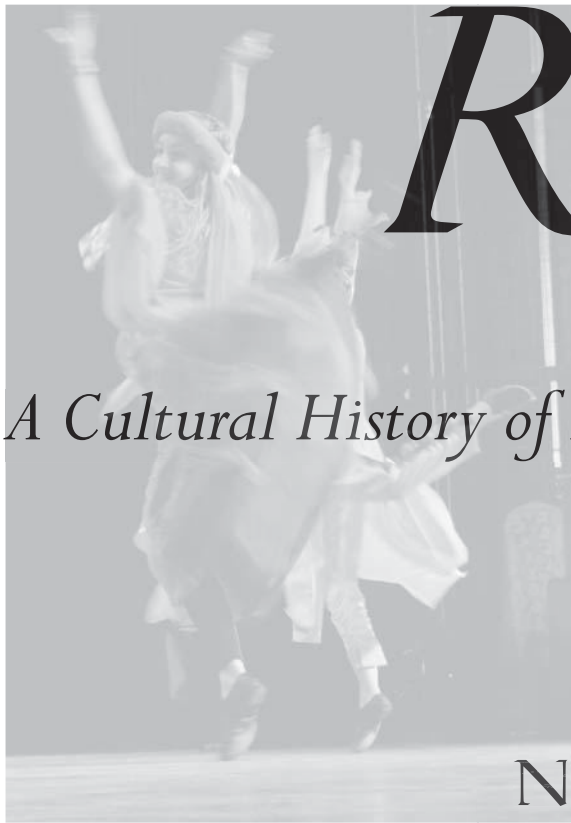# Raising Dust

A Cultural History of Dance in Palestine

Nicholas Rowe

Nicholas Rowe graduated from the Australian Ballet School and subsequently worked as a choreographer and dancer with the Australian Ballet, the Sydney Dance Company, the Finnish National Ballet, Ballet Philippines, the West Australian Ballet, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Modern Dance Turkey and Nomad Dance Theatre. In 2000 he moved to the West Bank city of Ramallah and spent the next eight years working with local dance collectives and arts institutions on dance performance and education projects in cities, villages and refugee camps across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He completed his PhD on Palestinian dance through the London Contemporary Dance School. He is the author of *Art, During Siege: Performing Arts Workshops in Traumatised Communities* and his articles have appeared in *Dance Research Journal*, *Research in Dance Education*, *Dance Europe*, *Dancing Times*, *Dance Australia*, the *Jerusalem Times* and *This Week in Palestine*. He is currently an Associate Dean at the National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland.

Raising Dust

A Cultural History of Dance in Palestine

Nicholas Rowe

To
SGT, MR, SR and YR
Three generations of
very different dancers

2   A dancer from the Caananite town of Laish,
thirteenth–fourteenth century BC

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Acknowledgements

This book has benefited from the direct and indirect input of so many people in various locations around the world. Foremost, the dance practitioners and dance supporters that I have worked with in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly those within the Popular Art Centre and the El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah dance groups. They have given greatly of their time and energy in teaching me about the social, cultural and political undercurrents in their work. Their enthusiasm to constantly refine and enhance their artistic expression has provided a major motivation for this research. While many local people informally provided insights into the cultural history and contemporary cultural experience of the central West Bank, I am deeply indebted to the local interviewees who were willing to go 'on the record'. In this regard, my own very poor Arabic has been well compensated by Maysoun Rafeedie, Noora Baker, Hadeel Karkar, Nagham Awadallah and Samir Irshaid, who have helped locate literature and given translation assistance on numerous occasions.

The historical research has also greatly benefited from access to online data bases, libraries and archives, including the British Library, the London Contemporary Dance School Library, the Arabic Studies Library at the University of Exeter, Birzeit University Library, the Israeli National Library in Tel-Aviv, the University of Auckland Library and the archives of the Palestinian Heritage Society (Inash-Al-Usra), El-Funoun, the Popular Art Centre and Sareyyet Ramallah. I am thankful to the staff in each of these and grateful for their patient support for my seemingly odd searches. The photographs

illustrating dance throughout Palestine's history would also not have been possible were it not for the generous access provided by Aida Odeh, Wadea Jarrar-Haddad, El-Funoun and Sarreyet Ramallah.

That this cultural study has any semblance of an academic rigour also owes much to Inma Álvarez, my principal doctoral supervisor. Her patient guidance transformed what began as a wild rant into a more scholarly document. More latterly, Henrietta Bannerman's detailed notes have also provided a valuable source of reflection. That this research was ever initiated owes much to Nigel Morgan, who encouraged me to commence a doctoral thesis on this subject through the London Contemporary Dance School.

Lengthy discussions at conferences and email correspondences with dance activists and diverse thinkers in different regions of the globe such as Elke Kaschl, Judith Marcuse, Liz Lerman, Toni Shapiro Phim, Sue Stinson, Ken Bartlett, Ralph Buck, Lisa Doolittle, Mark Zeitoun, Arthur Santorios, Ana Macara, Moataz Dijani, Serene Huleileh, Terri Biltoff, Rosemary Martin and Naomi Jackson have also greatly contributed to the ideas that I have presented here. Good friends and knowledgeable dancers Emma Manning and Josef Brown have been wonderful for bouncing ideas about and debating key issues. Also thanks to David Stonestreet at I.B. Tauris for his patience and willingness to see this academic thesis become a more accessible popular history, and Jessica Cuthbert-Smith for her meticulous editing. The AM Qattan Foundation and the NICAI Faculty Research Development Fund at the University of Auckland have also brought much-needed financial support and encouragement to the project.

On a more personal level, this study also owes a great deal to my mother, who has always supported my cultural adventures, and my father, who taught me that there is nothing wrong with noticing a problem even if a solution is not immediately apparent. And finally, to my wife Maysoun and my daughters Sama and Yafa, who have surrounded this research project with so much fun.

Part One

Entering Palestine
and its history

3   Travellers at the entrance to Nablus in April 1839

1   *Dance, people and politics*

SUNSET AT QALANDIA

'Excuse me, I have an important meeting. Can I go through?'

'What?'

'A meeting at the Popular Art Centre. It's a dance institute. I'm an Australian – here's my passport.'

'What?'

'Look, could I just run across?'

'What?'

The short soldier, whose heavy combat gear did not hide his wispy teenage beard, had stopped me on the edge of an intersection clouded with tear gas, strewn with rocks and punctuated with gunshots. The minibus traffic from Jerusalem was jammed back several blocks and, like many other people, I had decided to try to cross the intersection on foot.

'Dancer – I'm a dancer. And I just want to go and meet some other dancers. Over there.'

'You cannot go now.'

'But I have an appointment. I'm running late.'

The soldier turned away and said nothing more. He really did not want to be there. Other local people, including some frail and elderly men and women,

were scurrying down the road around the convoy of jeeps and soldiers, towards the ramshackle houses of Qalandia refugee camp and the road to Ramallah. So I ran across the fray, between the soldiers firing tear gas and the young men throwing back rocks, waving my Australian passport above my head as though it might radiate immunity.

The sting of the tear gas burnt much more than I thought possible, and the front of my head felt ready to explode with the pain. I shuffled towards a minibus on the other side of the young men throwing stones. Feeling guilty that in the confusion my social graces had slipped, I clambered in ahead of an elderly woman.

As the minibus pulled out of the gas cloud and on up the hill towards Ramallah, the elderly woman (who was now sitting beside me) pulled an onion out of her handbag. Peeling it, she offered a shard to me and then to some others around the bus. Her welcoming smile bewildered me. In the midst of what had just gone on, what sort of person pulls an onion from her handbag and shares it around? In my mind I started to justify that I was not really so wrong to climb ahead of her onto the minibus after all. I became even more confused a few moments later, as several others on the bus laughed as they started sniffing the onion shards as though it was all part of a ritual. Even the old man driving the bus was snorting on an onion above his toothy grin. *What is it with these people and onions?* Pain had rendered my face useless, almost numb, but my confusion must have been apparent. A young man in the seat in front leaned back and explained: 'Smell the onion. It makes you cry, then all the gas gets washed out of your nose and eyes. You will feel better.'

So I smelt the onion and soon felt better.

It was dusk on Thursday, 10 December 1998, and this was my first entry into the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I had no idea that I would be spending most of the following decade living and working there. Nor did I imagine how much of that subsequent time would be spent trying to pass an Israeli military checkpoint constructed on the very site of that twilight fray. Perhaps that first passage became so deeply embedded in my memory precisely because it was the sort of event that I never imagined repeating.

At the time I knew very little about the political history of the region. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs had brought me to Tel-Aviv from London to write a critique of *Curtain Up – Zionist Movement*, their annual showcase of Israeli contemporary dance. A chance meeting with some artists in Cairo a few months earlier had led to some dance contacts in the West Bank. Thinking I might get two interesting experiences for the price of one, I hitched a dance workshop in Ramallah onto my trip to the Israeli dance festival.

The subsequent week-long dance workshop in Ramallah was remarkable in that it was so ordinary. Young men and women came to the studio in the Popular Art Centre every day for three hours. I taught a technique class, then we experimented with choreographic ideas. Together we composed some short dances that they performed for their friends and families in the studio at the end of the week. While the dances that they made were unique, dynamic and humorous, the overall workshop was not that different from dance workshops that I had taught in other places around the world. Young men and women, comfortable with their bodies, were trying to figure out how they could tell stories through movement in ways that might interest and inspire others in their community. This only became extraordinary the moment I stepped outside the studio each day and into a world so shaped by military oppression that the very thought of dancing seemed bizarre.

What was also so notable was that none of these stories from the West Bank could be found in the tales of personal angst performed at the comparatively lavish contemporary dance festival an hour's drive away in Tel-Aviv. I commented on this peculiarity in my published review of the festival and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Israeli Ministry of Culture never invited me to write about Israeli dance again.[1] 'Why did you have to go and get political?' the Israeli cultural attaché in London later bellowed down the phone, 'We sent you to write an article on dance!'

That week in Ramallah twisted my world upside-down because it was filled with so many unfinished and untold stories. These peculiar stories linked dance with the wider socio-political environment. While I could not really comprehend (let alone articulate) those stories at the time, it felt nonsensical

to review contemporary dance performances in Tel-Aviv without at least pointing up the road towards the Occupied Territories and asking, 'But what about that? Isn't that worth mentioning in your art?' I guess at the time that I did not make the links between these stories clear enough for the Israeli Embassy in London. Over the subsequent years, as some of the stories have become more clear to me, it felt important to start putting them together in order to illustrate better this connection between artistic and political actions.

These stories of dance in the West Bank (which become a history when you string them end-to-end and suggest how one causes another to happen) have been gathered through talking with people, watching events unfold, reading old documents and looking at old videos and photographs. Navigating my way backwards into this history has been like travelling up a river and into ever diversifying streams and tributaries. As the contemporary West Bank is made up of people descended from a population that came from across nineteenth-century Palestine, this reconstruction of their cultural history begins in the wider region of Palestine and narrows to the West Bank as it approaches the current era.

CONTESTED HISTORIES AND ABSENT HISTORIES

I lived in Ramallah between 2000 and 2008, working with local dance groups and developing children's dance programmes in refugee camps across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This led to me being invited to the Dance and the Child International conference in Brazil in 2003 to present a keynote speech on the obstacles that children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip face when trying to engage in dance activities. Halfway through my speech, just as I was explaining how colonization and military occupation affected these children and their artistic choices, an Israeli delegate stood up and angrily called out, 'This is a conference about dance and children, not a platform for politics!' and stormed out. At the conclusion of my speech several more delegates

(from Israel and North America) took the microphone during questions and answers, vehemently denying not just the relevance of such politics in the speech but also the accuracy of the history presented. It just differed so much from their understandings of the region's past.

While it is the aim of this book to illustrate how dance and politics are interrelated and relevant to each other, it is perhaps important first to address this issue of historical truth. The history of Palestine has been a highly contentious area of study, resulting in very polarized versions of events. Central to popular debates has been the issue of whether a local, settled population actually existed in Palestine prior to the late nineteenth century, when political Zionism sought to establish a Jewish state in the region. Doubts over the existence of such a population were stimulated by Lord Shaftesbury's 1854 inspirational maxim for political Zionism, which claimed that Palestine was 'a land without a people for a people without a land'.[2] This idea that Palestine was mostly uninhabited has continued to gain support from the highest levels of Zionist political expression. It can be seen in Golda Meir's infamous claim in 1969 that 'There is no such thing as a Palestinian people . . . It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist.'[3] Such a view of the region's past has continued on into the twenty-first century, as suggested by Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that 'My ancestors came 100 years ago, and there was practically no one . . . The fact is that the Jewish restoration of this land brought a very large Palestinian immigration.'[4] This belief reflects popular Zionist versions of local history, which contend that most Arabs came to Palestine in the early twentieth century in order to enjoy the new prosperity generated by the industrious efforts of European Zionist immigrants.

From this presumption of the non-existence of a settled indigenous population, further controversies have arisen. The most contentious ideas relate to the continuing expulsion of this population from the region since 1947. Israeli historians[5] and political leaders[6] have claimed that the local non-Jewish population emigrated of its own accord, despite Zionist attempts to persuade them to stay. The idea that 'there was miracle and they ran away'[7]

has provided an important moral basis for Israeli national identity – a sense of 'purity of arms' in the heroic Israeli narrative of nation building.[8]

As such, Israeli school textbooks have largely ignored both the pre-Zionist existence of a local population, and the traumatic impact of Zionist colonization and Israeli nation building on that local population.[9] The Israeli censorship of school textbooks in the Occupied Territories following their 1967 annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (and their outlawing of the possession of books relating to the history of the local population) similarly attempted to nullify alternatives to the Israeli version of history.[10] Subsequent attempts to revise history in the Palestinian school curriculum, by the Palestinian National Authority in the late 1990s, were subjected to a politically organized misinformation campaign (erroneously suggesting that the new textbooks contained anti-Semitic propaganda). This led to restrictions on European and American aid for education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and what might be considered a continued process of censorship of indigenous history through economic proxy.[11]

A presentation of local dance history that first recognizes the existence of a substantial local population in the region prior to Zionist colonization and then examines the collective trauma experienced by that population is therefore bound to provoke contention. This alternative history has received strong and increasing academic support during the past two decades, however, from historians on both sides of the political divide. Since the 1980s more critical versions of Israeli history have been stimulated inside Israel by local historians with access to Israeli government and military archives.[12] There have been attempts to discredit these 'new historians' of Israel,[13] but these have become increasingly isolated. Israeli academic understandings of history have thus moved closer to the historical research produced by local indigenous and international historians.[14] This has created a greater consensus, within academia at least, on the reality of an indigenous population and its collective experience of colonial Zionism. This consensus forms a basis for the historical analysis presented in this book.

THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE

Curiosity brought me to the West Bank, but love made me stay. Among the participants at that first dance workshop that I taught in 1998 was a stunningly beautiful and creative dancer. Moving to live in the West Bank seemed to be the only way to get her attention. Several years later we married, and at our wedding in Ramallah an elderly man asked me, 'So why do you want to marry an Arab woman?'

It was a bit of a disturbing question because Maysoun does not look like a cartoon cut-out of an ethnic category. Before I could launch into a tirade on racial stereotyping, Maysoun leant in and laughed, 'He doesn't want *an Arab woman*. He just wants *me*.'

The man laughed with her, the moment passed, the wedding went on and I marvelled at the charm of my wife. On a later occasion, when Maysoun and I were trying to travel from Ramallah to the nearby city of Bethlehem, a gum-chewing Israeli soldier stopped us at what had become a permanent checkpoint at Qalandia. Looking at me and thumbing towards Maysoun, he said, 'You can pass, but the Arab cannot.'

Referring to an individual with a collective label in this way is obviously problematic. How, then, should a group of people be referred to when talking about events that affect them as a group? This becomes a major problem in the construction of social histories. Much of the writing on the region has been formed around references to cultural ethnicity (Jews and Arabs) and religious ideology (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). Several leading social theorists have even suggested that these racial/religious attributes are the root cause of the region's political difficulties.[15] While the Israeli soldier's casual reference to Maysoun as 'the Arab' seemed to be made more out of habit than malice, it did indicate how particular labels could guide his decisions as a soldier. Labels such as 'Arab' and 'Muslim' reinforce the idea that race and religion are the core cause of all local conflicts and traumatic eventualities. The history presented in these pages thus only uses terms such as Arab, Muslim, Christian or Jew when presenting particular illustrations of self-identification.

It might seem easier to use the term 'Palestinian' to describe the collective identity of those in this history. Although the term 'Palestinian' gained greater prominence throughout the twentieth century in association with nationalist political movements, there is no evidence indicating that it was a common cultural label before this. References to the nineteenth-century population of Palestine as Palestinians (when made in an era that often defines this population in terms of Palestinian nationalism) can suggest the inevitability of nationalism as a form of collective identity.[16] Even describing these people in the contemporary era as Palestinian reinforces the sense that they are only collectivized as a result of the 'imagined community' of political nationalism.[17] The term 'Palestinian' is therefore not used to describe the people of this history, in order to avoid ambiguity over the political and geographic meanings associated with it.

How then, might the people be identified and labelled? Their most overt common experience has been foreign colonization, economic dispossession and socio-political exclusion.[18] In this way it seems appropriate to describe them with a phrase that reflects this distinction in political power: 'the indigenous population'. The term indigenous might seem even more controversial, given the varied speculations about ancient ethnic links to the region. I use the term indigenous here to refer to a particular population group (and their biological descendants) who inhabited a region prior to a politically orchestrated process of foreign colonization.[19] This makes the term indigenous relative, dependent upon a distinct colonizing population that seeks political control over the shared geographical space. A sense of being indigenous might thus best describe the common bond that defines the very mixed population of both historic Palestine and subsequently the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

As the following history illustrates, nineteenth-century Palestine (like so many regions of the world) was subject to competing European colonial projects. The most successful of these (in terms of repopulating the region) was political Zionism. It is important to clarify and emphasize that this history recognizes Zionism, not Judaism, as the political basis of this colonizing population. This is in recognition of the existence of Jews among the indigenous

population of historic Palestine, and to clarify the European colonial origins of Zionism.[20]

DEFINING DANCE

The English word 'dance' can be difficult to apply in the Eastern Mediterranean. Within classical Arabic and colloquial Arabic in Palestine, several terms might be used to describe this cultural activity. Each describes a particular moment of physical expression (with varying connotations and social meanings), but there is no linguistic term that directly corresponds with 'dance'.

The most common translation of the noun 'dance' is *raqsa*.[21] This is possibly derived from the Assyrian *raq'qase*, which means to celebrate, or literally to cease mourning.[22] In the West Bank the idea of *raqsa* is certainly associated with celebration. When classical Arabic is used in the West Bank to describe the male dancer *raqqas* and female dancer *raqqasa*, both remain innocuous descriptive terms. When the colloquial Arabic is used, however, these titles often take on different meanings: the male *ra'as* suggests an effeminate/homosexual character and the female *ra'asa* suggests a woman with loose morals. This is possibly because *raqsa* is often interchangeable with the terms *raqsa Sharqi* (Eastern or Oriental dancing), *raqsa Turki* (Turkish dance), *raqsa Misri* (Egyptian dance) or *raqsa Lubnaniyyeh* (Lebanese dance). All refer to what is often known in Europe and America as belly dancing. As the above phrases suggest, this type of dancing is generally considered to belong to foreign regions and does not appear in local artistic histories.

The most publicly promoted form of dance in the contemporary West Bank is *dabkeh* (alternatively transliterated as *dabke*, *debkeh*, *debke* and *deppka*). Recognized in language as more than just an appendage word to dance, one does not dance *dabkeh*, one *yadbek*s. An equivalent in English would be the noun waltz (*dabkeh*), the verb waltzing (*yadbek*) and the noun waltzer (*dabik*). This linguistic distinction crucially allows it to not be considered a style of

raqsa, but as a separate activity subject to a different set of moral values. Local artistic histories of dance have therefore most consistently centred on dabkeh, which has led to further contentions over which movement expressions might and might not be defined by such a term.

These local linguistic complexities over the meaning of dance make the construction of a 'dance' history inevitably foreign. This becomes even more problematic when trying to distinguish which dances might be considered art. In Palestine, various functions, values and meanings can be attributed to physical activities that might be generically referred to in English as dance and dancing. Some of these activities are essentially presentational (that is, designed for a viewing audience) and others essentially participatory (intended primarily for the dancer's own social and sensual experience), but these distinctions are not always so arbitrary.[23] A thread of history might, however, be developed around dances that are intentionally presented as a visual spectacle.

Defining the type of spectacle, in terms of dance styles, again becomes controversial. From my discussions about dance with artists and audiences in the West Bank, two comments highlighted the political complexity of trying to label local dance styles. The first was a lament made by the choreographer of a local performance troupe: 'But can't they understand that this *is* our contemporary dance?'

This question followed the rejection of the group's application to a European contemporary dance festival, on the basis that their dance production was not considered contemporary enough and that it would be better suited to a folkloric festival. For those engaged in creative innovation in dance, this latter rebuke can feel like being sent to a home for the elderly: packed off to a place where everybody dances in circles, reminiscing about the glorious golden past of their own particular civilization.

The second comment invariably popped up among local dancers and audiences in studio and theatre-foyer conversations: 'I don't like *modern* dance.' This comment was generally directed at any foreign or local dance production that did not fit with nostalgically imagined impressions of dance in times gone by.

The two comments indicate the political consequences of not having a clearly defined artistic history. Being denied the label 'contemporary' can feel like being denied a collective cultural visa to the twenty-first century; rejecting the term 'modern' can appear to be an obstinate yet doomed refusal to accept the passage of time. Together they reinforce a sense that colonized and politically marginalized populations cannot define their own cultural modernity. They can '. . . either resist, or yield to, the new, but cannot *produce* it'.[24]

This view can present a major dilemma to dance groups that are building innovatively on their cultural heritage in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and elsewhere. Addressing such a challenge requires deeper investigation into what modernity and contemporary actually mean (socially, politically and culturally) in places such as the West Bank. I present the following stories with the hope that they might suggest how the indigenous population of Palestine have sought answers to the question: what is relevant now?

5   One of the many perspectives of the Holy Land: Richard Blome's 1687
map

2 *Finding the start for a history*

DANCE IN ANCIENT PALESTINE

Since the writing of the Bible and the *Histories* of Herodotus the term Palestine, or Philistine, has been used to describe a region on the south-eastern shores of the Mediterranean.[1] The area continued to be called Palestine through the Middle Ages and on into the mid-twentieth century,[2] when it was subsequently relabelled Israel. This geographic space has a rich history of human civilization. Over the last six millennia Canaanite, Jewish, Assyrian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic Arab, European Crusader, Egyptian Mamluk, Turkish Ottoman, British Imperial and Zionist national cultures have all left their impressions on the landscape. One only has to note the varied hair, skin and eye colours and facial shapes of the indigenous population to realize that, at some point in the past, almost every ethnic group in a 10,000-kilometre radius must have slept a night in Palestine. This diversity challenges any attempt to construct a local cultural identity based on race or on a single point of origin for local cultural history.

Given the location of many events in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is perhaps unsurprising that Palestine's past has been so often revisited, retold and historicized in texts, songs, dances, art, films and oral legends, by people all around the world. For those studying ancient civilizations, Palestine's geographic position as a land bridge between Africa and Asia further stimulates this curiosity about the region's cultural past. Other tumultuous events (from the medieval Crusades to wars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries)

have added to the intrigue, resulting in ever more detailed scrutiny of the region by archaeologists, historians and cultural analysts. This research has enlivened the diverse histories of Palestine, giving it perhaps one of the most gossiped about pasts on the planet.

Unfortunately, not all cultural expressions leave a trace, and dance tends to impart a particularly fragmented testimony. The remnants of dance in the archaeological record and ancient texts do, however, suggest the diversity of dance practices in Palestine's distant past. They also lend some important insights and context to the more consistent historical documentation of dance in Palestine that began in the late nineteenth century.

The oldest first-hand written documentation of dance practices in the region that I have come across is about 3,800 years old. It appears in a long letter from King Zimri-Lim of Mari (a kingdom that stretched from Palestine to Persia) to his wife Queen Siptu. Inscribed in cuneiform in 1800 BC, the following passage was preserved on a clay tablet, now on display at the Syrian Museum of Archeology in Aleppo:

> I am now directing to you female weavers, among which there are priestesses. Select the priestesses and assign the rest to weaving establishments. Choose from among these and previous weavers thirty – or as many as are worth selection – handsome ones, and assign them to Warad-Ilishu. Have Warad-Ilishu teach them the Subarean dances, but their figures are not to be changed. Be careful with their ration so their looks will not change.[3]

This tablet suggests several interesting ideas about dance in the region of Palestine in ancient times. Almost four millennia ago, set choreographic patterns were directly taught to females by what might be considered to be a dance guru. The concern over the women's diet and appearance suggests that the dancers were valued according to their aesthetic appeal. This, in turn, indicates that these dances were meant to be performed and viewed (by a deity or human audience), not just participated in. That the king finds it necessary

to indicate the particular dance type, the 'Subarean' dances, suggests that there might have been a variety of specific choreographies or dance styles in existence. That these dances were required to be taught implies that they may have involved specific and refined choreographic patterns that the dancers were not familiar with from a social context. There is also the suggestion that the role of being a dancer is somewhat secondary to that of being a priestess, perhaps indicating that dancers were a bit lower in the existing cultural hierarchy.

This clay tablet provides a small glimpse into a specific ancient dance practice within a particular social environment. While it does not provide a comprehensive picture of dance practices in Palestine four millennia ago, it does offer some insights into the complexity and potential diversity of dance practices in local history.

Some further impressions might be gained from pictorial remnants. An older clay seal from northern Palestine in the third millennium BC possibly depicts a dancing line. Differing from similar impressions of human activity at the time, the figures' arms are upraised (perhaps linked shoulder to shoulder) and the heads are elongated rather than flat (possibly suggesting faces turned upwards). The figures seem to be behind a facade or cultic structure, which may have provided the activity with a religious or a practical (e.g. harvest, building) context.[4]

6   An early cultic scene? Impression taken from an Early Bronze Age cylinder seal in Northern Palestine
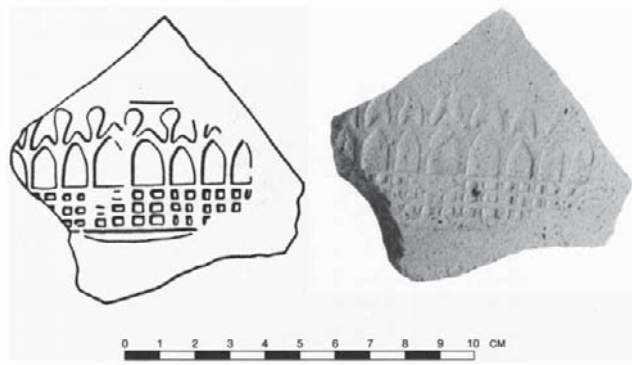
left: **7**   Four figures form a circle in a movement ritual within this Late Bronze Age cultic stand

right: 8   A dancing lute player is suspended in action within this Late Bronze Age tile from the Canaanite town of Laish

A more complex impression portrays moving figures facing left, connected arms to shoulders in a circle or a line. This line formation encircles a clay stand that was found on the steps of a raised platform in a Philistine temple on the Mediterranean coast (near present-day Tel-Aviv) dating from the eleventh century BC.[5]

A more distinct image of stylized movement can be seen on a tile from the Canaanite town of Laish in Palestine, from sometime between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries BC. This tile depicts a man playing a stringed instrument and twisting his right leg in an impractical manner, possibly suggesting a dance that was designed for its aesthetic value.[6] He also appears to be wearing a mask, which might suggest that the dance was part of a performance to be viewed by a deity or a human audience (rather than simply a moment of more spontaneous social dance). A clay figurine from the tomb of Hurvat Kitmit in the Negev desert provides a slightly later example of a similarly stylized movement.[7]

These again do not define the boundaries of dance in Palestine during ancient times, but do indicate how it may have been valued and the diverse functions it might have played in the contemporary society.

DANCE IN THE BIBLE

Religious texts, if taken as a semi-historical documentation of events, also provide fragmented impressions of dance in ancient times. Some particularly vivid references suggest how dance was perceived in the Old Testament era.[8] Jephthah's daughter danced with timbrels to celebrate his return in Judges 11:34: 'Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.' Jephthah then went on to kill his only daughter for doing this dance, in order to appease God.

This reaction did not stop the daughters of Shiloh from dancing in the vineyards, however, in Judges 21:21: 'And watch, if the daughters of Shiloh

come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and seize each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.' Despite the abduction and forced marriage that dance inspired on this occasion, biblical women did not seem to be deterred from dancing. In 1 Samuel 18:6–7, the Israelite women danced to celebrate the massacring of an indigenous population:

> As they were coming home, when David returned from slaying the Philistine, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with timbrels, with songs of joy, and with instruments of music.
>
> And the women sang to one another as they made merry, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.'

Such dances did not only respond to the sufferings of fellow human beings. This event seems to echo the joyful dances that Israelites fell into after the drowning of Egyptians and horses in Exodus 15:19–21:

> For the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea. Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.
>
> Miriam answered them,
>
> > 'Sing to the LORD,
> > for He is highly exalted;
> > The horse and his rider
> > He has hurled into the sea.'

The Israelites were not the only ones dancing, however, as the local prophets of Baal supposedly danced to their god in 1 Kings 18:26: 'And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was

no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made.' In response to this display, Elijah went on to slaughter the dancing prophets.

Similarly, Michal was not so pleased with David's vigorous dancing as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem in Chronicles 1 15:29: 'And as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw king David dancing and making merry; and she despised him in her heart.' In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, dance goes on in the Old Testament, objectifying the female body and debating the 'Male Gaze'[9] in the Song of Solomon 6:13: 'Return, return, O Shulammite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. Why will ye look upon the Shulammite, as upon the dance before two armies?'

Dance maintains a role within political activation, however, as God ultimately beckons people to dance with patriotic fervour in Jeremiah 31:4: 'Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with timbrels, and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.'

While these and other biblical writings do not provide details on the dance movements or meanings, they do suggest the multifaceted nature of dance during the Old Testament era in Palestine. Dance had a social function as a means of expressing celebration and unity, and dance played a part in religious rituals. In the New Testament the notion of dance specifically as a performance art is more clearly alluded to in the first century AD, in reference to Salome's dance for King Herod in Mathew 14:6 (and Mark 6:22): 'But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodius danced before the company, and pleased Herod.' Herod was so pleased with this particular dance performance that he chopped off the head of John the Baptist. In the Apocrypha, further ideas are put forward: at the Last Supper Jesus Christ was attributed the phrase 'The Whole on high have part in our dancing,'[10] suggesting a belief that some dances in Palestine were also subject to a divine or other-worldly participation.

9   A *fellahin* dance during the Nabi Musa festivities in Jerusalem, April 1900

CONNECTING HISTORY WITH PREHISTORY

Across the following two millennia, Arab and Islamic literature provides little more detail, and makes only a few allusions to dance practices in Palestine specifically. For example, Abdallah Al-Ayashi – a jurist travelling from Morocco on a religious pilgrimage in 1663 – records encountering the ubiquitous *dhikr* (a Sufi form of music and movement) in the region.[11]

It can be very tempting to use the small windows into the past provided by ancient texts and archaeological remnants to construct a more comprehensive account of local dance history. To this end, imagining the connections between ancient cultural activities and more recent dance practices has been a particularly seductive pastime for many historians. Over the last two centuries such speculations have come to dominate popular cultural histories of the region. As the following chapters illustrate, associations with the ancient past have been used to promote the historical importance of contemporary cultural activity, and to support emerging political theories about cultural originality and identity.

While contemporary dance heritage might contain influences from ancient times, these influences may be exceedingly marginal and indistinguishable from more recent trends. As a result, the earliest realistic starting point for the construction of a local dance history might be the nineteenth century, when the documentation of local dance practices starts to become more common.

next page: 10   A Bedouin dance-game in southern Palestine, photographed by onlookers in the early 1900s

Part Two

1800–1947, Dance observed: the salvage paradigm

Detailed written impressions of dance in Palestine began to emerge through the travel writings of European and American Bible tourists in the early nineteenth century. Their observations generally reflected a desire to relive the travels of their biblical heroes. Local indigenous cultural activity was generally viewed as a decaying remnant of a more glorious ancient past, and the writers' accounts read as frustrated attempts to reconcile the local indigenous culture with imaginings of a biblical lifestyle.

This led to the notion of a stagnant indigenous culture in Palestine, which became more entrenched through the work of anthropologists at the start of the twentieth century. With well-meaning concerns over the impact of European colonization, these foreign and local anthropologists displayed 'a desire to salvage "authenticity" out of destructive historical change'.[1] Following the principles of such 'salvage' anthropology,[2] the indigenous culture was perceived as previously immobile and suddenly faced the risk of oblivion. They were followed by more politicized commentators seeking to connect contemporary cultural identities with the region's history. Such writers also observed late nineteenth-century dance practices in Palestine as an unchanging reflection of more ancient cultural activity, further solidifying the notion that local culture was static.

3   *The late Ottoman period*

Before European pilgrims began flocking to the Holy Land in the mid-nineteenth century, John Fuller's leisurely *Narrative of a tour through some parts of the Turkish Empire* recorded a region less acquainted with such tourists and their needs. Published in 1829, the book provides what might be the earliest English-language observation of a dance in Palestine. Fuller's description of a *zefi* (a celebratory procession that conducts a bridegroom from a meal or picnic to further celebrations at his home) occurs on the outskirts of Nazareth:

> On returning from one of these rides I had an opportunity of observing some of the ceremonies of a Galilean wedding. Two marriages were to be celebrated at the same time; and the bridegrooms with their friends had been dining in a shady field about half a mile from the village . . . The two bridegrooms rode side by side, turning their eyes neither to the left or right, and retaining a gravity of countenance which did not admit a muscle of their faces to be moved. They were equipped with the best clothes and arms that they either possessed or could collect among their friends. Their turbans were profusely ornamented with flowers, and each of them carried a huge nosegay in one hand, while with the other he

facing page: 11   Dervishes dancing in the Nabi Musa Parade in the early 1900s, near Jerusalem

held his pipe, which he seemed to puff as it were mechanically, at regular intervals. Their whole appearance, indeed, was that of two automatons on horseback.

The horses were each led by two men, and moved on at the slowest possible pace. The solemn gravity of the principal actors in this pageant was strongly contrasted with the wild and almost frantic demeanour of their companions, who were all on foot. At every fifty yards these latter stopped and formed a circle round the bridegrooms. One of them held in his hand a large figure dressed in woman's clothes, which he kept moving up and down, and dancing backwards and forwards, the rest clapping their hands and stamping violently with their feet, till they seemed overcome with the exertion. Loud shouts were heard from every side, and guns were fired off at intervals. At about halfway to the village the women were seated in a group, and as soon as the procession came up they rose and joined it; some of them running by the side of the bridegrooms, whose horses now quickened their pace; others falling into the rear and all joining in that peculiar cry which the women of the East are accustomed to use on occasions of rejoicing, and which can be compared to nothing more exactly than to the frequent rapid pronunciation of the words lillah, lillah, lillah in the shrillest tone imaginable.

The procession conducts the bridegroom to his own house; after which he escapes to that of the bride, leaving his companions to continue their revelry, which is generally kept up in the same way- dancing, shouting, clapping of hands, and firing guns till midnight.[1]

This passage introduces several ideas that relate to current perceptions of folkdance traditions in Palestine. While the ornamental procession described would seem an exotic event in twenty-first-century Palestine, the circular formation of the dancing group and the vigorous stamping and clapping are common actions in contemporary wedding dabkehs. John Fuller's account also provides some insights into the multifaceted nature of dance in Palestine in the early nineteenth century. As a very public spectacle, the zefi was a performative event. There were distinct roles that the participants adopted:

the bridegrooms remained unmoved, the friends formed circles, one dance leader/puppeteer manipulated a female effigy in dance movements.

This dancing effigy of the bride continued in such processions into the twentieth century (it was often constructed on a farming impliment),[2] but gradually became a less common feature of wedding processions. The idea behind the event remains, however, in the teasing local colloquial phrase 'Even a pitchfork can be made into a beauty'. This intimates that an unattractive woman can be made beautiful with the right make-up and clothes.[3]

Although Fuller encountered this event by chance, his observations as an outsider suggest how and why this wedding ritual might be enjoyed as a performance spectacle. Such staged events subsequently did become tourist attractions in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but this passage provides an early record of local dance occurring purely within the context of a social activity. By doing so, it provides some insight into the role of women at such public dance events. It would seem that while they were not central players in this particular zefi, they were by no means excluded.

Fuller's subsequent observation tells even more about the socio-political environment of the time, as he notes that the wedding party '. . . is composed indiscriminately of Christians and Mahometans, who live together in the greatest harmony'.[4] This provides a stark contrast to the far more troubled image of the local political scene in colonial histories of early nineteenth-century Palestine.[5] Early European research in the area[6] points to three principal divisions in the social organization of the population: between the nomadic Bedouin, peasant farmer *fellahin* and city-dwelling *baladeen*. The rural areas are presented as lawless during this time, with Bedouin and rural peasant bandit troops vying for control. Israeli historian Moshe Ma'oz suggests that the 1831 Egyptian invasion '. . . brought about an end to centuries of confusion and backwardness and opened a new stage of openness and modernization'.[7] This 'openness and modernization' was basically defined by European colonization and economic expansion into the area.

Historical research focusing on the perspectives of the indigenous population presents a very different interpretation of this era, however, one

that suggests vibrant economic activity, social tolerance and cultural cohesion across Palestine. The evidence has implied that there was little distinction between a highly mobile peasant population and Bedouin that were often involved in forms of agriculture.[8] At that time, the population of the plains was comparatively sparse but the land was heavily cultivated, as villagers living in the more densely populated hills worked them on a seasonal basis. Port cities such as Jaffa, Haifa, Gaza and Acre dotted the coast, but economic and political strength was based in the cities in the hills. Nablus was a base for regional commerce, and Jerusalem, with its religious significance, was an important legal centre for the Ottoman Empire.[9] A collective Palestinian identity was not expressed among the local population in the early nineteenth century, as people were more inclined to identify themselves through an 'urban patriotism'.[10] This personal association with a city (such as Jerusalem, Gaza, Hebron, Nablus etc.) reflected the district divisions that the Ottomans had formed in the region. The Ottomans did generally refer to the entire region geographically (if not politically) as Palestine (or Filistin), though, following the recognition of the area in the preceding eras.[11] The sense of a Palestinian community was further supported by social and economic networks that engendered an interdependence within Palestine, and a close relationship between urban, rural and nomadic populations.[12] As a result of regional trade partnerships over production and export (particularly of soap and olive oil), lawlessness on trade routes and in the rural hinterland might be considered the exception rather than the rule.[13]

Cultural cohesion in Palestine at this time might have been further supported by annual gatherings at religious festivities, such as the *Mawsim* (festival/pilgrimage) of *Nabi Musa* (the prophet Moses) between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, and to a lesser extent the *Mawsim* of *Nabi Ruben* (the prophet Ruben) near Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast. Both lasted a lunar month and drew together pilgrims from villages, towns and cities across the region.[14] The origin of the Nabi Musa pilgrimage has been attributed to Saladin, who, in the era of the Crusades sought a Muslim event in Jerusalem that would coincide with an annual peak in Christian and Jewish pilgrimage (during

Easter and Passover).[15] While it may have been instigated to ensure a large number of Muslims were in the city to defend it during the influx of other religions, the pilgrimage subsequently became an opportunity for annual celebrations involving popular music and dance. As such these feasts can be seen as important rituals of cultural solidarity between peasants and town-dwellers and as important annual forums for social exchange and continuity in the region.[16]

Although the vast majority of the population of Palestine in the nineteenth century was Muslim, very few villages had their own mosques. Islamic worship was centred around numerous shrines to saints, which existed in almost every village. Rural religious worship involved appealing to the saint in the local shrine, often to intervene on one's behalf in important matters. Indigenous folk Islam thus developed a particular, localized flavour, with Muslims visiting Christian churches with the same reverence as they paid to Islamic shrines.[17] As John Fuller suggests above, the dances at wedding celebrations provided a further cultural opportunity to cross social divisions and bind the mixed communities of Palestine during this era.

