Dance and Political Credibility: The Appropriation of *Dabkeh* by Zionism, Pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism

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This article examines how the rural folkdance dabkeh *has, in the last century, been appropriated and reinvented as a tradition in order to construct the imagined communities of Zionism, pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism within Palestine/Israel. This appropriation has led to extensive debates and suppositions on the source, meanings, and cultural ownership of* dabkeh. *The following historical narratives, emerging from interviews with dance practitioners and dance advocates in the West Bank, Israel, and Lebanon, and from literature in libraries and archives in the West Bank, Israel, and Great Britain, draw attention to the salient links between dance and politics and the multiple ways in which collective identities can be constructed and deconstructed. These histories further raise questions about how local cultural autonomy and sustainability within the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been affected by the process of political appropriation.*

Dabkeh,[1] a circling folkdance made up of intricate steps and stomps, has helped construct three very different political communities and cultural identities during the 20th century. Zionism, pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism have all gained political credibility through the public performance of a dance[2] that, in the previous century, had no associations with any of these ideals. The three histories of dabkeh present a post-nationalist critique of dance in Palestine/Israel.[3] Revealing how dance can be used to define (and re-define) a collective identity, these narratives highlight the artistic legacies of Zionism, pan-Arabism, and Palestinian Nationalism. More importantly perhaps, they provide a historical baseline from which new, innovative choreographic histories might be identified and celebrated.

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1. The transliteration of this term has resulted in various spellings: in Zionist and Israeli discourse it appears as debke, debkeh, or deppka, whereas within pan-Arabist and Palestinian Nationalist discourse it appears as dabkeh, dabke, or dabka.

2. The word "dance" is inherently foreign in this context as there is no directly correlating term in Arabic. It is used here to refer to patterned movement activities that may have diverse cultural functions and meanings.

3. See Nicholas Rowe, "Post-salvagism: Cultural Interventions and Cultural Evolution in a Traumatized Community — Dance in the Central West Bank," Unpublished doctoral thesis, London Contemporary Dance School, University of Kent at Canterbury, 2007; and Nicholas Rowe, *Raising Dust: A Cultural History of Dance in Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

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IMAGINING, INVENTING, AND SALVAGING CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH DANCE

Across the world, the social dances and movement rituals of particular groups of people have been appropriated and given a "second existence"[4] as physical spectacles. These spectacles display a homogenized cultural identity and help validate new national, ethnic, or religious boundaries around people and place. In the public imagining of such a community,[5] the invention of shared traditions[6] through national folkdance troupes and festivals can make politicized aesthetics, ethics, gender roles, and social hierarchies appear inherent to a community.[7] This re-invention of dances is thus highly selective and can be seen as influenced by the ideological agendas of political elites guiding the appropriation.[8] As the following histories of dabkeh illustrate, shifts in these political environments and agendas can allow the boundaries of a community to continue to be guided by historical precedent while remaining in flux.

Within Israel and Palestine, the search for historical precedents as a basis for contemporary cultural actions can have a particular urgency amongst population groups that have experienced collective traumas. War, exile, colonization, or other political and natural disasters can dislocate people from their cultural pasts, threatening a population's existing bonds and networks.[9] Reviving elements of the distant cultural past and reconstructing them as a shared traditions can demonstrate that the past is not lost, but rather continues on into the future.[10] When the traumatic events themselves are also projected across generations through cultural lamentations (in folksongs, dances, oral histories, and other arts and rituals), the disrupted social bonds of a traumatized community can appear resilient to the traumatic events.[11] Folk dances can therefore be perceived as carrying both an ancient cultural past and a reminder of the threats to a traumatized community.

The revival of dance heritage can, however, be highly and purposefully selective. In Palestine, this selection has further been influenced by the ways in which local

4. Felix Hoerburger, "Once Again the Concept of Folk Dance," *The Journal of International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 20 (1968), pp. 30–31.

5. David B. Clark, "The Concept of Community: A Re-examination," *Sociological Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1973), pp. 32–37; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

6. Eric Hobsbawm, "The Invention of Tradition," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–15.

7. Anthony Shay, "Parallel Traditions: State Folk Dance Ensembles and Folk Dance in 'The Field,'" *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1999), pp. 29–56.

8. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

9. Kai Erikson, *Everything in its Path* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976).

10. Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Judith Hamera, "The Answerability of Memory: 'Saving' Khmer Classical Dance," in Ackbar Abbas and John Nguyet Erni, eds., *Internationalizing Cultural Studies* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 95–105.

11. Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, eds., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

cultural history was documented in the early 20th century. Anthropologists and folklorists who engaged in early cultural research in the region expressed concerns that local traditions were on the verge of disappearing and thus required salvaging. Their "salvage paradigm"[12] emphasized that these traditions were worth saving because the rural culture of Palestine had, up until that point, been frozen in time. This led to imaginative speculations on the Biblical nature of local culture and the assumption that no significant cultural change had occurred in the subsequent millennia.[13] This salvage paradigm subsequently induced some spectacular (and highly politicized) suppositions as to the origins and authenticity of local dance forms in Palestine.

The selective appropriation of dance in Palestine has been made even more complex by the variety of political communities engaged in the appropriation. As Ilan Pappe noted, the Israeli colonial appropriation of music and food was not an indicator of any politically inclusive intentions within Zionism, "... and cannot be said to be a bridge between Jewish society and the Arab world [...] [given that] the most right-wing parties play it at the very rallies where they preach anti-Arabic rhetoric."[14]

While previous dance histories have often considered the Israeli absorption of dabkeh as an indication of the respect early Zionists had for the local population,[15] this is perhaps a very romanticized speculation. In *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine*, Elke Kaschl more critically noted how this process of cultural appropriation only helped consolidate a new community amongst European immigrants; the local population were generally perceived as useful cultural vessels but not seen "as active, equal members of possibly the same community."[16]

The political appropriation of dance might thus be seen as an action capable of antagonizing as well as engaging imaginings of community, leading to counter-hegemonic[17] movements that seek to invent alternate traditions, construct alternate historical narratives, and form alternate borders for a community. The following three histories of the appropriation of dabkeh illustrate the ways in which dance has been used to collectivize and divide people in Palestine during the last century.

