was the daughter of a renowned Sheikh, Ali Noor Eddin al Yashrati, the Shadhily

5. ***Milia Sakakini*** (1890-1966), born in Jerusalem . Together with Zleikha Shihābi, Milia organized campaigns to promote female education in helping them read and write. Milia were among the starters of the Arab Women's executive committee in Palestine in the 1929, who was among the

¹⁴² <https://www.abjjad.com/author/6805395/مبى-زيادة/books>

¹⁴³ Najjar.pg 270-272

¹⁴⁴ <http://al-hakawati.net/arabic/arabpers/women2.asp>

¹⁴⁵ Najjar, pg 288

women's delegation that paid a visit to the British High Commissioner. Milia became the president of the Arab Women's Union that was established by her and Zleikha Shihābi in 1921. Milia were among the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem and appears in the photo.¹⁴⁶

Milia was the sister of Khalil Sakakini.

6. *Adele Azar*, born in Jaffa. She founded the Orthodox Ladies Society of Jaffa in 1910, with the intention of assisting orphaned and disadvantaged girls to receive education. Adele served as the president of the society, and she was also the principal of the Orthodox Girls' School. Among the teachers who worked at the school were: Najla Mousa,

¹⁴⁶ Najjar, pg .201-207.9205)

Souria Battikha. Adele was among the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi and appears in the Photo.¹⁴⁷

7. *Kalthūm 'Odeh* (1892-1965), born in Nazareth. A writer and an activist. Kalthūm story could be exceptionally different, since she contributed to her Palestinian plight while she was in Russia. She wrote to Stalin and protested against the Zionist movement, which held to her imprisonment. She studied in her early life in the Russian school in Beit jala, and married to a Russian. ^{148 149}

8. *Ni'mati 'Alami Husseini* (1895- 1982), Ni'mati was among the founders the Women Arab Movement in 1929. She was among the women activists and participated in meetings

¹⁴⁷ Najjar, pg 204-205,

¹⁴⁸ http://www.marefa.org/index.php/كثوم_عودة_-_فاسيليغا

¹⁴⁹ Najjar, 265-270

and in the demonstrations along the late 20s and the 30s. Ni'mati spoke four languages along with Arabic. She appears in the photo with the women's delegation with Huda Sha'rawi.¹⁵⁰¹⁵¹ She was the wife of Jamāl Hussein and mother of Serene Hussein Shahid. She was the daughter of Faidi Alami the mayor of Jerusalem in 1906, and the sister of Mūsa 'Alami who was a major figure in the political activism on the Palestinian sphere in that period.

9. '*Anbara Salām Khalidī* (1897- 1986), was born in Beirut She lived in Beirut until she moved to Jerusalem with her husband Ahmad Samih Khalidi at the age of thirty. As a girl she grew up within the strict culture of closure on women and firm Islamic teaching, and women inside it were still nothing but complimentary. Maybe, women political

¹⁵⁰Hussein, Serene: Jerusalem Memories. Publisher: nofal Inst. 2000.

¹⁵¹ Najjar, pg 201-207, 312

participation and resistance roles took a faster development than that of their own personal rights. She was highly appreciated by the time she was less than twenty, a main public figure in education and women's rights, she would make a speech in front of generals and kings, but all with her face veiled. People would applaud highly for her courage and outstanding commitment, but on the day she dared to make a speech without a veil, riots went out against her, and she was and her family the topic of societal criticism that occupied them more than the occupying colonial forces. She was committed to charity work and women rights. She participated in the first women congress in Cairo In Jerusalem she continued to participate in women movement and was active. She was among the women who received Huda Sha'rawi in her historical visit to

Jerusalem. She translated the Iliad and the Odyssey into Arabic.¹⁵²¹⁵³

10. *Matiel Mughannam* (1900-1987)¹⁵⁴. Matiel moved to Jerusalem with her husband in 1921. She was very active in the Palestinian liberal movement in the thirties and wrote numerous articles. She founded the Cultural Club in Jerusalem. In April 15th 1933, and while protesting the visit of Lord Allenby and Lord Swanton to Jerusalem. Palestinian women walked under a heavy rainy day, and walked through Omar Mosque opposite to the Holy Sepulcher. Where Matiel made a speech and the march went to the Holy Tomb where Tarab 'Abdel Hadi made a speech. Mughannam is the author of *The Arab Woman* and the

¹⁵² Khalidi Anbara

¹⁵³ Najjar, 285-288

¹⁵⁴ According to Fleischmann's *The Nation and its New Women*, Matiel died in 1992 in the U.S.