Perhaps the most overt sense of Palestinian community emerged from the popular rebellion against Egyptian military occupation in 1834. Centred in Nablus but undertaken across Palestine, this resistance movement (and the solidarity that it engendered) highlighted the social and political coordination between the urban centres and rural/nomadic communities in the region.[18] Perhaps in recognition of this cohesion, the Ottoman Empire established a temporary administrative entity (approximately along the borders of what would become British Mandate Palestine) three times during the nineteenth century – in 1830, 1840 and 1872.[19]

These colonial and indigenous histories present very different impressions of social cohesion in early nineteenth-century Palestine, but there is consensus on one point: the European-sponsored Egyptian invasion of Palestine in 1830 instigated massive and lasting change in the region.

THE EUROPEAN REDISCOVERY OF BIBLICAL PALESTINE

The Egyptian invasion and occupation of Palestine and Syria between 1831 and 1840 opened the region to European powers, particularly Britain, Russia, Prussia and France. Even after the Ottomans expelled the Egyptians in 1840, the European consulates and religious missions that had been established remained, under the guise of protecting religious minorities in the region. This led to rivalry over spheres of religious/cultural influence in Palestine, with the French supporting Catholics, the Russians supporting Orthodox Christians, and the British (and to a lesser extent the Prussians) supporting Protestants and Jews.[20]

This opening of European political and religious missions in Palestine subsequently also led to an opening of Palestine to the European imagination. European pilgrims and tourists arrived in increasing numbers, so that by the end of the century there were at least 20,000 such visitors every year.[21] Vast amounts of research on Palestine was undertaken by Europeans during this time, with more published on the relatively small region of Palestine than on any other part of the Middle East, aside from Egypt.[22] The scale of these publications in North America in the late nineteenth century is indicated by an incomplete bibliography of texts describing recent research conducted in the Bible lands. Compiled by E.C. Mitchell in 1887, this bibliography lists more than 350 books and articles (by American authors alone) from the preceding decades: the region's history had become the dominant issue in the vast majority of Western literature on Palestine in the nineteenth century.

While ancient ruins and archaeological remains were scoured in detail, this Western literature made relatively little comment on living cultural elements such as local dance or music. In Henry Stewardson's mammoth *Survey of Western Palestine*,[23] made for the Palestine Exploration Fund, the actual inhabitants of the region appear to be scurrying in the shadows of biblical ruins, like stray animals in an abandoned fair ground. The local contemporary culture only appears on the periphery, as a niggling distraction from the reconstruction of the biblical experience in the imagination of these writers.

Dance activities do emerge in some writings, however. Charles Dudley Warner provides a good illustration of the Mawsim of Nabi Musa in Jerusalem in 1875, albeit tempered by his own cultural perspective and biblical fantasies:

> Crowds of people thronged both sides of the road to the Mount of Olives and to Gethsemane, spreading themselves in the valley and extending away up the road of the Triumphal Entry; everywhere the most brilliant effects of white, yellow, red, yellow, grey, green. Black, and striped raiment: no matter what Orientals put on, it becomes picturesque, old coffee bags, old rags and carpets, anything. There could not be a finer place for a display than these two opposing hillsides, the narrow valley, and the winding roads, which increased the apparent length of the procession and set it off to the best advantage. We were glad of the opportunity to see this ancient valley of bones revived in a manner to recall the pageants and shows of centuries ago, and as we rode down the sunken road in advance of the procession, we imagined how we might have felt if we had been mounted on horses or elephants instead of donkeys, and if we had been conquerors leading a triumph, and these people on either hand had been cheering us instead of jeering us. Turkish soldiers, stationed every thirty paces, kept the road clear for the expected cavalcade. In order to see it and the spectators to the best advantage, we took position on the opposite sides of the valley and below the road around the Mount of Olives.
>
> The procession was a good illustration of the shallow splendor of the Orient; it had no order, no uniformity, no organization; it dragged itself along at the whim of its desperate squads. First came a guard of soldiers, then a little huddle of men of all sorts of colors and apparel, bearing several flags, among them the green Flag of Moses; after an interval another squad, bearing large and gorgeous flags, preceded by musicians beating drums and cymbals. In front of the drums danced, or rather hitched forward with stately steps, two shabby fellows throwing their bodies from side to side and casting their arms about, clashing cymbals and smirking with infinite conceit. At long intervals came other like bands with flags and music, in such disorder as scarcely to be told from the spectators, except that they

bore guns and pistols, which they continually fired into the crowd, with a reckless profusion of powder and the most murderous appearance. To these followed mounted soldiers in white, with a Turkish band of music, – worse than any military band in Italy; and after this the pasha, the governor of the city, a number of civil and military dignitaries and one or two high ulemas, and a green-clad representative of the Prophet, – a beggar on horseback, – on fiery horses which curveted about the crowd, excited by the guns, the music, and the discharge of a cannon now and then, which was stationed at the gate of St. Stephen. Among the insignia displayed were two tall instruments of brass, which twirled and glittered in the sun, not like the golden candlestick of the Jews, nor the 'host' of the catholics, nor the sistrum of the ancient Egyptians, but, perhaps, as Moslemism is a reminiscence of all religions, a caricature of all three.[24]

For many such American and British travellers writing of Palestine in the nineteenth century, it seemed that the actual pilgrimage could not match the sacred journeys undertaken in their imaginations. In describing Palestine as desolate, Mark Twain[25] typifies this disappointment. Absent were all the familiar colours and sounds from the nativity story and the passion play that had defined Christ's Palestine in Twain's American childhood. In their place stood the stubborn reality of a foreign culture and a harsh landscape.

Much of the literature generated by these tourists/pilgrims thus contributed to what Edward Said described as Orientalism: an occidental view in which the 'West' is perceived as austere, rational, dynamic and progressive, and the 'East' as sensual, irrational, stagnant and passive.[26] When the local living culture of Palestine was acknowledged in the observations of these nineteenth-century Orientalists, it tended to be presented with a speculation on the biblical origins of such activity. Local contemporary culture was generally perceived as a fragmented patchwork, the mongrel remains of the deliberate decision-making processes of ancient civilizations. This perception of cultural inertia thus provided a basis for the subsequent beliefs that nineteenth-century cultural traditions in Palestine were timeless.

The nineteenth century did bring some significant changes to the local society. Following the Egyptian invasion, Palestine's relationship with religion underwent major shifts. Jerusalem's *sharia* (Islamic law) courts were being radically adjusted as the Ottoman Empire was pressing for a new legal system fashioned on European models. The creation of the independent Sanjak of Jerusalem within the Ottoman Empire in 1872 increased the city's prestige as a legal centre in the region, and contributed to the subsequent growth of a Palestinian identity centred on Jerusalem.[27]

This was part of wider social changes in Palestine that might be attributed to the region's integration into the capitalist world market.[28] Most economically influential among these changes was the 1858 Ottoman Land Code. In certain areas, rural land ownership had been based on a collective system, with land parcels being rotated between kin groups on an annual basis. In the lowlands, the peasants generally participated in such *musba*, or communal tenure, whereas in the more populous highlands individual ownership – *mulk* – was more prevalent.[29] The 1858 code required that all land be registered with the state, ostensibly as a means of protecting small rural landowners from an urban elite that had begun to purchase large tracts of land.[30] It resulted, however, in a massive land grab by the wealthy and those with good connections to the Ottoman authorities. This process dispossessed local farmers of family-held land, placing them under tenancy agreements and the economic rule of absentee landlords living as far away as Beirut, Damascus and Constantinople.[31] As the cash economy grew in the region, so did money-lending schemes and debt. More and more peasants lost the title to their land as they failed to pay loans subject to huge interest rates.[32]

THE EARLY ENTERTAINMENT TRADE IN DANCE

The economic upheavals from the Ottoman Land Code and the influx of foreign capital through tourism appear to have stimulated a nineteenth-century entertainment trade in indigenous folk culture. Social/participatory

music and dance practices were adapted and performed as visual and aural entertainment for parties of visiting foreigners. These performances were sometimes presented as semi-realistic occasions, as though part of an ongoing wedding party that had come to visit the tourist's campsite. Generally written about by Orientalists as an imposition on their time rather than a desired cultural experience, these performances seemed to be coordinated through the local guides as a matter of local custom rather than personal choice.[33] This suggests that they had become an established practice in the local tourist business.

Eliciting money at the end through spontaneous donation, or demands of 'baksheesh', the performers seem to be from economically deprived environments, and the performances often a tired process of repetition. These dance performances, as street entertainment for tourists, might be understood as the most accessible window on local dance practices for Europeans visiting Palestine in the late nineteenth century. They thus contributed to European impressions of local dance practices, although they did not fully reveal how dance manifested in more restricted social contexts.

The following two accounts by Henry Baker Tristram suggest that by the early 1860s such music and dance events had become a common practice. The foreign label 'fantasia' was given to describing them – a term that recurs in the literature of Europeans describing rural dances in Palestine until the middle of the twentieth century. Tristram's first account describes a men's song/dance on 1 January 1864, in Jericho:

> In the evening our guards took it into their heads to treat us to a 'fantasia', or native dance, in honour of M.'s arrival and the completion of the party. It is hardly a dance, scarcely acting, but rude it certainly is. One of them standing with his drawn sword, and facing the others, gave the time as they commenced with a series of deep guttural grunts in 2/4 time, accompanied with a clapping of hands. Then came an extempore song of endless verses in praise of Howadjls, their success in shooting, the style of their horsemanship, and of course a prophetic intimation of their

generosity with gifts. All this long tale continued confined within three semitones, and also in 2/4 time. Then the grunts and the ducking, and hideous gasps, as they clapped their hands – then the song again, and so on for nearly an hour, till we stopped them and distributed a backshish for this Bedouin concert. Neither the dance nor the measure was like those of the Zickars I have often seen in Africa, although the monotonous chant and the indescribable grunting or soughing recalled them.[34]

Tristram's account is purportedly of Bedouin men, with the sung verses supposedly recalling the virtues of the tribe. It would appear to describe a participatory *sahje*, in which those gathered at a celebratory social occasion sing and repeat lines to each other. Tristram explains that the following performance (given the next day, again in Jericho) is by *fellahin*, or peasant women.

12 Encampment of the pilgrims at Jericho, 1 April 1839

In the afternoon we were serenaded by another fantasia or Zickkar; this time by the women of Er Riha, the village which stands on the sight of ancient Jericho. They came up and formed in front of the tents with loud shouts, and the strange 'trill trill' with the tongue which we had often heard from the women of Algiers. The dance consisted in the movement of the body rather than of the limbs, and one woman in the front of the circle, with a scarf in both hands, gave the time gracefully enough to the twenty-three performers who made up the party. They were a miserable and degraded looking set, scantily clad in blue cotton, all very filthy; and excepting two or three of the younger ones, most repulsive in feature. I never saw such vacant, sensual, and debased features in any group of human beings of the type and form of whites. There was no trace of mind in the expression of any one of these poor creatures, who scarcely know they have a soul and have not an idea beyond the day. They are the despised women of despised fellahin, who repay their wives with the contempt they meet with from the Bedouin. The women of the Ghor, unlike Moslems of the towns, do not veil, and truly there is no need for them to do so. In vain we told them it was our Sabbath, and that we did not wish for their performance. Still they persevered, till we left them and dispersed, in the hope of getting quit of them. But to no purpose. The Amazons of the party rushed in pursuit and caught L., whom they forcibly dragged back. We now observed amongst them a little childish figure completely covered, and an old red silk handkerchief tied over head and face. It was discovered that this was a wedding celebration, and that the poor child was the bride, who was led around only one hand exposed, into which everyone was expected to put a piece of silver as a wedding gift. This done, they retired, singing and dancing our praises; while we felt, as we looked after them, that if there is one thing more trying than to witness pain which one cannot alleviate, it is to behold degradation which one cannot elevate. And this, too, on the very spot where the Redeemer had taught and healed. [35]

The scene that Tristram describes here would seem to be from a pre-wedding *henna* party for women, with the trilling ululation preceding a typical

zaghareed form of women's wedding song. In describing the dance, Tristram makes reference to the women's use of the body rather than the limbs. This raises questions over the actual nature of the movement, as later historians generally claim that there was no 'belly' dancing in local folklore, and that it was only later imported from Lebanon and Egypt. Tristram's suggestion that the movement is 'of the body' could be an allusion to isolation in the body (which would seem to suggest belly dancing), or it could mean that the body moved as one, up and down as in jumps and steps, which would be more like dabkeh. Unfortunately, no further details are offered by Tristram, and so the exact nature of the movement appears uncertain.

Tristram describes one woman 'in the front' of the circle, although this could mean in front of a semi-circle or in the front of a full circle. Standing in the front of a full circle would seem to place the dancer outside it, which would be a difficult way to lead a group in dance, requiring a very dexterous ability to follow movement. From other aspects of Tristram's description, it seems more probable that Tristram referred to a semi-circle, with the leading dancer in the space in the centre. If so, this patterning may have involved a particular adaptation in local dance practices, opening the circle for the purposes of allowing a non-participating audience to view the event.

The dancer 'giving time' presumably means leading the others rhythmically and possibly suggesting movement patterns and sung verses. In a purely social context, such a role at a henna is generally considered to be taken by the mother or mother-in-law.[36] On this occasion, it seems to be filled by the best dancer, implying that cultural codes may have been adapted in order to appeal to a non-participating audience.

That these women allowed foreign men to observe them dancing suggests an open physicality among the peasant women of the Jordan valley. Tristram's subsequent comparison to the veiled women of the towns indicates the diversity in urban/rural social mores in Palestine at the time.

It is uncertain how widespread the practice of performing traditional dances for tourists was in Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century, although several accounts would suggest it was quite common. By

the mid-1880s Charles Dudley Warner claims that such performances were 'an imposition to which all tourists are subjected, it being taken for granted that we want to see a native dance'.[37] The following account by Warner is of one such dance performance presented near Bethlehem in 1875, presented at dusk by a group of Bedouin:

> The men dance first. Some twenty or thirty of them form in a half-circle, standing close together; their gowns are in rags, their black hair is tossed in tangled disorder, and their eyes shine with animal wildness. The only dancing they perform consists in a violent swaying of the body from side to side in concert, faster and faster as the excitement rises, with an occasional stamping of the feet, and continual howling like darwishes. Two vagabonds step into the focus of the half-circle, and hop about in the most stiff-legged manner, swinging enormous swords over their heads, and giving from time to time a war whoop, — it seems precisely the dance of the North American Indians. We are told, however, that the howling is a song, and that the song relates to meeting an enemy and demolishing him. The longer the performance goes on the less we like it, for the uncouthness is not varied by a single graceful motion, and the monotony becomes unendurable. We long for the women to begin.
>
> When the women begin, we wish we had the men back again. Creatures uglier and dirtier than these hags could not be found. Their dance is much the same as that of the men, a semi-circle, with a couple of women to jump about and whirl swords. But the women display more fierceness and more passion as they warm to their work, and their shrill cries, disheveled hair, loose robes, and frantic gestures give us new ideas of the capacity of the gentle sex; you think that they would not only slay their enemies, but drink their blood and dance upon their fragments. Indeed, one of the songs is altogether belligerent; it taunts the men with cowardice, it scoffs at them for not daring to fight, it declares that the women like the sword and know how to use it, and thus, and thus, and thus, lunging their swords into the air, would they pierce the imaginary enemy. But these sweet creatures do not sing altogether of war; they sing of love in the same

strident voices and fierce manner: 'My lover will meet me by the stream, he will take me over water'.

When the performance is over they all clamor for backsheesh; it is given in a lump sum to their sheikh, and they retire into the bushes and wrangle over its distribution. The women return to us and say, 'Why you give our backsheesh to sheikh? We no get any. Men get all.' It seems that women are animated nowadays by the same spirit the world over, and make the same complaints of the injustice of men.[38]

The number of individuals performing in this illustration suggests that such performances perhaps involved whole villages. This in turn might indicate that these performances were not just undertaken by peripheral members of the community and disapproved of by the community as a whole. The level of commitment that the local community invested in such performances highlights the economic and social value accorded to this probably part-time occupation.

While it may be argued that such dances were only performed publicly in Palestine at this time by people in a lower socio-economic class, such examples display a precedent in Palestine of women publicly performing dance in groups that predates any imitation of the West. It also illustrates the central roles that women undertook in such dances and the vibrant types of movements that they performed. This becomes an important reference point when considering later claims relating to the 'traditional' role of women in indigenous dance practices.

These social participatory dances had been adapted as performances for tourists, to provide a representation of local culture. This representation process does not appear to be part of a coordinated political campaign; instead it seems very localized and designed simply to trade on tourist curiosity. Adaptations may have been based on suggestions from foreign observers (such as opening the circle into a semi-circle so that viewers could see the dance better without having to participate themselves), but these changes are presumably not attempts by the dancers to emulate foreign dance productions that they had personally observed. Given the absence of foreign dance troupes

touring the region in that period, and the peasant dancers' obvious lack of opportunity to travel abroad and copy performance techniques, much of the adaptation process would have been derived directly from local initiatives. This suggests a localized process of innovation and cultural evolution, responding to changes in the socio-economic environment.

By seeking to attract the attention of foreign tourists, however, such social dance practices were possibly rendered less culturally meaningful. Through Palestine's nineteenth-century tourism business, dance in some contexts might thus have lost some of its value as an intimate and interconnected part of the community's cultural practices, but it might also have gained a new status as a form of collective representation to others.

'BACCHANTIC MADNESS'

Public performances provided the most common way for tourists to observe local dance culture, but other more private events also drew their attention. Of particular fascination were the physical expressions associated with burial and mourning. In 1875, inside a Muslim cemetery around Rachel's tomb, near Bethlehem, Charles Dudley Warner encountered a mourning ritual that he was told occurred every Thursday afternoon. The following account suggests that such movements were not just spontaneous expressions, but followed stylized and ritualized patterns passed on across the community and down generations through imitation:

> There is, alas ! everywhere in Judaea something to drive away sentiment as well as pious feeling. The tomb of Rachel is now surrounded by a Moslem cemetery, and as we happened to be there on Thursday we found ourselves in the midst of a great gathering of women, who had come there, according to their weekly custom, to weep and wait.
>
>   You would not see in farthest Nubia a more barbarous assemblage, and not so fierce an one. In the presence of these mourners the term

'gentler sex' has a ludicrous sound. Yet we ought not to forget that we were intruders upon their periodic grief, attracted to their religious demonstration merely by curiosity, and fairly entitled to nothing but scowls and signs of aversion. I am sure that we should give bold Moslem intruders upon our hours of sorrow at home no better reception. The women were in the usual Syrian costume; their loose gowns gaped open at the bosom, and they were without veils, and made no pretence of drawing a shawl before their faces; all wore necklaces of coins, and many of them had circlets of coins on the head, with strips depending on them, also stiff with silver pieces. A woman's worth was thus reckoned, for her entire fortune was on her head. A pretty face was here and there to be seen, but most of them were flaringly ugly, and – to liken them to what they most resembled – physically and mentally the type of the North American squaws. They were accompanied by all their children, and the little brats were tumbling about the tombs, and learning the language of woe.

Among the hundreds of women present, the expression of grief took two forms, – one active, one more resigned. A group seated itself about a tomb, and the members swayed their bodies two and fro, howled at the top of their voices, and pretended to weep. I had the infidel curiosity to go from group to group in search of a tear, but I did not see one. Occasionally some interruption, like the arrival of a new mourner, would cause the swaying and howling to cease for a moment, or it would now and then be temporarily left to the woman at the head of the grave, but presently all would fall to again and abandon themselves to the luxury of agony. It was perhaps unreasonable to expect tears from creatures so withered as most of these were; but they worked themselves into a frenzy of excitement, they rolled up their blue checked cotton handkerchiefs, drew them across their eyes, and then wrung them out with gestures of despair. It was the driest grief I ever saw.

The more active mourners formed a ring in a clear spot. Some thirty women standing with their faces towards the centre, their hands on each others shoulders, circled round with unrhythmic steps, crying and singing, and occasionally jumping up and down with all their energy, like the

dancers of Horace, 'Striking the ground with equal feet', coming down upon the earth with a heavy thud, at the same time slapping their faces with their hands; then circling around again with faster steps, and shriller cries, and more prolonged ululations, and anon pausing to jump and beat the ground with a violence sufficient to shatter their frames. The loose flowing robes, the clinking of silver ornaments, the wild gleam of their eyes, the bacchantic madness of their salutations, the shrill shrieking and wailing, conspired to give their demonstration an indescribable barbarity. This scene has recurred every Thursday for, I suppose, hundreds of years, within a mile of the birthplace of Jesus.[39]

Warner provides some vivid impressions here of a *latm* ritual, which will be discussed at more length later. This account is particularly important as it indicates how dance functioned as a carrier of cultural trauma in nineteenth-century Palestine. Such cultural trauma can be understood as a process that helps pass the pain felt by one on to the many: a specific tragic event occurring in the past (e.g. the murder of ancestors), the present (e.g. an unfolding natural disaster) or the future (e.g. from the threat of military action) is promoted through cultural activity. In doing so, the trauma felt by the actual victims of such an event is projected onto a wider population group, such as a tribe, nation or race. Cultural trauma is often considered in terms of how literature, film, news and television can inspire people to empathize with the suffering of others;[40] Warner's observations above record how dance was used as a medium to foster this sense of shared pain. The expression of feigned grief (although aggravating Warner's Victorian sense of emotional sincerity and restraint), suggests that this dance practice was not just for the emotional release of personal pain, but rather a means of consolidating collective identity and solidarity. As such, it presents an interesting precedent for the political use of dance as a mediator of cultural trauma in the late twentieth century.

'A LAND WITHOUT A PEOPLE'

In contrast to earlier travel writers (such as John Fuller), these mid- to late nineteenth-century European biblical tourists generally disregarded the living culture of Palestine. When local dances did enter their observations, it was met with disappointment or disgust. Perhaps nothing could have matched these travellers' imaginings of a pious biblical community in Palestine. Perhaps the Cartesian split between the mind and body (a popular philosophy in Northern Europe at the time) made the very embodied culture of Palestine seem abhorrent.[41] Or perhaps it was simply that the dances that the indigenous population enjoyed were too different from the aesthetic sensibilities of these foreign tourists. Whatever the reason for their disdainful reactions to local dance culture, their writings took on an ominously political dimension within the prevalent European mood of chauvinistic nationalism, racial superiority and imperial ambition.[42] The popular acceptance of (and belief in) empire and colonization at home can depend upon the depiction of cultural inferiority in foreign subject races.[43] As a result of the huge volume of travel writings on the Holy Land, by the second half of the nineteenth century the European public were more convinced of their 'rights of ownership' over Palestine than they were of their authority over any other non-European territory.[44] These travellers' impressions of highly emotive (and seemingly nonsensical) dance practices may have helped to convince European readers that the population of Palestine required subjugation and tutelage in order to develop and ascend to the contemporary civilized world. In such a view, Palestine held the dregs of an ancient culture, but was bereft of (and thirsty for) the sort of people who might revitalize it. Lord Shaftesbury's rallying cry of 'a land without a people for a people without a land' thus seemed to refer less to an actual absence of people so much as to an absence of 'civilized' people.

As the Ottoman Empire slowly crumbled, the colonization of Palestine became an urgent priority for several European parties. The Zionist goal of creating Israel as a national homeland for Jews was but one colonial dash towards Palestine from Europe at the time, and relatively late to join the

competition.[45] The Zionist colonial movement (and the subsequent Israeli state) might thus be recognized as a product of the political values of nineteenth-century Europe. This contrasts with a more romantic national myth that Israel emerged as Jews the world over were following their timeless longing to return to the Promised Land. At the end of the nineteenth century, Zionism as a political/colonial ideology still remained highly unpopular among Jews in North America, with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations roundly condemning the notion of a Jewish state in 1898.[46] As the Reverend Dr Isaac Wise, the Union's founder declared,

> We are men and patriots everywhere . . . Americans in America; English-men in England; Frenchmen in France; Germans in Germany, and so in all countries, without 'if' or 'when', without dodge or subterfuge, and after we have protested loudly and emphatically against any and every denial of our civic virtues, now come these Zionists and proclaim us as members of a foreign nation, one that has not existed, in fact, for nearly eighteen centuries, give us the lie, and brand us forever fossils and mummies, fit subjects for a museum.[47]

Much Christian support for a restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land had emerged in Britain, however, through the Anglican and Evangelical movements (and their newfound love of End of Days and Armageddon scenarios) in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[48] Under the patronage of Lord Shaftesbury and Prime Minister Palmerston, political Zionism thrived as it appeared to serve both the colonial and the religious interests of Britain.

As plans for settling a European population in Palestine were put forward by Britain and other European states, plans for the removal of the existing non-European inhabitants varied from economic inducements to violent confrontations.[49] These colonial plans were increasingly being recognized as problematic, however, as the indigenous population of Palestine steadily remained there during the second half of the nineteenth century. An Ottoman

survey indicates that this population was 411,000 by 1860. By 1890 this figure had grown to 553,000, and by 1914 to 738,000.[50]

By 1880, just before the first major wave of Zionist immigration, there were 24,000 Jews in Palestine, less than 5 per cent of the population.[51] While minor waves of early colonial immigration during this period brought small numbers of Jews and Christians from Europe, these immigrants did not have a major impact on the religious demography of the region. The indigenous population during the late nineteenth century remained predominantly Muslim, with a substantial Christian minority and a smaller number of Jews and other religious sects.[52] The Jewish population of Palestine was still marginal by 1897, when Zionism's popular founder Theodore Herzl convened the First World Zionist Congress in Switzerland and subsequently determined that the indigenous population of Palestine would have to be removed:

> We must expropriate gently the private property on the state assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it employment in our country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. Let the owners of the immoveable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back.[53]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Baron Edmond de Rothschild formed the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association and began buying land in Palestine from absentee landlords and forcibly uprooting and removing the local tenant farmers to make way for Zionist colonies.[54] Incorporated into the World Zionist Organization in 1907, the Jewish National Fund purchased land exclusively for Zionists and refused the displaced local inhabitants employment there.[55]

By the eve of the First World War and the end of the Ottoman Empire, these new land purchases still amounted to only 1.6 per cent of historic Palestine.

The Jewish population of Palestine had grown to 90,000, or 12 per cent of the local population.[56] Less than half of these were immigrants, however,[57] and of those that were, most were Jews seeking refuge from persecution in Russia rather than ideologically motivated colons.[58] By this time, the Christian European attempt to colonize and repopulate the region (most ambitiously the efforts of the Swabian Templars) had faltered through a lack of willing immigrants.[59]

The methods of indigenous resistance to Zionist colonization were limited and varied. The town-dwelling nobles reacted with letters of protest to Constantinople and the villagers and Bedouin whose land and resources had been curtailed by the new Zionist land purchases responded with bandit-style raids on these settlements.[60] Such responses were mostly sporadic, but region-wide protests against Zionism began to be coordinated in Palestine as early as 1891.[61]

As political Zionism was growing in Europe, a nationalist Arab movement was growing across the Middle East.[62] There were more than 500 state, Christian and Muslim schools in Palestine at this stage, and in 1909 the leading Al-Sakakini School in Jerusalem replaced Islamic history with Arab history in its curriculum, indicating a shift towards both secular and nationalist ideals in the region.[63] This also might have occurred in response to the Young Turks revolution of 1908. Through them the Ottoman Empire seemed to promise a new period of self-determination for the indigenous population of Palestine, within a greater Arab state.[64] Such hopes soon dissipated, however, as the Young Turks seemed intent on retaining the Turkish nature, and reach, of the Ottoman Empire. The advent of the First World War soon reshaped these plans again, bringing a whole new set of rulers for the indigenous population of Palestine.

At this stage, political identification among the indigenous population was generally aligned with wider regional struggles for independence from colonial European and Ottoman powers. Reflecting this, the First Palestinian National Congress in 1918 resolved that Palestine should be an integral part of any future independent Syrian state.[65]

'THE IMMOVABLE EAST'

Academic accounts of dance in Palestine began to emerge in the writings of foreign observers by the end of the nineteenth century. Salvage anthropologists, continuing the popular belief that culture in Palestine was a static phenomenon, sought to document what they considered to be the residues of a biblical society. Although generally more sympathetic towards this living culture than the previous foreign writers had been, these anthropologists nevertheless sought to consolidate the idea that local culture had been frozen in time since antiquity. Observing dervishes singing and dancing in the Judaean desert, Philip Baldensperger described how, 'as in the bowing of the golden calf, modern dancers bow down, prompted by some long lost motive.'[66] These writers' predominant concern was that what they commonly referred to as 'the Immovable East . . .' would soon disappear '. . . as the introduction of occidental learning and railroads is fast changing the customs of the people'.[67] These researchers thus concentrated on rural settings, feeling certain that the '. . . customs observed here are ancient and have been preserved practically in their purity'.[68] One consequence of this salvaging attitude was that the culture of the towns and cities of Palestine was generally ignored, making the socio-cultural activities and networks of Palestine appear entirely provincial in the European cultural record.

These salvage anthropologists do present several clear descriptions of local dance practices that are particularly revealing, especially as they are absent from the later dance histories of the region. Of particular note are accounts of the female mourning dances. Philip Baldensperger gave a brief description of how women tore their clothes, smeared their faces with soot and with dishevelled hair 'wildly danced about the grave, singing . . . as though trying to induce the departed one to return'.[69] The observations of Spoer (made between 1902 and 1904) provide another account of the mourning ritual that had previously been described by Warner:

Meanwhile the women mourners have begun their special performance, which has its own laws and customs. They divide into two groups, first at the house of mourning, and later at the burial-ground. The older women sit; the younger dance in a circle, laying hands on the shoulders of their neighbours, right and left, stopping now and then to beat their breasts, tear their hair, and shriek and scream. Whenever the name of the dead is mentioned, one of the relatives steps into the middle of the circle, beats her face with her hands, takes her share in the wailing, and returns to her place. This *latm*, or wailing dance, is repeated constantly during seven days, either at the house or at the grave. Some woman who understands the duty often takes the lead in singing the virtues of the deceased, the rest taking up the words line by line. The melodies are various, and are known to all present. After the first few weeks the mourning is less frequent, and takes place mainly on Thursdays, just after sunrise.[70]

Most noteworthy from this account is the level of structured choreography that appears to pervade the scene. The circle connected shoulder to shoulder, the turns taken in leading the wailing and the melodies chanted all provide the expressive gestures with a ritualized format. It would seem that, similar to the performed wedding dabkehs, dancers making solo improvisations are supported by a chorus of other dancers who maintain a rhythmic pattern.

In another essay, Spoer describes the dances at a wedding in the village of Siloam (just outside of Jerusalem), at the turn of the century:

After some time the men began the sword-dance. While the musicians played, one of the guests took up a sword and whirled it around his head, twisting it skilfully around his fingers. In his long flowing, white robes, the head well poised, brandishing the sword, every motion graceful and well directed, the body gently swinging from side to side, keeping time with the music, now throwing the sword into the air, he presented in the dimly illuminated room a magnificent spectacle. When tired, the performer handed the sword to another guest, who in turn executed the dance, trying

13   Women performing a wedding dance and song in Bethlehem in the
1940s

to surpass his predecessor in the display of skill. Those who refused had to purchase their exemption by a small sum of money, which was given to the performing musicians. This gift is called *subas*.[71]

Of particular note here, Spoer observed that those guests who were not willing or able to put on such a display were expected to make a small payment to the musicians. In this sense dancing was considered as a payment in goodwill. This idea of dance having some sort of value as a social currency extends the previously discussed notion that dance functioned to maintain solidarity and cohesion in the community. It also further supports the idea that, even within such social occasions, dance in Palestine was enjoyed as a performed art – designed for observation and not just for participation. Illustrating female involvement in such performances, the following account comes from a later event at the same wedding:

> To these we were now invited as a special mark of favour . . . No men were present except the father of the bride and one or two of her nearest male relatives and her little brother. Here we saw the mother of the bride dance to the beating of two small kettle drums. It was a graceful swinging of the body, while she lifted her arms in a rhythmical motion, and showed coquettishly her well-shaped, bare feet.[72]

Another female dance practice that became less prominent in subsequent histories of dance in Palestine involved movements with swords. Sword dances featuring women appear to have been common as both a social practice and a tourist curiosity at the time; Baldensperger referred to a woman juggling a sword while dancing solo.[73] In another account of a Bedouin wedding, Spoer described a sword dance as more of a competitive performance.

> A favourite game is for the young men, with arms interlocked, to form a circle before a young girl who holds in each hand a drawn sword. She stands at some distance from the fire with her back to it. Stepping slowly

towards the men she sways gracefully backwards and forwards, whirling the swords above her head. The young men, swaying rhythmically and singing simple words of invitation, – 'O be welcome' or the like, – beat the ground in measured time with their feet, and seek to drive her backward towards the fire, while she defends herself with swords. Should they succeed, she kneels down, holding one sword above her head; the men also kneel, but, incited by the onlookers, especially the women, she will seize a chance to regain her feet and continue her dancing, driving them away at sword point. When exhausted, she will escape and shelter amongst the women.[74]

Hans Spoer further claimed that in the south of Palestine, the sword-wielding leader of such dances was usually a man, while in the north this dance was usually performed by the bride of the wedding.[75] Such generalizations relating to the geographic spread of cultural practices often emerged from speculation rather than from extensive observation, and were seemingly motivated by a desire to construct a comprehensive impression of a distinct Palestinian culture based on its biblical heritage.

Despite such a tendency towards simplification, these salvage anthropologists' accounts indicate the diversity of functions that dance had in Palestine in late Ottoman times. More than just a celebratory activity at weddings, stylized physical expressions were integral to male–female interaction, expressions of religious piety, reflections of (and even possibly preparations for) battle, expressions of personal anguish at tragedy and the collectivization of trauma. Simultaneously contributing to the musical accompaniment through singing, chanting, clapping and stamping, the participants in these various dance events were not mute movers, separating visual expression from aural expression. These factors in particular take on a significance through their absence in later revival movements of indigenous folk dances.

4 *The British Mandate*

'. . . PEOPLES NOT YET ABLE TO STAND BY THEMSELVES'

The First World War (1914–18) induced a new set of traumatic circumstances for the inhabitants of Ottoman Palestine. The region was crisscrossed by foreign armies, and enforced conscription took many young men from poorer rural areas in particular, leaving villages populated by women, children and the elderly. Thousands died of smallpox, cholera, typhus and starvation as locust plagues decimated crops. As a result of both death and emigration, the population of Palestine had dropped by 1 in 14 by the war's conclusion – from 738,000 to 689,000.[1] The Ottoman Empire no longer existed and the region of Palestine was placed under the control of the League of Nations by the European victors of the war.

As might be expected after a century of Orientalist scrutiny and colonial meandering, the League of Nations needed little to convince itself that the indigenous population of Palestine were an inherently subject people. Determining that for regions 'inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves . . . the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations',[2] the League of Nations passed political control of Palestine to British Mandatory rule in 1920.

facing page: 14 A Dervish leading the Nabi Musa parade from Jerusalem to the monastery of the Prophet Moses near the Dead Sea in April 1900

'ARABIC DANCING IS A JOKE'

In April 1923 Eunice Holliday, an expatriate English woman living in Jerusalem – where her husband worked on engineering projects – wrote a letter home describing the Nabi Musa parade (earlier reviewed by Charles Dudley Warner in 1875):

> The procession was the queerest I have ever seen, a more disorganised affair you could not imagine, but then that is typical of the country. The people came along in batches, just a crowd with banners of silk, of all colours, then a crowd dancing – Arabic dancing is a joke – then a crowd singing and waving swords or sticks and, interspersed, groups of mounted police and soldiers to see there was no fighting . . . father and mother were worried for our safety here, and wrote of Arabs with daggers waiting around corners, but I would just like to tell you that the only unpleasantness we have had was from two British soldiers drunk on our doorstep. [3]

This passage suggests the bewildering cultural distance that might have been felt between the new colonial rulers of the region and the local indigenous population. Local dance customs, albeit perhaps appreciated among foreign anthropologists, were yet to gain universal admiration in the governing British society. As Eunice Holliday infers, however, actually experiencing this new relationship helped challenge some of the 'Arabs with daggers' stereotypes that those back in Britain might have held about the local population. At the same time, her letter draws attention to how the behaviour of British soldiers drunk in the holy city of Jerusalem might have influenced local attitudes towards British rule in Palestine.

A decade later, the following passage (from renowned British journalist Henry Vollam Morton) indicates the political tensions underpinning the Nabi Musa procession and its dances:

> There was a flash of swords in the sunlight. The straggling procession halted. A ring was formed around two men armed with swords and

bucklers. They executed a movement, half dance and half fight, hitting their bucklers by agreement, one–two, one–two, just like actors in a Shakespearean duel. The crowds applauded loudly.

Then came groups of wild haired fanatics who drugged their senses with a weird dance and a phrase known as the *Zikr*, or 'the mentioning'. It was a rhythmic repetition of the words 'La illalah illa llah . . . La illalah illa llah . . . La illalah illa llah . . .' – 'There is no God but God.' The effect of this repetition, and the shuffling dance that accompanied it, seemed to make them drunk. They sagged at the knees, wiped the sweat from their faces, tossed their wild hair, and all the time their lips moved in the 'mentioning' and their eyes were vague and trance-like.

There were other bands intent on a different kind of excitement. They were mounted on the shoulders of their friends and were rushed rapidly up and down a clear space in the procession, beating time with their hands or with sticks like choir-masters, and chanting something to which the crowd responded with enthusiasm. I asked a man next to me what they were saying.

'They are cursing the Zionists,' he replied. 'They are singing: "O Zionists what right have you in this country? What have you in common with us? If you stay in this country you will all find graves."'