12. James Clifford, "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," in Hal Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1987), pp. 120–130. Clifford describes how late 19th century and early 20th century anthropologists such as Lowie, Boas, Kroeber, and Malinowski gathered the cultural knowledge, discourses, and products of indigenous populations in order to salvage them before they could be diluted or destroyed by the deluge of European cultural and political activities. This salvage paradigm provided a cultural snapshot of various populations in the late 19th century, but little comparative knowledge about earlier periods in each population's history, leading to a perception of cultural stasis. For examples of such "salvage anthropology" in early 20th century Palestine, see Rowe, *Raising Dust*.

13. Hilma Granquist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village, Vol. 1* (Helsinki, Finland: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1931).

14. Ilan Pappe, "Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians, Part III: Popular Culture," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1997), p. 61.

15. See, for example, Judith B. Ingber, "Shorashim: The Roots of Israeli Folk Dance," *Dance Perspectives*, Vol. 59 (1974), pp. 3–60.

16. Elke Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine: Performing the Nation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 101.

17. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds., translated by William Boelhower (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985, first published in 1946).

ZIONIST APPROPRIATION

It might be argued that the political persecution and physical humiliation of Jews in Europe in the early 20th century influenced a reconstruction of physically vibrant and powerful Jewish cultural identity through Zionism.[18] European emigrants to Palestine challenged the stereotypical image of the downtrodden "ghetto Jew," promoting Zionist pioneers who were strong, independent, and active.[19] This sense of independence transformed into a need to possess cultural products that were non-European and a "... 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."[20] The need for a particularly Israeli dance form also emerged as a reaction to the cultural legacies that were being perpetuated amongst the European migrants. In considering the social dance forms engaged in by Zionists migrants during the British Mandate period, early Israeli choreographer Rivka Sturman reflects how "I was, frankly, outraged that Israeli youth should be bringing German dances and songs to others."[21] Mirali Chen similarly recalls that within the Zionist communities in Palestine at this time "... we were against all European traditions so we needed new things, new steps, new music."[22] This rejection of European cultural identity might thus be seen as both a counter-hegemonic movement resulting from the persecution of Jews in Europe and a desire to legitimize an Occidental cultural presence in an Oriental landscape.[23] This evoked a need for a collective identity that would appear dynamic and new, yet linked to an ancient culture of Jews in the southeastern Mediterranean region.[24]

The culture of the indigenous rural population of Palestine in the early 20th century appeared to present such a link. The following observations by Vera Goldman in the early 1940s encapsulates this sense that local rural dances were a legacy of an ancient Jewish civilization:

> 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.[25]

18. Max Nordau, "The Jewry of Muscle," in Paul Mendes-Flohr & Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, first published in 1903), pp. 547–548.

19. Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

20. Z. Friedhaber, "Did Israeli Folk Dance Truly Spring from the Ashes of the Holocaust?," *Nirkoda*, Vol. 11, No. 12 (1995), pp. 13–14.

21. Ingber, "Shorashim," p. 17.

22. Judith B. Ingber, "Villified or Glorified: Views of the Jewish Body in 1947," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1–2 (2000), p. 43.

23. Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine.*

24. Ruth Eshel, "Concert Dance in Israel," *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2003), pp. 61–80.

25. Vera Goldman, *The Dance in Palestine* (Tel-Aviv: Women's International Zionist Organization and Instruction Centre, 1945), pp. 5–6.

Goldman implies here that through a process of either genetic recall or spiritual mediation, Jews returning to their ancient homeland felt an innate aesthetic appreciation and connection with local peasant dances. The actual appropriation of dabkeh into Israeli culture can be seen, however, as far more socially constructed. During the 1930s and 1940s, Zionist pioneers studied the local peasant dabkeh and re-choreographed it into stage presentations for Zionist youth.[26] Early Israeli choreographer 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 lead 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.[27]

As a recent immigrant, Lea Bergstein also observed the local indigenous dances in the 1930s and considered how they might blend with the influences that she brought from Europe:

> 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.[28]

Bergstein's subsequent choreographies of folkdances attempted to integrate this perception of indigenous movements into Zionist wedding dances, as a reflection of Jewish traditions.[29] Such individual choreographic experiments can be seen contributing to a more politicized aesthetic through Zionist competitions and festivals. In the late 1930s, the Tel Aviv Municipality held a competition to identify the most authentic dances of "Israel."[30] First prize was awarded to Yardena Cohen, based on her studies of dabkeh in the indigenous rural communities of Palestine. In 1944, the first Dalya Festival was held in Kibbutz Dalya, promoting the Orientalization of Zionist folk dance. Showcasing the folkdances of Zionist choreographers who drew their inspiration from rural indigenous dance forms (such as Yardena Cohen, Rivka Sturman, and Gurit Kadman), more than 500 dancers performed in front of 25,000 spectators at the second Dalya Festival in 1947.[31] Books published in North America promoting Zionist culture,

26. Ingber, "Shorashim."
27. As cited in Ingber, "Shorashim," pp. 18–19.
28. As cited in Ingber, "Shorashim," p. 37.
29. Ingber, "Villified or Glorified."
30. This was prior to the establishment of Israel as a nation, and refers to a Zionist ideal at the time that the ancient land of Israel was being rebuilt in contemporary Palestine.
31. Ingber, "Shorashim."