Palestine Problem (London: Joseph, 1937). She attended the Cairo Conference in 1933.¹⁵⁵ She joined the Defense party with her husband. Upon moving to Ramallah in 1939, she founded the Ramallah Women's Union and became the president until she moved to the states in the 1950s.¹⁵⁶ She appears in the photo with Huda Sha'rawi.¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁸

11. ***Zleikha Shihābi*** (1901-1992), born in Jerusalem. She attended the Sisters of Zion School in Jerusalem. She founded the first women organization in Jerusalem “ Arab Women Executive Committee” in 1929. She is remembered for gathering three hundred women from

¹⁵⁵ Khalidi Walid, before their Diaspora. Pg 101.

¹⁵⁶ Fleishmann Ellen, The Nation and its new Women. Pg 216.

¹⁵⁷ Sabella, Bernard. Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem and Churches.
http://alqudsgateway.ps/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2016/01/4_felstenyon-mase7yon.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Najjar, 308-310, 246

different places from Palestine and demonstrated at the British High commissioner to protest against the Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1929. Her work focused on charitable campaigns to support Palestinian fighters and injured and their families. She campaigned for girls' education. She led the first women demonstration in 1936 to the British High Commissioner to protest the detention and later deportation of some of the Palestinian revolution leaders. Zleikha Shihābi was a major contributor to the establishment of the Arab Women Union in Jerusalem in 1921. Her father became the mayor of Jerusalem in 1927. In the photo that inspired this research, Zleikha Shihābi stands next to Huda Sha'rawi. Together Zleikha worked with the Egyptian Women Council and its Chief, Sha'rawi on campaigning against the judaization plans for Palestine and exploit the British policies .The First Congress of Arab

Women in Cairo, that focused on issues related to Palestine in 1938.

Zleikha Shihābi continued to efficiently contribute to the women movement in Palestine. She helped establish many centers that included the women medical clinic that cared for pregnant women and children welfare. This extended for a day care and vocational training center for women. She remained the president of the AWU from 1937 until her death in 1944¹⁵⁹

In 1968 the Israelis deported her, but the United Nations interfered in her return. ¹⁶⁰

12. ***Asma Tūbi*** (1905-1983), born in Nazareth. She studied in the English school in Nazareth. She was active during the

¹⁵⁹ Encyclopedia of Palestine. <http://www.palestinapedia.net/-1901-زليخة-الشهابي-1992/>

¹⁶⁰ Najjar: 200-210, 320-332

British occupation, she was among the founders of Acre Women union in 1929, and remained active there until 1948, when she left to Lebanon after the Nakba, and continued to write articles, novels and poetry. She died in Lebanon and left seven novels and tens of articles.¹⁶¹¹⁶²

13. ***Sadhij Nassār*** (19---), born in Acre. Sadhij worked as an editor in *Carmel*. She was the first Palestinian journalist to enter jail during the British period. She was sentenced to a year in prison on March 1939. And she was accused for being “a very dangerous woman”. Her husband wrote what looks prominent in today’s patriarchal world of Arabs when he said: “ if *al Carmel* didn’t make me enter history, I will enter it because of my wife, who is the first woman who is sentenced in British jails”. Sadhij’s father was a prominent

¹⁶¹ http://www.almoajam.org/poet_details.php?id=992

¹⁶² Najjar: 279-283,

Baha'i leader and sheikh. She got married to Najeeb Nassār who owned *al Carmel* paper that was published in Haifa in 1908. Sadhij was also in charge of editing the woman's section in the newspaper in 1926 (*Sahifat al Nisā'*) She started in the thirties an independent paper under the name of "*Risālet al Carmel*", and she became the editor in chief for *al Carmel al jadīd* between 1941-1944.^{163 164}

14. **Zahiya Nashashibi**, born in Jerusalem. She was among the activists in the women's movement in Palestine. She participated in the different Arab Conventions she was among the founders of the Arab Women's Union in Jerusalem in 1928. She participated in the demonstrations of the 1929 and the thirties revolt. Zahiya was the competitor of Zleikha Shihābi over the presidency of the

¹⁶³ http://emtiazalnahhal.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post_22.html

¹⁶⁴ Najjar, 242-246

Arab Women Association. The rivalry between the Husseini's and the Nashashibi was the main cause of this fracture among women associations, which resulted in the formation of the Arab Women Union. After the breach Shihābi became the president of the AWU. Zahiya succeeded Shahinda Duzdār in heading the AWA in 1946 and held the position until her death in 1977.¹⁶⁵