This gave me the clue to the whole procession. It was not an Arab procession at all! It was something from the Old Testament. This was the way the Hebrew fanatics danced and cried out against the Philistines and the Canaanites. The antics of dignified and elderly Moslems, who came gyrating at the head of their villagers to the sound of timbrels and of handclapping, were surely those of David . . .

It seemed to me that this procession of Nebi Musa preserved the atmosphere and the crowds that came 'singing unto Zion' for the great festivals of the year. It was a crowd like this, a crowd of excited turbulent peasants, that congested the streets of Jerusalem when Christ joined the pilgrimage at Passover time. It was a mob like this that cried 'Crucify Him!'[4]

Even though he continues the Orientalist view that contemporary local cultural actions are predetermined by the biblical past, Morton nevertheless provides descriptions of dance that indicate the ways in which vibrant physical movement remained a mode of collective expression during this period. That these dances were presented within a forum that protested at Zionist colonization is further evidence of the political relevance of dance at the time. Shared ideas of protest were not just spoken – they were embodied.

POPULATION SHIFTS AND TENSIONS

During the British Mandate period, Palestine experienced a massive adjustment in its ethnic and religious composition. Increasing European Jewish immigration to the region as part of Zionist colonization resulted in a considerable shift in the existing demography. From 12 per cent of the overall population at the conclusion of the Ottoman Empire, by the end of the British Mandate three decades later Jews made up 31 per cent of the population. During this period, nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of this increase was through immigration, whereas virtually all (96 per cent) of the increase in the Muslim and Christian population was through natural increase of the indigenous population.[5]

The overall population of Muslims, Christians and Druze increased from 689,000 in 1918 to 860,000 in 1931. This figure continued to increase, and by 1940 it had gone up to 1,086,000 and by 1946 to 1,308,000.[6] By 1947, the last official British Mandate estimate placed the local population at 1,908,775, which included both Zionist immigrants and the local indigenous population.[7] The population also shifted internally during this era, most notably among the peasants, who made up 75 per cent of the local population.[8] As a result

facing page: 15   A dabkeh line at Nabi Musa circling near the tomb of Moses
in the early twentieth century

of economic upheavals and reduced access to land, these fellahin increasingly migrated from rural areas to urban centres (particularly to port cities such as Haifa) in search of work.[9]

The British Mandate thus induced major social, political and economic changes in Palestine. The conclusion of the First World War brought an end to four centuries of Ottoman rule in Palestine, yet it brought no political liberation or self-determination for the local population. Instead, European imperial powers reshuffled the region according to their own spheres of political influence. Britain's Lord Balfour declared that, in terms of Palestine's political direction, 'We do not even propose to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the inhabitants of the country.'[10] This contrasted with official statements that Britain had previously made, promising both the Zionist colonial enterprise and the local indigenous population an independent national homeland in Palestine, in order to gain their political and military support during the war.

While this British support for Zionist colonization (through the Balfour Declaration of 1917) induced strong protests in Palestine, it was also perceived in the wider Middle East as a strategy for impeding the formation and resources of a pan-Arab state. Palestine's geographic location could potentially give it control of the Suez Canal, Haifa (the only deep-water harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean) and the land bridge between Asia and Africa. This blend of religious sentiment and economic manoeuvring heightened the political significance of Palestine for the wider world. The subsequent tension between Zionists and the indigenous population of Palestine thus had a ripple effect, sparking violent demonstrations of solidarity for both parties across Europe and the Middle East.[11] By 1929, disputes over sites sacred to both Judaism and Islam (such as Jerusalem's Wailing Wall and the Noble Sanctuary/ Temple Mount) provided a religious focus for the unfolding troubles. As already mentioned, however, the tension between immigrant Zionists and the indigenous population predated such events, as a result of economic disturbances and concerns over political control.[12] As a result of land purchases by the Jewish National Fund, indigenous tenant farmers were evicted to make way for European Zionist immigrants;[13] this land ceased to be accessible for

either residency or employment by non-Zionists, and by 1930 approximately 30 per cent of all indigenous villagers were landless, and 75–80 per cent held insufficient land to meet their subsistence means.[14]

INDIGENOUS RESEARCHERS, SALVAGE ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARAB NATIONALISM

Local cultural events and symbols soon became entwined with the nationalist political struggle. In 1920, the annual pilgrimage of Nabi Musa took on a nationalist tone, as Christians joined with Muslims in a procession led by the subsequent Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin Al-Husayni on a white horse. Reminiscent of Saladin's liberation of the Holy Land from the Crusaders, this semi-religious, semi-political procession resulted in anti-Zionist and anti-British riots and numerous deaths. By the time of the Great Revolt of 1936–9, the pilgrimage of Nabi Musa had become so potent a symbol of national identity that the British authorities banned it altogether.[15]

During the Mandate period, a local interest in documenting and defining indigenous cultural practices grew, as a means of distinguishing an Arab national culture from Ottoman and European colonial influences. The cultural research and analysis continued to be influenced, nevertheless, by the European inclination to view local culture as a remnant of ancient civilizations. An urgent call to research by the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* emphasized the 'importance of these studies for understanding the mind of the Palestinian peasant, in many respects no doubt like his Israelite and Canaanite predecessors'.[16] This led to a process of salvage anthropology undertaken by local urban academics such as Tawfiq Canaan, Stephan H. Stephan, Elias Haddad and Omar Effendi Barghuti. Their contributions to the twenty-two editions of the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* between 1922 and 1946 present an impression of indigenous culture that blends Orientalist patronage with nascent Arab nationalism. The local peasant culture is described as primitive and as it was millennia ago, as a

means of disregarding the influence of the Ottoman Empire.[17] In contrast, this Arab nationalist reconnection with the ancient world often emphasized a link to Canaanite, rather than Israelite, civilization (although their biblical references were not infrequent).

   Very few references to local dance practices emerge from this encyclopedic study of folklore in Palestine. Stephan mentions dabkeh as a 'native trotting dance' undertaken by men at weddings and other festivities,[18] with little detail on the motions or meanings of such dances. This reflected the Western trend towards cultural research and analysis at the time, which generally disregarded physical expression within cultural systems.[19] The references to dance that do appear are more concerned with illustrating a fixed canon of social etiquette that guides the Arabs of Palestine, particularly in reference to male–female interaction. In seeking to define such 'unwritten laws', Tawfiq Canaan proposed: 'In family festivals, such as weddings and circumcisions, the village women assemble and dance among themselves, but never with the men. An exception to this rule is seen in certain sections of the Acre district, especially in el-Bassah, where women may dance with men.'[20]

   The research by Aref Al-Aref (a wealthy urban Jerusalemite) on the Bedouin in the south of Palestine reflects a similar paradigm. The researched culture is admired yet academically assessed from within an Edwardian British set of values. The Bedouin are referred to as a primitive and uncivilized population, and Al-Aref's personal observations are used to construct a definitive summation of Bedouin culture. While various cultural behaviours are noted in detail, dance practices are generally disregarded. Only one passage, with a typical generalization, describes how Bedouin women dance:

> She may participate in evening parties, but does not make an appearance totally unveiled unless the party is attended only by relatives. At these parties she may take part in the so-called Red Dance known as the *Dahhieh*. She takes her husband's sword for this dance and in case there are strangers in the audience who do not belong to the family she is veiled. The veil is of course transparent enough for her to see through, otherwise

her movements in the dance may be impeded. The dance may last for two or three hours, the women dance in relays.

Meanwhile the menfolk gather in and around the tents before which the women dance. Men must not yield to the temptation to touch one of these whirling beauties, even to place a hand lightly on one of them in token of praise, as some Western minded men might want to do. The penalty for a touch is severe. Sword in hand, the woman would be entitled to slash or cut the offender anywhere she wished. No one would dare dispute her right to exact her penalty for undue familiarity. There are no rehearsals for this dance. It is a spontaneous gesture of happiness that might be inspired by the arrival of a welcome guest whom the host thinks should be entertained, return from a pilgrimage, recovery of the head of the family from an illness, the birth of a son or some other auspicious event.[21]

Al-Aref presents this account as a summation of Bedouin women's dance, but it is uncertain how widespread the ideas presented here were. The dance is described as an entertainment, with attendants at the gathering defined within circumscribed roles of observer/observed. That such a performance occurs in the context of the local community, and not as a form of collective representation to foreign tourists, points towards perhaps another function for dance in certain communities in Palestine. The only descriptive term that Al-Aref gives to the dance is 'whirling', suggesting that the movement involved turning or circular actions. Al-Aref's claim that the sword is utilized as a moral guardian seems to be romanticized speculation, as he does not himself witness or describe its usage in such defensive action. Given the closed social environment in which the dancing takes place in, such a violent deterrent to sexual harassment seems more of a theatrical symbol than a practical defence, with the sword having more of an imaginative and aesthetic function in the dance.

In describing a similar event, Tawfiq Canaan suggests that such dances are not as spontaneous and unrehearsed as Al-Aref says, but part of a cultural ritual, a dance game with prescribed expectations:

In some Bedouin tribes a girl, who must be agile and supple, dances and leads a row of men with a sword, setting the rhythm. The men try to touch her and so beshame her . . . while she has the right to hit the aggressor with her sword, even if it wounds him. Among the Bedouin of the Jaffa district, if the girl's clothes are touched by one of the men and she fails to strike him, she is replaced by another girl.[22]

This seems to echo the dance game previously documented by Hans Spoer, but again Canaan's interest is less in describing the dance itself and more focused on discussing the moral code that it represents.

left: 16   Bedouin woman doing wedding dance with sword in Palestine in the early 1900s

facing page: 17   Sword dance at a wedding in Palestine in the early 1900s

In these accounts of local cultural practices by members of the urban indigenous community, the rural fellahin and Bedouin culture remain central, whereas urban indigenous culture is generally disregarded. The writings of these indigenous researchers extend the European Orientalist and salvage anthropologist approaches to cultural observation and analysis. They begin to emphasize an ancient Arab thread in the cultural heritage, however, as a contrast to the narrative of rural peasants in Palestine as living relics of a biblical Jewish culture.

'. . . THE BIBLICAL DANGER'

Finnish anthropologist Hilma Granquist similarly challenged the prevalent European impression that Palestine's indigenous peasants were a cultural echo of an ancient Jewish civilization. Pointing to popular texts such as Baldensperger's *The immovable East*, Granquist explains how she had come to Palestine expecting to study women of the Old Testament through the local contemporary customs of the rural communities, only to realize what she labelled the 'biblical danger'.[23] The urge to capture a biblical legacy led to a secondary 'danger' that Granquist identified as prevalent in European (and local) cultural accounts in the early twentieth century: the creation of broad generalizations about a homogeneous 'Palestinian' culture based on brief encounters.

The following description of a 'Palestinian' dance might be considered typical of this form of generalized representation. With reference to traditional war dances in the Near East, A.M.Murray describes how:

> . . . the dancers are of course, men, but in Palestine and Jordan the leader is always a woman. She stands raised slightly above the rows of men and faces them. She is armed with a sword which she brandishes above her head and in this way signals to the men what they are to do, stand up, crouch down, move their bodies (not their feet) to right or left, and so on. With a good

leader it is probably very good physically, but quite unexciting to watch. These war dances take place frequently in Palestinian villages, as often as once a week. In some places they are practised as a show for tourists, but they are usually for the amusement of the performers themselves.[24]

While earlier literature suggests that the event described here is not impossible, the assumptions surrounding it deserve some scepticism. Murray gives no further references – he might have either personally experienced such an event, or heard or read about it through the accounts of others. Hilma Granquist would argue that such generalizations were a result of the trend in Europe to present a picture of an ancient and cohesive culture in the bible lands.[25]

Granquist's own work thus presents the first thorough research and analysis of local cultural practices by a foreigner that does not attempt to reimagine an ancient civilization. It also limits its speculations to the village of Artas near Bethlehem – where Granquist lived for several years – rather than offering sweeping statements about 'Palestinian culture'.

Among the few references that Granquist gives to local dance practices, most are concerned with wedding festivities. On the morning of the betrothal feast, women are described as singing and dancing outside the bridegroom's house. In the evening, however, the dancing appears to have become less public. Men and women dance in separate but close locations, with younger individuals occasionally sneaking to catch a glimpse of the other group. Although she does not detail the women's dance, Granquist describes the men doing 'a beautiful dance with swaying movements. One thinks of reeds murmuring and swaying with the wind.'[26] This accompanies what she describes as a very monotonous song. She explains how, later in the evening, the same group 'danced, stamping and clapping in a ring or alone to the notes of a flute (*ney*) played by a young man'.[27] These would seem to be accounts of first a sahje and then a dabkeh.

Granquist also recounts a zefi, or marriage procession, that she refers to as a 'fantasia'.[28] This features a bridal effigy similar to that described by John Fuller further north near Nazareth a century earlier:[29]

On the way back the men also dance in the bridal procession. A young
man dances alone before the bridal camel, other men gather in groups
to dance together, even old men may be seen dancing, and all with or
without swords; sometimes sticks are substituted for swords because the
government does not like to allow weapons to be used . . . And the whole
time the women sing their songs and clap their hands and often trill the
zararit . . . For safety's sake it is customary to carry before the bride a
pitch-fork (midra) on which fine women's clothes are hung.[30]

Unlike Fuller's account, this description features a bridal effigy in the
procession of the bride, not of the groom. Granquist subsequently explains
that this 'mock-bride' has a function in the local superstition to ward off the
'evil eye' and to keep bad fortune from the bride. These differing versions
suggest how thematic elements within indigenous folkloric dances varied
from place to place and possibly between different eras, demonstrating the
fluid rather than fixed nature of local culture. This account also presents an
interesting illustration of how changes in the political environment induced
adaptations in the dance practices, with sticks replacing swords.

One further account of dance at a circumcision feast by Granquist presents
the idea of dance as an obligation, leading to a form of expressive currency
(as suggested previously by Hans Spoer). A woman would dance extensively
at her son's own circumcision feast in order to alleviate the responsibility of
other women to do so. This would mean that she would be less obliged to
dance at the festivities of others. As Granquist explains:

The principle of recompense governs the fellahin, and this demands that
sympathy in both joy and sorrow be repaid in full. At the beginning of a
period of rejoicing however, there is no thought of dancing and singing as
a social duty, the women dance and sing for the very joy of their hearts.[31]

This example demonstrates the importance of collectivized expression
as a method of maintaining social cohesion, and the particular function of

dance as a medium for transmitting and assuring a sense of collective trauma – a process that Charles Dudley Warner earlier disparaged as insincere. Granquist emphasizes here the way that both grief and joy are danced as a contribution to social cohesion, and not merely as a result of individual excitement.

COLONIAL CONFLICT AND INTERNAL DIVISION

Swelling international support for Zionism, spurred on by increasing persecution of the Jews in Central Europe during the 1920s and 1930s, led to a growth in Zionist immigration to British Mandate Palestine. Wave after wave of migrants arrived from Europe with the intention of establishing a national homeland for Jews, despite British Mandate laws that attempted to limit this influx.[32] Although both landless indigenous peasants and immigrant Zionists might have found a common cause as labourers, cooperation between the two within workers' movements foundered. The 'Hebrew labour' policy promoted by the Zionist Histradut labour union had, by the mid-1930s, rendered most of the indigenous population unemployable.[33]

In 1936 a general strike across all of Palestine, protesting against Zionist immigration, was initiated by various localized national committees and endorsed by the newly formed Higher Arab Committee. The ever-increasing immigration helped fill the labour gaps caused by the strike, and the strike spiralled into violence as brutal government reprisals led to counter-reprisals. This initiated the Great Revolt of 1936–9, the largest indigenous rebellion against European colonialism in the Middle East between the World Wars.[34] As it was essentially a peasant uprising, the rebels were based in the countryside, and wealthy, urban indigenous families came to be seen as collaborating with the rulers.[35] This rebellion thus eventually became directed at wealthy local people and their debt collectors as much as towards the British authorities.[36] The urban elite were seen as becoming a 'consuming-parasitic class',[37] trying to emulate the West; in its turn, the urban elite often viewed the rebels as

simply bandits. This contributed to a growing class divide in the indigenous population.[38]

In 1937, both the British Peel Commission and the Zionists proposed partition plans for the region, which were considered untenable and unjust by the indigenous population. With the increasing probability of war in Europe, the British realized that they could no longer antagonize the indigenous population and responded to the uprising by withdrawing plans for partition and offering an independent state for the indigenous community within ten years, dependent on peaceful 'Arab–Jewish' relations. Growing Zionist power at the time, along with the Zionist leaders' stated intentions to establish a 'Jewish' nation in Palestine and expel the native population did much to undermine indigenous support for such a peaceful solution.[39]

The Great Revolt dissipated, however, by 1939. During its three years, 5,032 of the indigenous population had been killed, 14,760 wounded, 6,000 had been imprisoned and almost 2,000 of their homes had been destroyed. By comparison, there were only several hundred British and Zionist casualties.[40] Having lost its leadership through death, incarceration and exile, the revolt ended amid much internal conflict between indigenous resistance groups.[41]

During the Second World War the indigenous resistance to British occupation and Zionist immigration was tempered by both the wider conflict and a lack of leadership. By the war's end, however, Zionist immigration (and the world's sympathy for the Zionist cause) had increased dramatically as a result of the Nazi persecutions of European Jews. Zionist national aspirations had taken on a greater urgency and Zionist paramilitary forces, extensively developed by the British during the Second World War, were beginning to rebel against the British occupation of Palestine. Britain, wearied by the war and seeking an exit strategy from Palestine, eventually ceded the problem to the newly formed United Nations in 1947.

Increasing foreign cultural influences during the British Mandate era further contributed to divisions in the indigenous population. These influences came from the West, through the ruling British, and from the South and East,

through the Islamic revival movement. These twin hegemonies were aimed at different strata of the indigenous society and contributed to a growing socio-cultural schism between the wealthy urban population and the poorer rural population.

WESTERN CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND LOCAL DANCE PRACTICES

During the 1920s urbanites from notable families (who had previously constituted the intelligentsia of the indigenous nationalist movement) had become increasingly integrated into the administration of the British Mandate.[42] As a result, their socio-cultural experience became more exposed to European cultural practices than did the wider, predominantly rural population. The foreign influences on the dance practices of this urban class included a direct education in European social dances and participation in European popular dances at social events.

Among the new British rulers of the region there appeared to be little interest in promoting indigenous dance practices. Predominantly engaging children from the wealthier urban class, the British Mandate public education system provided lessons in 'international folk dance' through their physical education curriculum. The word 'international' in this context referred to folk dances from Europe. While many of the children attending the British Mandate schools might have had a casual familiarity with local peasant dances, their formal education in social dancing became based on European styles of movement.[43] As such, European dance aesthetics and moral codes might be seen as fostering a distance between urban and rural dance ideals.

The Scout movement, established in Palestine in 1912, also expanded at this time and introduced regimented group movement patterns and exercises and social games from the West to the more urban classes of Palestine. With uniformed costumes and marching sequences, these activities might also have presented a competitive aesthetic ideal to the younger generation at the time.

During this era there were several public venues in which this local urban class mixed with Europeans and experienced European music and social dancing. Eunice Holliday hints at the mood of these social events in another letter home in 1925: 'I went to a dance at the Allenby; they have one every Saturday night. There, there is a black man called Mr. Dudley, who conducts a jazz band and is very gay and entertaining.'[44] Along with the Allenby and Orient hotels in Jerusalem, perhaps the most prestigious live entertainment took place at the Grand Hotel (also known as the Hotel Odeh, after the name of the proprietor) on a forested hilltop in the middle of Ramallah. Several factors contributed to the popularity of Ramallah as a regional summer resort at the time. It was a Christian town and could thus serve alcohol and maintain a more liberal atmosphere than neighbouring Islamic towns. It had a favourable physical atmosphere too, being at one of the highest altitudes in Palestine, and so experiencing cool evenings even in midsummer. Also, a relatively large number of Ramallah residents who had emigrated to North and South America during the First World War returned periodically, bringing a familiarity with various American social customs and dance practices. As a result, although Ramallah was smaller than other urban centres such as Hebron, Nablus, Jerusalem or the coastal ports, it had become a social centre for the region's wealthy families by the 1930s.

The Grand Hotel presented European musical ensembles (mostly Italian but also sometimes groups from the surrounding region) playing European dance music. These performed to an average of 200 patrons each night on weekends in the summer, in the open air in a converted caravanserai in the hotel grounds. On these occasions, the urban elite from across Palestine participated in European ballroom dances. Weddings were often held in the hotel, but local peasant wedding dances such as dabkeh were not participated in at these events.[45]

During the Great Revolt, the Grand Hotel was briefly occupied by the British military. This led to a cultural boycott of British and Zionist musicians for the rest of the Mandate era – possibly the first cultural boycott of Zionist artists in Palestine, and an early precedent to indigenous cultural protests against Israel in subsequent eras.

Not all of the new influences on urban dance practices came from the West, however. Ghada Karmi recalls belly dancing as a child at *istiqbals*, or private women-only parties, held among the urban elite of Jerusalem during the 1930s.[46] This practice is not documented within local peasant celebrations at the time, and may have been imported through the increasingly fluid interaction with regional urban centres such as Cairo and Beirut. Such cosmopolitan influences may also be attributed to the influx of paid belly dancers at urban weddings. As Tawfiq Canaan continues in his analysis of the gender mores of Palestine in the 1920s: 'Professional female dancers are a feature of the luxurious town life and were formerly unknown among the villages. Dancing girls are, therefore, looked down upon and their profession is not considered respectable.'[47]

Dance had thus started to become a symbolic feature of the growing urban–rural divide.

EASTERN CULTURAL INFLUENCE AND LOCAL DANCE PRACTICES

In contrast to the urban elite in Palestine, the peasant class, and peasant folk practices, were increasingly coming under the influence of Islamic reformists from the wider Arab world. Paralleling the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the radical Islamic reforms of the Salafya movement were driven in Palestine by Sheik 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam. Al-Qassam had a major influence in spreading resistance to Western hegemony through stricter adherence to Islamic principles, leading (and dying in) a rebellion that preceded the Great Revolt. A Syrian cleric of considerable religious knowledge, Al-Qassam had studied in Cairo and came to Palestine to escape the death penalty in French-ruled Syria in the early 1920s. He quickly gained prominence as a preacher and teacher in Haifa, organizing night schools in urban slums to combat illiteracy among recently dispossessed rural peasants, and touring the Haifa area as a marriage registrar and promoting the development of agricultural cooperatives.[48] The

Salafya movement further expanded in Palestine following the death of Al-Qassam, when Amin Al-Husayni, as the Mufti of Jerusalem, entered into a formal relationship with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Husayni was subsequently exiled by the British, but the ties between Islam in Palestine and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood became more firmly entrenched during the Great Revolt.[49]

Political Islam did thus not arrive into an undisturbed socio-political environment in Palestine. Its sudden prominence in this era can be seen as a reaction against foreign colonization and material dispossession. The support for Al-Qassam and the Salafya movement was particularly fuelled among peasants because it directly confronted British imperialism and Zionist colonization in ways that the indigenous urban authorities had not.[50]

This early, pragmatic relationship between Islam and indigenous political movements reveals an important precedent for understanding the contemporary relationship between Islam and local dance practices. It is worth noting that the Salafya Islamic movement was not fundamentalist, but revivalist, in the sense that it was not seeking a return to an imagined traditional way of life (as Afghanistan's Taliban later did) but was instead aiming to reinvigorate the position of Islamic principles in contemporary struggles and concerns.[51] Acknowledging this distinction allows for a clearer understanding of the desired cultural directions of the Islamic movement in Palestine.

The cultural shifts instigated by the Salafya movement thus took on a political significance in Palestine. Dress had become a potent symbol with conflicting political meanings, reflecting these differing hegemonies. In 1929, after the first women's conference in Jerusalem, a delegation of women went to the British governor's home. In emulation of suffragette movements in the West, they removed their veils in protest at the British occupation and declared: 'To serve our homeland we shall take off our veil.'[52] By 1938, however, when the rebels held control of towns in the hinterland, rebel commanders from the countryside ordered all women in the town to veil and all men to wear the *kafiya* (chequered peasant headcloth) in place of the urban headgear, which was perceived to be foreign.[53]

In regard to indigenous folkdance culture, the Salafya movement vociferously attacked local folk Islam practices. These practices were seen as a superstitious distraction from true Islam and a divisive cultural factor among the wider Muslim population of the region.[54] The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which constituted the principal religious source of the Islamic reform movement in Palestine, had dismissed specific traditional dance forms as socially irrelevant.[55] Such a revision of the local religious ideals and folk customs inevitably resulted in changes to associated dance activities, and may even have resulted in the discontinuity of certain dances in certain locations. Of these, the rural mourning dances of Palestine were perhaps particularly at risk. As Spoer observed in relation to such latm, the Prophet Muhammed had specifically forbidden the practice of wailing for the dead,[56] but in the early 1920s such dances remained very visible in the public sphere. Eunice Holliday recounts the following event in October 1923:

> We watched a funeral procession that passed beneath the balcony, all men, led by priests. The women stood a little way off doing the most weird dance in a huge circle, clapping their hands and chanting the virtues of the dead man. It really looked rather festive, and very like the dance we saw at Jameely's wedding.[57]

Tawfiq Canaan also observed at the time that, while the mourning dances around the tomb only involved women, at such laments 'Unmarried men are allowed to look on at a seemly distance.'[58] This public exhibition of female physical expression might have seemed problematic to the Salafya movement.

The discontinuation of such dances by the rural population during this time might thus be attributed to hegemonic influences from both the East and West. It was perhaps the events that immediately followed the British Mandate, however, that had the most profound impact on local cultural continuity.

AL-NAKBA

With its power eroded by the Second World War and a crumbling empire, Britain passed the issue of Palestine's political future to the United Nations in 1947. The United Nations subsequently sent a newly formed United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to tour and assess the region. The European members of UNSCOP were particularly impressed by the European socio-cultural environment in Zionist communities and less impressed by the socio-cultural environment of the indigenous communities.[59] Extending the League of Nations' penchant for Western models of progress and development, this reaction of the UNSCOP team was to prove critical in their subsequent recommendation to cede half of the region to the Zionists. On 29 November 1947 the United Nations General Assembly thus voted in favour of donating 55 per cent of what had been British Mandate Palestine to a European colonial movement that constituted only 37 per cent of the total population and owned less than 7 per cent of the land.[60] This remarkable decision was not based simply on an indigenous people's failure to impress their colonial 'tutors'; it might be further understood in the context of European guilt over the Jewish Holocaust.[61]

Civil strife thus continued in Palestine as the British prepared to leave. The subsequent 1947–9 conflict had two phases: a civil conflict from November 1947 to Israel's Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948, followed by an international war between the new state of Israel and the surrounding nations.

During the first phase, a huge disparity in arms, military training and social organization could be seen to give the Zionist militias great advantage over scattered, localized indigenous resistance.[62] In the face of the 35,000-strong Haganah and other coordinating Zionist militias, the indigenous population had no centralized military organization.[63] From November 1947 to May 1948, Zionist militia raids on towns, massacres in villages, bombing campaigns in cities and other forms of psychological warfare might be understood as the significant factors that led 300,000 to 400,000 of Palestine's indigenous population to flee their homes and seek refuge in the surrounding region.[64]

On 14 May 1948, the State of Israel declared its independence. On 15 May an alliance of armies from surrounding nations entered the region, ostensibly to liberate Palestine from what was considered the latest European colonial invasion. During this second phase of the conflict, a further 300,000 of the indigenous population sought refuge in the adjacent nations. These included the 60,000 inhabitants of Lyd and Ramle who were forcibly expelled by troops of the newly nationalized and consolidated Israeli Defence Forces.[65]

On 16 June 1948 the new Israeli government passed a resolution barring the return of the exiled indigenous population into what had become Israel. This was followed by the passing of the Law of Abandoned Territories and the Absentees Property Law, which allowed for the official expropriation of refugee property by the Israeli state, which then sold it on to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). This resulted in the Israeli state and the JNF suddenly owning 95 per cent of the land in the State of Israel.[66] The region of Israel had expanded beyond the original United Nations Partition plan and now controlled the vast majority of what had been British Mandate Palestine. Around 500 villages of the exiled indigenous population were subsequently razed. In contrast to this process of systematic expulsion, the Israeli government passed the Law of Return in 1950, allowing anybody in the world with a Jewish grandparent to be granted Israeli citizenship. Across the cities, towns and villages of Palestine, the homes of an exiled indigenous population were soon reinhabited by the new Zionist immigrants.[67]

The conflict of 1947–8, commonly referred to in Arabic as *Al-Nakba*[68] (the Catastrophe), remains the penultimate traumatic event in historical narratives of the indigenous population of Palestine. Suddenly uprooted and travelling in different directions in panic and confusion, this displacement of more than half of the indigenous population of Palestine induced a division of families and communities.[69] The displaced population mostly ended up in sprawling refugee camps in the surrounding nations of Lebanon, Transjordan, Egypt and Syria, subject to a different political status in each place.[70]

By fragmenting the existing familial, social, economic and political bonds, the Nakba thus deconstructed both the indigenous society and its intangible

culture. Various dance practices were suddenly removed from the geographic and social environments that had provided them with contextual meaning. The subsequent attempts to reconstruct the population's cultural bonds were shaped by the diverse new geographic localities and socio-political environments that they began to inhabit.

Part Three

1948–80, Dance revived: three processes of salvage

For over half a century, the conflict between an indigenous population and a colonizing population in Palestine had predominantly focused on disputes over the region's environmental resources and historical truths. These disputes would continue in the ensuing years, and they would soon give rise to battles over cultural ownership as well. Playing a prominent role in such subsequent contentions were dance revival movements.

Dance revival movements often occur in conjunction with salvage anthropology, as dances that appear to be disappearing from the cultural landscape are revitalized and promoted through public performance. Such revival involves taking a dance from its 'first existence' as a specific communal activity and affording it a 'second existence', as a representation of cultural identity.[1] This second existence is more than simply an *opening-of-the-circle* for observers, or a shift from dance as a participatory activity to dance as a performed activity. Ultimately, this second existence involves a form of cross-cultural appropriation, as the individuals dancing and even redesigning these salvaged dances may come from a social group that never engaged in them during the first existence as a social practice. Since the nineteenth century, such folkdance revival movements have been a common means of establishing new national identities: the dances help to homogenize cultural values by defining politically acceptable modes of physical expression.[2] This has often led to extreme

adaptations of the revived dances so that they may more effectively promote the specific ideals determined by the population's political centre.[3]

As the following chapters illustrate, the revival of dances from Palestine's indigenous population occurred not once but three times in the twentieth century, resulting in very different interpretations of the same dances. As tradition became a means of validating national identity, Zionism, pan-Arabism and Palestinian nationalism each approached this revival process with different ideological and aesthetic viewpoints. These various phases of what might be labelled 'salvagist dance'[4] reveal how the contemporary political environment dominated perceptions of ancient culture in Palestine. These varied interpretations of the salvaged past then go on and have a very powerful influence on dance in the present.

5   *Zionist salvage*

In the early twentieth century, Zionist interest in dances of the indigenous population of Palestine appears to reflect an 'imperial nostalgia', an indulgent lament by a colonizing people for vanishing cultural legacies whose demise they themselves have actually brought about.[1] This interest also appears to be politically motivated by the belief that the local indigenous dances were an authentic impression of dances from ancient Israel. Their research and the subsequent performance of these dances in Israeli nationalist events by Zionists can be seen as attempts to make their Occidental presence in an Oriental landscape culturally legitimate.[2]

The rest of this book will focus on the cultural and social histories of the indigenous population of Palestine, but this chapter takes a side step to consider how and why these indigenous dance practices were appropriated by Zionist colons. The reason for this diversion becomes more apparent in the subsequent chapters, which illustrate how such cultural appropriation affected the indigenous population's view of their own dances and identity. This chapter also provides a contrast to the subsequent revival movements of the same dances, illustrating how particular socio-political environments can shape dance history and revival.

DANCE AND ZIONIST CULTURAL IDENTITY BEFORE 1948

The Zionist appropriation of the indigenous dance practices of Palestine emerged out of a particular socio-political context that was overwhelmingly defined by the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a cultural resistance to such oppression, ideals such as Max Nordau's 'new muscular Jew' in 1903 sought to reimagine the cultural identity of European 'ghetto Jews'.[3] These aesthetic ideals stimulated Zionist pioneers to create a more assertive, masculine and powerful collective identity. The European émigrés wished to emancipate themselves from the cloistered, downtrodden image of European Jewry and simultaneously release themselves from Occidental cultural expressions.[4] As Israeli dance historian Zvi Friedhaber explains, this resulted in '. . . the longing for the creation of an original Israeli dance style, to express the new way of life then coming into being in the land of Israel'[5] (in Zionist writings, the labels 'Israel' and 'Israeli' are often applied to Zionist immigrant communities in Palestine before the actual establishment of the State of Israel in 1948). Romanian social dances such as the *horah* remained popular in many Zionist communities in Palestine,[6] but it and other European dance styles did not satisfy a political need to shift away from a European identity. As one member of a kibbutz (a Zionist colony) observed in 1929, 'because we have no dances of our own, we have stopped dancing.'[7]

This cultural vacuum had emerged as a colonial stage between rejecting the past identity and creating a new one. Israeli choreographer Mirali Chen Sharon recalled: '. . . our German teachers (it seemed so many of our teachers on the Kibbutz were German) developed us either for art or gymnastics. But we were against all European traditions so we needed new things, new steps, new music.'[8]

Given the oppression of Jews in Europe at the time, a need emerged to produce non-European cultural items, and no longer to serve or perpetuate the oppressor's culture. Rivka Sturman (one of the leading Zionist choreographers

of the British Mandate era) forcefully articulated such a notion, declaring that 'I was, frankly, outraged that Israeli youth should be bringing German songs and dances to others.'[9] Cultural movements among Zionist colons thus reflected a desire to construct a collective identity that represented the breadth of Jewish experiences in the Diaspora, both occidental and oriental. This desire was also underscored by a desire to somehow re-establish cultural links with the ancient Jewish past.

'. . . THEY MIGHT HAVE KNOWN THEM ONCE IN THE FORGOTTEN PAST'

The representation of the indigenous culture of Palestine varies widely in Zionist discourse during the British Mandate period. Many of the descriptions in popular Zionist literature depicted the entire 'Arab' population as unsettled and nomadic by nature.[10] Impressions of them living in tents and continuously moving from place to place were used to support the Zionist political rationale for transferring the entire indigenous population into neighbouring countries, as such 'Arabs' did not appear to feel attached to any particular place. Zionist academic writings more clearly recognized an indigenous population that was settled in both urban and rural environments, but these writers generally sought to illustrate how poorly this indigenous traditional culture compared with contemporary Zionist culture.[11] When discussing local artistic practices, the 'Arabs' were often described as being backward, lazy, uncreative and uneducated before the motivating arrival of the British Mandate.[12] These analyses ultimately presented arguments supporting Zionist colonization as a step forward for the whole region.

Other Zionist representations had a more nostalgic and paternalistic flavour, similar to those produced by white colonizers in southern Africa.[13] This nostalgia was particularly strong in representations of the local dance culture, especially among those who perceived local traditional dances as a legacy from an ancient Jewish civilization. Searching for appropriate cultural

roots that might authenticate the political vision of a Jewish state in an oriental land, European Zionists often saw the indigenous villagers of Palestine and imagined a living relic of Jewish culture and people from biblical times.[14] These also continued Orientalist notions of a rural culture that had been frozen in time, yet their quest for cultural roots and authenticity stimulated a more fascinated admiration. The following account of a local peasant dance performance illustrates this imaginative experience. In the early 1940s, Vera Goldman recalls watching:

> . . . an Arab festival called 'Fantasia' (a name applied to all such occasions) being held in one of the Arab villages. We have to wind our way through the dense crowd of onlookers who surround the village square. There, in the centre, one man is leading two separate wings of men and women . . . What a sight – and can he dance! With amazing swiftness he leads his company in ever winding rows, sometimes forming a circle, while he moves in the opposite direction, swinging and waving his stick elegantly and at the climax, utters a loud 'Hi!'. The recorder is teasing, the same few wired sounds repeating themselves over and over again. Suddenly, the women leave, the men draw kerchiefs and whirl them with outstretched arms in the air. Now, the 'Deppka' is on – the Arabs shepherd-dance: a few light running steps, then little leaps on both legs with a turning of the hips – and running and leaping, running and leaping . . . And the 'Deppka', the Arabs' shepherd-dance, is danced with spontaneous gaiety by the youth of our settlements. Perhaps, in some of these customs, occidental Jews felt as if they might have known them once in the forgotten past and re-recognised them now.[15]

This account of a 'fantasia' reveals how indigenous dances continued to be part of an entertainment industry during the British Mandate era. The dances appear more theatrically structured than they were a century earlier, with one dance routine making a smooth segue into another. The men and women perform together, although in separate lines, and the entire presentation is

seen as having a certain theatrical polish. This suggests a series of local artistic adaptations: the change is not just an opening of the circle to present a participatory event to curious onlookers, but the dance is now an event more intricately designed for appreciation as dynamic visual entertainment.

Most noteworthy, however, is Goldman's suggestion that the indigenous peasant dabkeh spontaneously transferred into the cultural practices of immigrant European Jews. She implies that through a process of either genetic recall or spiritual association, Jews returning to their ancient homeland felt an innate (rather than socially constructed) aesthetic appreciation and connection with local peasant dance products.

