

POST-SALVAGISM
Cultural interventions and cultural
evolution in a traumatized community:
Dance in the Central West Bank

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Abstract:

This thesis examines how 19th Century social dance practices in Palestine have been transformed into 21st Century presentations of dance as a performed art in the Central West Bank. An extensive ethnographic history of the local dance culture is collated from various perspectives and (in acknowledging the ongoing collective trauma experienced by the indigenous population during this period) analysed in terms of pre-salvage, salvage and post-salvage phases. This involves an examination of the impact of dominant socio-political paradigms on local dance practices, including European Imperialism, political Zionism, Islamic Reformism, Pan-Arabism and Palestinian nationalism. Whilst the experienced community of the Central West Bank is acknowledged as continuously negotiating with various manifestations of an imagined community, this analysis considers how local dance products have not necessarily been limited by such definitions of identity. As the research aims to support (what has been identified here as) post-salvage dance production in the region through cultural interventions, the aesthetic principles and evolutionary processes of post-salvagism are examined and defined here as anti-hegemonic. This examination involves reflections on the author's own approaches to local dance interventions, conducted with dance groups in Ramallah and Al-Bireh from 2000-2006. It also posits a theory of cultural evolution that contrasts with more ethnocentric notions of unilinear progress and development. This proposition includes an algorithm for the evolution of dance that suggests how the processes of learning, creating and evaluating dance can be seen as analogous to the Darwinian evolutionary processes of reproduction, adaptation and selection. In this sense, it considers how post-colonial (and particularly post-development) studies may benefit from applications of Richard Dawkins' (1976) meme theory.

To
S.G.T., M.R. and S.R.,
three generations of very different dancers

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Note on the transcription of Arabic

For ease of reading this text in English, I have tried throughout this thesis to limit the amount of Arabic words within the text. Translating these terms into English and transcribing them phonetically into roman lettering is a particularly complex and far from straight forward process. There is no established academic consensus on how to do it, and the uncertainty is amplified by the variations between colloquial Arabic forms within Palestine, and distinctions from the more standardized classical Arabic.

Much of the literature that has been produced in English by dance activists in the Central West Bank (such as program notes, website features and published articles and books), has transcribed several key terms into roman lettering. These have included the titles of dance productions, the names of dance groups and the words for specific dances such as *dabkeh*. Not wishing to contradict or create confusion over such transcriptions, I have thus followed such local versions of transcription rather than sought to standardize these terms according to one of the many academic formula.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The point of departure

What is the role of a cultural interventionist in a traumatized community? Cultural interventions (specific actions/projects) can potently reinforce or challenge the existing cultural paradigms of a population group¹. When a community's sense of cohesion has been disturbed and left vulnerable as a result of traumatic collective experiences however, the influence of such interventions might be considered even more significant. How might a cultural interventionist, local *or* foreign but sympathetic to the local community's culture, best support the continuation of local cultural cohesion through such a period? Seeking a wider understanding of such an issue has formed the point of departure for this thesis.

This point of departure has inevitably given rise to further questions. Firstly, how do cultural systems actually evolve? Whether seeking to sustain or change a particular cultural system, cultural interventions are an integral part of this larger process. Can this evolution be understood from a cultural relativist perspective, or does the idea of evolution ultimately equate with more ethnocentric ideals of progress? If seeking to avoid a process of cultural imperialism (Said, 1993), cultural interventions might need to consider this evolutionary process in relation to localised cultural autonomy.

Moreover, how might such understandings of cultural evolution be applied to dance? Conceptualizations of dance can vary widely in different cultural contexts, leading to a need to identify how it is locally understood. Whilst this is a complex endeavour in stable cultural environments, this can become even more difficult amongst populations affected by massive social upheavals.

This subsequently leads to questions over how collective trauma impacts on culture. Can a cultural system itself be traumatised, or only act as a mediator of trauma?

¹ Whilst this thesis focuses on dance as an art form, a broad definition of the term culture is used throughout the thesis (unless otherwise specified) to describe the way of life of a community (Geertz, 1978). Cultural interventions thus refer to any actions (artistic, educational, media-related, etc.) that affect a community's systems for constructing meaning.

Whilst certain cultural products might generate a sense of collective involvement in disturbing events, these events might also have a more direct impact on the actual cultural system itself. How can this impact be observed and understood?

This leads to an uncertainty over the parameters of collective identity in traumatised communities. Population groups might be understood on one level as imagined communities, sustained by ideological paradigms and shared cultural sentiments (Anderson, 1991). Are there more tangible borders for communities, however? How might the actual collective experiences of a community affect cultural interventions?

Ultimately, this investigation into the function and value of cultural interventions seeks to identify relevant ideals that might guide interventionists in traumatised communities. How might such ideals be identified? In the context of evolving cultures, do the concepts of traditional, modernist and post-modernist express universal or relative ideals? How can the recognition and deeper understanding of more relevant ideals help communities maintain both pluralism and independence in local cultural decisions?

Whilst all of these theoretical queries have guided my research quest, it has been stimulated by the practical needs of my working environment. As a dance practitioner living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and working on various dance projects between 1998-2007, the need to understand the wider social impact of such dance interventions has motivated this research. As such, following a review of the research site, relevant literature and research methods (Chapters 2-4), this thesis begins investigating a particular history of local dance (Chapters 5-8). This historical narrative focuses on the transformation of 19th Century social dance practices in Palestine into 21st Century presentations of dance as a performing art in the Central West Bank.

Identifying massive social upheavals and collective trauma during this period, my historical research examines the local process of cultural evolution. This first involves identifying a salvage paradigm within local dance practices. This salvage paradigm values authenticity in cultural heritage according to a belief in historical cultural stasis (Clifford, 1987). As a pervasive and politicized cultural movement, it can be seen

promoting cultural identity whilst inhibiting cultural evolution. By recognizing that dance in the Central West Bank has evolved beyond the salvage paradigm, this study builds on previous research and theoretical discourse (e.g. al-Kurdi, 1994; Kaschl, 2003; Barghouti, 2004a; Abu-Hashhash, 2006) that has sought to understand the subsequent directions of that evolution. As such, pre-salvage, salvage and post-salvage phases in local dance production and the influences of foreign cultural hegemony are identified and discussed within this historical narrative.

This historical narrative also reveals cultural knowledge that might be considered important for dance interventionists seeking to improve their own praxis in the contemporary cultural environment of the Central West Bank. This thesis thus reflects upon specific dance teaching, writing and choreographing interventions that the author has been involved in locally. The subsequent analysis and recommendations (Chapter 9) discuss how this new knowledge might be applied to support the evolution of local dance *and* enhance local cultural autonomy and cultural cohesion.

1.2 Challenging the stagnant-backwater paradigm

Whilst the negative impact of foreign *economic* hegemony through international financial aid has been examined in the Central West Bank (e.g. Samara, 2000; Nakhleh, 2004; Bahour, 2005), foreign *cultural* hegemony through local and foreign interventions perhaps appears more innocuous and has thus been subject to less scrutiny. A common developmental paradigm seems to insist that any artistic activity (particularly for children) must be positive in such traumatized locations. This has perhaps impeded more critical evaluations of cultural interventions.

In the absence of such critical evaluation, concerns over agency and autonomy in cultural decision-making have arisen in the local community. As this thesis reveals, such concerns have often led to divisions in the community and a binary perception that foreign cultural ideas must either be completely rejected or uncritically followed.

The following quotation rationalizing cultural interventions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories highlights why some of these concerns over local agency and cultural cohesion exist. Promoting a new classical music school in the West Bank, Daniel Barenboim's statement here was made under the spontaneous conditions of a

newspaper interview². It nevertheless provides a clear illustration of a particular paradigm that often guides cultural interventionists in traumatized communities, to greater and lesser degrees:

An hour of violin lessons in Berlin is an hour where you get the child interested in music. An hour in a violin lesson in Palestine is an hour away from violence, is an hour away from fundamentalism. It suddenly has another dimension. Classical music is not something that one associates with the Palestinians, with the Arabs in general. You give it to them with the understanding it can enrich their lives and get creativity out of it. The optimistic view is that if the proper conditions are created- and it's a big if- then the Middle East could become a bridge between Europe and Asia, between Europe and Africa, East and West in the best sense of the world (sic). (as cited in Harding, 2004, para.24)

This view might be labeled the 'stagnant-backwater' paradigm, as it perceives the location of the intervention as isolated and lacking inherent cultural dynamism. Moreover, the emancipation of the individual, commonly valued within Western idealism (Hayek, 1960; Lal, 2000), is promoted as the unequivocal goal of cultural interventions. The stagnant-backwater paradigm posits that an individual might be loosed from the stagnation of their cultural origins by being filled with foreign cultural practices. As Barenboim's comment above suggests, this is undertaken in the hope that the culture of the whole population will eventually be emancipated from its own regressive nature, reaching a level of 'developed' sustainability through the emulation of the foreign cultural practices. This process can, however, result in individuals simply becoming more alienated from their own cultural identity, leading to their estrangement and departure from that cultural community, and that particular culture's loss of a talented human resource (Fanon, 1963/1986; Freire, 1972; Said, 1978; 1993).

1.3 Alternative evolutions: a paradigm shift

This thesis explores another approach to cultural intervention, one that involves recognizing and valuing local cultural practices. These local practices may be less apparent, considerably damaged or impeded as a result of colonization and foreign

² Further analysis on the politics and culture of the Middle East have been published as dialogues between Barenboim and Edward Said (see Barenboim & Said, 2002), although within these Barenboim does not reflect any major philosophical shift from the quotation provided here.

cultural hegemony. Recognizing and valuing them might thus require a radical paradigm-shift amongst those initiating cultural interventions. The alternative paradigm that I am examining here, following the philosophical approaches of Franz Fanon (1963/1986) and Paolo Freire (1972), does not aim to change an entire 'problem' culture but instead seeks to remove the impediments that affect the inherent growth and diversification of a culture. By recognizing an inherent dynamism in all cultures, this alternate paradigm considers how local practices might be supported, enhanced and diversified in order to ensure their continuity within the local community, and in order to support the local community's cohesion. It requires an interest in observing and appreciating cultural change, not just directing it, and an identification of what is there, not just what is needed. Whilst allowing for ongoing cultural exchange with foreign cultural systems, this alternative paradigm promotes a local community's collective right to be equal and active negotiating partners in any such interactions.

A form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990) has been battering at this alternate paradigm since the end of World War Two however, through the notion and phrase *cultural development* (Sachs, 1992). Both overt and insidious cultural hegemony can be seen as particularly active within the theories of development that have been globally promoted through international aid programs in the latter half of the 20th Century (Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995; Fasheh, 2000). Such 'development' interventions are generally embedded with the ethnocentric values of the donor-party, who have been intent on donating particular cultural practices to a region whilst dismissing what already exists there. This process can be seen diminishing the capacity for local cultural autonomy amongst the recipients of such aid (Valdes & Stoller, 2002).

Insinuating a meeting between inherent beneficence and cultural stagnation, the need for 'development' through such programs has implicitly denied that the culture in the location of the project might already be in dynamic motion. Through such conceptions of development, modernity has been posited as a concept that 'under-developed' cultural groups can either resist or yield to, but not produce (Clifford, 1987). Cultural development interventions have thus perpetuated the notion that colonization and globalization must inevitably result in deculturation; the replacement of one culture

with a more dominant one through processes of cultural exchange that are not equal and reciprocal (Ortiz, 1940/1995; Kroeber, 1948; Taylor, 1991; Winthrop, 1991). This hegemonic process of deculturation can be seen occurring when *vertical* cultural transfer, or ideas passed from one generation to the next within a certain cultural group, is replaced by *horizontal* cultural transfer, or ideas passed from a different cultural group within the same generation (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981).

Following such post-development critiques (e.g. Sachs, 1992; Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995), this study considers cultural interventions to be *adaptations* rather than *developments*, affording a more neutral view of such actions. Presenting a cultural adaptation project (rather than a cultural development project) to a community might more readily foster debate about the worthiness of such an adaptation. It may lead to the ideas within the project being embraced, modified or completely rejected, but it at least respects the agency of local partners and asks that they should approach the project critically. Moreover, it recognizes that the local culture is evolving and thus well familiar with the process of adaptation.

Gathering wider support for such a paradigm shift amongst cultural interventionists (and those who provide them with financial and moral support) can require convincing evidence that a traumatized and economically challenged population actually experiences cultural motion. Such evidence in turn requires research that reveals not merely the existence of local traditional cultural practices, but also the existence of a dynamic and autonomous process of cultural evolution. To this end, this thesis constructs a historical narrative that recognizes dance as an evolving phenomenon in Palestine.

1.4 Researching dance in the Middle East: the political implications

The representation of foreign regions as culturally homogenous is not uncommon in Western academic discourse (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1990). Dance is no exception, and extraordinary generalizations regarding dance, Arabs, Islam and the Middle East have been proposed by several well-established dance theorists (e.g., al-Faruqi, 1978; Buonaventura, 1983; 1990; Adra, 1998; Helland, 2001). In doing so, their studies have disguised the diversity of ways that the people and communities in the region value dance, as an evolving art and social practice.

Such generalizations can be seen contributing to the stigmatization of Islamic societies as antagonistic towards dance. This charge of choreophobia could also be a result of academic neglect: compared to studies of dance practices in other regions of the world, writings based on actual field research undertaken in the Middle East are relatively few (Shay, 1999a). The spurious impression of the Middle East as choreophobic is changing however, as a growing number of studies reveal a diversity dance practices in various eras and communities in the Middle East (e.g. Wood & Shay, 1976; Deaver, 1978; Adra, 1982; Gribez, 1985; Kapchan, 1994; Shay, 1994; 1999a; Van Nieuwkerk, 1995; Zuhur et al, 1998; Ladkani 2001; Kaschl 2003; Knox, 2005; Van Aken, 2006).

These studies can be seen as particularly important in the current era, as the stigma of choreophobia has ramifications that extend well beyond academic theoretical discourse, and can even contribute to major political upheavals. Just as Orientalist generalizations provided moral support to 19th century European Imperialism in the Middle East (see Chapter 6), contemporary generalizations of the region as monolithic and inert might lend moral support to 21st century Western hegemony in the region. By reinforcing this sense of Otherness, such homogenous representations of Islamic culture provide support to the political theories of Samuel Huntington (1994) and Bernard Lewis (2002) that military conflicts in the Middle East arise from an inevitable clash between a free, modern, secular Western civilization and a repressive, stagnating, fundamentalist Islamic civilization (Said, 2000). For a culturally diverse and evolving Middle East forced to negotiate around the dichotomous with-us-or-with-the-terrorists/Islamo-fascists paradigm of U.S. President George W. Bush (2001), such sweeping Western academic assessments of the region's culture can bring politically turbulent consequences.

This gives research into the dynamism and diversity of Middle Eastern culture a political significance. In order to contribute to a better understanding of the region, this thesis examines the ways that dance as an art form (and a very potent symbol of expressive freedom) has evolved and diversified specifically within the Central West Bank in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Even within this relatively small part of the Middle East, attitudes towards dance are very varied and dance remains a

contentious issue. Such controversy does not necessarily equate with an end to dance as a cultural activity however, but instead indicates the wide parameters of debate being openly probed by the society.

Chapter 2: The research site

This chapter considers how the Central West Bank (CWB) might be conceptualised as a community. It begins with a discussion of the terms used to describe the population under review. This is followed by a description of this population, with reference to local conceptions of collective cultural identity. The notion of an imagined community is then contrasted with that of an experienced community. This is followed by a consideration of why identifying and supporting such an experienced community can be important for cultural interventions.

2.1 Removing ethnic and religious labels from socio-cultural history

As this thesis reveals, much of the public discourse regarding the population of this study and their relationship with others in the region has been formulated around references to cultural ethnicity and religious ideology. Several contemporary social theorists (e.g. Patai, 1973; Ajami, 1992; Huntington 1993; Lewis, 2002;) have even proposed that these ethnic/religious attributes are the root cause of the population's socio-cultural difficulties. Central to this paradigm is the perception that socio-cultural discord in the region is fundamentally inspired by an ethnic conflict between Jews and Arabs or a religious conflict between Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

The analysis that I present does not, however, consider that the political conflict and attendant cultural challenges besetting the researched population stem from some form of innate religious or ethnic psycho-social antagonism. Instead I examine how the historical material difficulties associated with colonization and political exclusion have impacted upon the population under review and affected their cultural processes. From this perspective, longer-term aspects of the studied population, such as religious beliefs and ethnic culture, are seen as affected by (and responding to) traumatic events, rather than as causes of them (Asad, 1973; Zureik, 1977; Said, 1979; Abu Lughod, 1981). The subsequent impact of these events on local dance practices can therefore be recognized within a sequence of cultural disturbances that has been induced by foreign colonization, economic dispossession and socio-political exclusion.

As religion and ethnicity are not considered to be the defining factors within this cultural analysis (any more than, say, gender or sexual orientation), it would seem obtuse to use religious or ethnic labels within the text of this thesis. This research thus only utilises terms such Arab, Muslim or Jew when presenting particular illustrations of self-identification. The common, casual usage of these ethnic/religious terms within historical analyses reinforces the perception that ethnicity and religion are the core cause of all eventualities. In their place I utilize terms that reflect a distinction in political power, such as colonizers and the indigenous population.

The term indigenous here might seem controversial, given the varied speculations about ancient ethnic links to the region (as discussed in Chapter 5). Interpreting the definition provided by Article 1 (b) of the International Labour Organization's (1989) *Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*, I use the term indigenous in this thesis to refer to a particular population group (and their biological descendents) who inhabited a region prior to a politically orchestrated process of foreign colonization. As such, the term indigenous can be seen as always relative, dependant upon a distinct colonizing population that competes for control of the geographic space. It is important to clarify and emphasize that this thesis posits Zionism, not Judaism, as the basis of such a collective identity for the colonizing population of Palestine. This is in recognition of the existence of Jews amongst the indigenous population of historic Palestine, and in recognition of the foreign/colonial nature of Zionism (Shafir, 1996).

2.2 Local conceptions of 'Palestinian' and collective cultural identity

This study is situated within a wider geographic area that has been referred to as Palestine, or *Philistine*, since biblical times, throughout the Middle Ages and into the mid-20th Century (Doumani, 1992; Matar, 2000; Gerber, 2003). As such, this thesis acknowledges that a wider, more dispersed indigenous population is associated with the studied population through a sense of Palestinian collective identity (Khalidi, 1998). This wider group, living elsewhere in the West Bank, inside the 1948 borders of Israel, in East Jerusalem, in the Gaza Strip, and as refugees and migrants in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and elsewhere in the world, number approximately 9.5 million people (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006a).

Understanding the nature of *Palestinian* identity can require an analysis of the Arabic terms that the indigenous population use to describe this collective identity: *wataniyyeh* and *qawmiyyeh* (Kanaaneh, 1995). Both are often roughly translated as nationalism (e.g. Halloun, 2000), although their meanings are quite distinct from the European concept of national identity. *Wataniyyeh* is a noun derived from *watan*, which means the homeland, the place of residence, the country of residence, or the geographic locality one is associated with. *Wataniyyeh* emphasizes attachment to that locality, suggesting a sense of belongingness, loyalty and patriotism. Less commonly used and slightly more academic is the term *qawmiyyeh*, which is derived from *qawm*. *Qawm* can simply be a generic term referring to ‘people’, or it can refer to a particular group of people as a collective. In this latter sense *qawm* can be used in a similar way to the anthropological term ‘ethnic group’, as it can suggest a common ancestral origin. *Qawmiyyeh* thus emphasizes a sense of attachment to the group in terms of common descent and collective behaviour. So whilst *wataniyyeh* attaches one’s identity to a geographic space, *qawmiyyeh* attaches one’s identity to an ethnic group, and to use both in reference to being Palestinian is to emphasize a sense of belonging to both a geographic region and an ancestral group (Kanaaneh, 1995). Palestinian identity in terms of cultural heritage can be seen, therefore, as a concept that hovers between the two. .

The meanings associated with Palestinian identity can be quite fluid, however (Bowman, 1994; Kanaaneh, 1995). For members of the indigenous population living inside Israel with Israeli citizenship and relating to the actual land on a daily basis, the *watan* might refer to all the land as Palestine but conceive of it in the contemporary political context of the present state of Israel. For the children and grandchildren of indigenous refugees living in exile, the *watan* can mean a nostalgic, historic conceptualization of what Palestine was before the establishment of Israel in 1948 (Turki, 1974). For elderly refugees, the *watan* might refer to an urban patriotism (Khalidi, 1998), and associations with the smaller localities inside historic Palestine around their own particular cities, towns or villages. Similarly, the term *qawmiyyeh* can be associated with a specifically Palestinian ancestral connection, but is generally more associated with a pan-Arab ethnicity, depending on the political context.

As numerous ideals of collective identity have been used to define the indigenous population of Palestine during the past two centuries, the local sense of collective cultural identity is more complex than that simply suggested by the term Palestinian (Khalidi, 1998). The general term *Palestinian* is thus not used within this thesis in direct reference to the studied population, in order to avoid ambiguity over the political and geographic meanings associated with it. References to the 19th Century indigenous population of Palestine as Palestinians (when made from an era that often defines this population in terms of Palestinian nationalism) can suggest the inevitability of nationalism as a collective identity. Even referring to the indigenous population in the contemporary era as simply Palestinian reinforces the sense that this population are collectivised as a result of political nationalism, and not other cultural factors. Referring to these inhabitants as the indigenous population of Palestine (as a historic geographic, rather than political, entity) clarifies that the political notion of Palestinian nationalism is actually very transient and but one of the forms of cultural identity that exist locally.

The avoidance of ethnic/religious labels and the cautious use of political labels within this thesis allows for a cultural analysis that more clearly suggests how specific socio-political paradigms relating to colonization, material appropriation and military domination have led to the ongoing conflict and subsequent cultural trauma. It also challenges implicit and explicit suggestions that the traumatic events and cultural challenges have been induced by an inevitable clash of religions and ethnicities. This innovative approach to cultural identification in the region may lead to better understandings of the population and more pragmatic approaches to cultural interventions.

2.3 Defining the Central West Bank (CWB)

The Central West Bank (CWB) is a term that I propose, for the purpose of this research, to describe the urban cluster situated approximately 15 kilometres north of Jerusalem. The CWB population currently shares the same political and legal status as the 2.435 million people of the West Bank in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the 665,000 refugees originating from locations within the 1948 borders of Israel (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2005; 2006a). Geographically indistinct from the surrounding mountainous terrain, the CWB includes the city/towns of

Ramallah, Al-Bireh, Birzeit, adjoining refugee camps and nearby villages. The CWB thus roughly correlates with a region in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as defined by the municipal boundaries of the Ramallah District (for updated maps, see Palestine Red Crescent Society, 2006). In 2006 this district had a population of 290,401 (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006b). The Ramallah District presents an inexact correlation with CWB however, as it excludes, for example, the Qalandia refugee camp. As a title the Ramallah District is also problematic as it prioritizes Ramallah and diminishes the significance of other population groups, such as those in the refugee camps and surrounding towns.

What, then, defines the CWB? Most overtly, the Israeli government's military barrier within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (which commenced construction in June 2002) has introduced a new dimension to socio-cultural boundaries in the region. Subdividing rather than encompassing the West Bank, this 350km long barrier skirts around major indigenous population centres, separating them from each other, their surrounding farmlands and the expanding Israeli colonies (International Court of Justice, 2004). The Central West Bank is encircled by this barrier, several Israeli military bases and several Israeli colonies, which house 67,279 Israeli colons (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006a). Whilst this encirclement has had an adverse socio-economic affect on the indigenous population (United Nations, 2004), it can also be seen as increasingly enforcing more tangible socio-cultural borders for the CWB population than existing municipal boundaries and political delineations (such as the areas A, B and C of the Oslo Accords).

The terms *wataniyyeh* and *qawmiyyeh* are not generally employed by the indigenous population of Palestine in reference to the CWB as a specific geographic location and the population of the CWB as a distinct ethnic group. There are no local institutions, forums or organizations dedicated to fostering an economic, educational, administrative, cultural or other form of identity that distinguishes the CWB from a wider Palestinian entity. There is no popular discourse amongst the indigenous population attempting to redefine the spatial and ethnic identity of Palestine to even the geography and inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, let alone the CWB. Defining Palestinian identity by the population and territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or even considering these as 'more' Palestinian, contradicts existing

conceptualizations of *wataniyyeh* and *qawmiyyeh* by the local and exiled indigenous population. It is important to acknowledge, therefore, that the consideration by this thesis of a specific CWB community is an etic distinction³. Such distinctions are becoming increasingly necessary however, as attempts to construct a singular cultural narrative of the indigenous population of Palestine are inevitably facile as the experience of this dispersed and geographically divided population is so particularly varied (Said, 1986).

Whilst the CWB population is comprised of indigenous Christians and Muslims, it includes a mixture of refugees who arrived immediately following the 1948 war, exiled refugees returning through the 1993 Oslo Accords and a local population that can trace its continuous residency back to the same location for several centuries (Shaheen, 1982). As the current population of the CWB is thus descended from a wider population that came from across 19th Century Palestine (Pappe, 1988; Morris, 1988; 1994; 2001), an examination of their cultural evolution inevitably begins in this wider region and narrows as it approaches the current era.

2.4 Imagined communities and experienced communities

In considering the CWB as a cultural community, it is the intention of this thesis to contrast Benedict Anderson's (1991) definition of an imagined community with (what I am calling for the purposes of this research) an *experienced* community. Both reflect the ideal of community through what Clarke (1973) describes as the sense of solidarity and significance it provides to its members, but the way in which such a sense is constructed differs considerably.

In examining nationalist ideologies, Anderson's theory of imagined communities described how popular conceptualizations of the nation were socially constructed in order to ensure political unification, cultural homogenization and the consolidation of social hierarchies. This relied upon a process of cultural hegemony, carried out by political and intellectual elites, which sometimes imposed and sometimes

³ From Pike's (1954) distinction between research perspectives as etic (examining cultural products and behaviours according to criteria from an external culture) and emic (examining such products and behaviour in relation to the researched culture's own perspective).

appropriated 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) across the population in order to instill a collective sense of cultural identity. Through intense affiliation with such an identity, individuals who had no direct social connection with each other would feel bound in a sense of communal solidarity. As discussed further in 3.3.2, the mediation and promotion of cultural trauma depends upon such an imagined identification with the victims of distant events (Alexander, 2004).

For cultural practices such as dance, the construction of an imagined community within a centralized political economy can result in a shift from polysemy (various interpretations) into monosemy (a single interpretation), as particular dance products are managed in order to support particular ideological constructs (Shay, 1999b; Jordan & Grau, 2000; Desmond, 2003; Maners, 2005). In applying Anderson's theory of imagined communities to a study of Palestinian and Israeli dabkeh dance practices, Elke Kaschl (2003) posited that the adaptation of local dance products had become relational. This suggests that the local cultural interventions effecting dance products, and the local identification with these products, occurred not only in reference to the product themselves, but always in relation to the cultural identity of an Other (Hall, 1996).

Ultimately, although perhaps unintentionally, the notions of imagined communities with invented traditions can be read as a doubt over the actual existence of historic cultural practices within a population group and subsequently the integrity of the collective identity of those engaging in them (Hanson, 1991; Briggs, 1996). The concept of imagined communities with invented traditions can thus prompt an acute political controversy in colonial contexts in which indigenous identities are denied (discussed further in 5.4).

Whilst there have been various attempts to construct an imagined community through a Palestinian nationalist cultural narrative, the absence of a state and thus the absence of a centralized Palestinian political economy has restricted the ability of this narrative to exert a hegemonic control over the population. Bowman (1993) indicated how religious events, rituals and locations act instead as "floating signifiers" (Levi-Strauss, 1987, p.63) amongst the indigenous population of Palestine, suggesting that their interpretations have not been strictly homogenized by a single authority. I argue

here that the same contends for local dance practices, and as such a nationalist paradigm is but one of many local relationships with dance.

As Stein and Swedenburg's (2004) extensive analysis illustrated, even the most radical studies of the culture of the indigenous population of Palestine have generally considered cultural practices as epiphenomenal to the political construction of the Palestinian national identity. Such studies, intending to deconstruct the concept of a 'national culture', often misrepresent the population under review by disregarding the plethora of other non-nationalist cultural activities shared within the local communities. This thesis thus deliberately examines how localized collective cultural decision-making processes have occurred beyond the limitations of the national narrative. Whilst acknowledging the relational influence of the imagined community on *certain* dance practices in *specific* eras (as pointed to by Kaschl, 2003), this thesis reflects upon a wider array of cultural decision-making processes in the CWB. This requires identifying a different concept of community than that described by Anderson (1991), a concept of community that is not radiated from a centralized hegemonic base for the purposes of consolidating a unified cultural identity.

To this end, I return to earlier definitions of the community that consider how power in cultural decisions can be negotiated amongst stakeholders, rather than determined by hegemony. This follows Williams' (1973) concept that a community is an arena defined by collective approval. For such collective approval to be generated by the community, rather than just submitted to by the community however, there is an additional demand that the community in some way also be bound by shared locality (Tonnies, 1955; MacIver & Page, 1961). This allows for a personal *participation* in cultural discourse, rather than just a personal *reception* of cultural discourse from a distant, centralised media. This sense of interactive participation constructs a type of community that is an experienced phenomenon, as individuals personally encounter the various influences that contribute to their collective decisions on cultural matters, rather than being led to imagine the phenomenon that binds them.

As my research indicates, a certain sense of collective approval binds the CWB in terms of decision-making on dance. As the most immediately and continuously experienced reference point for cultural identity, the CWB community has constructed

an arena of approval relating to dance matters through various local institutions and events. As this thesis illustrates, these have included the First Ramallah Group, Birzeit University, The Society of En'Ash al-Usra, Hotel Odeh, the Popular Art Centre, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, the Ramallah Nights Festivals, the Birzeit Nights Festivals, the Heritage Festivals, the Palestine International Festivals, and various other non-governmental organisations. Strongly supported by an intensity of theatrical activity and the voluntary work movement that was founded in the Central West Bank in 1972 (Taraki, 1991), these local forums have acted to legitimize cultural decisions in the CWB by promoting the localized debate and evaluation of local dance practices. As Chapter 9 explores, these debates have not remained within parameters established by a centralised concept of national identity, but consider various factors that are of immediate relevance to the local community.

These forums illustrate that the CWB community is not a single, uniform cultural group in regards to such cultural decisions. Multiple internal cultural borders (Foley, 1995) can be seen existing: between Christians and Muslims, rich and poor, supporters of differing political factions, urban and rural populations, refugee camps and more established urban units. Such cultural borders are fluid concepts however, with individuals continuously adapting their behaviour and outlook as they find themselves under different circumstances within the community that they experience (Lugo, 1997; Chang, 1997). As my research findings suggest, amongst practitioners of dance as a performed art in the CWB, such internal cultural borders have tended to dissolve and artistic decisions are increasingly made to satisfy, or challenge, what might be considered acceptable by the community that artists experience in the CWB. From amongst the numerous influences in this experienced community, imagined communities such as the Palestinian nation are present. It would require a very selective reading of the local population's cultural practices, however, to suppose that local cultural practices are completely determined by any such imagined community.

2.5 The cultural interventionist, post-salvagism and the experienced community

In highly politicized cultural environments (such as that found within the context of foreign military occupation and colonization), it can become easy to assume that the imagined community forms a singular basis for collective cultural decisions. Through such a paradigm, the imagined community's culture can be reduced to one dominated

by a relational dimension: the culture is this because it is not that, and it needs to remain not that in order to remain united like this.

A (foreign or local) cultural interventionist looking through such a paradigm can feel forced to make a decision either to support or challenge the cultural identity of the imagined community, depending on their own political view. This decision might occur subconsciously, or at least not in a clearly articulated manner. In the context of the CWB, it might entail questions related to Palestinian national identity: e.g. does this cultural action help strengthen Palestine and Palestinian national identity? Does this cultural action help break down such divisive political barriers by immersing the local population in a globalized/Islamized/Arabized culture? Both of these implied goals of strengthening or weakening the imagined community of Palestinian nationalism can be particularly problematic for a cultural interventionist aiming to provide support to a post-salvage form of cultural evolution (discussed further in 3.4.7).

By choosing to engage with the experienced community rather than the imagined one, the cultural interventionist can consider the impact of the intervention on the various ideals co-existing in the community, not just the one emerging from a dominant or centralized narrative. In doing so, the pluralistic nature of local cultural decisions becomes more apparent. Whilst this in itself can present greater complexity in the planning of cultural interventions, it can also lead to a more sustainable local impact as the intervention addresses the actual, rather than imagined, local needs.

In order to understand the complexity of cultural influences within the experienced CWB community, this thesis undertakes an historical examination that considers local dance practices beyond the nationalist paradigm. This inevitably requires a study of dance practices from the whole of historic Palestine prior to 1948, as the CWB is composed of refugees and migrants from this wider region. This historical narrative narrows as it draws towards the present however, in order to distinguish the actual cultural practices of the CWB population from the imagined culture of Palestinian national identity. Experimental interventions conducted amongst the contemporary community (discussed in Chapter 9) further explore how evolving local cultural

practices might be recognized and distinguished from traditions invented for the construction of an imagined community.

Such an analysis will hopefully lead to a more complex understanding of the indigenous population of Palestine, with recognition of their extensive history and cultural heritage in the region of historic Palestine, but without having to create a relational polarity with Israeli cultural identity. From this position it might be easier to consider how colonial political practices have impacted on the cultural evolution of this indigenous population, without determining that those colonial political practices were an inevitable result of a dichotomous cultural context. Such a realization may lead to a less culturally defensive, civilization-based consideration of the region's ongoing military dispute, allowing for greater recognition of the actual (not imagined) political inequities.

Chapter 3: Literature review and theory

The cross-disciplinary nature of this study involves a convergence of theories from numerous academic fields, including dance theory and history, art theory and history, evolutionary theory, anthropology, ethnography, post-colonial theory, post-development theory, cultural studies and trauma studies. As such, I present a relatively extensive literature review here, examining the wide variety of theories contributing to this investigation and identifying the key gaps in theory that are addressed by this thesis.

I begin with a review of theories relating to cultural evolution, showing how contemporary understandings have challenged the ethnocentric presumptions of earlier literature. I suggest how these understandings can be used to clarify the dynamic nature of all cultures, regardless of their point of origin. This particularly focuses on how Said's (1983a) post-colonial definition of secular criticism may relate to Dawkin's (1976) evolutionary meme theory.

This is followed by a review of literature relating to the evolution of dance. I first illustrate how numerous existing theories proposing universal signifiers for the evolution of dance have been challenged as ethnocentric and subjective. This leads into an application of Dawkin's (1976) meme theory of cultural evolution to evolution in dance. This posits learning, creating and evaluating dance as key processes analogous to reproduction, random mutation and natural selection in the biosphere.

I subsequently review literature that defines dance as an art form. This particularly considers how Dickie's (1974) institutional definition of art and Nahachewsky's (1995) clarification of the presentational/participatory continuum in dance can be used to identify the artistic experience both visually and kinaesthetically in differing cultural contexts. This is followed by a summary of differing concepts relating to dance as art in the CWB. These emphasize how the literature on dance in the region has disputed the process of cultural evolution, by positing traditional dance practices as static, non-evolving cultural forms.

The reasons for such impressions of local stasis are subsequently analysed through a review of literature related to cultural trauma and salvage anthropology. This applies Clifford's (1987) description of the salvage paradigm within definitions of cultural trauma by Alexander *et al* (2004) in order to reveal how collective trauma, experienced through massive socio-political upheavals, can induce a salvage paradigm, which attempts to reconstruct the past in the present and deny the possibility of cultural change. From the perspective of post-colonial theory, Said (1993) and Bhabha (1994) clarify how such a paradigm will ultimately rupture however, under the overwhelming presence of a changing social environment.

This leads into contentions in the literature over how to distinguish diverse evolutionary trajectories within global modernity. I focus specifically on a particular evolutionary thread within CWB that has emerged from a counter-hegemonic (Gramsci, 1946/1985) process in order to confront deculturation (Ortiz, 1940/1995). Within this thread I point to how Fanon's (1963/1986) consideration of insidious colonial influences is extended by Freire's (1972) recognition of the influence education has over cultural action.

This leads into a review of theories related to cultural modernity, and the terms used to catalogue the process of moving into, and through, such modernity. These terms include modern, postmodern, contemporary and post-colonial. This review reveals a gap in current theory because, whilst the possibility of multiple forms of modernity is acknowledged, the prevalent cultural terminology tends to channel cultural evolution into Western pathways of cultural progress. I subsequently present and define the term post-salvagism for the purposes of this study, in order to investigate an evolutionary process into an alternative, undefined form of modernity.

3.1 Cultural evolution

Within this section I analyze how contemporary understandings of cultural evolution may contribute to the philosophical approach of cultural interventionists.

3.1.1 Secular, multilinear cultural evolution

Western imperialism, colonialism and subsequently the developmental paradigm have often been morally defended through representations of colonized people as culturally inferior (Said, 1978; 1993). The cultural products of such subject races may have been appreciated, even nostalgically admired, but from the imperial worldview they have been placed in a lower position on the ladder of cultural progress (Rosaldo, 1989). This belief in cultural superiority and inferiority has depended upon a unilinear conception of cultural evolution- the notion that all cultures are ultimately heading towards a particular ideal and some are more advanced along that course (Barnard, 2000). This unilinear conception can be seen relying, in turn, upon the idea that culture is occasionally guided by a supernatural source, and it is belief in the intervention of this supernatural force that thus legitimizes the sense of cultural superiority. Within Victorian England for example, a dominant theory claimed that cultural evolution was part of an ever-upward struggle towards the fulfilment of a divine plan, and that this struggle was supported by the divinely inspired acts of certain individuals (Arnold, 1869).

This unilinear conceptualization of cultural evolution was subsequently challenged by cultural relativists (e.g. Boas, 1887/1974; Malinowski, 1929; Mead, 1929). They argued that individual cultural systems should be viewed as distinct and that attempts to evaluate them by any 'universal' indicators of human cultural evolution would be subject to ethnocentric prejudice. The idea that cultural evolution inherently followed specific notions of qualitative progression persisted however, as more general phases of evolution were proposed, such as savagery, barbarism and civilization (White, 1959). Within structural anthropology, the global disparity in reaching these phases was attributed to cultures being inherently hot or cold: certain (European) cultures were posited as oriented towards dynamic change and certain (Eastern) cultures were posited as oriented towards stasis (Levi-Strauss, 1963).

Confronting these and other understandings of unilinear evolution, post-colonial literature has subsequently sought to highlight a global diversity of understandings towards cultural change (e.g. Ortiz, 1940/1995; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1972; Said, 1978; 1993; Chakrabarty, 1992; Hall, 1992; Chatterjee, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Garcia Canclini, 1995; Apparadurai, 1996). Of particular note, Edward Said's (1983a) theory of secular criticism challenges the presumption that cultural change can be subject to divine guidance. From Said's secular perspective, new cultural products are evaluated as by-products of the existing cultural environment, not as singular creative acts that are somehow supernatural in origin, inspired by muses or an individual's 'higher' imagination. By removing the notion of divine guidance from cultural production, secular criticism undermines the argument that cultural evolution can produce any universal indicators of qualitative improvement, which provide the foundation for belief in cultural superiority and inferiority.

If cultural change is not the result of divine or supernatural intervention, then it might be assumed that all cultures evolve according to processes existing in the natural world. Cultural interventionists seeking to challenge the stagnant-backwater paradigm of cultural imperialism might thus benefit from a clearer understanding of such evolutionary processes. To this end, the following discourse analyzes how Dawkins (1976) meme theory might be used to challenge cultural imperialism and support cultural interventions in a traumatized community.

3.1.2 Culture as replicated memes

Cultural evolution is more apparent if one considers that a cultural system does not simply exist as a complex whole or a coherent conceptual structure, the sort of all-or-nothing phenomenon that must be absorbed or rejected entirely. Cultural systems can instead be understood as temporary collections of socially transmitted information, comprised of numerous inter-dependent parts (Durham, 2002). These parts, that have been referred to as *memes* (Dawkins, 1976), *cultural traits* (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981) or *cultural units* (Durham, 1992), vary in both their size and their value to the community that sustains the culture. All aspects of the culture rely upon such memes, as the basic building blocks of language, music, architecture, politics, warfare, food gathering, medicine, religious ritual, artistic expression, etc. The potentially endless dissection of memes defies attempts to define a standardized basic

size (Blackmore, 1999). Within language for example, a meme might be considered as a sentence, a word, a letter or just an intonation.

The accurate copying of these memes allows them to remain part of a culture. If the meaning and execution of a particular meme constantly varies as it is passed around between members of the human community bearing the culture, then it can no longer maintain an inter-dependent relationship with other memes. For example, if the word 'dog' were to be mispronounced and changed each time it was spoken, then its cultural function as a symbolic verbal reference to a particular species of animal would quickly cease within the culture. In this sense, a cultural system only survives if the memes manage to remain static as they are passed between members of the human community bearing that cultural system. The letter 'a' is very valuable within numerous cultures, for example, because it has been consistently transferred within social groups for so long that millions of words and whole languages have grown dependent upon it.

This draws a parallel between cultural evolution and Charles Darwin's (1859) theory of biological evolution, as both genes and memes rely upon accurate replication if they are to remain a relevant part of their environments (Dawkins, 1976). Whereas genes rely upon accuracy in biological reproduction, for memes, this replication depends upon the imitative abilities of humans: the ability to copy words, dances and theoretical complex concepts. Maintaining a consistency within culture demands more than simply an ability to copy a meme however, it requires an ability to comprehend the meaning and function of that meme. To this end, Richard Dawkins (1976) points to Cloak's (1975) distinction between i-culture, the instructional foundation of cultural ideas, and m-culture, their material instantiations as actions or products (these parallel the genetic concepts of the genotype and phenotype). For example, an *idea* for a particular dance step (i-culture) manifests in various material instantiations. These can be the numerous enactments of that dance step or that dance step's the verbal descriptions, pictures or videographic recordings, written textual or notational instructions (m-culture).