15. Maīmanah al Qassām (1911-2004), born in Haifa. The daughter of 'Izz el dīn al Qassām who was martyred in 1935 by the British Army. Maīmanah was a smart girl. She recited the Qur'ān at the age of 6. She only finished elementary school and was supposed to go to *dar al Mu'allimāt*. But she couldn't because her father refused to teach there. A condition the administration put in order to

¹⁶⁵ Najjar, 322-327

accept her. She was active during the 1936 revolt. She gave speech in the mosque of Haifa in that year in an attempt to motivate the people for the strike. In 1938 she received an invitation to participate to the First Arab women Congress in Cairo and she was among the Palestinian delegation. She gave a speech that was widely spread in the papers. In the 1948 she became a refugee with her family in Jordan, where she worked there as a teacher and remained until she died. ¹⁶⁶

16. Hilweh Jakamān (1913-2004), born in Bethlehem. She was an activist in the woman movement and established the Women Arab Union in Bethlehem. She was known during the 1947-1948 for her charity works and relief services. She started cooperation where they were giving loans to the

¹⁶⁶ Najjar 322-327, 149-183

locals. During the 48 and the 1967 she was active in mobilizing the people for strikes. ¹⁶⁷

17. *Wadi'ah Qaddūra Khartabīl* (1915-), born in Beirut. She moved to Tiberias and then to Jerusalem with her husband at the age of seventeen. Her husband was a doctor. She started studying medicine before getting married. She received good education inside Christian catholic schools, despite her family's Islamic religious background. She later moved to Tulkarem with her family, where husband worked in the hospital there. She as appointed as the head of the Palestinian Women Arab Union branch in Tulkarem. During the revolt of 1936, her work within the union as well as, in her capacity as a wife to a doctor, whereas, the crisis led to many injuries and activist then became nurses. Though her work in the union she mobilized women in the north. She

¹⁶⁷ Interviews 1930s pg 183-197

led demonstrations in the 1947 division plan. In 1949 the family left to Beirut where she started the Union's branch in Beirut.¹⁶⁸

18. *Isam Hamdi Husseini* (1919-2005), lived between Jaffa, Nazareth and Gaza. She graduated from *Dar al Mu'allimāt* and worked as a teacher in Gaza's Elementary Girls School. She was an activist against the British occupation and participated in the 1936 revolt through using school cultural activities as a forum for resistance. She wrote columns in newspapers, and had a Radio show in Jerusalem Radio under the title of "from Girl to Girl". She became a school principle and was able to promote the school level into secondary by 1948. During the Nakba she founded an organization called "*Al Takaddom al Nisā*" (Women's Progress) that worked on helping the refugees

¹⁶⁸ Interviews, 1930s pg 197-245

by providing services and collected donations. She established a theatre in 1948 and performed in the act she directed. She was the first woman to remove the veil (the face cover) in Gaza. In the later years of struggle she was invited to a woman's conference in Cairo where she made a speech that was heard coincidentally by Jamal 'Abdel Nasser who invited her personally later to appreciate her words and as a result the minister paid a visit to Gaza.¹⁶⁹

19. *Mufida Darwish Dabbāgh* (---1992) born in Jaffa. She was the first Arab Muslim to be appointed as a principal to a governmental school; she graduated from the *Dār Al Mu'allimāt* that was founded in 1919. She was appointed as a school principal to Yama's girl's school "Asma bint Assiddīq. As well as a teacher in *al Zahra* school which was

¹⁶⁹ 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties. From an interview conducted PG 277-299.

considered the biggest in Jaffa. Mufida was an activist, who took roles in awareness building and women development programs. She helped establish *Attadāmon* organization for women, where is worked on fighting illiteracy and vocational training services such as sewing, first aid, etc.... she had a radio program in the Far East radio called “*Rukn al Mar’āh*” (woman corner). She was active in relief and aid funding in 1947-48. Left to Saudi Arabia after the Nakba and established the first private girls school there in 1949. She also established the first women’s organization in Saudi Arabia. She died in Cairo.¹⁷⁰¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰https://books.google.ps/books?id=cnEY9n4u9bkC&pg=PT386&lpq=PT386&dq=مفيدة+الدباغ&source=bl&ots=cb9OR_xZpa&sig=p8_6glQ9-UKECOUEm5Nfl3zF-Lw&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=مفيدة20%الدباغ&f=false (pg 49)