such as *Palestine Dances!*[32] and *Dances of Palestine*,[33] provided step-by-step instructions in dabkeh as a Jewish folk dance, alongside other dances such as the *horah* that were brought to Zionist communities in Palestine from Eastern Europe in the early 20th century. It is not without irony that no reference was given in these books to the recent sourcing of dabkeh from amongst the indigenous population of Palestine. The construction of Israel's cultural roots in Palestine can thus appear to have relied upon a playing down of European influences on Jews in the Diaspora, along with a growing denial of the cultural roots of the indigenous population in the same land.[34] This cultural appropriation of dabkeh might also be seen as an integral part 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.[35]

Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, Dalya festivals continued to promote Israeli folk dance. Within the fledgling Israeli society, the dances presented were politically valued as 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.[36]

At the same time that dabkeh was helping to establish and legitimize Israeli cultural identity around the world,[37] the recognition of the indigenous population of Palestine as a source for dabkeh began to disappear from Israeli dance discourse. Israeli dance texts in the 1950s begin to discuss the "rich" and "vibrant" contributions of the newly arrived Yemeni Jews, and give only passing mention to a vague influence from the more "monotonous" "Arab" dabkehs.[38] Israeli choreographers in subsequent generations placed a greater emphasis on the creative adaptations of the Israeli folk choreographers than on the cultural sources.[39] This extended the philosophy of earlier Zionist choreographers like Rivka Sturman, who attested,

32. Corrine Chochem and Muriel Roth, *Palestine Dances!* (New York: Behrman House, 1946).

33. Fred Berk and Katya Delakova, *Dances of Palestine* (New York: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, 1947).

34. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

35. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881–2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).

36. Gurit Kadman, "Folk Dance in Israel," in Fred Berk, ed., *Ha-Rikud: The Jewish Dance* (New York: American Zionist Youth Foundation and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1975), p. 30.

37. Shalom Hermon, *The Development of Folkdance in Modern Israel: From the Beginnings to the Establishment of the State of Israel (1882–1948)* (Jerusalem, Ministry of Education, unpublished report, 1981).

38. See, for example, Ayalah Kaufman, "Indigenous and Imported Elements in the New Folkdance in Israel," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 3 (1951), pp. 55–57; Gurit Kadman, "Yemenite Dances and their Influence on the New Israeli Dances," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 4 (1952), pp. 27–30.

39. For comments emphasizing creativity over cultural sources by Israeli choreographers such as Shalom Hermon, Sara Levi-Tanai, and Yonaton Karmon, see Ingber, "Shorashim."

> 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.[40]

Israeli folkdance histories[41] thus began crediting the emergence of Israeli folk dance to the spontaneous creations of rural *kibbutzniks*, living in the land of Israel and reviving Biblical memories. The Israeli folkdance choreographer Yonaton Karmon explained the political importance of such creativity 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.[42]

The collective forgetting of the appropriation of dabkeh from the exiled indigenous population can thus be seen as contributing to the international community's acceptance of an inherent (and therefore undeniable) Israeli identity. This perception that Israeli folk dance culture had spontaneously emerged also contributed to the more general notion that the state of Israel had resulted from miracles and divine intervention.[43] As Gurit Kadman reflects,

> 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.[44]

The influence of the indigenous population of Palestine on Israeli dance was being recollected within Zionist discourse by the mid-1970s,[45] although it did not provoke an ethical debate on the actual process of cultural appropriation.[46] This might seem

40. Rivka Sturman, as cited in Ingber, "Shorashim," p. 16.

41. See, for example, Gurit Kadman, "The Creative Process in Present-Day Israeli Dances," *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 12 (1960), pp. 85–86.

42. As cited in Ingber, "Shorashim," pp. 47–48.

43. Avi Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948," in Ilan Pappe, ed., *The Israel-Palestine Question* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 171–192.

44. Kadman, "Folk Dance in Israel," pp. 28–30.

45. See, for example, Ingber, "Shorashim."

46. See Pamela Squires, "Review of 'Shorashim: The Roots of Israeli Dance,'" *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1975), p. 34; Susan Puretz, "Review of 'Shorashim: The Roots of Israeli Dance,'" *Dance Research Journal,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1975), p. 35; Eshel, "Concert Dance in Israel"; Gaby Aldor, "The Borders of Contemporary Israeli Dance: 'Invisible Unless in Final Pain,'" *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 81–97.

a spectacular oversight, given that Zionist, and subsequently Israeli, political leaders have persistently denied the existence of an indigenous population from which the dances were appropriated.[47]

Appropriated dabkeh steps were 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 indigenous population, and her *Yes, They Will Lose*, performed by hundreds of Israeli soldiers at the first Independence Day in 1949, used dabkeh patterns to mimic acts of attack and final triumph over the local indigenous population.[48]

The Zionist engagement with dabkeh in the early 20th century might have emerged from an Orientalist curiosity, speculation on what the Kingdom of Israel might have been like two millennia earlier, or a sharing of culture between colonizers and colonized. It soon became integrated, however, into a wider political process that ultimately marginalized the indigenous population.[49] Dance steps, formations, and movements were studied and replicated for their aesthetic value and accorded new symbolic meanings associated with Zionist nationalism.[50] Dabkeh was not learnt so as to embody a set of meanings that would help new immigrants in Palestine integrate more effectively into the indigenous population, but appropriated to express a new political ideal. It might thus be argued that by learning and performing dabkeh, a hegemonic Western colonial movement developed an Eastern cultural identity that could authenticate their claims to territory in the Middle East.