3.1.3 The process of adaptation and selection

The process of memetic transfer described above suggests how culture remains consistent within a human community. As cultures also change and grow over time however, there remains a need to explain the process of cultural innovation as well. From a secular perspective, this might be understood as combining existing elements of culture so that something new is produced (Hobbs & Blank, 1982). Such an understanding inevitably raises questions over the cause of such innovation, however.

Some theorists pursuing the cultural/biological analogy have postulated that cultural change is somehow subject to Lamarckian inheritance (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Gabora, 1997). Lamarckian inheritance is an alternate, and widely dismissed, biological theory that postulates changes in a species occur as a result of changes to individual organisms during their lifespan⁴. When applied to culture, this proposes that cultural change only occurs when the material instantiation of a meme (such as the execution of a particular dance step on a particular occasion) is accidentally changed. The accidental change is then copied, creating a new meme. Such a notion has been ridiculed for suggesting that all cultural evolution is the result of poor memory, accidents and slips of the tongue (e.g. Pinker, 1997). How and why the human mind deliberately manipulates the actual instructions for a meme has required further explanation.

Leading meme theorists (Dennet, 1995; Blackmore, 1996; 1999; Rose, 1998), intent on rejecting the concept of a mind or higher consciousness able to manipulate memes, have postulated that adaptations in a meme's instructions result from the manipulative interference caused by other memes. Susan Blackmore (1999) suggests that these manipulated adaptations are then subject to a psychological selection criteria that has evolved over millennia through biological evolution, establishing a purpose-driven evolutionary psychology within the human mind (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992).

⁴ I have observed a common logical error in the conceptualization of 'Lamarckian cultural evolution' as proposed by Maynard Smith (1996), Gould (1997), and Molino (2000). These theorists propose that cultural evolution is Lamarckian because through culture humans are able to pass survival benefits on to the next generation. According to this view, cultural evolution thus allows humans to inherit acquired characteristics in the Lamarckian sense. This notion confuses the Baldwin Effect (Baldwin, 1896) in biological evolution with cultural evolution, however, as what is really being stipulated is that *through* culture, the biological evolution of our species can gain a Lamarckian advantage. The actual process of *cultural* evolution, or how the memes themselves (rather than generations of human beings) are actually adapted and changed, is not considered by such a misapplication of the phrase 'Lamarckian cultural evolution'.

Exploiting the complexity of this psychology, memes are even capable of manipulating the individual human into acts that contradict their basic biological impulse to survive and reproduce, through cults that promote, for example, suicide or sexual abstinence (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Brodie 1996; Lynch 1996; O'Hear, 1999). The suggestion that human behaviour is subservient to the interaction between memes extends earlier considerations of cultural determinism (Kroeber, 1917; White, 1959). These support the idea that cultural changes result from random, or unplanned, interactions between memes and are subsequently maintained because they fit the social environment. Dennet summarizes this process of cultural evolution through accurate replication, random interference and environmental selection as an evolutionary algorithm, or a "scheme for creating Design out of Chaos without the aid of Mind" (1995, p.50).

Several meme theorists (Dennet, 1995; Rose, 1998; Blackmore, 1999) thus interpret the idea of random mutation in memes as meaning that the individual human can, however, only invent ideas randomly and not deliberately. This forms a contradiction within their meme-gene evolutionary analogy, as the same theorists acknowledge cultural innovations are not merely subject to accident. I would argue that such an interpretation of random mutation has confusingly positioned a biological unit (a human individual) as a cultural host. Within Darwin's (1859) evolutionary theory, reproductive mutations are considered random because the biological host has no control over them. To parallel this idea within culture means recognizing that a cultural host has no control over random mutations. If culture is understood as a phenomenon that exists in-between people however (White, 1959), then a cultural host is not an individual person but a community's cultural system. Memetic mutations/adaptations thus remain random because the cultural system cannot direct the actual changes (through memetic-transfer). These adaptations are instead deliberated on within individual human minds and subsequently memetically transferred to others, thereby entering the cultural host. Such an argument does not suggest individuals have a free will that allows them to make cultural adaptations completely independent of any cultural influence. They can make cultural adaptations

that are not determined by the *entire* cultural system, however. It is this crucial distinction that allows cultural adaptations to be considered random⁵.

By considering the evolution of a cultural system from such a perspective, cultural adaptations and innovations occur as a result of changes to a meme determined within an individual human mind, as influenced by the various other memes in that mind. Such adaptations must occur infrequently enough for the memes to maintain a certain consistency. The new adaptations depend upon the continued accurate replication of the pre-existing memes that were adapted, as the new meme's existence is provided with an epistemological meaning through juxtaposition with the parent idea. In dance for example, the meme 'a turn on the ground' might be adapted to a 'turn in the air' through the influence of other memes. The distinction of the new idea a 'turn in the air' is only apparent, however, if the old idea a 'turn on the ground' is maintained within the cultural system.

Such random adaptations are then subject to a process of selection by the cultural system, and ultimately other cultural systems. Within such a selection process, the adapted memes will only become copied and consistently repeated if they somehow fit the wider cultural environment by remaining relevant: the survival of the fittest, or most appropriate, meme. As such, the selection of innovative cultural ideas is ultimately dependent on the ideas already existing in a cultural system. For a cultural interventionist, therefore, an adaptation project might more sustainably contribute to a cultural system if it remains relevant to that cultural system (as discussed further in Chapter 9). If it does not, then it will be either rejected by that cultural system, or it will need to overwhelm and transform that entire cultural system.

3.1.4 Distinguishing evolution from diffusion

Evolution through internal innovation and adaptation is, of course, not the only mechanism through which a population might undergo cultural change: diffusion from other cultural groups can also stimulate change (White, 1957). Without cultural

⁵ This debate on autonomy can be seen paralleling the arguments presented on personal agency and performativity by Judith Butler (1990). It is hoped here that by situating the argument in the context of an unresolved debate within meme theory, the post-modern emphasis on agency and subversion implicit within Butler's thesis is not presumed but simply acknowledged as one possible evolutionary trajectory that *might* not exist in all cultural systems.

innovation however, cultural evolution does not occur and such diffusion simply contributes to deculturation: the domination and replacement of one culture by another.

Not recognizing the distinction between diffusion and internal evolution has led to certain confusions regarding evolutionary analogies with culture. For example, Stephen Jay Gould (1997) suggests that a better biological metaphor for cultural change would be 'infection' rather than 'evolution'. Supporting this, Gould points to the way Italian culture was infected by Chinese culture through the travels of Marco Polo, suggesting that the topography of biological evolution, with its singular source sprouting ever-separating lineages, has no reflection in the cross-fertilization of cultural exchange. This infection metaphor might aptly describe diffusion, or the way culture spreads geographically across the globe between different social groups and cultural systems. It does not, however, explain the way that culture actually changes. The actual memes involved in the infection/diffusion are subject to another extensive process of adaptation, which Boas (1938) described as diffusion plus modification. Without such evolution, diffusion/infection could only be a process of deculturation, making everything, everywhere, the same. Marco Polo's infection would mean that food in Italy would now be an exact copy of 13th century Chinese food. Through the evolutionary process however, memes change as they pass from one host society to the next, and subsequently within the new host society, when passed between individuals and across generations. Garcia Canclini describes this process as 'To Import, Translate and Construct One's Own', (1995, p.48), and this phenomenon has previously been described as hybridization (Clifford, 1987; Bhabha, 1994), traveling theory, (Said, 1983a) and transculturation (Ortiz, 1940/1995).

Cultural interventionists might thus recognize that whilst the diffusion of ideas across cultures contributes to changes in a cultural system, the cultural system is only sustained when those new ideas remain subject to a process of evolution within the cultural system. As such, a cultural interventionist wishing to avoid cultural imperialism might not only introduce a new idea, but would also investigate how that new idea might evolve according to the criteria of the local cultural system.

3.1.5 The implications of the evolutionary analogy

Three important points need to be drawn from the analogy between cultural and biological evolution that I am utilizing within this thesis: a) that human minds are not able to access extra-cultural ideas, but they can mix existing ideas in a way that is random for the cultural system, b) that evolution does not equate with qualitative improvement, and c) that culture is inherently struggling for stasis. It is thus worth clarifying these points and their implications before applying these to an analysis of the evolution of dance in the CWB.

The first point addresses contentions over the function of the human mind within contemporary meme theory. By positing the mind as incapable of accessing new ideas from beyond the surrounding natural and cultural environment (in the form of divine revelations, genetic-inspiration or any other form of extra-cultural knowledge), the function of the human mind is defined here as secular. This means that all innovative ideas, and thus cultural adaptations, are directed by existing memes, within the location of the human mind. Such an understanding can be particularly important in the examination of cultural evolution in a region of the Middle East that is commonly referred to as the Holy Land. As this thesis reveals, the attributing of changes in a populations' dance practices to divine guidance has been used to assert cultural superiority and disguise the more-worldly cultural paradigms that have actually instigated major cultural shifts in the region. So whilst Jesus Christ, in very close proximity to the region of this study, has been attributed with the phrase "The Whole on high have part in our dancing" (Van Unnik, 1964, p.1), the secular perspective undertaken by this thesis postulates that dances are not subject to divine or other-worldly influence, and creative innovations are but the result of interactions between memes.

Such a secular understanding suggests that cultural adaptations can be traceable to ideas already existing in the cultural system. This does not mean, however, that the cultural system is capable of directing such changes. In this regard the cultural system is impotent, as it merely functions to maintain memes. Such changes might thereby considered random, as although they can arise from logical deliberation within human

minds, the ultimate impact of these changes on the cultural system is of unpredictable value.

This leads into the second point- that cultural evolution does not equate with qualitative improvement. This contradicts a pervasive notion that is fundamental to the institutionalized concept of 'cultural development' (Escobar, 1995; Crush, 1995). Just as popular pre-Darwinian concepts of biological evolution spuriously suggested that organic life was involved in an upward struggle towards greater perfection (Gould, 1999), certain popular concepts of cultural evolution have asserted that there exists one definitive line of evolution (Barnard, 2000).

In the search for cultural origins, those adhering to such a unilinear concept of evolution have noted the 'primitiveness' of other cultural groups. This has also fostered a sense that the more 'primitive' cultural groups need to be developed in order to 'catch-up' with the rest (Sachs, 1992). By considering cultural evolution as simply a reference to adaptive changes in memes however, a directional interest on the part of evolution is not discernable. Evolution is thus not inherently ascending or descending, pushing closer to or further from a certain point, or reflecting any divine concept of quality. This definition of evolution does lead, however, to what might be described as greater appropriateness-within-the-moment, as adapted memes are selected based on their relevance to a cultural environment. Evolutionary change may be very gradual, but it is inevitable and any apparent stasis is actually transient, with only the complete extinction of a meme terminating its evolution. Such extinction would arise through the lack of a record (such as human memory or via some other media) that could allow a meme to be accurately copied. The more memes that actually evolve rather than become extinct, the greater the diversity of memes in a cultural system, and the greater the complexity of that cultural system. Whilst some cultural theorists (e.g. Bhabha, 1994) have presumed that such cultural complexity equates with a qualitative improvement in the life of those bearing the culture, this assertion is very open to dispute.

The third point suggests that culture is not inherently designed to be continuously changing, and that memes demand a certain degree of stasis in order to contribute to a cultural epistemology and remain discernible. As it is by staying the same that memes

are provided with their phylogenic status, the imitative mechanisms by which memes remain constant is as crucial to an evolving cultural system as the mechanisms of change. The notion that individual memes are actually struggling for stasis (not change) through replication serves as a major bulwark against modernist arguments that consider culture to be destined by an evolutionary pull, one that is ever struggling towards greater complexity and perfection in the service of God or humanity.

The methods that have allowed memes to remain consistent have been academically researched in cultural areas as diverse as linguistics, financial markets, taboos, music, religion, suicide, architecture and even chess moves through the *Journal of Memetics*. Despite the obvious aspects of imitation and adaptation in dance however, only cursory comments have been afforded to dance by meme theorists (e.g. Gabora, 1997), and no thorough academic study applying meme theory to the evolution of dance has been published to date. The following discussion thus examines how such an investigation might be undertaken.

3.2 The evolution of dance

Within this section I examine the literature specific to dance and discuss how concepts of cultural evolution may be specifically applied to dance as a performing art in the CWB.

3.2.1 Signifiers of evolution

The social sciences have generally presented strong arguments against the application of Darwin's theory of evolution to cultural phenomenon, mostly over concerns of biological reductionism and right-wing idealism (Dunbar, Knight & Power, 1999). The literature on dance is no exception. This is because most of the theories relating to the evolution of dance in Western literature have conceptualized evolution from a unilinear, ethnocentric perspective. Searching for the origins of dance, several major texts have supposed a progression of dance that culminates in the contemporary Western dance scene. This generally traces a path from animal displays to animalistic rites to folk dances, finally ascending to theatrical ballet and contemporary Western dance techniques (e.g. Grove, 1895; Harrison, 1913; Sachs, 1937; Rust, 1969; Lange, 1976; Lonsdale, 1981). This approach has been extensively criticized for its ethnocentricity (e.g. Kealiinohomoku, 1970; Youngerman, 1974; Williams, 1976;

1995; Kaeppler, 1978; Grau, 1993; Farnell, 1995; Buckland, 1999), although much of this criticism has continued to confuse the ethnocentric concept of unilinear progression with the more general concept of evolution, and by criticizing the former has generally disregarded the latter.

The ephemeral nature of dance leaves it particularly prone to change, however (Friesen, 1975), and if evolutionary change is to be acknowledged as something more than just the result of poor memory amongst dancers, a greater understanding of this process of change can be useful. Numerous socio-cultural perspectives have been presented explaining why these changes have been disregarded in historical documentation (e.g. Spencer, 1985; Johnson & Fuller Snyder, 1999; Adra, 1998), mostly acknowledging the recency of dance as an academic discipline. The evolution of dance has been implicitly recognized by dance theorists however, through processes of change in diverse cultural circumstances. For instance, Cohen (1982; 1997) analyzed the constant adaptations within Western theatrical dance and Grau (1993) pointed to the changing nature of ritual dances amongst Tiwi islanders.

The desire to consider this evolution of dance from an empirical perspective has given rise to various non-unilinear evolutionary theories, which have, however, continued to be criticized for their subjectivism. Goodman (1968) proposed distinctions between the 'contingent' and 'conditional' aspects in the reproduction of theatrical dance productions, although Cohen noted how "ideas of what is essential to a dance will vary, depending on one's concept of its purpose" (1982, p.15). Determining what is essential within a dance could also vary widely according to the cultural distance between the dancer and the viewer (Kaeppler, 1989).

Similar to Goodman's approach, the type/token theory has also been applied to dance in attempts to identify a specific dance's evolutionary pathway (e.g. Margolis, 1981; McFee, 1992). This theory suggests a distinction between a 'type', the stylistic theoretical construction of a dance work that is subject to repeated instantiations (e.g. the classical ballet *Swan Lake*), and the individual 'tokens', or the practical, material instantiations/reproductions of that type, which may vary more. This theory presents severe limits on how a specific dance piece might develop and evolve, however. As Rubidge (2002) observed, whilst the reductionist, generalizing nature of type/token

theory provides a basis for identifying tokens of a stable type, if one considers the 'type' itself to be unstable and subject to deconstruction, reinvention and reinterpretation, the format dissolves.

The same criticism could be applied to Giurchescu's (1986) etic, structuralist analysis of European folk dances, with distinctions between 'principal', 'complementary' and 'sporadic' movements. Giurchescu's approach to observing the evolution of dance might have a broad relevance in the context of European folk dances seen through a 19th century paradigm of nationalist identity. Such a folkdance paradigm has a focus on authenticity, historical symbolic meaning and taxonomic linkages (Friedland, 1998). Giurchescu's approach remains, however, an ethnocentric and very subjective method of analysis. Without the discovery of some intrinsic cultural DNA, such determinations of cultural taxonomy are simply speculation guided by a particular paradigm. The character and intent of a cultural product, just like the specific features of a biological organism, is not simply expressed by the state in which it is, but by its whole history (Boas, 1887/1974). Seemingly identical biological features have emerged under differing circumstances and from completely separate lineages (Gould, 1989). The same sense of identical resemblance can, and quite probably has, occurred in the features of different dances. This does not mean that these features signify the same idea, or that they have emerged from a common source. Seeking a dance product's intrinsic 'grammar' for the purposes of cross-cultural comparison and interpretation can thus lead to massive oversimplifications of cultural meaning, intent and history when applied outside this context and paradigm.

From Grove (1895) to Giurchescu (1986), therefore, the attempts to define any universal signifiers of adaptation or evolutionary taxonomy have been problematically ethnocentric and subjective. Signifiers in dance can appear differently from different cultural perspectives, and changes that might seem invisible to some may have great significance to others (Sklar, 2001). By fostering the recognition of cultural evolution through irrelevantly ethnocentric criteria, these theories present an obstacle to a more localised, or emic, recognition of adaptations.

3.2.2 Learning, creating, evaluating: dance's evolutionary algorithm

This thesis attempts no speculation on universal evolutionary *signifiers*, focusing instead on universal *processes* of cultural evolution. As with Darwin's (1859) theory of biological evolution, the three crucial processes within the evolutionary algorithm are: accurate replication, occasional adaptation, and relevant selection. This can be seen within dance as an art form when dance units are accurately copied through *learning*, adaptations to dance units arise through innovation when *creating*, and new dance units are selected and old dance units retained through *evaluation*.

As processes in dance, learning, creating and evaluating have been subject to extensive theoretical literature in the West during the past century. Whilst the three are not always distinctly separated, some writings have focused more on the learning process and the creating process (e.g. H'Doubler, 1925; 1957; Duncan, 1927; Wigman, 1931; 1966; Hayes, 1955; Laban, 1956; 1966; Humphrey, 1959; Sheets, 1966; Sheets-Johnstone, 1978; 1981; Horst & Russel 1972; Dunn 1972;) and some more on the evaluation process (e.g. Denby, 1949; Lipincott, 1949; Siegel, 1972; Beiswanger, 1973; Jowitt, 1973; 1977; Best, 1975; 1978; Cohen, 1978; 1982; Sorrel, 1978; Margolis, 1981; Van Camp, 1981; 1992; Acocella, 1992; Miller, 1993). Others have done more to emphasize the nexus between learning and creating (e.g. Haynes, 1987; Schwartz, 1993; Green-Gilbert, 1992; Smith-Autard, 1992; 1994), creating and evaluating (e.g. Hawkins, 1964; 1991; Warburton, 2000; Lavender, 1996; 2000; Lavender & Predock-Linell, 2001; Hamalainen, 2002) and learning and evaluating (e.g. Redfern, 1973; 1983; Best, 1978; 1986; Greene, 1981; Bannon & Sanderson, 2000; Curl, 2005).

Whilst these texts provide conceptual understandings of evolutionary processes in dance, they are based upon analyses of specifically Western theatre dance. It is important to clarify that the evolutionary processes of dance creating, dance evaluating and dance learning are not defined by the culture-specific contexts of theatrical choreography, published dance criticism and studio-based dance classes. It is also important to distinguish these processes from culture-specific roles such as those suggested by the relationship between the choreographer and the audience, the critic and the reader and the teacher and the student.

An analysis of the evolution of dance in Palestine during the past two centuries thus requires positioning dance as an art form within this particular cultural context. Whilst Chapters 5 to 8 of this thesis analyze how wider socio-cultural trends have affected dance production in the CWB, Chapter 9 returns to these specific evolutionary processes and analyzes how they have influenced dance interventions in the CWB.

3.2.3 Defining dance as an art form

This thesis explores the evolution of dance from a social practice in 19th Century Palestine to a performed art in the 21st Century CWB. The use of categorical terms such as *social* and *art* within cultural research can, however, present conflicting meanings and inhibit more concise discourse (Blacking, 1973; Geertz, 1976; Booth & Kuhn, 1990; Nahachewsky, 1995; Crowther, 2004). Positioning dance as an art form within any given cultural group is also a contentious endeavour (Kealiinohomoku, 1970; Hanna, 1979; Hart, 1991; Williams, 1991; Fraleigh, 1999; Kaeppler, 2000; Dils & Cooper Albright, 2001). Various functions, values and meanings can be attributed to the physical activities generically referred to in English as a dance or dancing. In the CWB, there are several terms utilized to describe patterned movement activities, including *dabkeh*, *raqsa* and *nuwah*. Whilst each describes a particular moment of physical expression, with varying connotations and social meanings, there is no specific term used in the community that distinguishes any particular local dance form as artistic.

There is, however a vibrant movement in the CWB community towards constructing theories of creative expression with dance in a way that directly correlates with what might be considered contemporary Western notions of art. As Van Camp (1981) observed, Western definitions of dance as art have previously demanded necessary and sufficient conditions, a distinction from other types of human movement and a distinction from other art forms. The necessary and sufficient conditions have involved the formalization of qualities such as grace, beauty and elegance, the use of music, mime, costumes, scenery and lighting or the purpose of communicating or an idea or story. Attempts to distinguish dance from similar human activities (such as gymnastics) have focused on the expressive skills and intent of the performer. Attempts to distinguish dance from other art forms (such as drama) have required

determining which aspect of the artistic presentation should be focused on for evaluation. Van Camp concludes that each of these demands is ultimately flawed in the context of a postmodern culture, and suggests “the solution is to shift the test of the borderline between art and non-art from the creator or performer to the perceiver” (1981, p. 38). Whilst this might seem to suggest that any physical movement can be termed artistic if an individual perceiver determines that it is, such a notion might be limited to the cultural ecology of postmodernism. In other cultural contexts, this notion can render the term art meaningless.

A more collectively meaningful definition positions art as an artefact that has had the status of “candidate for appreciation” conferred upon it by a particular society or subgroup of a society (Dickie, 1974, p.34). This theory follows the idea that an artistic product is recognizable as artistic because it follows a particular pre-existing history of art (Danto, 1964). This recognition of artistic theory can subsequently contribute to what might be considered an aesthetic experience of the artistic representation. Such an understanding explains how Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Box* could be considered art: it built upon and extended existing artistic theories. This allowed the community to recognize it as art and appreciate it aesthetically, without which it would be a mere object. In this sense, art is defined in the context of an artisan, or someone who knows how to accurately reproduce, purposefully adapt and critically assess an existing artistic theory.

The question then becomes, which patterned movement activities in the CWB community have built upon pre-existing local theories that determine them worthy of aesthetic attention, subsequently leading to their reproduction, adaptation and evaluation? If replicating the ideas of an artistic history provides a definition of art, it would seem that the imitation of a previously enacted movement is central to the distinction of dance as art. This idea of artistic dance resulting from imitative, or replicative, action is suggested by Cohen (1953), and juxtaposed with other forms of dance by Kaepler’s ethnographic distinction between dances of impersonation and dances of participation (1993), noting one’s use of arduous training in imitation and the other’s basis in spontaneous expression. This presents a common theoretical dichotomy in dance ethnography, between what might be considered *consumer oriented* and *participant oriented* cultural practices (Crowther, 2004). These

orientations reflect a division between dance that is intended to be seen and dance that is intended to be felt. It can be otherwise understood by Isadora Duncan's (1927) distinction between dancing as Apollo and Dionysus, with Apollonian as a process of telling and Dionysian as a state of being, and Sheets-Johnstone's (1981) split between the symbolic and the existential aspects of embodying dance.

3.2.4 Divisions between participatory and presentational

This division between the dance that is deliberately performed and the dance that is simply experienced cannot, however, always be so arbitrarily imposed on dance practices within a community. Nahachewsky (1995) notes that in most cultural contexts, what are often referred to as 'presentational' and 'participatory' dances are not so clearly divided. Rather than being distinct categories (one defined according to how it looks and the other according to how it feels), Nahachewsky suggests that presentational and participatory are in effect idealizations, poles on a theoretical continuum. Within Nahachewsky's continuum are reflexive dance, in which the dancer focuses on their own kinaesthetic experience, participatory dance, in which the dancers focus on their interaction with each other, sacred dance, which is intended for supernatural beings, and presentational dance, which is performed for an external human audience. All, however, can be seen as being subject to imitation and even dances at the more personal/reflexive end of the continuum are also subject to the process of impersonation, or imitation, and as such, of adaptation.

This position confronts Kaeppler's (1993) division between studied impersonation dances and spontaneous participatory dances, and challenges the notion that individuals within an ethnic group will somehow innately dance in a certain way when dancing spontaneously. Whilst the spontaneous participatory dancing that Kaeppler describes does not reflect the same precision as the set impersonation dances, they are still learnt from the social environment and are specific to that social environment. One needs only to contrast such Melanesian spontaneous dancing with the spontaneous dancing of the Bedouin or Tiwi people to illustrate this. Such differences in spontaneous dancing do not emerge biologically from within the dancers. Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) helped dispel such connotations of cultural acts being somehow innately tied to race or ethnicity. Distinguishing biologically inherited traits from culturally inherited traits, Cavalli-Sforza and

Feldman showed how these parallel yet distinct processes of vertical transmission carry social identity across generations.

This thesis proposes that within even the most freestyle form of spontaneous social dancing, movement ideas have been observed and imitated (although perhaps less meticulously), and across the entirety of Nahachewsky's continuum dance evolves through a process of copying, adaptation and selection. Various social constructs might distinguish the presentational from the participatory, but the process of copying known dance ideas, or creating new dance ideas with reference to known dance ideas, remains constant.

From this understanding, dance as art cannot be distinguished from other movement activities simply because it is designed to be seen rather than just felt, as dance-art can be appreciated kinaesthetically as well as visually. Any movement activity can thus be presented as dance-art so long as it can be argued that the movement is primarily being done in a particular way as a repetition of, or as an adaptation in reference to, one or more existing artistic paradigms. Dance as art here thus incorporates Drid Williams (1979) definitions of both a dance (which refers to a specific, acknowledged set of choreographed movements) and dancing (which refers to an active experience of movement). The value, or level of appreciation, that a specific dance or moment of dancing has in any given community will subsequently depend on how accurate the copying process has been and how relevantly the adaptations resonate with the community's contemporary circumstance.

As mentioned, there are numerous dance-arts, or imitative and adaptive movement patterns, in the CWB, only some of which have been increasingly promoted as subjects of specifically visual appreciation and presented in "the seeing place" (Fraleigh, 1999, p.6). As this thesis reveals however, from the mid-19th to the beginning of the 21st century, the emphasis given to visual appreciation has determined that some of these dance-arts have increased in prominence, value and identification within the community. At the same time, dance-arts that have not been so publicly presented as visual spectacles have become less practiced socially within the community.

3.2.5 Classifications of dance art and cultural evolution in the CWB

Numerous terms are locally employed by the CWB population to describe what has been defined above as dance art. Whilst the standard language is a local colloquial Arabic, classical Arabic is also understood and used, and at the beginning of the 21st Century the most common translation of the noun 'dance' is *raqsa* (Halloun, 2000). This is possibly derived from the Assyrian *raq'qase*, which means to celebrate, or literally to cease mourning (Haupt, 1919). Within the CWB community the idea of *raqsa* is certainly associated with celebration. When classical Arabic is used in the CWB community 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 a derogatory meaning: 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. Indicative of its collective perception in the CWB, this type of dancing (and all the value judgements that accompany it) is attributed in language to foreign regions. At the beginning of the 21st Century, such dancing is often considered to have no roots in local cultural heritage.

The *nuwah* and *al' latm* are other patterned movement activities, generally not considered in the same context as *raqsa*. Historically part of a mourning ritual, these have in the past been a particular vigorous collective activity (see Chapter 6). At the beginning of the 21st century however, both are conceived of in the CWB as a rarely practised gestural expression.

At the beginning of the 21st Century the most prominent dance art within the CWB community is *dabkeh*. A folkloric social dance traditionally participated in at weddings, the term *dabkeh* has gained political connotations relating Palestinian national identity and is often used to describe a wide range of movements drawn from indigenous cultural heritage. The politicization of *dabkeh* in the latter half of the 20th century has resulted in it being promoted, taught and performed through various forums in the CWB (see Chapter 7). Recognised in language as more than just an

appendage word to dance, one doesn't 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.

Another term for an activity that can be considered as dance-art is *tabeer hareke*, meaning 'physical expression'. This term is often used in dance innovation processes (see Chapter 9) in order to evoke more than typical folk dance steps (which *dabkeh* would) and not offend local sensibilities (which *raqs* might). It remains a very vague term however, and is not in common usage.

As my research explores, the practice of dance arts in Palestine has changed considerably throughout history. The local transition between what has been referred to as "folk dances in their first existence" and "folk dances in their second existence" have been speculated on as shifts between 'original' and revival versions of the same dances (Hoerburger, 1968, p.30-31). This very simplified view of cultural evolution can, however, disguise the complexity and integrity of the changes that occurred within a dance art before, during and after major transformations in social context. Whilst certain texts reinforce this notion by drawing a distinction between pre-1948 *dabkeh* and post-1948 *dabkeh* (Hamdan, 1996; Ladkani, 2001), others have acknowledged the ongoing changes occurring in local dance practices during the post-1948 period (El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, 1984; 1986a; Kurdi, 1994; Kaschl, 2003; Barghouti, 2004a; Abu-Hashhash, 2006).

There is a gaping hole in the knowledge of pre-1948 dance however, and my research did not encounter any discourse that comments on the evolutionary changes in this era. As Chapter 5 discusses however, numerous observers have spuriously theorised that no changes occurred in local dance practices during the millennia preceding the modern era. Depending on the particular attitude of such observers, the image of a frozen pre-20th Century indigenous dance form has reflected a culture that is either a stagnant-backwater or a pristine preserver of an ancient golden age.

3.2.6 The evolution of dance in a traumatised community

Challenging this pre-change/post-change dichotomy and revealing greater evolutionary complexity throughout local cultural history is an important step if cultural interventions are to move beyond the stagnant-backwater paradigm. This study argues that the indigenous cultural practices of Palestine have not been static since antiquity, liberated somehow into cultural motion only through foreign intervention. This involves acknowledging that, whilst particular cultural products and paradigms might have been introduced or imposed from outside of the local community, the actual process of cultural evolution is indigenous and that ongoing cultural adaptation is integral to the continuation of local heritage.

Revealing such on-going change can be particularly difficult in the CWB environment, in which local cultural history often seems to obsess on a singular change between a static past and a confusing present (Abu-Hashhash, 2006). That the ongoing cultural evolution of the CWB is not self-evident can be understood more clearly when the community is considered in the context of its collective trauma, however (Abu-Lughod, 1981).

3.3 Trauma and salvage

Within this section I examine theories relating to collective and cultural trauma, and consider specifically how a salvage paradigm can impact upon the evolution of a cultural system.

3.3.1 Fetishizing the past, imagining the future

Culture can have a heightened meaning during the experience of tragedy. A belief in cultural continuation can address the existential fear felt by individuals aware of their own mortality (Becker, 1971; Brodsky, 1997; Rosenblatt et al, 1989; Salzman, 2001). Moreover, local cultural knowledge can explain how a sense of community prevailed during previous difficult times and local cultural practices can help the community work through the trauma and envisage a collective future that their current existence is contributing towards (LaCapra, 2000).

The collective experience of natural, economic or political disasters can result, however, in the dismemberment of a community through emigration, exile,

imprisonment, death, socio-economic division, political re-alignment, religious separation or a combination of these and other factors. Foreign cultural practices and new languages might have divorced the community from the cultural practices that sustained them as a particular collective. As such, when tragic events directly assault not just the individuals of the community but the continuity and integrity of the actual cultural system of the community, these events have an even more forceful capacity to dismember the community (Erikson, 1976; Sztompka, 2000). In such contexts, access to cultural mechanisms of collectivizing and surviving trauma (such as traditional mourning song/dance rituals or oral narratives) can be particularly difficult.

3.3.2 Collective and cultural trauma

Whilst collective trauma can thus *damage* the cultural mechanisms that provide a sense of communality and collectivization, collective trauma can also *stimulate* new cultural products that provide a sense of communality and collectivization. For example, slavery can be seen giving rise to a folklore that contributed to the construction of African American identity (Eyerman, 2001). In such instances, collective identity is formed or reinforced through culturally mediated representations of a traumatic event. Certain tragic events, occurring to specific individuals in the past, present or future (such as the rape and murder of ancestors, the destruction from a devastating storm, or the threat of a terrorist bombing), are promoted through various cultural media (such as television, film, theatre, radio, music or literature). Cultural innovation is thus motivated by a desire to project the pain felt by the actual victims of this trauma onto a wider population group, such as a town, nation or race, thus gaining their solidarity (Alexander et al, 2004).

This concept of collective trauma as a singular-distant-experience-granted-personal-immediacy-through-culture is a notion grounded, however, in historic Western medical conceptualizations of post-traumatic stress. Such a conception does not acknowledge the impact of on-going collectively experienced traumas such as colonialism (Fanon, 1963/1986; Saunders & Aghaie, 2005). For populations who are continuously embroiled in war, poverty or other calamity, sometimes for several generations, there is much less temporal or spatial distance from the events accorded traumatic status, and no sense that these events are only existing in the past or mostly occurring to other individuals. In such environments, cultural trauma also includes the

sharing of ideas during moments of uncertain fate and not simply post-traumatic references projected onto others, although post-trauma references may also be included as the layers of trauma build up. For example, a third-generation indigenous refugee living under military occupation will experience collective trauma not simply as an inherited or passed-on psychological state, but as a direct result of very real and personally traumatizing circumstances (Said, 1979).

Considering cultural trauma as a process of manufacturing victimhood amongst a population can thus implicitly deny the actual suffering experienced by that population.

Whilst Alexander (2004) concludes that all collective traumas are simply cultural constructions and that cultural trauma works to reconstruct a collectivity's pre-trauma life, this thesis presents evidence that there are also damaging collective traumas that are *actually* collectively suffered. Subsequent cultural interventions that attempt to reconstruct the damaged collective culture do not necessarily reconstruct the same particular culture for the same particular population group. It is important to distinguish, therefore, the process of damaging existing collective identities through actual traumatic events from the process of affirming new collective identities through traumatic representations.

3.3.3 Trauma and dance in the CWB

The examination of the evolution of dance in the CWB within this thesis considers how trauma has been both collectively experienced and culturally mediated within the CWB community, and how these two processes have both damaged and reconstructed local dance practices. To do so, Chapters 5-8 analyze the events that have collectively traumatized the indigenous population of Palestine since the mid-19th Century and how these events have led to the extinction of certain dance arts. This historical narrative also examines how the ongoing nature of these traumatic events continues to influence existing dance practices, so that dance has predominantly become a medium for promoting a sense of collective trauma into the local community and beyond.

For indigenous refugees, such cultural references can be more focused on a utopian end or an antiquated precedence to the ongoing trauma (Bowman, 1994) and cultural trauma is not necessarily limited to representations of the traumatic events

themselves. Such trends in dance in the CWB have been criticized for promoting an obsessive victimness (Barghouti, 2004a; 2006b) and contributing towards a mythologizing of the past (Land, 2001). As this thesis argues however, it is the implicit and explicit recognition of local collective trauma within local dance productions that has supported the collective acknowledgement of dance as a relevant art form within the West Bank during the latter half of the 20th century. It might thus be suggested that the evolution of dance has been collectively evaluated in the CWB within the context of a community binding itself through collective trauma.

In this context, dance has taken on a particularly important role as the nature of the political conflict has meant that the more institutionalised channels for the education of indigenous history and the mourning of indigenous suffering have been censored by those outside the community (Brown, 2002; 2003; Khalili, 2005). This denial of collective history, suffering and identity has reinforced the dread that contemporary collective experiences are without precedence and consequence, which has in turn led to what might be considered an imaginative obsession with the collective past and the collective future (Hamera, 2005).

3.3.4 The salvage paradigm

The collective fixation with a particular historic era can result in ambivalence towards contemporary cultural innovations, reinforcing a belief that cultural heritage is a static phenomenon (Naficy, 1993). This can result in frozen stereotypes of historic culture, which gain a sacred status in an attempt to bring order to the dislocated past (Shapiro, 1994). The mythological utopian past need not be limited by temporal parameters, but may exist simultaneously in heterotopian spheres (Foucault, 1967), linked to this world through the fragmented items of salvaged culture.

Within a traumatized community, the revival of the past through historic cultural practices can thus become a highly emotive coping system used to overcome a sudden dislocation from that cultural past, and as a means of creating a distance from the cultural present. This dislocation can be felt in exile and at it can also be felt at home, if the homeland is being transformed beyond recognition through colonization or deculturation.

The reconnection of a population with a fixed historical point, and the defining of that era as an authentic representation of the population's cultural identity, has also been stimulated through the salvage anthropology of late 19th century and early 20th century anthropologists such as Lowie, Boas, Kroeber and Malinowski (Clifford, 1987). Their research gathered the cultural knowledge, discourses and products of native populations in order to "fix it in perusable terms" (Geertz, 1973, p.20) before the deluge of European cultural and political activities could dilute and destroy them. This process provided a cultural snapshot of various populations in the late 19th century, but little comparative knowledge about earlier periods in each population's history. Writing back at such research from the perspective of the colonized, Asad (1973) observed how anthropologists seeking a unique and authentic 'otherness' in these populations ultimately drew representations of contemporary dominant ideologies, which were neither universally held amongst the population or timeless. Such representations particularly failed to examine the process of how the specific ideologies became currently, transiently, dominant.

One particular consequence of the salvage approach to cultural research and representation was the subsequent determination by structural anthropologists that the indigenous cultures under review were oriented towards stasis and not dynamic change (e.g. Levi-Strauss, 1963). Within this paradigm, deliberate cultural innovation became a Western concept synonymous with modernism, an evolutionary action that could tamper with a non-Western community's supposedly authentic, static culture. This process of salvage extended deep into 20th century conceptualizations of non-Western cultures, with a 'salvage paradigm', intent on saving 'authenticity' out of destructive historical change, pervading both ethnographic research and artistic criticism (Clifford, 1987). This had perhaps its most tangible impact on colonized populations through the imperial nostalgia of colonizing populations, who lamented the vanishing heritage of indigenous cultures that their own settlement had disturbed (Rosaldo, 1989). The colonizer's subsequent salvage paradigm continued to express a colonial economic influence over the evolution of cultural practices amongst indigenous populations, valuing tribal art and artifacts according to a historical moment rather than a contemporary dynamism.

3.3.5 Salvagism

The salvage paradigm identified by Clifford (1987) manifests in an artistic process that, for the purposes of this study, I refer to as 'salvagism'. Salvagism can thus be motivated by an ethnographic fear of losing global diversity, a nostalgic indulgence towards the disappearing 'other' and a psychological coping-strategy for the culturally estranged.

Salvagism ultimately involves a process of inventing traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983), which in no way suggests that the cultural activity does not currently, or did not previously, maintain a vibrant existence in the community or amongst the individuals engaged in the salvaging. Salvagism does, however, involve re-contextualizing the cultural activity and positing it within a certain historical frame. This re-contextualizing requires a certain degree of invention and definition, which paradoxically might force the cultural activity into an evolutionary immobility. For example, the re-contextualizing of a salvaged dance could involve presenting a participatory dance in a performance setting such as a theatre or street pageant. It may alternatively involve recording dance in another medium for posterity through written accounts, video recording or notation. Salvagism thus tightly associates this new cultural manifestation with the past, emphasizing its 'authentic origins' with suppositions on how the aesthetic content would have previously been valued rather than how it is currently valued by the individual or community. Salvagism can thus effectively inhibit cultural evolution, as the selection process has been designed to determine that 'no change' is always better than 'change'.

Salvagism can often manifest within a wider socio-political movement, sometimes under the banner of national heritage. For colonized, marginalized or otherwise traumatized populations, collectively reviving a fragment of the cultural past provides a new basis for cultural identity and collective representation. The Palestinian nationalist folklorist Ali al-Khalili expresses how the existential fear that results from such cultural dislocation can be married to a sense of political salvation, "Heritage is the framework of national identity; he who does not have a heritage, does not have a national identity. Furthermore, he who does not have a heritage, does not exist (in the deep cultural sense)" (as cited in Alqam, 1994, p.187).

Within such a politicized salvagist movement, traditional cultural activities (such as folk dances) can be re-invented and maintained as static, unchanging forms, according to contemporary suppositions on the historical authenticity and origins of those activities. This supports an impression of long-term cultural stasis before the traumatic event came and changed everything, and thus a sense of cultural resilience, longevity and profundity for the group identified by these cultural items.

Whilst it cannot be assumed that salvagism is motivated and exists simply for the purposes of fostering an imagined community, salvagist manifestations do often collate around political movements in the forms of national/ethnic heritage and “assert the existence of some national trauma” (Alexander, 2004, p.8). In doing so, such traumatized salvaged cultural products are subject to processes of appropriation and classicization by local political elites (Chatterjee, 1993, p.73). In such cases salvagism can become an even more politically charged process of recollection and part of a counter-hegemonic struggle. Such counter-hegemonic movements construct a particular historical narrative and definition of collective identity to compete with the dominant historical narratives and definitions of identity presented by the colonizer/oppressor (Gramsci, 1946/1985). This compulsion to both criticize and disregard the colonizing Other can, however, become a major deconstructive predicament within post-colonial discourse (Spivak, 1990). Selections over what is salvaged, and how it is promoted, are very much influenced by contemporary ideals and identity aesthetics relating to the self and the other that might not previously have been so central to the salvaged item. When an oppositional attitude to the colonial culture dominates cultural choices, a counter-hegemonic culture can ultimately become as restrictive and irrelevant as the foreign hegemonic ideals being resisted (Bhabha, 1994).