¹⁷¹ Najjar, pg 150-152

20. *Mary Shehadeh* (1901-1994), born in Lebanon. In 1931 she delivered a speech at the Orthodox Youth Club in Jaffa in 1931, where she described the state of women of her time. She helped in the establishment of the *Difa'* (Defense) Party in 1934, which was chaired by Ragheb Nashashibi. Her husband owned the *Mir'at al Sharq* paper to which she contributed in articles that addressed women issues and social issues¹⁷². She worked as a journalist at *Mir'at al Sharq* (mirror of the east) newspaper that was owned by her husband (Boūlos Shehadeh). She wrote about women issues and called for liberation of women as the case of European women. She was active within the women movement. She participated in the women's

¹⁷²https://books.google.ps/books?Id=sohCF9Nly3sC&pg=PT107&lpg=PT107&dq=شهادة+ماري&source=bl&ots=Q4U7gMLm5y&sig=McbbhJ560-MprX584duH08ZIdIU&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=شهادة20%ماري&f=false

conferences of 1938 and 1944, and headed some of the announced committees. She was a member of Arab Women Association and later continued to be active within the Angelic Women Association in Ramallah. In 1942 she became known with her radio show on Jerusalem “Education in the Arab family”.¹⁷³

21. *Wajīha Husseini* (1908), born in Jerusalem. She was the wife of ‘Abdel Qader Husseini: Wajīha was destined to live the burdens implied to her husband; the fighter despite inheriting a great deal of property from her father. Her role in helping the fighters in supporting their needs was invaluable. She participated in smuggling, hiding and

¹⁷³ Najjar, pg 237, 241-242, 257,270,

feeding as well as securing the fighters supplies in the different locations within her husband's lifetime.¹⁷⁴

22. *Wahida al Khalidi*, was among the founders of the Arab Women's Union in 1928. She was among the women who attended the Arab Convention. Together with Matiel Moghannam, they were the main signatories on the written communications in the early 1930s to the High Commissioner.¹⁷⁵ Wahida was the wife of Hussein Fakhri Khalidi.

23. *Nimra Tannous*, lived in Jerusalem and worked as a telephone operator. During the 1948 war, she was twenty-four. She played an important role in warning the Arab leaders that the enemies may monitor them. A historical

¹⁷⁴ Khalidi, Hussein wa mada ahd al mujamalat

¹⁷⁵ Najjar, 324-325

moment in her life was when she tried to reach the Jordanian royal court to warn them about the dangers. She was surprised to be received directly by the king himself ('Abdullah I) she told him: Jerusalem is in danger your majesty. A response the king did by calling for his prime minister and organizing a trip immediately to Jerusalem.¹⁷⁶

24. ***Serene Hussein*** (1920-2008), born in Jerusalem. She contributed with a breath taking biography on her memories in Jerusalem that allows vivid memories of real Jerusalemite life that history cannot wash away. She lived a life of exodus and diaspora after having Jerusalem as her springhouse, Jericho the winter house and Sharafat the summerhouse. Her life became an exodus from Beirut to Baghdad, and Jerusalem became a visiting place. She

¹⁷⁶ Najjar, 40-42

studied as a child in the Pre School of the American colony. Her school years were in the new Islamic institute, which was closed in 1930 by the British forces. She studied later in the friend's school in Ramallah, and in Beirut she graduated from the American university of Beirut and was married there. She became part of the Palestinian women union, and worked closely with refugees in Lebanon after 1967.^{177 178}

25. *Fikriyeh Sidqī*: A writer, who wrote in anonymous under the pseudo name of "*Qarīah*" (A reader). She went to Al Quds School. She wrote in Filastin Paper. Later, she wrote under the name of "a searcher in the desert". Fikriyeh encouraged Palestinian women to work on their own promotion step by step and empower themselves. She was

¹⁷⁷ Husseini serene, memories of Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁸ Najjar, 285-288

the first woman to attend a lecture in the YMCA for the author Amin Riana who resided in Haifa. Her presence in that lecture as the only woman, sitting next to men, made an example of fearlessness, and became the topic of newspapers and was described as the liberal Palestinian girl, the Higher Commissioner was present in that event and he applauded her presence and addressed Muslim women through her in asking for their own right of existence.¹⁷⁹

26. *Hilweh Zidan*, a female martyr in 1948 massacre of *Deir Yasin*. Hilweh saw her husband and sons one after the other fighting the Zionist terror groups, and she courageously pulled an old gun and started fighting until she was killed. ¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Najjar, pg 239-240

¹⁸⁰ Najjar, 330-331

27. *Hayat Bilbesi* was the principle of Deir Yasin Girls School.