INDIGENOUS DANCES BECOME ZIONIST DANCES

While the interaction between individual Zionists and members of the indigenous population at dance events may have occurred in spontaneous and personal ways, the actual Zionist salvage and appropriation of indigenous peasant dances can be seen as both methodical and politically orchestrated. During the 1930s and 1940s, Zionist dancers researched the local peasant dabkeh. The steps were then re-choreographed into stage presentations of folk dance by Zionist youth.[16]

Sometimes these studies resulted in a blend of European and local dance forms. With an aesthetic vision influenced by her studies of classical and modern dance in Europe, Zionist immigrant Lea Bergstein began creating new dances based on the indigenous peasant dances of Palestine that she observed:

> She danced with a sword, doing a kind of dance of attack. I thought her movements looked exactly like Laban's. Even at weddings there were dances of war and victory . . . Once I remember a girl entered the circle to dance and she didn't do anything but walk in the kind of way that ballerinas try to achieve — an incredible fragile flight that was simplicity itself. The men danced the dabkeh. All these celebrations influenced me.[17]

Bergstein observed peasant dance in Palestine through a lens of choreographic patterns that had been defined for her by Rudolph Laban (a prominent European choreographer and dance theorist) and classical ballet. Her subsequent choreographies attempted to integrate this vision of indigenous movement into Zionist wedding dances, as a reflection of Jewish traditions.[18]

Other Zionist choreographers felt a greater compulsion to develop a more local understanding of the indigenous dance form and body language. Rivka Sturman attended the local celebrations, describing how:

> . . . by the end of the 1930s I had seen many Arabic dances. At Ein Harod I could watch the Arabs as they led their sheep down into the valley where the well lay. As they danced down the path, playing their hallil (simple wind pipe) their steps and behaviour were of interest to me. I would watch for the good dancers. I recognized them from the village festivities. The observations gave an Arabic color to my earliest dances, especially in the step-bend, the restrained, erect bearing, and the special, abrupt rhythm.[19]

In the late 1930s, Yardena Cohen won the Tel-Aviv municipality's competition for showing the most authentic dance sources of Israel, based on her studies of dabkeh in the indigenous rural communities of Palestine. By the summer of 1944, Gurit Kadman arranged the first Dalya Festival, a Zionist folkdance gathering conducted on Kibbutz Dalya. Showcasing the work of Kadman, Sturman, Cohen and others, the 1944 Dalya Festival became the first in a series of Dalya Festivals, promoting the orientalization of Zionist folk dance. In early 1947, the second Dalya Festival was held. Despite a British curfew, 25,000 Zionists gathered to watch more than 500 dancers performing the new Israeli folk dances, created and refined in the three years since the first festival.[20]

The study of indigenous dance practices was broadly undertaken by Zionists during the British Mandate period, but their research remained narrowly focused on the local rural population. In the subsequent discourse of Zionist/ Israeli folk choreographers learning these local dances, no comment is made

on the cultural practices of an educated and urban indigenous population at the time;[21] they appeared to not exist. Instead the Zionists perceive villagers behaving in simplistic ways and offering nostalgic images of bygone eras. Israeli dance historian Judith Brin Ingber suggests that such Zionist research into local peasant folk dances generally reflected their respect and admiration for the native population,[22] but this seems a somewhat romantic speculation. These personal encounters occurred in a socio-political climate defined by a hierarchical power relationship. The indigenous population were generally perceived as useful cultural vessels but not seen 'as active, equal members of possibly the same community'.[23] Their dance steps, formations and movements were studied and replicated for their aesthetic value and accorded new symbolic meanings associated with Zionist nationalism.[24]

As a material speculation on what the kingdom of Israel might have been like two millennia earlier, dabkeh provided an image, but not an embodied set of meanings. The process of learning an alien way of moving was thus not undertaken by Zionists to improve their understanding and integration with the indigenous population of Palestine, but to create an oriental cultural image that might serve an occidental political movement. Appropriated dabkeh steps were subsequently even used in an antagonistic context against the indigenous population. Rivkah Sturman's dance piece *Debkeh Gilboa* glorified the Gilboa Settlement's conquest of a new hill after expelling the local indigenous population, and her *Yes, They Will Lose*, performed by hundreds of Israeli soldiers at the first Independence Day in 1949, mimicked acts of attack and final triumph over the local indigenous population.[25] These adapted dabkeh dances were very much designed for the closed encampment of Zionist identity, and not as a celebration of the indigenous population or an extension of their culture.

Further Dalya Festivals continued after the establishment of Israel in 1948, providing a national showcase and source of inspiration for future generations of Israeli folkdance choreographers. Zionist choreographer Gurit Kadman recalled the significance of these dances in the fledgling Israeli society, describing how they:

spread to the towns and cities as well and conquered the youth, helped to integrate new migrants into the country, shaped the character of big celebrations like Independence Day, etc. and were also received enthusiastically by Jews all over the world who quickly took them as a means of identification with the new Israeli culture.[26]

As Israeli choreographer Shalom Hermon noted, these dances became '. . . one of the best known ambassadors of the spirit of the new State of Israel and its people',[27] promoting Israeli cultural identity to the international community. This process of cultural salvage and revival was therefore particularly effective politically. It may seem odd that the salvaged culture was glorified while the population from whom the culture was salvaged were subsequently denigrated. This approach to cultural salvage occurred, however, through a particular paradigm that envisaged contemporary indigenous dance practices as a static relic of ancient Jewish culture. This can be seen as a reflection of the wider economic and political ethic of Zionism, which contended that European Jews had a right to repossess the various resources of the land of Israel.[28]

'ONLY A MIRACLE'

In subsequent years, the Zionist salvage and appropriation of the peasant dances of Palestine involved a historical revision that would erase, or at least diminish, any recognition of the cultural input of the indigenous population.[29] This process had begun by the late Mandate era, in books published in the United States of America promoting the Zionist colonial project. *Palestine dances!*[30] provides step-by-step instructions in dabkeh as a traditional Jewish dance, with no reference to its recent sourcing from within the peasant folklore of Palestine. In the preface of *Dances of Palestine*[31] much emphasis is given to the importance of cultural pluralism and the acceptance of Jewish traditions in the United States, but again no reference is given to the non-Jewish peasants of Palestine, from whom the dabkeh presented in the

book was appropriated. Following the establishing of Israel in 1948, even references to Palestine disappear. Despite including music and instructions for how to dance a 'Debka', attribution for its indigenous source is glaringly absent from *Dances of Israel* by the New England Zionist Youth Commission. Instead, the authors declare in the foreword: 'A new folk lore has come to life in Eretz Israel. Out of the multifarious cultural backgrounds which the Jews returning to their homeland brought with them, an entirely different culture was born. An inseparable phase of this new way of life is the folk dancing of Israel.'[32]

Israel's absorption of Sephardic Jews from Yemen after 1948 introduced a new oriental source for the development of Israel's traditional dance identity. Emphasis on this new source began to emerge in texts on Israeli dance. In the early 1950s, Ayalah Kaufman[33] and Gurit Kadman[34] discuss the 'rich' and 'vibrant' contributions of the Yemeni Jews, and give only passing mention to a vague influence from the more 'monotonous' 'Arab' dabkehs.

Israeli choreographers and dancers in subsequent generations, such as Shalom Hermon, Sara Levi-Tanai and Yonaton Karmon place a greater emphasis on the creative adaptations of the Israeli folk choreographers than on the actual cultural sources.[35] This method of cultural attribution was also promoted by early Zionist choreographers. As Rivka Sturman attested:

> The most important fact is not that we Israelis used the Arab debka or Yemenite steps or were influenced by a landscape. The artist's personality is the most important, more so than the steps he uses, which are really the means of expression just as the crayons for drawing are a painter's tools.[36]

This notion is similarly addressed by Kadman, who attributed Israeli folk dance to the spontaneous creations of rural kibbutzniks living in the land of Israel and reviving biblical memories.[37] As Israeli dance notator Noah Eshkol observed, such an attitude was not unproblematic: called upon to advise in a court case regarding the intellectual property rights of one Israeli choreographer's folkdance composition, Eshkol expressed incredulity at the

idea that supposed folk heritage could be reduced to the possession of an individual.[38]

Among the second generation of Israeli folkdance choreographers, the discourse that emphasized the creativity of individual Israeli artists had effectively cleansed the collective memory of any process of cultural appropriation from the indigenous population of Palestine. As the Israeli folkdance choreographer Yonaton Karmon explained in the 1970s:

> We have the reality that we created something from nothing. Sara Levi-Tanai, Rivka Sturman, Yardena Cohen created something that was adopted by all the world as Israeli folk dance. It was created as if from nothing . . . My own company spends several months on tours to America, Canada and South America . . . If there wasn't an Israeli style, no Israeli group would be asked to participate in all the international festivals and people wouldn't be able to identify Israeli dances.[39]

This excerpt illustrates both the prevailing non-recognition of indigenous sources for Israeli dance traditions and the subsequent political impact of such a construction of tradition. Israeli ingenuity is credited with fostering a sudden folkdance culture, and this folkdance culture is credited with legitimizing Israeli cultural identity abroad. The perceptions that an Israeli folkdance culture had emerged from nothing continued a more general legend that the State of Israel had emerged by divine intervention. Just as various military and agricultural 'miracles' were attributed to Israel's birth,[40] the Israeli folkdance movement was often accorded self-glorifying origins:

> It was clear we had no choice. We had to create dances and this is what happened, starting in 1944 [. . .] This was against all the laws of the development of folk culture the world over. How can one create purposefully, artificially, folk dances [. . .] How is it possible to accelerate a process of hundreds of years into a few years? Only a miracle can bring this about. But, after all, the same is true for the rebirth of the Jewish

nation [. . .] – a constant miracle is needed [. . .] The hope for a miracle had happened – the indigenous Israeli folk dance was born.[41]

The actual socio-political influences that fostered Israeli dance 'traditions' present a challenge to this idea that Israeli dance culture emerged through such a supernatural process. It also challenges the idea that the dance simply re-awoke in the genes of Jews who were reunited with an ancient homeland. To acknowledge this does not diminish the importance or value of this dance form; it may lead, however, to a greater appreciation of the various actions that contributed to Israel's dance culture. Among these, the significant influence of the indigenous population of Palestine was being recalled in Zionist discourse again by the mid-1970s in Ingber's exploratory 'Shorashim: the roots of Israeli dance'. This did not involve an ethical debate on the actual process of cultural appropriation, though, and very little such analysis subsequently arose in Zionist folkdance discourse.[42] Such an absence of ethical consideration was not limited to Israeli cultural commentators: in critiques of *Shorashim* in the United States through *Dance Research Journal*,[43] the cultural authenticity of the Israeli process of creating folklore is challenged. These critics make no comment on the ethics of cultural appropriation from an indigenous population. This might seem a spectacular oversight, given that the Israeli nation culturally legitimized by such links to the orient was, at the time, denying the very existence of the indigenous cultural group from whom the dances had been appropriated.

Meanwhile, among the indigenous population of Palestine, a very different socio-cultural experience was resulting in very different processes of dance revival.

18   A vision of the ruins of Ba'albakk, drawn in 1839

6   *Pan-Arabist salvage*

The establishing of the State of Israel in 1948 brought about a massive uprooting and dispersal of the indigenous population of Palestine. The subsequent experiences of these people were very diverse, and very much defined by the varied political statuses that were accorded to them in Israel, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and further afield. As a result, any attempt to construct a common narrative of 'the Palestinians' after 1948 is prone to oversimplification and imagined projections of national identity. This historical narrative therefore narrows here to focus on the dance practices and socio-political experiences of the indigenous population within an area that would come to be known as the West Bank.[1]

SHOOT ON SIGHT

The portions of British Mandate Palestine that had not become part of the new State of Israel in the 1947–8 war were subsequently annexed by Egypt (the Gaza Strip) and Transjordan (the West Bank), the latter entering a nineteen-year period of rule by a Jordanian monarch. This provided the first political demarcation of the western, northern and southern edges of the West Bank, with the river Jordan and the Dead Sea marking the eastern line. At this stage there were 765,000 people residing in the West Bank, including more than 321,000 refugees from other parts of Palestine.[2] This very mixed population of refugees – tribal nomads, illiterate peasants and educated city-dwellers,

Christians and Muslims, infants and elderly, wealthy and poor, from mountains, plains and coastal ports – all suddenly found themselves sharing the common experience of dispossession and exile.

Among this population there prevailed a general sense that the sudden and disastrous political situation was temporary and would soon be remedied through international intervention.[3] Particularly for the exiled rural population, this led to constant attempts to go back across the very porous border. Despite Israeli military orders to shoot on sight any refugee suspected of trying to re-enter, between 1949 and 1954 there were roughly 10,000 to 15,000 such attempts annually. This figure dropped to 6,000 to 7,000 annually in 1955–6. The vast majority came to harvest crops left behind, plant new crops in their fields, visit relatives or retrieve goods, with less than 10 per cent of the returnees being involved in any acts of sabotage or political vengeance.[4] These crossings resulted in the execution of between 2,700 and 5,000 mostly unarmed refugees by the Israeli military between 1948 and 1956, in addition to incalculable cases of rape and violent abuse of such 'infiltrators' by their Israeli captors. Between 1949 and 1956, a further 10,000 fellahin and Bedouin inhabiting the border region inside Israel were rounded up and expelled into the West Bank.[5]

The period 1947–67 thus maintained the West Bank as a perpetual, low-key battlefield, subjected to continual cross-border raids by the Israeli military. With these raids initially using mortars and aircraft to strafe and bombard border villages, they resulted in massive civilian casualties and international condemnation. The Israeli military then switched to a policy of commando raids, which nevertheless resulted in massacres of civilians in the West Bank. The most notorious such massacre occurred in the village of Qibya in 1953, with sixty villagers (mostly women and children) executed by Israeli soldiers under the command of Ariel Sharon – later to become prime minister.[6]

During this period, Palestine ceased to exist as a political or administrative entity. Just as historical narratives were being constructed inside Israel that denied any pre-existing indigenous identity, Jordanian political aspirations

(bereft of a substantial national population) were attempting to redefine the displaced indigenous population of Palestine according to a newly constructed Jordanian national identity.[7] Jordan supported the Israeli closed-border policy, imprisoning and fining over 1,000 refugees annually for attempting to cross back to their old lands.

This traumatic social environment might have seemed capable of providing broad support for the Islamic revival movement.[8] As an instrument of the Jordanian monarchy, however, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Amman closely watched the preaching activities in the West Bank, and the Jordanian parliament's Sermonizing and Instruction Law of 1955 allowed for the official censorship of sermons written for Friday prayers. The Council for Preaching, founded in 1962, further controlled the sermons and other activities in the Waqf mosques of the West Bank. The Jordanian monarchy thus impeded any localized support for other Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which might challenge the Jordanian king's dominion over the West Bank. As such, Islamic political movements, which in previous and subsequent eras were a major feature of the West Bank cultural environment, were much less coordinated during this time.[9]

Discourse on an independent Palestinian identity was officially censored in Jordan, and potential opportunities for expressing political unrest and Palestinian identity – such as the annual Nabi Musa procession – were banned by the Jordanian king. While popular allegiance to Jordan was never fully achieved in the West Bank, this censorship kept Palestinian nationalism on the periphery of cultural references and slowed the political construction of a distinct Palestinian identity. Such restrictions began to be challenged by the acceptance of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) into the League of Arab States in 1964. The PLO would later go on to play a very prominent role in indigenous notions of collective identity, but during most of this period the unity suggested by pan-Arabism offered the most salient hope of salvation from the overpowering Israeli military.[10]

This inclination towards pan-Arab unity had a particularly lasting effect on the revival of traditional indigenous dances.

'WITH SWORDS IN HAND . . .'

There are far fewer documented accounts of the dance practices of the indigenous population during this era. The European fascination with the culture of Palestine seems to halt abruptly after more than a century of fervent research and speculation. At the same time, Palestinian nationalist research into indigenous culture (which would become so energized in future decades) was just beginning to formulate. The historical record of dance in the West Bank between 1948 and 1967 thus remains somewhat arid.

Abdulla Lutfiyya's research trip back to his hometown of Baytin (just north of Ramallah) in 1960 provided a refreshingly sensitive perspective into the rural dance culture at this time. Lutfiyya had studied anthropology in the United States, yet was aware of both the political experience of the local population and how they might be perceived in the West. Entitling his study 'A Jordanian village', Lutfiyya gave impressions of the local society that were neither culturally judgemental nor likely to disrupt the contentious political status quo of Jordanian rule. His following description of village wedding dances thus provides perhaps the clearest impressions of folk dances occurring within their social context in the West Bank during this period.

A few days before the wedding takes place men and women gather together in the *saha* (village square) each night to dance and sing around a campfire.

The men engage in the *sahja* dance, lining up in two opposite rows facing one another. The men in one line chant a single line of verse, and this refrain is picked up and repeated by the opposite group. The singing is accompanied by a rhythmic clapping of the hands and a few dance steps. So it goes for hours, introducing a new line of verse once the first one has been repeated twice by each line of the singing dancers. Between the two lines stands a man or two with swords in hand, moving from one end of the line to the other, dancing and singing and whipping up enthusiasm.

The dance is finally interrupted by men from the groom's family, who move in with refreshments and cigarettes to entertain the dancers. During this intermission, a group of amateur male entertainers, disguised as animals or foolish and fat men and women take the floor and commence clowning. The *sahja* is resumed once more after the intermission and continues for a time. When this dance is over, the men form a circle and a group of dancers appears in the middle, lining up for the *dabka* dance. In addition to the dancers, there are usually a flute player and a singer in the centre. Each of the dancers places his hands on the shoulders of the dancers on either side. The leader stands at the head of the line of dancers and carries a handkerchief to signal the movements that should be made by the group. The singer sings one verse at a time, usually making up original lines on the spot, and is accompanied by the flute player. Whilst this singing is going on, the dancers are standing, making very slow and noiseless movement with their feet. Once the singer is done, the leader gives orders and the dancers begin moving in a circle, jumping up and down, and kicking the ground in a rhythmic fashion to the tune of the flute player. The *dabka* dance continues for about half an hour, and then the dancers quit and everyone goes home.

While the men are dancing the women will gather in a circle in a corner of the *saha*. Some of the younger ones dance, while the rest sing. The main theme of their songs deals with the men of the village – each identified by his name indicating how handsome, learned, brave and generous he is. Once in a while, a woman will raise her voice above the others and sing a quatrain. When she has finished, the rest of the women join her in a *zaghrut* (a female cry of joy). When the women are tired of singing, they find themselves a high place where they can sit and watch the men dancing from a distance and listen to their singing.[11]

This passage provides perhaps the first 'insider's account' of folkdance practices in Palestine. The sahje, which baffled previous commentators with its seeming monotony, is given a clearer rationale as a means of building collective participation in a social/performance event. As a life-long member

of the community under observation, Lutfiyya was also more able than the earlier writers to identify which of the dance elements were spontaneous and particular to one occasion and which were more enduring features of local wedding festivities. He thus provides both an impression of a specific wedding dance and more plausible generalizations on the way such events usually occur. It should be noted, however, that Lutfiyya presents a distinctly male perspective, with broad assumptions on the female activities in these events. From his view, perhaps unsurprisingly, the female activity mostly revolved around admiring the male activity. Without presenting the voices of the women involved (e.g. through interviews) and uncovering perhaps more complex understandings of these seemingly gender-segregated events, his representation of traditional dance ultimately provides support for subsequent patriarchal definitions of local dance heritage.

The descriptions of clowning and role-play within this account indicates the imaginative complexity and performative nature of wedding dances in Baytin at the time. This festive occasion thus illustrates how dance functioned as a spectacle within rural cultural practices of the West Bank, fostering collective participation as well as distinct audience–performer relationships.

While such rural dances appear to have remained quite vibrant performance events during this era, the actual theatrical staging of these dabkehs in the West Bank emerged from somewhere else entirely.

DANCE AS THEATRE IN THE WEST BANK

Ramallah remained a cultural hub for the region's urban elite. Less disturbed by military incursions than the cities and villages closer to the new border with Israel, Ramallah continued to present entertainment throughout each summer. Resurrecting its nights of music and dance from the 1930s, the Grand Hotel began in 1952 to bring foreign (mostly Italian) bands, playing Western-style dance music from the era. As access from the coastal cities and other parts of historic Palestine was no longer possible because of the

new Israeli borders, the hundreds of patrons then attending such events each evening were drawn from wealthier families across the West Bank and East Bank of Jordan, including the Jordanian king on a regular basis.

At that time, the proprietor of the Grand Hotel was Mr Odeh, and the establishment was also referred to as the Hotel Odeh. More than fifty years later, sitting in the terraced gardens of the long-closed Grand Hotel, his daughter Aida Odeh described to me the festive mood of these summer events of the 1950s. The patrons engaged in European-style ballroom dances, rather than any local traditional social dances. Cabaret acts, commencing in 1960 and continuing until the 1967 war, introduced a performance aspect to these dance events. Aida recalled how these floorshows were family-oriented, featuring a diversity of acts that over the years included a Pakistani belly dancer, a Spanish flamenco troupe, a Norwegian trapeze artist, a solo ballerina and various other dance and small-scale performances such as magicians and singers.[12]

19   Ballroom and other couples dancing at the Grand Hotel in the 1960s.

European dance activities, introduced during the Mandate era, thus continued to be emulated in the limited circles of the local population's urban elite. In the mid-1950s, St Josef's (a private girls' school in Ramallah) began providing ballet classes for its students. Under the tuition of a Russian ballet teacher, this resulted in modest school productions of works such as *The Beauty and the Beast* in the 1960s. Other private schools in the area subsequently began to offer ballet, although less consistently than St Josef's. Such classes and performances remained in the limited realm of wealthy families as a school activity, however, and did not give rise to any public displays by students beyond their high-school years.[13]

The most enduring foreign influence on West Bank dance practices arrived between 1962 and 1966, through the annual Ramallah Nights festivals. Presented by the First Ramallah Group (a Scouting organization and community club), the Ramallah Nights festivals introduced staged dabkeh productions to the post-Nakba West Bank, along with other performing arts from the Middle Eastern region. These festivals further established the city's reputation as an entertainment capital in the area, offering a distinct cultural alternative to the European forms of cabaret dance entertainment presented at the Grand Hotel.

At that time, there were no locally performing dabkeh groups and so local urban youth were selected and trained to perform rural folk dances. The Ramallah Nights festivals thus instigated a transition in perceptions of folk dance in the West Bank, from a social rural practice to an urban performance art. These outdoor performances brought a wide public following and subsequently instigated a local process of cultural revival. The cultural content presented in these festivals was not directly drawn from local sources, however, but was introduced from outside the West Bank via the pan-Arab folklore movement.[14]

PAN-ARAB FOLKLORE, BA'ALBAKK AND WADEA JARRAR-HADDAD

The pan-Arab folklore movement gained popular prominence in the political context of anti-colonial struggles in the 1950s. Ideologically sponsored by Egyptian President Jamal Abdul Nasser and the Ministry of Culture in Cairo, this process involved salvaging the traditional culture of the region's peasants in order to provide a basis for a region-wide cultural identity that had been emancipated from European hegemony. By entwining folklore with political identity, this movement thus presented a struggle against European colonialism that at the same time emulated a European method of constructing national identity.[15] The League of Arab States presented the first Folklore Conference in Egypt in 1964, seeking to celebrate diversity while revealing commonalities among those nations of the Middle East associated with Arab ethnicity.

Such pan-Arab folk dance did not arrive in the West Bank from Egypt, but from Lebanon. It principally came through the choreographer/teachers Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and her husband Marwan Jarrar. Their exposure in the West Bank was limited to several months, spread between the years of the Ramallah Nights festivals in the 1960s, but their influence had a profound impact on the construction of local staged folkdance aesthetics and subsequent decades of local dance production.[16]

Hoping to fit together the jigsaw of this dance history, I travelled to Lebanon in 2006 to meet Wadea Jarrar-Haddad. We talked for hours in her apartment in central Beirut, and she unfolded both her own remarkable life story and the process of how pan-Arab folk dance was brought to the West Bank.

Born near Safad in northern Palestine during the British Mandate era, Wadea Haddad was part of a wealthy land-owning family. Her earliest exposure to the social dances of rural Palestine was through her father, who would observe the celebratory dances of the Bedouin and fellahin working on his lands and then come home and teach them to the young Wadea and her sisters. She explained how this provided her with a basic knowledge of local rural dance practices, a knowledge that was unusual in her social class. Attending a British

Mandate school in Haifa, Wadea was more formally taught European folk and social dances in the school's physical education curriculum. In 1947 she went to England to study physical education at the Bergman Osterburg Trust in Dartford, Kent, where she gained a more thorough schooling in European folk and ballroom dance forms.

Graduating top of her year in 1951, Wadea left England for Lebanon, where her family had sought refuge, having lost all of their lands to Israel in the Nakba. Her specialist education led to her being appointed as organizer of physical education for all seventeen state schools in Beirut. Training teachers, she began working at the American University of Beirut and creating folk dances for the university's festivals in the early 1950s. There she met and married Marwan Jarrar, who also came from a land-owning family in Palestine that had fled to Lebanon during the Nakba. The two would go on to win local folkdance competitions and gain public acclaim. Seeking to define more rigorously 'Lebanese' folk dance, Marwan Jarrar and Wadea Jarrar-Haddad subsequently undertook research in fourteen villages around Lebanon in 1955. In line with the pan-Arab folklore paradigm, they perceived local peasants as the repository of the region's long-term cultural identity and were intent upon salvaging traditional dance practices in order to reconstruct an authentic Lebanese post-colonial cultural identity.

In 1956 a festival was founded in the ancient ruins of Ba'albakk in central Lebanon. The Ba'albakk Festival would go on to become an annual summer event and an international symbol of Lebanese culture. The festival commenced its first year, however, with mostly highbrow European theatrical spectacles. The Lebanese president's wife, Zalfa Cham'oun, was particularly inspired by the Soviet folkdance specialist Igor Moiseyev and his troupe. Although Moiseyev offered to choreograph a Lebanese folkdance production the following year, it was instead determined that two Lebanese folkdance specialists should be sent to Russia to study. Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and Marwan Jarrar were chosen and, living in Moscow for three months in 1956, studied classical ballet, modern dance and international folk dance at the Moiseyev School and the Bolshoi. Upon returning to Lebanon in 1957 they began choreographing folk dances

for the operettas of the Rahbanni brothers, which were featured within the newly established 'Lebanese Nights' folkloric section of the festival.[17]

Illustrating the anti-colonial political climate of the time, pamphlets promoting the dance in these productions declared, '. . . Bacchic rites and the folkloric dabka dance become siblings reunited after thousands of years of foreign intervention.'[18] By establishing a cultural link with the ancient past, pan-Arabism defied both Ottoman and European cultural domination. While such proclamations suggested that the dabkeh presented was a remnant of the local culture from previous millennia, it had actually been manufactured through appropriating local peasant dances and adapting them to fit a European set of theatrical aesthetics. In the process, classical ballet steps and training styles became an integral part of the revived folklore.[19] An extension of the dancer's line was particularly emphasized, as was their upright posture. As foreign movements were added, formations were changed, old meanings were lost and new meanings were invested into choreographed patterns. This folkdance movement did not emerge from local peasants adapting their own dances for European tourists, as had occurred a century before in Palestine. It instead came from members of the local urban classes whose own dance education had overwhelmingly been defined by European methods and theatrical aesthetics.

The effects of this process of folkdance construction were not, however, limited to Lebanon. As Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and Marwan Jarrar subsequently toured the Middle East and taught other groups, they brought the emerging aesthetics of the wider pan-Arab folklore movement to the West Bank.

DANCING TRADITION IN THE RAMALLAH NIGHTS FESTIVALS

Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and Marwan Jarrar taught and staged four folkdance productions in Ramallah as part of the annual Ramallah Nights festivals between 1962 and 1966. The process of theatrical production for these events

20   Youth performing folkloric dances in the Ramallah Nights Festivals in the 1960s

involved a somewhat didactic method of cultural instruction. Local young men and women selected to participate in the performances came from the urban Ramallah environment. As Jarrar-Haddad recollects, 'They gave me students that didn't know anything . . . I demonstrated, I showed them how to be elegant, how to stretch their body. And they improved. And you could see the improvement in one month.'[20]

The Jarrars thus first gave the dancers stretching and toning exercises to prepare them physically; they then taught them specific choreographic sequences, and subsequently rehearsed them in these sequences in preparation for performance. Throughout this process, the artistic emphasis was on an accurate emulation of the folkdance productions that had been presented in Lebanon and elsewhere. Saliba Totah (one of the young local dancers in these festivals who would subsequently go on to form his own performing troupes) recalls that there was no reference given to more local dance movements and styles.[21]

This process of representing folk dance on stage was thus wholly imported into the West Bank through the Ramallah Nights festivals. While they resembled

local social dabkehs and were imported from nearby Lebanon, these Lebanese dabkeh productions had themselves been adapted to reflect a European set of theatrical aesthetics. Presented by local youth in Ramallah to provide a sense of local cultural production, the local cultural influences had in effect been cleansed through the teaching and staging processes.

In subsequent decades dabkeh as a performed art would evolve in numerous directions in the West Bank. Certain presumptions about the staging of folk dance introduced through the Ramallah Nights festivals would, however, remain constant within such adaptations. These include:

- the memorizing of choreographic patterns to pre-arranged music patterns, rather than the spontaneous improvisation of group dance patterns through a dance leader;
- the duration of choreographic sequences being determined by the length of particular songs and composed pieces of music;
- the indiscriminate composition of the audience, with no gender restrictions;
- the exaggeration of gesture and lengthening of posture, to increase the size of actions and project them to an audience at a greater distance;
- a disciplined uniformity among movements and poses of the dance ensemble;
- dancer selection based on youthfulness and appearance rather than community standing;
- a physical separation between dancers, musicians and audience, as opposed to a fluid interchange of activities between everybody present;
- the use of a stationary flat location, diminishing the processional aspect of certain wedding dances;
- the function of dancers as mute performers rather than as chanter-dancers, and audiences as mute observers rather than observer-chanter/participants.

The introduction of new movement material into a community's dance practices is an expected result of any process of cultural exchange. These structural and contextual adaptations imported through the Ramallah Nights festivals were far more complex, however, and might be seen to reflect a process of foreign cultural hegemony. This placed staged folk dance in the West Bank on a developmental pathway that had been predetermined by decisions made in a European cultural context. It might be presumed that social dances – when placed in a theatrical context with an artistic purpose – will inevitably result in the above changes regardless of the cultural context. Yet these and other decisions relating to the staging of dabkeh did not arise through local consideration. They were determined outside the community, as steps necessary for social dances to be accepted in an artistic, theatrical context. While the local community might have willingly adopted these changes in order to participate in the pan-Arab cultural scene, they were not involved in the process of determining these changes. Subsequent struggles to reinvest a localized integrity into theatrical folkdance production thus had to negotiate with the cultural expectations established during this process.

This process of cultural hegemony may be attributed to the collective cultural identity being fostered by Jordan at the time. The Ramallah Nights festivals were organized under the auspices of the Jordanian king and promotional material associated with the events[22] advocated a sentimental allegiance to an Arab-Jordanian identity, with no mention of Palestinian identity. The performing group that had developed through the Ramallah festivals subsequently represented Jordan in an international dabkeh competition at the American University of Beirut. The introduction of this particular method of staging dance can be understood, therefore, in the political context of Jordanian nationalism utilizing pan-Arab ideals to foster a sense of regional homogeneity.

THE SIX-DAY WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

The Six-Day War of 5–11 June 1967 became the third international conflict between Israel and the countries of the region. Although the organized military activity of this war mostly involved combatants from outside the West Bank, it nevertheless had a profound impact on the local population. As Israel expanded, it placed the inhabitants of the West Bank under military occupation; in this process, local villages were razed, in acts that Israeli military commanders acknowledged were not related to the war but to a subsequent process of ethnic cleansing undertaken by individual Israeli military units.[23] As a result of these cleansing actions approximately one-fifth of the West Bank population – around 200,000 people – went into exile, both during the fighting and in the succeeding weeks.[24] Many of these people were second-time refugees, having already been exiled from the 1948 borders of Israel in the earlier conflict, and most joined existing refugee populations on the East Bank of the river Jordan. On 2 July 1967 Israel officially announced it would allow back all of these 1967 refugees, but in practice it permitted only 17,000 to return.[25]

From the outset, the new Israeli government relationship with the population of the West Bank was politically distinct from the previous Jordanian approach. Whereas the West Bank population had automatically become full citizens of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the government of Israel did not wish to absorb the indigenous population along with the land.[26] Only residents of the newly annexed East Jerusalem were offered citizenship, with such provisos that only 2.3 per cent of the city's population accepted.[27] The remainder of the population of East Jerusalem was subsequently categorized by Israel as 'Jerusalem residents' and subject to a different legal status from that of the inhabitants of the rest of the West Bank. The Israeli occupation thus led to the first political boundaries around the entire West Bank and a distinct legal status for its population.

This distinction had an immediate effect on cultural life within the West Bank, creating a demographic pocket that was politically isolated from the wider Arab world and alienated from the newly occupying Zionist nation.[28]

Even among indigenous families (from inside Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank) reuniting for the first time in two decades, there remained a deep sense of cultural and social estrangement.[29] As the popular novelist Ghassan Kanafani observed, this reunion was particularly clouded because the gate was 'being opened from the other side',[30] with the indigenous population meeting not in a liberated Palestine but rather in deeper subjugation to Zionist colonization. In terms of collective identity, the decades spent apart had resulted in '. . . the construction of a number of different "Palestines" corresponding to the different experiences of Palestinians in the places of their exile'.[31] These multiple constructions of identity might have possibly merged more readily into a pluralist collective identity had the Israeli distinctions in legal status not maintained a clear separation in socio-cultural experience.[32]

The practices of the military occupation itself also induced a collectively experienced trauma that further distinguished the population of the West Bank. It has been suggested that what began as an 'occupation with a smile' only descended into violent oppression with the transfer of power to a right-wing Israeli Likud government in the mid-1970s (and their colonial expansion policy).[33] This misleadingly infers that the suffering of the West Bank population under occupation was a result of the political choices made by Israelis, and not from the disempowering process of military subjugation itself. From the outset the Israeli occupation of the West Bank '. . . was founded on brute force, repression and fear, collaboration and treachery, beatings and torture chambers, and daily intimidation, humiliation and manipulation'.[34]

In early July 1967 the first anti-occupation demonstration marches and graffiti appeared in Jerusalem. Various strikes and demonstrations continued across the West Bank throughout the following months and culminated in a general strike in September. Despite facing only unarmed civil resistance, by November 1967 the Israeli response to such strikes and demonstrations by the West Bank population involved shutdowns of schools, public transport, telephone systems and businesses, full curfews, house arrest, expulsions, detention and imprisonment without trial (for renewable six-month terms), the withholding of travel, work and marketing permits, commercial and

building licences and family reunion approvals. Some striking shops were permanently sealed shut by the Israeli military, their business licences revoked, and house-to-house searches were undertaken: actions that might be seen as principally designed to intimidate the population into submission.[35]

The restrictions and punishments, implemented both selectively and collectively, instigated an immediate reduction in artistic production and cultural events. At the end of the Six-Day War the Grand Hotel in Ramallah was immediately occupied by the Israeli military for several weeks. The military imposed curfews and cancelled all cultural events in Ramallah over the summer of 1967, including the Ramallah Nights festival. During the following summer, the whole city of Ramallah was denied the right to receive visitors from Arab states.[36] This social isolation, coupled with what Aida Odeh described as the 'generally depressed mood of the people', led to the permanent closure of the Grand Hotel and an end to its influence on West Bank urban middle-class culture.[37]

21   Looking towards Jordan from the West Bank

7 *Palestinian nationalist salvage*

The 1967 war and subsequent years of Israeli military occupation in the West Bank presented a new socio-political environment for the dance culture of the indigenous population. This would lead to a significant redefinition of how local dances were presented as performed art. While various local dance practices seemed to stop during this era, dabkeh was salvaged and revived for a third time, this time within the context of a Palestinian national identity.

THE RISE OF THE FEDAYEEN

The 1967 war defeated pan-Arabism, and with it the hope of a sudden restitution of the exiled indigenous population to Palestine through international military intervention. At the same time, the pan-Arab military engagement with Israel highlighted a wider ethnic-Arab aspect to the ongoing tension with Israel, drawing attention away from the plight of the indigenous population of Palestine.[1]

The losses sustained by the West Bank population as a result of this war were material as well as political. Economic changes in the West Bank were instigated by the Israeli confiscation of local farmland to accommodate new Zionist colonies; by 1973 there were seventeen such colonies in the West Bank, by

1977 this had risen to thirty-six. During this period, house demolition became a standard form of both collective punishment and Israeli land acquisition, resulting in 1,265 homes of West Bank residents being demolished or sealed in the first fourteen years of the occupation.[2] The indigenous population grew in the West Bank through natural increase, however, from 677,000 in 1970 to 964,000 in 1980.[3]

This first decade of the Israeli military occupation thus saw the ascendancy of the Palestine Liberation Organization. As peace treaties between Israel and Egypt were being signed, Palestinian nationalist ideology came to replace the earlier pro-Jordanian and pan-Arabist ideologies in West Bank discourse and popular affiliation.[4] This was particularly boosted following the Battle of Karameh in March 1968, in which an Israeli cross-border raid on the village and refugee camp of Karameh on the East Bank of the Jordan was repelled by PLO fighters.[5] This small victory against the Israeli military (following the thorough defeat in the Six-Day War) instilled a new belief in the potential for success of local resistance fighters in an asymmetric battleground.[6]

The PLO was composed of a variety of political agendas and highly competitive factions. These included Fatah, headed by Yassir Arafat, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and various smaller groups. During the first decade of the Israeli occupation Islamic politics and the Mujama movement were very marginal in the West Bank, with members of the local anti-colonial resistance movement referring to themselves as *fedayeen* (suggesting 'self-sacrificing revolutionaries') – not *mujahidin* (or 'fighters of the Jihad for God'). Although their fallen were referred to as *shahiden* (martyrs), they drew their inspiration from 'third worldism' and the communist and nationalist liberation guerillas of Africa, Latin America and Indochina, not from a sense of religious duty.[7]

The increase in references to Palestinian nationalism within public discourse in the West Bank during this era does not indicate that such a collectivized identity did not exist in the public imagination in the preceding years. It does indicate, however, the commencement of a public process of reconstructing the West Bank's cultural past according to a collective political identity that

was bound by the geographic borders of historic Palestine. This began positing 'time-honoured links between people, polity, and territory',[8] based on a distinct Palestinian national identity. It also involved a new phase of cultural salvage.

SALVAGING PALESTINIAN PEASANT HERITAGE YET AGAIN

The growth in Palestinian nationalist consciousness stimulated a search for unifying symbols of collective identity though folkloric heritage.[9] In the West Bank town of Al-Bireh in 1972 the Committee for Social Research and Popular Heritage established the first indigenous institute dedicated to researching folklore in Palestine. Transformed into the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage, in 1974 it began publishing the annual journal *Al-Turath wa-'l Mujtama* (*Heritage and Society*). This journal provided a clear reference point for Palestinian nationalist culture during the succeeding decades. In 1973 the Palestine National Front (PNF) was established in the Occupied Territories and linked up to the PLO in exile. In reference to local cultural activity, the PNF committed itself to protecting indigenous 'culture and history from Zionist manipulation and distortion' and to reviving folk heritage as an embodiment of the indigenous population's attachment to their land.[10] Folkloric research and activity thus became a highly politicized act and spread rapidly through numerous community centres, social clubs and universities in the West Bank. Among the latter, the most influential was Birzeit University, which transformed from a tertiary college in 1975.