As Chapter 7 of this thesis examines, within the 20th century three distinct political movements, during three overlapping periods, engaged in salvaging local dance practices in Palestine: Zionism, Pan Arabism and Palestinian Nationalism. Each maintained very distinct ideological basis when salvaging the same folk dance, and each lead to different conceptualizations of the salvaged dance. The salvage process, however, necessitated the formation of a static, non-evolving and timeless concept of

the salvaged dance, which became more and more limiting and less and less relevant to the rapidly changing socio-political environment.

3.3.6 Moving beyond the salvage paradigm

Through the unavoidable complexity of contemporary global interaction, multiple layers of identity push population groups away from singular collective definitions (Said, 1993). In criticizing the salvage process as nativism, Said asserted the problem of seeking a singular 'authentic' basis in cultural forms and denying the plurality and hybridity existing within all cultures. Emerging discourses in marginalized cultural groups reflect how a movement beyond the salvage paradigm is stimulated as new definitions of authenticity (cultural, personal, artistic) are making themselves felt. Within these, authenticity is "reconceived as hybrid, creative activity in a local recent-becoming-future" (Clifford, 1987, p.26). Along with dance practitioners all over the world challenging the 'static' notion of traditional dance (Dils & Cooper Albright, 2001), such hybridity and plurality has pushed parts of the CWB dance culture beyond the salvage paradigm and into a more fluid form of cultural debate and diversification (Isotalo, 1999).

As with other artistic endeavours, this movement has not always maintained a definite clarity of intention, however. The evidence from my research shows that whilst a counter-hegemonic thread intent on fostering the evolution of pre-colonial indigenous culture remains, the distinction of this process of evolution from a Western process of progress is not always clear. Whilst Bhabha (1994) claimed that such post-colonial ambivalence serves to stimulate and intensify cultural production, his proposition merely appreciates the quantity of cultural products rather than their local relevance. Such a position does not indicate the value of the numerous new cultural items within the community bearing them.

My findings suggest that, for dance practitioners in the CWB, local value is important if their adaptations are to be accepted as an inherent part of local culture and not simply the result of foreign 'cultural development' impositions. Distinguishing a sense of local relevance can promote what Bhabha (1994) described disparagingly as a binary approach to cultural identity, defining a colonised culture in opposition to a colonising culture. As this thesis explores, however, counter-hegemony is not

necessarily an end in itself. Distinguishing a sense of local relevance can also lead to what is referred to in this thesis as *anti-hegemony* (see Chapter 9). Such anti-hegemony can subsequently result in greater cultural pluralism, as innumerable cultural systems can remain self-approving and not dependent upon either their similarity to, or dissimilarity from, a singular dominant culture.

3.3.7 An unnamed phenomenon

This thesis argues that recognizing a sense of local in the evolving dance practices of the CWB has been particularly impeded by the actual terms used to describe the dance that follows cultural salvage. Whilst Mahmoud Abuhashhash (2006) has described this evolutionary transition as a phenomenon that remains unnamed, there have also been local attempts to promote references to a 'Palestinian modern' and a 'Palestinian contemporary' dance movement, in order to create some distance from the category of 'Palestinian folk' dance and highlight the evolutionary process (e.g. Barghouti 2004a; 2004b). The use of such foreign terminology does not necessarily empower these dance products however, and it can instead limit the ability of foreign and local viewers to interpret their power (Traugott, 1992). Ultimately, these terms can reinforce the notion that cultural evolution equates with a Western conception of cultural progress

As my research revealed, such a limitation is not uncommon in the CWB. Innovative local dance productions that move beyond the salvage paradigm are popularly referred to as *raqsa hadith*, which directly translates as 'modern dance', with a strong local connotation that *modern*, in this context, is interchangeable with *Western*, and that even locally created innovations with no basis in Western dance techniques are products of Western influence. As such *raqsa hadith* is not just a display of imagination, an adaptation of traditional ideas, or even a product of transcultural exchange. Given the region's history and contemporary experiences with colonial powers, *raqsa hadith* can carry strong imperial overtones and even suggestions of latent oppression – a sort of denial of the value of indigenous heritage. Chapter 8 reveals how dances considered to be *raqsa hadith* have often faced strong opposition in the CWB community, as they appear to threaten, rather than extend, local cultural practices and social values.

Such a sense of threat is not without good reason. Local choreographers, as “native intellectuals”, can ultimately render their own culture less familiar and more exotic through the use of foreign techniques (Fanon, 1963/1986, p.180). There are several reasons, however, why a local choreographer might use such foreign techniques in local dance production. In some instances, it might have occurred deliberately with a counter-hegemonic intention, through “a strategic realization that one must meet the enemy on his [sic] own turf” (Keesing, 1994, p.54). It might also have occurred deliberately through admiration, as the pressing “desire to be modern became for much of the world an aspiration to achieve through emulation rather than the working out of an indigenous history” (Rowlands, 1995, p. 23).

Alternatively, the use of foreign methods and ideals might have occurred unwittingly. In such cases, hegemonic influences continue to exert power through the local process of cultural education, thus steering cultural actions (Freire, 1972). Chapter 9 of this thesis examines this latter process of absorption, distinguishing it from artistic processes in the CWB that consciously choose to emulate foreign ideals. Such unseen hegemonic influences may have worked their way into the cultural education system through a past colonial experience or present foreign cultural ‘development’ interventions. This insidious hegemony can lead to cultural discord and impede localized cultural growth. Such discord and impediments can, in turn, stimulate more interest in consciously emulating foreign cultural practices, leading to further deculturation and an even greater dependence on foreign cultural hegemony.

The disdain for *raqsa hadith* in the CWB Community can thus be seen as indicative of deeper political concerns over deculturation. Difficulties in the local struggle to evolve dance beyond the salvage paradigm are particularly exacerbated by cultural labels that seem to serve foreign hegemony and disempower local influence in the cultural decision-making process. The local acceptance of cultural evolution beyond the salvage paradigm, and the clarity of purpose that this process demands, can thus require terminology that acknowledges local autonomy and promotes local involvement.

3.4 Labelling Modernity

Within this section I examine the literature on cultural modernity and consider how dance interventions that evolve beyond the salvage paradigm in the CWB are not necessarily served by current definitions of cultural production. This introduces a need for a clearer definition of what might be considered a post-salvage cultural idealism.

3.4.1 Modernity and salvage

Whilst modernity is a term that has been defined in various ways, I use it here to refer to a “mode of relating to a contemporary reality” (Foucault, 1994, p.309). This distinguishes modernity from the salvagist process of attempting to reconstruct a past reality. This definition of modernity is also distinct from definitions that posit modern as a particular set of ideals emerging from within Western civilization, promoting ideals of individual liberty and technological development (Hayek, 1960; Giddens 1990; Tavakoli-Targhi, 1998; Lal, 2000). Modern societies may be seen as a global phenomenon, as global flows of people and media have stopped movements towards modernity from being isolated and limited within national boundaries and identities (Hall, 1992; Appadurai, 1996). These flows can also be seen as leading, however, towards a global homogenizing of ideals of modernity. In the context of economically and politically disempowered populations, such flows can contribute to the marginalization of alternate forms of modernity, as aggressive cultural hegemony continues to contribute to deculturation.

For such populations, cultural modernity is often acknowledged through several rather ambiguous, temporal terms, including modernist, postmodernist, contemporary and post-colonial. They are ambiguous terms because, as I will discuss, there are often contradictions within their common meanings and little consensus on their academic meanings. Whilst these terms may generally describe certain cultural actions in politically marginalised communities, confusion over their potential meanings can lead to oversimplifications of artistic intent. This in turn can result in the obscuring of more diverse ideals driving innovative cultural action and defining local conceptions of modernity.

In order to more clearly reveal the actual diversity in cultural evolution, a clarification of the artistic meaning of these terms is first required. It may then be decided whether or not they adequately describe cultural activity in the CWB community.

3.4.2 The specificity of modernist

Arguing that modernist does not merely mean the most recent, Danto (1997) posits modernism, in art and philosophy, as a notion of strategy, style and agenda. Preceded by a rapid growth in European empires that resulted in European global hegemony in the 19th Century, modernism brought a cultural relativity and subjectivity to academic and artistic ideals. Rejecting the existing empiricism, positivism, objectivism and the cultural absolutism of the Victorian era, modernism as a cultural intent came to be defined as a rebellion against historic paradigms (Greenburg, 1989). This fostered a sense of aesthetic autonomy, liberating artistic practices from particular mythical or religious philosophies (Foster et al, 2004). Such autonomy gave rise to subsequent manifestos, each rebelling against the predecessor and more firmly entrenching the process of rebellion, as each sought to redefine truth in art (Carroll, 1988; Danto, 1997). This puts modernism in a very specific cultural and historical context, distinguishing it from the general notion of modernity as a socio-economic idea (Schulte-Sasse, 1986).

As a process of mimesis in the visual arts during the Renaissance period shifted to a process of reflexivity in the 20th century, modernism came to involve a critical focus on the medium of expression rather than on imitations of the material world (Greenburg, 1989). As Mark Franko (1995) observed however, this shift did not correlate with the rise of modernism in dance, as dances in Europe in the late Renaissance/Baroque period were not attempting to imitate reality. For dance in the West, the “most salient trait of the modernist narrative is its progress from expression as spontaneity to expression as semiological system to the marginalizing of expressive intent” (Franko, 1995, p.ix). The modernization of dance in this cultural context can be seen as paralleling the more general progression of cultural modernism in the West however, as it has involved a process of deliberately creating distance from previously articulated techniques and ideals (Dils & Cooper Albright, 2001).

The emergence of modernism can be attributed to the increasing impact of cross-cultural contact between colonizing and colonized societies (Said, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Foster et al, 2004). The contrasts invoked by such encounters led to modernist processes of self-reflection and historical rejection, in both colonizing and colonized cultures. The Arab modernist movement, or *hadatha*, emerged in the early 20th century, seeking new movements, theories and ideas, and a conscious break from existing traditional cultural structures (Adonis, 1980). As a mirror to the European modernist movement, *hadatha* ideologically identified

the forward motion of time with progress. In this sense, it rejects the tribal/traditional notion that the motion of time embodies a constant distancing of reality from the sources of purity and perfection, i.e. from the golden age (...) Progress had a Western model and we had to emulate that model to become modern. While it rejected all internal models derived from the past, it did not question the validity of the external model it had set its sight on; nor did it subject that model to the same critique to which it had subjected its own past. (Abu Deeb, 2000, p.344-347)

Within Arabic, therefore, defining artistic practices as modernist has implied a purposeful rejection of cultural traditions and an uncritical emulation of a Western model of modernism. Determining dance productions as modernist in the CWB can thus carry overwhelming connotations of not just an evolution beyond past ideals, but an outright rejection of those ideals. Such a definition of modernity can be problematic for artists who do not possess such angst against traditional culture, and are themselves suspicious of Western cultural hegemony.

3.4.3 The specificity of postmodern

Suggesting that the production of culture had become bitterly divided between modernists and traditionalists in Latin America, Garcia Canclini (1995) emphasized the importance of postmodernism as a philosophical and artistic paradigm,

The postmodern contribution is useful for escaping from the impasse insofar as it reveals the constructed and staged character of all tradition, including that of modernity: it refutes the originary quality of traditions and the originality of innovations. (1995, p. 143-144).

As an extension and deconstruction of modernism, postmodernism, with its post-structural rejection of meta-narratives and absolute truths (Lyotard, 1984), moves

away from the cultural specificity of modernism and thus might seem to provide an appropriate label for contemporary cultural production globally. Whilst modernism has been criticized for its ethnocentricity, the influence that colonized populations and post-colonial theory have had on the emergence of postmodernism and post-structuralism has been emphasised by leading post-colonial writers such as Bhabha (1994) and Said (1993). Implicit within their writings is the presumption that postmodernism is an inexorable eventuality and global phenomenon, as postmodern's pluralism and the resulting acquiescence of Western hegemony provides marginalised, colonised populations a position of equality and dignity in global culture.

Postmodernism does not reflect a universally desired set of values, however. For populations that feel they have undergone very specific historical injustices and suffered massive collective trauma, accepting postmodernism's sudden plurality of perspectives and doubt over the 'originary quality of traditions' is not such a prize (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Retreating from binary notions of absolute right and wrong (following the genocidal aspects of colonization) may be convenient for a Western culture reviewing its own historical hypocrisies, but this does not necessarily equate with postmodernism being a globally relevant paradigm. Postmodernism can thus seem to rebuke rather than yield, by denying any particular culture an absolute artistic, cultural, spiritual or historical truth (Chin, 1989).

The libertarian pessimism of postmodernism (Eagleton, 1991) has not, however, halted the continuity of meta-narratives around the world and defined global cultural production in the 21st Century. Whilst the Arab post-*hadatha* (postmodernist) movement involved a "... collapse of consensus and the intensification of fragmentation..." contributing to the "aesthetics of contiguity" (Abu Deeb, 2000, p.338), this movement did not define all Arab post-colonial cultural activity. The sense of incredulity towards religious meta-narratives rendered postmodernism a disconcerting intent for many:

While Muslims appreciate the spirit of tolerance, optimism and the drive for self-knowledge in postmodernism, they also recognize the threat it poses them with its cynicism and irony. This is a challenge to the faith and piety which lies at the core of their world view. (Akbar, 1992, p.6)

Whilst Islam implies submission to divine revelation, postmodernism implies submission to a mirage, an 'eternal presentness' that allows for no continuous structures (Majid, 2000). Religion is but one meta-narrative that many cultural communities do not desire to cynically deconstruct; historical events such as the refugee crisis and the historic existence of a non-Zionist indigenous population in Palestine are, for example, central to meta-narratives that many in the CWB community do not actively seek to doubt and deconstruct through cultural interventions. If local artistic output in dance is thus evaluated according to the degree to which it has achieved a postmodern paradigm, the evolution of certain dance products might seem particularly limited as they hold firm to such meta-narratives.

3.4.4 The uncertainty of contemporary

The term contemporary is often used to describe innovative dance practices of all varieties from around the globe (e.g. Dils & Cooper Albright). The term is generally appended to a locality/ethnicity and a cultural medium to suggest a more specific epistemological link, such as 'contemporary Palestinian dance' or 'contemporary Ethiopian music' or 'contemporary African-American writing'. Contemporary can thus suggest an intimacy, a sense of creation in our time (Danto, 1997).

The live, physical manifestations of dance ideas are, however, inevitably ephemeral. Dance always becomes, therefore, temporarily contemporary when performed. Moreover, the very act of performance involves some degree of innovation, even if such an intention is not explicitly expressed and the danced ideas are supposedly imitations of dance ideas from earlier periods (Cohen, 1982). This can thus render the term contemporary a completely superfluous indication of 'the present', unless a further idea is associated with the term. If that association is an intention to purposefully innovate for the sake of breaking with past ideas or deconstructing past ideas, then contemporary is an equivalent of the terms modern and postmodern as described above.

The term 'contemporary' might otherwise suggest how a current creation expresses an awareness of art history without trying to carry it forward (Belting, 1987). Danto describes this process as post-historical, suggesting contemporary art has "no brief

against the art of the past” (1997, p. 5), is not based on the meta-narratives of any particular era and is “less a style of making art than a style of using other styles.” (p.10). This equates the term contemporary with the concept of artistic fusion. Contemporary might thus indicate a past/present fusion, or it may refer to the process of transcultural fusion (Ortiz, 1940/1995). Transcultural fusion is particularly, although not exclusively, predominant in communities confronting deculturation. Whilst illustrating the possibility of multicultural harmony, such transcultural fusion can in practice be undertaken within vastly differing contexts however, from aggressive cultural hegemony or cultural appropriation to equitable cross-cultural exchange (Marranca & Dasgupta, 1991; Taylor, 1991; Grau 1992; Bharucha, 1993; Garcia Canclini, 1995; Chakravorty, 2000; Williams, 2000; Desmond, 2001; Liep, 2001). Fusion does not necessarily refer to an autonomous diffusion-plus-modification process (as discussed in section 3.1.2), and so contemporary art as fusion does not necessarily reflect a sense of localised volition.

When applied to dance in the CWB, therefore, the term contemporary can thus carry several contradictory meanings. These include a break from the past, a deconstruction of the past, a fusion with the past, an autonomous fusion with foreign cultural forms and an undesired submission to foreign cultural influences. As such, the common interpretations of contemporary might confuse rather than clarify the artistic intention and local evolutionary pathway.

3.4.5 *Post-colonial: have they left yet?*

Finally, ‘post-colonial’ is another term that has often been adopted to broadly describe aspects of cultural production occurring in the colonized, or tricontinental (Abdel-Malik, 1981), cultures of the world. Post-colonialism might seem an appropriate alternative to modern, postmodern and contemporary, as it specifically “combines the epistemological cultural innovations of the postcolonial moment with a political critique of the conditions of postcoloniality” (Young, 2001, p.57). Post-colonial theory has thus been associated with dance movements in Africa (e.g. Reed, 2001; Edmondson, 2001; Barnes, 2006), South Asia (e.g. Chakravorty, 2000; Meduri, 1996) The Philippines (e.g. Ness, 1997), Cambodia (e.g. Sasagawa, 2005), Australia (e.g. Jewell, 2004) and amongst British Asians (e.g. Godiwala, 2003). In such contexts, the

term 'post-colonial' is used to distinguish artistic intent from both prevalent Western artistic forms and the local traditional practices that might have preceded colonization.

By emphasizing both the idea of 'post' and the idea of 'colonial' however, the term post-colonial presents particular problems as a general definition of artistic intent. 'Post' suggests that the experience of colonization has concluded for the artist/arts community. This might be historically incorrect, as the colonizing power and population may still be present and dominant- a contradiction well summarized by the Aboriginal activist Bobby Sykes' query, "What? Post-colonialism? Have they Left?" (as cited in Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.24). 'Post' might also be culturally incorrect, if the cultural residue of colonization continues to exert an influence on current cultural actions (Fanon, 1963).

'Colonial' is similarly problematic, as it emphasizes the role that colonization had in local cultural production and insinuates a debt that the artistic product must owe to the colonial process. This therefore posits post-colonial art as either an extended refinement of the colonial project or a construction of an oppositional Otherness, in the culture of colonized communities.

The term post-colonial art might thus suggest art that has come into existence after the colonial process and is somehow struggling to be independent of it, through the salvagist process of 'returning to the roots'. Post-colonial art might alternatively suggest art that fuses the colonial experience with the pre-colonial indigenous experience, promoting both. Post-colonial art might even suggest a critique of the colonial experience through artistic processes that are from neither the colonized nor the colonizing cultures. Post-colonial might also simply determine a particular era, suggesting that it is art that came into existence after local political autonomy was achieved, without any allusions to the political history or intent of the work.

The term post-colonial effectively draws attention to the impact of the colonial experience, and in doing so draws attention away from other possible causes of cultural dislocation in a traumatized community. Whilst its philosophic intent is an important form of dissent against dominant historical discourses, its common meaning, when applied to artistic production, can be interpreted in many contradictory

ways. If used when analyzing the evolution of dance in the CWB, the term post-colonial, like the term contemporary, can thus obscure the actual artistic intention. It can also appear to deny the contemporary political reality of ongoing colonization.

3.4.6 Recognizing a different thread

When describing cultural activities, terms such as modern, postmodern, contemporary and post-colonial can be seen presenting a particular restriction on localised cultural evolution. Referring to specific or vague agendas that are not necessarily relevant to the cultural activity being described, these terms can undermine the cultural decision-making processes of a community, define cultural evolution by foreign ideals of progress, and thereby foster a demand for foreign cultural 'development' interventions. This can result in foreign patronage and aesthetic control of a traumatized community's culture (Clifford, 1987; Chatterjee, 1993).

These terms have been used extensively, in the CWB community and elsewhere, to define localised forms of cultural modernity and processes of cultural evolution. This has often led to the presumption, by leading ethnographers and post-colonial theorists (e.g. Clifford & Marcuse, 1986; Said, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Garcia Canclini, 1995), that postmodernism must inevitably define the cultural goal of marginalised populations. As this thesis explores, however, for dance in the CWB, this presumption does not always correlate with reality.

Whilst certain dance products have emerged from processes that have pursued modernist and postmodernist ideals, and numerous dance products could be categorized amongst the various interpretations of contemporary and post-colonial, there is a particular thread of artistic activity and cultural evolution in the CWB that is not accurately reflected by these terms. It is this thread that is the primary focus of my research, and I term it, for the purposes of this thesis, post-salvagism.

3.4.7 Post-salvagism

Post-salvagism follows after the salvagist process of saving and preserving cultural artifacts and practices in a traumatized community. An extension of salvagism, post-salvagism continually re-examines cultural heritage from the dislocated past and struggles to incorporate it into the needs of a contemporary social environment. This

involves re-invigorating evolutionary motion into salvaged culture through a) adapting the salvaged items into contemporary settings, b) reinterpreting the salvaged items from different perspectives, c) blending the salvaged items with each other and items from elsewhere, and/or d) revising the local understanding of the items and the actual past that the items came from.

These post-salvage processes disturb the salvage paradigm, which perceives the adapting, blending, re-interpreting and revising of salvaged items and the past as a denial of traditions and stasis, increasing the threat of deculturation. The relationship between post-salvagism and salvagism might thus be posited in Bhabha's (1994) terms as the difference between culture as an active, enunciatory site rather than an epistemological object. This enunciation is not merely an emulation of foreign modernities however, but an active process of reconnecting the local cultural present with the dislocated cultural past. Post-salvagism is thus presented as a semantic release from the seeming dichotomy of museum-style preservation and Western concepts of progress. In doing so, it challenges the binary relationship fostered by the cultural labels traditional and popular (Spalding & Woodside, 1995; Doolittle & Elton, 2001; Strother, 2001).

Through post-salvagism, cultural activists “use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope” (Fanon, 1963/1986, p.187). Whilst acknowledging the significance and relevance of the salvaged past, post-salvagists emphasize the importance of the present and consider how both can contribute to the future. Whereas salvagism can be seen as a counter-hegemonic argument, an attempt to decentre the dominant and sabotage hegemonic discourse, post-salvagism might be considered an *anti*-hegemonic argument that continues within salvagism’s alternate narrative (see 9.1.1). As an anti-hegemonic ideal, post-salvagism acknowledges that there are multiple historic narratives within a salvaged culture, and tries to give voice to each and thus diversify the trajectories of a salvaged culture. In this sense, post-salvagism seeks a return to the existing evolutionary processes and diversity that existed within a culture prior to a period of massive social disruption.

Distinct from the way that the modernists rejected the overbearing Classical and Romantic traditions that preceded them, post-salvagists recognize that their community's sudden departure from earlier cultural practices was not of their own choice, but a choice made for them by external forces. Their movement 'beyond salvage' is not therefore limited to a movement away from the past, as modernism and postmodernism may be seen to be (Carroll, 1988; Greenburg, 1989; Danto, 1997), but a reinterpretation of the past in a contemporary setting. Whilst the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism are thus evaluated by the degree to which the cultural products have emancipated themselves from the ideological structures of their own past, the aesthetics of post-salvagism demand to be evaluated by the degree to which the salvaged past has been both diversified and integrated into a vision of the present and future.

Post-salvagism similarly maintains no postmodern rejection of meta-narratives. Whilst it fosters a certain fragmentation of discourse through the diversification of historical narratives within the salvaged culture, it allows for the sacred, and the possibility of universal, unquestionable and absolute meta-narratives, such as those presented by religion, politics or historical events. Post-salvagism thus provides space for the participation in cultural evolution by those with fundamental ideals, in a way that postmodernism does not.

The post-salvage paradigm can be seen as complimentary to post-colonial theory, but they are not synonymous concepts. Post-colonialism is both too broad and too narrow a category to describe post-salvagist cultural activity. Too broad because it renders post-salvagism indistinct from salvagism and localized modernisms/postmodernisms; too narrow because it suggests salvagism and post-salvagism are limited to the traumatic effects of colonialism and not other forms of cultural amputation (such as emigration, for example).

This thesis investigates the emergence and practice of salvagism and post-salvagism in dance in the CWB, with a particular emphasis on how cultural interventions undertaken during the transition between the two can resist a movement into Western concepts of cultural progress. Salvagism and post-salvagism are new words, but not original ideas. As my research indicates, they describe processes of cultural

perception, practice and criticism that have been occurring in the CWB for decades⁶. As words, their meanings can be very broadly interpreted and ultimately they can become stifling categories of meaning. As words, however, they are an important means of a) addressing the theory, technique, aesthetics and politics of a cultural product, and b) of highlighting the existence of a local process of cultural evolution. Recognizing the autonomy of this evolution is an important step, if the foreign hegemony fostered by the stagnant-backwater paradigm is to be challenged by cultural interventions. By clarifying this evolutionary pathway, this thesis hopes to provide a platform from which localised decisions regarding cultural evolution can be more clearly motivated, appreciated and sustained.

⁶ Several strong illustrations of what might be considered salvagism and post-salvagism within dance practices in other locations around the world can be found in (Buckland, 2006).

Chapter 4: Research methods

This chapter explains the research methods that I have utilised within this study. The first section presents the theoretical approach to my research questions, with a discussion on artistic qualitative and postpositivist research. I identify the research method as ethnography, heavily informed by action research as part of critical design ethnography. This is followed by an analysis of my own position as a researcher, with reflections upon the influences and subjectivity that I brought to the study, and my relationship to the research environment. I then present the research design, reviewing the data collection methods and the process of analysis.

4.1 Research aims and theory

This thesis investigates the evolution of dance as a performed art in the CWB during the past fifty years, with reference to dance in Palestine during the previous century. In undertaking this research, I utilize what Eisner (1981) describes as an artistic qualitative, rather than a scientific qualitative, approach. From an ontological and epistemological perspective, an artistic qualitative approach posits that reality is socially constructed, and as such cannot be observed objectively. Whilst acknowledging that the process of observation will always maintain a degree of subjective interpretation, this approach does attempt to identify the position and subjectivity of the observer in order to reduce this influence as much as possible (Ely et al,1991).

As a postmodern, or what might be described as a postpositivist (Green & Stinson, 1999) or poststructuralist (MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001) form of research, this thesis does not attempt to prove or disprove a particular hypothesis or produce an idealized solution to the problems identified. Instead this thesis seeks to stimulate a multiplicity of interpretations regarding the evolution of dance in the CWB. In doing so, this research challenges dominant perceptions (both local and foreign) of the history and present actuality of dance in the CWB. The research can thus be understood as emancipatory as it does not simply seek to understand a phenomenon from existing paradigms, but to present new paradigms through which the phenomenon might be understood. This inevitably involves a process of deconstructing and disturbing existing paradigms (Lather, 1991).

In order to achieve this, my research undertakes descriptive, explanatory and exploratory processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8 describe the evolution of dance in the CWB from the early 19th century to the beginning of the 21st century. This provides speculative explanations on the wider social causes of the changes to local dance products, with reference to the collective trauma paradigm discussed in chapter 3. Such descriptive and explanatory research has produced a unique collection of information: there has been very little documentation on the dance of this community, and none from a secular evolutionary paradigm that considers the entire period in question. Chapter 9 subsequently undertakes an exploratory analysis of the changes to dance in the CWB, with particular reference to the secular theory of cultural evolution presented in chapter 3. This theory posits that whilst diffusion can affect the composition of a cultural system, internal cultural evolution can also bring changes in dance through the processes of learning, creating and evaluating. Deeper understandings of this secular evolutionary theory might subsequently provide those engaged in post-salvagist cultural production (as described in Chapter 3) with a clearer means of identifying and engaging in post-salvagism. As such, these explorations provide the basis for further research in the field and lead to numerous recommendations.

4.2 Research methods: critical design ethnography as a means of ob/serving.

Whilst the findings presented in this thesis constitute an ethnographic study, conducting such research in a traumatised community raises particular ethical concerns. The practice of colonizing peoples researching the cultural practices of colonised peoples has been criticised as a process of objectifying cultural systems in order to better control and regulate those within them (Asad, 1986). Such studies might not only represent a new form of social life but in doing so define it and thus create it (Asad, 1994). Ethnographic research techniques have thus been disparaged for their residual linkages to anthropology and imperialism, from which they emerged (Said, 1993; Jordan & Yeomans, 1995). Investigating what has been described here as a post-salvage cultural phenomenon from a post-modernist perspective further heightens such concerns. As Paul Crowther argued,

consider the First Pillar of Islam, which holds that there is no God but God, and his prophet is Muhammad. For Muslims this is not a social construction

but rather a truth about the nature of things...[to recontextualize such ideas] as culturally specific social constructs . . . is to define them within a new global world order where they cannot be what they take themselves to be. (2004, p.376).

Within post-modern ethnography, therefore, the paradigm of post-modernity can seem to undermine other approaches to cultural construction (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995).

By seeking an emic understanding of the local systems of meaning however, such ethnography at least distinguishes itself from research methods that seek to impose etic (or foreign/universal) ideals and categorizations (Pike, 1954; Visicaro, 2003).

When using a qualitative, postpositivist approach, this method of investigation can be understood as an academic discipline that invents ways of seeing a particular culture, rather attempting to represent it from a supposed objective and definitive viewpoint (Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

Such theoretical details do not always transfer clearly to the research environment when working in the field, however. I have often encountered the presumption that my research is seeking positivist, empirical representations of culture, as a reaction to the use of ethnographic research techniques. For example, as soon as I turn on the tape-recorder for formal interviews, the joking, self-contradicting, pluralistic nature of friends and colleagues has often swung quite suddenly to a more rigid attitude, with carefully formed responses based on concerns over collective representation. These cautious expressions of collective representation seemed to come from an ideological frame of reference that was (consciously or sub-consciously) prepared for external observers, and was not generally present in the day-to-day discourses that I normally had with these interviewees. The tape recorder (and being 'on the record') was an abrupt intrusion of external observation into what had been a more personal relationship between us. It was only through extensive questioning, further joking and light banter that deeper, more complex answers and unresolved, contradictory responses would surface whilst the tape recorder continued to roll. I have observed similar, subtle shifts in individual and group behaviour in the dance studio when a foreign journalist, researcher or artist would come to watch/record the rehearsals of dance groups. The subjects of the observation are generally familiar with such research techniques through the power-struggle context of colonization and

representation. As such, the techniques can seem mildly offensive (not emotionally, but strategically), inciting defensive responses, behaviour and actions.

As a means of challenging this power-relationship between the observer and the observed, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) argues for the importance of involving the subjects of the research in the research process itself, or as Freire (1972) suggests, making research with and for, but not about, people. This position stems from a concern over the value of cultural studies that “describe what is already known” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.149) by the subjects of the research. Such studies can be seen as doing nothing to alleviate the actual problems faced by the research subjects, resulting only in an inaccessible canon of knowledge (Lewin, 1952). If the research process actually involves the recovery of advantageous, practical knowledge for the subjects of the research however, the research process is ultimately serving (and not merely observing) them.

Such a process might involve action research, a form of self-reflective enquiry that is undertaken by practitioners in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice, in the context of their practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1992).

Combining ethnography with action research in a dance environment can refine the praxis of dance practitioners, as they reflect upon their artistic actions in relation to their wider cultural context. This process recovers knowledge that does not merely describe a social group but also provides them with practical tools for managing contemporary challenges (Jordan & Yeomans, 1995).

In addressing this issue, the research conducted for this thesis was integrated with a series of local cultural interventions that I was involved in. This combination of research and intervention contributed to what might be described as emancipatory action research (Cohen, 2000). It involved blending knowledge from my previous professional experiences as a dancer, choreographer, dance teacher and dance writer with knowledge gained from ethnographic research undertaken in the CWB. This mixture of knowledge was then invested into further cultural interventions that I undertook in the CWB (see 4.4) in order to promote the local recovery of dance knowledge and contribute to improvements in praxis by local dance practitioners. This led to a process of critical design ethnography, in which the participants in the

interventions were change agents, observing their practice, identifying problems, speculating on solutions, undertaking specific actions, reflecting on their impact and designing new models for dance production (Barab et al, 2004). Whilst the scope of this thesis does not include an analysis of these critical design interventions, much of the data collated here has been informed by such interventions. It is hoped that this thesis might thus provide a platform on which to base further research and publications relating to such critical design ethnography on dance in the CWB.

4.3 Position of researcher: full participant observation

I first briefly visited the CWB community in 1998, then twice again in 1999. I subsequently resided there more permanently from early 2000 until mid-2001. During these periods I participated in several cultural interventions, at the invitation of local cultural groups. Throughout this period, I was undertaking what might be considered informal research, learning about the local culture, participating in local actions and trying to gain a greater understanding of local interests and directions. This research was stimulated by my role as a cultural interventionist employed locally. As my continued employment was fundamentally dependent upon the degree to which I could offer cultural services that were locally valuable, it was necessary that I gain a practical understanding of local cultural needs. In this sense, I was already an apprentice in the culture (Spradley, 1980) a long time before my formal research began, although I was positioned in a role with a change-agenda and was providing critical expertise.

My position as a researcher underwent a radical shift in mid 2002 when I returned to the CWB community and commenced work on this thesis. Whilst work on this study involved full participant observation (Patton, 1990), the actual participation had preceded the role of a formal observer. I had already been following the three principal responsibilities that Finn (1994) accords to the participant-observer, however: concern for people, awareness of power, and enthusiasm for improving praxis. This study did not therefore represent a particular shift in my concern for the CWB research environment, but the more formal process of research did change my sense of responsibility towards how I gathered information. Queries over my personal curiosity in local history and culture had previously led to a running joke amongst colleagues that I was a spy working for British Intelligence. After beginning this

thesis however, following Patton (1990) I underwent a process of gaining informed consent during information gathering. This involved being upfront with my queries, clarifying that I was undertaking formal research and elaborating on its nature to whoever was interested. I revisited conversations that I had had with numerous colleagues and associates in the community, so that I could get their opinions again on the record. I informed the organizers of cultural interventions in which I was involved, so that they were aware that my observations might be incorporated in an academic study. At the same time I assured anonymity to those who did not wish to be formally credited with ideas presented in this study. This latter point was particularly important, given the risks to personal expression posed by the Israeli military occupation.

There has remained for me, however, an ethical quandary: should I include references to observations that I made during cultural interventions in the community prior to commencing this formal academic research? Not to do so would obscure several years of practical experience and many valuable examples that could help define the themes of this thesis. To do so might violate the wishes of those involved before the formal research began. Having had this thesis encouraged and supported by all of the principal participants in my formative years in the West Bank however, I err here on the side of exposure, and reference my observations and experiences from that era.

Despite my lengthy residency, I have remained quite obviously a foreigner in the community, as there are relatively few individuals from outside the West Bank who choose to live in it. Those that do are generally, like myself, married to a local resident, or contracted to work in the field through an international NGO or foreign governmental organization. Foreign tourists and journalists pass through regularly, but more generally base themselves in Israeli neighbourhoods in Jerusalem. As such, a European in the community is generally an oddity and, through cultural manners and ethnic features, often quite obvious from a distance. My status in the community thus fluctuated between what Adler and Adler (1997) described as active membership and peripheral membership: I felt invited in and accepted as a change-agent for local culture, but (particularly as a result of the local emphasis on Palestinian national identity) I never felt that I was going to be considered a local artist.

My British/Australian ancestry and citizenship continued to present a particular identity imbued with the potential for determining a certain power-imbalance in my relationship with the local community. I occasionally felt this identification was both imposed and resented by certain members of the community. By working through local institutions rather than the international donor agencies, I hoped to at least diminish any sense of economic power in my local relationships: I had no official influence on the distribution of money from wealthy nations. The source of funding for my professional activities in the CWB also helped create this distance. Aside from my first encounter, which was sponsored by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, all of my subsequent professional dance work was through local sponsorship, or from funds raised by local institutions. This ensured that I was not imposed on the community by a foreign governmental organization as a foreign expert, a common phenomenon that has led to much local resentment (see Nakhleh, 2004), but locally valued and evaluated for the cultural interventions I was involved in.

My professional dance experience could, however, present an overwhelming knowledge-power, which could in turn become an intimidating feature in local artistic collaboration. Over time I tried to become more sensitive to these perceived imbalances in political, economic and professional status. Drawing too much attention towards them, however, can be both patronizing towards others and personally debilitating. These imbalances have not been a dominating feature of my life in the CWB. They probably reflect a sensation experienced by many politically advantaged outsiders, to lesser and greater degrees. I have thus generally retained an awareness of their impact in the background, rather than the foreground, of my day-to-day interactions.

4.4 Data collection

This research involved four principal methods of data collection. The foremost was the experiential process of personal observation. This led to interviews with key informants from the community. The subsequent historical research into eras beyond current memory depended more upon reviewing literature in libraries and archives. It also involved viewing videos and pictures of past dance productions. In this section I describe how I undertook these four methods of research.

In undertaking naturalistic observation (Kimball 1974), I followed my initial observation with informed questioning, generalization of theory and further observation to assess the theory. This observation occurred in various contexts, including dance rehearsals, dance classes, dance performances, social events such as weddings and in the daily street life and news media of the CWB community. As mentioned in the previous section, my residency in the West Bank has extended from 2000 to 2007, with two breaks away of approximately a year in 2001-2002 and a year in 2005-2006. It was preceded by three shorter visits of two weeks each in 1998 and 1999, and included a brief visit to conduct a workshop in early 2006. During these periods I was present as a change-agent (Barab et al, 2004), undertaking cultural interventions as a choreographer, writer and teacher of dance technique, choreography, dance pedagogy and dance writing. The knowledge gained from these interventions further contributed to my ethnographic understanding of dance in the CWB.

The lengthier interventions included 18 months of regular (twice weekly) sessions with the El Funoun Popular Dance Troupe in 2000-2001, two six-month blocks of regular (three times weekly) sessions with Sareyyet Ramallah Dance Group (in 2000 and 2003), and six months of regular (three times weekly) sessions with Ramallah Dance Theatre in 2003-2004. Within these, I was present at training and rehearsal sessions (including when I was not directly teaching or choreographing), and at all performances. With El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, this also involved touring around the West Bank and internationally to Europe and the Middle East. From 2000-2004 I was regularly employed at the Popular Art Centre, managing community outreach programs (Rowe, 2003a) and teaching regular dance classes. This brought me into contact with a much wider cross-section of the society, and allowed me to observe dance practices in locations such as villages and refugee camps. Between 2000-2005 I conducted many dance workshops and worked on more short-term collaborative arts projects through Ashtar Theatre, Al-Kasaba Theatre, Sabreen, the Friend's School, St. Josef's School, the Arab Episcopal Evangelical School and numerous other institutions. During 2004-2005 I devised and taught a public speaking and debating workshop program to children and adults through the Amideast organization, in an outreach program that occurred in refugee camps and towns across

the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Rowe, 2004b). This latter intervention afforded me the opportunity to listen to more than two hundred debates and a wide variety of rationales for local cultural actions. In 2006, I facilitated a writer's workshop in conjunction with the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival, promoting the publication of local dance criticism (Rowe, 2006a).

During these professional experiences, I attempted to construct a broad understanding, or thick description (Geertz, 1973), of the local cultural life through writing journal notes and brief, unpublished articles. This process was very much stimulated by my social engagement in the community, however. I established several close friendships over the years, some through the dance projects and others independent of them. My relationship with Maysoun Rafeedie had begun during the first workshop I conducted in 1998, and was a principal cause of my subsequent returns to Ramallah. Whilst this relationship immediately brought me into greater social contact with the community, when we subsequently married in 2002 and had a child in 2005, my bonds extended and strengthened even more through family associations.

The highly dramatic political events that unfolded during the years of my residency also brought political discourse into the forefront of social and cultural action, which subsequently projected them to the forefront of my observations. As with other residents of the West Bank, my daily activities brought constant encounters with the Israeli military. The personal experience of curfews, road-blocks, roadside detention, physical abuse, emotional violence and military bombardment was painful, frustrating, frightening and humiliating. It also further lessened my own barriers of identification with the local population.

My processes of cultural observation in the community thus occurred on both a professional and a more intimate social level. These contextualized my understandings of not only local cultural production, but also the wider phenomenon that directly and indirectly contributed to that production.

The formal interviews that I chose to record and transcribe thus emerged from far more numerous informal conversational interviews (Patton, 1990) that I had experienced within fieldwork. These informal conversational interviews had provided

me with the chance to identify different and influential voices in the community. As I was thus not dependant upon a wide net of official interviews in order to discover diverse points of view and their sources in the community, I was relatively selective in the choice of interviewees (see Appendix 1). These interviews were conducted live in the Central West Bank and in Beirut, Lebanon. They were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The interviews remained semi-formal (or guided), with impromptu questions often moving the discourse into unexpected directions, depending on the interviewee's responses. In doing so, I utilised what Spradley (1980) refers to as descriptive, structural and contrastive questions. Following Kvale (1996), these interviews remained like conversations, with the attempt to understand the world from the subject's point of view and the meanings that they gave to their experiences. These interviews were thus generally quite in depth, each lasting from half-an-hour to two hours. I did not feel confident enough to conduct and transcribe these interviews in Arabic, and so they were conducted in English, sometimes relying upon supportive translation from a local interpreter who was familiar with the nature of my research. This supportive translation allowed the interviewees to hear and understand the questions in both English and Arabic, present their answers in Arabic and then discuss the translation with the translators for clarification of meaning during the interview process. Several more interviews were also conducted via email with interviewees, often leading to several exchanges as interviewees provoked further questions from me or sought to clarify their expressions.