She was murdered among the other teachers in the school and they were thrown in the well of the village in *Deir Yasin's* massacre.¹⁸¹

28. *Fadwa Touqan* (1917-2013), born in Nablus the sister of the renowned poet Ibrahim Touqan was born to a rich conservative family who denied female's access to education or movement. Her exchange letters with her brother Ibrahim, who encouraged her to read and write, discovered her skills in poetry and writing. She moved to his residence of living in Jerusalem and stayed there until his death. During that period she blame active and her literal and poetry contribution was appreciated. She wrote many

¹⁸¹ Najjar, 150-158, 330-331

novels and poems. An important figure in the Palestinian literature, not less than her brother.¹⁸²

29. *Salma Hussein* (1920-2002), born in Jerusalem. Salma used to collect donations for the prisoners inside the British prisoners, as a student guide in Jerusalem's school with her colleagues. She grew up within the atmosphere of women's work, since her mother (Thurayah Daoud Hussein) was a member of the Arab Women's Association, headed by Zleikha Shihābi in that time. Her activity became as that of other Palestinian wives during the 1936-1938 revolts in hiding weapons for the husbands and supporting the fighters with food and hiding them when chances required. She became a member of different organizations after the Nakba, including the Red Crescent, the Arab Women

¹⁸² Najjar, pg 274-275

Union. She wrote critical articles on education in al *Jihād* Newspaper, she wrote poetry, but was confiscated by the Israeli forces in 1967 after an investigation with her accusing her of provocations to the public. She was also active in *Jam'iyyet Tanzeem al Usra* (Family Organizing Society).¹⁸³

30. ***Najwa Ka'war*** (1923-2015), born in Nazareth. A writer and poet. She studied in Nazareth and received her higher education in *Dar al Mu'allimāt* in Jerusalem. She was an activist and worked on promoting cultural life in Jerusalem and Palestine. She published novels and articles. Her novels were broadcasted in Jerusalem Radio and the Far

¹⁸³ Interview, *ibid.* pg 355-381

East as well as Holland. She lived between Haifa, Jerusalem, and Ramallah and ended in Beirut. ¹⁸⁴

31. ***Saba Fahoūm*** (1923-2004), born in Nazareth. She was an active participant in the Nakba victim's support. She participated in the first Palestinian women council in 1965 and was among the pioneers in establishing the Women Union in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁵

32. ***Samīha Khalīl*** (1923-1999), born in 'Anabta. She got married while she was still in school, and decided to pursue her education after having five children. She started as a young girl in the 1936 revolt. She became active with her mother who was a member in the Palestinian Women Arab Union in Tulkarem headed by Wadi'ah Khartabīl. The

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.alnssabon.com/showthread.php? T=19648>

¹⁸⁵ Najjar, 150-158

organization had a political agenda that focused on recruitment against selling land to the Jews and to those who collaborated with them. She helped distribute their statements in the stores and the streets. Samiḥa's roles after the Nakba and within the Palestinian National union and inside *Jamīyyet In'āsh al Ūsra* that she headed until her last year of life represents an important model of Palestinian resilience. Samiḥa however, insisted on considering that the Palestinian cause and the struggle is that's of a woman and a man alike and equally. Each within what he or she can provide. She always refused to join any political party but insisted to serve any that serves the Palestinian cause. She believed the completion among the parties didn't serve it. ¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. Palestinian Women's Role in the Thirties. Pg 381-410

33. *Widād Abu al hajj al Ayyoūbī* (1925), born in Jerusalem. An educator, a writer and an activist. Her activism started when she was a young girl within schools activists within the student guide program. Student's participated in demonstration in the 1936 revolt and later until the Nakba. In 1948, she was a principal at the *Malḥa* School where she witnessed the escape of the village upon the massacre of *Deir Yasīn* the day before. She was a member in Arab Women Association. She attended the conference of the Women Arab Union in Jerusalem. As a writer she wrote under a pseudonym name of *Bint al ḥaram* (the daughter of the mosque) in the fifties. She was the first media and journalism graduate, where she graduated from Egypt. She later wrote for the theatre. ¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Interviews; 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the Thirties*. Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005. 259-285

34. *Fatimah Abu Soūd* was a teacher in Silwan's Prep School.