The research into folklore by academics in the West Bank during this era predominantly involved collecting and categorizing items of tangible and intangible culture in order to build a sense of unchanging continuity in the national character.[11] This research drew on the writings of folklorists and anthropologists from the British Mandate and late Ottoman eras in order to access information about Palestine's pre-Nakba culture. While the folkloric

nationalists of the post-1967 era noted that a colonial European attitude was implicit within these earlier writings, they nevertheless perpetuated the European presumptions that 'authentic' local culture could only be found in a rural environment and that this culture had been static for millennia.[12] Belief in this stasis led to suppositions that a Palestinian national collective identity and culture was rooted in Canaanite civilization, with spectacular claims that were both self-glorifying and designed to reinforce an impression that local cultural practices had always been framed in relation to other groups, such as: 'Canaanites cared for music more than other Semitic peoples who settled in the Middle East. They refined their musical art to the highest degree known to their contemporaries.'[13]
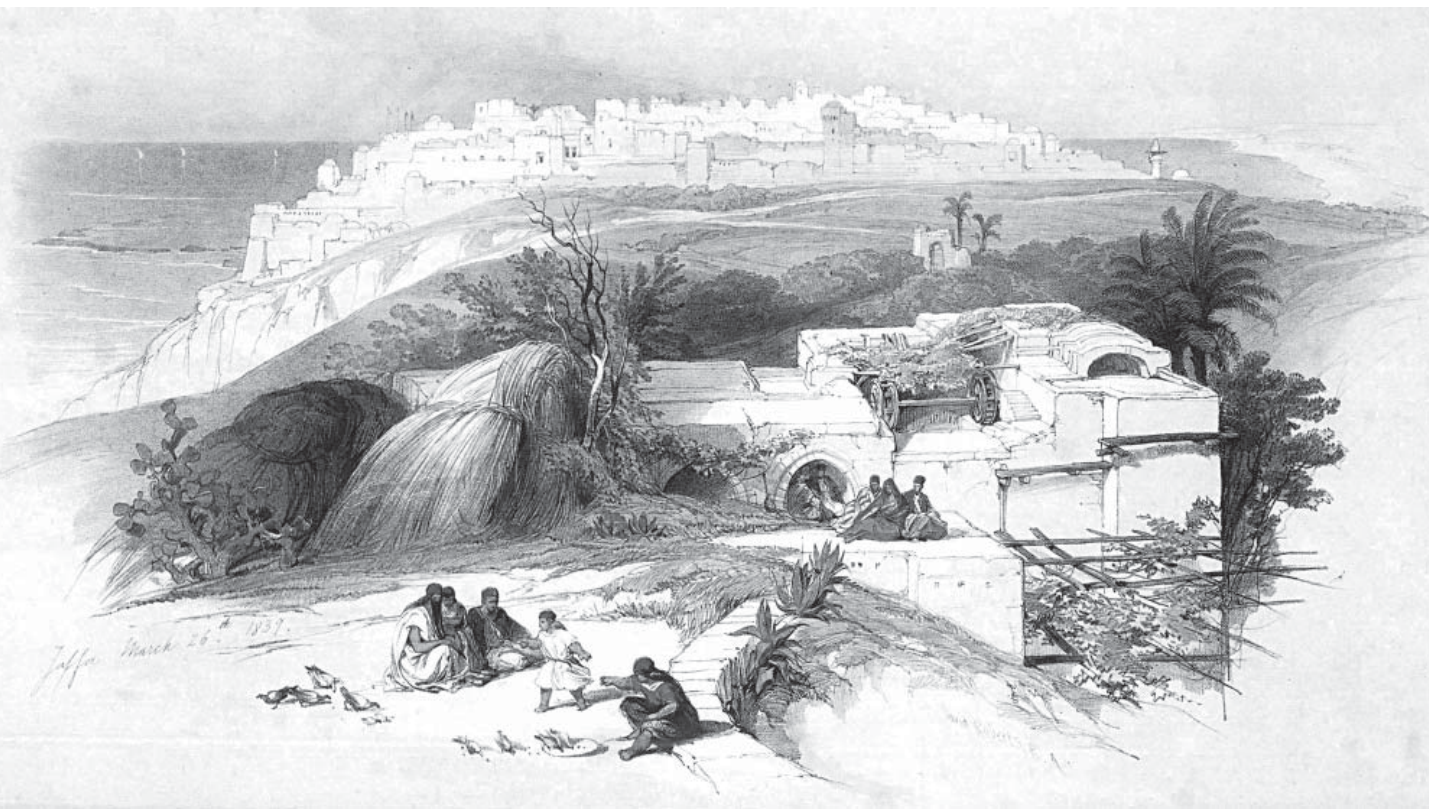
22   A vision of rural life around Jaffa in 1839

Just as Israel legitimized its presence through links to a glorious ancient past, the Palestinian nationalists constructed a cultural history that could challenge even the most ancient claims of Zionist superiority and originality in the region. Palestinian national identity can thus be seen to have been developing 'in spite of, and in the same cases because of' its confrontation with Zionism.[14]

The construction of a national identity based on a static ancient culture can also be understood as an urgent response to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's 1969 claim that the indigenous population did not exist.[15] Such a denial of existence emphasized the virtue of *sumud* (defiant steadfastness, presence) that pervaded the West Bank population at the time.[16] The presentation of peasants as bastions of the national cultural identity was also supported by this ideal of defiance, as the indigenous peasant echoed in the collective memory as the brave instigator of the Great Revolt of 1936–9 against foreign occupation.[17]

Through folklore revival the Palestinian nationalist movement thus ironically coupled a European imperial hypothesis (cultural stasis) with a post-colonial, counter-hegemonic ideal (local cultural identity). Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba, the director of the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage, however, stressed the importance of this merging: 'Just as studies into German folklore in the nineteenth century were done to provide a basis for German national identity, my opinion is that Palestinian folklore is a necessity for Palestinian national identity. Through my folklore I struggle against my enemy.'[18]

In the 1970s, the word *turath* (heritage) markedly became a new part of the daily street language in the West Bank.[19] As a means of supporting the interconnectivity of the diverse West Bank population, *turath* came to suggest equality through a common history, overriding differences of class, religion and background; this ultimately required the erasure of contradiction or discord from that collective history. *Turath* (as constructed by the Palestinian nationalist folklore researchers) thus came to refer to a particular interpretation of specifically rural heritage. In doing so it provided a highly sentimental process of cultural reflection, which subsequently had a prodigious influence on the fostering of local dance aesthetics among West Bank dance troupes.

THE POLITICIZATION OF DABKEH

Not all of the dance performances in the West Bank during this era reflected the revival aesthetics of the national folklore movement. Theatrical productions in the early years of the occupation (such as *Karakash*, *Balaleen* and *Sawad*) displayed more of an influence from the Arab *hadatha* (modernist) movement. These involved local actor/dancers (clad in leotards and tights) doing expressionistic movement sequences to music in solos and mixed-gender ensembles. Directed by expatriate Palestinian François Abu Saleem (later one of the founders of the Hakawati Theatre) and performed by young men and women from the urban elite, these productions were subsequently presented in both urban and rural parts of the West Bank.[20]

Similarly, amateur performances of ballets such as the all-female production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by students of St Josef's School continued through the 1970s. These, again, were limited to the children of the urban elite.[21] In general, however, the particular dance practices of wealthy urbanites in the West Bank maintained less of a popular following than in the previous eras. These dance practices had been led by European dance trends for several decades, as promoted through entertainment venues such as the Grand Hotel. The closure of such establishments, the isolation of the West Bank population from the wider Middle East and the ascent of the folkloric nationalist movement all contributed to the homogenizing of dance practices into a classless local dance culture based on nationalist identity.

The dances of the urban elite were not the only dance practices excluded in this homogenizing process. The new Palestinian nationalist folklore revival movement neglected several rural female dances. These most pointedly included women's sword dances and mourning rituals (as described in the previous chapters). While the earlier existence of a funerary latm was noted by nationalist folklorists,[22] there appears to have been little attempt during this era to revive such movement rituals.

The revival movement focused instead on the dabkeh. In the post-1967 era the cultural status of this peasant celebratory dance shifted, from being

simply one of several local rural dance/movement practices to an emblem of Palestinian national identity. Prior to the 1967 war, even the performed dabkeh of the Ramallah Nights festivals was presented as a distinctly rural practice. The dabkeh was not present in the weddings and celebrations of the urban elite at the time, but was rather looked down upon as a cultural practice from the lower classes.[23] After 1967, however, dabkeh rapidly crossed such class divides. Participating in it on social occasions became an expression of political identity that dismissed distinctions of class.[24]

In this sense dabkeh served as a traumatic reminder of the imagined past, as its conscious revival was inextricably tied to the notion of a violent break with that past. This invested dabkeh with symbolic meanings associated with oppression, dispossession and resistance. The enactment of dabkeh at a wedding (particularly among classes to whom the peasant dance was a relatively new phenomenon) thus gained nostalgic value through its function as a signpost to traumatic social upheavals in the local collective history.

During the 1970s dabkeh thus became a ubiquitous social activity for youth in the West Bank. The voluntary work movement, founded in the Jerusalem–Ramallah area in 1972, had already been very effective at mobilizing and politicizing young men and women in shared community endeavours.[25] This mood spread into cultural activity. Community organizations such as the Al-Bireh First Group (a Scout group) were teaching dabkeh to mixed-gender groups of children and youths. The volunteer teachers were essentially passing on the traditional dabkeh that they themselves had learnt in local weddings, celebrations and the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s. As students in these groups, Mohamad Atta and Wassim Al-Kurdi recalled that there was no comprehensive research undertaken by these dance teachers and they only taught two dances, the *tayara* and the *delonah*. These were then performed in local weddings during the summer, usually supported by live instruments such as the *ney* (flute), clapping and semi-improvised local traditional song structures. These dances also occasionally added a political and artistic aspect to public events in social clubs, schools and tertiary education institutes.[26]

Dabkeh also manifested a more directly political form, at the rallies of different political factions in the West Bank during the 1970s. As Wassim Al-Kurdi remembers, 'All [Palestinian political] parties wanted to have their own folk groups, magazines, their own festival. Everything was centred on folklore.'[27] By the late 1970s, major political parties had dabkeh groups, and dabkeh featured as a centrepiece of most political rallies. Musical organizations, such as Fatah's Al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah (the Central Band), were dedicated to producing revolutionary songs for these occasions.[28] At such rallies, these songs and chanted political slogans replaced the traditional instrumentation that sustained the rhythm of the dabkeh. Observing and participating in such events became, in effect, displays of allegiance and a rite of passage for party supporters.

Dabkeh was not limited to partisan politics. Redefined as a distinctly Palestinian dance and presented and participated in at nationalist events designed to emphasize Palestinian identity, dabkeh had the capacity to invest a sense of solidarity with the sufferings of the indigenous population and the defiant nature of the Palestinian national cause, within both the participants and the observers of the dance. Dabkeh physically embodied 'an active means of resistance, asserting national presence on the land with every stomp of the circling line'.[29]

Such politicization thus produced dabkeh as a new cultural ritual, proclaiming collective identity through repetitive enactment.[30] This ritualization led in turn to the search for a greater definition of dabkeh, as its enactment had taken on symbolic meanings representative of Palestinian nationalist identity. Its growth as a theatre art in the 1970s was thus buoyed, and guided by, such a politicized sentiment.

ISRAELI CENSORSHIP, SUPPRESSION AND APPROPRIATION

The use of folk dance to promote a critical awareness of local heritage and history occurred within a political environment that maintained tight restrictions on public expression. West Bank publications about indigenous heritage and folklore were delayed permission and heavily censored by the Israeli military.[31] The scripts of local plays required approval from the Israeli military prior to performance, with the permission for such productions often being cancelled at the last moment.[32] There was even a censoring of visual artists over the use of the colours of the Palestinian flag.[33] Most notably, this censorship was extended into the textbooks in use in West Bank schools.[34] The West Bank population was thus not permitted to utilize written and spoken language to transmit their own history and cultural trauma across generations and throughout the wider community. The Palestinian nationalist movement required other cultural media that might provoke empathy towards, and a greater understanding of, collective experiences from the present and past. Folk dance presented a medium that, while laden with emotive potential and local historical associations, was seemingly more innocuous than spoken or written words.

Through the Heritage Centre, local folklore festivals featuring displays of dabkeh were held in public gardens throughout the 1970s. These were increasingly subjected to censorship by the Israeli military, however, which withheld permits and disrupted such cultural gatherings through military intervention. Dabkeh troupes were denied permission to travel between towns, and individuals attempting to promote dabkeh became subject to house arrest, detention, interrogation, imprisonment and physical abuse.[35]

The military occupation might therefore be considered as a major stimulant in the politicization of folk dance. By denying such public performances of cultural identity, the Israeli military increased the significance of dabkeh as an act of political resistance. This politicization was further stimulated by the appropriation of indigenous items of intangible culture by Israeli institutions.

Indigenous food, clothing, music and dance were promoted as Israeli national symbols that could validate Israeli cultural identity.[36] The appropriation of indigenous cultural items was presented by Zionist commentators as symbolic of the culturally inclusive model of modern Israeli identity,[37] ironically coinciding with the political exclusion of the occupied or exiled population that bore those items. Within cultural discourse in the West Bank,[38] the nationalist revival of dabkeh thus became wedded with, and boosted by, an adversarial process of reclaiming and redefining intangible cultural items as distinctly Palestinian.

This interest in folklore as a political tool was not simply undertaken in reaction to Israeli cultural appropriation. As Wassim Al-Kurdi (one of the founders of El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe) recalls: 'When we started looking for folklore as an example, we heard they [the Israelis] were using our traditional costumes on their airplanes, they were using falafel. But we started before we knew that. It wasn't just a reaction to that.'[39] The Israeli censorship of indigenous narratives, suppression of folkloric activities and appropriation of items of intangible culture might all be seen as factors that contributed to the increasing politicization of dabkeh and its revival as a Palestinian national dance. This in turn led to a greater need to define the salvaged dabkeh according to political ideals.

'ANCIENT CANAANITE FERTILITY RITES'

By striving to authenticate a distinctly 'Palestinian' dabkeh, Palestinian nationalist folklorists were challenging both Zionist appropriation and pan-Arabist assimilation. To reinforce this latter distinction, the dabkeh presentations of the 1960s Ramallah Nights festivals were contrasted with descriptions of authentic Palestinian dabkeh heritage.[40] The actual historical path from which the Ramallah Nights dabkeh productions emerged (as discussed in the previous chapter) was not, however, examined in such comparative discourses. The Rahbanni theatrical style of dabkeh more generally became referred to as

Lebanese dabkeh, stimulating a sense that the differences fell along inherent national lines.[41] Palestinian dabkeh was contrasted with Lebanese and other 'Arab' dabkehs in these discourses through particular aesthetic qualities, described as simple, rustic and earthy.[42] These aesthetic qualities emphasized the antiquated nature of a supposedly unadulterated and uncolonized local peasant culture.

From such an understanding of dabkeh heritage, it was further argued that the concept of *asalah* (purity and fidelity to the origin) was of paramount importance.[43] This took on a particular logic in the context of Israeli occupation and appropriation: the notion of *asalah* supported contentions that Palestinians were closer to such heritage items than Israelis. Israelis would perform dabkeh choreographies created by specific Israeli choreographers on specific dates and named on a whim. By contrast, Palestinian nationalist folklorists stressed that dabkeh was of the people, not of a person, and that it was timeless and named after specific geographic locations, all in order to stress that Palestinian dabkeh was the authentic *turath*.[44]

To assert these links between local heritage and an ancient cultural system, Palestinian nationalist folklorists began proposing theoretical explanations for the origins of the movements. Some claimed dabkeh jumps came from ancient Canaanite fertility rites, to scare away evil forces and protect the security and growth of seedlings.[45] Others suggested that dabkeh's left-leg-leading had emerged from the peasant body ploughing the field with the left foot forward.[46] It was even suggested that the basic step patterns of the dabkeh were rooted in ancient rural symbology.[47] These accompanied claims that Palestinian dabkeh, prior to the socio-political upheavals of the twentieth century, was an unchanging cultural form.

Vehement protests regarding *tatwir* (adaptation) in dabkeh by leading folklorists[48] subsequently infused the version of dabkeh revived by Palestinian nationalists with an almost sacred sense of stasis. As 'origins' had come to mean 'purity', 'adaptations' had become equated with 'corruption'. From the Palestinian folkloric nationalist viewpoint, dabkeh was valued not as an evolving cultural medium that might be adapted to serve the needs of the

community, but as a cultural essence that needed to be protected against new influences from the wider social environment. This induced a standardizing process that replaced the evolution of cultural ideas with an unquestionable set of rules. These rules attempted to define universally (among other things) the gender norms of a collective Palestinian identity.

WOMEN'S ROLE IN DANCE AS RETURNING FROM WELLS WITH WATER JUGS

While it has been suggested that Palestinian nationalism provided 'a masculinizing ritual, wherein Arab women could transform themselves into men through participating in the liberation of Palestine',[49] this observation presents a particularly patriarchal conception of both gender norms and women's historical role in the indigenous population of Palestine. In local dance practices, the opposite can be seen to be occurring. Palestinian nationalist folklorists constructed an impression of female dance heritage that in effect reduced their participation and rendered them less active as dancers than they had been in previous eras.

23   A vision of women carrying water jugs in Nazareth in 1839

The position of women in the West Bank was as complex in this era as it had been in earlier stages of history. By 1979, 3,000 female political prisoners from the indigenous population were held in Israeli detention centres;[50] women had played a very active role in the political and military struggle against the Israeli occupation.[51] The female body and sexual presence in public was subject to growing social censorship, however, a result of both anti-colonial aesthetics and the Islamic reform movement.[52] This presented a major challenge for the performed representations of Palestinian national identity, as the public mood increasingly demanded both women's symbolic presence[53] and their sexual/physical absence. Performed dance thus became a focal point for defining an acceptable portrayal of women's public physicality within Palestinian collective identity. The Palestinian nationalist definitions of women's identity in Palestinian dance centred around three main themes: what movements females should do; what clothing females should wear; and the physical interrelationship between male and female performers on stage.

Dance movements had become very gender segregated, as dabkeh was forthrightly presented as a men's dance within the Palestinian nationalist salvage paradigm. This followed the notion that *asalah* was being eroded through women's participation in, and performance of, dabkeh.[54] According to this view, women traditionally engage in *ra'as*, a feminine dance form that contrasted with the masculine, stomping dabkeh line.[55] Describing such ra'as as 'soloistic', 'sexual', 'about beauty and the erotic', Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba (chairman of the Palestinian National Dabkeh Committee) contended that such dancing would not be accepted by the public in times of political struggle.[56] With women considered unqualified to do dabkeh and discouraged from doing ra'as, a vacuum emerged within the Palestinian nationalist paradigm regarding female dance movements. In performances of Palestinian identity, women were thus encouraged to produce supportive, peasant-like images on stage, such as returning from wells with water jugs, as men danced the more vigorous dabkeh.[57]

From this theory it was conceded that a much more subdued woman's form of dabkeh − *dahraja* − existed in traditional dance. The movements of women within such performances were expected to adopt an upright bearing,

frontal orientation and avoid seductive affectations or jumps, redefining their femininity as highly modest, through comparative restraint and calmness beside the more vigorous men.[58] Such public performances by women in dance were morally redefined by nationalist salvagists as 'devoid of explicitly "feminine" movements and overt allusions to the female body'.[59] In this sense, female dance movements were rendered more asexual than masculine by the Palestinian nationalist paradigm.

Palestinian nationalist folklore also positioned women as displayers of heritage through parading traditional peasant costumes. Women's activity in Palestinian national dance was thus further authenticated as historic through the wearing of distinctly local attire. This mostly involved wearing the bridal *thobe*, a heavy ankle-length gown with intricate embroidery. The embroidered *thobe*s promoted the origins of local culture, featuring symbols dating from ancient eras such as the S-shaped leech and the tree-of-life.[60] The wearing of *thobe*s had an additional significance in Palestinian nationalist folklore, as a claim against appropriated cultural items: the Israeli national airline El Al used these embroidered patterns in the uniforms of their female cabin crew.[61] The presentation of them on stage in public displays of Palestinian identity thus served to challenge Israeli claims to Palestinian peasant heritage. The length and weight of the *thobe* did present physical restrictions on the movement range of folk dancers, however, further contributing to a more subdued role for women in dance.[62]

Finally, the interrelationship between men and women on stage was defined as distinctly separate, with Abu Hadba contending, 'Traditionally, in our weddings and such, men always dance separately from women.'[63] This led to the idea that women could not join the dabkeh line with men, as it involved holding hands or shoulders. Within the redefined public performance of dabkeh as national heritage in the 1970s, therefore, women performed either in separate female-only groups or took disconnected, supportive roles.[64]

The cultural paradigm constructed by Palestinian national folklorists might thus appear as a deliberate attempt to diminish the role of women in displays of national identity. To this end, it has been suggested that Palestinian cultural

leaders consolidated 'a system of patriarchal hierarchy through *dabkeh* that relegated women in the name of national struggle to a secondary role'.[65] Such suppositions of masculine conspiracies require further contextualization, as the actual process of transforming social dance practices into public displays of political identity presents particular challenges. It might be argued that the very public arena of nationalist representation does not so readily accommodate the more intimate and familial sphere that often surrounded feminine dance heritage. It is unsurprising, therefore, that as public representations of the nation began to define local dance practices, the items of heritage that had no restrictions on who could view them gained greater legitimacy as traditions. Conversely, items of heritage that presented an uncertainty over who could view them (such as dances that had historically only been shared among groups of women or close family) were neglected in public performance spaces.

Whether or not such cultural constructions and restrictions on women were part of the conscious intent of a patriarchal movement in Palestinian nationalist folkloric revival, this vision of heritage was soon challenged. The position of women and feminine heritage in indigenous identity would subsequently give rise to the most contentious debates on dance within the West Bank community.

THE CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF PAN-ARAB SALVAGISM

Not all of the dabkeh presentations of the post-1967 era reflected the aesthetic ideals constructed by the Palestinian nationalist folklorists. Some local dance practitioners continued to create dance productions in the style introduced (from Europe via Lebanon) by the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s. Among these Saliba Totah, a former dancer in the festivals, made the most consistent contributions to the West Bank dance scene in the early years of the Israeli occupation. From the start of the 1970s until the late 1980s, Totah produced danced folkloric tales with mixed-gender groups of children

and youths, through the Catholic Club in Ramallah and the Young Women's Christian Association in East Jerusalem. Using recorded music by Wadee' Al-Saafi, Nasser Shams E-Din, the Rahbanni brothers and Fairuz, Totah's work was very much an echo of the use of dabkeh and expressionistic dance in Lebanese Rahbanni musical theatre and might be seen as an extension of the pan-Arabist folklore movement. Nostalgic Rahbanni melodies such as 'Kan Ezaman W'kan' ('Once upon a time') provided a thematic backdrop for numerous productions, which were often presented more in homage to the popular Rahbanni singer Fairuz than to the imagined community of Palestinian nationalism.

By the 1970s, Rahbanni musical theatre productions could be seen on television in the West Bank via broadcasts from the Jordanian channel. The adaptations of staged dabkeh by Totah and his students in the post-1967 period mirrored the continuing stylistic changes in Lebanese music and dance theatre. The music of the Rahbanni brothers and Fairuz altered during this time to reflect both the public despair at the defeat in the 1967 war and a renewed faith in the fedayeen.[66] Indigenous resistance to Zionism became a central, if metaphorical, feature of such songs as 'Sayfun fal-Yushhar' ('A sword must be brandished') and 'Zahrat al-Mada'in' ('City of flowers').[67] This shift in the Rahbanni style allowed Totah's choreography to remain related to both the imagined community of Palestinian nationalism and the popular following of Rahbanni music. His choreography blended dabkeh steps and formations with simple expressive movements that reflected the sung lyrics and the mood of the music. The productions used colourful costumes that were stylistically derived from traditional local costumes, but were not an attempt at an authentic representation of local costumes. Several of Totah's students subsequently formed their own groups and continued working in this style.[68]

Totah's influence was somewhat more restricted than the broader Palestinian nationalist folklore movement, engaging mostly the Christian minority and the urban elite. Through Totah's work pan-Arab folklore revival did, however, maintain a continuing (if peripheral) influence on the local dance scene and on the innovations in local dance that began to emerge in the 1980s.

Part Four

1980–2008,
Dance in evolutionary motion:
the post-salvage paradigm

While the Palestinian nationalist folklore movement continued to play a prominent role in West Bank dance revival activities, it could not satisfy the ever-diversifying ideals of the indigenous population. Attempts to define the cultural identity of the local population were inevitably ruptured by continuing changes in the political environment.[1] For dance in the West Bank, this rupturing can be seen occurring most vividly in the 1980s as local dancers and dance audiences yearned to move 'beyond the "salvage" paradigm'.[2]

By considering cultural heritage as dynamic and evolving, these dance artists contributed to the process of political change by deliberately adapting cultural legacies. In doing so, they instigated what might be labelled as a post-salvage phase, distinguishing their dances from the preceding processes of salvagism.[3] As they continued through the 1990s (when cultural encounters between local and foreign artists increased dramatically) their dance productions were forced to negotiate with both the ongoing local salvagist ideals of unchanging traditions and foreign definitions of modernism and postmodernism. This led to disputes over cultural identity and cohesion in the early years of the twenty-first century, when the West Bank became relatively isolated once more.

24   El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe before a performance of *Wadi Tofah* at the Birzeit Nights Festival at Birzeit University in 1984

8 *The First Intifada*

The West Bank experienced a boom in dance production during the 1980s and a diversification of dance practices associated with local heritage. This occurred in a cultural environment that was relatively isolated from foreign influences as a result of the Israeli military occupation. While the Israeli occupation provided a common antagonist for the local community to rally against, it also severely disrupted the local forums through which the community might engage in critical discourse. This, along with the collective trauma of life under military occupation, can be seen as contributing to the growing divisions within the community over cultural identity. Danced expressions of these divisions ultimately challenged the more homogeneous impression of local identity fostered by Palestinian nationalist folklore revival, and instigated a more creative approach towards dance heritage.

DANCE AS HUMILIATION

As the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank continued into the 1980s, increasing amounts of land and water resources were appropriated by the growing Israeli colonies. By 1988 there were 125 such colonies with 130,000 Zionist colons. Regulating water resources in the West Bank, the Israeli occupation forces awarded twelve times more water to these colons than to the local indigenous population; the amount of land irrigated by the indigenous population of the West Bank thus diminished by 30 per cent between 1967 and

1987.[1] This led to a shift in employment, from local agricultural production to low-paid industrial labour in Israel.[2] By 1987, 120,000 of the indigenous population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (40 per cent of the workforce) were employed in the Israeli labour market. Approximately 20,000 of this population emigrated from the West Bank and Gaza Strip each year in this period due to economic, social and political difficulties.

The Israeli military continued to impose collective restrictions on the indigenous population of the West Bank during this time, including curfews, closures, bans on internal and external travel and bans on visitors from other states. Israeli military practices also continued to involve individual forms of mental and physical abuse against the indigenous population. One trend amongst Israeli soldiers entailed forcing men in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to publicly dance during random military inspections, as a form of ritualized humiliation. Sporadic reports of such a particular process of humiliation emerged in the 1970s,[3] but the practice appeared to become more widespread by the mid-1980s.[4] Dance thus gained an association with ritual humiliation in the context of the occupation, in a way that had no particular precedent in the indigenous culture.

Why dance was chosen for such a purpose by the Israeli military is uncertain. Israeli military commanders suggested that it was simply a random and regrettable result of frustrated Israeli soldiers returning to the Occupied Territories from the more intense invasion of Lebanon.[5] The Israeli military's methods of enforcing submission among the populace of the Occupied Territories seemed to respond, however, to the social effect that such methods had on indigenous detainees. As certain physical abuses actually increased the social standing of detainees in a community committed to resisting the occupation, more specific methods of humiliation were introduced (including various forms of sexual abuse).[6] From this perspective, the forcing of community leaders to dance publicly can be seen as a particular form of psychological warfare aimed at dismantling social cohesion.

PALESTINIAN NATIONALIST FOLKLORE AND THE ISLAMIC REFORM MOVEMENT

The practice of making men dance was particularly inflammatory in a political environment that was increasingly influenced by religious ideals of modest behaviour. By the second decade of the occupation, Islamic politics re-emerged in the West Bank from the remnants of the local Muslim Brotherhood (which had been abandoned by the headquarters in Amman following the 1967 war). Although at first independent, the emergence of Islamic politics in the West Bank paralleled the more pervasive Mujama movement of the Gaza Strip (under the direction of Sheik Mohammed Yassin), which would evolve into the powerful political unit Hamas by the late 1980s. The ideological agenda of Mujama was not indigenous, however, but had been imported from doctrines and religious leaders in the surrounding region. While its focus was more towards regional religious reform than national resistance, the political philosophy of Mujama quickly took hold among the indigenous population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and led to strident divisions within the community.[7] Such local community support for Mujama was, ironically perhaps, fostered by the Israeli military. By granting permission for local Islamist organizations and infrastructure building and at the same time denying such permits to organizations associated with Palestinian nationalism, the Israeli military in some ways sponsored the growth of Islamic politics during this era.[8]

As universities became central forums for cultural and political expression in the Occupied Territories,[9] the ideological struggle between secular nationalism and Islamic reform became a prominent feature of campus discord. In the West Bank student groups challenged the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution at Birzeit University[10] and violent on-campus conflict between the Islamic bloc and nationalist student groups led to temporary closures of the entire institute during 1983. Unlike the wider political growth and social influence of the Mujama in Gaza, in the West Bank during the second decade of the occupation the political successes and growth of the Islamic movement remained limited to universities (which were populated by a large

number of students from Gaza). Islamic political organizations made no major inroads into West Bank trade unions, women's cooperatives, non-governmental organizations or professional associations.[11] Their impact was felt more at a grassroots level, with forty new mosques being built per year in the West Bank during the 1980s.[12] It might thus be supposed that this expansion of the Islamic reform movement, particularly in rural environments, might have furthered the erosion of local folk-Islam practices related to dance.

The role of women in society was a particular controversy that underscored this local political division. Although major Palestinian political organizations avoided the issue of women's rights in this era (either because it was not a priority or because they feared internal division at a time when political unity seemed crucial), there was a presumption that with national liberation, female liberation would ensue.[13] The rise of the Islamic reform movement challenged how such liberation might be interpreted, however, particularly with the introduction of the *hijab* (headscarf) and *jilbab* (full-length robe) by the Mujama movement in the Gaza Strip and, to a lesser extent, the West Bank. This Islamic dress code had gained new nationalistic as well as religious meaning, as it became positioned as a sign of a woman's commitment to both the intifada and her national heritage. It might have been presumed that these robes reflected local traditional clothing, but the particular style was imported from the wider regional Islamic fundamentalist movement.[14]

While Palestinian nationalist folklore had arisen as a response to European colonial imperialism,[15] it subsequently acted as a barrier against cultural influences from the other direction; it could be argued that the dilution of regionalism by the Islamic reform movement was slowed by the salvaging of local heritage as distinctly 'Palestinian'. Those wanting to eradicate localized folk practices (particularly dance) in the name of Islam were forced to negotiate with a powerful local sentiment that had entwined local heritage with local political identity. Those wanting to challenge the Islamic reform movement (without appearing 'Westernized') were able do so through the guise of salvaged folklore. Palestinian nationalist folklore revival had thus provided a possible destiny as an alternative to American/European secular-modernist

ideals or Egyptian/Saudi Arabian conservative-theocratic principles during a period of massive social disruption.

FOLKLORE BECOMES A FORUM FOR DIALOGUE

During this era, the folklore revival movement shifted into an arena of intra-Palestinian dialogue.[16] The goals of national unity that the folkloric movement initially strove for had actually led to a forum that allowed for more internal diversity, as various folkloric organizers utilized heritage to present their own social agenda. This internal debate over collective identity might be considered as a principal stimulating force behind the adaptations to local dance practices during the 1980s.

The belief in the intransigence of intangible heritage and the rejection of innovation by Palestinian nationalist folklorists could also be seen as serving the Israeli cultural image in the international arena. The presentation of a static cultural past at the expense of a dynamic cultural present and future supported the representation of the indigenous population as backward looking, when compared to a progressive image of Israeli national culture.

To underscore this point, even the Israeli government supported such a static view of the culture of the indigenous population. When examining 'Israeli Arab' dabkeh troupes (inside the 1948 borders of Israel) during the 1990s, Elke Kaschl pointed to the influence of 'imperial nostalgia' among Zionist officials.[17] In controlling government funding and support for such cultural activity, these officials intervened directly to discourage the 'Israeli Arab' dabkeh troupes from innovating, particularly in areas of gender, costuming and music. One result of such intervention had been the continued politicized stereotyping of indigenous culture as intransigent and unresponsive to the contemporary social environment.[18] Unsupported by such governmental funding, this stereotyping was more radically challenged in the West Bank.

The source of these changes is particularly noteworthy. While the Palestinian nationalist rural folklore revival movement was initiated by '. . . middle-class

urban intellectuals, it was later amplified by the people who were still *living* that culture in many of its components'.[19] The sudden diversity of cultural products that emerged in the West Bank during the 1980s can be attributed to the reappropriation of cultural activity by those still actively engaged in such cultural practices in their daily lives.

CULTURE ON CAMPUS

Birzeit University became the central forum for experimentation and debates over cultural interventions in the West Bank.[20] In 1980 the university initiated an annual dabkeh competition, which was adjudicated by its professors of folklore and anthropology. This gathered dabkeh groups from inside and outside of the university and included performances and subsequent panel discussions on dabkeh. By 1984, the annual month-long Birzeit Nights summer festival had been initiated, featuring competitions for local drama, dance and music groups in order to 'increase theatrical appreciation'.[21] Although these competitions and festivals were continuously disrupted by the Israeli military,[22] they nevertheless provided the most stable local forum for community discourse on culture.

Birzeit University also encouraged the formation of student dance groups. While most of these groups were associated with political parties and primarily existed to support political rallies, others increasingly focused on artistic rather than political goals.[23] The campus dance group Juthoor – founded in 1981 – had a significant influence on local theatre dance. Directed by Tayseer Masri (a local designer who had been living in Italy), Juthoor was made up of students from villages who had learnt dabkeh from family members at weddings, and students from cities who had more formally been taught dabkeh by teachers such as Saliba Totah. Reflecting a mood of on-campus experimentation, their production process involved a blending of different local approaches to dance. Juthoor challenged the influence of the Lebanese Rahbanni dance styles introduced through the Ramallah Nights festivals of the

1960s, and also held extended debates over the Palestinian folkloric nationalist attitudes towards the use of lighting, costume and the physical interaction of men and women in dance.[24]

Individual members of Juthoor went on to contribute much to other local dance collectives, but ultimately as a group its influence was relatively transient. Although Juthoor was active again on the Birzeit University campus at the start of the twenty-first century, as a students' collective it had been through numerous generations and directors with lengthy intervals of non-activity, so did not maintain a consistent stylistic influence.

Similarly, the group Sharaf was both supported and limited by the nature of campus culture. Formed on campus by students in 1985 and named after a Birzeit University student killed by the Israeli military, Sharaf tried to maintain consistency and continue on as an off-campus group with the same members in the early 1990s. The participation of women in the group was more difficult to maintain off campus however, particularly as it did not become affiliated with any other institution and rehearsals just took place in the garages of members' homes. The group thus became inactive by the late 1990s, although former members continued to dance in other local groups.[25]

The influence of Birzeit University on the development of post-salvage dance ideals can therefore be more readily seen through the support and feedback it provided for the more established off-campus dance groups. This was particularly important for the growth of El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe and the Sareyyet Ramallah Troupe for Music and Dabkeh.

THE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF EL-FUNOUN AS CHANGE AGENT

Firqat El-Funoun Ash-shabiyeh (El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe[26]) was the longest established and generally most popularly renowned dance collective in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the late twentieth century.[27] El-Funoun might also be considered the most noteworthy proponent of a post-

salvage dance aesthetic in the West Bank, and thus highly influential change agent in local culture. Its processes of innovation in the 1980s, when the region experienced almost no interaction with dance artists from outside the West Bank, provides a particularly clear illustration of post-salvage cultural ideals.

El-Funoun was founded in Al-Bireh in 1979 by Wassim Al-Kurdi, Mohamad Atta and Mohamad Jacoub. As three friends who had informally participated in dabkeh at weddings and more formally performed dabkeh together through the First Al-Bireh Scout Group, they decided to establish a group in order to participate in the 1980 Birzeit University dabkeh competition. By 1984 their mixed-gender ensemble had toured to Bethlehem, Nablus, East Jerusalem, Gaza, Haifa, Acre and the Galilee, and had a massive popular following among the indigenous population of Palestine.[28] El-Funoun's elevated regional standing and the broad popular acceptance of its innovations can be attributed to several factors: its factional neutrality, its socio-cultural roots and its pursuit of artistic excellence.

El-Funoun established itself as a non-factional performing group strongly committed to the indigenous people and culture of Palestine. Although ideologically aligned with the socialist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), it did not openly represent this political faction within its performances. As Al-Kurdi recalled: 'We started to take a distance from political slogans [of Palestinian factions]. We asked, are we doing dabkeh for art, or just for posters for a political party? It was not our idea to become a dancing group for any political party.'[29]

25   The first performance of El-Funoun, at Birzeit University in 1979

The troupe's leftist political leanings did, however, affect the ideological direction of the group. Suggesting that these ideals took root in high-school student union politics, Atta recalled that in the early years there was no artistic director, and El-Funoun's rehearsals involved collective decision making among all the dancers. Such experiences led the group to challenge the idea of the *lawih*, or leader, of the dabkeh line. This was supposedly a role taken by the dominant village male, who would dictate the dance steps and could display through virtuoso dancing his ability to lead the family and community.[30] El-Funoun refuted this image of both patriarchy and authoritarian rule within indigenous culture.[31] Over the succeeding years such a role was featured less and less within El-Funoun productions, as varied geometric patterns made by small groups on stage came to replace the single line being led and controlled by a *lawih*.

This process of creating also contributed to the inclusion of women on stage as equal members and not relegated to secondary roles. While such a notion of gender equality could be attributed to foreign cultural influences, it could also be ascribed to a more gender-balanced interpretation of local heritage than that presented by the Palestinian national folklore movement. Former El-Funoun member Serene Huleileh suggested that such equal participation on stage was less a deliberately advocated ideal and more simply a reflection of the gender dynamic that already existed within the group; a continuation of their own social experience rather than a projection of social idealism.[32]

A second reason for El-Funoun's popularity can be attributed to the sense that it represented the authentic heritage of Palestine. This was consolidated when its members were awarded first place in the Birzeit University competition of 1980 and praised specifically for their authentic detail. To a large extent, however, the group were (in this first performance) reflecting the Palestinian nationalist folklore aesthetic ideals that had been taught to them through the Al-Bireh Scout group, and the adjudicating panel was mostly comprised of salvage folklorists. That El-Funoun members were generally from a working-class (or recently urbanized rural) background, with a mix of local residents and refugees from other parts of Palestine, further contributed to this perception

of authenticity. They were even able to perform in traditional peasant wedding clothes that had been borrowed from their own grandparents.[33]

Although the group had conducted some rural field research into indigenous musical forms, their knowledge of dance was based on more personal experiences. This underscores the notion that the group were not attempting to preserve a dance that they had studied with the intent of localized cultural appropriation, but were instead dynamically exploring their own familiar cultural practices. As former El-Funoun member Suhail Khoury recalls,

> These people were working class. They were basically doing it in life – sometimes they were artists and coming and doing it on stage. That was very important for the whole movement . . . You couldn't get more popular than that. It was the grassroots. That's what everybody related to. They were just putting it on stage, so that everybody could see them.[34]

Later reviews of the group's history would claim that El-Funoun's knowledge of Palestinian rural dance practices was based on extensive field research conducted during this period.[35] This somewhat misleading suggestion was stimulated by a television documentary made in conjunction with their 1987 production *Afrah Filastiniyah* (*Palestinian Festivities*), which showed several El-Funoun members entering a village to learn the heritage from elderly people.[36] As Al-Kurdi, who featured in the documentary, later explained, the process displayed in the documentary was very staged:

> Yes we brought it from villages but not in this way, not as researchers. We participated in weddings. Sometimes as a group, sometimes as individuals. So sometimes we would have a friend from Kofr Aqab, and they invited us to go there . . . We just gathered movements. There was no discussion about their meaning at all.[37]

Mohamad Atta concurs, recalling that they were also usually familiar with the movements that they encountered at such social events, although the name of the step might have varied from place to place.[38]

26   El- Funoun performing *Afrah Filastiniyah* at Al-Quds University in 1987

It may be because of this personal association with dabkeh that El-Funoun
subsequently felt a certain liberty when adapting it. This evolution can be seen
occurring in a particular nexus of dance as artistic performance and dance as
social participation. El-Funoun members described their choreographic goals
as not simply to create for the stage, but to present work that the audience would
recognize, accept, absorb and subsequently emulate in a social environment.[39]
In this sense, the dabkeh as performed art was not seen as a separate path, but
part of a cycle of cultural renewal that included dabkeh as a social activity, with
the two feeding off each other. As El-Funoun noted, however, its performed
dabkeh had begun to take on such authority that audiences were often wrongly
presuming that such productions presented an authentic, unchanged portrayal
of how their grandparents used to dance in social settings.[40]

A third reason for its popular acceptance can be seen to have resulted from its members' artistic commitment. As a group they practised more consistently than other local collectives, who would generally gather on a more short-term seasonal basis. Several of the former dancers explained that it was this dedication to rehearsal that resulted in more rigorously defined performances and aesthetically complex choreography than existed among other groups – and resulted in more university competition wins. Their theatrical productions thus reflected a very confident and deliberate artistic intent, which further contributed to the local perception that El-Funoun was an authoritative representative of the indigenous population's culture.