Whilst these interviews provided reflections on current events, they were also an important resource for first-hand accounts of recent cultural history. Gaining an understanding of this history required a much more extensive process of reading documents and historical texts, however. In order to do this I accessed several on-line 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 and the archives of the Palestinian Heritage Society (Inash-Al-Usra), El-Funoun, the Popular Art Centre and Sareyyet Ramallah. In doing so I accessed primary sources of documentation on local dance practices and cultural history. Most of these were

written in English, or had been officially translated into English⁷. Others were written in Arabic, and I worked with local translators familiar with the nature of my research in order to comprehend these accounts.

Whilst researching the cultural history of the CWB presents certain challenges, researching the history of their collective trauma is a highly controversial endeavour, given the region's political circumstance. Even simply gathering the perspectives of the local indigenous population can incite fierce academic disdain as a defensive reaction by those within Western academia who unstintingly support the Zionist colonial project (Swedenburg, 1995; Journal of Palestine Studies, 2005). In the course of researching this thesis, several North American, European and Israeli dance academics have aggressively condemned my reflections on how colonization and military occupation impact on cultural production in the CWB (see Rowe, 2003e). Attempting to present what might seem a politically-balanced account of local collective suffering can thus seem futile. Apolitical recognition of the actuality and impact of historical traumatic events is particularly important, however, if the relationship between local trauma and cultural evolution is to be broadly accepted. Whilst the denial of indigenous identity and trauma within official Israeli discourse is a theme that I examine in more detail in chapter 5, the revisionary work of the Israeli 'New Historians' (such as Benny Goodman, Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim and others) has provided an important source of literature on local trauma for this thesis. These contemporary Israeli historians help cross the political divide by contributing to a platform of greater concurrence over this contested history. Their writings, in addition to the first-hand accounts of collective trauma that I have gathered from local interviewees, and other primary and secondary literature from indigenous and international scholars, provide this study with a Zionist/Israeli affirmation of otherwise contested historical events.

In addition to naturalistic observation, in-depth interviews and research into historical literature, I have also accessed archival video records (El-Funoun, 1986b; 1987; 1987b; 1989; 1994; 1997b; 1998; 1999; Palestine International Festival for Music and

⁷ This was particularly the case for 19th Century texts. Kaschl (2003) indicates several brief references in German texts to dance in the late Ottoman period (de Damas, 1866; Dalman, 1901; Graf, 1907). My research has uncovered no documents published during this era in Arabic on dance in Palestine.

Dance, 1996; Sareyyet Ramallah, 1989; 1992; 1997). This involved watching videotaped recordings of workshops, rehearsals and live performances of local dance groups from the 1980s and 1990s, in order to gain a clearer impression of choreographic products and processes from those periods. As Marshall and Rossman (1989) pointed out, there is a risk in equating the experience of such video recordings with the live performances they capture. They are an edited, second-hand experience of the live performance, however. My viewing of these videos was thus to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas that had already been presented to me through interviews and written documentation, rather than to experience them as a direct reference to the cultural products and processes of previous times.

Whilst I examined photographs of local dance rehearsals and performances from the archives of local groups, I have not incorporated such images within the text of this thesis. As these photographs are mostly limited to images from the 1980s onwards, they present a brief historical moment. The presence of such snapshots in this historical narrative might unintentionally reinforce static impressions of local dance history. This would undermine the philosophic intent of this thesis to reflect how local dance practices have changed over time.

4.5 Process of analysis

In analysing this research, various source materials contributed to my overall conception of the phenomenon researched. The transcribed interviews, foreign and local textual references, video recordings and personal observations all became points of reference. This contributed to a process of triangulating the data, or gaining clarification from different perspectives and sources (Lincoln and Guba, 1986; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995). This validation process was particularly important given the contentions in the region's socio-political history, with various conflicting paradigms presenting contradictory information.

Attempting to define a dynamic, evolving phenomenon will inevitably result in contradictions, however, as the perception of actions and attitudes will always shift over time. My research thus required informally revisiting interview topics with key informants at later dates, reflecting my own understandings back to them, and eliciting their responses to my ideas. It also involved publishing articles on my

research topics locally and internationally in order to gain a more public response, and react to it (Rowe, 2000a; 2000b; 2002; 2003b; 2003c; 2003d; 2004a; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c; Rowe, Awadallah & Karkar, 2006). I also made this public interaction process more immediate by presenting papers at local and international conferences and forums (Rowe, 2003e; 2003f; 2005d; 2006b; 2006c). This was sometimes undertaken amongst groups that maintained very contrasting ideals from those I presented, and sometimes amongst those with more familiar ideals. All of the arguments that were presented in these interactions further stimulated my own understandings of this topic.

Such a process led my subsequent analysis to being inductive rather than deductive (Warren & Karner, 2005): inducing new ideas on the evolution of dance in the CWB rather than deducing any empirical conclusions on the topic. Whilst the data was initially generated by my research questions (see 1.1), analyzing it thus involved a process that Stinson (1994) describes as being in dialogue with the data: the data stimulates theories that then feed into further data collection and analysis and further theorizing. This process of theory-generation (Punch, 1998) contributed to the paradigms that I have described throughout the thesis, and those that I have presented in the conclusion as recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Writing a history of dance, trauma and salvage in Palestine

Within this chapter I explain the structure of the history that is presented by this thesis, moving from a wider impression of Palestine to a focus on the CWB community. After providing a summary of more ancient references to dance in the region, I define the various approaches to cultural salvage and revival examined by this thesis, and the socio-political motives that promoted a belief in cultural stasis. This leads into an acknowledgment of the contested nature of the history of this region during the past 200 years, suggesting the extent to which a consensus on this history exists.

5.1 From historic Palestine to the CWB

The following historical narrative is concerned with Palestine during an era that spans from the early 19th Century to the opening of the 21st Century. This era presents a diversity of socio-political environments, from a pre-nationalist time when the region was a small part of the Ottoman empire, to intense foreign colonization under a British mandate, subsequent partition then occupation by the newly-established state of Israel, through increased Palestinian nationalist and religious idealism, eventuating in a period of semi-autonomy for the indigenous population. By compiling a narrative of dance that spans across these different socio-political environments, the distinct influences from these environments on local dance practices becomes more apparent, as do the subsequent adaptations to the dances.

Whilst the focus of this research is on the CWB, such a social entity is a relatively recent phenomenon (see 2.3). This history of local dance practices thus starts wide, incorporating accounts from across historic Palestine, and narrows to describing events in the CWB as it reaches the contemporary era. This funnelling process allows for the incorporation of various historic narratives from the mixed population of the CWB, a large number of whom arrived as refugees and migrants from other parts of historic Palestine.

As a secular examination of cultural evolution, this analysis illustrates the links between collective decisions regarding dance aesthetics and wider environmental events and paradigms. By reviewing the local traumatic events in tandem with the local cultural actions, this history highlights how collective trauma has impacted upon dance practices during the last two centuries, and how dance has acted as a carrier of collective trauma during this period.

This history also examines how politicised theories of cultural stasis have supported various salvagist paradigms in Palestine and impeded post-salvagist processes of cultural evolution. The following chapters therefore provide a historical impression of dance practices in Palestine that both deconstructs salvagist representations and incorporates references to local dance practices that have been neglected within these representations. By thus going beyond particular salvagist representations, this historical impression is designed to help dance activists see past the imagined community, engage with the experienced community, and more readily support local post-salvage cultural interventions.

5.2 Dance in Palestine prior to the 19th Century

My attempts to extend this history beyond the 19th Century have been severely impeded by the absence of documentation and textual references to dance in Palestine prior to that time. This, of course, does not indicate any absence of dance in the region in the preceding era, but the impressions are scattered and do not provide a continuous narrative. There are several references to dance in Palestine in the biblical and apocryphal writings (see Spoer, 1906; Murray, 1955; Van Unnik, 1964). Arabic literature provides little more detail and only a few allusions to dance practices in Palestine specifically. For example, Abdallah al-Ayashi, a jurist traveling from Morocco on a religious pilgrimage in 1663, records seeing the ubiquitous *dhikr* (a Sufi form of music and movement) that he encounters in the region (Matar, 2000). My research suggests that it is not until the 19th century however, that more detailed accounts of local dance practices become documented in text, through literature produced by European travelers to the region. These accounts can be seen to increase steadily from the 1840s onwards (Mitchell, 1877), following the opening up of the region to Europeans through the Egyptian invasion and occupation.

As this chapter discusses, numerous theorists have speculated that 19th Century dance practices in rural Palestine had remained relatively static for millennia, thus providing an accurate reflection of more ancient dance practices in the region. My research has not, however, uncovered any documentary evidence that would suggest such an undisturbed cultural continuity. Given the diversity of cultural groups passing through Palestine over the centuries, suppositions of unadulterated connections to ancient cultural origins seem to reveal more about contemporary ideologies than historic actualities.

Such suppositions are hard to confirm or disprove as very little information on ancient dance practices appears within the historical record. There are some pictorial impressions. Lapp (1989) provides illustrations of an early Bronze Age (3000 B.C.) clay seal from Northern Palestine, which possibly (although vaguely) depicts a dancing line linked shoulder to shoulder. More clearly, Biran (2003) reveals a tile from the Canaanite town of Laish in Palestine in the late Bronze Age (1,500 B.C.), which depicts a man playing a stringed instrument and possibly dancing. One of the few ancient textual references to dance practices in the region of Palestine, preserved on a clay tablet from 3,800 years ago, illustrates why suppositions to cultural stasis should be approached critically. This reference (which I encountered on display at the Syrian Museum of Archeology in Aleppo) appears within a letter from King Zimri-Lim of Mari, an empire that stretched from Palestine to Persia, to his wife Queen Shiptu. The museum's English translation of the cuneiform reads:

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.

This tablet presents several issues relating to ancient dance in the region. Almost four millennia ago, set choreographic patterns were directly taught to females by a dance guru. The concern over the women's diet and look suggests that the dancers were valued according to their aesthetic appeal. This in turn suggests that the dances were designed to be performed and viewed (by a deity or a human audience), not just participated in. That the king finds it necessary to indicate the particular dance type,

the 'Subarean' dances, suggests that there may have been a variety of specific choreographies or dance styles. That these dances were required to be taught suggests that they may have involved choreographic patterns that the dancers were not familiar with from a social context.

This clay tablet provides a small glimpse into a specific ancient dance practice within a particular social environment. Whilst it does not provide any comprehensive picture of dance practices 4,000 years ago, it does offer some insights into the complexity and potential diversity of dance practices in local history. Attempts to link a simplistic and symbolic ancient origin with a dance practice observed in the 19th and 20th centuries would seem to deny both the sophisticated diversity of dance practices existing in ancient times, and millennia of subsequent cultural diffusion and innovation through Canaanite, Jewish, Assyrian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic Arab, European Crusader, Egyptian Marmeluke and Turkish Ottoman presence in the region. 19th Century dance heritage may arguably contain influences from much earlier times, but these influences may be exceedingly marginal and indistinguishable from more recent trends. Given the absence of a comprehensive historical record, determining which aspects arose in which particular era would seem purely speculative. As such, theories defining the authentic origins of local dance heritage should be regarded as attempts to define the dance heritage that began to be salvaged in Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when more consistent documentation began.

5.3 Five processes of salvage, three phases of revival

Speculations on links to more ancient times exist because, for those engaged in salvagism, the late 19th century represents the end of cultural stasis in Palestine. By examining the various phases of salvagism that commenced during and after that period, it is possible to observe how their varied interpretations of a static ancient culture were very much inspired by differences in contemporary political paradigms.

Previous analyses of cultural research in the West Bank suggest that there have been various phases of cultural salvage. Nabil Alqam (1994) labelled two general stages of folkloric research in Palestine: *Orientalist*, from 1865-1948, "motivated by colonial, religious or missionary motives" (p.179), and *Palestinian*, from 1947-1967,

suggesting “their basic motives were patriotic” (p.180). Sherif Kanaana (1994) broke these stages down further, suggesting four different phases of research into folkloric practices. Following the European traveller’s accounts of cultural practices in Palestine in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Kanaana noted a more academic phase. Between 1922 and 1946, this predominantly involved cultural observations published within the 22 editions of the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* (by mostly European anthropologists, with some support from local researchers). Kanaana suggested this was followed by a less co-ordinated approach to cultural research by local anthropologists and folklorists, between 1948 and 1967. He suggested that subsequently, between 1967 and the early 1990s, this folkloric research became more organised and consolidated within a Palestinian nationalist agenda. In considering how this research was transferred into dance revival movements, Kaschl (2003) focused on two phases, one by Zionists in the 1930s and 1940s, and one by Palestinian nationalists between the 1960s and 1980s.

My investigation has suggested that five general phases of research into dance in Palestine occurred during the past two hundred years, leading to three distinct dance revival movements. Roughly correlating with the phases outlined above, these five research phases have been undertaken from differing ideological perspectives, and by different population groups, although all reinforce the idea that the culture salvaged had been static and preserved from ancient eras. These five salvagist approaches do not always fit neatly into specific periods, as these research approaches often overlap across eras and blend with each other and within the writings of different individual researchers. It is possible and useful, however, to discern them as general trends.

From my research, it would appear that the first approach to documenting dance practices in Palestine was undertaken by European travellers during the 19th century. Their recorded observations of dances were not necessarily appreciative or driven by a desire to understand these dances within the context of the local culture. Reflecting an interest in the Biblical era, these accounts often read as attempts to reconcile contemporary dance practices with imaginings of the biblical past. The record produced by these writers can be seen as both reflecting and contributing to European colonial impressions of the region.

These accounts begin to merge with the second process of cultural research, and the first truly salvagist process, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This salvage process was undertaken by various Western anthropologists and folklorists, and continued through the era of British Mandate Palestine. Following the principles of salvage anthropology, this process of documentation perceived the local culture as previously static but suddenly facing the risk of oblivion. As a form of cultural documentation, these accounts of local dance practices shifted away from the mood of earlier travellers' accounts, seeking a greater understanding of dance in the context of the local culture.

A third approach to the research and salvage of peasant dance practices in Palestine was undertaken by Zionist pioneers during roughly the same period. Intent on rediscovering ancient Jewish cultural practices in the region, this phase of salvage led to the first local revival movement of the early 20th century, staging indigenous folk dance practices as Israeli national dance.

A fourth approach to cultural salvage, although with less of an interest in dance and not immediately resulting in any dance revival movement, commenced during the same period through indigenous anthropologists and folklorists. Working in conjunction with European anthropologists, they perpetuated the idea that local culture was static, but emphasised the notion that local peasant cultural practices were based on Arab, rather than Jewish heritage.

These approaches to cultural research and salvage can be considered Orientalist (Said, 1978), in that they generally involved viewing local dance practices from a foreign perspective that was defined by notions of cultural superiority, inferiority, backwardness and progress⁸. These salvagists were followed by a second local dance

⁸ In her popular study of dances in the Middle East, Wendy Buonaventura offers the following critique of Said's *Orientalism*:

The current, widely held view of Orientalism derives from Edward Said's thesis that the West has exploited, misunderstood and even invented the East for its own sinister purposes. From the wealth of material available, it is easy to select examples to suit this theory and ignore those which do not. However, Orientalist attitudes to the Middle East are as varied as human beings. An obsession with European colonialism has unfortunately blinded many critics to the complex interrelationship which has existed between Europe and the Arab-Islamic world for hundreds of years. This obsession has merely served to prolong the misunderstanding which exists between them. Many Europeans who went to the Arab world compared the life they found there favourably with that of Europe. (1990, p. 55)

revival movement in the 1950s and 1960s. During this era, a distinct Palestinian identity and culture was not officially recognized or sanctioned in the region. Local dance was instead salvaged, blended with other regional and foreign influences and staged under what might be considered a Pan-Arabist idealism. Following 1967 and the renewed struggle for Palestinian nationalism, a fifth process of cultural salvage and a third dance revival movement was undertaken, this time from a definitively Palestinian nationalist perspective.

These various phases of research and revival posited that local cultural practices had been static for millennia, and that as such ancient dance practices were being salvaged and preserved in writing and re-enactment before they became lost within the rapidly changing socio-political environment.

Having illustrated the various ways in which the same dance practices were conceived as static to support differing political paradigms, the following history examines the phase of post-salvagism that was initiated in the CWB in the 1980s. This post-salvage phase distinguished itself from the preceding processes of cultural salvage by positing cultural heritage as dynamic and evolving, with post-salvagists contributing to this process of evolution through deliberate adaptations⁹. In doing so it was forced to compete with ongoing local salvagist ideals, and subsequently with foreign concepts of modernism and postmodernism.

This historical narrative thus reflects these different approaches to cultural salvage and the subsequent post-salvage phase in the CWB. This is done in order to compile a) a linear narrative of certain local dance practices during the past two centuries, and

Intent on dismissing the impact of colonization on cultural encounters, Buonaventura fundamentally misunderstands and misrepresents Said's *Orientalism* within her criticism. As various historians (e.g. Turner, 1994; Mackenzie, 1995) have discussed, much of the research of Eastern cultures undertaken by Western scholars have reflected a sense of admiration. In *Orientalism*, Said does not necessarily doubt the ability of Europeans to appreciate cultures in the colonized world. Said observes that even when appreciative, however, European literary discourse on these cultures in the 19th and early 20th centuries has often been defined by a sense of cultural superiority. Said goes on to argue that this sense of cultural superiority has subsequently fostered a moral platform for European political actions abroad, such as invasion, colonization, appropriation of resources, economic conquest and cultural imperialism. This paradigm has perhaps an increasingly urgent relevance within the political climate of ongoing Western military invasion and occupation in the Middle East in the early 21st Century.

⁹ It might be argued that the process of salvaging local indigenous dance practices led into other post-salvage phases, such as within the salvaged dance culture of Zionists or pan-Arabists. This thesis focuses, however, on the post-salvagism that emerged within the CWB community.

b) a linear narrative of how these dance practices have been popularly documented. It is thus both a review of history and an examination of how that history has been constructed, contrasting the dance practices experienced by the CWB community with the dance traditions invented by the imagined communities of Zionism, Pan-Arabism and Palestinian nationalism.

5.4 A contested history

Several imagined communities have competitively identified with the cultural practices of the indigenous community of Palestine. As the following historical narrative suggests, this has been done in order to construct historical narratives that merge a contemporary cultural identity with a more ancient ethnic presence in the region, thus authenticating cultural ownership and political sovereignty over the geographic space. Whilst my research here does not examine the basis for such claims of cultural and genetic precedence in the region, it does consider how these competing narratives of collective identity and cultural ownership have influenced contemporary cultural decision-making within the experienced community of the CWB.

This historical analysis also considers how debates over events in the more recent past have similarly impacted upon local cultural practices. As a fiercely contested historical period, differing understandings of the last two centuries continues to bear an immediate influence on both the politics of the region and local conceptualizations of cultural identity. Central to this debate is the question over whether or not a settled local population actually existed in the region prior to Zionist colonization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Doubts over the existence of such a population were stimulated by Lord Shaftsbury's 1854 inspirational maxim for Zionism, which claimed Palestine was "a land without a people for a people without a land" (Garfinkle, 1991, p.539). The general persistence of this presumption that Palestine was mostly uninhabited has continued to gain support from the highest political levels of Zionist thought, as indicated by the statements of former Israeli Prime ministers Golda Meir (in Syrken, 1969, p.355) and Benjamin Netanyahu (in Verta, 2001). Within popular Zionist versions of local history (e.g. Peters, 1988), the current existence of a local ethnic Arab population is attributed to recent immigration from the surrounding region. This theory argues that most Arabs arrived in Palestine in the

early 20th 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 indigenous population from the region since 1947. Israeli historians (e.g. Schechtman, 1952; Kimche and Kimche, 1960; Kohn, 1961; Lorch, 1961) have claimed that the indigenous population emigrated of its own accord, despite Israeli attempts to persuade them to stay, a perception initiated by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion (Morris, 2001). The idea that “there was miracle and they ran away”¹⁰ has provided an important moral basis for Israeli national identity- a sense of “purity of arms” in the heroic Israeli narrative of nation building (Shlaim, 1999, p. 173). 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 indigenous population (Podeh, 2002; Raz-Krakotzkin, 2003). The Israeli censorship of school textbooks in the Occupied Territories following their 1967 annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Brown, 2002; 2003) and their outlawing of the possession of books relating to the history of the indigenous population (Swedenburg, 1987) similarly attempted to nullify alternatives to the Israeli version of history amongst this population. Subsequent attempts to revise history in the Palestinian school curriculum, by the Palestinian Authority in the late 1990s, were subjected to a politically organized misinformation campaign (erroneously suggesting that the new text books contained anti-Semitic propaganda). This led to restrictions on European and American aid towards education in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Moughrabi, 2001) and what might be considered a continued process of censorship of indigenous history through economic proxy.

As such, a presentation of local dance history that firstly recognizes the existence of a substantial local population in the region prior to Zionist colonization, and subsequently examines the cultural trauma experienced by that population as a result of foreign colonization, is bound to provoke contention. This alternative history, however, has received strong and increasing academic support during the past two

¹⁰ From the Hebrew phrase *haya ness vehem nassu*.

decades, from historians across 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 (e.g. Segev, 1986; Bar-Joseph, 1987; Flapan, 1987; Morris, 1988; 1993; 1994; 1996; 2001; Pappé, 1988; 1997; 1999; 2006; Shlaim, 1999; Shafir, 1996). Whilst there have been attempts to discredit these 'New Historians' of Israel (e.g. Karsh, 1997), these have become increasingly isolated. Israeli academic understandings of history have thus moved closer to the historical research of local indigenous and international historians (e.g. Khalidi, 1959; 1978; Childers, 1961; 1971; Porath, 1977; Sayigh, 1979; Said, 1979; Abu Lughod, 1981; Said & Hitchens, 1988; Muslih, 1988; Hadawi, 1979; Swedenburg, 1987; 1989; 1990; 1993; 1995; McCarthy, 1990; Wasserstein, 1991; Masalha, 1992; Khalidi, 1998; Kanaana, 2000). This has created a greater consensus, amongst academia at least, on the actuality of an indigenous non-Zionist population and their collective experience of Zionism, forming a basis for the historical analysis presented in this thesis.

Chapter 6: Dance observed

This chapter begins with an overview of dance and culture in early 19th Century Palestine. This is followed by a more extensive analysis of dance documentation in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in Palestine, during the closing years of the Ottoman Empire and the rapid growth of European engagement in the region. An analysis of dance documentation in the early to mid-20th Century is then presented, an era in which the region was governed by a British Mandate.

6.1 Early 19th Century Palestine

6.1.1 The geographic identity and socio-cultural interdependence of Palestine

Whilst the region known as Palestine was generally subdivided into various districts of the Ottoman Empire, a temporary administrative entity (approximately along the borders of what would become British Mandate Palestine) was established three times by the Ottomans during the 19th century- in 1830, 1840 and 1872 (Doumani, 1992). The Ottomans generally referred to the region geographically (if not politically) as Palestine, or *Filistin*, following such recognition of the area within the preceding eras (Matar, 2000, Gerber 2003). I therefore refer here to Palestine in the Ottoman era not as a political unit, but as a commonly recognized geographic area.

Early European research in the area (e.g. Finn, 1927) points to three principle divisions in the social organization of this population- between the nomadic *bedouin*, peasant farmer *fellaheen* and city dwelling *baladeen*. In Ottoman Palestine, however, there was little distinction between a highly mobile peasant population and a Bedouin that were often involved in forms of agriculture (Doumani, 1992).

Various Zionist and colonial histories of early 19th century Palestine (e.g. Ma'oz, 1968; Abir, 1975; Bailey, 1980) suggest that the rural areas were lawless during this time, with nomadic Bedouin and rural peasant bandit troops vying for control. Moshe Ma'oz illustrates this perspective well, suggesting that the 1831 Egyptian invasion "...brought about an end to centuries of confusion and backwardness and opened a new stage of openness and modernization" (1968, p.v), which was soon followed 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. 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. Whilst port cities such as Jaffa, Haifa, Gaza and Acre dotted the coast, economic and political strength was based in the cities in the hills. Nablus was a centre for regional commerce and Jerusalem, with its religious significance, was an important legal centre for the Ottoman Empire (Doumani, 1992).

A sense of collective Palestinian identity was not locally expressed amongst this population in the early 19th century, as the local communities generally felt defined by more of an "urban patriotism" towards nearby cities (Khalidi, 1998, p.153). There were, however, social, economic and cultural networks that engendered a regional sense of interdependence within Palestine, and a close partnership between urban, rural and nomadic populations (Doumani, 1992). Economically integrated through production and export, trade partnerships in the region meant that lawlessness on trade routes and in the rural hinterland was the exception rather than rule (Asad, 1974; Doumani, 1990). The popular rebellion of 1834 against Egyptian occupation (centred in Nablus but undertaken across Palestine) further highlights the level of social and political coordination between the urban centres and rural/nomadic communities (Swedenburg, 1993).

On a cultural level, Palestinian regional coordination was influenced 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* (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 (Canaan, 1927). As celebrations involving folk music and dance, these feasts were important rituals of popular solidarity between peasants and town-dwellers and important annual forums for cultural exchange and continuity in the region (Swedenburg, 1993).

Although the vast majority of the population of Palestine in the 19th Century was Muslim, very few villages had their own mosques. Islamic worship was centered 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 Islamic shrines (Canaan, 1927).

6.1.2 Dance in early 19th century Palestine

Wedding celebrations also provided a cultural opportunity to cross social divisions and bind the mixed communities of Palestine at this time. Observing the dancing in a rural wedding ceremony just outside of Nazareth in the late 1820s, John Fuller, a British traveler, notes that the social dancing in the group "...is composed indiscriminately of Christians and Mahometans, who live together in the greatest harmony" (1829, p.313).

From my research, Fuller's observations provide the earliest European account of dance in Palestine. His description of a double-wedding *Zefi* (an ornamental procession that conducts bridegrooms from a meal or picnic to their home before they go to that of the bride) presents little information on the actual movement danced, but it does reveal how central dance was within such social occasions:

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. [...] The horses were each lead 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. (1829, p.313-314).

Whilst this is one of few 19th Century references to the effigy of a bride being ‘danced’ in a Zefi, Sherif Kanaana (personal communication, December 7, 2004) suggests that this was a common ritual in Ottoman Palestine, leading to the local colloquial phrase “You can dress up a pitchfork and it will look like a beauty (lit. mirror)”. This intimates that even an unattractive woman can be made beautiful with make-up and the right clothes. There is not enough detail to posit the specific dance steps or sequences being executed, although the circle formation and stamping on the ground is consistent with later descriptions of wedding dabkeh. This does not necessarily suggest that the steps were exactly the same as contemporary dabkeh steps, however, or that these steps had remained the same through previous millennia.

This passage is also somewhat unique when compared to most of the later accounts of wedding dances by 19th Century European travelers to Palestine. Experienced as a chance encounter by the writer, the dancing has not been staged as a spectacle for the entertainment of foreign tourists. As such it provides an early record of a dance occurring in the context of localized social activity.

6.2 Late Ottoman Period – 1830-1917

6.2.1 The population of late Ottoman Palestine

The indigenous population of Palestine experienced steady growth during the second half of the 19th 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. Due to famine and emigration induced by World War 1 however, this figure had dropped to 689,000 by 1918 (McCarthy, 1990). Whilst minor waves of early colonial immigration during this period brought small numbers of Jews and Christians from Europe, they did not have a major impact on the religious demography of the region. The indigenous population during the late 19th Century remained predominantly Muslim with a substantial Christian minority and a smaller number of Jews and other religious sects (McCarthy, 1990; Doumani, 1992; Morris, 2001).

6.2.2 The European rediscovery of Biblical Palestine

The Egyptian invasion and occupation of Palestine and Syria between 1831-1840 opened the region to European penetration and the presence of European powers such as England, Russia, Prussia and France. Even after the Ottomans expelled the Egyptians in 1840, the established European consulates and religious missions 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 (Scholch, 1992).

This opening of European political and religious missions in Palestine subsequently also led to an opening of the region 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 (Khalidi, 1998). 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 (Doumani, 1992). The scale of this publication in North America in the late 19th 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.

Most of the European and American texts that my research has uncovered from this era have focused on the region's biblical history. Whilst ancient ruins and archeological remains are scoured in detail, this literature provides relatively few references to living cultural elements such as local dance or music. In Henry Stewardson's mammoth *Survey of Western Palestine* (1888) 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. Charles Dudley Warner, when describing his participation in the Easter procession to

Gethsemane, illustrates the disruptive impact of contemporary local dance practices on a private biblical fantasy:

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. [...] 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. (1877, p.145)

For many such American and British travelers writing of Palestine in the 19th century, it seemed the actual pilgrimage could not match the sacred journeys undertaken in their imaginations. In describing Palestine as desolate, Mark Twain (1870) typifies this disappointment. Absent were all the familiar colours and sounds from the Nativity Story and the passion play that defined Christ's Palestine in Twain's American childhood. In their place stood the stubborn reality of a foreign culture and a harsh landscape. Whilst the local culture is acknowledged in such observations, it tends always to be set against the context of biblical origins. That the intervening millennia might have produced new rationales for cultural action is not supposed, as contemporary culture seemingly imitates the more deliberate decision-making processes of ancient times. Through their disregard for local contemporary culture, these Orientalist accounts can be seen contributing to the empty-land myth.

6.2.3 Ottoman reforms and economic upheaval

By the middle of the century, 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 growth of a Palestinian identity centred on Jerusalem (Khalidi, 1998).

This was part of wider changes in Palestine at the time, which might be attributed to the region's integration into the capitalist world market (Swedenburg, 1993). Most economically influential amongst 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 (Patai, 1949; Swedenburg, 1993; Kanaana, 2000). The 1858 Ottoman code required that all land be registered with the state, ostensibly as a means of protecting small rural land owners from an urban elite that had begun to purchase large tracts of land (Doumani, 1992). 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 (Patai, 1949; Morris, 2001). 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 foreclosed on loans subject to huge interest rates (Grant, 1922).

6.2.4 The early entertainment trade

The economic upheavals from the Ottoman Land Code and the influx of foreign capital through tourism appear to have stimulated a 19th Century entertainment trade in indigenous folk culture. Social/participatory music and dance practices were adapted to be 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 (e.g. Tristram, 1865; Warner, 1877). 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 19th and early 20th centuries. Whilst they thus contributed to European impressions of local dance

practices and provide suggestions about the actual practices that these contrived representations were based on, they do not comprehensively reflect local cultural practices any more than a street busker might comprehensively represent contemporary English culture.

The following two accounts by Henry Baker Tristram suggest that by the early 1860s such performed 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 Orientalists describing rural dances in Palestine until the middle of the 20th Century (see 6.3, 7.1). Tristram's first account describes a men's song/dance on January 1st, 1864, in Jericho.

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 [...] 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. (1865, p. 207)

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.

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. (1865, p.208)

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. The most interesting point to note here is the 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 salvagists 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 the dabkeh performed by men. 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 of 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, I would argue that this patterning may have involved a particular adaptation in local dance practices, 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 (Sherif Kanaana, personal communication, December 7, 2004). On this occasion, it seems to be filled by the best dancer, suggesting that more regular elements of cultural practice may have been adapted in order to accommodate a non-participating audience.

That these women allowed foreign men to observe them dancing suggests an open physicality amongst the peasant women of the Jordan valley at the time. Tristram (1865) subsequently compares them to the veiled women of the towns, suggesting the diversity in urban/rural social mores.

It is uncertain how widespread the practice of performing traditional dances for tourists was in Palestine in the second half of 19th 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” (1877, p.111). Warner’s following account 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”. (1877, p.111-112)

The number of individuals involved in this example suggests that such performances did not include only peripheral members of the community engaged in an activity disapproved of by the community as a whole. This display indicates the level of commitment that the local community invested in such performances, and thus the economic and social value accorded to this probably part-time occupation.

Whilst it may be argued that such dances were only performed publicly in Palestine at this time by people from 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 suggests the dominant roles that women would have undertaken in less public performances of dance and the vibrant types of movements that they may have done. As such, this becomes an important reference point when considering later salvagist 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. Nothing from my research suggests that this adaptation process was part of a coordinated political campaign however, and it appears to be very localized and designed to solely to trade on tourist curiosity. The adaptation process 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 pandering to the whims of foreign tourists, however, such social dance practices were possibly rendered less culturally meaningful, as meaning became secondary to satisfying foreign tastes. Through Palestine's 19th Century tourism business, dance might thus have lost some of its value as an intimate and interconnected part of the community's cultural practices, whilst it might have gained a new status as a form of collective representation to others.

6.2.5 Dance as a carrier of collective trauma

Although the predominant means of accessing local dance culture, public performances were not the only occasions when Orientalists observed dance activities. The physical expressions associated with burial and mourning also drew a particular fascination in their writings. 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. In a Muslim cemetery around Rachel's tomb near Bethlehem in 1875, Charles Dudley Warner encountered a mourning ritual, which he was told occurred every Thursday afternoon.

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 other's 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 saltations, the shrill shrieking and wailing, conspired to give their demonstration an indescribable barbarity. (1877, p.119-120)

This illustration suggests how dance acted as a carrier of social trauma in the community. The community used dance to project themselves into a state of group solidarity, spreading a particular (perhaps temporally or spatially distant) painful event amongst the group. Warner suggests in an earlier passage that for many of the women, the grief was feigned, not actual. This notion of dry grief (whilst aggravating Warner's Victorian conception of emotional sincerity and restraint) suggests that participation in such a ritual contributed to the construction of trauma-solidarity in a community, and that it was not just a forum for the expressive release of personal pain. This presents an interesting precedent to the local use of dance to foster trauma solidarity in the 20th Century.

6.2.6 Cultural representation and the beginnings of colonization

Throughout these traveller's accounts, the indigenous population of Palestine are measured against 19th Century European imaginings of a pious Biblical community. This generally leads to disappointment and disgust, as Tristram expresses at the conclusion of one dance performance:

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 ... 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. (1865, p.209-210)

Such a reaction to local dance practices reflects a particularly Cartesian attitude towards mind-body separation and a general disdain for physical methods of expression that was prevalent in north-western Europe during the era¹¹. From such a perspective, the passions of anger, sorrow, lust and defiance are degraded by their existence in the body.

These personal impressions take on a political dimension, however, in the context of European colonial imperialism. The popular acceptance of (and belief in) empire and colonization at home can depend upon such depictions of cultural inferiority in foreign, subject races (Said, 1993). These impressions of highly emotive (and seemingly nonsensical) dance practices thus helped to convince 19th century Western readers that the population of Palestine required subjugation and tutelage in order to develop and ascend to the contemporary civilized world.

As a result of such Orientalist representations of Palestine, by the second half of the 19th century the "...European public was more convinced that they had "rights of ownership" in Palestine than in any other non-European territory" (Scholch, 1992, p.44). With a slowly crumbling Ottoman empire, the control of the Holy Land became a priority for several European parties.

The Zionist strategy for colonization was but one colonial movement towards Palestine from Europe at the time, and a relatively late one to join the competition (Scholch, 1992). The emergence of the Zionist political movement can thus be recognized within the socio-political context of 19th Century Europe, rather than within a purely religio-cultural context associated with Judaism and a Jewish historical longing for a return to the Holy Land. By the end of the 19th Century, Zionism as a political ideology remained highly unpopular in North America, with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations roundly condemning the notion of a Jewish state (Graetz, 1919). With Anglican and Evangelical Christian promotion of

¹¹ See (Farnell, 1995) for a further discussion on the impact of Europe's 19th century Cartesian and evolutionary attitudes on the dance practices and physicality of colonized peoples.

the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land, however (e.g. Warren, 1875; Hoare, 1877; Walker, 1881), and the patronage of Lord Shaftsbury and Prime minister Palmerston, Zionist political colonization of Palestine had gained particularly strong political and religious support within Britain.

As plans for settling a European population in Palestine were put forward by Britain and other European states, the plans for the removal of the existing non-European inhabitants varied from economic inducements to violent confrontations (Scholch, 1992). The rallying cry of "a land without a people for a people without a land" thus referred less to an actual absence of people so much as an absence of 'civilized' people, in keeping with a "wider European intellectual network characterised by chauvinistic nationalism, racial superiority and imperial ambitions" (Doumani, 1992, p.8).

By 1880, just prior to the first major wave of Zionist immigration, there were 24,000 Jews in Palestine, or less than 5% of the population (Gilbert, 1993). This population 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 (Patai, 1960; Morris, 2001). Towards the end of the 19th 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 (Bober, 1972). Incorporated into the World Zionist Organization in 1907, the Jewish National Fund purchased land exclusively for Zionists, on which the displaced local inhabitants were refused employment (Hope Simpson, 1930; Morris, 2001).

By the eve of World War One and the end of the Ottoman Empire, these new land purchases still amounted to only 1.6% of historic Palestine. The Jewish population of Palestine had grown to 90,000, or 12% of the local population (Ben Gurion, 1966). Less than half of these were Zionist immigrants (Lacquer, 1996), and of those most were Jews seeking refuge from persecution in Russia rather than ideologically motivated colons (Morris, 2001). By this time, the Christian European attempts to

colonize and repopulate the region (most ambitiously that of the Schwarbian Templars) had faltered through a lack of willing immigrants (Scholch, 1992).

6.2.7 The beginnings of anthropological salvagism

By the end of the 19th century, a more empathetic approach to the recording of local cultural practices began to emerge in the writings of foreign observers. This followed the contemporary academic trend of salvage anthropology (see 3.3.4) and the supposition that certain 'primitive' cultures that had been static for centuries were at risk of disappearing. As Hans Spoer suggested in connection to the village of Siloam near Jerusalem, "The phrase the 'Immovable East' will soon be no longer applicable, as the introduction of occidental learning and railroads is fast changing the customs of the people" (1905, p.7). This shift in the process of recording local customs by foreigners, whilst more admiring of the culture than some of the previous Orientalist accounts, still retained the idea that local culture was a static residue of the biblical era.

This biblical link is present in the observations of dance in Palestine by Spoer and Philip Baldensperger, perhaps the most prolific of these early cultural salvagists in Palestine. Observing dervishes singing and dancing in the Judean desert, Baldensperger described how "as in the bowing of the golden calf, modern dancers bow down, prompted by some long lost motive" (1913, p. 271). Whilst such a biblical link would eventually be challenged in the discourse of European anthropology in Palestine by the 1930s (e.g. Granquist, 1931), the more academic writings of Spoer, Baldensperger and others from the era solidified the notion that local rural customs had been frozen in time for millennia. This academic precedent supported the subsequent nationalist approaches to cultural salvagism, and their politicized speculations on ancient cultural identities.

The salvage anthropology of this era presents several descriptions of local dance practices that are particularly revealing, however, due to their absence within the later salvagist movements. Of particular note are accounts of the female mourning dances. 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" (1913, p. 267). The observations

of Spoer (made between 1902 and 1904) provide a more detailed 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. (Spoer & Spoer, 1927, p. 137)

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.

Another female dance that had become less prominent in subsequent salvagist attempts to define local dance practices involved dances with swords. Such sword dances featuring women appear to have been common as both a social practice and a tourist curiosity at the time. Baldensperger (1913) referred to a woman juggling a sword whilst dancing solo. Such balancing and juggling is similarly described amongst men in an account of a village wedding by Spoer (1905). Of particular note, 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 (a theme further discussed in 6.4)

In another account of a bedouin wedding, Spoer described a sword dance as more of a dancing game, in which a group of young men with arms interlinked circle around a fire and a girl bearing a sword in each hand. Swaying and “whirling the swords above her head” she is incited by onlookers to drive them back, whilst they chant and advance attempting to force her to kneel or step in the fire (1910, p.279). Spoer (1906)

claimed that in the south of Palestine, the sword-wielding leader of such dances was usually performed by a man, whilst in the North this dance was usually performed by the bride of the wedding. Such generalizations relating to the geographic spread of cultural practices often emerged from speculation rather than from extensive observation, however, and were motivated by a desire to construct a comprehensive impression of a distinct Palestinian culture based on its biblical heritage (as discussed further in 6.3).

Despite such a tendency towards generalization, these salvagists' 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 local folk dance.

6.2.8 The crumbling of the Ottoman Empire

As political Zionism was growing in Europe, a nationalist Arab movement was taking hold across the Middle East (Muslih, 1988). Indicative of a shift towards both secular and nationalist ideals, in 1909 the leading Al-Sakakini school in Jerusalem replaced Islamic history with Arab history in its curricula (Khalidi, 1998). Palestine's first region-wide protest against Zionist colonization occurred in 1891 (Morris, 2001). The methods of indigenous resistance to Zionism were, however, limited and varying at this time. Whilst the town-dwelling nobles reacted with letters of protest to Constantinople, the actual fellahin and Bedouin whose land and resources had been curtailed by the new Zionist land purchases responded with bandit style raids on these settlements (Swedenburg, 1993).

In 1908, the Young Turks revolution within the Ottoman Empire suggested a new period of self-determination for the indigenous population of Palestine, within a greater Arab state that would extend from the "valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates to

the Isthmus of Suez, from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Oman" (Zeine, 1966, p 75). Such hopes soon dissipated, however, as the Young Turks seemed intent on retaining the Turkish nature, and reach, of the Ottoman Empire.

World War One subsequently induced a new set of traumatic circumstances for the inhabitants of Ottoman Palestine. Crisscrossed by foreign armies, enforced conscription took many young men from poorer rural regions in particular, leaving villages populated by women, children and the elderly. Thousands died of smallpox, cholera, typhus and starvation as locust plagues reduced crops. By the war's conclusion, the population of Palestine had dropped by over 50,000, through death and emigration (McCarthy, 1990). The Ottoman Empire no longer existed and the region of Palestine was placed under the control of the League of Nations, who would subsequently pass it on to a British Mandate.