PAN-ARABIST APPROPRIATION

The military conflict of 1947–1948 and establishment of Israel in Palestine resulted in the displacement and exile of the majority of the indigenous population.[51] Referred to in Arabic as *al Nakba* [the catastrophe],[52] this collective trauma fragmented existing familial, social, economic, geographic, and political bonds, disrupting both the indigenous society and its intangible culture. Diverse dance practices were suddenly removed from the geographic and social environments that had provided them with contextual meaning, threatening their continuity as cultural practices.

The subsequent attempts to reconstruct this population's cultural bonds were

47. See, for example, Adam Garfinkle, "On the Origin, Meaning, Use, and Abuse of a Phrase," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1991), pp. 539–550; Marie Syrken, *Golda Meir* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1969); Benjamin Netanyahu, "Address by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," address at the Fifth International Conference of Jewish Ministers and Members of Parliament (Jerusalem: Israeli Forum, 1998).

48. Elliot Cohen, "Steps, Style, Authenticity and 'Kavana' in Israeli Folkdance," *Israel Dance* (1984), pp. 10–12.

49. Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine.*

50. Ingber, "Shorashim."

51. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1948* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Thought* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2006).

52. Constantine Zurayk, *Ma'na al Nakba* [*The Meaning of Disaster*] (Beirut: Khayat's College Book Cooperative, 1956).

shaped by the diverse geographic localities and socio-political environments that they began to inhabit.[53] This dispersal and the subsequent disparate processes of cultural reconstruction render any singular cultural history of the indigenous population of Palestine illusory.[54] The following narrative of the appropriation of dabkeh in Palestine therefore focuses on the cultural experiences of those within the West Bank.

In 1948, the 765,000 residents of the West Bank (including more than 321,000 refugees from other parts of Palestine)[55] began 19 years under the rule of a Jordanian monarch. During this time, the West Bank remained a perpetual, low-key battlefield, subject to continual cross-border raids by the Israeli military and ongoing displacement.[56] Palestine had ceased to exist as a political or administrative entity, and the collective identity of the inhabitants of the West Bank appeared to be as unstable as the new military boundaries. As historical narratives were being constructed inside Israel that denied any pre-existing, settled, indigenous community, Jordanian public forums were attempting to redefine the displaced indigenous population of Palestine according to a newly-constructed Jordanian national identity.[57] It would appear, however, that particularly for those exiled from what had become Israel, the unity suggested by pan-Arabism offered the most salient hope of salvation from the overpowering Israeli military and the restitution of former homes.[58] This allegiance to a broader ethnic identity subsequently facilitated a local acceptance of changes to cultural practices. Notable amongst such changes was the reconfiguration of dabkeh within the West Bank as a performance of a distinctly Arab identity.

This shift to a pan-Arab cultural identity emerged out of the wider Arab folklore movement, which paralleled similar anti-colonial political movements in the 1950s. Promoting the region's peasants as bastions of cultural authenticity, the Arab League presented the first *Folklore Conference* in Egypt in 1964 to identify the commonality and diversity within Arab folk culture. By entwining folklore with political identity, this movement presented a struggle against European colonialism that at the same time emulated European methods for constructing political identity.[59]

The annual Baalbek Festivals in Lebanon became a central cultural location for this anti-colonial movement, as the region's rural social dances were made into perfor-

53. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

54. Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

55. These figures come from a 1950 census. Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

56. Benny Morris, "The Israeli Press and the Qibya Operation, 1953," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1996), pp. 40–52; Moshe Sharett, "The 1953 Qibya Raid Revisited: Excerpts from Moshe Sharett's Diaries," introduced by Walid Khalidi and annotated by Neil Caplan, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (2002), pp. 77–98.

57. Ella Zureik, "Toward a Sociology of the Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1977), pp. 3–16.

58. Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

59. Sherif Kanaana, "Introduction: Palestinian National Identity and the Palestinian Folklore Movement," in Sherif Kanaana, ed., *Folk Heritage of Palestine* (Ramallah, Palestine: Al-Shark, 1994), pp. 1–15; Inaya Bushnaq, "The Role of Folklore in Nation Building," in Sherif Kanaana, ed., *Folk Heritage of Palestine* (Ramallah, Palestine: Al-Shark, 1994), pp. 167–177.

mance spectacles for wealthy urbanites. Illustrating defiance to both European and Ottoman cultural hegemony, pamphlets promoting dance in these productions declared that "... Bacchic rites and the folkloric dabka dance become siblings reunited after thousands of years of foreign intervention."[60] While such proclamations suggested that the dabkeh being performed was a remnant of the local culture from previous millennia, these performances were more recently manufactured through the appropriation of local peasant dances, which were adapted to fit a European set of theatrical aesthetics.

The *Lebanese Nights* productions most prominently presented a form of dabkeh that originated in rural Palestine and Lebanon, yet was filtered through a very European set of theatrical aesthetics. Wadea Jarrar Haddad, the principal choreographer of these events had been born into a wealthy land-owning family in northern Palestine in the 1920s and exposed to the local peasant dabkehs through interactions with her father's farm workers. This provided her with a basic knowledge of local rural dance practices, a knowledge that was unusual within her social class in Palestine at the time, and helped her facilitate a subsequent cultural appropriation of this dance. Attending a British Mandate school in Haifa, Wadea Jarrar Haddad was taught European folk and social dances more formally within the school's physical education curriculum. In 1947, she went to England to study physical education at the Bergman Osterburg Trust in England, where she gained a more thorough education in European folk and ballroom dance forms. Exiled with her family from Palestine in 1948, she subsequently worked at the University of Beirut, where she met her husband and choreographic partner Marwan Jarrar (a fellow Palestinian refugee). Through their research into the rural folkdances of Lebanon and their incorporation of movements from these dances into productions for university folkdance competitions, Wadea Jarrar Haddad and Marwan Jarrar gained prominence as choreographic authorities on Arab folk dances, which led to their selection in 1956 to go to the Moiseyev School and the Bolshoi in Russia for further training in European approaches to the staging of folkdance. Upon returning to Lebanon in 1957, they began choreographing folk dances for the operettas of the Rahbanni Brothers, which were featured in the newly established *Lebanese Nights* folkloric section of the festival.[61] Through this process, classical ballet steps and training styles became an integral part of the revived folklore.[62] 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.