MASHAHED FOLKLORIYYE, WADI TOFAH AND MISH'AL

While initial evening-length productions such as 1982s *Mashahed Folkloriyye* (*Folkloric Scenes*) simply presented a vista of traditional folk songs and dances, the ongoing commitment to rehearsal within El-Funoun led to greater experimentation and a desire to represent a wider variety of folkloric elements and historic episodes. The intensely politicized atmosphere of foreign occupation similarly led to a desire to address pressing social concerns. Both of these factors in turn significantly contributed to the evolution of El-Funoun's choreographic work.[41] The 1984 performance, *Wadi Tofah* (*Valley of Apples*), involved greater historical research as the group was not simply displaying their familiar dances but portraying the seasonal cycles of a rural village in pre-1948 Palestine, with dramatic episodes of war and emigration. Wassim Al-Kurdi recalled that in this process the group studied folklore histories by Nabil Alqam and Abdelatif Barghouthi.[42] This research (and the adaptations to movement) became more pronounced in 1986's more complex narrative, *Mish'al* (the lead character's name, literally translating as Lantern). This production explored an oral legend about a young freedom fighter during the British Mandate, glorifying resistance against foreign occupation.

Although the story in both *Wadi Tofah* and *Mish'al* was supported by an oral narrator, the need to represent images more complex than a festive wedding and to entertain audiences with dance during an evening-length story fostered more innovative uses of the existing dabkeh steps.[43] In these two productions, such innovations included the creation of new dabkeh steps (referred to in El-Funoun as *dabkeh jdeed*), which were similar to, and fitted into the choreographic patterns of, existing dabkeh steps.[44] These adaptations also involved adding dramatic gestures with the arms to the dance movements being made with the feet, which intimated a new contextual meaning for these traditional steps. Perhaps most iconic, a clenched shaking fist converted a traditional hop and stamp into a stomp of defiance. Such ideas were prompted through a series of workshops with local drama teachers and theatre directors, utilizing creative improvisation techniques.[45] Added to this were ever more complex floor patterns (choreographic pathways on the stage) and group formations, to provide more aesthetic diversity. Similarly, the music became composed or arranged to fit the narrative. While folk songs remained the source of this musical arrangement, the instrumentation was adapted and the words often changed to suit more contemporary themes.

In reflecting upon the deliberate nature of these changes in *Mish'al*, Wassim Al-Kurdi described how El-Funoun had 'chosen one of the most famous and common Palestinian folk stories . . . and restructured it, in form and content, to suit the Troupe's vision and concepts . . . it has been given new dimensions and meanings that it did not originally have'.[46]

Reflecting on this process, Al-Kurdi went on to detail several particular adaptations that El-Funoun undertook in the production of *Mish'al*.[47] These included:

- utilizing narration and dramatic structure within dance performances;
- utilizing group narration rather than an individual narrator (in the form of a traditional storyteller or orator);
- telling the narration from a contemporary perspective;
- incorporating singing alongside the performance of dancing;

- utilizing cultural symbols and images that were not directly related to the dance;
- utilizing modern standard, rather than classical, Arabic in the songs;
- creating new songs in the form of local folk tunes.

These were adaptations to the style of folk dance previously defined by the Palestinian nationalist folklore movement, not necessarily adaptations to the folk dance that existed historically in Palestine. To validate the interpretations of indigenous dance history in these productions, El-Funoun often sought historical precedents to support such innovations.[48] This involved lengthy internal debates and discourses with local folklorists such as Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba and Sherif Kanaana, who sometimes supported and sometimes contested their innovations on historical grounds. The role of women in dance became a particularly salient point: Abu Hadba contended that men and women never danced together; but Kanaana explained how:

> There's a special name for men and women dancing together, it's called *habel muadeh*. It means a necklace of shells. Standing in a circle man–woman–man–woman and so on. The shells that make it pretty, I assume, were the women. If it did not exist, it would not have a technical, traditional term.[49]

It was through such illustrations that the presentation of men and women dancing while holding hands (one of El-Funoun's most radical challenges to the aesthetics of nationalist salvagism) gained support through historical precedent. Maintaining an association with this mix of folklore academics also helped clarify that El-Funoun's adaptations were deliberate and based on differing interpretations of local history or contemporary ideals, not simply theatrical gaffes. To illustrate this, these differing interpretations were incorporated in El-Funoun's own publications.[50]

DANCE AS STORYTELLING IN MARJ IBN 'AMER

El-Funoun travelled to North America on its first international tour in 1986, bringing some international exposure to the dance theatre occurring in the Occupied Territories. The busy performing schedule did not provide the El-Funoun dancers with much time to observe other foreign dance productions. International influences on dance in the West Bank were thus relatively indirect during this period. While the West Bank was still very much physically isolated from dance practitioners in other parts of the region, Atta recalls that by the mid-1980s televised productions of dance groups were more frequently broadcast through the Jordanian channel. Most notably the work of Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Theatre made a very strong impression on the group, particularly for the complexity of their group formations.[51]

In 1986 El-Funoun also formed the junior performing group Bara'em (Buds) to train younger dancers for the main adult company. This initiated a cross-generational cultural education that was distinct from previous local revival teachings of dabkeh. Instead of passing on a supposedly static and salvaged form of folk dance, the students were being taught dances that had been openly and deliberately adapted, and they were also encouraged to innovate themselves.

In 1987 El-Funoun established the Popular Art Centre as a separate institution with the mission to document traditional dance in Palestine. The Popular Art Centre undertook field research into local indigenous music forms and compiled an extensive traditional music archive, but no such research was taken into local indigenous dance practices.[52] The centre did, however, become an important base for dance interventions in the West Bank, providing El-Funoun and others with a rehearsal space and administrative facilities for theatrical production and dance education.

The 1987 production *Afrah Filastiniyah* was simply a 'best of El-Funoun' compilation (linking together dances from former El-Funoun productions). More radical choreographic adaptations occurred in 1989's *Marj Ibn 'Amer* (*The Plains of Ibn 'Amer*). This production contained strong metaphors of

resistance against colonial encroachment, entwining a narrative of romance and abduction with the dispossession of villagers from the Ibn 'Amer plains in the north of Palestine in the early twentieth century. In this production, movement took a much more central role in actually telling the narrative, with dramatic gestures increasingly stylized into dance movements that often had no association with existing folkdance actions.

The process of creation also shifted as Suhail Khoury, who had been involved in the production of music for *Mish'al* and *Afrah Filastiniyah*, was appointed to direct *Marj Ibn 'Amer*. This positioning of a director within an El-Funoun production did not grant total artistic licence to one person. Several of the former dancers recall that the group continued to create based on collective contributions and consensus, and the director's role was more that of a facilitator than an author. Suhail Khoury did, however, bring new influences. From a more wealthy urban background in Jerusalem, his own dabkeh education began in the productions of Saliba Totah in the 1970s and continued in Juthoor at Birzeit University in the early 1980s. Having also travelled and observed folkdance performances during musical studies in North America, Khoury further challenged some of the constructions of heritage of the Palestinian nationalist folklore movement. One dance, performed to the rustic folk lament *Tair el-Gourab* (*The Blackbird*), strongly suggested a traditional peasant mourning ritual, with repetitive soft swaying arms, flowing veils and tilted attitudes of longing. While the group were aware of the historic existence of mourning movement rituals (such as latm and nuwar), Suhail Khoury admitted that he did not base this dance's choreography on any traditional movement ritual that he had actually witnessed.[53] The graceful aesthetics of this choreographed lament certainly bear little relationship to the more furious indigenous mourning dances described in the nineteenth-century accounts. It was thus more of a revival of dance contexts from local heritage than a revival of actual dance practices.

Other innovations within this production included the creation of dance solos, male–female duets and the use of more stylized traditional costumes that would allow greater freedom of movement. These changes introduced

far more contention within the group, as they seemed to be direct challenges to local heritage. These changes were reasoned through ideological, historical and aesthetic grounds, but the production stirred fierce debate within El-Funoun and led to numerous members leaving the group. It also more clearly defined the group's cultural goal as the evolution, rather than the preservation, of indigenous dance practices,[54] or post-salvagist rather than salvagist. As Mohamad Atta contended, 'Folklore allows you to be related with your history, not to live your history, but to be related with it. Not to cut with. But you must always be creative.'[55] This process induced much uncertainty, however, and it would be five years before El-Funoun's next theatrical premiere.

The strong public support for *Marj Ibn 'Amer* can be seen to have been generated by its political relevance to the popular resistance of the occupation, its

27   El-Funoun performing *Marj Ibn 'Amer* at the Al Hakawati Theatre in Jerusalem in 1989

apparent rootedness in indigenous culture and its level of theatrical polish. This sustained El-Funoun's popularity during the following years as the group further explored new artistic directions.

THE ADAPTIVE APPROACH OF SAREYYET RAMALLAH

After almost twenty years of inactivity since the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s, the First Ramallah Scout Group re-established a performing dance group in 1985, the Sareyyet Ramallah Troupe for Music and Dabkeh.[56] This new group largely comprised dancers who had danced – and continued to dance – with El-Funoun. These members included the Sareyyet Ramallah's new artistic director Khaled Ellayan, who continued performing with El-Funoun until 1990, and Wassim Al-Kurdi, who wrote the scenarios and text for the first three major productions. The group can thus be seen as an extension of El-Funoun's cultural influence, although it also evolved a distinct artistic direction.

While the appeal of Sareyyet Ramallah within the Occupied Territories did not become as broadly popular as El-Funoun's during this era, its experimental approach to folk dance garnered a substantial following and rendered a strong influence on the course of performed dance in the West Bank. Similar to El-Funoun, Sareyyet Ramallah established its heritage credibility with a first prize at a university dabkeh competition, at the 1985 Bethlehem University folk festival. In contrast to El-Funoun's more collective approach to choreography, Sareyyet Ramallah's artistic process involved specific choreographers (Khaled Ellayan and Fuad Fino) taking an authoritative role in the composition of the movement. At the early stages in Sareyyet Ramallah's work, this choreographic role did not involve much innovation. The group's first few years produced virtually '. . . the same steps, the same choreography' as those being done by El-Funoun, although with different stories and music.[57]

The first evening-length production, 1986's *Al-Sheiq* (*The Lover*), told the story of a man who left Palestine because of the political situation. This

narrative was told, in effect, by the narrator and song lyrics. Some expressive gestures were added to the ensemble dabkeh dance pieces, which were seemingly included mostly for their aesthetic and culturally symbolic value.

The second production, 1989's *Sowar Filistiniyye* (*Pictures from Palestine*), had no narrative aspect and was simply a series of wedding dances without any particular choreographic innovations. It introduced a local shift in costuming however, with designer Ghassoub Serhan shortening the traditional *thobe* to allow greater freedom of movement, and changing its colours for aesthetic effect.[58] Other children/youth groups such as those directed by Saliba Totah had previously used such stylized costumes, but this action from a revered mainstream adult folkdance group made a controversial challenge to the heritage aesthetics defined by nationalist folklorists. It also indicated greater value being given to the female performers as dancers, rather than just as models parading historic items of clothing.

More pronounced choreographic innovation in Sareyyet Ramallah began in 1992's *Jbaineh* (the name of the lead character, which literally translates as White Cheese), a local folk tale about a young village woman abducted by an aristocrat. The story was adapted to express a political message, with the abducted woman becoming a metaphor for the stolen land of Palestine.[59] The choreographic adaptations here involved a break from ensemble dancing, and the creation of solo dances. Much of the movement was based on dramatic expressions, with danced actions imitating the themes expressed in the sung words. As in El-Funoun's adaptive process, dramatic expression in choreography focused on the upper body (head, arms, torso), while the legs maintained an impression of local heritage through the use of familiar dabkeh steps. This method of adaptation allowed familiar dance aesthetics to grow increasingly central to the storytelling.

Jbaineh might also be seen as more of an extension of the Rahbanni influence from Lebanon. The recorded musical score by Said Murad followed the more classical style of the Fairuz operettas, in contrast to the arrangements of local folk tunes for dabkeh displays. Choreographer Khaled Elayyan recalled having seen the work of Lebanon's Caracalla on the television by then and being

inspired by their formations and costumes, although the actual movement vocabulary seemed less accessible.[60] Radi Shehadeh, a drama director, was also brought in from outside the local community. As an indigenous artist living inside the 1948 borders of Israel, Shehadeh had had a relatively different cultural experience to indigenous artists living in the West Bank, with more of an inclination towards modernist aesthetics. Accordingly, *Jbaineh* might be considered a very mixed work stylistically, blending the emergent post-salvage ideals with other aesthetic ideals fostered in Lebanon and further afield. Not gaining as wide a popular following as El-Funoun – perhaps because of this stylistic blend – Sareyyet Ramallah nevertheless developed a strong following as a creative yet patriotic dance troupe. Their productions maintained a direct connection to the trauma experienced by the indigenous population, but a slightly looser association with local heritage.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE INTIFADA

During the 1980s Palestinian nationalists and other foreign groups (such as the Jordanian-based Islamic Jihad) had undertaken sporadic militant acts against the Israeli occupation, although these were not coordinated with the general indigenous population. The intifada (literally translated as 'shaking off') that began in the Occupied Territories in December 1987 was a more popular uprising. Ostensibly sparked by a traffic accident in which indigenous workers in Gaza were killed by an Israeli vehicle, the actual causes of the intifada have been attributed to the 'sheer despotism, selfishness and greed' of the Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories, with the indigenous population serving as a 'slave market' for the Israeli economy.[61] Along with the appropriation of land and resources, over the previous two decades the Israeli security forces had detained, humiliated and tortured tens of thousands of this population in the West Bank.[62] Throughout the refugee camps of the Occupied Territories particularly, the mood of rebellion was already well established. The intifada reflected that this mood had been consolidated within the towns and cities as well.[63]

While the intifada often involved youths throwing stones at Israeli military vehicles in the Occupied Territories, it was not primarily an armed rebellion. Civil disobedience in the form of general strikes was the more defining feature of this uprising. A massive, persistent campaign of civil resistance, including public demonstrations, the voluntary closures of shops, schools and universities and the withdrawal of labourers from the Israeli market were symbolic acts of political solidarity.[64] On the street, the Israeli military reacted with the forced openings of shops and, in the first three years of the intifada, approximately 30,000 people were tried on intifada-related charges. Penalties were severe, ranging from three months' to two years' imprisonment for stone throwing. A further 14,000 people were imprisoned through administrative detention, an Israeli legal clause allowing imprisonment without charge or trial for the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories. This imprisonment typically lasted six months but could be repeated and often meant that individuals were held for years.[65] A beatings policy, adopted in 1988 by the Israeli Defence Minister Yitzak Rabin, commanded Israeli police to use riot sticks to break the bones of the indigenous demonstrators, to render them unable to participate in protests for long periods.[66]

By this stage, the mass expulsion of the indigenous population from both Israel and the Occupied Territories 'once again became, as it had during the 1930s and 1940s, a legitimate subject of public advocacy' within Israeli public discourse.[67] Utilizing the euphemism 'transfer', such an expulsion policy was continuously preached from Israeli political pulpits, from Rehav'am Ze'evi's right-wing Motherland Party to more mainstream Israeli government ministers such as Michael Dekel. One opinion poll indicated that almost half the Israeli Jewish electorate favoured some form of enforced transfer of the indigenous population,[68] with more than 60 per cent supporting their voluntary departure.[69] This continuing threat of expulsion can be seen to have further stimulated the need among the indigenous population to express their historical association with the geographic space. This, in turn, reinforced the promotion of cultural identity through rural heritage.

On 31 July 1988 Jordan's King Hussein 'abdicated as king of the Palestinians'[70] and announced that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was severing its administrative and judicial claims to the West Bank in deference to the will of the PLO.[71] This sudden turn removed the option of the West Bank ever returning to Jordanian sovereignty and, for Israeli politicians, removed the possibility of ceding any population-dense part of the West Bank to Jordan in some form of peace treaty. The West Bank indigenous population had become a distinct, stateless, geo-political entity.

By 1991, internal travel for the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories had become subject to tighter restrictions. Those with West Bank identification could not visit Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip without a permit from the Israeli Ministry of the Interior, and those with Gaza Strip identification could not visit the West Bank or Jerusalem without permission.[72] Through this, a distinct West Bank (minus Jerusalem) indigenous social grouping was being imposed and consolidated by the Israeli occupying forces. Along with the existing restrictions on international travel for the indigenous population, these changes increased the process of cultural isolation. The closure of Birzeit University by the Israeli military from 8 January 1988 until 29 April 1992[73] further diminished vital forums for internal cultural discourse within the West Bank.

'NOBODY USED TO USE NAMES'

Like many indigenous cultural activists during the late 1980s, dance artists from El-Funoun, Sareyyet Ramallah and other dance collectives were targeted by the Israeli military. Almost every male and many of the female members of these troupes were imprisoned without charge or trial for periods ranging from a week to two years, and subjected to mental abuse and physical torture. While this inevitably delayed their cultural productions, it also reinforced the political credentials of their subsequent cultural output. Their dances could be seen as very much entwined with the political struggle, and not elitist or removed from the daily experience of the community.

This risk of Israeli military retributions also contributed to the collectivized decision-making process and the sharing of artistic credit in programme notes. As one former El-Funoun member recalls, individual artists were not named as:

> Nobody at that time would admit that they were part of El-Funoun. You would go and be tortured for a week for them to get out of you that you were part of El-Funoun. And if you go back to the material that was published by El-Funoun at that time, you probably wouldn't find anything [names], or if you would, you would only find 'choreography by Funoun, lighting by Funoun'. Nobody used to use names, who was doing what. And that was also part of this group struggle idea. It was underground. Although you are performing, you would never admit who was behind what.[74]

This also produced a large amount of solidarity for the dance artists among the general public. As Mustafa Dawoud, a former member of Sharaf, recalled: 'In 1988–9, the audience would cheer wildly just for a dancer to step onto stage.'[75] Since the Israeli military often raided performances to try and arrest performers, being a dancer in such a group became perceived as a heroic act of resistance against the occupation. Just as enduring physical abuse in an Israeli prison had become a rite of passage into adulthood for local indigenous youth,[76] subsequently standing up and putting the same body on display to reveal its continuing dynamism through dance invested such performances with highly potent political meanings.

El-Funoun's *Marj Ibn 'Amer* was largely devised and composed in Israeli prison camps, as indigenous musicians, dancers and writers found themselves gathered in such facilities. Once outside the prison camps, the Israeli military presented other obstacles to dance, as a former El-Funoun member recounts:

> A lot of times they [the Israeli military] would close the Hakawati Theatre when we were going to perform. We had many issues like this. At one

time we were going to perform at Beersabre . . . the day before, they summoned nine of the members of El-Funoun to Shin Bet [the Israeli domestic intelligence police]. They [Shin Bet] told them to be there at 7 o'clock in the morning. We had to leave at 10 a.m. to get to Beersabre, to perform and come back. They made them wait until 4 or 5 o'clock, and then they just let them go. Just to stop the performance.[77]

Within the first three months of the intifada, one-fifth of the indigenous population wounded by the Israeli military forces was female.[78] Such public recognition of women's participation on the front line of the struggle against the occupation further challenged the Palestinian nationalist representations of women as secondary characters in dance. This may have supported the post-salvage adaptations in dance that accorded a more central and equal role for women, but did not necessarily ensure social and political equality for women amongst the indigenous population, particularly with the rising popularity of the Islamic reform movement.[79]

In the West Bank, despite such seeming unity against the occupation forces, internal political divisions among the indigenous population continued and deepened. The popular response to the militant acts of Islamic Jihad against Israelis in 1986 instigated a growth in the Islamic political movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1988 this culminated in the new political force Hamas, which emerged out of Mujama and was more committed to the struggle against Zionism than Mujama had been. Retaining links with the international Islamic reform movement and describing itself as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, the doctrine of Hamas remained distinct from the nationalist resistant movement of the PLO, and focused more on the establishment of a non-secular Islamic state in the whole area of historic Palestine.[80] This contradicted the PLO's Declaration of Palestinian Independence on 15 November 1988 in Algiers, which included an acceptance of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 and UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, displaying a willingness to cede part of the region to an Israeli state.

The PLO's subsequent backing of Saddam Hussein in the First Gulf War triggered a massive change in their international financial support. The US$28 million that the PLO had been receiving every month from Saudi Arabia was now diverted to Hamas, who had adopted a more neutral position in the conflict. Hamas went on to supply poverty relief and greater welfare activities in the burgeoning refugee camps, establishing a greater base of indigenous support, while the PLO struggled to make back-payments to its employees.[81]

By the commencement of the October 1991 Madrid peace talks between Israel and the PLO, the popular demonstrations of the intifada had become less active. Replacing them were more isolated militant activities (such as bombings, shootings and kidnappings), mostly by Islamic Jihad and Hamas, who were opposed to the peace talks. There was by then 'a general malaise on the Palestinian street affecting people's attitudes to the daily routine of the Intifada'.[82]

During the intifada, 50,000 of the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories served time in Israeli prisons. The already fragile economy was shattered, with a 35 per cent drop in living standards. The intifada also tallied a considerable loss of life among the indigenous population. From December 1987 to December 1993, 1,143 people (197 of whom were children) had been killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers, and thousands more had been injured. In addition to this, more than 500 people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had been killed in internal violence, particularly through the execution of people suspected of collaboration with the Israelis.[83] While the intifada had reflected a particularly strong level of political solidarity among the indigenous population, it had also revealed the existing divisions.

THE DELIBERATE ADAPTATION OF DANCE HERITAGE

Birzeit University anthropologist Sherif Kanaana suggested that many of the adaptations to local folkdance practices by dance groups during this era were merely accidental products of local ignorance; 'They put women's clothes on men and men's clothes on women, just trying to improvise on the spot by people who are not informed enough to appreciate the culture.'[84] Many dance practitioners were, nonetheless, both knowledgeable and deliberate in their adaptations of folklore in staged productions. Since much local discourse had already been invested in the idea of cultural stasis through the preceding folklore revival movements, the public acceptance of such adaptations was not automatic. As one local journalist observed, however, the topical socio-political themes of these new dance productions ensured wide public support for such deliberate challenges.[85] Dancing about the tragic plight of the indigenous population provided a popularly valid reason for adapting the dances of the indigenous population.

Another reason for this acceptance may be attributed to the familiar style of the choreographic innovation. The dances were relatively similar to what was already in existence, and so the local population were not always aware of what was an innovation. As Khaled Qatamish recalls: 'Funoun has added movements to these dances that people now view as traditional Palestinian dance. So a lot of steps that people still use now, like *gazelle-jdeed*, they don't know that Funoun invented it and they think that it is from before.'[86]

Throughout my discussions with local dance practitioners on the causes of such deliberate adaptations during this era, a 'personal creativity' polemic did not emerge. An individual artist's desire to satisfy their own imaginative speculation or to innovate simply for the sake of innovation was not offered as a rationale for adapting dance heritage. This does not suggest that creative exploration was not a personal motivation for many dance practitioners in the West Bank. It does reflect, however, a certain reverence for the collective ownership of such heritage among the dance practitioners and their supporters.

28   El-Funoun performing *Marj Ibn 'Amer* at Jarash in Jordan in 1994

Demonstrating a post-salvage (as opposed to a modernist) perspective, creative innovation was not the right of the individual or idealized as inherently positive, but was accepted if it seemed to respond to the contemporary needs of the wider community.

While post-salvagism was not the only evolutionary pathway undertaken by performed dance in the West Bank during this era, it could be argued that it became the most locally popular and left the most enduring legacy. Some local drama groups experimented with what might be considered more

modernist approaches to physical expression. These followed the wider Arab *hadatha* movement, which admired Western models of progress and sought to reject local traditions.[87] Some folkdance ensembles continued to follow the aesthetic ideals fostered by the Palestinian nationalist folklore and the earlier pan-Arab dance revival movement. The mass popular following generated by (what might be described as) post-salvage dance artists did, however, reflect the heightened importance of this cultural movement. This artistic movement valued its indigenous dance heritage, but it also emphatically argued '. . . that folklore is not a static matter; rather, it is dynamic and connected to the present'.[88]

A seeming dichotomy between modernism and traditionalism (or the encroaching foreign present and the salvaged local past) continued to surround such an argument. For many of the local cultural activists that I talked to, it appeared that, despite their reasoned adaptations, they were expected to define themselves as agents of either a foreign hegemony or a local intransigence. This was particularly exacerbated by the public forums for cultural criticism, which were overwhelmingly dominated by political, rather than aesthetic, ideologues.[89] Although it was generally acknowledged that staged dabkeh was not, and could not be, the real authentic *turath* of village weddings, no new consensus emerged regarding the values by which local dance theatre might be assessed. Notably, it was nationalist folklorists, ethnologists, anthropologists and socio-political commentators that continued to provide the most consistent and published criticism and appraisal of dance as a performed art within the West Bank during this period, not art, theatre or dance critics. The adjudication panels for staged dabkeh competitions at the universities and schools relied on similar expertise. As such, most criticism emphasized the responsibility of dabkeh performers to render Palestine's cultural legacy of dabkeh accurately as a historical social activity, and thereby promote awareness of the Palestinian national cause. Very little criticism was published analysing the creative intentions and aesthetic innovations of the dance makers or performers. This presented a particular problem in identifying the emerging aesthetics of post-salvagism.

The modernism versus traditionalism dichotomy became an even more pronounced issue in the subsequent era. As the West Bank became very suddenly exposed to more intense cultural interaction with the outside world, local innovations in dance became more readily attributed to foreign hegemonic sources rather than local reasoning and reflection.

29   One of the ubiquitous roadblocks installed by the Israeli military around the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This one is situated on the road between Nablus and Jericho

9   *The Oslo period*

The Oslo Peace Process instigated a new cultural era in what had become the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Heightened international cultural exchange, an influx of international financial support, pockets of semi-autonomy for the indigenous population and ongoing political and military oppression provided an atmosphere for dance that was charged with both energy and confusion. Paramount among the local artistic concerns during this era was (what was posited as) the dichotomy between traditional and modern dance.

PIECES OF PEACES

The Israeli/Fatah signature of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) on 13 September 1993 (following secret negotiations in Oslo), might be seen as the official ending of the intifada, despite its rejection by Hamas and other political factions representing the indigenous population of Palestine. The DoP demanded that the indigenous population recognize and accept an Israeli state, cease any claim of sovereignty over historic Palestine (pre-1948 borders) and halt all civil and militant resistance to Zionism. In return, the indigenous population would receive limited self-rule (not sovereignty) and responsibility for taxation, welfare, health, education and tourism in certain parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Within the DoP, several key issues (e.g. Israeli colonies in the Occupied Territories, the rights of indigenous refugees

in exile and the status of Jerusalem) were scheduled for consideration at a later date.

While this initiated what was contentiously referred to as a 'peace process' between Israel and the indigenous population, the basis of this political action was vociferously challenged.[1] The Oslo Accords can be seen as leading to a period in the Occupied Territories that was 'untenable for most . . . and unbearable for hundreds of thousands'.[2] On an economic level the Oslo agreements seemed designed simply to make the Occupied Territories into a client state of Israel, subject to asymmetric containment as a result of the continuing Israeli military presence throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[3] By December 1999, the Oslo agreements had created 227 separate areas in the West Bank under Palestinian National Authority control. Israel controlled the land in between them and (through ubiquitous military checkpoints) effectively controlled these enclaves, restricting the transfer of goods and people between and around the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.[4] This can be seen as further contributing to the cultural isolation of the indigenous population in the West Bank.

The change of government in Israel in 1996 (following the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin by a right-wing Zionist) led to a shift in Israeli policy over the Oslo agreements. The later prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, declared that his government would oppose the establishing of an independent Palestinian state as well as any further negotiations on the status of Jerusalem and the rights of indigenous refugees in exile.[5] The decision to freeze the construction of Zionist colonies in the Occupied Territories was officially rescinded[6] and by 2000 the population of Israeli settler colonists residing in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had doubled.[7]

In this context of ongoing colonization and military occupation, the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories continued to be subjected to what appeared to be state-sanctioned violence. Hundreds were imprisoned by Israel without charge or trial until the late 1990s.[8] In December 1995, a Zionist colon deliberately shot and killed a pregnant indigenous woman in the village of Al-Jib, and was sentenced to four months' community service by an Israeli judge. In September 1996, seventy of the indigenous population were killed

and several hundred injured when the Israeli military used live rounds to disperse people gathered at demonstration rallies in the West Bank.[9] Such actions against the indigenous population (along with the continued appropriation of resources by Zionist colons) can be seen to have induced a local scepticism about the end of Israeli military occupation and the existence of a genuine peace process. This was further exacerbated as sporadic acts of terrorism during this period (by both Zionist colons in the Occupied Territories and indigenous militant groups) threatened to derail further political negotiations.[10]

While the return of Yassir Arafat and the establishing of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) security apparatus led to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from major West Bank urban centres by 1995, 61 per cent of the West Bank continued to be subject to Israeli military control.[11] It also appeared that the hegemonic system set up by Israel was going to be maintained, although mediated by the newly established PNA. A new social class emerged in the Occupied Territories as those with links to the PNA were very visibly accorded privileges and rights that were denied to others. This led to a fractious divide between locals and several thousand returning exiled indigenous refugees who constituted the core bureaucracy of the PNA.[12] These 'returnees', as they came to be known, might thus be considered as having a particularly transformative socio-cultural impact in the West Bank.

The semi-autonomy granted to the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories through the PNA did at first lead to an increase in the popularity of Fatah and away from the Islamist political groups.[13] In 1996 Yassir Arafat won 85 per cent of the vote in the first legislative elections. Although this suggested a strong mandate and support for pursuing a final settlement with Israel, the non-participation in the elections by Hamas (and other political parties opposed to the peace process) meant that such a consensus was actually very uncertain among the indigenous population. By the end of the twentieth century key issues such as the political rights of the exiled indigenous refugee population, the status of Jerusalem and the expanding Zionist colonies in the West Bank remained unresolved, and the PNA became subject to increasing criticism over financial corruption.[14]

A separate Israeli–Jordanian peace treaty, on 26 October 1994, further opened the Jordan valley border to third-country passport holders, allowing foreigners to visit the West Bank without having to pass through an Israeli airport (although they would need to pass an Israeli-controlled border crossing). This made access to the West Bank slightly less restrictive, which supported the sudden increase in cultural exchange that ensued.

BUILDING THEATRES AS BRIDGES

The onset of peace negotiations produced a gradual but consistent change in the social atmosphere of the Occupied Territories. As communal celebrations (such as weddings and graduations) began to be participated in with greater extravagance, new sites for cultural consumption emerged. Restaurants, wedding halls, hotels (and in Christian municipalities) nightclubs and bars proliferated.[15]

Numerous new local television stations were licensed by the PNA, just as satellite channels gave sudden access to news and entertainment from the wider world. The local channels continuously played footage from local dabkeh performances (along with other cultural music and images promoting Palestinian patriotism) between regularly scheduled programming. Meanwhile, satellite channels (particularly from Lebanon) exposed even the most remote villages in the West Bank to popular and folkdance styles from other regions.

Local performing arts groups became more visible as funding for the arts suddenly became available from international donor agencies.[16] The construction of facilities and infrastructure for dance production was particularly pronounced around Ramallah/Al-Bireh, where most international donor agencies established administrative offices, along with the PNA.[17] Two dance studios with sprung wooden floors and wall-length mirrors were built: one in the Popular Art Centre and another in the First Ramallah Group. The Popular Art Centre also constructed a small fifty-seat cinema. The new Al-Kasaba Theatre, transferring from Jerusalem to Ramallah in 2000, provided a 300-seat

30 Sareyyet Ramallah on tour in Europe in 2000. Street parades were regular features of international tours of indigenous dance groups during this period, promoting both the current performances and Palestinian cultural identity

cinema and a 377-seat theatre. By 2004, the US$6 million Japanese-funded Ramallah Cultural Palace, with a 700-seat opera-size theatre, was opened. Within ten years, the process of rehearsing dances in empty halls and performing in makeshift open-air amphitheatres had been radically transformed.

During the 1990s annual festivals featuring local and international performing artists also brought greater attention to dance as a performed art. From 1993 to 1999, the Popular Art Centre organized the Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance. Gathering an average audience of 20,000 people each summer, this festival featured mostly folk-art performing troupes from places as diverse as Chile, Cuba, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, France, Spain, Britain, Greece, Turkey, Norway and Italy.[18] The success of this festival led to the initiation of numerous other summer arts festivals around the Occupied Territories (including a revival of the Ramallah Nights festival), which were sponsored by the PNA between 1996 and 2000.

International donors began sponsoring artistic production, and dance groups such as Sareyyet Ramallah and El-Funoun became financially supported for the first time. Others were formed as a result of international sponsorship, such as the Ibdaa children's group in the Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem

31   At the Palestine International Festival in 1996, El-Funoun perform a scene from what would become *Zaghareed*

(which would go on to tour performances of dabkeh and expressive dance stories of the Nakba internationally). The A.M. Qattan Foundation, a local institution, started providing financial grants to dance productions by the late 1990s, indicating that there was a growing local investment in dance as a performing art.

THE RISE OF THE 'DANCE TEACHER'

Throughout this era, being a theatre dancer remained a strictly non-professional endeavour in the leading performing groups. Whilst actors and musicians were recognized as professional and financially recompensed, dancers (even when they shared the same stage with paid musicians and actors) were not paid. This might be attributed to a sense of pride, that the dancers in these groups

wished to illustrate that they were dancing for their nation or community and not for money (as groups that performed in weddings often did). It could also be attributed to the ambiguities over a professional standard in dance. Suhail Khoury (a former choreographer with El-Funoun and subsequently the director of the Edward Said National Academy of Music) explained to me that during the 1980s and 1990s there was much uncertainty over who would qualify as a professional dance artist.[19] While there was little doubt that the dancers' rehearsals and performances made more demands than might be expected of an amateur enthusiast, there was no established training system that might serve to evaluate professional progression.

Much of the funding for dance from international agencies during the 1990s thus went to sponsoring visits by foreign guest teachers (including the author). These workshops – lasting from several days to several weeks and often involving repeat visits from the teachers – introduced a variety of different approaches to dance pedagogy and choreography.[20]

Through the Popular Art Centre, the Moroccan teacher Faisa Talbawi presented a ballet technique workshop in 1997 to local dancers from different groups. In her workshop, participants also experimented with choreographing ballet, putting different ballet movements together to music and presenting them as dance pieces.

The 1998 workshops of Robert Wood from North America, presented only to members of El-Funoun, were entwined with the formative rehearsal stages of the production *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* (*Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*). These workshops thus involved (along with exercises in Cunningham technique) workshop activities exploring how the choreographers of the latest production could communicate their ideas to the performers, to elicit movement ideas and construct these into dances.

From Germany, Klaudia Lehmann's 1999 workshop through the Popular Art Centre was presented to dancers from different groups in Ramallah. This workshop involved all the dancers taking turns to choreograph solo, small and large group pieces on each other, a process guided by Lehmann. While the dancers were free to select any theme, music, props and even performance

locations, many utilized aspects of release technique, which Lehmann had been teaching in conjunction with the choreographic workshop.

My own first workshop in the West Bank, conducted through the Popular Art Centre in December 1998, was focused on partnering and the use of physical contact in choreography (for men and men, women and men, women and women). Each session began with exercises from the Graham technique, yoga and Pilates, followed by various exploratory activities to introduce different types of contact partnering. The dancers then worked in pairs to generate movement material, and in collaboration with each of the couples I composed a short duet. This process was repeated during a second workshop that I conducted in December 1999, which led to an invitation to return for a six-month residency, teaching such classes in 2000 with El-Funoun, Sareyyet and the Popular Art Centre.

Foreign dance styles and methods were also introduced to local dancers through indigenous teachers. Bethlehem-based Melinda Hazboun provided classes in classical ballet to El-Funoun in the early 1990s, before travelling to Germany for further dance studies. Hazboun returned to provide some ballet workshops to Sareyyet Ramallah in 1999. Aerobics – which had become ubiquitous as a group exercise form in gyms and fitness centres in the West Bank by the late 1990s – also became part of the regular regime of El-Funoun and Sareyyet through local teachers such as Samir Qatamish, Esperenza Shannon and Hussain Amer. These classes emphasized stamina and stretching and provided a standard format for warming-up before rehearsals and performances.

Further training was provided to individual members of the local dance groups in the late 1990s through participation in workshops in Tunisia and Germany. For groups such as Sareyyet Ramallah and El-Funoun, international tours and participation in cultural festivals in Europe, North America and the Middle East provided an additional exposure to foreign dance styles during this period.[21] This was still limited, as many of the leading dancer/choreographers of these and other groups continued to be subject to personal travel restrictions imposed by the Israeli military (without charge or trial) that did not allow them to leave the country.

For El-Funoun the appointment of Omar Barghouti as the group's permanent trainer in 1994 brought perhaps the most lasting changes. As the son of exiled indigenous refugees from Palestine, Barghouti arrived in the West Bank in 1994 from New York. During the 1980s and early 1990s he had been a member of Al-Watan, a New York-based dance collective that blended indigenous dance styles from Palestine with classical ballet. While he did not introduce a particular dance technique to El-Funoun, Barghouti further entrenched a command-style approach to practice sessions, (in which dancers are expected to follow the directions of an authoritative teacher),[22] in emulation of dance rehearsal methods that he had experienced through Al-Watan in North America.[23] Rehearsal changes included new processes of auditioning and selecting dancers for entry into the group as a whole and (for those already in the group) to gain particular roles in dance productions.