6.3 The British Mandate Period – 1920-1947

6.3.1 Population shifts

During the British Mandate period, Palestine experienced a massive adjustment in its ethnic/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% of the overall population at the conclusion of the Ottoman Empire, by the end of the British Mandate three decades later Jews composed 31% of the population. During this period, nearly three quarters (72%) of this increase was through immigration, whereas virtually all (96%) of the increase in the Muslim and Christian population was through natural increase of the indigenous population (Halbrook, 1981).

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 (McCarthy, 1990). 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 (Morris, 2001).

The population also shifted internally during this era, most notably amongst the peasants who made up 75% of the local population (Abu-Lughod, 1981). As a result of economic upheavals and access to land, these fellahin increasingly migrated from rural areas to urban centres (particularly port cities such as Haifa) in search of work (Swedenburg, 1987; 1993).

6.3.2 Immigration, colonization and dispossession in the 1920s

The British Mandate period induced major social, political and economic changes within Palestine, affecting the rural fellahin in particular. Whilst the conclusion of World War One brought an end to four centuries of Ottoman rule in Palestine, 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 hegemony. 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" (in Ingrams, 1973, p.73). Such foreign determination could be justified through the prevailing conception of progress and unilinear cultural evolution, as explicitly expressed by the newly formed League of Nations. 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"¹², the League of Nations passed political control of Palestine to British mandatory rule in 1920.

During World War One, Britain had promised 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. Whilst this British support for Zionist colonization (through the Balfour declaration of 1917) induced strong protests within Palestine, it was also perceived within the wider Middle East as a strategy for impeding the formation and resources of a pan-Arab state¹³. 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 (Toynbee, 1931).

¹² Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

¹³ Palestine's geographic location could position it in control of the Suez Canal, Haifa (the only deep water harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean) and the land bridge between Asia and Africa (Toynbee, 1931).

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. The tension between immigrant Zionists and the indigenous population preceded such events however, as a result of economic disturbances and concerns over political control (Wasserstein, 1991). As a result of land purchases by the Jewish National Fund, indigenous tenant farmers were evicted to make way for European Zionist immigrants (Hope Simpson, 1930). This land ceased to be accessible for either residency or employment by non-Zionists, and by 1930 approximately 30% of all indigenous villagers were landless, and 75-80% held insufficient land to meet their subsistence means (Carmi & Rosenfeld, 1974).

At this stage, political identification amongst the indigenous population was generally aligned with wider regional struggles for independence from colonial European powers. The First Palestinian National Congress in 1918 resolved that Palestine should be an integral part of any future independent Syrian state (Morris, 2001).

6.3.3 Ethnographic salvage, nationalism and Canaanite heritage

Local cultural events and symbols soon became entwined with the nationalist political struggle. In 1920, the annual pilgrimage to Nabi Musa took on a nationalist tone, as Christians joined with Muslims in a colourful 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 eventuated in anti-Zionist and anti-British riots and numerous deaths. During the Great Revolt of 1936-39, the pilgrimage of Nabi Musa had become so potent a symbol of national identity that the British authorities banned it altogether (Segev, 2000).

During the Mandate period, the local interest in documenting and defining indigenous cultural practices thus grew as a means of distinguishing an Arab national culture distinct from Ottoman and European colonial influences. This cultural research and analysis continued to be influenced, however, 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" (1921, p.4). 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 22 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 previous Ottoman Empire (Doumani, 1992). This Arab nationalist reconnection with the ancient world, however, emphasized a link to Canaanite rather than Israelite civilization.

Very few references to local dance practices emerge within this encyclopaedic study of folklore in Palestine. Stephan mentions dabkeh as a "native trotting dance" undertaken by men at weddings and other festivities (1922, p.260), but little other mention of dance or physical expression is provided by these writers. This emulates the Western trend towards cultural research and analysis at the time, which generally disregarded physical expression within cultural systems (Williams, 1979).

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 English set of values. The Bedouin are referred to as a primitive and uncivilised population, and Al-Aref's personal observations are used to construct a definitive summation of Bedouin culture. Whilst various cultural behaviours are noted in detail, dance practices are generally disregarded. The only illustration of Bedouin dance, with a typical use of 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. (Al Aref, 1944, p. 54-55)

Whilst Al-Aref presents this account as a definitive representation of Bedouin women's dance, it is uncertain how widespread the ideas presented here were. Al-Aref presents, however, an interesting example of a dance event in early 20th century Palestine. The dance is described as an entertainment, with attendants at the gathering defined within circumscribed roles of observer/observed. That such a performance occurs within the context of the local cultural group, and not as a form of collective representation to foreign tourists, suggests yet 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. Al-Aref's suggestion that the sword is utilised as a moral guardian seems to be romanticised speculation, as he does not himself witness or describe its usage in such defensive action. Given the closed social environment that such dancing takes place in, such a violent deterrent to sexual harassment seems more symbolic than threatening. From this perspective, the sword's function is essentially theatrical rather than practical, suggesting it has other more imaginative and aesthetic functions within the dance.

Within 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 can be read as a local extension to the preceding European Orientalist approach to cultural research and analysis. They begin to emphasize an ancient Arab thread within the cultural heritage however, as a contrast to the narrative of rural peasants in Palestine as living relics of a biblical Jewish culture.

6.3.4 Hilma Granquist and recognizing the 'Biblical danger'

The prevalent European impression that contemporary indigenous peasants were a cultural echo of an ancient Jewish civilization was similarly challenged by Finnish anthropologist Hilma Granquist. 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 realise what she labelled the "biblical danger" (1931, p.9). The need to so imaginatively capture a biblical legacy led to a secondary 'danger' that Granquist identified as prevalent within European (and local) cultural summations in the early 20th century: the creation of broad generalizations about a homogenous '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, M.A. 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. (1955, p. 404)

Whilst earlier literature (as discussed 5.2) suggests that the event described here is not impossible, the assumptions surrounding it require critical investigation. Murray gives no further references- he might have either personally experienced such an event, or heard/read about it through the accounts of others. Seemingly unfounded and incredulous generalizations are constructed, however, relating to the historic rationale, frequency and pervasiveness of such dance events in Palestine. Granquist (1931) would argue that such generalizations were a result of the demanding trend in Europe to present an ancient and cohesive impression of culture in the bible land.

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

Within the few references that Granquist gives to local dance practices, most are concerned with the 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. Whilst not detailing the women's dance, she describes the men doing "a beautiful dance with swaying movements. One thinks of reeds murmuring and swaying with the wind" (1931, p.36). This accompanies what she describes as a very monotonous song. Later in the evening, she explains how the same group "danced, stamping and clapping in a ring or alone to the notes of a flute (*naye*) played by a young man" (p.37). 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" (p.90). This features a bridal effigy in a similar manner to that described by John Fuller (1929) further north near Nazareth a century earlier.

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. (1931, p81)

Differing from Fuller's account, this illustration features a bridal effigy in the procession of the bride not the groom. Granquist subsequently explains that this 'mock-bride' has a function within the local superstition to ward off the evil eye and bad fortune against the bride. These differing versions suggest how thematic elements

within indigenous folkloric dances varied from place to place and possibly between different eras, suggesting 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 mentioned by Spoer in 6.1). 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. (1931, p69-70)

This example suggests the importance of collectivised 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 previously disparaged as insincere (in 6.1), Granquist emphasizes here the way that both grief and joy are expressed as a contribution to social cohesion, and not merely as a result of individual excitement.

6.3.5 Colonial conflict and internal division

Increasing international support for Zionism, spurred on by increasing persecution of the Jews in Central Europe during the 1920s and 1930s, led to an increase in Zionist immigration to British Mandate Palestine. Wave after wave of migrants arrived from Europe with the intention of establishing a national homeland Jews, despite British Mandate laws attempting to limit this influx (Morris, 2001). 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 (Lockman, 1993).

In 1936 a general strike across all of Palestine, protesting against Zionist immigration, was initiated by various localised 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 1936-1939, the largest indigenous rebellion against European colonialism in the Middle East between the World Wars (Swedenburg, 1987). As a peasant uprising, the rebels were based in the countryside and wealthy, urban families came to be seen as collaborators with rulers (Swedenburg, 1993). This rebellion thus eventually became directed at wealthy local people and their debt collectors as much as towards the British authorities (Kayyali, 1978). The urban elite were seen as becoming a "consuming-parasitic class" trying to emulate the West (Zureik, 1977, p.8) and this urban elite often viewed the rebels as simply bandits. This contributed to a growing class divide within the indigenous society (Porath, 1977).

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 realised 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, dependant on peaceful 'Arab-Jewish' relations. Growing Zionist power at the time, along with stated intentions (by the political leaders of the Zionist community) to establish a 'Jewish' nation in Palestine and expel the native population did much to undermine indigenous support for such a peaceful eventuality (Segev, 2000; Morris, 2001; Pappé, 2006). 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 (Khalidi, 1978; Morris, 2001). Having lost its leadership through death, incarceration and exile, the revolt ended amidst much internal conflict amongst indigenous resistance groups (Porath, 1977).

During World War Two 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 World War Two, were beginning to rebel against the British occupation of Palestine. Britain, wearied by World War Two and seeking an exit strategy from Palestine, eventually ceded the problem to the newly formed United Nations in 1947 (Morris, 2001).

Increasing foreign cultural hegemony during the British Mandate era further contributed to the growing division within the indigenous population and to a more general process of deculturation in Palestine. Whilst a number of cultural analysts, from Canaan (1923) to Matar (2000), have emphasized the impact of Western and particularly British hegemony on this phase of deculturation, it is important to acknowledge the similarly powerful influence of Southern/Eastern hegemony in the form of the Islamic revival movement from the surrounding states. These twin hegemonies were aimed at different strata of the indigenous society however, and thus contributed to a growing socio-cultural schism between the wealthy urban population and the poorer rural population.

6.3.6 Western cultural hegemony and local dance practices

During the 1920s urbanites from notable families (who had previously constituted the intelligentsia of the indigenous nationalist movement) had become more and more integrated into the administration of the British Mandate (Swedenburg, 1993). As such, their socio-cultural experience became more increasingly exposed to European cultural practices than 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.

Along with other imported knowledge and ideals, European dance practices were actively promoted to the indigenous population within the British Mandate school system. Predominantly engaging children from the wealthier urban class, these schools provided lessons in 'international folk dance' within their physical education curricular. The word 'international' in this context referred to folk dances from Europe and Russia. Whilst 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 was based on European styles of movement (Wadea Jarrar-Haddad, personal communication, December 19, 2006). As a reflection of European aesthetics and moral codes, this compulsory dance education for the indigenous urban classes can be seen as fostering a distance between urban dance practices and rural dance practices.

Similarly the Scout movement, established in Palestine in 1912, expanded during this era and introduced regimented group movement patterns/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 also several public venues in which this local urban class experienced European music and social dancing. The most prestigious and active of these was the Hotel Odeh, or Grand Hotel, 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. With one of the highest altitudes in Palestine it experienced cool evenings even in mid-summer. 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, whilst Ramallah was smaller than other urban centres such as Hebron, Nablus, Jerusalem and the coastal ports, it had become a social centre for the region's wealthy families by the 1930s.

The Hotel Odeh presented European musical ensembles (mostly Italian but also occasionally groups from the surrounding region) playing European dance music. These performed to an average of 200 patrons each night on weekends in the summer, under the open air in a converted caravanserai within the hotel grounds. On these occasions, the urban elite from across Palestine participated in European ballroom dances. Whilst there were frequent weddings held in the hotel, local peasant wedding dances such as dabkeh were not participated in at these events (Aida Odeh, personal

communication, August 19, 2005). The form of social entertainment provided by the Hotel Odeh was similarly promoted to the wealthy urban population at the Hotel Hamra in Ramallah and the Orient Hotel in Jerusalem, although on a smaller scale.

During the Great Revolt, the Hotel Odeh 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 (2004) presented a nostalgic reminiscence of “belly-dancing” in the 1930s as a child at *istiqbals*, or private women-only parties, amongst the urban elite of Jerusalem. 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. My research has revealed no further references to (or recollections of) such belly-dancing, so it is uncertain how extensive or novel this practice was locally.

6.3.7 Eastern cultural hegemony and local dance practices

In contrast to the urban-elite in Palestine, the peasant class, and peasant folk practices, were increasingly coming under the hegemony 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 Shaykh ‘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 amongst recently dispossessed rural peasants, and touring the Haifa area as a marriage registrar promoting the development of agricultural cooperatives (Swedenburg, 1993). The *Salafya* movement further expanded in Palestine following the death of Al-Qassam, when Sheik Al-Husseini, as the Mufti of Jerusalem, entered into a formal relationship with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Whilst Al-Husseini

was subsequently exiled by the British, the ties between Islam in Palestine and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood became more firmly entrenched during the Great Revolt (Abu-Amr, 1994).

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 amongst peasants because it directly confronted British Imperialism and Zionist colonization in ways that the traditional urban authorities had not (Seikaly, 1995).

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. As Beverly Milton Edwards (1999) argued, 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 with Afghanistan's Taliban) but was instead seeking to reinvigorate the position of Islamic principles within contemporary struggles and concerns. Acknowledging this distinction allows for a clearer understanding of the desired cultural directions of the Islamic movement in Palestine (discussed further in 8.3).

The cultural shifts instigated by the Salafya movement thus took on a political significance within Palestine, with cultural action indicating hegemonic influence. Clothing 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" (Abu Zu'bi, 1987, p.21). 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* (checkered peasant head cloth) in place of the urban headgear that was perceived to be foreign (Swedenburg, 1993).

Of noteworthy relevance to indigenous folk dance culture, the Salafya movement vociferously attacked local folk-Islam practices. Such practices were seen as a superstitious distraction from true Islam and a divisive cultural factor amongst the wider Muslim population of the region (Schleifer, 1979; Kanaana, 1994). The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which constituted the principal religious source of the Islamic reform movement in Palestine, had specifically denigrated the social value of traditional dance forms (Van Nieuwkerk, 1995). If such dance practices are to be recognized as evolving within an interdependent network of cultural practices and meanings, then the revision of the local religious ideals and folk customs would have inevitably resulted in changes to associated dance activities, and may even have resulted in the discontinuity of certain dances in certain locations. It might thus be assumed that the Salafya movement had an adverse affect on the continuity of certain traditional dance practices. Of these, the mourning dances would have been particularly at risk. As Spoer and Spoer (1927) observed in relation to the *latm* (mourning dance) of the rural population of Palestine, the Prophet Mohammed had specifically forbidden the practice of wailing for the dead.

The diminished status of various local folkdance practices amongst the indigenous population during this era might thus be attributed to hegemonic influences from both the East and West, and an academic neglect within local cultural commentary. This disinterest was, however, soon to be challenged by various parties.

Chapter 7: Dance revived

Folkdance revival movements had been a common means of consolidating political identification in 19th Century Europe (Friedland, 1998). As this chapter examines, such a phenomenon was emulated in the 20th Century within post-colonial nationalist movements in the Middle East. The practice of dance revival involved providing certain local dance practices with a secondary existence, as performances of cultural identity (Hoeburger, 1968). This secondary existence diverged from the dance's primary existence as a social ritual within a community, and was not merely a shift from participation to performance. In contrast to the 'opening-of-the-dance-circle' by local peasants that occurred as an economic enterprise in 19th Century Palestine, this second-existence dance revival movement was politically motivated and often involved the participation in, and presentation of, folkdances by those who had no experience of them in their primary existence.

In order to illustrate the subjective nature of salvagism and the multiplicity of interpretations of cultural history, I examine here how three different salvagist movements gave a secondary existence to the dances of the indigenous population of Palestine: Zionism, Pan-Arabism and Palestinian Nationalism. As this chapter discusses, each approached the revival process from differing ideological *and* aesthetic paradigms, which subsequently shaped the cultural products that emerged.

7.1 Zionist salvagism

7.1.1 Zionist collective identity and representations of the indigenous culture of Palestine

Within Zionist discourse in the British Mandate period, the representation of the indigenous culture of Palestine varies. Masalha (1992) illustrated how Zionist impressions in popular literature during this time depicted the entire 'Arab' population as unsettled and nomadic by nature. Descriptions of them living in tents and moving from place to place highlighted a pragmatism in the Zionist political ideal of transferring the indigenous population into other 'Arab' countries. Within more academic representations, the indigenous population was recognized as both urban and rural. These descriptions were generally written from a very etic perspective,

however. Patai (1947; 1949) considered how indigenous traditional cultural practices (mostly negatively) contrasted with contemporary Zionist cultural practices. In more direct reference to the arts, Shimoni (1948) described the indigenous population as lacking creativity and generally backward, lazy and uneducated prior to the motivating arrival of the British Mandate. Of particular note, his observations on the non-existence of local educational institutes contrasts with Khalidi's (1998) later documentation of more than 500 state, Christian and Muslim schools in Palestine at the end of the Ottoman empire.

Other Zionist representations had a more nostalgic and paternalistic flavour, similar to those produced by white colonizers in southern Africa (Bachur, 1964). This nostalgia was particularly strong within representations of the local dance culture, particularly amongst those who perceived local traditional dances as a legacy from an ancient Jewish civilization. This led to the appropriation of local dance products and their subsequent reinvention as traditional Israeli national dances. In *Dance and authenticity in Israel and Palestine*, Elke Kaschl (2003) suggested that whilst this Zionist engagement with local dance culture might have begun as simply an Orientalist curiosity, or a sharing of culture between colonizers and colonized, it subsequently became integrated into a wider political plan that ultimately marginalized the indigenous population.

This Zionist appropriation of the indigenous dance practices of Palestine emerged out of a particular socio-political context that was overwhelmingly defined by the oppression of ethnic and religious minorities in Europe. Aesthetic ideals such as Max Nordau's (1903/1993) *New Muscular Jew* sought to re-imagine the cultural identity of European 'ghetto Jews'. This stimulated Zionist pioneers to create a more assertive, masculine and powerful collective identity. As European émigrés, they wished to emancipate themselves from the cloistered, downtrodden image of European Jewry and simultaneously release themselves from Occidental cultural expressions (Berkowitz, 1993). For dance, 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 Israel¹⁴" (Friedhaber, 1995, p 13). Whilst Romanian social dances such as

¹⁴ Within 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.

the horah remained popular in many Zionist communities in Palestine (Kadman, 1975), it and other European dance styles did not satisfy a political need to shift away from a European identity. As one kibbutznik¹⁵ observed in 1929, “because we have no dances of our own, we have stopped dancing” (Friedhaber, 1995, p 13).

This cultural vacuum had emerged as a colonial stage between rejecting the past identity and creating a new one. 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” (as cited in Ingber, 2000, p. 43). Given the oppression of Jews in Europe at the time, a need emerged to produce non-European cultural items, and no longer 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” (as cited in Ingber, 1974, p.17). Cultural movements amongst 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.

7.1.2 Zionist perceptions of indigenous dance practices

Searching for appropriate cultural roots that might authenticate the political vision of a Jewish state in an oriental land, European Zionists observed the indigenous villagers of Palestine and imagined a living relic of Jewish culture and people from Biblical times (Ingber, 1974; Kaschl, 2003). In this sense Zionist pioneers were continuing 19th century Orientalist conceptions of a Palestinian culture that had been frozen in time and should be salvaged. The quest for cultural roots, however, stimulated a more nostalgic fascination in indigenous peasant culture than that possessed by the Orientalists. The following account of a local peasant dance performance provides an illustration of this imaginative experience for Zionists at the time. Vera Goldman recalls watching

¹⁵ Member of a Kibbutz, or Zionist communal settlement

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”¹⁶ 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.

(1945, p5-6)

This account provides an illustration of the continuation of indigenous dance as an entertainment industry (as discussed in 6.2) 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 observed as having a certain theatrical polish. This suggests a series of local artistic adaptations, as the dance is not just an opening-of-the-circle to present a participatory event to curious onlookers, but an event more intricately designed for appreciation as dynamic visual entertainment.

Of particular interest, however, is Goldman’s belief that the indigenous peasant dabkeh spontaneously transferred into the cultural practices of immigrant European Jews. It suggests 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. A further analysis of the cultural evolution of Zionism reveals a very different process of aesthetic connection, however.

¹⁶ Transliterations of this Arabic term vary. Generally within contemporary Palestinian nationalist discourse, it is spelt and pronounced *dabkeh*. Within Zionist discourse in English, it generally emerges as *deppka*, *debka*, *debkah* or *debkeh*. See (Kaschl, 2003) for further discussion.

7.1.3 Appropriation and the evolution of Zionist cultural identity

Whilst 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 began a meticulous study of the local peasant dabkeh. These steps were then re-choreographed into stage presentations of folk dance by Zionist youth (Ingber, 1974).

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, 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. (as cited in Ingber, 1974, p.37)

Bergstein perceived this peasant dance in Palestine according to familiar choreographic patterns that had been defined for her by Rudolph Laban¹⁷ and European classical ballet. Her subsequent choreographies attempted to integrate this perception of indigenous movements within Zionist wedding dances, as a reflection of Jewish traditions (Ingber, 2000). 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 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

¹⁷ A leading European dance educator and choreographer of the time.

restrained, erect bearing, and the special, abrupt rhythm. (as cited in Ingber, 1974, p.18-19).

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 folkdances, created and refined in the three years since the previous Dalya Festival (Ingber, 1974).

7.1.4 The closed encampment of Zionist cultural evolution

Whilst the study of indigenous dance practices was broadly undertaken by Zionist pioneers, it remained narrowly focused on the local rural population. As Kaschl (2003) observed, within the discourse of Zionist/Israeli folk choreographers learning local dances, no comment is made on the cultural practices of an educated and urban indigenous population. It appears that they do not exist. Instead the Zionists perceive villagers behaving in simplistic ways and offering nostalgic images of bygone eras. Whilst Ingber (1974) suggested that this research generally reflected the Zionists respect and admiration for the native population, this is perhaps a romanticized speculation. Suggesting that these personal encounters occurred within a socio-political climate defined by a hierarchical relationship of unequal power, Kaschl observed that the indigenous population were generally perceived as useful cultural vessels and not seen "as active, equal members of possibly the same community" (2003, p.101).

The Zionist salvaging of indigenous dance practices in British Mandate Palestine occurred within the specific context of constructing an Israeli cultural identity above the existing indigenous population. As dances, they were very much designed for the closed encampment of Zionist identity, and not as an evolutionary extension of the

indigenous population's culture¹⁸. Dance steps, formations and movements were studied and replicated for their aesthetic value and accorded new symbolic meanings associated with Zionist nationalism (Ingber, 1974). 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 better understand and integrate 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 (Cohen, 1984).

Further Dalya festivals continued after the establishment of Israel in 1948, providing a national showcase and source of inspiration for future generations of Israeli folk dance choreographers. The folk dances constructed became prominent ambassadors for Israeli cultural identity around the world (Hermon, 1981). Zionist choreographer Gurit Kadman recalled the significance of these dances within 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. (Kadman 1975, p 30)

This process of cultural salvage and revival was therefore particularly effective politically. As a process it may seem peculiar, in that the salvaged culture was glorified whilst the population from whom the culture was salvaged became denigrated. This approach to cultural salvage occurred, however, through a particular paradigm that envisaged contemporary indigenous dance practices as a static relic of

¹⁸ Kaschl (2003) goes on to argue how the subsequent dance performances by the indigenous community in Israel (controversially referred to as 'Israeli Arabs' inside Israel) were actually impeded from evolving, as a result of policies emanating out of the Israeli Ministry of Culture. This was ostensibly undertaken to preserve Arab culture, but in effect reduced popular representations of this population to displays of a static society.

ancient Jewish culture. This was 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 (Morris, 2001).

7.1.5 The subsequent de-arabization of Israeli folk dance

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, the cultural input of the indigenous population. As Yael Zerubavel explains, "ironically, the recovery of the [Israeli] nation's roots in the ancient past implied playing down its roots in exile as well as the renunciation of the Palestinians' roots in the same land" (1997, p.22). This process had begun by the late Mandate era, within books published in the United States of America promoting the Zionist colonial project. *Palestine Dances!* (Chochem & Roth, 1946) provided 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 *Dances of Palestine* (Berk & Delakova, 1947), much emphasis is given to the importance of cultural pluralism and the acceptance of Jewish traditions in the United States of America, but again no reference is given to the non-Jewish peasants of Palestine from whom the dabkeh presented in the book was appropriated.

Israel's absorption of Sephardic Jews from Yemen following 1948 introduced a new oriental source for the development of Israel's traditional dance identity. Emphasis on this new source began to emerge within texts on Israeli dance. Ayalah Kaufman (1951) and Gurit Kadman (1952) 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 (see Ingber, 1974) place a greater emphasis on the creative adaptations of the Israeli folk choreographers than on the cultural sources. 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. (as cited in Ingber, 1974. p16)

This notion is similarly addressed by Kadman (1960), who credited Israeli folk dance to the spontaneous creations of rural kibbutzniks, living in the land of Israel and reviving Biblical memories. Israeli dance notator Noah Eshkol, however, observed that such an attitude was not unproblematic. Being called upon to advise in a court case regarding the intellectual property rights of one Israeli choreographer's folk dance composition, Eshkol expressed an incredulity at the idea that supposed folk heritage could be reduced to the possession of an individual (Eshkol & Shmuel, 1974).

7.1.6 Miracles and ethics

Amongst the second generation of Israeli folk dance choreographers, the emphasis on 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 extolled 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. (as cited in Ingber, 1974, p. 47-48)

This excerpt illustrates both the prevailing non-recognition of indigenous sources within Israeli dance traditions and the subsequent political impact of such a construction of tradition. Israeli ingenuity is credited with fostering a sudden folk dance culture, and this folk dance culture is credited with legitimizing Israeli cultural identity abroad.

Of particular interest to a secular analysis of cultural evolution, this perception that Israeli folk dance culture had emerged from nothing continues a more general

idealization that the state of Israel had emerged subject to divine intervention. Avi Shlaim (1999) discussed this concept with reference to the various military and agricultural miracles attributed to Israel's birth. The idea is extended into Israeli folk dance, through Gurit Kadman's reflective assessment:

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.
(1975, p. 28-30)

Recognizing the actual socio-political and cultural influences that shaped the emergence of traditional Israeli dances allows for a challenge to the notion that Israeli dance culture emerged through such a supernatural process. It also challenges the idea that the dance simply re-awoke within the genes of Jews reunited with an ancient homeland. Acknowledging this does not diminish the importance or value of this dance form. It may lead, however, to a greater appreciation of the various cultural forces involved and of the evolutionary (rather than divine) nature of Israel's dance culture.

The influence of the indigenous population of Palestine was being recalled within 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 however, and very little such analysis subsequently arose within Zionist folkdance discourse (Kaschl, 2003).

Such a lack of ethical consideration was not limited to Israeli cultural commentators. Within the reviews of *Shorashim* in *Dance Research Journal* (Squires, 1975; Poretz, 1975), the Israeli process of creating folklore is challenged by the writers on the grounds of cultural authenticity. No ethical comment is made by the reviewers, however, regarding the actual process of cultural appropriation from an indigenous population. This might seem a spectacular oversight, given that the Israeli political state being culturally legitimized by such links to the orient were, at the time, denying

the very existence of the indigenous cultural group that the dances had been appropriated from.

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

7.2 Pan-Arabist salvage

7.2.1 The Nakba and cultural trauma

In 1947 Britain passed the issue of Palestine's political future to the United Nations, who subsequently sent a newly formed United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to tour and assess the region. Morris's (2001) suggestion that 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 provides an illustration of the political impact of the Western cultural development paradigm. Extending the League of Nation's unilinear conception of progress and development, the socio-cultural reaction of UNSCOP was to prove critical in their subsequent recommendation to cede half of the region to the Zionists. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly thus voted in favour of donating 55% of what had been British Mandate Palestine to a nationalist European immigrant movement that constituted only 37% of the total population and owned less than 7% of the land (Morris, 2001). Many people both inside Palestine and in the wider world felt that through this partition plan the indigenous population of Palestine was being made to compensate for European guilt over the Holocaust (Cohen, 1982; Khalidi, 1991).

Civil strife thus continued within 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 May 14, 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 can be seen to be giving the Zionist militias great advantage over scattered, localized indigenous resistance (Shlaim, 1999). Against the 35,000 strong

Haganah and other coordinating Zionist militias, the indigenous population had no centralized military organization (Levenburg, 1993). 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 (Morris 1988; 2001; Masalha, 1992; Pappé, 2006).

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared its independence. On May 15, 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 surrounding nations. These included the 60,000 inhabitants of Lyd and Ramle who were forcibly expelled by troops from the newly nationalized and consolidated Israeli Defense Forces (Morris 1988; Masalha, 1992; Pappé, 2006).

On June 16, 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, who then sold it on to the Jewish National Fund (JNF). This resulted in the Israeli State and the JNF suddenly owning 95% of the land in the newly formed State of Israel (Kanaaneh, 1995). 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 and their homes in towns and cities re-inhabited by the growing number of immigrant Zionists¹⁹ (Morris, 2001; Pappé, 2006).

The conflict of 1947-48, commonly referred to in Arabic as the *Nakba*²⁰ (Zurayk, 1956), remains the penultimate traumatic event in historic narratives of the indigenous population of Palestine. Suddenly uprooted and traveling in different directions in

¹⁹ The 'Law of Return', passed by the Israeli government in 1950, allowed for anybody in the world with a Jewish grandparent to be granted Israeli citizenship.

²⁰ Literally translating as the 'Catastrophe'.

panic and confusion, this displacement of more than half of the indigenous population of Palestine induced a division of families and communities (Morris, 1988; Masalha, 1992; Pappé, 2006). The displaced population mostly ended up in sprawling refugee camps within the surrounding nations of Lebanon, Transjordan, Egypt and Syria, subject to a different political status in each (Khalidi, 1998).

This *experienced* collective trauma, as opposed to a *mediated* collective trauma, meant that the culture was being actually damaged rather than being simply a mediator of damage amongst the population (as discussed in 3.3.2). By fragmenting the existing familial, social, economic, geographic and political bonds, the Nakba thus deconstructed both the indigenous society and its intangible culture. Amongst these elements of intangible culture, the variety of existing 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 geographic localities and socio-political environments that they began to inhabit. This dispersal and the subsequent disparate processes of cultural reconstruction thus render any singular historical narrative of the indigenous population of Palestine illusory (Said, 1986). From this point, therefore, this thesis focuses on dance practices in the CWB²¹.

7.2.2 Trauma, identity and dance in the West Bank from 1948-1967

The result of the 1947-48 war provided the first political demarcation for the Western, Northern and Southern edges of the West Bank, as the remaining portions of Palestine were subsequently annexed by Transjordan (the West Bank) and Egypt (the Gaza Strip). The 765,000 residents of the West Bank, including more than 321,000 refugees from other parts of Palestine²², entered a nineteen-year period under the rule of a Jordanian monarch. This very mixed population of refugees –tribal nomads, illiterate peasants and educated city dwellers, Christians and Muslims, infants and elderly,

²¹ For research on the dance practices of the remaining indigenous population of Palestine inside the 1948 borders of Israel, see (Eshkol, 1974; Kaschl, 2003). For research on the dance practices of the exiled indigenous population of Palestine in Jordan, see (Ladkani, 2001; Van Aken, 2006).

²² From a 1950 census (McCarthy, 1990).

wealthy and poor, from mountains, plains and coastal ports- all suddenly found themselves sharing the common experience of dispossession and exile.

Amongst this population, there prevailed a general sense that the sudden and disastrous political situation was temporary and would be soon remedied by international intervention (Kanaana, 2000). Particularly for the exiled rural population, this led to constant attempts to return 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 ten to fifteen thousand such attempts annually. This figure dropped to six to seven thousand annually in 1955-56. The vast majority came to harvest crops left behind, plant new crops in their fields, visit relatives or retrieve goods, with less than 10% involving any acts of sabotage or political vengeance (Morris, 2001).

These crossings resulted, however, in the execution of between 2,700 and 5,000 mostly unarmed refugees by the Israeli military between 1948-56, in addition to incalculable cases of rape and violent abuse of such 'infiltrators' by their Israeli captors. Jordan supported this closed-border policy, imprisoning and fining over a thousand refugees annually for attempting to cross back to their old lands. Between 1949-56, a further 10,000 fellahin and bedouin inhabiting the border region inside Israel were rounded up and expelled into the West Bank (Morris, 1993).

The period of 1947-67 thus maintained the West Bank as a perpetual, low-key battlefield, subject to continual cross-border raids by the Israeli military. Initially using mortars and aircraft to strafe and bombard border villages, this method resulted in massive civilian casualties and international condemnation. The Israeli military thus 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 60 villagers (mostly women and children) executed by Israeli soldiers under the command of subsequent prime minister Ariel Sharon (Morris, 1996; Sharett, 2002).

During this period, Palestine ceased to exist as a political or administrative entity. The Gaza Strip provided the only location in historic Palestine where the indigenous

population was allowed to organize itself on a political platform that represented a Palestinian collective identity (Kanaana, 1994). Just as historical narratives were being constructed inside Israel that denied any pre-existing indigenous identity, Jordanian public forums were attempting to redefine the displaced indigenous population of Palestine according to a constructed Jordanian national identity (Zureik, 1977). Whilst discourse on an independent Palestinian identity was officially censored within Jordan, popular allegiance to Jordan was never fully achieved in the West Bank. This censorship did, however, keep Palestinian nationalism on the periphery of cultural references, impeding 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. For the exiled indigenous population of historic Palestine however, the unity suggested by Pan-Arabism offered the most salient hope of salvation from the overpowering Israeli military (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1993). This inclination towards Pan-Arab unity would subsequently result in a particularly lasting impact on the reconstruction of their traditional dance practices.

Similarly, the religious and spiritual identity of the West Bank Islamic population (already introduced to the Islamic reforms from outside through Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and Hajj amin Al-Husseini in the 1930s) continued to be externally influenced under Jordanian rule. Amongst the refugee community, the tension between conservatism and modernism contributed to a politicised religious environment capable of providing broad support for the Islamic revival movement (Abidi, 1965). As an instrument of the Jordanian monarchy, however, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Amman closely watched the preaching activities in the West Bank. The Jordanian parliament's Sermonising 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 Waqf-run mosques of the West Bank. This hegemony helped the Jordanian monarchy impede any localised 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 subsequent eras would become a major feature of the West Bank cultural environment, were much less co-ordinated during this time (Milton-Edwards, 1999).

The weakened influence of the Islamic reform movement and connections with the Muslim Brotherhood may have thus meant a less vigorous criticism of the West Bank's folk Islam practices, including dance rituals associated with death and worship. This is very hard to speculate on however, as my research has uncovered no studies undertaken (by locals or foreigners) into rural dance practices in the West Bank during this era. The European fascination with the culture of Palestine halts abruptly after more than a century of fervent research and speculation. Palestinian nationalist research into local dance practices does not yet commence. The 1948-67 period stands, therefore, as a literary vacuum on West Bank rural dance history.

Some of the local informants contributing to my research have provided very vague recollections of rural dance events, but with no clear memory of any specific discontinuity or adaptation occurring within the dance practices of these events. Most prominently recalled was the wedding dabkeh. During the Jordanian era in the West Bank, the dabkeh continued as a participatory rural dance in which all of the attending members of (an often gender-segregated) wedding party could join a curving dancing line. This line was lead by a *lawih*, who functioned as a captain of the dance. The *lawih* would call out named dabkeh steps to the line of dancers, who would then repeat that step. The *lawih* would also dance solo improvisations in front of the group. The dancing and singing line would continue on indefinitely to live music, usually produced by a *ney* (flute) and *tabla* (hand drum). Dancers freely joined and left the curving line from the wider celebration activities (personal communication, Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba, July 3, 2004, Salibah Totah, July 6, 2004, and Sherif Kanaana December 7, 2004).

Less could be recalled about other traditional dance practices at the time, such as those related to mourning. Whilst future research through interviews with elderly members of the rural population may reveal more information, it is currently very difficult to speculate on how the Nakba and the subsequent period under Jordanian rule directly impacted on the dance practices of the rural population.

7.2.3 The continuation of foreign hegemony through dance

A clearer picture can be drawn of the urban dance practices during this era, however. The CWB remained a cultural hub, particularly 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 due to 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.

Those attending continued to partake 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. 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 (personal communication, Aida Odeh, August 19, 2005).

The dance education of the urban elite similarly followed European styles. In the mid 1950s, St. Josef's (a private girl's 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 result in any public displays by students beyond their high school years (personal communication, Sister Elizabeth Dimitri, August 2, 2005).

European dance activities, introduced during the Mandate era, thus continued to be emulated within the limited circles of the local population's urban elite. The most enduring foreign influence on West Bank dance practices arrived between 1962 and

1966 however, 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 and similar establishments.

At that time, there were no other locally performing dabkeh groups and so local youth were specially trained to perform rural folkdances. The Ramallah Nights festivals thus instigated a transition in perceptions of folkdance 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 salvage. 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 (Personal communication, Saliba Totah, July 6, 2004, and Ziad Khalaf, July 5, 2004).

7.2.4 Wadea Jarrar, Ba'albeck and Pan-Arab folklore

The Arab folklore movement gained popular prominence within 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 (Kanaana, 1994; Bushnaq, 1994). The Arab League presented the first *Folklore Conference* in Egypt in 1964, seeking to celebrate diversity whilst revealing commonalities amongst those nations of the Middle East associated with Arab ethnicity.

Such Pan-Arab folkdance salvagism did not arrive into the West Bank from Egypt however, but from Lebanon. This was principally through the choreographer/teachers Wadea Haddad-Jarrar and her husband Marwan Jarrar. Whilst their exposure in the

West Bank was limited to several months spread between the years of the Ramallah Nights festivals in the 1960s, their influence had a profound impact on the construction of local staged folk dance aesthetics and subsequent decades of local salvagist and post-salvagist dance production (personal communication, Saliba Totah, July 6, 2004; and Ziad Khalaf, July 5, 2004).

Born near Safad in northern Palestine during the British Mandate era, Wadea Haddad was part of a wealthy landowning 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 then come home and teach them to the young Wadea and her sisters. This provided her with a basic knowledge of local rural dance practices, a knowledge that was unusual within her social class. Attending a British Mandate school in Haifa, Wadea Haddad was more formally taught European folk and social dances within the school's Physical Education curriculum. In 1947 she went to England to study physical education at the Bergman Osterburg Trust in Dartford, Kent²³, where she gained a more thorough education in European folk and ballroom dance forms.

Graduating top of her year in 1951, Wadea Haddad 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 Organizer of Physical Education for all 17 state schools in Beirut. Training teachers, she began working at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and creating folk dances for the AUB 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 folk dance competitions and gain public acclaim. Seeking to define more rigorously 'Lebanese' folk dance, Marwan Jarrar and Wadea Haddad-Jarrar subsequently undertook research in 14 villages around Lebanon in 1955. In line with the Pan-Arab salvagist paradigm, they perceived local peasants as the repository of the region's long-term cultural identity, and were intent upon salvaging static dance practices in order to reconstruct an authentic Lebanese post-colonial cultural identity.

²³ which subsequently became part of the University of Greenwich.

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 high-brow European theatrical spectacles. The Lebanese President's wife Zalfa Cham'oun was particularly inspired by the Soviet folk dance specialist Igor Moiseyev and his troupe. Whilst Moiseyev offered to choreograph a Lebanese folk dance production the following year, it was instead determined that two Lebanese folk dance specialists should be sent to Russia to study. Wadea Haddad-Jarrar and Marwan Jarrar were chosen, and living in Moscow for three months in 1956, studied classical ballet, modern dance and international folkdance 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 (personal communication, Wadea Jarrar-Haddad, December 19, 2006).

Illustrating the anti-colonial political climate of the time, pamphlets promoting the dance in these productions declared "...Bacchic rites and the folkloric dabka²⁴ dance become siblings reunited after thousands of years of foreign intervention" (Stone, 2003, p.20).

This wish to establish a cultural link with the ancient past, in defiance of both Ottoman and European cultural hegemony, reflected the prevalent Pan-Arab salvagist ideal. Whilst 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 (Zuhur, 1998). 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

²⁴ Another variation on the spelling of dabkeh.

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 Lebanon²⁵. As Wadea Haddad-Jarrar and Marwan Jarrar subsequently toured the Middle East and taught other groups, they brought the emerging aesthetics of the wider Pan-Arab salvagist movement to the West Bank.

7.2.5 The Ramallah Nights Festivals and Pan-Arab salvagism.

Wadea Haddad-Jarrar and Marwan Jarrar taught and staged four folkdance productions in Ramallah as part of the annual Ramallah Nights festivals. The process of theatrical production for these events involved a didactic method of cultural instruction. Local young men and women, selected to participate in the performances, came from the urban Ramallah environment. As Wadea Haddad-Jarrar recalls,

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. (personal communication, December 19, 2006).

The Jarrars thus first gave them exercises and movements 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. There was no reference to the local dance knowledge, or to local dance movements and stylizations (personal communication Saliba Totah, July 6, 2004, and Wadea Jarrar Haddad, December 19, 2006).

This process of representing folkdance on stage was thus wholly imported into the West Bank through the Ramallah Nights festivals. Whilst it resembled local social dabkeh and was 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,

²⁵ Franken (1998) points to a similar process to in the construction of Egyptian folk dances in the same era.

the local cultural influences had in effect been cleansed through the teaching and staging processes.

As discussed in the following chapters, in subsequent decades some of the dancers who had been student performers in the Ramallah Nights festivals would continue to produce staged dabkeh in emulation of this theatrical style. Others would seek to reconstruct a more distinct Palestinian identity within local dabkeh productions, in line with shifting political paradigms. Certain structural adaptations, which presented a radical departure from local dabkeh practices in the social context, would continue in the staging of local dance heritage, however. From interviews with local informants, these adaptations would seem to include:

- 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 memorising 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 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.