She succeeded in recruiting girls during the riots by distributing statements for strikes and instructions. She had a strong effect on students and had strong national sentiments. She was active between Gaza and Jerusalem within the Arab Women Association that later merged into the Palestinian Women Union. She used to drive between Gaza and Jerusalem and was known for her political involvement. She was with the women delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi and appears in the photo.¹⁸⁸

35. *Shahinda Duzdār* (1906), born in Jerusalem. Shahinda

headed the Arab women association she was an active

leader in the thirties. She was among the women delegation

¹⁸⁸ [https://jerusalems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalem/Facebook Page](https://jerusalems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalem/Facebook%20Page). Tags from family.

to the High Commissioner in late twenties. Duzdār and Mughannam have been “skipped” from movement memory as a result of the political fraction that occurred between the two rival families. However, their involvement, in protests, demonstrations, and conferences were as evitable as the others.¹⁸⁹

36. *Hind al Hussein* (1916-1994), born in Jerusalem. She finished her elementary education from the Islamic school for girls in the old city of Jerusalem and graduated from the English school in 1937 and worked as a teacher. She gained her remarkable reputation after rescuing the orphans who survived the Deir Yasin Massacre in April 1948, where she converted her family mansion into an orphanage that continue to operate until this day. During

¹⁸⁹ Fleischman, Ellen: The Nation and it's new Women (pg 28-290

the 1936 revolution, as a young woman, she was active in collecting donations to the fighters with other women activists. She joined the Arab women's union in 1945. And established a school and a girl's college *Dar al Tifl al 'Arabi* later.¹⁹⁰

37. ***Samīra Azzam*** (1927-1967), born in Acre. She worked as a teacher and expertized English language. She wrote as a columnist in Palestine paper under the anonymous name of *fatat al Sahel* (girl of the beach). She fled to Lebanon with her family in the Nakba. She worked as a newscaster in Far East radio. She wrote a series of stories and has some translations and received many prizes in best novels writings in Beirut.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Najjar, 152,207,291,331

¹⁹¹ Najjar, 172,246,283-284

38. *Muh̄iba Khorsheid* (1925-1999), born in Jaffa from Turkish origins. She was an artist, writer and violinist. She started *Zahret al Aq̄hawān* organization with the vision of social change and interfaith tolerance. The organization later became militarized and she was affiliated with ‘Abel Qader Husseini in their resistance. She wrote articles that reflected strong feminist views. She was a believer of the importance of women’s role and the importance of equality with men. She called women to unveil themselves in her articles, as a step to the involvement of women in the political and social role that should include both Muslims and Christians. She became militant after witnessing a brutal murder of a child in Beit Yam by the Zionist terror gangs. Her sense of tolerance was affiliated with strong human emotions that

included all religions not just among Muslims and Christians.¹⁹²

39. *Narimān Khorsheid* (1927-), born in Jaffa. Narimān worked in a chemical company in Tel Aviv as a secretary. She is the sister of Muhiba. She joined her sister in the organization within the military form. She also was traumatized upon witnessing the Manchiya massacre in Jaffa. One day upon going back from work she saw a building destroyed by the British army. She made a public speech that provoked the emotions to the people, which resulted in cancelling her work contract in the company. She joined the organization and she was known for fighting. She led the military faction of *Zahret al Aqḥawān*, which

¹⁹² 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the Forties*. Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005. Interview: p. 239-259.

included men. She was a proud-armed woman who wore trousers. A strong sign of strength in fighting for her in that time. She visited the king 'Abdulla of Jordan upon the request of the higher national committee. She also met the mufti in Syria. She became a threat to the Zionists. She left to Beirut in 1948, and later to Egypt. She attempted to learn how to fly in an attempt to pursue the fight; she was joined with around twenty females. She later married and quit political and military work. She continued to live in Cairo.¹⁹³

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¹⁹³ Abdo, Janan. Nariman Khoursheid and the organization of Zahret al Aqhawan. <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/21776/--ناريمان-خورشيد-وتنظيم-زهرة-الأقحوان>

¹⁹⁴ Abdel Hadi, Fayha, *Nuqta w awwal al Satr*. Iman Khorsheid: *Al dukhul ila hayyez al dhakira al jamaiyah*. <http://www.noqta.info/page-69517-ar.html>

40. 'Isam 'Abdelhadi (1928 -2013), born as Fatima Isam in Nablus. Isam dropped her female name (Fatima) and called herself Isam only, to be able to represent her cause in what she perceived as courageous and resilient. She was elected as secretary general of the Arab women union in Nablus, and was elected as president of general Palestinian women union in 1965 in its first establishing conference in Jerusalem. She was the first woman to be deported under the Israeli occupying forces in 1969. She was a member in the national council that took place in Jerusalem in 1964, and was elected in 1974 to be the only woman in the central council for four years to continue her role in the higher committee. Isam was the sister in law of Tarab 'Abdel Hadi.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ 'Abdel Hadi, Faiḥaī. *Palestinian Woman Roles in the forties*. Ramallah: Palestinian Woman Center for Research and Documentation 2005. Interviews; 341-381