The King of Jordan subsequently invited Wadea Jarrar Haddad and Marwan Jarrar to go to the West Bank four times between 1962 and 1966 to stage dabkeh productions within the annual *Ramallah Nights* festivals.[63] While dabkeh continued as a social practice amongst rural and displaced communities in the West Bank during this era,[64] the *Ramallah Nights* festivals prompted dabkeh to be appropriated and performed as

60. Christopher Stone, "The Ba'albakk Festival and the Rahbannis: Folklore, Ancient History, Musical Theatre, and Nationalism in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2003), p. 20.

61. Interview by the author with Wadea Jarrar Haddad, Beirut, December 19, 2006.

62. Sherifa Zuhur, ed., *Images of Enchantment: Visual and Performing Arts in the Middle East* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1998).

63. Interview by the author with Wadea Jarrar Haddad, Beirut, December 19, 2006.

64. See, for example, Abdullah Lutfiyya, *Baytin: A Jordanian Village* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).

an expression of Arab identity amongst local urban populations. Presented by the First Ramallah Group, these outdoor performances developed a wide public following, and promotional material associated with the events advocated a sentimental allegiance to an Arab-Jordanian identity.[65] Local young men and women from the urban Ramallah environment, with little or no knowledge of rural dabkeh, were selected to perform the dances. As Wadea Jarrar Haddad recalls, "They gave me students that didn't know anything. [...] I demonstrated, I showed them how to be elegant, how to stretch their body."[66]

Participants in these events recall that they were taught specific choreographic sequences and rehearsed these sequences in preparation for performance. This process demanded an accurate emulation of the dabkeh choreography that had been presented in Lebanon, and there was no reference to local dance knowledge.[67] This staging of dabkeh might thus be seen as wholly imported into the West Bank. Presented by local youth and resembling local social dabkehs, any local cultural influences had in effect been cleansed through the teaching and staging processes.

While their exposure in the West Bank was limited to several months spread between the years of the *Ramallah Nights* festivals in the 1960s, the influence of Wadea Jarrar Haddad and Marwan Jarrar had a profound impact on the construction and aesthetics of local staged folk dance in the following decades.[68] Through these festivals, dabkeh as a performed spectacle was redefined and accorded certain artistic traditions that contrasted markedly from local dabkeh practices in rural social contexts. From interviews with local participants in these festivals, I came to understand that these new traditions included:

- A physical separation between dancers, musicians, and audience, as opposed to a fluid interchange of activities between everybody present.
- The permanent 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.
- The memorizing of choreographic patterns to pre-arranged music patterns, rather than the spontaneous improvisation of group dance patterns led by different individuals.
- The duration of choreographic sequences being determined by the length of particular songs and composed pieces of music.
- The exaggerating of gesture and lengthening of posture, to increase the size of actions and project dance images to an audience at a greater distance.
- A disciplined uniformity amongst movements and poses of the dance ensemble.
- Dancer selection based on youthfulness and appearance rather than community standing.

65. See, for example, Baladiyyat Ramallah, *Mahrajan Ramallah 1965* [*Ramallah Festival, 1965*] (Ramallah, Jordan: Baladiyyat Ramallah, 1965).

66. Personal communication by the author with Wadea Jarrar Haddad, December 19, 2006.

67. Interview by the author with Saliba Totah, Ramallah, July 6, 2004; Interview by the author with Wadea Jarrar Haddad, Beirut, December 19, 2006.

68. Interview by the author with Saliba Totah, Ramallah, July 6, 2004; Interview by the author with Ziad Khalaf, Ramallah, July 5, 2004.

These structural, contextual, and aesthetic redefinitions of dabkeh in the West Bank through the *Ramallah Nights* festivals might be considered a process of hegemonic deculturation rather than a more equitable process of transcultural fusion.[69] A pan-Arab folkdance format, which had been conceived from a European folkdance paradigm, established new traditions for the performance of dabkeh in the West Bank. The local community might have willingly adopted these changes in order to participate in the pan-Arab cultural scene, and thus foster political solidarity within pan-Arabism. They were not, however, involved in any process of deliberating on these changes.

While pan-Arabism began to fade in the public imagination in the subsequent decades, the performance of dabkeh in the West Bank had been positioned on a developmental pathway that was guided by distant cultural and political ideals. Subsequent attempts to regain cultural autonomy in local performances of dabkeh thus had to negotiate with the various artistic traditions that were overtly and covertly established in this process.