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 reflected a process of foreign cultural hegemony. A Pan-Arab folkdance format, which had been conceived from a European folkdance paradigm, can be seen establishing a precedent for the staging of folk dance in the CWB. This placed staged folkdance in the CWB on a developmental pathway that had been predetermined by decisions made in a European cultural context. Subsequent struggles to re-invest a localised integrity into theatrical folkdance production had thus to negotiate with the cultural expectations established in this process.

It might be presumed that social dances, when placed in a theatrical context with an artistic purpose, will inevitably result in such changes regardless of the cultural context. These and other decisions relating to the staging of dabkeh did not arise, however, through local consideration. They were determined outside the community, as steps necessary for social dances to be accepted in an artistic, theatrical context. Whilst 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.

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 organised under the auspices of the Jordanian King and promotional material associated with the events (e.g. *Baladiyyat Ramallah*, 1965) advocated a sentimental allegiance to an Arab-Jordanian identity. The performing group that had developed through the Ramallah festivals subsequently represented Jordan in a dabkeh competition at the American University of Beirut. As Kaschl (2003) observed, the term 'Palestinian folk heritage', omnipresent in dabkeh productions in the subsequent decade, was notably absent during this period. The introduction of this particular method of staging dance can be understood, therefore, in the political context of Jordanian nationalism utilising Pan-Arab ideals to foster a sense of regional homogeneity.

7.3 Palestinian nationalist salvagism

7.3.1 The clarity of war and the fog of occupation

The Six Day War of 1967 (June 5-11) became the third international conflict between the 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 (Morris, 2001). 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 successive weeks (Lacquer, 1969). Many of these were second time refugees, having already been exiled from within the 1948 borders of Israel in the earlier conflict, and most joined existing refugee populations on the East Bank of the River Jordan. On July 2, 1967, Israel officially announced it would allow back all of these 1967 refugees, but in practice it permitted only 17,000 to return (Morris, 2001).

From the outset, the new Israeli governing relationship with the population of the West Bank was politically distinct from the previous Jordanian governing relationship. 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 (Hadawi, 1979). Only residents of the newly annexed East Jerusalem were offered citizenship, with such provisos that only 2.3% of the city's population accepted (Baker, 2003). The remainder of the population of East Jerusalem was subsequently categorized by Israel as Jerusalem residents and subject to a different legal status than 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 impact 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 (Boullata, 2004). Even

amongst 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 (Gorkin & Othman, 1996). As the popular novelist Ghassan Kanafani observed, this reunion was particularly clouded because the gate was "being opened from the other side" (1969/2000, p.150), 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" (Bowman, 1994, p.138). These multiple constructions of identity might have possibly merged more readily into a pluralist collective identity had the imposed distinction in legal status by Israel not maintained a clear separation in socio-cultural experience (Said, 1979; 1986).

The practices of the military occupation itself also induced a collectively experienced trauma (see 3.3.2) that further distinguished the population of the West Bank. Kimmerling and Migdal suggested that what began as an "occupation with a smile" (1993, p.252) 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). This misleadingly infers that the suffering of the West Bank population under occupation was a result of the democratic choices made by Israelis however, and not from the disempowering process of military subjugation in and of itself. As Morris pointed out, 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" (2001, p.341).

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 on 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 licenses and family reunion approvals. Some striking shops

were permanently sealed shut by the Israeli military, their business licenses revoked and house-to-house searches were undertaken, actions that might be seen as principally designed to intimidate the population into submission (Morris, 2001).

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 canceled 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 (Gazit, 1985). This social isolation, coupled with what Aida Odeh describes as the “generally depressed mood of the people” led to the permanent closure of the Grand Hotel and its influence on West Bank urban middle-class culture (personal communication, Aida Odeh, August 19, 2005).

Other economic changes within the West Bank were instigated by the Israeli appropriation of local farmland to accommodate new Zionist colonies. By 1973 there were 17 such colonies in the West Bank. By 1977 this had risen to 36. During this period, house demolition became a standard form of both collective punishment and land appropriation, resulting in 1,265 homes of West Bank residents being demolished or sealed in the first 14 years of the occupation (Shaffir, 1999; Morris, 2001). The indigenous population grew in the West Bank through natural increase however, from 677,000 in 1970 to 964,000 in 1980 (McCarthy, 1990).

The 1967 war and subsequent years of occupation thus presented a new socio-political environment for the culture of the West Bank population. This would lead to a significant redefinition of dance practices, within the context of a Palestinian national identity.

7.3.2 The rise of Palestinian nationalism

The losses sustained by the West Bank population within the 1967 war were political as well as material. Pan-Arabism had been defeated, 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 war had drawn attention away from the

plight of this exiled indigenous population. As Milton-Edwards (1999) argued, within public discourse this Pan-Arab military engagement with Israel served to highlight a wider ethnic-Arab aspect to the ongoing tension with Israel whilst diminishing its political effect on the indigenous population of Palestine.

This first decade of the occupation thus saw the ascendancy of the PLO within the West Bank, whose Palestinian nationalist ideology came to replace the earlier pro-Jordanian and pan-Arabist ideologies in local discourse and popular affiliation, as peace treaties between Israel and Egypt were being signed (Sayigh, 1979). This was particularly boosted following the Battle of Karamah in February, 1968, in which an Israeli cross-border raid on the village and refugee camp of Karamah on the East Bank of the Jordan was repelled by PLO fighters (Taraki, 1991). This small victory against the Israeli military (following the thorough defeat of the Six Day War) instilled a new faith in the potential for success of local resistance fighters within an asymmetric battleground (Baumgarten, 2005).

The PLO was composed, however, 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 a sense of religious duty (Baumgarten, 2005, p.33).

The increase in references to Palestinian nationalism within public discourse in the CWB during this era does not indicate that such a collectivised identity did not exist within 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” (Malkki, 1995, p.1) based on a distinct Palestinian national identity. It also involved a new phase of cultural salvage.

7.3.3 Palestinian national identity and peasant heritage salvage

Following the 1967 war, the growth in Palestinian nationalist consciousness in the West Bank stimulated a search for unifying symbols of collective identity through folkloric heritage (Taraki, 1991). In 1972 the first indigenous institute dedicated to researching folklore was established in Al-Bireh²⁶ and in 1974 it began publishing the annual journal *al-Turath wa-'l-Mujtama (Heritage and Society)*. This journal can be seen as defining the cultural constructions of Palestinian nationalist salvagism during the successive 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 protect indigenous “culture and history from Zionist manipulation and distortion” and revive folk heritage as an embodiment of the indigenous population’s attachment to their land (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976, p.460). Folkloric research and activity thus became a highly politicised act and spread rapidly through numerous community centres, social clubs and universities in the West Bank. Amongst the latter, the most influential for the CWB community was Birzeit University, which transformed from a tertiary college in 1975.

The research into folklore by academics in the CWB during this era predominantly involved collecting and categorizing items of tangible and intangible culture in order to foster an impression of stasis in the national character (Hammami & Tamari, 1997). 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. Whilst the folkloric nationalists of the post-67 era (e.g. Alqam, 1994; Haddad, 1994) noted how 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. 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

²⁶ Established through the existing Jam'iyyat In'ash al-Usrah (Society for the Regeneration of the Family), this new organization was founded as the Committee for Social Research and Popular Heritage. The name later changed to the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage.

reinforce an impression that local cultural practices had always been framed in relation to other groups,

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. (Barghouthi, 1994, p.33)

Just as Israel legitimised 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 developing "in spite of, and in the same cases because of" its confrontation with Zionism (Khalidi, 1998, p5-6).

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 infamous claim that there was no such thing as Palestinians (Bushnaq, 1994). This denial of existence had emphasised the virtue of *sumud* (defiant steadfastness) that pervaded the West Bank population at the time (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1993; Barghouthi, 1994). The positing 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 1936-39 against foreign occupation (Swedenburg, 1995).

Through folklore revival the Palestinian nationalist movement thus ironically coupled an imperial hypothesis (cultural stasis) that had been introduced by European cultural hegemony with a post-colonial, counter-hegemonic ideal (local cultural identity). Abdelaziz Abu Hadba, the director of the Centre for Popular Palestinian Heritage, is emphatic on the importance of this merging however:

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. (personal communication, July 3, 2004)

Whilst Khalidi observed that such constructions of nationalist narratives meant that "characteristics of identity became the feature characteristics of Palestinian history"

(1997, p.9), it might also be said that characteristics of history became feature characteristics of Palestinian nationalist identity. In the 1970s, the word *turath* (heritage) markedly became a new part of the daily street language in the West Bank (Bushnaq, 1994). 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 within that collective history, however. *Turath*, as constructed by the nationalist folkloric researchers, thus came to refer to a particular interpretation of specifically rural heritage.

The folkloric nationalist historian's intense focus on a unified national identity resulted, however, in an academic discipline devoid of critical frameworks that might have identified such limitations (Hammami & Tamari, 1997). At the same time, nationalist folklore provided a highly sentimental process of cultural reflection, which subsequently had a prodigious influence on the fostering of local dance aesthetics amongst CWB dance troupes.

7.3.4 The politicization of dabkeh

Not all of the dance performances in the West Bank during this era reflected the salvagist 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 (see 3.4). 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 (one of the subsequent 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 (personal communication, Nadia Aboushi, April 4, 2004).

Similarly, amateur performances of ballets such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the all-female students of St. Josef's school continued through the 1970s. These, again, were limited to the children of the urban elite, however (personal communication, Sister Elizabeth Dimitri, August 2, 2005). In general, the particular dance practices of the urban elite 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 within a classless local dance culture based on nationalist identity.

Before examining the new nationalist dance culture, it is worth noting that the dance practices of the urban elite were not the only ones excluded in the homogenizing process. Several rural feminine traditional dance practices were also neglected within the new folklore revival movement. These most pointedly included women's sword dances and mourning rituals (as described in 6.2 and 6.3). Whilst Nabil Alqam notes the prior existence of a funerary *latm* (1977, p.71), my research has uncovered no further local studies into this traditional movement ritual, and it is not discussed within the dance revival constructions of Palestinian national salvagists.

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 (personal communication, Saliba Totah, July 6, 2004, Nadia Aboushi, April 4, 2004, and Aida Odeh, August 19, 2005). Following 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 (Kaschl, 2003).

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 amongst 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.

Dabkeh also manifested in 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 centered on folklore” (personal communication, April 4, 2006). By the late 1970s, major political parties had dabkeh groups and dabkeh featured as a centrepiece of most political rallies. Musical organizations, such as Fateh’s *al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah* (the Central Band), were dedicated to producing revolutionary songs for these occasions (Massad, 2003). 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, however, to partisan politics. Redefined as a distinctly Palestinian dance and presented/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. As Kaschl observed, dabkeh physically embodied “an active means of resistance, asserting national presence on the land with every stomp of the circling line” (2003, p.93).

Such politicization thus produced dabkeh as a new cultural ritual, proclaiming collective identity through repetitive enactment (Fraleigh, 1999). 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.

During the 1970s dabkeh became a ubiquitous social activity for youth in the CWB. 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 (Taraki, 1990). This mood spread into cultural activity

and community organizations such as the Al-Bireh First Group (a Scouts group) were teaching *dabkeh* to mixed-gender groups of children and youths. The teachers were local volunteers who 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 Mohamad Atta and Wassim al-Kurdi recalled, there was no comprehensive research by the dance teachers and they only taught two dances, the *Tayara* and *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/artistic aspect to public events in social clubs, schools and tertiary education institutes (personal communication, July 3, 2004, and April 4, 2006).

Jeniffer Ladkani contends that for youth in the West Bank, participating in such dabkeh groups was “also often their most direct source of institutionalized political indoctrination” (2001, p.189). The somewhat disparaging term ‘indoctrination’ in Ladkani’s comment suggests that this cultural education process existed to support political ideals and invest new symbolic meanings into the aesthetics of the dance. Ladkani’s etic observation removes this cultural education process, however, from the already highly political context of colonization and military occupation. It might alternatively be understood that this cultural education was less about fostering an *uncritical indoctrination* of youth into counter-hegemonic political paradigms, and more about stimulating a *critical awareness* of the politicized appropriation and censorship of indigenous heritage and history.

7.3.5 The impact of Israeli censorship, suppression and appropriation

The use of folk dance to promote a critical awareness of local heritage and history occurred in a political environment that maintained tight restrictions on public expression. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Israeli military authority imposed a strict code of censorship in the Occupied Territories. West Bank publications about indigenous heritage and folklore were delayed permission and heavily censored (Abu Hadba, 1994b). The scripts of local plays required approval prior to performance, with the permission for such productions being cancelled at the last moment (personal communication, Nadia Aboushi, April 4, 2004). There were even restrictions on

visual artists over the use of the colours of the Palestinian flag (Boullata, 2004). Most notably, this censorship was extended into the textbooks in use in West Bank schools (Brown, 2002; 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 mediums that might provoke empathy towards, and a greater understanding of, collective experiences from the present and past. Folkdance presented a medium that, whilst laden with emotive potential and local historic associations, was seemingly more innocuous than spoken or written words.

Through the Heritage Society in Al-Bireh, 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 (Abu Hadba, 1994b).

The military occupation can thus be considered as a major stimulant in the politicization of folkdance. 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. Appropriated food, clothing, music and dance (as discussed in 7.1) were promoted as Israeli national symbols that could validate Israeli cultural identity (Haddad, 1994). Whilst the appropriation of indigenous cultural items was presented by Zionist commentators as symbolic of the culturally inclusive model of modern Israeli identity (Paine, 1989), it ironically coincided with the political exclusion of the occupied/exiled population bearing these items. Within cultural discourse in the CWB (e.g. El-Funoun, 1986a; Kanaana et al, 1994), the nationalist salvaging 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, however. 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.

(personal communication, April 4, 2006)

The Israeli censorship of indigenous narratives, suppression of folkloric activities and appropriation of items of intangible culture were thus all locally acknowledged as factors that contributed to the increasing politicization of dabkeh and its salvage as a Palestinian national dance. This in turn led to a greater need to define the salvaged dabkeh according to political ideals.

7.3.6 Emphasizing origins and authenticity

In the context of Palestinian national identity in the post-1967 era, indigenous culture in the CWB became subject to a highly politicised vetting process. By striving to authenticate a distinctly 'Palestinian' dabkeh, Palestinian nationalist folklorists attempted to construct a cultural buffer against both colonial appropriation and regional assimilation.

Representing such a paradigm, Abu-Hadba (1994a) distinguished the dabkeh presentations of the 1960s Ramallah Nights festivals from what he posited as authentic Palestinian dabkeh heritage. The actual historical path that the Ramallah Nights dabkeh productions emerged from (as discussed in 7.2) was not examined in such comparative discourses, however. This Rahbanni theatrical style of dabkeh more generally became referred to as Lebanese dabkeh, stimulating a sense that the differences fell along inherent national lines (personal communication, Suhail Khoury, September 19, 2005).

As Kaschl (2003) observed, Palestinian dabkeh was contrasted with Lebanese and other 'Arab' dabkehs in such discourses through particular aesthetic qualities,

described as simple, rustic and earthen. These aesthetic qualities glorified the ancient legacy of a supposedly unadulterated and uncolonized local peasant culture. From such an understanding of dabkeh heritage, Abu Hadba (1994a) argued that the concept of *asalah* (purity and fidelity to the origin) was of paramount importance. 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 (as discussed in 7.1). By contrast, Palestinian nationalist folklorists stressed that dabkeh was of-the-people not of-a-person, that it was timeless and named after specific geographic locations, all in order to emphasize that Palestinian dabkeh was the authentic *turath* (El-Funoun 1986a).

Following the general claims by Palestinian nationalist folklorists positing links between local heritage and ancient cultural systems, the salvagists of Palestinian nationalist dabkeh presented theoretical explanations regarding the ancient sources and peasant nature of the movements. Al-Awwad (1983) claimed dabkeh jumps came from ancient Canaanite fertility rites, to scare away evil forces and protect the security and growth of seedlings. Fawaz Traboulsi suggested that dabkeh's left-leg-leading had emerged from the peasant body ploughing the field with the left foot forward (1996). Abdel-Latif Barghouthi (1994) suggested that the basic step patterns of the dabkeh were rooted in ancient rural symbology. These accompanied claims that Palestinian dabkeh, prior to the socio-political upheavals of the 20th century, was an unchanging cultural form.

Vehement protests regarding *tatwir* (adaptation) in dabkeh by leading folklorists (e.g. Abu-Hadba, 1994a; Hamdan, 1996) subsequently infused the version of dabkeh salvaged by Palestinian nationalists with an almost sacred sense of stasis. As origins had become equated with purity, adaptations had become equated with corruption. From the Palestinian folkloric nationalist paradigm, dabkeh was valued not 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 cultural changes from the wider social environment.

The wariness of evolution helped consolidate the cultural ideals and aesthetics that had been posited by folkloric nationalists in relation to dabkeh. In doing so it introduced a hegemonic intent over the local dance practices, rather than simply a new cultural influence. This Palestinian nationalist salvagism induced a standardizing process that replaced "former flexibility with a canon of fixed rules" (Kaschl, 2003, p.93), which attempted to universally define (amongst other things) the gender norms of a collective Palestinian identity.

7.3.7 Women's role in dance as defined by nationalist salvage

Whilst Joseph Massad suggested that Palestinian nationalism had provided "a masculinizing ritual, wherein Arab women could transform themselves into men through participating in the liberation of Palestine" (2003, p.29), this observation presents a particularly etic conception of both gender norms and women's historical role within the indigenous population of Palestine. Within local dance practices, the opposite can be seen to be occurring. Palestinian nationalist salvagists 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.

The position of women in the CWB 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 (Antonius, 1981) and women had played a very active role in the political and military struggle against the Israeli occupation (Jad 1990). The female body and sexual presence in public was subject to increasing social censorship however, resulting from the counter-hegemonic influence of anti-colonial aesthetics and the Islamic reform movement (Hammami, 1990). This presented a major challenge for the performed representations of Palestinian national identity, as the public mood increasingly demanded both women's symbolic presence (Al-awwad, 1983) 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 salvagist definitions of women's identity in Palestinian dance can be seen as centered around three main themes: what movements females

should do, what clothing females should wear and the physical interrelationship between male and female performers onstage. The following points highlight these definitions.

Dance movements had become very gender segregated, as dabkeh was forthrightly presented as a men's dance within the Palestinian nationalist salvagism paradigm. This followed the notion that *asalah* was being eroded through women's participation in, and performance of, dabkeh (e.g. Abu Hadba, 1994a). From this paradigm, women traditionally engage in *ra'as*, a feminine dance form that contrasted with the masculine, stomping dabkeh line (e.g. Hamdan, 1996). Describing such *ra'as* as "soloistic", "sexual", "about beauty and the erotic", Abdel-azziz Abu Hadba determined that such dancing would not be accepted by the public in times of political struggle (personal communication, July 3, 2004). 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 (e.g. Abu Hadba, 1994a).

Within this paradigm it was conceded that a much more subdued woman's form of *dabkeh*, or *dahraja*, existed in traditional dance. Nadia al-Butmah (1996) described how 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. Such public performances of women in dance were morally redefined by nationalist salvagists as "devoid of explicitly 'feminine' movements and overt allusions to the female body" (Kaschl, 2003, p.87). In this sense, female dance movements were rendered more asexual than masculine by the Palestinian nationalist paradigm.

Palestinian national salvagism 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 *thobes* promoted the origins of local culture as they featured symbols dating from ancient eras such as the S-shaped leech and the tree-of-life (El-Khalidi, 1999). The wearing of *thobes* had an additional significance within Palestinian nationalist salvagism, however, as a claim against appropriated cultural items. The Israeli national airline El Al utilized these embroidered patterns within the uniforms of their female cabin crew (Haddad, 1994). The presentation of them on stage in public displays of Palestinian identity thus challenged 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 (personal communication Sherif Kanaana, December 7, 2004, Suhail Khoury, September 19, 2006, and Wassim al-Kurdi, April 4, 2006).

Finally, the interrelationship between men and women onstage was defined as distinctly separate, with Abu Hadba contending "traditionally, in our weddings and such, men always dance separately from women" (personal communication, July 3, 2004). 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 national heritage in the 1970s therefore, women performed either in separate female-only groups or took disconnected, supportive roles onstage with men (Kaschl 2003).

The cultural paradigm constructed by Palestinian national salvagists might thus appear as a deliberate attempt to diminish the role of women in displays of national identity. To this end, Kaschl argued 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" (2003, p.93).

Such suppositions of masculine conspiracies require further contextualization however, 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 context 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 amongst 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 within Palestinian nationalist salvage, 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 CWB community.

7.3.8 Saliba Totah and 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 national salvagists. Some local dance practitioners continued to create dance productions in the style introduced by the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s. Amongst these Saliba Totah, a former dancer in the festivals, made the most consistent contributions to the CWB 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 Wade' Al-Saafi, Nasser Shams e-Din, the Rahbani Brothers and Fayruz, Totah's work was very much an echo of the use of dabkeh and expressionistic dance in Lebanese Rahbani musical theatre. Nostalgic Rahbani 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 Rahbani singer Fayruz than to the imagined community of Palestinian nationalism. By the 1970s, Rahbani 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-67 period mirrored the continuing stylistic changes in Lebanese music and dance theatre. As Massad (2003) observed, the music of the Rahbani brothers and Fayruz altered during this time to reflect both the public despair

from the defeat of the 1967 war and a renewed faith in the *fedayyin* (localised resistance fighters). 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”)²⁷. This shift in the Rahbani style allowed Totah's choreography to remain related to both the imagined community of Palestinian nationalism and the popular following of Rahbani music. His creative work 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 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 (personal communication, Ziad Khalaf, July 5, 2004, Saliba Totah, July 6, 2004, Suhail Khoury, September 18, 2005, and Lubna Ghanayem, July 5, 2006).

Totah's work can be seen in some ways as an ongoing reflection of local heritage through the paradigm of Pan-Arabist salvagism. The aesthetics of his dance productions continued to be defined by the influences introduced (from Europe via Lebanon) during the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s. Whilst Palestinian nationalism was a recurrent theme, Palestinian national salvagism did not define the aesthetic ideals of Totah's choreography.

Totah's influence was somewhat more restricted than the broader Palestinian national salvagist movement, engaging mostly the Christian minority and the urban elite. As we will see, through Totah's work Pan-Arab salvagism 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.

²⁷ See (Massad, 2003) for a further analysis of the impact of the Rahbani musical legacy on Palestinian cultural identity.

Chapter 8: Dance in evolutionary motion

As Edward Said (1993) observed, ever-changing influences from the socio-political environment will inevitably rupture any attempt to define a specific culture as static. For dance in the CWB, this rupturing can be seen occurring most vividly in the 1980s and continuing on through the 1990s and into the early years of the 21st Century.

This chapter begins by examining the emergence of (what is labelled here as) post-salvagism as a cultural movement amongst dance artists and groups in the CWB during the 1980s. In doing so it provides some clearer definition of the aesthetic and ideological goals of post-salvagism. This leads into an examination of the same artists/groups during 1990s, when cultural encounters between local and foreign artists increased dramatically. The impact of these cultural encounters on post-salvagist interventions is analysed within local cultural production in this era, and subsequently during the second intifada in the early years of the 21st Century (when the CWB becomes relatively isolated once more).

8.1 The CWB between 1980-1994

8.1.1 External oppression and internal debate

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 West Bank, the Israeli occupation forces awarded 12 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% between 1967 and 1987 (Schiff and Yari, 1990, Morris, 2001). Kimmerling and Migdal (1993) reported that this led to a shift in employment, from local agricultural production to low-paid industrial labour within Israel. By 1987, 120,000 of the indigenous population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (40% of the work force) were employed in the Israeli labour market. Approximately 20,000 of this population emigrated from the West Bank and Gaza Strip each year during this period due to economic, social and political difficulties.

The Israeli military continued to impose collective restrictions upon the indigenous population of the West Bank during this time, including curfews, closures, internal and external travel and visitors from other states. Israeli military practices also continued to involve individual forms of mental and physical abuse against the indigenous population. Of particular cultural relevance to this study was a trend amongst Israeli soldiers to force men in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to publicly dance during random military inspections, as a form of ritualized humiliation. Whilst sporadic reports of such a particular process of humiliation emerged in the 1970s (e.g. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1976), this practice appeared to become more widespread by the mid 1980s (Hirst, 1985). 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 may be argued in several ways. 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 (Hirst, 1985). As Julie Peteet (1994) pointed out however, the Israeli military's methods of enforcing submission amongst the populace of the Occupied Territories flexibly responded to the social impact 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 (Peteet specifically focuses on the introduction of sexual abuses for the purpose of humiliation). From this perspective, the forcing of community leaders to dance can be seen as a particular form of psychological warfare aimed at dismantling social cohesion.

The practice of making men dance had a particularly symbolic aspect in a political environment that was increasingly influenced by a religious idealism that condemned dancing in public. By the second decade of the occupation, Islamic politics re-emerged in the West Bank from the leftovers 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 figures in the surrounding region. Whilst its focus was more towards regional religious reform than national resistance, the political philosophy of the Mujama quickly took hold amongst the indigenous population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and led to strident divisions within the community (Milton-Edwards, 1999). Such local community support for the Mujama was, ironically, by the Israeli military who granted permission for local Islamist organizations and infrastructure building whilst denying such permits to organizations associated with Palestinian nationalism (Sella, 1989).

As universities became a central forum for cultural and political expression in the Occupied Territories (Taraki, 1991; Mi'ari, 1998), the ideological struggle between secular nationalism and Islamic reform became a prominent feature of campus discord. In the CWB student groups challenged the teaching of Darwin's Theory of Evolution at Birzeit University (Claiborne, 1982) 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 however, 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 co-operatives, NGO's or professional associations (Milton-Edwards 1999). Their impact was felt at a grass-roots level however, with 40 new mosques being built per year in the West Bank during the 1980s (Schiff & Yari, 1990). 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 underscoring this local political division. Isla Jad (1991) contended that although major Palestinian political organizations avoided the issue of women's rights during this era (because it was either not a priority or they feared internal division when political unity seemed crucial), there was a presumption that with national liberation, female liberation would ensue. The rise of the Islamic reform movement challenged how such

liberation might be interpreted however, particularly with the introduction of the *hijab* (head scarf) and *jilbab* (body-length robe) by the *Mujama* movement in the Gaza Strip and, to a lesser extent, the West Bank. Rema Hammami (1990) suggested that this Islamic dress code had gained new nationalistic as well as religious meaning, as it became socially posited as a sign of a woman's commitment to both the *intifada* and her national heritage. As Hammami noted, however, this particular style of clothing came from the wider regional Islamic fundamentalist movement and lacked any historical precedent in Palestine²⁸.

Whilst Palestinian nationalist salvagism had arisen as a counter hegemonic argument against European colonialism and imperialism (e.g. Alqam, 1994), it subsequently acted as a barrier against cultural hegemony from the other direction. It could be argued that the regionally-diluting Islamic Reform movement was slowed by the salvaging of local heritage as distinctly 'Palestinian'. Those wanting to eradicate localised 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 hegemony of the Islamic reform movement (without appearing 'Westernized') were able to do so through the guise of salvaged folklore. Palestinian nationalist folklore salvage had thus provided a seemingly alternate destiny to American/European secular-modernist ideals and Egyptian/ Saudi Arabian conservative-theocratic ideals during a period of massive social disruption.

As Isotalo (1999) noted however, this revival movement shifted from a claim towards Israel and the world and into an arena of intra-Palestinian dialogue. 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 utilised heritage to present their own social agendas. This internal debate over collective identity might be considered as a principal stimulating force behind post-salvage adaptations to local dance practices during the 1980s.

²⁸ In Palestine, as throughout the Islamic world, the whole concept of veiling is complex however, 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.

The belief in the intransigence of intangible heritage and the rejection of innovation by Palestinian nationalist salvagism could also be seen as serving the Israeli cultural image in the international arena. As Mosleh Kanaaneh (2002) observed, Israel's acceptance and integration into the 'advanced' Western hemisphere had been dependent upon a Palestinian nationalist foil of eastern backwardness. The Palestinian nationalist 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, Kaschl (2003) points to the influence of 'imperial nostalgia' (see 3.3.4) amongst Zionist officials. In controlling government funding and support for such cultural activity, these officials directly intervened 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 politicised stereotyping of indigenous culture as intransigent and unresponsive to the contemporary social environment (Kaschl 2003). Unimpeded by such governmental constraints, this stereotyping was more radically challenged by post-salvagists within the CWB.

The source of these changes is particularly noteworthy. As Lisa Taraki observed, whilst 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" (1991, p.64). The sudden diversity of cultural products that emerged in the CWB during the 1980s can be attributed to this re-appropriation of cultural activity.

8.1.2 Dance as now: Culture on campus

For dance in the CWB, Birzeit University became the central forum for experimentation and debates over cultural interventions (Ellayan, 2006). 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” (El-Funoun, 1984, p.32)²⁹. Whilst these competitions and festivals were continuously disrupted by the Israeli military (Abu-Hadba, 1994b), they nevertheless provided the most stable local forum for community discourse on culture.

Birzeit University also fostered an atmosphere that encouraged the formation of student dance groups. Whilst 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 (Ellayan, 2006). Founded in 1981, the campus dance group Juthoor had a significant influence on local theatre dance. Directed by Tayseer Masri (a local designer who had been living in Italy) Juthoor was comprised 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 like Saliba Totah. Reflecting a mood of on-campus experimentation, their production process involved a blending of different local approaches to dance. Seeking different theatrical approaches to the presentation of dabkeh than that which had previously been tried, Juthoor challenged the influence of the Lebanese Rahbanni dance styles introduced through the Ramallah Nights festivals of the 1960s. This prompted extended debates over the use of lighting, costume and the physical interaction of men and women in dance (personal communication, Suhail Khoury, September 19, 2005).

Individual members of Juthoor would go 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 time of writing, 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 a consistency and

²⁹ My translation.

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, simply rehearsing 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 (personal communication, Mustafa Dawoud, January 16, 2007).

The influence of Birzeit University on the evolution 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 post-salvagism through El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe and The Sareyyet Ramallah Troupe for Music and Dabkeh.

8.1.3 The popular acceptance of El-Funoun as change agents

Firqat El-Funoun Ash-shabiyeh (El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe³⁰) was the longest established and generally most popularly renowned dance collective in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the late 20th Century (Kaschl, 2003; Massad, 2003). El-Funoun might also be considered the most noteworthy proponents of a post-salvage dance aesthetic in the CWB, and thus highly influential change agents in local cultural evolution. Their processes of innovation in the 1980s, when the region experienced virtually no interaction with dance artists from outside the West Bank, provides a particularly clear illustration of post-salvagist cultural interventions.

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 Scouts Group, they decided to establish a group simply in order to participate in the 1980 Birzeit University dabkeh competition. By 1984 however, they had toured their mixed-gender ensemble to Birzeit, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, East Jerusalem, Gaza, Haifa, Acre and the Galilee, and had a massive popular following amongst the indigenous population of Palestine (personal communication, Mohamad Atta, July 3, 2004).

³⁰ '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.

El-Funoun's elevated regional standing and the broad popular acceptance of their post-salvage innovations can be attributed to several factors: their factional neutrality, their cultural authenticity and their commitment to artistic excellence.

Firstly, they established themselves 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), they did not openly represent this political faction within their performances. As al-Kurdi recalled-

We started to take a distance from political slogans (of Palestinian factions). We asked are we dabkeh for art, or just posters for a political party? It was not in our idea to become a dancing group for any political party. (personal communication, April 4, 2006)

Their leftist political leanings, which Atta had suggested took root in high school student union politics, did, however, subsequently affect the ideological direction of the group's artistic processes and artistic decisions. In the early years there was no artistic director, and El-Funoun's rehearsals involved collective decision-making amongst all the dancers (Huleihleh, 2003). 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 (Hamdan 1996). El-Funoun wished to refute this image of both patriarchy and authoritarian rule within indigenous culture (Kaschl, 2003). Over subsequent 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 lead and controlled by a *lawih*.

This process of creating equally might also be seen as a significant factor contributing to women being included as equal members on stage and not relegated to secondary roles in particular dances. Such a notion of gender equality could be attributed to foreign cultural hegemony. Alternatively, it could be attributed to a more gender-balanced interpretation of local heritage than that presented by national salvagists intent on promoting the construction of a patriarchal society (see 5.6.7). Former El-

Funoun member Serene Huleihleh (2003) suggested that such equal participation onstage was less a deliberately advocated ideal and more simply a reflection of the gender dynamic that already existed within the group. As such, the leftist political aspect of El-Funoun can be seen as a continuation of their own social experience rather than a projection of social idealism.

A second reason for El-Funoun's popularity can be attributed to the perception that they represented the authentic heritage of Palestine. This was consolidated when they 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 was (in this first performance) reflecting the nationalist salvagist aesthetic ideals (see 5.6) that had been taught to them through the Al-Bireh scouts club, and the adjudicating panel was mostly comprised of national folklore salvagists. That El-Funoun members were generally from a working class (or urbanized rural) background, with a mix of local residents and refugees from other parts of Palestine, probably further contributed to this perception of authenticity. For example, they were able to perform in traditional peasant wedding clothes that had been borrowed from their own grandparents (personal communication, Mohamed Atta, April 3, 2004).

Later reviews of the group's history (e.g. El-Funoun, 2005) would claim that El-Funoun's knowledge of Palestinian rural dance practices was based on extensive field research conducted during this period. This somewhat misleading suggestion was also stimulated by a television documentary made in conjunction with their 1987 production *Palestinian Festivities (Afrah Filastiniyah)* showing several El-Funoun members entering a village to learn the heritage from elderly people (El-Funoun, 1987b). As al-Kurdi, who featured in the documentary, later explained however, 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. (personal communication, April 4, 2006)

Mohammed Atta concurs, stating 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 (personal communication, July 3, 2004). Whilst 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 intentionally studied with the intent of localised cultural appropriation, but were instead dynamically exploring their own familiar cultural practices. As Suhail Khoury recalls,

These people were working class. They were basically doing it in life-sometimes they were artists and coming and doing it onstage. That was very important for the whole movement... You couldn't get more popular than that. It was the grass roots. That's what everybody related to. They were just putting it on stage, so that everybody could see themselves. (personal communication, September 19, 2005)

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 (1986a) described their choreographic goals as not simply to create for the stage, but to present work onstage that the audience would recognize, accept, absorb and subsequently emulate in a social environment. 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 (1986a) noted, however, their performed dabkeh had begun to take on such authority that audiences were often spuriously presuming that such productions presented an authentic, unchanged portrayal of how their grandparents used to dance in social settings.

A third reason for their popular acceptance can be seen resulting from their artistic commitment. As a group they practiced more consistently than other local collectives, who would generally gather on a more short-term seasonal basis. As several of the informants to this study attest, it was this that resulted in more rigorously defined performances and aesthetically complex choreography than that existing amongst other groups, and more university competition wins. Their theatrical productions thus

reflected a very confident and deliberate artistic intent, which could have contributed to the local perception that El-Funoun were authoritative representatives of the indigenous population's culture.

8.1.4 The post-salvage interventions of El-Funoun

Whilst initial evening-length productions such as 1982's *Mashahed Folkloriyye (Folkloric Scenes)* simply presented a vista of various 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 politicised 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 (El-Funoun, 1986a). 1984's *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 (personal communication, April 4, 2006). This research (and the adaptations to movement) became more pronounced in 1986's more complex narrative entitled *Mish'al*³¹, which told the folktale of a young freedom fighter during the British Mandate.

Although the context in both of these latter two productions was supported by an oral narrator, the need to represent images more complex than a festive wedding and entertain audiences with dance during an evening-length story fostered more innovative uses of the existing dabkeh steps (al-Kurdi, 1994). Within 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 (personal communication, Khaled Qatamish, April 4, 2006). These adaptations also involved adding dramatic gestures with the arms to the dance movements being done with the feet, which intimated a new contextual meaning for these traditional steps. Ideas were prompted through a series of workshops with local drama teacher/theatre directors, utilizing creative improvisation techniques (personal communication, Mohamad Atta, July 3, 2004). A

³¹ The lead character's name, literally translating as Lantern.

clenched shaking fist thus converted a traditional hop and stamp into a stomp of defiance and victory.

Added to this were ever more complex floor patterns (choreographic pathways on the stage) and group formations, to provide a more aesthetic diversity. Similarly, the music became composed or arranged to fit the narrative. Whilst 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 Troupes vision and concepts . . . it has been given new dimensions and meanings that it did not originally have. (1994, p.223-224).

Al- Kurdi (1994) subsequently described several particular adaptations that El-Funoun undertook in the production of *Mish'al*. 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/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 adaptations are more clearly recognized as adaptations to the form of folkdance as previously defined by nationalist salvagists, not necessarily adaptations to the folkdance form historically existing in Palestine. This is important as El-Funoun often sought historical precedents to support such innovations (al-Kurdi, 1994). To validate their interpretations of indigenous dance history in these productions, El-Funoun

engaged in lengthy internal debates and discourses with local folklorists such as Abdel-Azziz 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. Whilst Abu Hadba contended that men and women never danced together, 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. (personal communication, December 7, 2004)

It was through such illustrations that the presentation of men and women dancing whilst 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 variety of folklore academics also helped clarify that El-Funoun's adaptations were at least deliberate and based on differing interpretations of local history or contemporary ideals. To illustrate this, these differing interpretations were incorporated in El-Funoun's (1984; 1986a) own publications.

8.1.5 Growth, exposure and dance as storytelling: The Plains of Ibn 'Amer

In 1986, El-Funoun travelled to North America on its first international tour, which provided a limited amount of international exposure to the dance theatre occurring in the Occupied Territories. The busy performing schedule did not provide the El-Funoun dancers with any time to observe other foreign dance productions, however. International influences on dance in the West Bank were thus relatively indirect during this period. Whilst the West Bank was still very much physically isolated from dance practitioners in other parts of the Arab world, by the mid-1980s, Atta recalls they more frequently saw televised productions of other Arab dance groups through the Jordanian channel. Most notably the work of Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Group made a very strong impression on the group, particularly the complexity of their group formations (personal communication, July 3, 2004).

In the same year, El-Funoun established the junior performing group Bara'em³² to train younger dancers for the main adult company. This initiated a cross-generational cultural education process that was distinct from previous local salvagist teachings of dabkeh. Instead of passing on a supposed static and salvaged form of folkdance, the students were being taught dances that had been openly and deliberately adapted.

In 1987, El-Funoun established The Popular Art Centre as a separate institution with the charter of researching traditional dance in Palestine. Whilst the Popular Art Centre did subsequently undertake field research into local indigenous music forms, and compiled an extensive traditional music archive, no such research was taken into local indigenous dance practices (personal communication, Suhail Khoury, September 19, 2005). It 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.

Whilst the 1987 production *Palestinian Festivities* was just a 'best of El-Funoun' compilation (linking together dances from former El-Funoun productions), more radical choreographic adaptations occurred in 1989's *Mar Ibn 'Amer (The Plains of Ibn 'Amer)*. The 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 20th century. Within this production movement took a much more central role in actually telling the narrative, with dramatic gestures increasingly stylised 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 *Lantern* and *Palestinian Festivities*, was appointed to direct the *The Plains of Ibn 'Amer*. This positioning of a director within an El-Funoun production did not grant total artistic licence to one person. As several informants to this study have suggested, the group continued to work based on collective contributions and consensus, and the director's role was more that of a facilitator than an author. Suhail Khoury did bring new influences, however. From a more wealthy

³² which can be translated into English as 'buds'.

urban background in Jerusalem, his own dabkeh education began in the productions of Saliba Totah in the 1970s and continued within Juthoor at Birzeit University in the early 1980s. Having also travelled and observed folk dance performances during musical studies in North America, Khoury introduced ideas that were without precedent in the local salvaged theatre dance.

One dance, performed to the rustic folk lament *The Blackbird (Tair el-Gourab)*, strongly suggested a traditional peasant mourning ritual, with repetitive soft swaying arms, flowing veils and tilted attitudes of longing. Whilst the group were aware of the historic existence of mourning movement rituals (such as *al-latm* and *nuwar*), Suhail Khoury admitted to not basing this dance's choreography on any traditional movement ritual that he had actually witnessed (personal communication, September 19, 2005). The graceful aesthetics of this choreographed lament certainly bares little relationship with the more furious indigenous mourning dances described in the 19th Century accounts (see 6.2). It was thus more of a revival of dance contexts from local heritage than a revival of actual dance practices.

Other innovations to local salvaged dance theatre included the creation of dance solos, male-female duets and the use of more stylised traditional costumes that would allow greater freedom of movement. These introduced far greater contention within the group, as they seemed like more direct adaptations to local heritage. Whilst these were reasoned through ideological, historic and aesthetic grounds, 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 (Al-Kurdi, 1994), 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" (Personal communication, July 3, 2004). This in itself induced more uncertainty however, and it would be five years before their next theatrical premiere.

The strong public support for *The Plains of Ibn 'Amer* can be seen as generated by its political relevance to the popular resistance of the occupation, its seeming rootedness in indigenous culture and its level of theatrical polish. This sustained El-Funoun's

popularity during the following years as they further explored possible artistic directions.

8.1.6 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 Dabkeh³³. This new group was largely comprised of dancers who had danced, and continued to dance, with El-Funoun. This 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.

Whilst their appeal within the Occupied Territories did not become as broadly popular as El-Funoun's during this era, their experimental approach to folk dance garnered a substantial following and rendered a particular influence on the course of performed dance in the CWB. 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 however, Sareyyet Ramallah's artistic process involved specific choreographers (Khaled Ellayan and Fuad Fino) taking a more 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 that being done by El-Funoun, although with different stories and music (personal communication, Khaled Ellayan, April 7, 2006).