41. *Samīra Abu Ghazaleh* (1928), born in Nablus. She studied in Jerusalem. She was among the first females to be selected to study in the American university in Beirut. She writes poetry and has columns and novels. She was the first woman in the Palestinian national council.¹⁹⁶

42. *Salwa Abu Khadra* (1929-), born in Jaffa. She received her certificate of Education from oxford in 1947. She became active in the sixties within the PLO and the women movement. She was an establishing member of the general Palestinian women council in 1965. Remained an active member of Fateh and a member of its revolutionary council.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.293-341

¹⁹⁷ Ibid381-395

43. *Marie Awí* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.¹⁹⁸

44. *Madīḥa Nusseibeh* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.

45. *Samiḥa Nusseibeh* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.

46. *Madeleine Rahel Albina* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.

47. *Catherine Berouti Gelat* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.

¹⁹⁸ <https://jeruselems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalemites/>. Facebook Page. Tags from family.

48. *Georgine 'Attalla Calis* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.

49. *Fadila Duzdār*, born in Jerusalem. She was a social activist. The sister of Shahinda. She participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ FADILEH IS THE middle row 3rd from left and Shahinda is the seventh left middle row (interview with Khalid Duzdar)

50. *Hilda 'Azzam* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰⁰

51. *Katie Aboussouan Salāmah* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰¹

52. Lucy Gress participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰²

53. *Pauline Mantoura* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰³

54. *Kokun Tuleil* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰⁴

55. *Nuzha Darwish*, a teacher, an activist, participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ <https://jerusalems.wordpress.com/2015/07/23/british-mandate-jerusalemites/>. Facebook Page. Tags from family.

²⁰¹ ibid

²⁰² ibid

²⁰³ ibid

²⁰⁴ ibid

²⁰⁵ ibid

56. *Badrieh Husseini* participated in the delegation that met Huda Sha'rawi in Jerusalem. She appears in the Photo.²⁰⁶

9. Conclusion

The discussion in this research attempted to shed the light on the development of the Palestinian women's movement from a context that could have been broadly overviewed through a photo that reflected a progressive image of modernity within the society, that might have effected the rise and development of the women's movement then. As much as one can use a photo to understand some parts of the reality and analyse it . The very same photo can put us face to face with contradictions. If we think of the moment

²⁰⁶ ibid

after that photo was taken, we can simply put some of those women in a photo that is also used later, to discuss women movement in Palestine. In this other photo, the women are veiled. In this sense, it is not efficient to discuss modernity when this modernity is jeopardized by behaviors that could be considered very controversial and contradictory. The discussion of modernity in the Arab world will remain restricted to traditional constraints that women voluntarily continued to adapt to. This however, cannot undermine that such setting of modernity has affected those women, regardless to their adaptation to the requirement of the traditions. The journey of women in liberation remains as diverse then as it is today. It is always unique to the specific circumstances of the women in the specific place. In the same setting of time, as we have seen in the research, women in rural areas where veils remained, where not lesser efficient to the national movement that the women movement has delved in.

In what seems to be characteristic in Palestinian women attitude towards adaptation and compromise, the women movement itself was compromised with masculine nationalism under the endorsement of patriarchal structure that women never attempted to really change revolutionary. It continues to be a part of an adaptation to a compromise of gained or acquired rights.

The relationship of women and nationalism, cannot be excluded from the Palestinian women's movement, on the contrary, it remained a central concern and marks the significance in the links between modernity and reforms.

I could not less agree with Abu Lughod's argument that explains the difficulty in thinking about "the woman question", without escaping "the language of accusations and counter accusations about cultural authenticity"²⁰⁷ I agree as well with Leila Ahmad's critique on Western Feminism where she argues that " the

²⁰⁷ Abu Lughod, L. p.14

European obsession with unveiling women, reflected in the efforts of Lord Cromer, has produced the contemporary fixation on the veil as the quintessential sign of Muslim resistance and cultural authenticity”.²⁰⁸ A rhetoric that continues to provoke the Arab framing to the meaning of modernity, that is congested with colonial forced ideals, and continue to give space to the Islamist discourse, that seizes the discourse in the level of the “Veil”.

That’s said, to talk about the Palestinian society and its structure in the past remains in the same complication that exists today. To be able to point out a category to a subject designated is also not easy.