PALESTINIAN NATIONALIST APPROPRIATION

The expansion of Israeli military control in June 1967 resulted in one-fifth of the indigenous population of the West Bank going into exile.[70] The Israeli military imposed curfews and canceled all cultural events in Ramallah over the summer of 1967, including the *Ramallah Nights* festival.[71] During the following summer, the whole city of Ramallah was denied the right to receive visitors from Arab states.[72]

For those that remained in the West Bank, the Israeli military occupation presented a very different governing approach to that from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, introducing a new dynamic in local conceptions of collective identity. This was largely defined by the notion of exclusion and the sense that the government of Israel did not wish to absorb this entire indigenous population along with the land.[73] As noncitizens in the new boundaries of Israel, they suddenly formed a demographic pocket that was politically isolated from the surrounding nations to the north, south, and east, and politically alienated from the nation to the west that now governed them.[74]

The 1967 war and subsequent years of occupation thus presented a new socio-political environment for the culture of the West Bank population. Pan-Arabism had been defeated and with it the hope of a sudden restitution of the exiled indigenous population

69. For discussions on deculturation and fusion in theater arts, see Bonnie Marranca and Gautum Dasgupta, eds., *Interculturalism and Performance* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1991); Diana Taylor, "Transculturating Transculturation," *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1991), pp. 90–104; Rustom Bharucha, *Theatre and the World* (London: Routledge, 1993).

70. Walter Lacquer, *The Road to War: The Origin and Aftermath of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967–8* (London: Penguin Books, 1969); Morris, *Righteous Victims*.

71. Interview by the author with Aida Odeh, Ramallah, August 19, 2005; Interview by the author with Saliba Totah, Ramallah, July 6, 2004; Interview by the author with Ziad Khalaf, Ramallah, July 5, 2004.

72. Shlomo Gazit, *The Carrot and the Stick: Israel's Policy in Judea and Samaria, 1967–68* (Washington, DC: B'nai B'rith Book Service, 1995).

73. Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: Palestine 1914–1979* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1979).

74. Kamal Boullata, "Art under Siege," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2004), pp. 70–84.

to Palestine through international military intervention. A Palestinian nationalist ideology, sponsored by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and boosted by events such as the Battle of Karameh (in which Jordanian and PLO troops fought an Israeli incursion into refugee camps in 1968), began to replace pan-Arabist ideologies in local public discourse and popular affiliation.[75]

This redefining of collective identity led to a third process of salvaging and appropriating of dabkeh. Community organizations provided lessons in *dabkeh* to mixed-gender groups of children and youths. As El-Funoun founders Mohamad Atta and Wassim al-Kurdi recalled, at these lessons the students were generally taught two dabkeh dances, the *Tayara* and *Delonah,* with a sense of theatrical staging that was informed by the *Ramallah Nights* festivals of the 1960s. The youth then performed these at local weddings during the summer.[76] Prior to the 1967 war, even the performed dabkeh of the *Ramallah Nights* festivals was presented as a distinctly rural practice. Older members of the community recall that dabkeh was not a part of the weddings and celebrations of wealthy urbanites at the time, but was rather looked down upon as a cultural practice from the lower classes.[77] Following 1967, however, dabkeh rapidly crossed such class divides and became a ubiquitous social activity, particularly amongst youth.

On such occasions, dabkeh served as a traumatic mediator of the pre-*Nakba* past, as its purposeful revival and performance was inextricably tied to memories of a violent break from that past. The enactment of dabkeh at a wedding, particularly for classes to whom the peasant dance was a relatively new phenomenon, thus gained a new nostalgic value through its function as a signpost to traumatic social upheavals in the local collective history. This invested dabkeh with symbolic meanings associated with resistance to oppression and dispossession.

The notion of dabkeh as resistance emerged more forcefully at the rallies of different political factions in the West Bank during the 1970s. As Wassim al-Kurdi recalls, all of the Palestinian political factions "...wanted to have their own folk groups, magazines, their own festival. Everything was centered on folklore."[78] Observing and participating in such events became, in effect, a display of allegiance and a rite of passage for party supporters. This presentation of dabkeh as a symbol of political identity had been fostered by the Palestine National Front, which declared a commitment to protect local "culture and history from Zionist manipulation and distortion" and to revive folk heritage as an embodiment of the people's attachment to their land.[79] To support this goal, the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage[80] began publishing the annual journal

75. Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979); Lisa Taraki, "The Development of Political Consciousness among Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, 1967–1987," in Jamal Nassar and Roger Heacock, eds., *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (New York: Birzeit University/Praeger, 1991), pp. 53–71.

76. Interview by the author with Mohamed Atta, Ramallah, July 3, 2004; Interview by the author with Wassim Al-Kurdi, Ramallah, April 4, 2006.

77. Interview by the author with Saliba Totah, Ramallah, July 6, 2004; Interview by the author with Nadia Aboushi, Ramallah, April 4, 2004; Interview by the author with Aida Odeh, Ramallah, August 19, 2005.

78. Interview by the author with Wassim al-Kurdi, Ramallah, April 4, 2006.

79. *International Documents on Palestine, 1973* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976), p. 460.

80. The Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage was initially established in 1974 in Al-Bireh as the Committee for Social Research and Popular Heritage.

al-Turath wa al-Mujtama' [*Heritage and Society*], which throughout the 1970s and 1980s defined the intangible culture of Palestine using a Palestinian Nationalist paradigm. This politicizing of rural heritage led to varied suppositions about the origins of dabkeh, with particular emphasis on its roots in ancient rural symbology[81] and Canaanite fertility rites.[82] The political antagonism that Palestinian nationalism had emerged from[83] also led to suppositions that such cultural practices had been constructed in contrast to other groups since antiquity: "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."[84]

Through connections with Canaanite civilization, Palestinian nationalism constructed a cultural history that might challenge even the most ancient claims of Zionist superiority and originality in the region. Dabkeh became a conduit of this connection, an expression of counter-hegemony that embodied and asserted the historical and political claims of the indigenous population. 'Abdel 'Aziz Abu Hadba, the director of the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage and chair of the National Dabkeh Committee, suggests, "Just as studies into German folklore in the 19th 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."[85]

Ironically, this idea emulated European processes of constructing national identity while seeking to confront what was perceived as European colonial encroachment. It should be acknowledged, however, that the use of folk dance to promote a critical awareness of local heritage and history occurred in a political environment in which the Israeli military was maintaining tight restrictions on public expression. West Bank publications about indigenous heritage and folklore were permitted only after delay and heavily censored.[86] The scripts of local plays required approval prior to performance, with the permission for such productions often being cancelled at the last moment.[87] There were even restrictions on visual artists over the use of the colors of the Palestinian flag.[88] Most notably, this censorship was extended into the textbooks in use in West Bank schools.[89]

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81. Abdel-Latif Barghouthi, "Palestinian Folk Heritage: Roots and Characteristics," in Sherif Kanaana, ed., *Folk Heritage of Palestine* (Ramallah, Palestine: Al-Shark, 1994), pp. 19–46.