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

³³ '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.

ensemble dabkeh dance pieces, which were seemingly included mostly for their aesthetic and culturally symbolic value.

The second production, 1989's Sowa *Filistiniyye (Pictures from Palestine)*, had no narrative aspect and was basically 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 (personal communication, Khaled Ellayan, April 7, 2006). Other children/youth groups such as those directed by Saliba Totah had previously used such stylised costumes, but this action from a revered mainstream adult folk dance group controversially challenged the heritage aesthetics defined by nationalist salvagists. 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 within Sareyyet Ramallah began in 1992's *Jbaineh*³⁴, a local folk tale about a young village woman abducted by an aristocrat. The story was adapted in this production to express a political message however, with the abducted woman becoming a metaphor for the stolen land of Palestine (personal communication, Khaled Ellayan, April 7, 2006). 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 rather than salvaged dabkeh steps, with danced actions imitating the themes expressed in the sung words. Similar to El-Funoun's adaptive process, dramatic expression in choreography focused on the upper body (head, arms, torso), whilst 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 story telling.

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 Fayruz operettas, in contrast to the arrangements of local folk tunes for dabkeh

³⁴ The name of the lead character, which translates into English literally as white cheese.

displays. Choreographer Khaled Elayyan recalled having seen the work of Lebanon's Caracalla on the television by then and been inspired by their formations and costumes, although the actual movement vocabulary seemed less accessible (personal communication, April 7, 2006). Radi Shehadeh, a drama director, was also brought in from outside the local community. As an indigenous Palestinian from inside the 1948 borders of Israel, Shehadeh had nevertheless a relatively different cultural experience than those living in the West Bank, with more of an inclination towards modernist aesthetics. As such *Jbaine* might be considered a very mixed work stylistically, blending the emergent post-salvage ideals of the CWB 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, the Sareyyet nevertheless developed a strong following as creative yet patriotic dance artists. Their productions maintained a direct connection to the trauma experienced by the indigenous population, but a slightly looser association with local heritage.

8.1.7 The outbreak of the intifada and the compounding of collective trauma

Whilst Palestinian nationalists and other foreign groups (such as the Jordanian based Islamic Jihad) had undertaken individual militant acts against the Israeli occupation, these were generally sporadic in nature and were not co-ordinated with the wider indigenous population of the Occupied Territories. The *intifada*³⁵ that began in the Occupied Territories in December 1987 presented a more popular uprising however. Whilst it was 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 more reasonably 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 (Schiff & Yari, 1990, p.92). 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 (Shalev, 1990). Particularly throughout the refugee camps of the Occupied Territories, the mood of rebellion was already well established. The *intifada* reflected that this mood had been consolidated within the towns and cities as well (Yahya, 1991).

³⁵ The popular label for the political uprising, which can translate into English as 'shaking off'.

Whilst 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 laborers from the Israeli market were symbolic acts of political solidarity (Morris, 2001). 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 3 months to two years for stone throwing. A further 14,000 were imprisoned through Administrative Detention³⁶, typically for six-month periods (Morris, 2001). A beatings policy, adopted in 1988 by the then Israeli Defense 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 longer periods (Schiff & Ya'ari, 1990).

By this stage, the mass-expulsion of this indigenous population from both within 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 (Morris, 2001, p.598). 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 (Schiff & Ya’ari, 1990), with more than 60% supporting their voluntary departure (Barzilai, 2002). This continuing threat of expulsion can be seen further stimulating the need amongst the indigenous population to express their historic association with the geographic space. This, in turn, reinforced the promotion of cultural identity through rural heritage.

On July 31, 1988, Jordan’s King Hussein “abdicated as king of the Palestinians” (Nassar & Heacock, 1991, p.310) and announced that the Hashemite Kingdom of

³⁶ An Israeli legal clause that allows imprisonment without charge or trial for the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories.

Jordan was severing its administrative and judicial claims to the West Bank in deference to the will of the PLO (Peretz, 1990). This sudden turn removed the option of the West Bank ever returning to Jordanian sovereignty and, for Israeli politicians, the possibility of ceding off 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, their internal travel 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 interior, and those with Gaza Strip identification could similarly not visit the West Bank or Jerusalem without permission (Murray, 2005). Through this means, a distinct West Bank (minus Jerusalem) indigenous social grouping was being imposed and consolidated by the Israeli occupying forces. This, coupled with tight restrictions on international travel for the indigenous population, increased the process of cultural isolation. The closure of Birzeit University by the Israeli military from January 8, 1988 until April 29, 1992 (Birzeit University, 2007) further diminished vital forums for internal cultural discourse within the CWB. As such, the local indigenous population can be seen as actually collectively experiencing disruptive and traumatic events, rather than just absorbing them through cultural mediation.

8.1.8 Dancing through siege and growing divisions

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. As several of the informants to this study have attested, 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. Whilst this inevitably delayed their cultural production, it also reinforced the political credentials of their subsequent cultural products. 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 collectivised decision-making process and the sharing of artistic credit in program notes. As one former El-Funoun member recalls³⁷, 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 the Funoun. And if you go back to the material that was published by the 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.

This also invested a large amount of solidarity for the dance artists amongst the general public. As Mustafa Dawoud, a former member of Sharaf, recalled, "In 1988/89, the audience would cheer wildly just for a dancer to step onto stage" (personal communication, January 16, 2007). As 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. Moreover, Peteet (1992) indicated how the survival of physical abuse in an Israeli prison had become a right-of-passage into manhood for local indigenous youth. To subsequently stand up and put the same body on display and reveal its continuing dynamism through dance thus invested such dance performances with highly potent political meanings.

As several informants to this study explained, El-Funoun's *The Plains of 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 of the prison camps, the Israeli military presented other obstacles to dance, as a former El-Funoun member³⁸ 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 am to get to Beersabre, to perform and come back. They

³⁷ Name not disclosed for security reasons.

³⁸ Name not disclosed for security reasons.

made them wait until 4 or 5 o'clock, and then they just let them go. Just to stop the performance.

Within the first three months of the Intifada, a fifth of the indigenous population wounded by the Israeli military forces was female (Schiff & Yari, 1990). Such public recognition of women's participation on the front line of the struggle against the occupation further challenged the salvagist representations of women as secondary characters in dance. Whilst this may have supported the post-salvage adaptations in dance that accorded a more central and equal role for women, this did not necessarily ensure social and political equality for women amongst the indigenous population, particularly with the rising popularity of the Islamic reform movement (Jad, 1991).

Within the West Bank, despite such seeming unity against the occupation forces, internal political divisions amongst 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 the Mujama and was more committed to the struggle against Zionism than the 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 distinctly different from the nationalist resistant movement of the PLO, and focused more on the establishment of a non-secular Islamic state in the entirety of historic Palestine (Milton Edwards, 1992). This contradicted the PLO's Declaration of Palestinian Independence on November 15, 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, however. The US\$28million a month the PLO had been receiving 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, whilst the PLO struggled to pay employees back-wages (Morris 2001).

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. As West Bank sociologist Sam Tamari observed, there was by then “a general malaise on the Palestinian street affecting people’s attitudes to the daily routine of the Intifada” (cited in Tessler, 1994, p.748).

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% drop in living standards. The *intifada* also tallied a considerable loss of life amongst the indigenous population. From December 1987 to December 1993, 1,143 had been killed by Israeli soldiers and settlers (197 of whom were children) 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 localized execution of suspected collaborators with the Israelis (Morris, 2001). Whilst the *intifada* had reflected a particularly strong level of political solidarity amongst the indigenous population, it had also revealed the existing divisions.

8.1.9 The deliberate adaptations of post-salvagism

The CWB experienced a boom in cultural interventions leading to 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. Whilst this 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 shared socio-political trauma of life under an oppressive foreign occupation, can be seen as contributing to the growing divisions within the community over cultural identity. In terms of dance interventions, it can also be seen as contributing to the diversification in expressions of cultural identity, as different aspects of the community felt more emphatic about having their perspective recognized. Such interventions led to challenges to the more homogenous impression of local identity previously fostered by Palestinian nationalist salvagism.

Recognizing the purpose of such adaptations can be complex. 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” (personal communication, December 7, 2004).

Many dance practitioners were, however, both knowledgeable and deliberate in their adaptations of folklore within staged productions. Such adaptations generally required strong justifications in order to maintain the wider public support (and protection from religious condemnation) that was provided to dance as folkloric nationalism.

In the discussions that I have had with CWB dance practitioners on the reasons for deliberate change during this period, responses generally fell into four categories: ideological, historical, representational and aesthetic.

Ideological adaptations, such as El-Funoun's adaptation of the figure of the *lawih*, emerged from reflections on the contemporary socio-political environment. Such an ideological challenge to cultural heritage might be considered modernist and a rejection of past values (rather than post-salvagist), unless it could be shown that within local tradition and history such pluralistic ideals also existed.

Deeper *historical* revisions were thus undertaken to reveal the complexity in local cultural precedents. Such revision challenged the supposed definitive interpretations of history by salvagism, including restrictions on women and men dancing together.

The *representation* of complex folkloric ideas and local historic events through dance also required certain choreographic adaptations, such as the incorporation of dramatic movements and expressions within dabkeh. These subsequently invested new meanings into the existing movements.

The need to appeal to the *aesthetic* demands of a more consumer-oriented (and less participatory) context invoked a need to be more visually appealing. This involved

creating more complex movement patterns, dynamics, costuming and promoted more disciplined group cohesion.

As much local discourse had already been invested in the idea of cultural stasis through the preceding salvagist movements, the public acceptance of such adaptations was not automatic. As one local journalist observed however, the topical socio-political themes of these post-salvage dance productions ensured wide public support for such deliberate challenges to the more established, nationalist interpretation of salvaged heritage (Aboudi, 1984). 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. As they were relatively similar to what was already in existence, 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.

(personal communication, April 4, 2006)

Throughout my discussions with local dance practitioners on the causes of such deliberate adaptations during this era, it was interesting to note that a 'personal creativity' polemic did not emerge. An individual artist's desire to satiate their own imaginative wonderings and innovate simply for the sake of innovation was not presented as a rationale for adaptation. This does not suggest that creative exploration was not a personal motivation for many dance practitioners in the CWB. It does reflect, however, a certain reverence for the collective ownership of folk heritage amongst the dance practitioners and their supporters. Reflecting a post-salvage (as opposed to a modernist) perspective, creative innovation was not the right of the individual and idealised as inherently positive, but was accepted if it seemed to respond to the contemporary needs of the wider community.

Whilst post-salvagism was not the only evolutionary pathway undertaken by performed dance in the CWB 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 more modernist approaches to physical expression. Some folk dance ensembles continued to follow the aesthetic ideals fostered by the Palestinian nationalist salvagists and the earlier Pan-Arab salvagists. 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. Whilst this artistic movement valued its indigenous dance heritage, it emphatically argued "...that folklore is not a static matter; rather, it is dynamic and connected to the present" (Al-Kurdi, 1994, p.219).

A seeming dichotomy between modernism and traditionalism (or the encroaching foreign present and the salvaged local past) continued to surround such an argument, however. For many of the local cultural activists that I interviewed, it appeared that despite their reasoned adaptations, they were expected to define themselves as either agents of a foreign colonial hegemony or a local protectionist intransigence. This was particularly exacerbated by the public forums for cultural criticism, which were overwhelmingly dominated by political, rather than aesthetic, ideologues (Taraki, 1991). Whilst 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 sociopolitical 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 accurately render Palestine's cultural legacy of dabkeh as a historic social activity, and thereby promote awareness of the Palestinian national cause. Very little criticism was published analyzing 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/salvagism dichotomy became an even more pronounced issue in the subsequent era. As the CWB 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.

8.2 The Oslo period of 1994-2000

8.2.1 The socio-political environment in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo period

The Israeli/Fatah signature of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) on September 13, 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, final agreement on several key issues (e.g. Zionist colonies in the Occupied Territories, the rights of indigenous refugees in exile and the status of Jerusalem) was scheduled to be considered at a later date.

Whilst this initiated what was contentiously referred to as a 'peace process' between Zionists and the indigenous population, the basis of this political action was vociferously challenged (e.g. Said, 1996; 2001). The Oslo Accords can be seen leading to a period in the Occupied Territories that was "untenable for most . . . and unbearable for hundreds of thousands" (Hammami & Tamari, 2000, p.8). On an economic level the Oslo agreements seemed designed to simply 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 (Khan, 2004). By December 1999, the Oslo agreements had created 227 separate areas in the West Bank under Palestinian 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 (Roy, 2001; Hass, 2002a). This can be seen as further contributing to the cultural isolation of the CWB from other pockets of the indigenous population.

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. Subsequent Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that his government would oppose the establishing of an independent Palestinian state and any further negotiations on the status of Jerusalem and the rights of indigenous refugees in exile (Morris, 2001). The decision to freeze the construction of Zionist colonies in the Occupied Territories was officially rescinded (Aronson, 1996) and by 2000 the population of Israeli settler/colonists residing in the Occupied Palestinian Territories had doubled (Halper, 2003).

Within 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 (B'tselem, 2007a). In December 1995, a Zionist colon deliberately shot and killed a pregnant indigenous woman in the village of al-Jib, only to be awarded four months of community service by an Israeli judge. In September 1996, 70 of the indigenous population were killed and several hundred injured when the Israeli military used live fire to disperse people gathered at demonstrations in the West Bank (Morris, 2001). Such actions against the indigenous population (along with the continued appropriation of resources by Zionist colons) can be seen as inducing a local skepticism about 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 (Morris, 2001).

Whilst the return of Yassir Arafat and the establishing of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) security apparatus led to the withdrawal of Israeli troupes from major West Bank urban centres by 1995, 61% of the West Bank continued to be subject to Israeli military control (Halper, 2003). 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 (Roy 2001). The 'returnees', as they came to be known, might thus be considered as having a particularly transformative socio-cultural impact in the CWB community, where the PNA established its West Bank headquarters.

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 (Milton-Edwards, 1999). In 1996, Yassir Arafat won 85% of the vote in the first legislative elections. Whilst 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 amongst the indigenous population. At the closing of the 20th 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 (Amundsen & Ezbidid, 2004).

A separate Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty, in October 26, 1994, 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.

8.2.2 Dance and cultural exchange in the 1990s

As Stein and Swedenburg (2004) observed, the onset of peace negotiations induced 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.

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 folk dance styles from other regions.

Local performing arts groups became more visible as funding for the arts became suddenly available from international donor agencies (Samara, 2000). The construction of facilities and infrastructure for dance production was particularly pronounced in the CWB, where most international donor agencies established administrative offices along with the PNA (Boullata, 2004). 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 50 seat cinema. The new Al-Kasaba Theatre, transferring from Jerusalem to Ramallah in 2000, provided a 300-seat cinema and fully equipped 377-seat theatre. By 2004, the \$6 million Japanese-funded Ramallah Cultural Palace, with a 700-seat opera-size theatre, was opened. Within the space of 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 groups also brought greater attention to dance as a performed art. Between 1993-1999, the Popular Art Centre organized the *Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance*. This annual festival gathered an average audience of 20,000 people each summer for events around the CWB, and featured (mostly folk-arts) performing troupes from Chile, Cuba, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, France, Spain, Britain, Greece, Turkey, Norway, Italy and elsewhere (Popular Art Centre, 2002). 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 1996-2000.

International donors began sponsoring artistic production, and CWB dance groups such as Sareyyet Ramallah and El-Funoun became financially supported for the first time. The A.M. Qattan Foundation, a local institution, started providing financial grants to dance productions by the late 1990s, indicating a growing local investment in dance as a performing art. Throughout this era, however, being a dancer remained a strictly non-professional endeavour in these 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 was perhaps also a result of the uncertainty over who qualified as a professional dance artist, however (Suhail Khoury, personal communication, September 19, 2005).

Much of the funding from international agencies thus went to sponsoring visits by foreign guest teachers (including the author) during the 1990s. These workshops (lasting for several weeks and often involving repeat visits from the teachers) introduced a variety of different approaches to dance pedagogy and choreography. The following descriptions of several of these workshops are derived from the reflections of several local informants and archival video recordings of the workshops themselves.

Through the Popular Art Centre, the Moroccan teacher Faisa Talbawi presented a ballet technique workshop in 1997 to local dancers from different groups. Within 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 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. It involved all the dancers taking turns to choreograph solo, small and large group pieces on each other, a process guided by Lehmann. Whilst 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 CWB, 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 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.

Alternate dance styles and methods were also introduced to dancers in CWB groups 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 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 CWB 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 emphasised 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 (personal communication, Khaled Ellayan, April 7, 2006, and Khaled Qatamish, April 4, 2006).

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 1980-90s, he had been a member of Al-Watan, a New York based dance collective that blended indigenous dance styles from Palestine with classical ballet. Whilst he did not introduce a particular dance technique to El-Funoun, Barghouti brought a more authoritarian approach to practice sessions, in emulation of dance rehearsal methods that he had experienced through Al-Watan in North America (Kaschl, 2003). Barghouti's stylistic influence on El-Funoun can be more distinctly discerned within his choreographic interventions, however.

8.2.3 Identifying hegemony vs. recognizing innovation in local dance productions

1994's *Talla Wara Talla (Tableaus)*, El-Funoun's first new production since *The Plains of Ibn 'Amer*, was a thematic collage of revived dance pieces from El-Funoun's earlier works, along with several new pieces. Within these, the newly appointed dance trainer Omar Barghouti created several short pieces using Lebanese music and introducing what might be considered the Rahbani/Jarrar aesthetic legacy (see 7.2) to the work of El-Funoun. His duet *I Chose You* utilizes 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 effeminate and the woman assertive and flirtatious. Whilst such commentary on its own *might* have been considered controversially alien to local social mores, the merging of El-Funoun's existing post-salvage style with Barghouti's choreographic approach (which blended Western classical ballet aesthetics with improvised Oriental or 'belly' dancing and dabkeh) led more directly to contention within the group. Barghouti's subsequent choreography *Phoenix* was particularly disdained by local audiences, who refused to applaud when it was premiered at the opening of the 1996 *Palestine International Festival for Music and Dance* (Kaschl, 2003). This was a shocking experience for El-

Funoun, who had hitherto developed a very strong and vocal popular following. Barghouti attributed this negative public reaction to the local society not being ready for such rapid cultural change, suggesting

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. (as quoted in Kaschl 2003, p. 132).

If there was within *Phoenix* a post-salvagist intent to draw from the Palestinian past and make it relevant to the contemporary CWB circumstance, there was an apparent lack of collective consensus within the process. Barghouti's subsequent conclusion that it was the pace, rather than the direction, of cultural change suggested a belief in a unilinear cultural evolution: 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 (in Kaschl, 2003). Dismissing what might be defined as salvagism, 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. (Barghouti, 2004a, p.24).

Whilst Barghouti thus suggested 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 (Kaschl 2003). 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.

The case of *Phoenix* emphasizes why such local challenges to the 'traditionalist versus modernist' dichotomy demands a clearer articulation of the idea of post-salvagism as an alternate evolutionary pathway. Although perhaps a minor contention in itself, the debate over *Phoenix* can be seen as an early illustration of a wider cultural issue that pervaded decisions regarding dance in the CWB during this time. As both foreign economic and cultural interventions increased in the Occupied Territories, greater uncertainty over the evolution of indigenous culture arose, leading in many cases to a strengthening of the foreign/modernist versus local/traditionalist

polarity. Upon my own arrival in the West Bank and discussions with local dancers in 1998, I encountered numerous firm expressions either for or against what was ubiquitously referred to as 'modern dance', as though what had already been presented as modernity in dance in the CWB definitively portrayed one of only two alternate cultural destinies. By the start of the 21st century, conflicts surrounding this dichotomous perception led to major upheavals in both El-Funoun and Sareyyet.

Further experimentation with more foreign forms occurred however, as dancers from El-Funoun continued creating short dances to various pieces of music in the following years, which were often incorporated in 'folk vista' compilation programs 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 particularly inspired by local exposure to much-admired videos of productions by Lebanon's Caracalla Dance Theatre. As Khaled Qatamish explained, "We are very similar in Bilad i-Shams,³⁹ although distinct perhaps from the North Africa" (personal communication, April 4, 2006). Reflecting a continuing shift away from Palestinian nationalist salvagism, El-Funoun's artistic direction increasingly sought a reintegration with the culture of the wider region. That a Lebanese-based group was undertaking such choreography may have induced a belief in the CWB that much of the movement repertoire used in their productions was indigenous to the region, particularly as Caracalla Dance Theatre blended elements of local folklore and folkdance steps with classical ballet and Graham technique in their choreography.

European cultural hegemony extended much further than this, however, within the work of Caracalla Dance Theatre. The founder/director of the group, Abdel-Halim Caracalla, had been a former student of Wadea Jarrar-Haddad and a graduate of the London Contemporary Dance School. Caracalla contended that for a local dance form to evolve, dancers "... must do classical ballet, as a first step, for the discipline" (personal communication, April 9, 2003). Caracalla further posited that local audience acceptance of such cultural actions was ultimately dependent upon European approval, or "...as long as the West likes it, they will like it" (personal

³⁹ A term commonly used to refer to the geographic region of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq.

communication, April 9, 2003). Through such a promotion of Western technique and a dismissal of independence in local cultural judgment, it could be argued that Caracalla approached local cultural production through an aesthetic paradigm that had been defined in the West. I would contend that Caracalla Dance Theatre works such as *2001 Nights* (with a score including adaptations of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Ravel's *Bolero*) are thus less a danced exploration into local aesthetics and more a reflection of distant Western stereotypes of Arab aesthetics. Such production of local culture has involved a peculiar self-orientalizing process (Said, 1978), in which the East emulates the West emulating the East.

Such an approach towards cultural interventions can thus be seen indirectly affecting dance in the CWB. Due to an absence of research into the history of foreign dance influences in the region, local commentary has not always clearly identified when and how the actual cultural production processes might have been subject to overwhelming foreign hegemony. Belief that such a hegemonic process had occurred, however, can be seen underscoring the skepticism that cultural commentators in the CWB felt towards the cultural adaptations that Barghouti had defended as a “...process of artistic modernization that comes from within” (2004a, p.24). Simply because members of a community are *involved* in the cultural production process, the process of artistic modernization is not necessarily based on local cultural judgments. What appears to be local inspiration can often be subject to considerable amounts of foreign cultural hegemony. The identification of such hegemonic influences within cultural production can, however, allow local artistic processes to evaluate the local relevance of ideas emerging from cultural encounters with foreign dance artistic ideas. This evaluation process can, in turn, more concisely challenge the wholehearted rejection or absorption of external influences, and support a post-salvage cultural evolution (discussed further in Chapter 9). This struggle to identify the precise points at which a local evaluation of foreign ideas and a local processes of innovation occurred might thus be considered one of the greatest impediments to post-salvage cultural evolution in the CWB during the mid 1990s.

The increase in more direct exposure to foreign aesthetic ideals through the visiting teachers of the late 1990s can be seen as helping to clarify this uncertainty. Perhaps problematically for the evolution of post-salvagism in the CWB however, these

teachers (including the author) came to promote foreign aesthetic ideals, rather than simply identify them. From the recollections of several informants to this study, within these workshops, the teachers accorded a positive value to the student's exact emulation of the dance techniques being introduced (discussed further in Chapter 9).

8.2.4 Remembering the past, addressing the present

El-Funoun's subsequent evening-length production, 1997's *Ululations (Zaghareed)*, saw a return to a more collective process of choreography within the group, although it generally recognized that El-Funoun founder Mohamad Atta was the principle choreographer. Whilst the work was more choreographically complex, it was clearly a continuation of the choreographic style established in *The Plains of Ibn 'Amer* and earlier works and a shift away from the Lebanese influence. Set to local rural folk tunes performed live, *Ululations* thematically explored the ceremonies of a traditional rural wedding. A certain defensive self-consciousness about this change in direction was, however, apparent in the promotion of the work. As a note in the production's program explained,

Surprisingly enough, the theme chosen for this particular production was a folkloric-inspired one. This was not done to submit to popular pressure to guard the 'purity' of our folklore, but quite the opposite, to free the riches of our folklore from monotony, 'museumness,' and literal projections. (El-Funoun, 1997a)

To gauge the public response, El-Funoun subsequently conducted an audience survey within a wider United Nations Development Program project on gender. Whilst the results indicated the audiences were generally appreciative of the work, there was some criticism from female university students and teachers regarding the representation of gender roles (Kaschl, 2003). This further challenged El-Funoun's inclination to both engage in radical social commentary *and* 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 folk dance 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*, it 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 specifically 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*. Whilst their 1997 *Unshudat El-Ru'yan (Song of the Shepherds)* was a collage of folk style dances, they began experimenting with a radical stylistic change in the late 1990s, following the dance workshops with international guest teachers.

Khaled Ellayan (personal communication, April 7, 2006) suggests that these workshops led to his choreographing the short duet *Hob (Love)*, 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, *Love* 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 keffiyah (a local checkered headcloth/scarf that is often used to symbolize resistance to the Israeli occupation) to indicate that this was definitively a current local issue. *Love* might thus be considered the first dance piece in the CWB to directly address issues related to a local contemporary, rather than local historic, 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*⁴⁰ 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). Within the story, a traveling salesman arrives at an idyllic 19th 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 villages flee, the village is destroyed, but the traveling salesman and his new love return to triumphantly rebuild the community. The music, with several pieces by Anuar Brahem, reflected stylised adaptations of traditional music from the Middle East. The costumes and set similarly reflected a romantic stylization of tradition, echoing Rahbanni influences from Lebanon. Whilst *Al-Birjawi* appeared to follow earlier Sareyyet Ramallah productions like *Jbaineh*, a shift in the artistic direction of the group had commenced, which would lead to radical changes in the following years.

8.2.5 Politics and cultural boycotts at the turn of the century

The intensification of foreign cultural exchange in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo era drew increasing political scrutiny. From a nationalist perspective, this criticism in the CWB particularly focused on the political implications of cultural activities that involved interactions between local indigenous and Israeli artists.

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 (see 6.3). This was a sporadic rather than co-ordinated boycott however, and it did not stop interactions between individual Zionists and members of the indigenous population at cultural events during this time (see 7.1). Such cultural interactions between the indigenous population and Zionists continued after 1948 inside the newly established state of Israel. These would appear to have taken place within a political framework defined by a very asymmetrical power relationship however, leading to the further political exploitation of indigenous culture (Pappe, 1997; Stein, 1998; Kaschl, 2003). For the indigenous population outside the 1948 borders of Israel, no cultural interaction with

⁴⁰ A type of local travelling salesman who traditionally would carry both goods and news from village to village. The author was employed as a choreographic consultant on this production for six months during 2000.

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 (Hadawi, 1979).

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 centralised. 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. Whilst 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 East Jerusalem and the CWB during this period, although the indigenous population groups bordered each other and otherwise experienced fluid interaction.

The Oslo accords introduced, however, 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 bi-lingual Alkhan Theatre /Al-Kasabah Theatre co-production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Jews were cast as Montagues and Arabs as Capulets. Promoted as a co-operative 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 CWB that I spoke with did not condone this production however, 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/religious tribal hatred. As Omar Barghouti explained, 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. (as cited in Rowe, 2002, p51)

Fall-out from 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 CWB arts institutions such as El-Funoun, the Popular Art Centre and the National Music Conservatory.

The boycott was not restricted to such overtly political interactions, however. 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 (Kaschl, 2003). It could be argued that such actions made it particularly difficult for the boycott to be recognised as maintaining an ideological principle beyond simply nationalism.

By the time I began working in the CWB 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 an individual artist 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 collated these ideas in a proposal, which all of the leading dance groups and dance institutions in the CWB subsequently agreed to.

This proposal demanded that any Israeli artist or institution wishing to engage in co-operative activity with artists in the Occupied Territories should first refuse to do their annual service in the Israeli military or support the Israeli military whilst it remained an army of occupation. This was considered to be an essential basis for cultural dialogue, as they 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 subsequent demands were that the Israeli artist/institution publicly declare (through either 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 however, 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 within an article in *Dance Europe* magazine (Rowe, 2000a) and a conference paper presented in Montreal (Rowe, 2005d). 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 were willing to accept any of the demands 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 life-long restrictions within Israeli society. They particularly felt that a show of

support for the return of indigenous refugees was the most contentious issue, as they argued this would threaten the demographic balance of a specifically Jewish state.

For dance artists in the CWB, 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 (2004). Whilst this formerly clarified the local rationale for why the boycott existed 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 (e.g. in Harding, 2004) of the construction of Israeli military barriers and colonies throughout the West Bank went some way towards satisfying local concerns. It fell short on others 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 (Rowe 2005c).

At the time of writing, cultural interactions with Israelis remained a particularly volatile issue for dance artists in the CWB, and none of the informants in this study suggested 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 CWB. For those advocating the boycott, however, it remained a means of ensuring that the community's aesthetic evolution would not become divorced from its ideological evolution.

8.3 The Second Intifada from 2000-2007

8.3.1 The rise of Hamas

Whilst the outbreak of the second *intifada* is popularly attributed to Ariel Sharon's controversial tour of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem, its deeper cause can be discerned in the ongoing processes of colonial dispossession and brutal occupation that had increased in the Occupied Territories during the Oslo period (Said, 2001; Usher, 2003). The violent force that the Israeli military utilized to put down indigenous protests in late 2000 was surprising 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 of the indigenous population had been killed and 11,000 injured by Israeli military interventions (Palestine Red Crescent Society, 2007). An overwhelming majority of these casualties were children and bystanders uninvolved in any protest action (B'tselem, 2007b).

These deaths and injuries amongst the indigenous population of the Occupied Territories can be seen equating, by population ratio, to more than the total number of American dead and injured during the entire war in Vietnam. The CWB community thus entered a phase of collective trauma. Throughout the West Bank, local businesses went on strike in protest and all scheduled public cultural performances were cancelled. An Israeli military blockade between Ramallah/Al-Bireh and Birzeit divided the CWB, disrupting activities at Birzeit University. During these months I was conducting arts workshops in the refugee camps and villages across the West Bank (see Rowe, 2003a) 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. Whilst local cultural and business life gradually became more active in the ensuing months, it was very clear that a new cultural era had been entered by the indigenous community and that the Oslo period was over (Stein & Swedenburg, 2003).

The hostilities continued and increased, and on March 28, 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” (Usher, 2003, p.32). Banks, businesses and homes were robbed and vandalised in a military operation that seemed subject to both random acts of greed amongst individual Israeli soldiers and a more methodical and orchestrated process of destroying local infrastructure (Hass, 2002b; 2002c). This incursion followed what Baruch Kimmerling described as Sharon’s goal of Politicide, or the “...dissolution of the Palestinian people’s existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity” (2003, p.4). Whilst the Israeli military subsequently withdrew from encampments in occupied buildings in Ramallah and Al-Bireh, it maintained military control over the area, imposing continuous curfews and closures for several months and occasional incursions during the subsequent years. Commencement on 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 PNA president Yassir Arafat on November 11, 2004 instigated a shift in the political discourse between Israel and the PNA. Whilst an agreement made in Egypt between subsequent 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 and 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 (B’tselem, 2007a).

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 of America, 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 (Baumgarten, 2005). This political change thus challenged existing definitions of local collective cultural identity. As Milton-

Edwards (1999) contended however, the concept of Palestinianism (nurtured by political movements like the PLO) had become so ingrained in the indigenous population that the task of reorienting the Palestinian sense of identity to become Muslim first and Palestinian second presented Hamas with a considerable challenge. As the following section discusses, even Islamic leaders in the CWB felt a strong affiliation with the conception of local dance culture that had been defined by nationalist salvagism.

8.3.2 Religion and foreign cultural influences at the start of the 21st century

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 amongst the indigenous population. Whilst such criticism had previously been limited to religious sermons and demonstrations, 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 impact on 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 within 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 CWB (personal communication, Iman Hammouri, April 5, 2006).

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 (Nasser, 2005a). The Popular Art Centre protested 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 the CWB) released a statement supporting the Popular Art Centre and stressing the importance of such cultural activity for solidifying the cultural identity of Palestine (Al-Hayyat al Jadida, 2005). 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* (Islamic law), and that it was the will of the local population that it not be held (Nasser, 2005b). The Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheik Okroma Sabri, entered the argument supporting the Qalqilya Municipal Council, suggesting the cultural event would deny the political 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 mentioned that what suited other nations did not suit the local society, and vice versa. Various prominent local non-governmental organizations (the Palestinian Media Centre, Miftah, The Tedaqwal Institute) also 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 (Baghdadi, 2005). Ultimately, the permission was not granted and no dance performance took place in Qalqilya that year as part of the Palestine International Festival, although the following year administrative negotiations between the Popular Art Centre and the Qalqilya Municipality were revived regarding another cultural event.

Whilst perceiving this disagreement from a modernist vs. traditionalist perspective would suggest it was simply a conflict between the forces of cultural progress and cultural regression, such an understanding does not acknowledge the dynamic nature of the Islamic reform movement. As Milton-Edwards (1999) suggested, political Islam in Palestine was not based on the conservative ideal of maintaining traditions. It had entered the political landscape with the aim of radically aligning the population with a particular interpretation of Islam that it considered to be the right way. Defining the Islamic reform movement as fundamentalist similarly conceals more than it depicts, by implicitly denying the diversity of internal rationales and directions (Sabet, 2000).

The conflict over the proposed dance performance in Qalqilya in the summer of 2005 might alternatively be understood as resulting from a nexus of differing political

hegemonies, each evolving in separate directions. The ascendant Islamic Hamas was attempting to assert its influence through the municipal council. The waning secular nationalist Fatah was attempting to assert its influence through the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. The leftist Popular Art Centre was attempting to assert its influence through cultural activities. From this perspective, the dispute did thus 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 assert a post-salvage ideal for both the local community, and in doing so define the nature and extent of regional cultural identity. That the negotiations ended in political taunts and antagonistic refusals revealed a cultural rift within the population of the West Bank: a growing uncertainty over the boundaries of collective identity and a growing uncertainty over the cultural value of dance within that identity.

Such a dispute highlighted the 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 authoritarian idealism. Such dialogues would first need to acknowledge the evolving, post-salvage nature of the various attitudes presented, and then consider how each might accommodate the other. This would involve accepting that cultural ideas emulated from a foreign source might have to be adapted to remain locally relevant.

To try to gain a greater understanding of the basis of the local controversy related to dance and Islam, I met with several leading sheiks (Islamic religious leaders) in the CWB during the course of this study. Amongst these sheiks there was a diversity of political opinion: whilst some were more ideologically aligned with the Hamas movement, others were more supportive of leftist movements and secular nationalism⁴¹. Their general contentions with performing dance groups in the CWB generally fell into two categories. Firstly, that they were too far removed from the

⁴¹ For security reasons, I do not identify each with their political affiliations in this thesis.

local folkdance traditions that preceded them, and secondly that they did not reflect Islamic values.

The understanding of traditional folk dance practices presented by these informants was very similar to that previously defined by Palestinian nationalist salvagists, particularly in relation to gender segregation. Whilst this paradigm suggested that historic folkdance traditions were generally compatible with contemporary Islamic ideals, it did acknowledge the impact of the Islamic reform movement on local dance practices in the early 20th Century. Of particular note, the vigorous participation of women in dance activities, based on accounts from the 19th and early 20th Centuries (see 6.2), reveal an immodesty that might not be compatible with contemporary local Islamic ideals. Acknowledging such a history might not stimulate a shift in values within the contemporary Islamic reform movement to embrace such dances. It would, however, at least highlight the evolving nature of local culture and suggest that the idea of adaptations to local traditional dance practices is not inherently incompatible with the Islamic reform movement.

Resolving the argument that current local dance products are removed from Islam itself presents a more complex challenge. From the opinions expressed to me, there was no concern relating to the kinesthetic influence of dance on the morals of the dancer. Religious concerns were more directed at the moral impact on the viewer of the dance, and specifically protested against the erotic objectification of women. 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" (personal communication, April 9, 2006). Fadel Saleh suggested 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.

(personal communication, April 10, 2006)

This leads to an uncertain area, as determining what is an erotic, rather than just aesthetic, expression may become a highly subjective issue. As Bassam Jarrar

suggested, aesthetic expressions were promoted within Islam, and that “The Holy Koran asks us to see the beauty in movement”, indicating chapter 16, verses 6 and 8 (personal communication, April 9, 2006). Jarrar argues that such aesthetic expressions should be related to the wider social environment, however:

Islam believes in committed art, [not] art for the sake of art. . . . It should be in harmony with peoples understandings, beliefs and values. This is very important. . . . This is part of correcting art. There is no rejection, but Islamization. (Personal communication, April 9, 2006)

This perspective places a positive value on artistic production as a means of contributing towards social harmony. As such, the process of Islamic reform might be understood not so much as an elimination of unwanted cultural phenomenon, but as an ongoing analysis, adaptation and refinement of cultural phenomenon so that they it 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 appear, however, that the relationship with popular religious movements has not been subject to ongoing public investigation by producers of dance in the CWB. Whilst some private dialogues between religious figures and dance makers have taken place, my research has uncovered virtually no published literature methodically analyzing the relationship between dance and religion within the CWB. This perhaps reflects a local disinclination amongst both Islamic scholars and dance practitioners to intensify public debate on this issue.

Instead, a process of self-censorship has guided dance production within the CWB. 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 amongst the indigenous population of Palestine becomes increasingly aligned with the ideals of the Islamic Reform movement however (as suggested by the political rise of Hamas), new challenges arise for producers of dance. For dance to remain a popular art form in the CWB community *and* retain a popular following amongst the wider indigenous

population (in places like Qalqilya), reliance upon Palestinian nationalist sentiments may no longer be enough.

8.3.3 Dance during siege

Public cultural activities were initially halted in the CWB 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 whilst the dance on display generally involved standard folk dance pieces, it occasionally included short experimental works in physical theatre/modern dance (particularly featuring artists from Sareyyet Ramallah).

Whilst Israeli military actions inevitably had a direct impact on the private lives of leading local dance artists during this period (see Rowe, 2003e), these actions also obstructed the dance production process. The dance studio in the Popular Art Centre was extensively vandalised by Israeli soldiers. Israeli military curfews constantly interrupted rehearsal schedules. Roadblocks and closures on towns impeded the movement of individuals into, out of, and around the CWB.

The production of major evening-length works by local dance artists was thus considerably delayed. Several new productions were premiered however, and can be seen as reflecting new directions in local dance culture and continuing to react to shifts in the socio-political environment. These included Ramallah Dance Theatre's *Access Denied*, Sareyyet's *At the Checkpoint*, Wishaa's *Raqas* and El-Funoun's *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond* and *A Letter Too...* With these new productions also came major upheavals in the composition of local groups.

Whilst international guest teachers generally visited less during this period than in the late 1990s, dancers from the CWB increasingly undertook studies in dance abroad, particularly in Italy, France, Germany, Tunisia and the U.K. 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 dancer/choreographers. This instigated new patterns of cross-generational cultural negotiation.

8.3.4 A shift from historic to contemporary conceptions of indigenous identity

Ramallah Dance Theatre was a six-month project between 2003-2004 that produced several dance videos and *Mamnou al-Obour (Access Denied)*, performed live at the Al-Kasaba Theatre and Birzeit University. These presented a collage of dance scenes focused on life under military occupation, satirical reflections on curfews, military checkpoints, the wall, imprisonment and public demonstrations of solidarity.

The choreographic work of Ramallah Dance Theatre specifically promoted non-traditional movement forms as local art, in ways that might be described as physical theatre. In this sense, the movement vocabulary within the production was mostly stimulated by narrative rather than aesthetic goals. In order to reveal appropriate movements, the artists' personal experiences of the physicality of torture, enclosure, exclusion and resistance provided constant reference points. Dressed in casual contemporary clothes, the dance was set against an eclectic score of popular music from Africa and Europe mixed with traditional Islamic music. 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. The digitally recorded scenes, projected onto a screen at the back of the stage, were recorded in various external locations to provide a context to the danced narratives. These included a child's bedroom and a lounge room during curfew, an interrogation cell and a grey concrete separation wall. These short dance videos were subsequently screened on local television stations across the West Bank.

As a temporary collective, Ramallah Dance Theatre involved an artistic collaboration between Noora Baker, Maysoun Rafeedie, Raed Badwan, Maher Shawamreh and the author, working with seven other dance artists from El-Funoun, Sareyyet Ramallah and the wider community. Within *Access Denied*, Ramallah Dance Theatre publicly presented artistic adaptations that had previously been the subject of tentative debate and physical experimentation within the more closed studio spaces of El-Funoun and

Sareyyet. The presentation of these innovations were motivated by a desire amongst the artists involved to promote the contemporary, rather than historic, identity of the local community.

Whilst Ramallah Dance Theatre was a relatively brief intervention, it allowed for more experimental local ideas to gain a greater theatrical polish and for an examination of the boundaries of local aesthetic sensibilities. The popular local response to the project provided an indicator 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.

8.3.5 Directional shifts in Sareyyet Ramallah

The work of Ramallah Dance Theatre might thus be seen supporting shifts in the Sareyyet group, as it was going through turbulent changes of artistic direction from *Al-Birjawi* in 2000 into *At the Checkpoint*⁴² in 2005. As the name suggests, this new production was based on contemporary scenes around a military checkpoint (see Rowe, 2005a). Building on the short expressive group dance *I.D. Cards (Hawayat)* choreographed by Khaled Ellayan in 2002, the music for *At the Checkpoint* included sections from various non-Arab sources, constructing an aural pastiche of the contemporary West Bank. The movement used a variety of different styles, with less overt references to local folklore although distinct folkloric actions echoed like a ghost in the background during certain scenes. Most notable within the choreography was the use of stillness, a contrast to the vibrant energy usually present in local folkdances. 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 very disciplined ensemble work within the choreography carried themes of community solidarity. Juxtaposed solos with ensembles suggested that what happens to the one happens to the whole (Rowe, 2005a).