What is certain in the journey of the Palestinian exodus is that men and women genuinely carried on their shoulders the liberation dream of Palestine. As their exodus continued from the Nakba to

²⁰⁸ Abu Lughod, L. p.14

the Naksa, the plight became a fight for finding a place to resist from, from Jordan, to Syria, to Lebanon, until Tunisia. With each devastating closure to status in one city, the plight was taking another form. More power to the structure of the Fateh part of the PLO and Palestine was minimized gradually in the map and in the hearts, until in the mid-1980s, the cause became not just institutionalized but personalized. It was a moment the cause transformed into a state of personalization, and it all became about one person.

Whether that person was one or a body that formed what shaped the current situation of Palestinians today is not really the most crucial part. The problem may lie in the fact that people's devotion to the cause was diverted. In the 1960s and '70s those leaders (females when they existed) dedicated their lives to the freedom of Palestine. The resistance took the form of armed struggle. Women sacrificed their families in a society that is patriarchal and

traditional in all its basic concepts, especially when it comes to women. Those women and men gave themselves to the plight of Palestine. How their discourse changed, and how their plight itself took a different course, explains a lot about our failures as a nation.

It could be true, that after being washed out of countries, every few years to another. Having to fight your allies instead of your enemies. Or conspire against those who hosted you and vice versa instead of teaming up to liberate the land were an exhausting work after three decades of struggle and resistance. By that time there was a lot of money and power, but no land to settle. Maybe bitterness and an aspiration anyone who didn't taste displacement feel.

But yet, we are talking about more than a half-displaced population here. The decision to leave Beirut with hundreds of

thousands of refugees behind what persisted to remain a dark destiny of injustices and despair seems to be that of an eccentric decision, not different from that of signing a peace agreement for the sake of just coming back home.

If one would wonder about the altering or the non-altering situation in the Palestinian women's movement, and thus its consequences, I wouldn't agree more than Mayer's point of view in this regard in her previously mentioned book in this research: "Because their (women) national involvement started on grounds from which they were not challenging indigenous social structures—with literacy campaigns and aid to the needy, in the case of urban middle-class women and, in the case of peasant women, with demonstrations against the 'outsiders'—Palestinian women were able to take the streets and move from the private to

the public spheres in ways which were acceptable to their male counter-parts.”²⁰⁹

The absence of strategy in the Palestinian leadership of that period, which continues until this very day, remains an important obstacle in women’s participation in the political sphere, and to identifying her role in the structure of the society. The movement succumbed to a politics of national consensus at the expense of developing an effective feminist social agenda. The Palestinians have focused throughout their history on fighting an aggressor or enemy, but they never seem to have a plan for what is coming next. In today’s living reality, the liberation project that has been announced as the Palestinian main goal became an obstacle that prevents women from gaining status or performing adequately within their real spectrum.

²⁰⁹ Mayer, *Women and the Israeli Occupation*, p. 65

It is apparently no coincidence that the rise of the women's movement on the political level in the early British Mandate era and toward the last years of the Ottoman Empire coincided with the general need for such participation, as in the first intifada model. The participation of women started voluntarily, and spontaneously. It was due to the general emotion of a nationalistic struggle that women found themselves on its front line, facing the aggression and oppression of the perpetrators when men were martyred or jailed or exiled. Women found themselves with no other choice but to confront the enemy. Participating with the ongoing emerging struggle has also managed to distribute roles of participation in the times of need in the Palestinian struggles. Finally, the biographical trajectories discussed in this essay raise the significant issue of phases in the women's movement in Palestine. A large number of those women were born at the turn of the nineteenth century, and their participation reached its high

point during the 1930s—which corresponded with the zenith of the nationalist movement during the Mandate. The reemergence of that movement after the Nakba, especially after the 1967 war and the separation of Palestinian society from its diaspora, projected a women’s movement whose objectives and temperament were at variance with its predecessors. While in the 1930s nationalism absorbed all the energies of these women leaders, in the 1970s and 1980s women were able to break with the nationalist consensus and create a social agenda that became prominent during the struggle against occupation. In a very paradoxical manner, the women’s movement of the 1980s and 1990s returned to its roots in the 1920s.

That period undoubtedly witness a movement of women who were very much part of and concerned about their own societies and cannot be dismissed as Western agents”.²¹⁰ Many of those

²¹⁰ Abu Lughod, L. p.16

women had strong and some ties to Europeans, “in not only the languages in which they wrote, but their formative influences, their interlocutors, and their liberal ideas,²¹¹ but nevertheless, the women’s movement in Palestine kept a genuine culture and never went out of the line of its nationalist target.

The controversy between the public and private appearances, and that of strong nationalist agenda and submission to patriarchal dominated national agenda, remain to be the unanswered complexity of Palestinian women.

²¹¹ Ibid.

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Annexes

Photos