82. Suhad Al-Awwad, *Al-Dabkeh: Dirisat fi al-Fulklur al-Filistini* [*The Dabkeh: Studies in Palestinian Folklore*] (Amman, Jordan: Palestine Liberation Organization, Department of Media and Culture, 1983), pp. 100–103.

83. See Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.

84. Barghouthi, "Palestinian Folk Heritage," p. 33.

85. Interview by the author with Abdel-Azziz Abu Hadba, Ramallah, July 3, 2004.

86. Abdel-Azziz Abu Hadba, "How Zionist Authorities Dealt with Palestinian Folklore," in Sherif Kanaana, ed., *Folk Heritage of Palestine* (Ramallah, Palestine: Al-Shark, 1994), pp. 55–92.

87. Interview by the author with Nadia Aboushi, Ramallah, April 4, 2004.

88. Boullata, "Art under Siege."

89. Nathan J. Brown, "The International Controversy Regarding Palestinian Textbooks," Paper presented at the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, December 2002; Nathan J. Brown, "The Struggle over Religion, Nation and Identity in the New Palestinian Curriculum," Paper presented at *Constructs of Inclusion and Exclusion: Religion and Identity Formation in Middle Eastern School Curricula*, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, November 2003.

The West Bank population was thus not permitted to utilize written and spoken language to transmit 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. Folkdance presented a medium that, while laden with emotive potential and local historic associations, was seemingly more innocuous than spoken or written words.

While the legacy of pan-Arabism and the theatrical dabkeh of the 1960s *Ramallah Nights* festivals continued to be staged through the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in East Jerusalem and the Catholic Club in Ramallah through the 1970s,[90] a new manifestation of dabkeh was beginning to be presented as a theatrical spectacle in the West Bank. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, university dabkeh competitions and folkloric festivities held in public gardens were fostering a redefinition of dabkeh as a performance of Palestinian nationalism, as distinct from the performances of dabkeh as Zionism and pan-Arabism. Many of the staging processes of the *Ramallah Nights* festivals remained, yet central to this redefinition was the claim that a more authentically Palestinian form of heritage was being revealed through the dabkeh that had been popularized at political rallies and urban weddings.

The theatrical style of dabkeh presented in the *Ramallah Nights* festivals became known as Lebanese dabkeh, stimulating a sense that the differences fell along inherent national lines. The new Palestinian dabkeh presented as a performance was contrasted with Lebanese and other "Arab" dabkehs through particular aesthetic qualities, described as simple, rustic, and earthen.[91] These aesthetic qualities emphasized the supposedly unadulterated and uncolonized features of "Palestinian" dabkeh, promoting the concept of *asalah* (referring to purity and fidelity to the origin).[92] The notion of *asalah* supported contentions that Palestinians were closer to such heritage items than Israelis. Israeli dabkeh had been purposefully created by specific Israeli choreographers on specific dates and named according to contemporary concerns. By contrast, the Palestinian dabkeh was identified as authentic *turath* [heritage] that was "of the people" not "of a person," a timeless cultural legacy named after (and laying claim to) specific geographic locations.[93] This promotion of *asalah* led local folklorists to protest vehemently against *tatwir* (the creative adaptation of folklore).[94] From this viewpoint, dabkeh was not valued as an evolving cultural medium that adapted to serve the needs of the community, but as a cultural essence that needed to be protected against corruptive foreign influences in order to distinguish the boundaries of the community.

Continually maintaining such a suspicious eye on the colonial Other can have a

90. Interview by the author with Saliba Totah, Ramallah, July 6, 2004; Interview by the author with Ziad Khalaf, Ramallah, July 5, 2004.

91. Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine.*

92. See Abdel-Azziz Abu Hadba, "*Firaq El-Funoun Al-Sha'abiyyah al-Filistiniyyah*" ["Examining Popular Palestinian Folk Dances"], *At-Turath wa-'l Mujtama*, Vol. 24 (1994), pp. 55–84.

93. See El-Funoun, *Turath* [Heritage] (Al-Bireh, Palestine: El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, 1986).

94. Abu-Hadba, "*Firaq El-Funoun Al-Sha'abiyyah al-Filistiniyyah*;" H. Hamdan, "*Al-Dabkah al-Sha'abiyyah al-Filistiniyyah bi-'l- Sawt al-Hadir wa-Anin al-Madi*" ["Palestinian Popular Dabkeh in the Present Voice and the Moan of the Past"], *At-Turath wa-'l Mujtama*, Vol. 27 (1996), pp. 39–64.

very blinkering effect. When such an oppositional attitude to the colonial culture dominates cultural choices, counter-hegemonic cultures ultimately become as restrictive and irrelevant as the foreign hegemonic ideals being resisted.[95] For traditional dance in the West Bank, this oppositional attitude induced a standardizing process that replaced "former flexibility with a canon of fixed rules."[96] These attempted to define (amongst other things) the gender norms of dabkeh, and through it the gender norms of a collective Palestinian identity.