These various influences furthered a shift away from local processes of dance pedagogy that had been promoted by El-Funoun during the 1980s. Dance knowledge moved from belonging to the collective to belonging to dance specialists. This perhaps streamlined rehearsal processes as well as introducing new positions of power and authority in local dance learning.[24]

32   Bara'em performing the patriotic homage *Sayfun fal Yushhar* at the Palestine International Festival in 1996, to music by Fairuz

FOREIGN HEGEMONY OR LOCAL INNOVATION?

As foreign economic and cultural interventions increased in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo period, greater uncertainty over the autonomy and future of the indigenous culture arose. By the time I first arrived in the West Bank in 1998, what was ubiquitously referred to as 'modern dance' was at the centre of a local cultural debate pitting foreign/modernism against local/ traditionalism. The very broad set of ideals suggested by the term 'modern dance' meant that it took me some time to understand why it had become so divisive.

The public response to *Phoenix*, a new dance work premiered at the 1996 Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance,[25] gives a good early illustration of this growing cultural rift. Choreographed by El-Funoun's new dance trainer Omar Barghouti, *Phoenix* blended Western classical ballet aesthetics with improvised oriental or 'belly' dancing and dabkeh. *Phoenix* extended Barghouti's previous creations within El-Funoun's 1994 compilation production *Talla Wara Talla* (*Tableaux*), which used Lebanese music and introduced what might be considered the Rahbanni/Wadea Jarrar-Haddad aesthetic legacy to the work of El-Funoun. Within this compilation, Barghouti's duet *I Chose You* utilized dramatic gestures as a woman flirts with a man who at first disregards then accepts her affections. The duet was presented as a socio-cultural comment challenging gender distinctions in traditional Palestinian relationships, with the man being somewhat coy and the woman assertive and flirtatious. This shorter work might have stimulated some local controversy, but there is little doubt that *Phoenix* was a confrontational event. Although *Phoenix* might just be dismissed as poor art, the audience's refusal to applaud the work at its premiere was a shocking experience for the artists involved. El-Funoun had hitherto developed a very strong and vocal popular following, and its performers were used to having even their less remarkable dance pieces accorded a certain respect. Barghouti attributed this suddenly negative public reaction to the local society not being ready for such rapid cultural change, and suggested that 'The dancers could not cope with the choreography well.

They did it very much half-heartedly . . . The audience saw this hesitation. They could not relate, they hated the whole show, or at least did not appreciate it.'[26]

If there was within *Phoenix* a post-salvage intent to draw from the Palestinian past and make it relevant to contemporary life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, there was an apparent lack of consensus within the dance-making process. Barghouti's subsequent conclusion that it was the pace, rather than the direction, of cultural change that caused such a reaction[27] suggested a more modernist belief in progress: that the cultural future was determined and inevitable, and it was only a question of when the local society would be ready to embrace it. Barghouti further argued that some of El-Funoun's earlier repertoire had fallen for a 'Museum Tendency . . . a fundamentalism in dance that rejects as corrupting not only "external" influences, but also any process of artistic modernization that comes from within'.[28]

While Barghouti thus suggested that the problem lay with cultural intransigence, other local cultural commentators felt Barghouti's approach did not adequately acknowledge and value the existing evolutionary processes that had 'come from within' local dance culture.[29] The local rejection of *Phoenix* might not, therefore, indicate a local unwillingness to change, but could be understood as an unwillingness to change in the direction suggested by this particular choreography.

Further experimentation with foreign styles took place as dancers from El-Funoun continued creating short dances to various pieces of music in the following years, and these were often incorporated in 'folk vista' compilation programmes taken on international tours. These pieces varied, but increasingly utilized Lebanese music by Fairuz, the Rahbannis and others, blending dabkeh with steps drawn from a ballet and modern dance repertoire. This blending was further inspired by much-admired videos of productions by Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Theatre, who were regarded by many dance artists in the West Bank as a powerful authority on traditional dances in the region.

To get a clearer understanding of Caracalla Dance Theatre and its history, I travelled to Beirut, joined the group in rehearsal and met with their founder/

director Abdel Karim Caracalla. Caracalla had been a former student of Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and a graduate of the London Contemporary Dance School. Sitting with me in his theatre in downtown Beirut, Caracalla discussed their influences on his choreography and approach to dance. He was particularly inspired by Martha Graham, whom he felt brought together the best of the East and the West. Indicating a cultural distance from the ideals that I had heard expressed in the West Bank, Caracalla argued that for a local dance culture to evolve, all dancers 'must do classical ballet, as a first step, for the discipline'.[30] Although he liked to include folkdance movements in his choreography, he felt that they needed further refinement for the stage through the use of a European classical ballet technique. When I asked how local audiences might respond to having local folkdance culture influenced by European dance aesthetics, Caracalla's response that '. . . as long as the West likes it, they will like it'[31] further highlighted the ideological gap between his artistic values and those of the people I had worked with in the West Bank. Through such a promotion of Western technique and a dismissal of specifically local cultural ideals, it appeared that Caracalla approached local cultural production through an aesthetic conception that had been defined in the West. Caracalla Dance Theatre works such as *2001 Nights* (with a score including adaptations of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Ravel's *Bolero*) can seem less a danced exploration into local aesthetics and more a reflection of distant Western stereotypes of Arab aesthetics. I felt that this approach to local dance culture involved a peculiar self-orientalizing process,[32] one in which the East emulates the West emulating the East, as a parrot rather than a parody. It presented a marked contrast with the counter-hegemonic ideals being promoted by dance groups in the West Bank.

Such ideals might nevertheless be seen as indirectly affecting dance in the West Bank, as groups such as El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah looked to Caracalla Dance Theatre as an aesthetic authority for dance in the region. This underscored the scepticism that local cultural commentators felt towards the cultural adaptations that Barghouti had defended as a 'process of artistic modernization that comes from within'.[33] As the folk dance in the 1960s

Ramallah Nights festivals illustrated, just because members of a community are involved in a performance, the artistic decisions may not be based on local cultural values. What appears to be local inspiration can often be subject to considerable amounts of foreign cultural hegemony. The artistic evolution of an indigenous dance style in the West Bank, subject to local innovation and autonomy, thus remained an elusive and fragile ideal.

REMEMBERING THE PAST, ADDRESSING THE PRESENT

El-Funoun's next evening-length production, 1997's *Zaghareed* (*Ululations*), saw a return to a more collective process of choreography within the group, although it is generally recognized that El-Funoun founder Mohamad Atta was the principal choreographer. While the work was more choreographically complex, it was clearly a continuation of the choreographic style established in *Marj Ibn ʿAmer* and earlier works and a shift away from the Lebanese/Rahbanni/Caracalla influence. Set to local rural folk tunes performed live, *Zaghareed* thematically explored the ceremonies of a traditional rural wedding.

To gauge the public response, El-Funoun subsequently conducted an audience survey as part of a wider United Nations Development Program project on gender. Although the results indicated that the audiences were generally appreciative of the work, there was some criticism from female university students and teachers regarding the representation of gender roles.[34] This further challenged El-Funoun's inclination both to engage in radical social commentary and to seek a wide popular appeal through the maintenance of local heritage.

By the end of the 1990s several of the dancers from El-Funoun had also created experimental pieces that were overtly removed from local folkdance traditions. These were set to music from the Middle East and mostly involved a use of European movement techniques that had recently been introduced by the visiting foreign teachers, along with an emphasis on hip and abdominal

actions in reference to Middle Eastern belly dance styles. Presented not as El-Funoun but as part of a contemporary dance fringe festival around the 1999 Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance, this was the first time that such deliberately non-traditional experiments had been shared with the local public rather than as simply in-house workshop displays to invited friends and families. Within the festival, these pieces were presented to a group of visiting international choreographers (including the author) for discussion and evaluation. The critical feedback provided in this forum generally focused mostly on technical matters, such as how the dance pieces could more dynamically explore choreographic concepts (such as vertical levels, floor patterns on the stage, changes in speed, group formations, juxtaposition, etc.) and did not engage in an any cultural analysis of the movement repertoire on display.

During the same period, Sareyyet Ramallah had shared many of the guest teachers and influences on El-Funoun, and continued to collaborate with them on projects such as the annual opening ceremony of the Palestine International Festival. Their 1997 *Unshudat El-Ru'yan* (*Song of the Shepherds*) was a collage of folk-style dances, but they began experimenting with a radical stylistic change in the late 1990s, after the dance workshops with international guest teachers.

Sareyyet Ramallah director Khaled Ellayan suggests that these workshops led to his choreographing the short duet *Hob* (*Love*),[35] which was presented in the contemporary dance fringe festival of 1999. Set to music by Anwar Braham, this work blended movements drawn from the workshops with dramatic gestures. Through these gestures, *Hob* expressed a short narrative in which a man was taken from his wife as a political prisoner, with contemporary clothing and symbolic use of the *kafiya* (a local chequered headcloth or scarf that is often used to symbolize resistance to the Israeli occupation) to indicate that this was a current local issue. *Hob* might thus be considered the first dance piece in the West Bank directly to address issues related to a local contemporary, rather than local historical, trauma. The emergence of such direct, rather than suggestive, allusions to the traumatic experience of the Israeli military occupation might be attributed to the removal of Israeli censorship through the Oslo political process.

Sareyyet's next full-length work, *Al-Birjawi* (*The Travelling Salesman*), was on relatively familiar terrain with mostly dabkeh and pantomimic actions telling a local folk story about a Palestinian village suddenly uprooted – with indirect allusions to the Nakba. In the story, a travelling salesman arrives at an idyllic nineteenth-century Palestinian village in which everybody appears to be living in harmony. He falls in love with a local woman and courts her. Suddenly, something changes in the village, an unspecified destructive force, as lights flash, music pounds and villagers flail in panic. All the villagers flee, the village is destroyed, but the travelling salesman and his new love return triumphantly to rebuild the community. The music, with several pieces by Anwar Brahem, reflected stylized adaptations of traditional music from the Middle East. The costumes and set similarly reflected a romantic stylization of tradition, echoing Rahbanni influences from Lebanon. While *Al-Birjawi* appeared to follow earlier Sareyyet Ramallah productions such as *Jbaineh*, a shift in the artistic direction of the group had started that would lead to radical changes in the following years.

33   Sareyyet Ramallah perform *Al-Birjawi* at Al-Kasaba Theatre in 2000

PALESTINIAN–ISRAELI ARTISTIC BOYCOTTS

The intensification of foreign cultural exchange in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo era drew increasing political scrutiny. Political criticism of art in the West Bank focused especially on the ethical implications of cultural activities that involved interaction between local indigenous and Israeli artists. Such critiques ultimately reflected on the value of cultural boycotts.

The boycotting of Zionist artists by the indigenous population of Palestine had precedents in the late British Mandate period, with the refusal to engage colonist music bands in establishments such as the Grand Hotel. This was a sporadic rather than coordinated boycott, however, and it did not stop interactions between individual Zionists and members of the indigenous population at cultural events during this time. Such cultural relations between the indigenous population and Zionists continued after 1948 inside the newly established Israeli state. These would appear to have taken place within a political framework defined by a very asymmetrical power relationship, leading to the further political exploitation of indigenous culture.[36] For the indigenous population outside the 1948 borders of Israel, no cultural interaction with Israelis occurred before the 1967 war (and the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), as a result of an official social, political and economic boycott of Israel by the surrounding states.[37]

Following the 1967 war, protocols over cultural interaction between the indigenous population in the Occupied Territories and Israeli artists seem to have become much less centralized. Israel's imposed legal distinction between the West Bank and East Jerusalem populations resulted in those in Jerusalem becoming more integrated into Israeli national culture (along with the indigenous population from inside the 1948 borders) as theatrical collaborations within Jerusalem occasionally involved interaction with Zionists. While in the West Bank there was some 'quiet' interaction (e.g. an Israeli ballet teacher giving weekly classes in a private high school in Ramallah), even this was relatively exceptional. This can be seen as contributing to growing

cultural distinctions between the East Jerusalem and West Bank populations during this period, although the indigenous population groups bordered each other and otherwise experienced fluid interaction.

The Oslo Accords introduced a new political context for cultural interactions between the population of Israel and the Occupied Territories. Uncertainty over the accepted norms was highlighted by the 1994 bilingual Alkhan Theatre / Al-Kasaba Theatre co-production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Jews were cast as Montagues and Arabs as Capulets. Promoted as a cooperative venture between Israelis and Palestinians, this production subsequently toured Europe, sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most of the indigenous artists in the West Bank that I spoke with did not condone this production, as they felt it misleadingly presented a veneer of political normality to the world and disguised the ongoing brutality of the occupation. The familial Montague–Capulet conflict was particularly disdained as a metaphor for the dispute between Zionists and the indigenous population of Palestine as it did not reflect the actual imbalance in power inherent to foreign colonization and military occupation, and suggested the conflict was simply based on an ancient ethnic and religious tribal hatred. As Omar Barghouti explained to me, the indigenous population:

> viewed art and cultural expression as organically interlaced with political reality; they believed there can never be normal cultural links between occupier and occupied, between oppressor and oppressed . . . This had nothing to do with religion or ethnicity; it was a political statement against Israel's illegal military occupation.[38]

Reactions to the production led to not only a more vociferous boycott of cultural interaction with Israel within the Occupied Territories, but also a boycott of artists who engaged in such cultural normalization activities. As a result, artists involved in the *Romeo and Juliet* production were shunned by other artists and the new Al-Kasaba Theatre (which opened in Ramallah in 2000) was subject to an internal boycott by leading West Bank arts

institutions such as El-Funoun, the Popular Art Centre and the National Music Conservatory.

The boycott was not restricted to state-sponsored cultural interactions. It also targeted individual Israeli citizens engaged in cultural activity on a more anonymous level. In 1996, the Popular Art Centre un-invited a Spanish flamenco company who were scheduled to appear in the Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance when it was discovered that two of the dancers in the group also held Israeli citizenship.[39] It could be argued that such actions made it particularly difficult for the boycott to be recognized as maintaining an ideological principle beyond simple nationalism.

By the time I began working in the West Bank in the late 1990s, I had already had extensive experience working with Israeli dancers and dance institutions. Many were interested in establishing links with dancers and dance groups in the Occupied Territories. It seemed to me unfair that individual artists be politically evaluated according to the nation of their birth, regardless of their own political actions and beliefs. In discussing the possibility of such cultural encounters with indigenous dance artists, I tried to gather an understanding of what it would take for them to be willing to work with an Israeli artist or arts institution. In an effort to clarify the rationale for the boycott, I collected these ideas in a proposal, which the leading dance groups and dance institutions in the West Bank subsequently supported.

This proposal demanded that any Israeli artist or institution wishing to engage in cooperative activity with artists in the Occupied Territories should first refuse to do their annual service in the Israeli military or support the Israeli military while it remained an army of occupation. This was considered to be an essential basis for cultural dialogue, as the West Bank artists felt it would be impossible to participate in an equal artistic collaboration when at a later date one party would have the power (e.g. as a soldier at a checkpoint) to dominate and control the actions of the other party. As indigenous artists did not have the opportunity to remove themselves from this unequal power dynamic, it was thus considered the responsibility of the Israeli artist or arts institution to do so.

The other demands were that the Israeli artist or institution publicly declare (either through expressions in their art or as a published programme note) that they condemn the Israeli military occupation and colonization of the territories annexed in the 1967 war and that they support the right of indigenous refugees exiled in the 1948 and 1967 wars to return. Such declarations were designed to assure the indigenous artists that the proposed cultural interaction was not simply a publicity stunt designed to provide an impression of Israeli goodwill without addressing the actual problems stemming from ongoing colonization. Following such actions and declarations, the indigenous artists felt that artistic interaction could be based on a platform of mutual respect and an understanding of political equality.

I addressed this proposal to Israeli dance artists through various forums. The central ideas were published in an article in *Dance Europe* magazine[40] and a conference paper presented in Montreal.[41] I also entered into lengthy discourses with the directors of Israeli dance institutions, including the Suzanne Dellal Centre, the Rubin Academy for Dance, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance School, the Israel Ballet Company and the Arab-Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa. In most of these discourses, the Israeli artists expressed empathy and offered some private condemnation of the military occupation. None was willing to accept any of the preconditions, however, as they felt these would diminish both their public standing in Israel and their relationship with funding bodies in the Israeli government. Refusing military service could lead to imprisonment and lifelong restrictions within Israeli society. They particularly felt that a show of support for the return of indigenous refugees was the most contentious issue, arguing that this would threaten the demographic balance of a specifically Jewish state.

For dance artists in the West Bank, this indicated that they were not willing to sacrifice their participation in the Zionist colonial project and meet in a forum that accorded equal rights to colonists and the indigenous population. No public interactions between dancers in Israel and the Occupied Territories ensued. A local commitment to an international boycott of Israeli artists and institutions was subsequently expressed by the Palestinian Campaign for the

Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel.[42] While this formally clarified the local rationale for the boycott and how it should be implemented, it placed less emphasis on identifying political actions that would allow for interaction with Israeli artists and institutions. This somehow suggested that any such involvement would have to wait until a comprehensive and acceptable political solution had been accomplished at a national level.

The musical collaboration of Israeli Daniel Barenboim's West–Eastern Divan Orchestra, which brought young Zionist and indigenous musicians together for a performance in Ramallah in 2005, presented a particularly noteworthy challenge to this boycott. Barenboim's very public condemnation of the construction of Israeli military barriers and colonies throughout the West Bank[43] went some way towards satisfying local concerns. It fell short of other demands, however, such as supporting the rights of indigenous refugees and the refusal of service in the Israeli military by participating musicians. As such, it gained partial local support, but continued to be boycotted by many in the community.[44]

At the start of the twenty-first century, cultural interactions with Israelis remained a particularly volatile issue for dance artists in the West Bank, and none of the dance artists that I worked with expressed a desire to shift from the boycotting campaign. This political position might be seen as an obstacle to the most immediate form of foreign cultural contact for artists in the West Bank. For those advocating the boycott, it remained a means of ensuring that the community's aesthetic evolution would not become divorced from its ideological evolution.

10 *The Second Intifada*

The Second Intifada, commencing in September 2000, instigated a new socio-political environment for the West Bank dance culture. While the military occupation imposed tighter restrictions on activity, internal discord between local political factions within the West Bank indicated new cultural problems for local artists to navigate. As new ways of expressing collective identity emerged, so did uncertainties over the boundaries of indigenous identity.

THE END OF OSLO AND THE RISE OF HAMAS

The outbreak of the Second Intifada is popularly attributed to Ariel Sharon's controversial tour of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem, but its wider cause can be seen as the ongoing process of colonial dispossession and brutal occupation, which had increased in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo period.[1] The violent force that the Israeli military used to put down indigenous protests was shocking in its ferocity. In the first four months of the intifada – before militant bombings inside the 1948 borders of Israel had commenced and when public demonstrations and stone throwing at military vehicles in the West Bank were the main form of indigenous resistance – approximately 350 members of the indigenous population had been killed and 11,000 injured by Israeli military interventions.[2] An overwhelming majority of these casualties were children and bystanders uninvolved in any

34   An expressive lament performed by a dancer from Sareyyet Ramallah at Al-Kasaba Theatre after the outbreak of the Second Intifada

protest action.[3] Israeli military blockades throughout the West Bank became ever more present and established, impeding civilian access between towns, villages and cities.

The numbers of dead and wounded among the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories in these first few months can be seen equating (by population ratio) to more than the total number of American dead and wounded during the entire war in Vietnam. The West Bank thus entered a new phase of collective trauma. During these months I was conducting arts workshops in the refugee camps and villages across the West Bank and in almost every school and community centre that I entered at least one local child had been killed or seriously injured by the Israeli military. The mood of public spaces was redefined as ubiquitous posters of the newly dead were continually pasted over each other. Throughout the West Bank, local businesses went on strike in protest and all scheduled public cultural performances were cancelled. While local cultural and business life gradually became more active in the ensuing months, it was very clear that the indigenous community had entered a new cultural era and that the Oslo period was over.[4]

The hostilities continued and increased, and on 28 March 2002 the Israeli army invaded Ramallah as part of Operation Defensive Shield and 'spent three weeks either destroying, gutting, or looting virtually every national Palestinian institution, public and nongovernmental, security and civilian that had been built in the last 8 years'.[5] Banks, businesses and homes were robbed and vandalized in a military operation that seemed subject to both random acts of greed by individual Israeli soldiers and a more methodical and orchestrated process of destroying local infrastructure.[6] This incursion followed what has been described as Ariel Sharon's goal of politicide, or the 'dissolution of the Palestinian people's existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity'.[7] The Israeli military subsequently withdrew from encampments in occupied buildings in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, but it maintained military control over the area, imposing continuous curfews and closures for several months and occasional incursions during the following years. The construction of an Israeli military barrier — commonly referred to in the West Bank as the racial

segregation wall or apartheid wall – began in 2003, further restricting the movement of the indigenous population around the Occupied Territories.

The death of Palestinian National Authority President Yassir Arafat on 11 November 2004 instigated a shift in the political discourse between Israel and the PNA. While an agreement made in Egypt between the next PNA President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in February 2005 attempted to create an official end to the Second Intifada, little further progress was made towards implementing a peace plan or bilateral engagements. By the end of 2006 approximately 4,000 of the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories had been killed by the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada. Thousands more had been imprisoned and the violent suppression of this population continued unabated.[8]

The overwhelming victory of Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006 resulted in even greater uncertainty over the future of any negotiations with Israel. The positioning of Hamas in control of the Palestinian government led to a freeze on financial aid to the PNA from Europe and the United States, and a crisis in the local economy. The shift away from Fatah and towards Hamas also reflected a shift in collective political goals from secular Palestinian nationalism to the establishment of an Islamic state.[9] This political change thus challenged existing definitions of local collective cultural identity. The concept of Palestinianism (nurtured by political movements such as the PLO) had become so ingrained in the indigenous population, however, that the task of reorienting the Palestinian sense of identity to become Muslim first and Palestinian second presented Hamas with a considerable challenge.[10] Within that Palestinian national identity, dabkeh was a very potent symbol. So it is perhaps unsurprising that dance became a topic of political debate.

THE QALQILYA AFFAIR

The intensification of cultural exchange in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo era also drew increasing religious scrutiny. For the Islamic reform movement, this criticism focused on how external cultural influences might be morally corrupting the indigenous population. Such criticism had previously been limited to religious sermons and demonstrations, but the participation (and overwhelming success) of Hamas in municipal and subsequent national elections between 2004 and 2006 accorded such ideals actual political power. The controversy over the revival of the Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance and events planned for Qalqilya in 2005 provided a strong illustration of how this political influence began to affect cultural activity.

A city in the northern West Bank, Qalqilya had recently been completely encircled by the Israeli military wall, and the latest municipal council elections had resulted in a resounding victory for Hamas. In 2005 the Popular Art Centre submitted an application to this council for the use of a local park for music and folkdance performances by El-Funoun and other visiting troupes. This event fitted into the Popular Art Centre's promotion of events at venues across the West Bank, in response to the increasing Israeli military restrictions on domestic travel within the Occupied Territories and the subsequent inability of local audiences to reach the festival's previous sites in Ramallah, Al-Bireh and Birzeit.[11]

The Popular Art Centre's request for the use of the park was at first refused by the Qalqilya Municipal Council on the basis that the event would damage the grass.[12] The Popular Art Centre protested at this, pointing out that a massive political rally organized by the Qalqilya municipality itself had recently been held on the same site. The Palestinian Ministry of Culture (based in Ramallah) released a statement supporting the Popular Art Centre and stressing the importance of such cultural activity for solidifying the cultural identity of Palestine.[13] The Qalqilya Municipal Council then responded that their refusal arose because the event – which it noted included both Palestinian and non-Palestinian folk dances – contradicted *sharia*, and

that it was the will of the local population that it not be held.[14] The mufti of Jerusalem, Sheik Okroma Sabri, entered the argument, supporting the Qalqilya Municipal Council and suggesting that the cultural event would deny the suffering of the local population and morally damage the society, breaking it up from the inside. Notably, he challenged the value of such foreign cultural interactions and argued that what suited other nations did not suit the local society.

Prominent local NGOs (the Palestinian Media Centre, Miftah, the Tedaqwal Institute) presented arguments supporting the Popular Art Centre and the importance of such cultural activity, challenging the Qalqilya Municipal Council's jurisdiction over the community's cultural choices.[15] Ultimately, the permission was not granted and no dance performance took place in Qalqilya that year as part of the Palestine International Festival. That the negotiations ended in political taunts and antagonistic refusals highlighted the cultural deadlock being faced by the population of the Occupied Territories.

How and why had this contention arisen and what was its significance in the summer of 2005? Amid the surrounding political turmoil it might seem as turbulent as a sneeze in a thunderstorm. Yet it vividly revealed how a bustling traffic of cultural histories can suddenly jam during expressions of political solidarity, leading to contentious re-routings of cultural direction. In the subsequent years, the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories became embroiled in what was essentially a civil war. Divisive understandings and symbols of cultural identity and history came to the fore, along with a growing uncertainty over the boundaries of collective identity.

While such a controversy might seem implacable, it is worth drawing attention to the common goals underlying all of the parties involved in the dispute over a dance performance in Qalqilya. All were local and all sought to promote social cohesion. All aimed for an inclusive collective identity, one that was rooted in their own understandings of local cultural heritage. It was not, as some cultural historians might presume,[16] simply a dispute over which era the community should be living in – the present or the past. Such an understanding does not acknowledge the dynamic nature of the Islamic reform

35   A scene from *Al-Birjawi* in which women dance around the bride

movement in Palestine.[17] Nor did the controversy represent two intransigent sets of cultural values grinding away at each other.[18] Just as none of the parties involved in the Qalqilya dance dispute positioned itself as backward looking, none actively sought to promote a foreign colonial culture and none sought to exclude the others from its cultural realm. Central to each was a desire to investigate how the region's legacies and histories might most relevantly contribute to the contemporary cultural environment.

From this perspective, the dispute did not represent an inevitable clash between an encroaching foreign modernism and a defiant local traditionalism, but over disagreements in how to foster a local modernity that would relevantly connect with the unique heritage and contemporary experiences of the local population. In this sense, each of the parties was struggling to support the cultural growth of the local community, and in doing so define the nature and extent of regional cultural identity.

Ultimately, this dispute highlighted the urgent need for greater internal dialogue within the indigenous community on issues such as dance and religion, in order to maintain both a cohesive cultural identity and avenues for cultural pluralism. The alternative would appear to lead to either local cultural disintegration and discord or the construction of a cultural climate defined by a singular, intolerant and authoritarian set of values.

LOCAL ISLAMIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS DANCE

To gain a greater understanding of local Islamic attitudes towards dance, I met with several leading sheiks (Islamic religious leaders) in the West Bank. Among these sheiks there was a diversity of political opinion: some were more ideologically aligned with the Hamas movement; others were more supportive of leftist movements and secular nationalism.[19] In our discussions two general contentions emerged regarding performing dance groups in the West Bank: that they were too far removed from the local folkdance traditions that preceded them, and that they did not reflect Islamic values.

The understanding of traditional folkdance practices presented by these sheiks was very similar to that previously defined by the Palestinian nationalist folklore movement, particularly in relation to gender segregation. While this suggests that historic folkdance traditions were generally compatible with contemporary Islamic ideals, it ignores the effect of the Islamic reform movement on local dance practices in the early twentieth century. Of particular note, the vigorous participation of women in dance activities, based on accounts from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reveal an immodesty that might not be compatible with contemporary local Islamic ideals. Acknowledging such a history might not stimulate a shift in values in the contemporary Islamic reform movement to embrace such dances. It would nonetheless highlight the evolving nature of local culture and suggest that the process of adapting traditional dance practices is not the essential challenge to the Islamic reform movement that it is sometimes perceived to be.

Resolving the argument that current local dance products are removed from Islam itself presents a more complex challenge. From the opinions related to me, there was no concern relating to the kinaesthetic influence of dance on the morals of the dancer (as expressed by the Christian Puritans). Religious concerns were more directed at the moral impact on the viewer of the dance, and they specifically protested at the erotic objectification of women. Sheik Bassam Jarrar contended that within public performances of dance, the concern 'is not about the woman being there or not, it is about the erotic connotation'.[20] Sheik Fadel Saleh expanded on this perspective, arguing that Islam:

> respects women as human beings . . . [it] is against using the women's bodies as a commodity, where they are used as the attraction, to sell a certain product. So having a woman half naked, just to attract people to buy shoes or to buy cars, that is a violation of her humanity. A woman can be present in a folkloric or an artistic [dance] performance, but it should not be for an erotic or commercial reason.[21]

This leads to an uncertain area, as determining what is an erotic, rather than just aesthetic, expression may become a highly subjective issue. As Sheik Jarrar suggested, aesthetic expressions were promoted within Islam, and 'The Holy Quran asks us to see the beauty in movement,' indicating chapter 16, verses 6 and 8.[22] Jarrar argues that such aesthetic expressions should be related to the wider social environment: 'Islam believes in committed art, [not] art for the sake of art . . . It should be in harmony with people's understandings, beliefs and values. This is very important . . . This is part of correcting art. There is no rejection, but Islamization.'[23]

This perspective places a positive value on artistic production as a means of contributing to social harmony. The process of Islamic reform might thus be seen not so much as an elimination of unwanted cultural ideas, but as an ongoing analysis, adaptation and refinement of cultural ideas so that they might reflect Islamic ideals in the contemporary social environment. From

this perspective the Islamic Reform movement can be understood as evolving, rather than fundamentalist or intransigent, capable of accommodating dance as a cultural medium.

It would nevertheless appear that the relationship with popular religious movements has not been subject to ongoing public investigation by producers of dance in the West Bank. While some private dialogues between religious figures and dance makers have taken place, I could find no local publications methodically analysing the relationship between dance and religion. The dancers that I spoke to suggested that this reflects a local disinclination among both Islamic scholars and dance practitioners to intensify public debate on this issue. Instead, a process of self-censorship has guided local dance production. From my own experience with local dance artists, this process has mostly considered how to work around, rather than with, religious idealism. As popular culture among the indigenous population of Palestine becomes increasingly aligned with the ideals of the Islamic reform movement – as indicated by the political rise of Hamas – new challenges arise for producers of dance. For dance to remain a popular art form in the West Bank and retain a popular following among the wider indigenous population (in places such as Qalqilya), reliance upon Palestinian nationalist sentiments may no longer be enough.

DANCE DURING SIEGE

Public cultural activities were initially halted in the West Bank at the outbreak of the Second Intifada, in collective solidarity with those in mourning. As the military conflict extended over several months, however, local cultural production resumed. The Kasaba Theatre began weekly improvisation nights, in which various local performing groups and individuals were invited to present brief artistic expressions that might reflect the current trauma experienced by the indigenous population. These proved very popular, and, while the dance on display generally involved standard folkdance pieces, it occasionally included

short experimental works in physical theatre or expressive dance (especially featuring artists from Sareyyet Ramallah).

The production of major evening-length works was considerably delayed, as Israeli military actions had a direct effect on the lives of local artists during this period. Leading choreographers and dancers such as Mohamad Atta of El-Funoun and Khaled Ellayan of Sareyyet Ramallah were placed in administrative detention by the Israeli military for several months. El-Funoun trainer Omar Barghouti had his home destroyed by a stray Israeli tank shell. Eight months later he and his young family were driven out of their new apartment by Israeli soldiers wanting to use it as a base camp. Khaled Qatamish, artistic director of El-Funoun, was pulled out of his home in his pyjamas at 2 o'clock in the morning and used as a human shield by an Israeli military patrol as they raided the neighbourhood, while his wife and children watched from the window. The elderly mother of Lana Abu Hijli, another El-Funoun choreographer, was deliberately shot and killed by a passing Israeli patrol for sitting on the veranda of their family home during curfew. Although shocking, these events were not unusual at the time and reflected the experiences of the wider population.

The Israeli military also obstructed the dance production process – performances and rehearsals became impossible to organize as curfews randomly yet consistently held everybody indoors for days on end. The dance studios and computers of the Popular Art Centre were vandalized and destroyed by Israeli soldiers. Roadblocks and closures of towns impeded the movement of individuals into, out of, and around the West Bank.

Several new productions were eventually premiered, reflecting new directions in local dance culture and reacting to shifts in the socio-political environment. These new productions were also accompanied by major upheavals in the composition of local groups. While international guest teachers generally visited less often during this period than in the late 1990s, dancers from the West Bank increasingly undertook studies in dance abroad, particularly in Italy, France, Germany, Tunisia and the UK. Both international donors and the local A.M. Qattan Foundation supported these study projects,

sponsoring the students for up to a year abroad. This began what might be considered a generational shift in local knowledge power, as generally younger dancers returned with aesthetic experiences and dance knowledge that was unfamiliar to more senior local dancers and choreographers. Along with new processes of rehearsal and technical refinement, this instigated new patterns of cross-generational cultural negotiation that underscored some of the tensions within the groups at the time.

SEEKING NEW WAYS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Premiering in 2003, El-Funoun's dance production *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* (*Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*) was an hour-long fictional narrative about the impact of the Nakba on a coastal village in Palestine. Following the separation of two young lovers — Saleh, who flees to Lebanon, and Aisha, who remains behind — the story reflected the wider plight of a divided and exiled indigenous population. Through various movement styles ranging from traditional folkloric patterns to more expressive physical theatre, *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* explored themes such as dispossession, alienation and bewilderment.[24]

  The narrative structure of *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* was divided into four parts, each created by different choreographers. The first scene presented an idyllic pre-Nakba fishing village on the coast of Palestine. Various village-style activities were engaged in with a dabkeh-based sense of aesthetics, with men throwing nets and fishing, women weaving and waiting for them to return from the sea. The second scene depicted the confusion that beset this population in 1948, with moments of mourning for those killed by colonizing forces and a panicked escape into Lebanon. The third scene portrayed the new life of this population in refugee camps in Lebanon. The movement repertoire included belly dancing and attempted to show the incompatibility of dance styles in Lebanon and dance styles in Palestine, suggesting irreconcilable frustration for the two populations. Other parts involved more expressive postures of horror at events of violent repression in the refugee camps. The final scene reflected

a longing to return. Dancers bearing over-sized keys — a popular local symbol reflecting the desire to return to homes inside what became Israel — across their shoulders moved in a slow folk-style dance. A barbed-wire fence divided the stage as two groups (including the now-ageing protagonists Aisha and Saleh) attempted to contact each other across the Lebanon–Israel border, in a slow dance of reaching.

The highly stylized costumes for *Haifa, Beirut wa Baed* were designed and made by a dancer from the Caracalla Dance Theatre in Lebanon. With vibrant shiny colours and a blending of romanticized imaginings of the Ottoman era, these outfits shifted further away from the literal presentation of rural-style *thobe*s and gowns of nineteenth-century Palestinian peasants. The production also extended a separation between music and dance that had slowly been occurring within El-Funoun's choreographic process, with recorded music fully replacing live musicians and singers on stage. For the first time a musical score was commissioned from a distance, through European financial support.[25] Lebanon's renowned Marcel Khalife produced a Western orchestral recording that utilized Middle Eastern motifs yet was very derivative of the oriental-flavoured compositions of Rimsky-Korsakov and Prokofiev.

The entire production had involved a seven-year rehearsal process and a complex structural shift in the management of El-Funoun that facilitated another approach to collective choreography: the inception of an artistic committee that could encourage and stimulate but also censor choreographic ideas. Through this the concept of collective choreography remained, but had transformed into a more structured process: individual choreographers created different scenes that were subsequently viewed, discussed and subjected to decisions made by an artistic committee regarding their suitability within the overall production. Performers remained privy to this process, as regular meetings involving all the dancers kept them informed and provided them a forum through which to present their own ideas and opinions (although decision-making power was the prerogative of the artistic committee alone). This process brought something of an internal crisis to El-Funoun, leading to the departure from the group of several prominent members.

36   A video from *Mamnou al-Abour*, in which an indigenous man is interrogated by an Israeli soldier

FROM HISTORIC TO CONTEMPORARY VISIONS OF INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

As part of a six-month project during 2003–4, the Ramallah Dance Theatre project produced the hour-long performance *Mamnou al-Obour* (*Access Denied*) and several shorter dance videos. In artistic collaboration with eleven local dance artists, I participated in this project, which presented some of the choreographic experimentation that had occurred within more closed studio spaces over the previous years. While most of the artists involved were familiar with performing revived traditional dances through groups such as El-Funoun and Sarreyet Ramallah, this project was motivated by a collective desire to explore the contemporary, rather than historical, identity of the local community.

Mamnou al-Obour thus presented a collage of satirical dance scenes reflecting on life under military occupation. In doing so, the choreography shifted markedly from prescribed traditional movement forms to physical theatre based on life experience. In this sense, the movement vocabulary in the

production was mostly stimulated by narrative rather than aesthetic goals. In order to reveal appropriate movements, the artists' physical experiences of torture, imprisonment, behaviour under curfew and at checkpoints provided constant reference points. Dressed in casual contemporary clothes, the dance was set against an eclectic score of popular and traditional music from North Africa, the Middle East and Europe. The set involved a solid wall that the dancers rebounded off in one corner of the stage, and a series of simple props (chairs, tables, benches, poles, tyres) that were integrated into the movement sequences. Videos, projected onto a screen at the back of the stage, had been recorded in various external locations to provide contexts for the danced narratives. These included a child's bedroom and a lounge during curfew, an interrogation cell and a grey concrete wall. These short dance videos were subsequently screened on local television stations across the West Bank.

The Ramallah Dance Theatre project was a relatively brief intervention, but it allowed for more experimental local ideas to gain a greater theatrical refinement and for an examination of the boundaries of local aesthetic sensibilities. The popular local response to the project provided an indication to other groups that danced expressions of the contemporary social circumstances (rather than of historic events and folk culture) were also capable of evoking community support.

The work of Ramallah Dance Theatre might thus be seen supporting shifts in the Sareyyet group, as it was going through changes of artistic direction from *Al-Birjawi* in 2000 into *Ala Hajez* (*At the Checkpoint*) in 2005.[26] *Ala Hajez* itself was an extension of *Hawayat* (*I.D. Cards*), a short expressive group dance first performed in 2002. As the name suggests, this new production was based on contemporary scenes around a military checkpoint. The movement used a variety of different styles, with less overt references to local folklore, although distinct folkloric actions were echoed in the background during certain scenes. Most notable in the choreography was the use of stillness, a contrast to the vibrant energy usually present in local folk dances. Infused with an almost butoh-esque quality, the slow steadiness within many of the dance sequences reflected the physical experience of waiting at checkpoints, under curfew and

in prison. The disciplined ensemble work within the choreography carried themes of community solidarity, with juxtaposed solos suggesting that what happens to the one is experienced by the whole.