The position of women in West Bank society 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 centers[97] and women had played a very active role in the political and military struggle against the Israeli occupation.[98] However, the female body and sexual presence in public was subject to increasing social censorship, given the counter-hegemonic influence of anti-colonial aesthetics and the Islamic reform movement.[99] This presented a major challenge for the performed representations of Palestinian national identity, as the public mood increasingly demanded both women's symbolic presence[100] and their sexual/physical absence. Performed dance thus became a key location for representing an acceptable portrayal of women's public physicality within Palestinian collective identity.

While historical documentation from the 19th century suggests that dabkeh had previously been engaged in vigorously by both men and women,[101] Palestinian nationalist folklorists declared that women traditionally engage in *ra'as*, a feminine dance form that contrasted with the masculine, stomping dabkeh line.[102] Describing such *ra'as* as "soloistic," "sexual," "about beauty and the erotic," 'Abdel 'Aziz Abu Hadba determined that such dancing would not be accepted by the public in times of political struggle.[103] Considered unqualified to danec dabkeh and discouraged from performing *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.[104] While it was conceded that a much more subdued woman's form of *dabkeh*, or *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, rede-

95. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

96. Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine*, p. 93.

97. Soraya Antonius, "*Femmes Prisonnières pour la Palestine*" ["Palestinian Female Prisoners"], *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes*, Vol. 1 (1981), p. 76.

98. Islah Jad, "From Salons to Popular Committees: Palestinian Women, 1919–1989," in Jamal Nassar and Roger Heacock, eds., *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (New York: Birzeit University/ Praeger, 1991), pp. 125–143.

99. Rema Hammami, "Women, the Hijab and the Intifada," *Middle East Report*, Vol. 165 (1990), pp. 24–28.

100. Al-Awwad, *Al-Dabkeh*.

101. See Rowe, *Raising Dust*.

102. See, for example, H. Hamdan, "*Al-Dabkah al-Sha'abiyyah al-Filistiniyyah bi-'l- Sawt al-Hadir wa-Anin al-Madi*."

103. Interview by the author with Abdel-Azziz Abu Hadba, Ramallah, July 3, 2004.

104. See, for example, Abu Hadba, "*Firaq El-Funun Ash-Shabiyye al-Filistiniyya*."

fining their femininity as highly modest through comparative restraint and calmness beside the more vigorous men.[105] The relationship between men and women onstage was also defined as distinctly separate, following the contention that "traditionally, in our weddings and such, men always dance separately from women."[106] This led to the ideal 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 Palestinian national heritage in the 1970s, women thus performed either in separate female-only groups or took disconnected, supportive roles onstage with men.

BEYOND SALVAGE

These three histories present particular challenges for the dance artists creatively and critically exploring their local heritage in the contemporary West Bank.[107] A frustration with the strictures on Palestinian folkdance described above resulted in an artistic revolution within the West Bank throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The people who continued to participate in these dances in their "first existence" as social dances re-appropriated and creatively explored their use in public performance.[108] Through groups such as El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dance, Juthoor, and Ibda'a, these dancers sought to promote the evolution, rather than the preservation, of indigenous dance practices. They thus contributed to an artistic movement that valued local dance heritage yet emphatically argued "... that folklore is not a static matter; rather, it is dynamic and connected to the present."[109] The idea of *cultural authenticity* was reconceived, acknowledging (and responding to) shifts in the socio-political environment. Legitimizing such deliberate changes to performances of indigenous dance culture has required a continual discourse with the wider West Bank community. As dance activists have attempted to reveal a more pluralist, hybrid, and dynamic indigenous dance heritage, they have also sought to understand how hegemony has affected local dance culture.

From the three histories presented in this article, it is clearly apparent that foreign

105. Nadia Al-Butmah, "*al-Dahrajah wa al-Dabkeh*" ["The Dahraja and the Dabkeh"], *At-Turath wa-'l Mujtama*, Vol. 27 (1996), pp. 67–80.

106. Interview by the author with Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba, Ramallah, July 3, 2004.

107. See Nicholas Rowe, "Dance Education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Hegemony, Counter-hegemony and Anti-hegemony," *Research in Dance Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2008), pp. 3–20; Nicholas Rowe, "Post-salvagism: Choreography and its Discontents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2009), pp. 45–68; Nicholas Rowe, "Movement Politics: Dance Criticism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2010), pp. 441–449.

108. For more on this artistic revolution in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, see Rowe, *Raising Dust*. For more on how Zionist approaches to dabkeh traditions shifted within Israeli performance and discourse, see Kaschl, *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine*. For changes to the dabkeh of Palestinian refugees outside of Palestine, see Jennifer Ladkani, "Dabke Music and Dance and the Palestinian Refugee Experience: On the Outside Looking In," Unpublished doctoral thesis, Florida State University, 2001; and Mauro Van Aken, "Dancing Belonging: Contesting Dabkeh in the Jordan Valley, Jordan," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2006), pp. 203–222.

109. Wassim Al-Kurdi, "Artistic Inspiration from Folklore," in Sherif Kanaana, ed., *Folk Heritage of Palestine* (Ramallah, Palestine: Al-Shark, 1994), p. 219.

aesthetic ideals and pragmatic approaches to staging have been introduced through the creating, teaching, and performing of "traditional" dabkeh. Ultimately, the performance of dabkeh has been heavily influenced by hegemonic political ideals related to ethnic nationalism. Given the stalemate that such political ideals have fostered in the region of Israel/Palestine, reflecting on the impact of ethnic nationalism on dance might be seen as crucial to the future of danced arts in the region. Such critical investigations may lead dance artists to further challenge current understandings of heritage, and employ dance to reveal new, 21st century imaginings of community, collective identity, and cultural continuity.