This shift coincided with a temporal shift in conceptions of collective cultural identity, from an indigenous culture that only existed within the imagined community of pre-1948 Palestine to an indigenous culture that was dynamic and reflecting a contemporary social experience. As Sareyyet Ramallah director Khaled Ellayan suggested,

> Whether the music is traditional music or modern music or Western music and whether the steps are dabkeh or modern dance, for me this is not a problem. But the audience must see that it has a Palestinian identity . . . [through] the theme of the performance, the story of the performance, what the performance talks about. Sometimes they say that the dancing group here has changed, that they don't care about their traditions, but this is not true. But we want to talk about daily life, not just what happened 100 years ago.[27]

This change resulted in a major division within the group. For two years the group debated and considered different ways of accommodating two visions: one that wished to continue representing indigenous identity through expressions of traditional culture, with dance movements, costumes and music presenting life in the past, the other representing indigenous identity through its contemporary circumstances. Eventually, the decision to represent contemporary life was chosen, and half the dancers left the group. This split and new direction also entailed a change of the group's name, from the First Ramallah Group for Music and Dabkeh to the First Ramallah Group for Music and Dance.

In response to the popular appeal of *Ala Hajez* and to support this artistic direction further, Sareyyet Ramallah organized the Ramallah International Contemporary Dance Festival in 2006. Several contemporary dance groups from Europe and Africa were invited to perform and give workshops, in order

to provide some local exposure to the cultural adaptations made by a variety of cultural communities. The non-European groups were refused entry visas by the Israeli government, however, and so only European companies were able to participate.

During this time El-Funoun continued with further choreographic experimentation, leading to 2007's *Resala Ila . . . (A Letter to . . .)*. As a tribute to the assassinated Palestinian political cartoonist Naj Al-Ali, *Resala Ila . . .* provided a multimedia blend of live dance and black-and-white cartoon images being drawn and projected on to a back screen. Continuing the aesthetics established by Naj Al-Ali's pictures, the dancers were dressed in simple black and white pauper-like clothes and interacted with large symbolic black and white props such as brooms, guns, scythes and barrels. Voiceover narration provided a poetic commentary on the images, and the eclectic score involved traditional tunes from the Middle East and North Africa fused with Western instruments and orchestrations. The dance aspect appeared to be more focused on exploring the aesthetics of the cartoon images than extending the narrative ideas already established in the cartoons. In doing so, it blended expressive gestures drawn from the cartoons with release technique and actions echoing the dabkeh folk dance. While the movement repertoire and theatrical effects of *Resala Ila . . .* reflected the increased interaction with foreign artists, it also continued to address local topical themes and to project indigenous aesthetics.

The ways that the collective indigenous identity could be expressed through movement thus continued to be explored and challenged during this era, keeping a tight relationship between dance, politics and social change. Debates over foreign hegemony, constructions of tradition and the many meanings of 'contemporary' continue within local dance production, and perhaps the biggest shifts are yet to come. During this period El-Funoun began engaging in multimedia productions, in 2006 producing the short dance film *Emotional Rescue* with German filmmaker Helena Waldmann. Given the ongoing political and military restrictions being faced by the indigenous population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, digital technologies present a viable option for the production of local dance art. Wider distribution through the internet,

satellite television and film festivals may provide the people of Palestine with a more accessible way to exchange danced ideas with each other, and may allow more people from outside Palestine to gain a glimpse of the dances going on behind that broad, grey wall.

11 *Dancing down the road*

SUNSET AT ITHNA

I began this journey into the history of Palestine to try to gain a clearer understanding of how dance and politics may be related, and how together they might guide social change. Although the written and spoken anecdotes and events that I found offered a compelling narrative, I felt that the historical threads of dance and politics were woven most tightly together during more physical experiences with dancers. One such moment occurred on an evening in May 2003, in the town of Ithna near Hebron. At the time my concerns were mostly for my own wellbeing, but the incident subsequently made me think about why documenting local dance histories might be of critical importance to those both inside and outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

I had spent the day giving a dance workshop to youth leaders in a small, unfinished indoor sports hall. The workshop itself was part of the Popular Art Centre's teacher-training project aimed at bringing dance workshops to children in various villages and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. My job was to spend five days in each community, learning about local attitudes to dance, negotiating how these ideas might contribute to regular creative dance activities for local children and presenting a variety of dance workshop exercises and techniques to potential local workshop leaders.

The first day had been challenging, as first days among strangers often are. After discussing some problematic issues and physically playing some dance games, the sixteen young men and women from Ithna divided into small groups

37   The Israeli wall encircling and dividing the West Bank

to experiment collaboratively on making dances. Knowing that these might be the sort of activities that they would give to children, they broke from their terribly serious lives as adolescents and fancifully created some dances. At the end of the day each group informally showed what they had come up with. A gangly young man called Shadi, who had entered the workshop with his arms fixed tightly by his sides, was now swooping like an eagle, laughing with a certain pride as he leapt and circled through the others in his group. It was a warm, but fairly brief, moment. I think the image only stayed in my memory because of the events that followed.

As I was walking away from the concrete shell of the sports hall and back towards the main road (where I could get a bus to Hebron, then on to Bethlehem and Ramallah), five of the young men, including Shadi, came running up to me. They insisted on driving me as far as the first military checkpoint, which would save me about half an hour. We all piled into an old hulk of a car and drove out of Ithna and down along the valley that connected it with the rest of the world, making jokes about the dances we had made.

About half a kilometre out of the town an Israeli military jeep appeared down the road. The driver of the car that I was in suddenly swung us onto a dirt track and into a tiny courtyard flanked by two barns and a farmhouse. The car doors flew open and the young men scrambled out in fear. One grabbed at me, yelling '*Jaish! Jaish!*' – soldiers.

As soon as I got out of the door, I saw what he was referring to. The Israeli jeep had pulled up across the entrance to the courtyard and four soldiers were already out and running towards us with a surprisingly vicious intent. Their guns were cocked up to their eyes, waving about like the cumbersome noses of swamp fowl every time they turned their heads. My hands were reaching forward and one of them was somehow wielding my passport (when it comes to quick-fire displays of identification papers, I am the fastest cowboy in the West Bank). My stammers of 'Australian' meant little, though, as one of the soldiers screamed at me to join the others.

What I saw then was possibly the most disturbing thing that I have ever seen, even more disturbing than the sights that were to come. In the pink hue

of sunset, all of the young men that I had been with in the car were now lined up in front of the barn with their heads bowed and their hands crossed over their groins. Their complete and immediate transformation from cheerful young men into these postures of terrified submission implied how familiar they were with this ritual. No belligerence, no bewilderment, no searching for another way out. Just a sudden drop into shame and despair. I went and lined up beside them, trying to look as nonchalant as possible, thinking for some reason that nonchalance might lift the collective mood.

One soldier went to the jeep, two others stood back and kept their guns pointed at us, and one walked down the line, smacking faces, punching guts and occasionally barking questions in Israeli-accented Arabic. The young men in the line were visibly shivering, more from what might happen than what was happening. They mumbled uncertain responses, did not try to block any strike or threatened strike, fearing that the slightest flinch might give the soldiers enough cause to shoot. By the time the soldier reached me I was also quivering, and I saw that the man beside me was softly crying.

The soldier yelled at me in Arabic, then Hebrew when I did not respond. Pushing my *I'm Really Not Meant to Be Here* card as far forward as I could, I asked 'Do you speak English?'

He did not reply but snatched my passport and took it to the soldier standing at the jeep. He then returned very purposefully and asked, 'Which one was driving the car? Which one?' I knew the answer, but could not say it.

'I don't know,' I mumbled.

He grabbed my collar with a viciousness that I had not felt since high school and pushed his gun hard against the side of my head. It did not feel as if he was actually going to shoot me, it was more a result of him not having a free hand. Like a cumbersome claw, the sharp metal of the barrel's edge pushed my face to look closely at each of the faces as he pulled me along down the line.

'Which one was driving the car?' he repeated.

'I don't know man. I really don't know. You all look the same to me.' It was the sort of line that sounded much more blasé, even cool, in my mind. The way I mumbled it out ruined any hopes of appearing glib, and it just seemed

callous. The soldier pushed me aside and punched me once in the chest. It was a fairly weak punch, done with confidence that I would not hit back.

The two soldiers that had been standing near moved forward and joined the one that had been asking questions. They were young men, about the same age as those lined up against the wall. One had a silver stud through his lower lip. With an indignant, righteous-looking anger they kicked their thick boots into cheap jeans, shoved their rifle butts into t-shirts, punched necks, yelled abuse. They took Shadi from the line and pushed him against the back of the jeep. Two of them then beat him while the other kept his gun pointed at the rest of us. I thought I was going to vomit as a rifle butt smashed into Shadi's narrow shoulder blade and scraped on down his back. They kept beating him and kicking him. He fell down and they pulled him up again to beat him some more, until he could only stand there hopping on one leg, the other leg dangling uselessly. They let him limp back to his place in the line and grabbed hold of the next man and pushed him up to the jeep.

At that point another soldier sitting at the front jeep waved me over. He looked as if he was the only one in his unit who did not really want to be there, just biding his time in the shadows while the others did their business. He gave me my passport and muttered 'You go now,' in a thin Russian accent.

'But what about these other guys?' I stammered.

'Now you go!' he repeated.

The other soldier who had questioned me before then came over and yelled, 'Now you fuck off!'

And so I fucked off. I walked on down the road, ashamed at my cowardice but trembling too much to think of a better idea. I was not a fearless defender of the weak. I was just a scared and tired little dance teacher who wanted to go home. I got to a crossroads, got on a minibus and sat with a group of people who knew nothing about the event.

I was pretty messed up for a while after that. In the weeks before two members of the International Solidarity Movement, Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall, had been targeted and killed as they tried to protect local people from the excessive brutality of the Israeli military. I had lost the illusion of being

an untouchable foreigner, left alone above the fray, and it was humbling. Going back to Ithna three days later to continue the workshop was very difficult. All of the young men from the incident were there. Two had been admitted to hospital but were out now, sporting some bandages. We made some jokes and tried to laugh about it all. But the truth was it was hard to make eye contact in the way we had before. I just wanted to get the workshop finished, to get out of Ithna and never go back.

Of all the violent events that I have witnessed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the various moments of pointless death and destruction, that sunset in Ithna remains the most difficult to move away from. I knew there would be no legal inquiry into the event. It just happened, and its causes and effects would be left drifting in a void. Almost every indigenous man that I have met in the West Bank has been beaten like this by Israeli soldiers. Some have had it many times, as have many indigenous women and children. All live with the fear and expectation that it will probably happen again.

This is a very sad reality, but it also raises very disturbing theoretical questions about the future of dance as an art in Palestine. What does all this do to a dancing body? To the very physical aspect of a dancer's freedom of movement? How does this sort of actual bodily control affect an entire community of dancers? And ultimately, how does this physical subjugation spring back, to those sponsoring the oppression and to others who do not seem to give a damn?

The behaviour of the Israeli soldiers that evening in Ithna was most shocking in that it seemed to erupt not from a freedom to treat the indigenous population with such contempt, but from an obligation to do so. After the incident I tried to reason that that sort of brutality occurs when young men are given lots of power and zero accountability, but the urgency of their violence hinted at a deeper rationale. These soldiers were not laconic thugs. Their actions suggested a sense of duty to an ideal that had been drilled into them through classrooms and textbooks and lectures and all sorts of media representations.

A glorious national history pushed their boots and rifle butts forward and into the skin of anything that appeared to contradict it.

So how might an alternative history stand up against such presumptions of moral righteousness? Would seeing another's view of the past weaken the resolve, give pause to thought, even suggest an alternative? Would knowing about how and why somebody else dances make a difference?

I don't know. I grew up in Australia, comfortably inside the embrace of dominant historical narratives. Such histories provided a warm bosom of ancestral righteousness. I subsequently found the experience of other, contrary versions of the past to be very disorienting and even painful. The sense of betrayal can sting. Like sniffing an onion, alternative histories can flush the face with unexpected tears. Ultimately, though, the same onion can unblock noxious ideas and allow people to be seen through the haze of war. Sometimes they even appear to be dancing.

38   Sareyyet Ramallah's *Jbaineh*

Notes

Part One

1   Dance, people and politics

1 Rowe, 1999.
2 Garfinkle, 1991, p. 539.
3 In Syrken, 1969, p. 355.
4 Netanyahu, 1998.
5 e.g. Schectman, 1952; Kimche and Kimche, 1960; Kohn, 1961; Lorch, 1961.
6 e.g. David Ben Gurion. See Flapan, 1987, p. 18.
7 From the Hebrew phrase *haya ness vehem nassu*.
8 Shlaim, 1999, p. 173.
9 Podeh, 2002; Raz-Krakotzkin, 2003.
10 Swedenburg, 1987; Brown, 2002; 2003.
11 Moughrabi, 2001.
12 e.g. Segev, 1986; Bar-Joseph, 1987; Flapan, 1987; Morris, 1988; 1993; 1994; 1996; 2001; Pappe, 1988; 1997; 1999; 2006; Shlaim, 1999; Shafir, 1996.
13 e.g. Karsh, 1997.
14 e.g. W. Khalidi, 1959; 1978; Childers, 1961; 1971; Porath, 1977; Sayigh, 1979; Said, 1979; Abu Lughod, 1981; Said and Hitchens, 1988; Muslih, 1988; Hadawi, 1979; Swedenburg, 1987; 1989; 1990; 1993; 1995; McCarthy, 1990; Wasserstein, 1991; Masalha, 1992; R. Khalidi, 1998; Kanaana, 2000.
15 e.g. Patai, 1973; Ajami, 1992; Huntington, 1993; Lewis, 2002.
16 R. Khalidi, 1998.
17 See Anderson, 1991.
18 Asad, 1973; Zureik, 1977; Said, 1979; Abu Lughod, 1981.
19 This usage is based on the definition provided by Article 1(b) of the International Labour Organization's 1989 Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.
20 Shafir, 1996.
21 e.g. Halloun, 2000.
22 Haupt, 1919.
23 See Nahachewsky, 1995.
24 Clifford, 1987, p. 122, original emphasis.

2   Finding the start for a history

1 Herodotus, *The Histories*, bk 7,89.
2 Doumani, 1992; Matar, 2000; Gerber, 2003.
3 This English translation was provided by the Syrian Museum of Archeology.
4 Lapp, 1989.
5 Biran, 2003.
6 Biran, 2003.
7 Biran, 2003.
8 The following quotes are taken from the American Revised Standard version of the Bible.
9 See Mulvey, 1975.
10 Van Unnik, 1964, p. 1.
11 Matar, 2000.

Part Two

1 Clifford, 1987, p. 121.
2 Popularized in the era through the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas, Malinowski and Kroeber.

3   The late Ottoman period

1 Fuller, 1829, pp. 313–14.
2 See for example Granquist, 1931.
3 From author's interview with Sherif Kanaana.
4 Fuller, 1829, p. 313.
5 e.g. Ma'oz, 1968; Abir, 1975; Bailey, 1980.
6 e.g. Finn, 1923.
7 Ma'oz, 1968, p. v.
8 Doumani, 1992.

9 Doumani, 1992.
10 R. Khalidi, 1998, p. 153.
11 Matar, 2000; Gerber 2003.
12 Doumani, 1992.
13 Asad, 1974; Doumani, 1990.
14 Canaan, 1927.
15 Lutfiyya, 1966
16 Swedenburg, 1993.
17 Canaan, 1927.
18 Swedenburg, 1993.
19 Doumani, 1992.
20 Scholch, 1992.
21 R. Khalidi, 1998.
22 Doumani, 1992.
23 Stewardson, 1888.
24 Warner, 1877, p. 145.
25 Twain, 1870.
26 Said, 1978.
27 R. Khalidi, 1998.
28 Swedenburg, 1993.
29 Patai, 1949; Swedenburg, 1993; Kanaana, 2000.
30 Doumani, 1992.
31 Patai, 1949; Morris, 2001.
32 Grant, 1922.
33 e.g. Tristram, 1865; Warner, 1877.
34 Tristram, 1865, p. 207.
35 Tristram, 1865, p. 208.
36 Author's interview with Sherif Kanaana.
37 Warner, 1877, p. 111.
38 Warner, 1877, pp. 111–12.
39 Warner, 1877, pp. 119–20.
40 Alexander et al., 2004.
41 See Farnell, 1995, for a further discussion on the impact of Europe's nineteenth-century Cartesian and

evolutionary attitudes to the dance practices and physicality of colonized peoples.

42 Doumani, 1992, p. 8.
43 Said, 1993.
44 Scholch, 1992, p. 44.
45 Scholch, 1992.
46 Graetz, 1919.
47 *New York Times*, 1911, p. 20.
48 e.g. Warren, 1875; Hoare, 1877; Walker, 1881.
49 Scholch, 1992.
50 McCarthy, 1990.
51 Gilbert, 1993.
52 McCarthy, 1990; Doumani, 1992; Morris, 2001.
53 Herzl, 1960, p. 581 (entry for 12 June 1895).
54 Bober, 1972.
55 Hope-Simpson, 1930; Morris, 2001.
56 Ben Gurion, 1966.
57 Lacquer, 1969.
58 Morris, 2001.
59 Scholch, 1992
60 Swedenburg, 1993.
61 Morris, 2001.
62 Muslih, 1988.
63 R. Khalidi, 1998.
64 Zeine, 1966, p. 75.
65 Morris, 2001.
66 Baldensperger, 1913, p. 271.
67 Spoer, 1905, p. 7.
68 Spoer, 1905, p. 7.
69 Baldensperger, 1913, p. 267.
70 Spoer and Spoer, 1927, p. 137.
71 Spoer, 1905, p. 9.
72 Spoer, 1905, p. 10.
73 Baldensperger, 1913.
74 Spoer, 1910, p. 279.
75 Spoer, 1906.

4 The British Mandate

1 McCarthy, 1990.
2 Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.
3 Holliday, 1997, pp. 22–3.
4 Morton, 1934, pp. 339–40.
5 Halbrook, 1981.
6 McCarthy, 1990.
7 Morris, 2001.
8 Abu Lughod, 1981.
9 Swedenburg, 1987; 1993.
10 In Ingrams, 1973, p. 73.
11 Toynbee, 1931.
12 Wasserstein, 1991.
13 Hope-Simpson, 1930.
14 Carmi and Rosenfeld, 1974.
15 Segev, 2000.
16 *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research,* 1921, p. 4.
17 Doumani, 1992.
18 Stephan, 1922, p. 260.
19 Williams, 1979.
20 Canaan, 1931, p. 189.
21 Al-Aref, 1944, pp. 54–5.
22 Canaan, 1931, p. 189.
23 Granquist, 1931, p. 9.
24 A.M. Murray, 1955, p. 404.
25 Granquist, 1931.
26 Granquist, 1931, p. 36.
27 Granquist, 1931, p. 37.
28 Granquist, 1931, p. 90.
29 Fuller, 1829.

30 Granquist, 1931, p. 81.
31 Granquist, 1931, pp. 69–70.
32 Morris, 2001.
33 Lockman, 1993.
34 Swedenburg, 1987.
35 Swedenburg, 1993.
36 Kayyali, 1978.
37 Zureik, 1977, p. 8.
38 Porath, 1977.
39 Segev, 2000; Morris, 2001; Pappe, 2006.
40 W. Khalidi, 1978; Morris, 2001.
41 Porath, 1977.
42 Swedenburg, 1993.
43 Author's interview with Wadea Jarrar-Haddad.
44 Holliday, 1997, p. 56.
45 Author's interview with Aida Odeh.
46 Karmi, 2002.
47 Canaan, 1931, p. 189.
48 Swedenburg, 1993.
49 Abu Amr, 1994.
50 Seikaly, 1995.
51 Milton-Edwards, 1999.
52 Abu Zu'bi, 1987, p. 21.
53 Swedenburg, 1993.
54 Schleifer, 1979; Kanaana, 1994.
55 Van Nieuwkerk, 1995.
56 Spoer and Spoer, 1927.
57 Holliday, 1997, p. 32.
58 Canaan, 1931, p. 189.
59 Morris, 2001.
60 Morris, 2001.
61 M. Cohen, 1982; W. Khalidi, 1991.
62 Shlaim, 1999.
63 Levenburg, 1993.
64 Morris, 1988; 2001; Masalha, 1992; Pappe, 2006.
65 Morris, 1988; Masalha, 1992; Pappe, 2006.
66 Kanaaneh, 1995.
67 Morris, 2001; Pappe, 2006.
68 Zurayk, 1956.
69 Morris, 1988; Masalha, 1992; Pappe, 2006.
70 R. Khalidi, 1998.

Part Three

1 Hoerburger, 1968, p. 30.
2 Friedland, 1998.
3 Maners, 2005.
4 Rowe, 2009.

5   Zionist salvage

1 Rosaldo, 1989.
2 Kaschl, 2003, p. 57.
3 Nordau, 1993.
4 Berkowitz, 1993.
5 Friedhaber, 1995, p. 13.
6 Kadman, 1975.
7 In Friedhaber, 1995, p. 13.
8 In Ingber, 2000, p. 43.
9 In Ingber, 1974, p. 17.
10 Masalha, 1992.
11 e.g. Patai, 1947; 1949.
12 e.g. Shimoni, 1948.
13 Bachur, 1964.
14 Ingber, 1974; Kaschl, 2003.
15 Goldman, 1945, pp. 5–6.
16 Ingber, 1974.
17 In Ingber, 1974, p. 37.

18 Ingber, 2000.

19 In Ingber, 1974, pp. 18–19.

20 Ingber, 1974.

21 Kaschl, 2003.

22 Ingber, 1974.

23 Kaschl, 2003, p. 101.

24 Ingber, 1974.

25 E. Cohen, 1984.

26 Kadman, 1975, p. 30.

27 Hermon, 1981, p. 14.

28 Morris, 2001.

29 Zerubavel, 1997, p. 22.

30 Chochem and Roth, 1946.

31 Berk and Delakova, 1947.

32 New England Zionist Youth Commission, 1948, p. ii.

33 Kaufman, 1951.

34 Kadman, 1952.

35 See Ingber, 1974.

36 In Ingber, 1974, p16.

37 Kadman, 1960.

38 Eshkol and Shmuel, 1974.

39 In Ingber 1974, pp. 47–8.

40 Shlaim, 1999.

41 Kadman, 1975, pp. 28–30.

42 Kaschl, 2003.

43 Squires, 1975; Puretz, 1975.

6   *Pan-Arabist salvage*

1 For research on the dance practices of the indigenous population of Palestine remaining inside the 1948 borders of Israel, see Eshkol and Shmuel, 1974; Kaschl, 2003. For research on the dance practices of the exiled indigenous population of Palestine in Jordan, see Ladkani, 2001; Van Aken, 2006.

 2 From a 1950 census (McCarthy, 1990).

 3 Kanaana, 2000.

 4 Morris, 2001.

 5 Morris, 1993.

 6 Morris, 1996; Sharett, 2002.

 7 Zureik, 1977.

 8 Abidi, 1965.

 9 Milton-Edwards, 1999.

10 Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993.

11 Lutfiyya, 1966, pp. 135–6. This passage is reproduced by permission of De Gruyter Publishing.

12 Author's interview with Aida Odeh.

13 Author's interview with Elizabeth Dimitri.

14 Author's interviews with Saliba Totah and Ziad Khalaf.

15 Kanaana, 1994; Bushnaq, 1994.

16 Author's interviews with Saliba Totah and Ziad Khalaf.

17 Author's interview with Wadea Jarrar-Haddad.

18 Stone, 2003, p. 20.

19 Zuhur, 1998.

20 Author's interview with Wadea Jarrar-Haddad.

21 Author's interviews with Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and Saliba Totah.

22 e.g. Baladiyyat Ramallah, 1965.

23 Morris, 2001.

24 Lacquer, 1969.

25 Morris, 2001.

26 Hadawi, 1979.

27 Baker, 2003.

28 Boullata, 2004.
29 Gorkin and Othman, 1996.
30 Kanafani, 2000, p. 150.
31 Bowman, 1994, p. 138.
32 Said, 1979; 1986.
33 Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993, p. 252.
34 Morris, 2001, p. 341.
35 Morris, 2001.
36 Morris, 2001.
37 Author's interview with Aida Odeh.

7   Palestinian nationalist salvage

 1 Milton-Edwards, 1999.
 2 Shafir, 1996; Morris, 2001.
 3 McCarthy, 1990.
 4 Sayigh, 1979.
 5 Taraki, 1990.
 6 Baumgarten, 2005.
 7 Baumgarten, 2005, p. 33.
 8 Malki, 1995, p. 1.
 9 Taraki, 1990.
10 Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976, p. 460.
11 Hammami and Tamari, 1997.
12 e.g. Alqam, 1994; Haddad, 1994.
13 Barghouthi, 1994, p. 33.
14 R. Khalidi, 1998, pp. 5–6.
15 Bushnaq, 1994.
16 Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993; Barghouthi, 1994.
17 Swedenburg, 1995.
18 Author's interview with Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba.
19 Bushnaq, 1994.
20 Author's interview with Nadia Aboushi, 4 April 2004.
21 Author's interview with Elizabeth Dimitri.
22 Alqam, 1977.
23 Author's interviews with Saliba Totah, Nadia Aboushi and Aida Odeh.
24 Kaschl, 2003.
25 Taraki, 1990.
26 Author's interviews with Mohamad Atta and Wassim Al-Kurdi.
27 Author's interview with Wassim Al-Kurdi.
28 Massad, 2003.
29 Kaschl, 2003, p. 93.
30 Fraleigh, 1999.
31 Abu Hadba, 1994b.
32 Author's interview with Nadia Aboushi.
33 Boullata, 2004.
34 Brown, 2002; 2003.
35 Abu Hadba, 1994b.
36 Haddad, 1994.
37 Paine, 1989.
38 e.g. El-Funoun, 1986a; Kanaana, 1994.
39 Author's interview with Wassim Al-Kurdi.
40 Abu Hadba, 1994a.
41 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.
42 Kaschl, 2003.
43 Abu Hadba, 1994a.
44 El-Funoun, 1986a.
45 e.g. Al-Awwad, 1983.
46 e.g. Traboulsi, 1996.
47 e.g. Barghouthi, 1994.
48 e.g. Abu Hadba, 1994a; Hamdan, 1996.

49 Massad, 2003, p. 29.
50 Antonius, 1981.
51 Jad, 1990.
52 Hammami, 1990.
53 Al-Awwad, 1983.
54 e.g. Abu Hadba, 1994a.
55 e.g. Hamdan, 1996.
56 Author's interview with Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba.
57 e.g. Abu Hadba, 1994a.
58 Al-Butmah, 1996.
59 Kaschl, 2003, p. 87.
60 El-Khalidi, 1999.
61 Haddad, 1994.
62 Author's interviews with Sherif Kanaana, Suhail Khoury and Wassim Al-Kurdi.
63 Author's interview with Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba.
64 Kaschl, 2003.
65 Kaschl, 2003, p. 93.
66 Massad, 2003.
67 See Massad, 2003, for a further analysis of the impact of the Rahbanni musical legacy on Palestinian cultural identity.
68 Author's interviews with Ziad Khalaf, Saliba Totah, Suhail Khoury and Lubna Ghanayem.

Part Four

1 Said, 1993.
2 Clifford, 1987, p. 120.
3 Rowe, 2009.

8   The First Intifada

1 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990; Morris, 2001.
2 Kimmerling and Migdal, 1993.
3 e.g. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1976.
4 Hirst, 1986.
5 Hirst, 1986.
6 Peteet, 1994.
7 Milton-Edwards, 1999.
8 Sella, 1989.
9 Taraki, 1990; Mi'ari, 1998.
10 Claiborne, 1982.
11 Milton-Edwards, 1999.
12 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990.
13 Jad, 1990.
14 Hammami, 1990. In Palestine, as throughout the Islamic world, the whole concept of veiling is complex, and not simply limited to political or religious themes. See MacLeod, 1991, for a discussion on the changing economic and social reasons for the use of the veil amongst lower middle-class working women in Egypt.
15 e.g. Alqam, 1994.
16 Isotalo, 1999.
17 Kaschl, 2003.
18 Kaschl, 2003.
19 Taraki, 1990, p. 64.
20 Ellayan, 2006.
21 El-Funoun, 1984, p. 32. Author's translation.
22 Abu Hadba, 1994b.
23 Ellayan, 2006.
24 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.
25 Author's interview with Mustafa Dawoud.

26 'El-Funoun' translates into English as 'the arts', but the group never generally translate this portion of their title, and their extended title is commonly truncated to El-Funoun as a universal label for the group.
27 Kaschl, 2003; Massad, 2003.
28 Author's interview with Mohamad Atta.
29 Author's interview with Wassim Al-Kurdi.
30 Hamdan, 1996.
31 Kaschl, 2003.
32 Huleileh, 2003.
33 Author's interview with Mohamed Atta.
34 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.
35 e.g. El-Funoun, 2005.
36 El-Funoun, 1987b.
37 Author's interview with Wassim Al-Kurdi.
38 Author's interview with Mohamad Atta.
39 El-Funoun, 1986a.
40 El-Funoun, 1986a.
41 El-Funoun, 1986a.
42 Author's interview with Wassim Al-Kurdi.
43 Al-Kurdi, 1994.
44 Author's interview with Khaled Qatamish.
45 Author's interview with Mohamad Atta.
46 Al-Kurdi, 1994, pp. 223–4.
47 Al-Kurdi, 1994.
48 Al-Kurdi, 1994.
49 Author's interview with Sherif Kanaana.
50 El-Funoun, 1984; 1986a.
51 Author's interview with Mohamad Atta.
52 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.
53 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.
54 Al-Kurdi, 1994.
55 Author's interview with Mohamad Atta.
56 'Sareyyet' translates into English as 'first', in reference to the numerical title of the Scout club. This word is generally not translated with the rest of the name, and the group is generally referred to by the truncated name Sareyyet Ramallah, or just Sareyyet.
57 Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.
58 Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.
59 Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.
60 Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.
61 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990, p. 92.
62 Morris, 2001.
63 Yahya, 1990.
64 Morris, 2001.
65 Morris, 2001.
66 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990.
67 Morris, 2001, p. 598.
68 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990.
69 Barzilai, 2002.
70 Nassar and Heacock, 1990, p. 310.

71 Peretz, 1990.

72 H. Murray, 2005.

73 Birzeit University, 2007.

74 Author's interview, name not disclosed for security reasons.

75 Author's interview with Mustafa Dawoud.

76 Peteet, 1992.

77 Author's interview, name not disclosed for security reasons.

78 Schiff and Ya'ari, 1990.

79 Jad, 1990.

80 Milton-Edwards, 1992.

81 Morris, 2001.

82 Sam Tamari as cited in Tessler, 1994, p. 748.

83 Morris, 2001.

84 Author's interview with Sherif Kanaana.

85 Aboudi, 1984.

86 Author's interview with Khaled Qatamish.

87 Abu Deeb, 2000.

88 Al-Kurdi, 1994, p. 219.

89 Taraki, 1991.

9   *The Oslo period*

1 e.g. Said, 1996; 2001.

2 Hammami and Tamari, 2000, p. 8.

3 Khan, 2004.

4 Roy, 2001; Hass, 2002a.

5 Morris, 2001.

6 Aronson, 1996.

7 Halper, 2003.

8 B'tselem, 2007a.

9 Morris, 2001.

10 Morris, 2001.

11 Halper, 2003.

12 Roy, 2001.

13 Milton-Edwards, 1999.

14 Amundsen and Ezbidi, 2004.

15 Stein and Swedenburg, 2004.

16 Samara, 2000.

17 Boullata, 2004.

18 Popular Art Centre, 2002.

19 Author's interview with Suhail Khoury.

20 The following descriptions of these workshops are derived from the recollections of local participants and video recordings of the workshops themselves (Popular Art Centre video archives).

21 Author's interviews with Khaled Ellayan and Khaled Qatamish.

22 Mosston and Ashworth, 2002.

23 Kaschl, 2003.

24 See Rowe, 2008.

25 Kaschl, 2003.

26 In Kaschl, 2003, p. 132.

27 In Kaschl, 2003.

28 Barghouti, 2004, p. 24.

29 Kaschl, 2003.

30 Author's interview with Abdel Karim Caracalla.

31 Author's interview with Abdel Karim Caracalla.

32 Said, 1978.

33 Barghouti, 2004, p. 24.

34 Kaschl, 2003.

35 Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.

36   Pappe, 1997; Stein, 1998; Kaschl, 2003.
37   Hadawi, 1979.
38   In Rowe, 2002, p. 51.
39   Kaschl, 2003.
40   Rowe, 2000.
41   Rowe, 2005c.
42   Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, 2004.
43   e.g. in Harding, 2004.
44   Rowe, 2005b.

10   *The Second Intifada*

1   Said, 2001; Usher, 2003.
2   Palestine Red Crescent Society, 2007.
3   B'tselem, 2007b.
4   Stein and Swedenburg, 2003.
5   Usher, 2003, p. 32.
6   Hass, 2002b; 2002c.
7   Kimmerling, 2003, p. 4.
8   B'tselem, 2007a.
9   Baumgarten, 2005.
10   Milton-Edwards, 1999.
11   Author's interview with Iman Hammouri.
12   Nasser, 2005a.
13   *Al-Hayyat al Jadida*, 2005.
14   Nasser, 2005b.
15   Baghdadi, 2005.
16   e.g. Lewis, 2002.
17   Milton-Edwards, 1999.
18   e.g. Huntington, 1992.
19   For security reasons political affiliations are not identified here.
20   Author's interview with Bassam Jarrar.
21   Author's interview with Fadel Saleh.
22   Author's interview with Bassam Jarrar.
23   Author's interview with Bassam Jarrar.
24   See Rowe, 2003.
25   Author's interview with Khaled Qatamish.
26   See Rowe, 2005a.
27   Author's interview with Khaled Ellayan.

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Aboushi, Nadia. Actress and music teacher, Ramallah/Jerusalem. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah, 4 April 2004.

Abu Hadba, Abdel-Aziz. Director, Centre for Heritage and Folklore Studies; chairman, Palestinian National Dabkeh Committee. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah, 3 July 2004.

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1   Sword dance at a Bedouin wedding in Palestine, early 1900s
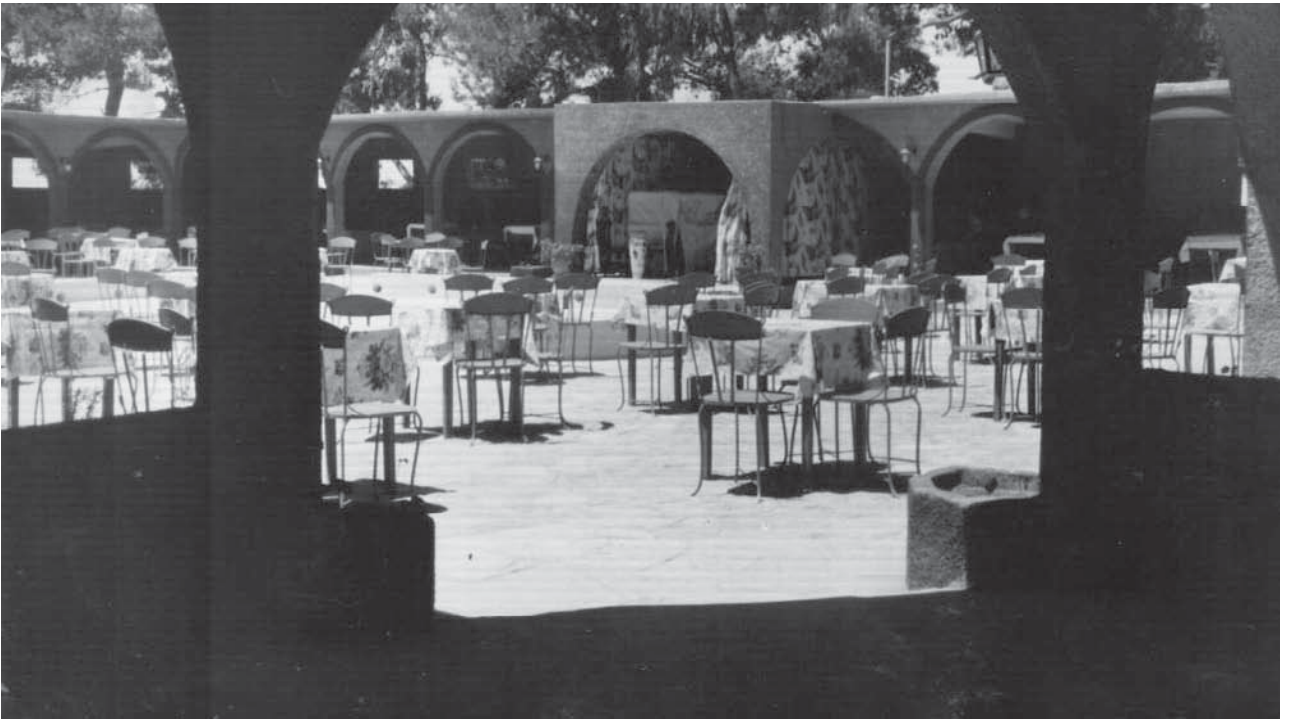
2   Men dancing with swords in celebration in Palestine, late nineteenth or early twentieth century

3   Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and Marwan Jarrar at Ba'albakk in the late 1950s

4   The caravanserai courtyard at the Grand Hotel provided a nostalgic venue for cultural events

5   Pageant winners at the Grand Hotel in the late 1950s and 1960s

To Aida
With best
Wishes from
always
Violet
MODAK
Alep 4/11 1959.

6 (*This page and facing*) Promotional cards of dance acts that performed at the Grand Hotel during the 1960s

7   El-Funoun often rehearsed *Marj Ibn 'Amer* during the first intifada in The Arab Evangelical Episcopal School (pictured here) when the Popular Art Centre was closed by the Israeli Military

8   Drama and dance in Sarreyet Ramallah's *Jbaineh*, performed at the Hakawati Theatre in Jerusalem in 1992

9   Sarreyet Ramallah's *Jbaineh*, performed at the Hakawati Theatre in Jerusalem in 1992

10   El-Funoun's *Zaghareed* being performed in the 1997 Palestine International Festival

11 To celebrate the 2004 opening of the Ramallah Cultural Palace, El-Funoun and Baraem performed past works from El-Funoun together

12   Sarreyet Ramallah's *Al-Birjawi* performed in the new Kasaba Theatre in Ramallah in 2000, drawing on themes from sufi movement rituals

13   (*This page and facing*) Scenes from El-Funoun dances revived and performed in a
compilation evening at the Ramallah Cultural Palace

14 (*Opposite page and above*) Created for El-Funoun's Baraem youth group in 2006, *Raqsit Shamis* revisits familiar territory with romantic scenes of rural life in pre-1948 Palestine

15 Sareyyet Ramallah's short work *Hawayat*, performed at Al-Kasaba Theatre in 2002, marks a shift towards contemporary (rather than historic) expressions of collective identity through dance

16 *Hawayat* was developed and extended into the 2005 Sareyyet Ramallah production *Ala Hajez*, which explored the physical impact of Israeli military checkpoints on different characters