As Khaled Ellayan suggests, this shift coincided with a temporal shift in conceptions of collective cultural identity, from an indigenous culture that only existing within the

⁴² The author was employed to provide choreographic workshops for three months in preparation for this project in 2003.

imagined community of pre-1948 Palestine to an indigenous culture that was dynamic and reflecting a contemporary social experience:

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. (personal communication, April 7, 2006)

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 go forward with representations of contemporary life was chosen, and half the dancers left the group. This split and new direction also entailed a changing of the group's name, from The First Ramallah Group for Music and Dabkeh to The First Ramallah Group for Music and Dance. In order to reflect a wider understanding of the community, the choreographic process also shifted back into a more collective endeavour. Whilst Khaled Ellayan, Lena Harami and Elena Hamoudi were credited with choreographing the work, the generating of movement material involved greater input from the performers than previous Sareyyet Ramallah productions. The process also engaged in greater community discourse than previous productions, as community dance workshops offered to children by Sareyyet during the rehearsal stages fed the production with both performers and movement ideas.

In response to the popular appeal of the production and to further support this artistic direction, 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. Unfortunately, the non-European groups were refused entry visas by the Israeli government, and so only European companies were able to participate.

8.3.6 Directional shifts in *El-Funoun*

Premiering in 2003, El-Funoun's dance production *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*⁴³ was an hour-length fictional narrative about the impact of the Nakba (refugee crisis of 1947/48) on a coastal village in Palestine. Following the separation of two young lovers, one who flees to Lebanon, another who remains behind, the story reflected the wider plight of a divided and exiled indigenous population. Through various movement styles ranging from more traditional folkloric patterns to more expressive physical theatre, *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond* explored themes such as dispossession, alienation and bewilderment (see Rowe, 2003d).

The narrative structure of *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond* was divided into four parts, each created by a different choreographer. The first scene, choreographed by Khaled Qatamish and Noora Baker, presented an idyllic pre-Nakba fishing village on the coast of Palestine. Various village-style activities were engaged in, with men throwing nets and fishing, women weaving and waiting for them to return from the sea. Whilst stylised to express these cultural activities, the movement continued to explore the dabkeh-like aesthetic patterns of previous El-Funoun productions.

The second scene, choreographed by Lana Abu Hijleh, 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. Graceful mourning through group dances with scarves continued the imagined aesthetic traditions of the *nuwar* (or *latm*) presented in earlier productions like *The Plains of Ibn Amer*.

The third scene, choreographed by Omar Barghouti, portrayed the new life of this population in refugee camps in Lebanon. Reflecting Orientalist-style imaginings of belly dancing, the movement repertoire in some of this section attempted to show the incompatible conflict between dance styles in Lebanon and dance styles in Palestine, suggesting irreconcilable frustration for the two populations. Other parts were more based on expressive gestures of horror at events of violent repression in the refugee camps.

⁴³ The author was employed as a choreographic consultant on this project between 2000-2002.

The final scene, choreographed by Mohammad Atta, reflected a longing to return. Dancers bearing over-sized keys (a popular local symbol reflecting the desire to return to homes abandoned 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 aging protagonists Aisha and Saleh) attempted to contact each other across the Lebanon Israel border, in a slow dance of reaching.

The highly stylised costumes for Haifa, Beirut and Beyond were designed and made by a dancer from the Caracalla group in Lebanon. With vibrant shiny colours and a blending of romanticised imaginings of the Ottoman era, these outfits shifted further away from the literal presentation of peasant like thobes and gowns of 19th century Palestinian peasants.

Haifa Beirut and Beyond further 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 (relatively expensive) musical score was commissioned from a distance, as a result of European financial support (personal communication, Khaled Qatamish, April 4, 2006). Lebanon's renowned Marcel Khalife produced a Western orchestral score that, whilst utilizing Middle Eastern motifs, was very derivative of the Oriental-flavoured compositions of Rimsky-Korsakov and Prokofiev. Even after revision, this recording did not satisfy all of the choreographers involved in the production, particularly as its very balletic sound contrasted with the more familiar traditional music that had previously been used by the group. As each choreographer was responsible for different scenes, only a portion of Khalife's score was ultimately used by the production, and an eclectic mix of other recorded folk music filled in the rest.

The production resulted from a complex seven-year rehearsal process and a structural shift within 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, transforming from a process of collective contribution to a process of collective contribution and consent: individual choreographers created different scenes, which 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 of evaluating choreography contrasted with the earlier processes of collaborative creative contribution that had defined El-Funoun choreography in the 1980s and several former El-Funoun members such as Suhail Khoury and founder Wassim al-Kurdi remained highly critical of it. As a re-location of collective artistic discourse, upon watching the production they felt that communicative skills in the boardroom context had overwhelmed creative skills in the studio context, compromising the artistic intent of individual choreographers (personal communications, September 19, 2005, and April 4, 2006).

This choreographic process brought something of an internal crisis to El-Funoun, leading to the departure from the group of several prominent members. Most notably, Mohammad Atta (one of El-Funoun's remaining founding members and leading choreographer) felt the process of choreography-by-committee had become untenable and subsequently left El-Funoun in 2003, after the opening of *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*.

Atta was also dissatisfied with the artistic direction that El-Funoun was taking and sought a return to the evolutionary pathway that was being forged by El-Funoun in the 1980s and subsequently with productions such as *Ululations* (personal communication, July 3, 2004). To this end, he founded Wishaa', with a new group of dances, premiering the more folk-based production *Raqas* in 2005. Within this Atta continued the El-Funoun trend towards creating regionally Arab rather than specifically Palestinian dance, although the focus was much more on the continuation of rural peasant folk culture (see Rowe 2004a).

El-Funoun continued on with further choreographic experimentation, and by 2006 specifically non-folk based dances, such as Maher Shawamreh and Noora Baker's *Message of the Soul (Khitab al-Rouh)* were being presented as part of the repertoire of El-Funoun. A further shift away from the choreographic committee process of

creation occurred in 2007, within the preparations for the group's new production *A Letter To... (Resala Ila...)*. This led to the departure from the group of former trainer Omar Barghouti, as the choreographic and rehearsal process remained under the sole direction of Maher Shawamreh.

As a tribute to the assassinated Palestinian political cartoonist Naj Al-Ali, *A Letter To...* provided a multi-media blend of live dance and black and white cartoon images being drawn and projected on to a back screen. Continuing the aesthetics established Naj Al-Ali's pictures, the dancers were dressed in the simple black and white pauper-like clothes and interacted with large symbolic black and white props such as brooms, guns, scythes and barrels. Voiced over 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 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. Whilst the movement repertoire and theatrical effects of *A Letter To...* increasingly reflected interactions with foreign artists, it also continued to address local topical themes and project indigenous aesthetics. During preparations for the production, Maher Shawamreh explained his approach to devising a local dance technique:

I see myself as able to make technique, because this is my body. I can move like this or that. I can also watch the other people around me. Like this I can make a more local technique [...] Any body can make a technique if they have a mind and a body. (personal communication, April 11, 2006).

The developing of new technical basis for local choreography has involved a continuous process of absorbing new ideas and analyzing their local relevance. It might be suggested that such a process of analysis, spurred by these international encounters, has also stimulated reflections on the actual boundaries of local collective cultural identity and the most effective means of representing it. As El-Funoun director Khaled Qatamish explained,

El-Funoun has stopped doing strictly traditional, traditional dance, e.g. *deloneh* and *tayarah*. We don't see these borders between what is traditional and what is contemporary Palestinian dance. We have to be open to the world and the experiences of the world. But from these influences of the world, El-Funoun tries to put its Arab touch. (personal communication, April 4, 2006)

The future directions of local dance culture are far from certain. Whilst post-salvagism emerged as a vaguely defined yet prominent ideal within dance production in the CWB at the end of the 20th Century, foreign cultural hegemony and local salvagist ideals continue to challenge its acceptance.

Chapter 9: Analysis and recommendations for cultural interventions and the evolution of post-salvagism

It might be argued that the major ruptures within the most established dance groups in the CWB at the start of the 21st Century were the result of ambiguities in the groups' artistic agendas. Central to these internal conflicts has been an uncertainty over notions of modernity and tradition, and how shared heritage might best be carried forward and maintained within contemporary artistic activity.

Whilst Bhabha (1994) argues that such an ambiguity is a healthy stimulant for diversifying cultural production, diversification does not necessarily equate with a qualitative improvement in cultural lifestyles (see 3.1). The endless fragmentation of cultural idealism is not a universally desired goal. For traumatised populations trying to maintain a sense of community and an ongoing, cross-generational cohesion, such dissemblance can feel incrementally destructive. Multiple discourses might be accommodated within such a community, but only if they remain within parameters that are determined by the mutual consent of community members.

So where might one position the current direction of recent dance productions by El-Funoun, Sareyyet Ramallah and Ramallah Dance Theatre? Do they continue to promote local social cohesion or do they contribute to its fragmentation? Working from a post-salvage paradigm, within this chapter I examine dance-making processes in these groups. Through this analysis I distinguish factors that might be seen promoting cultural continuity from those that might seem to challenge it. Whilst perhaps not overtly apparent, this post-salvage process of continuity, if clarified, might subsequently lead to a strengthening of local cultural cohesion rather than further division.

This chapter is thus based upon my own observations of dance practices during the critical juncture between El-Funoun's *Haifa Beirut and Beyond* (in 2003) and *A Letter To...* (in 2007), and between Sareyyet Ramallah's *Al-Birjawi* (in 2000) and *At the Checkpoint* (in 2005). I worked with both groups as a dance teacher and choreographic consultant on the two former productions between 2000 and 2002. The

experience of these residency periods guided the subsequent interventions that I undertook with artists from both groups during 2003 and 2004. In 2003 I facilitated a six-month workshop focused on enhancing choreographic and pedagogic practices within Sareyyet Ramallah. In 2003/2004, I directed the Ramallah Dance Theatre project, which involved collaboratively choreographing new work with the dancers Maher Shawamreh and Noora Baker (who would go on to produce *A Letter Too...* within El-Funoun).

The rationales guiding my own interventions might thus be seen as particularly salient to the artistic shifts undertaken by El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah. Analyzing these rationales from a post-salvage paradigm can indicate the ways in which recent productions by El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah carry forward local heritage, maintain social cohesion and foster cultural autonomy.

This requires a more thorough treatment of the philosophical basis of post-salvagism, particularly in relation to how local artists approach cross-cultural interventions and foreign cultural influences. Such an analysis involves the definition and recognition of what I term here *anti-hegemony*. The degree to which this cultural ideal has been represented in public discourse might be seen as particularly relevant to the ongoing evolution of post-salvagism. As such, this chapter examines the ways that dance learning, dance creating and subsequently the public evaluation of dance productions have taken place in the CWB.

The constraints of the research parameters for this study have limited this analytical review to observations on historic and current dance practices, identification of problems, speculations on solutions, and descriptions of specific dance interventions undertaken. These provide the first four stages of a critical design ethnography (see 4.2). It is hoped that this review might subsequently provide a basis for further research into the impact of these actions on local dance practitioners, and the designing of new models for improved praxis.

9.1 Hegemony and cultural interventions

9.1.1 Hegemony, counter-hegemony and anti-hegemony

There have been several individuals in the CWB community that have, during the course of my research, expressed a desire for local dance artists to simply emulate and master foreign dance techniques (such as classical ballet), believing that this would allow the local community to competitively participate in global cultural forums. The overwhelming majority of the dance artists and dance commentators that I have observed and interviewed in the CWB within the course of this study have, however, disagreed with this proposition. These artists and commentators have generally argued that the process of simply emulating a foreign dance form would render subsequent local dance products less locally meaningful, undermine the existing aesthetic values in the local dance culture, and contribute to foreign hegemony or deculturation (see 3.1.4). This, they suggested, would in turn lessen local cultural autonomy. As such, these dance interventionists have opted instead to examine how local, indigenous dance practices may be used to reflect the local community's expressions. From amongst those holding this opinion, it can be important, however, to recognize a distinction between two very different paradigms: salvagist and post-salvagist.

Confronting concerns that "Western cultural invasion increases day by day in our lives" (Alqam, 1994, p.195), some dance interventionists have subsequently pursued a distinctly counter-hegemonic intent (see 3.3.5). This has involved completely rejecting foreign or colonial influences in local cultural production as a corruption of local culture, fundamentally *because* these ideas are foreign or colonial. Such cultural production might be posited as relational, as it is deliberately constructed in antipathy to the cultural constructs of an Other. As Chapter 7 of this thesis suggests, in the context of the CWB this counter-hegemonic paradigm can be seen guiding salvagist dance interventions.

There are also those in the CWB community who, whilst rejecting the idea of simply adopting foreign dance practices, have not been so antagonistic to the idea of allowing foreign influences into local dance practices. Although refusing cultural activity with Zionist colonists for political, not cultural, reasons, these local interventionists have

actively sought other foreign cultural encounters as part of their processes of dance production. This attitude can be seen emerging from the increasing confidence that local dance artists have in the intrinsic value of local dance products. Choreographer Lena Harami explained how, following the production of *At The Checkpoint*, she realized that

dance is not really a universal language. It has universal tools, in your body, your mouth, your hands, your eyes, your feet, your stomach. But the language is not the same, because there are gestures that in some country mean a totally different thing in another country. . . .In order to create your own [dance] language, you really need to explore your own language *and* other people's language so you can really see what is necessary. (personal communication, April 7, 2006)

This desire to investigate the cultural ideals of others without necessarily emulating them can also be seen emerging as a reaction to the way in which past cross-cultural encounters diminished local confidence in cultural production. Iman Hamouri, director of the Popular Art Centre, explained how

we used to have international dancers come to teach us, we were just the receivers. Now it is different, now we are trying to make it more interactive, more of a two-way dialogue. . . . If it is just one way, it won't really reach anywhere, it will be patronizing and no one will benefit from this experience. They should know it and we should know it. The superiority - inferiority relationship will lead to more division, not learning. (Personal communication, April 5, 2006)

These local artists and institutions had thus begun to seek ways of advancing their intercultural competence (i.e., their ability to confidently and sensitively interact with other cultures). This was undertaken with an acute awareness, however, that such encounters had a tendency to be defined by the uneven political platform inherent to Western interactions with colonised population groups (Bharucha, 1993). As such, these artists upheld their defiance towards deculturation and cultural imperialism, but not necessarily towards the cultural Other.

To further understand this notion, the actual function of these cultural interactions with foreign artists requires greater definition. From the responses of most of the dance artists interviewed for this thesis, it would appear that their aim in engaging in these foreign cultural encounters was not simply interculturalist, in the socio-political

sense of fusing of two cultural styles to illustrate multi-cultural or cross-cultural harmony (Marranca & Dasgupta, 1991; Pavis, 1996; Holledge & Tompkins, 2000). The intent of local artists engaging in these cultural encounters may be better understood from a post-salvagist paradigm: foreign cultural resources were sought in order to support social cohesion within a population group whose own cultural practices had been greatly diminished by cultural dislocation. To promote a sense of local cultural autonomy and relevance with the cultural past, post-salvage interventionists attempt to identify ways in which foreign aesthetic ideas and techniques might be evaluated, adapted and *selectively* incorporated into the local culture, based on their relevance to other local cultural phenomenon. To achieve this, these artists sought to *critically* engage in cultural interventions with foreigners, so that foreign influences might contribute to (but not direct) the post-salvage evolution of local dance culture.

9.1.2 Post-salvagism as anti-hegemonic

Post-salvage interventions might thus be considered as supporting neither hegemony nor counter-hegemony: they challenge both deculturation and the construction of a cultural polarity. As such, the post-salvage goal to contribute to an autonomous yet inherently dynamic and self-referential cultural environment supports what might be labelled *anti-hegemony*, as it rejects the very notion of hegemony. I would argue that in an anti-hegemonic cultural context, cultural evolution is defined by the needs of those in the immediate community, with reference to their past and present experiences and beliefs and their future expectations, rather than by a need to conform to, *or defy*, the cultural expectations of others outside the community.

Whilst this anti-hegemonic intent obviously applies to encounters with foreign artists who are presenting their own traditional or modernist cultural ideas, it is equally applicable in encounters in which post-modernist cultural knowledge is being shared. The rejection of hegemony (and cultural-knowledge superiority) in this latter context perhaps requires particular emphasis, given the presumptions regarding the universal applicability of post-modernism in the post-colonial world (as discussed in 3.4.3). As post-salvagism does not necessarily demand the deconstruction of meta-narratives and the distancing of tradition, the imposition of post-modernist cultural practices can be as affronting as the imposition of foreign traditional or modernist ideals.

Through hegemonic foreign cultural interactions, *all* cultural knowledge can thus maintain the capacity to undermine local cultural autonomy and the evolution of post-salvagist culture. Alternatively, an anti-hegemonic intent can result in cross-cultural encounters when no cultural knowledge is posited as inherently superior.

9.1.3 Insidious hegemony

Identifying an anti-hegemonic goal within post-salvagism is an important step towards supporting post-salvage cross-cultural encounters. Such a realization does not, in itself, impede hegemony however. As this chapter examines, hegemony can be insidious. Hegemony can subtly infiltrate a cultural system through the actual cultural/educational structures that encompass cultural interventions. This is particularly the case in traumatised, colonised communities such as the CWB, in which indigenous mechanisms of cultural production have been severely disrupted by the surrounding socio-political upheavals.

So whilst the political ideal of anti-hegemony might pervade local post-salvage cultural interventions, it does not always translate into actual cultural autonomy on an aesthetic level. This is perhaps because aesthetic rationales have often been relatively divorced from socio-political rationales. Reflecting on dance production in the CWB in recent years, local writer and arts administrator Mahmoud Abu Hashhash suggested that

too much of the local choreography is politics first, then aesthetics, and only using aesthetics to support the political message. Not enough is done to explore the actual aesthetics existing within the political situation. (personal communication, April 4, 2006)

From this viewpoint, foreign dance ideas can often appear to have been adopted simply because they vibrantly amplify a political message, without consideration of how their particular aesthetic qualities might contradict the ideology being symbolically represented through the dance. El-Funoun choreographer Omar Barghouti criticised this phenomenon as a “Monkey Tendency” (2004a, p.25) in local dance production, emphasizing the need to examine local dance *processes* rather than just dance *products*. Continuing this line of inquiry, the purpose of this chapter is to

examine such insidious hegemony within the processes of dance interventions, and reflect upon how, through improved praxis, cross-cultural encounters and local cultural interventions might better support anti-hegemony and the aesthetic evolution of post-salvagism.

Determining insidious hegemony in a community's cultural evolution can be particularly difficult, as such judgments on this issue can be prone to very culture-specific ideals and standards that even those within the community might not be fully aware of. For example, it can be easy to presume certain methods of cultural education are universal (such as a context in which a dance teacher instructs a dance student), and thereby ignore or undermine the existence of other methods of cultural education that might have preceded periods of colonial hegemony. As such, this chapter reviews the history of local dance learning, dance creating and dance evaluating, revealing how and why each of these evolutionary processes might have fallen subject to insidious hegemony, and how each might contribute to the growth of post-salvagism.

9.2 Dance learning

9.2.1 Defining 'dance learning' as an evolutionary process

The theory of cultural evolution presented in this thesis contends that specific dance ideas are culturally, not genetically, mediated within a population group (see 3.2.4). Whilst acknowledging that genetic reproduction within a population group may bestow upon individuals certain physical attributes that are valued within particular dance styles (e.g. flexible fingers, elongated limbs), the actual dance ideas specific to the culture are passed from individual to individual through the process of cultural imitation (Seitz, 2002).

Blackmore (1998) further defines this process of cultural imitation as memetic transfer, following Dawkins (1976) description of memes as units of cultural information. Memetic transfer refers to a process in which specific cultural knowledge is obtained by absorbing an idea presented by another individual. This learning process involves the transfer of i-culture (i.e., the instructions related to a cultural idea that provide it with meaning and context) for the purpose of being able to

reproduce m-culture (i.e., repeated material instantiations of that cultural idea). This replication of cultural ideas is not limited to the form of m-culture experienced by the cultural learner, however. Dance ideas may be conceptualized and transferred through, for example, written text, pictorial representations or oral expressions. An individual might learn and retain the capacity to do a certain dance action through reading a particular form of dance notation, or improve their ability to embody a particular dance aesthetic principle through hearing a metaphor. The approaches to such transfer are numerous and have been discussed in many texts (e.g. Redfern, 1973; 1983; Best, 1978; 1985; Greene, 1981; Haynes, 1987; Schwartz, 1993; Green-Gilbert, 1992; Smith-Autard, 1992; 1994; Stinson, 1997; 2004; Bannon & Sanderson, 2000; Bresler, 2004; Curl, 2003). The effective transfer of dance i-culture is generally considered to require a multitude of different m-culture instantiations however, utilizing various senses and media (Williams, 1991; McFee, 1992; Seitz, 2002).

Whilst it is possible to distinguish between learning a specific dance piece, learning a particular dance style and learning about the generic phenomenon of dance (Williams, 1979), each involves a process of cultural imitation. As such, dance ideas are memetically transferred when an individual replicates the particular series of movements, the components of a particular dance style (such as the aesthetic principles, postures and movement sequences associated with classical ballet) and even the aesthetic concepts or movement principles that might generically be applied to dance, after exposure to existing dance theories that detail these concepts and principles (e.g. H'Doubler, 1925; 1957; Duncan, 1927; Wigman, 1931; 1966; Hayes, 1955; Laban, 1956; 1966; Humphrey, 1959).

This process of obtaining knowledge through memetic transfer can be seen as distinct from processes of more individual learning however, such as the personal discoveries obtained through classical or operant conditioning (Skinner, 1953). When learning through guided-discovery (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002) for example, a dancer experiences ways of moving without necessarily being informed of that movement's value and meaning by another individual. They are thus not learning cultural knowledge and experiencing memetic transfer. They may subsequently turn that discovery into cultural knowledge however, if they transfer those discoveries

memetically to another individual, or if somebody clarifies for them that what they have discovered is valued by the culture (Blackmore, 1998).

This process of memetic transfer can be identified at different stages in the evolution of a dance idea. For example, a well-established dance idea, such as an *inzel* (a type of hopping-stamp) in dabkeh, undergoes memetic transfer when it is being passed across generations to new learners. A less-established dance idea, such as a movement innovated during choreographic improvisation (discussed in 9.3), is also being memetically transferred when the choreographer tries to repeat the idea and other dancers try to absorb it. During this dance creating process, the creating and recreating (or learning) processes can occur almost simultaneously. At one moment the dance idea itself is being formulated, and thus its creation and evaluation is the focus of attention. In the next moment the focus is on how to accurately copy this new idea so that it retains a consistency and can be recalled later or transferred to other dancers. In the former process the individual is making critical decisions regarding *what* it is they want to dance, in the latter process they are making critical decisions regarding *how* that dance idea might be repeated.

For both established and new dance ideas, this learning process does not therefore involve the making of decisions regarding the value and meaning of the dance product being transferred. When such decisions are being made, the processes of dance creating and dance evaluating (see 9.3 & 9.4) are being engaged in. The learning process, or memetic transfer, only involves making decisions regarding how a dance idea might be recalled, reconstructed and repeated.

It could be argued that there is no culture-neutral form of cultural transfer (Fanon 1963/1986; Freire, 1972; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). As Foster (2003) suggested, *how* a dance idea is replicated extends culture-specific knowledge onto that dance idea, and so different approaches to dance learning can thus influence the evolution of the dance idea. How specific dances (and the generic subject of dance) are memetically transferred thus becomes important. For post-salvage dance in the CWB, there is a need to identify pedagogic techniques that are culturally relevant to the ideas being transferred.

9.2.2 The rise of the 'dance teacher' in the CWB

The ancient discourse from King Zimri-Lim to his wife, inscribed on a clay tablet 4,000 years ago (see 5.3), suggests that (in that period at least) dance ideas were sometimes learnt through a process of specific dance instruction. This instruction seemingly occurred as a distinct experience, separate from other (social or performative) contexts for the dance. My research has not encountered descriptions of such a separate process of dance learning in the foreign accounts of dance practices in 19th and early 20th Century Palestine, however. From those and more contemporary descriptions of traditional dance practices in Palestine (e.g. Barakat, 1995; Hamdan, 1996; Karmi, 2002; Kaschl, 2003; Van Aken, 2006), the learning of dance ideas has been described as a process that traditionally occurred only through participating in the dance itself in its social context. The social context was thus multi-purpose, providing the principle forum for collective expression through, and cultural education of, dance.

Within this social context, there does not appear to have been a specific dance instructor, although a leader of the collective expression, such as the *lawih* in dabkeh, often played a prominent role as a carrier and transmitter of dance knowledge. Whilst these dance leaders did not necessarily instruct and correct individual participants in the dance, they did provide an example of how the dance should be done, in both its physical execution and its structural composition, and were charged with inspiring a certain discipline within the dancing group (Van Aken, 2006). Informants for this study who initially learnt dance in such social contexts explained that they occasionally received supportive verbal and visual instruction from co-dancers through what might be described as a peer-led collaborative learning process (Gough, 2000), but mostly the dance was learnt through just visually observing and kinaesthetically replicating movements. Pointedly, in these social forums verbal discourse was not used to invest a symbolic meaning into the specific dance ideas. This does not imply that meaning was not invested in these dance actions through other (perhaps more visceral) forms of communication. It does suggest however, that it was not common practice on such occasions to attempt to verbally rationalize the dance actions and provide them with a detailed semasiological (Williams, 1979) justification.

A more command-style of teaching (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002), in which learning is directed through both demonstration and correction from a specific individual, began to be experienced within dance learning amongst the indigenous population of Palestine during the early 20th Century. At this time, such dance instruction appears to be generally restricted to the teaching of foreign folk dances within the physical education syllabus of British Mandate schools. By the 1960s however, a command-style of dance teaching was being introduced to the learning of *local* folkdance forms in the CWB, through the Ramallah Nights festivals. Whilst this method of cultural education was experienced by relatively few dance learners at this time, it became a far more widespread phenomenon in the 1970s, through the politicised promotion of dabkeh as a national dance. Dance teachers, using a command-style method of instruction, became a new phenomenon across the CWB and more and more children experienced the learning of dance through forums specifically dedicated to such cultural education.

There were challenges to this phenomenon. El-Funoun dancer Serene Huleileh (2003) described utilizing an experienced dancer as a *lawih* (rather than as a dance teacher) to help a new girls group learn dabkeh in the late 1970s, specifically to confront this historical shift in local cultural education. In the early years of El-Funoun, a sense of peer-led, collaborative education was maintained to some extent as the dancers were responsible for teaching each other steps and not simply following the instructive corrections of a single teacher (Huleileh, 2003).

Within El-Funoun (and subsequently Sareyyet Ramallah) however, this collaborative learning process began to increasingly give way to a more command teaching style. This occurred as the dance creating process came more and more under the direction of singular choreographers (personal communication, Suhail Khoury, September 19, 2005; Khaled Ellayan, April 7, 2006). By the mid-1990s, the position of a specific dance trainer had become established within the practice sessions of El-Funoun and Sareyyet. Within these groups, the experience of guest teachers (for dance and aerobics) further reinforced a dance learning structure that involved a singular instructor demonstrating ideas and correcting learners as they attempted to replicate these ideas.

Whilst a command-style of teaching was used in the rehearsal of specific dances and the instruction of dance technique, this was not the only approach to dance learning undertaken by these groups. Certain sections of their training sessions were also dedicated to individual learning processes through improvisation tasks. Instigated in the 1980s as a result of workshops with drama teachers (see 8.1.4), these improvisational sessions, using the guided-discovery teaching style (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002), were subsequently emulated by the regular dance instructors. Alone, paired or in small groups, dancers were provided with a physical/expressive idea to explore, then given the time and space in which to explore it. This method of dance learning continued and diversified through exposure to visiting foreign teachers in the 1990s (Personal communication, Maysoun Rafeedie, July 10, 2004).

The issue of how dance ideas were transferred and who had authority in this process thus underwent radical changes during the latter half of the 20th century. Whereas learning dance had been mostly self-instructional or peer-lead (with friends and family at weddings helping novices), salvagist interventions and the revival of folkdance as a theatre art established a new learning practice. This mostly involved placing the responsibility for the learning process with certain individuals. As dance teachers, they became representatives of an institutionalized repository of local dance knowledge that had emerged through the politicization of local cultural practices (see Chapter 7). Whilst post-salvage interventions began to challenge this transformation, encounters with foreign dance pedagogues and increased personal authorship of dance products reinforced the use of a singular dance teacher directing the learning process, even amongst post-salvage dance collectives. It could thus be argued that dance learning in the CWB had been influenced by insidious hegemony, as the local relevance of foreign dance learning processes was not critically assessed but simply emulated.

9.2.3 Dance learning in El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah at the end of the 20th Century

I first began observing the practice sessions of El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah during brief visits in the late 1990s and early 2000. These critical observations subsequently informed my own approach to dance pedagogy in the CWB, as I

increasingly considered how specific dance learning processes might support or diminish post-salvagist ideals. I review these early observations here, so as to illustrate how these impressions subsequently guided my own approach to dance learning interventions.

The practice sessions took place in spacious studios with wooden floors and mirrored walls and involved mixed gender gatherings of approximately 20 dancers, who usually wore leotards, tights, t-shirts or tracksuits and bare feet, socks/ballet slippers or sneakers. Training sessions for both groups were held twice a week (or more often when a performance was near), for two to three hours in the evenings. These sessions were generally divided into three dance learning activities, which I discuss in order here: technical training, improvisation and rehearsing.

The sessions usually began with an hour of technical training led by a senior member of the dance group, repeating exercises learnt from the workshops with previous guest teachers: a blending of yoga stretches, Graham floor-work, Cunningham and release technique centre exercises and some ballet jumps. As the individuals leading these sessions did not necessarily have more experience in these particular techniques than the others in the group (and none had had more than a relatively brief exposure to each of these techniques), these individuals played a mostly facilitating role, reminding the group of the exercise sequences from previous workshops, leading them through the sequences with the music and occasionally stressing technical points that had been suggested by the guest teachers. Others in the groups would often interject with instructional comments- “remember so-and-so used to say we should think of such-and-such when we do this”. The dance learning process thus engaged in fairly constant verbal dialogue amongst the participants in the lesson.

Alternatively, and quite regularly, this technique session would instead involve an aerobics workout, with stretches, sit-ups and standing/stepping stamina workouts led by a member of the group who had more extensive experience in aerobics. These were generally presented with less dialogue as the dancers simply mimicked the actions being presented by the trainer.

The second part of the practice session involved a more individual learning process, as dancers were given improvisational tasks. This occurred regularly in El-Funoun as an integral part of the practice session, led by the group's trainer Omar Barghouti. In Sareyyet Ramallah, such creative improvisational activities generally occurred more sporadically, and mostly in the context of developing movement material for a particular choreography.

In El-Funoun, the improvisational exercises focused on the exploration of new movement rather than the personal blending of defined and existing steps (Puri & Hart-Johnson, 1995), and began with the group standing in a circle and slowly moving different parts of their body in isolation, as indicated by the trainer. Recorded music was played in the background and after a couple of minutes the group separated and the dancers scattered around the studio and began improvising in their own space. After a couple of minutes the music (which was different each session) was stopped and Barghouti suggested a specific task. These tasks were based on various concepts, such as rhythms existing in the music, emotional states, or metaphoric images and were focused on enhancing the dancer's ability to embody movement principles through self-discovery. The dancers then continued exploring these themes for a few more minutes. Sometimes the improvisational exercises ended at this point. On other occasions, the improvisational work was extended, the dancers paired up and explored the themes in duets. At some stage in the process, Barghouti would usually draw the groups attention to one or two dancers, as illustrations of the concept he was suggesting and indicating that these illustrations might guide the others. This reverted the activity to a process of cultural, rather than individual, learning.

When not actively involved in choreographing new works, the remainder of the practice sessions (for both El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah) involved learning and practicing specific dance pieces for performance. These rehearsals were led by a choreographer or the group's regular trainer and involved certain dancers 'running through' a piece. The trainer usually moved around the front of the studio calling corrections and reprimands to individual dancers as they danced. This process would be repeated over and over again throughout the evening. There was limited discussion or exploration of the problem areas after each run through, just a repeat of the overall mistakes and a sense of 'we are just going to keep doing this until we get it right': if

one dancer made a mistake, the whole group would often be made to repeat the dance. If the dance pieces remained problematic after several run-throughs, dancers were usually taken out of the piece and told to rehearse it separately at the back. The choreography was occasionally simplified to accommodate the lowest common denominator of dance technique in the group. This approach remained constant throughout the rehearsal period up until the performance, so that often the first time the dancers actually executed the dance without continuous instruction, reprimand and threat of removal from the piece was in the actual performance.

Observing the technique training, improvisation activities and dance rehearsing in these practice sessions thus contributed to my own approach to local dance learning interventions. The following sections present an analysis of these dance learning activities from a post-salvage paradigm, identifying problems and rationalizing my approach to resolving these.

9.2.4 Technique training

The process of dance technique training, or the engaging in specific exercises for the purpose of improving and maintaining dance abilities (Smith-Autard, 1994), was undertaken with particular dedication and discipline by the dancers in these groups. Through collaborative efforts they struggled to maintain the dance technique knowledge that they had been exposed to during brief workshops with foreign dance pedagogues. They were very enthusiastic not just to dance and create but also to actively improve their capacity to execute movement ideas with greater refinement. The methods of technique training that they were utilizing suggested, however, several areas of concern for the evolution of post-salvagism.

Most notably, the movement repertoire utilized in these technical training sessions (from both the various dance forms and the aerobics) did not always maintain a direct relevance to the choreographic work being presented by the groups. The technical training might have supported broad goals related to physical dexterity, flexibility, strength, co-ordination, musicality and stamina, but they did not refine the dancers for the specific choreographic work that they would subsequently rehearse and perform. Some of the postures, jumps and turns from these technique classes had been incorporated into their more recent choreographies. The movement repertoire and

dance knowledge that existed in their choreographic productions had not, however, been adapted into exercises that might be used in this training context.

Moreover, a dancer's aesthetic paradigm can be seen as a product of their cultural environment (Walsh, 2004). The movements that formulate the basis of a dancer's technical training can extensively influence the way that they interpret an established piece of choreography or create a new choreography (Puri & Hart Johnson, 1995). As such, a technical training based on the use of foreign aesthetic principles (including those present in aerobics) might thus be seen as presenting an insidious form of cultural hegemony, subtly reinforcing very specific aesthetic ideals within the dancers.

In order to address this and maintain a post-salvage evolution of local dance ideas, the pedagogic workshop that I undertook with Sareyyet Ramallah sought to form a method of technical training based on (or related to) the existing local choreographic vocabulary of movement. This involved deconstructing set pieces of choreography and collectively searching for the technical exercises that might enhance a dancer's ability to perform them. Whilst this series of exercises would constantly need updating as a result of innovations in the dance creating and dance evaluating processes, it was undertaken with the intention that the aesthetics being reinforced through training would not insidiously control local dance creation and evaluation. It was hoped that such a body of technical knowledge would provide the dancers with appropriate skills, supporting them in the subsequent learning, practicing and performing of specific dance pieces (see 9.2.6).

Within this workshop series I also re-examined the functional role of a dance pedagogue in technique training. The processes that I had observed revealed an uncertainty regarding authority over dance knowledge- should it belong to one individual or a blending of ideas from the collective? Whilst an emulation of Western training models had increasingly positioned a single individual in the role of teacher for the entirety of the training activity, local historical precedent did not determine such a learning structure for dance. Post-salvage dance learning suggested other potential structural relationships for the presentation and transfer of dance technique knowledge. Within the Sareyyet Ramallah workshops I tried to foster the existence of

multiple pedagogues in the learning space through reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) and a merging of the instructor-doer roles. Dancers would regularly partner-up or form small groups in order to teach each other particular ideas. This was done to challenge the imported notion that dance teachers are specialist individuals distinct from the dancers and afforded greater decision-making powers. It was hoped that it might both improve the dancers (as both the instructing and the doing of dance inform each other) leading to their more holistic development (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), and empower the dancers, leading to a more dancer-centred approach to rehearsal and pedagogy through an emphasis on the dancer's personal agency and their own power of choice and responsibility (Kyriacou, 2001). Such a restructuring of the learning process appeared to create a more energized learning zone (Zajonc, 1965) as dancers displayed a greater sense of ownership over the dance knowledge (Craft, 2005). Moreover, from a post-salvage perspective it maintained a tradition of dance learning as a collaborative, peer-led activity.

9.2.5 Guided exploration and improvisation

The guided-exploration techniques discussed previously reflect common methods used within dance improvisation classes (e.g. Hayes, 1955; Humphrey, 1959; Laban, 1956; 1966; Horst, 1961; Blom & Chaplin, 1982; Hawkins, 1988; Minton, 1991; Smith-Autard, 1992; Nagrin, 1993; Hodes, 1998). These techniques use verbal/visual prompts in order to motivate the dance-learners to explore the form (e.g. space, shape, energy, etc.) or expression (e.g. memory, hope, fear, etc.) of dance. These activities maintain as their goal creative self-exploration and the self-discovery of dance ideas amongst the learners (Lavender & Predock-Linnell, 2001).

Within the groups observed, these improvisation activities induced movement material that was spontaneous, dynamic and executed with great physical commitment. Moreover, I would argue that the creativity and intricate detail generated in these improvisation activities far surpassed the choreographic complexity that existed within the group's theatrical productions. This suggested a particular problem within the dance learning process. If this movement material *was not* considered appropriate for the group to present onstage, why was it such a regular feature of their training sessions? If this material *was* considered appropriate for the group to present

on stage, why had it not been effectively transferred into their choreographic productions?

Through subsequent discussions with the groups' choreographers, I came to understand that the movement ideas emerging from these improvisation activities did not always reflect dance ideas the group would feel comfortable presenting in public. This presents a post-salvage concern over the function of these as creative exercises, an issue discussed further in 9.4.1. The improvisation activities *were* valued as dance learning tools however, as they provided the dancers with a chance to more generally explore movement dynamics and improve their kinesthetic competence. This function for improvisation continued a local historical process of dance learning within the social context, and thus might be understood as an important post-salvage cultural practice to support.

Kinesthetic familiarity is a very relative concept however (Schwartz, 1993), and how kinesthetic competence is nurtured can influence aesthetics. As such, the guided-learning process could be refined to more directly support the kinesthetic demands of the groups' choreographic products. The construction of a relevant collection of actions related to the groups' choreographic products (as discussed in the last section) might subsequently allow these activities to focus on improvising within a set repertoire of movement, rather than in an unbounded manner. This might refine the dancers' kinesthetic competence in more specific relation to the dance styles that they actually perform and choreograph.

Overall, little emphasis was given to how the dance-learners might replicate the movement material generated in these improvisation sessions. This became a dance learning problem when the choreographers *did* wish to incorporate some of the improvised movement in a choreographic work. The original creative ideas were rapidly compromised by the dancers' inability to articulate and clarify exactly what they had managed to originally manifest. Attempts to repeat ideas often resulted in a loss of the innovation and a return to more familiar movement patterns, or in choreography composed of very static, expressive moments, like photographic excerpts of what was once a dynamic and moving image.

This led me to work on activities within Sareyyet Ramallah aimed at improving the dancers' abilities to accurately retain their improvised creations. The activities involved collaborative exercises and the use of multiple pedagogues (as discussed in the previous section). Numerous dance-learners worked together to analyze how to accurately replicate a movement produced by another individual during improvisation, so that they could subsequently teach it. This process sought to emphasize the separate but tight relationship between the dance learning and the dance creating processes (as discussed in 9.2.1).

9.2.6 Learning and practicing specific dances

As the final activity within the practice sessions, the rehearsal of specific dances in preparation for their public performance was generally the lengthiest process. It involved new dancers learning older works from the choreographic repertoire whilst experienced dancers practiced their ability to do them, or all the dancers learning and practicing a new choreographic work.

The command-style approach of the trainer in this dance learning process, whilst attempting to instill discipline in the dancing group, increasingly rendered a tense social atmosphere. The complex process of identifying and solving inconsistencies in ensemble dances was particularly overwhelming for a singular authority. Large amounts of energy were thus expended with relatively little effect, as the rehearsal process often needlessly exhausted the dancers and failed to actually clarify what was problematic.

The dancers themselves seemed demeaned by this process. The requirement to continuously compete for positions within a dance (which the trainer would sometimes not decide until the final rehearsal) threatened to overwhelm the traditional practice of peer-support in the learning of dances. The uncertainty over who would get to actually perform the dance meant that the dancers were given relatively little opportunity to take such possession of a dance and collaborate on its improvement. This rehearsal process positioned the dancers as an instrument for the choreography, rather than as an interpreter, contributor, creator or co-owner of the dance

(Butterworth, 2002; 2004). This was even the case in dance pieces whose creation the dancers themselves had actually contributed to.

Reflecting upon the impact of such authoritarian rehearsing, Serene Huleileh (2003) disappointedly described watching performances in which the singular personality of the dance trainer was more apparent than the collective personality of the dancers. As volunteers and part of the organizational committees of each group, the dancers were used to being integral in policy-making decisions, and the hierarchical nature of such command-style teaching contrasted sharply with other aspects of the groups' organization. In informal discussions with the ex-dancers from both groups, the manner in which this phase of the practice sessions was conducted was a predominant reason for their early departure from performing. As such, it might be considered one of the most urgent areas in need of intervention within the dance learning process. At the same time, collaborative learning remained quite common, as dancers would often take each other to the side of the studio or meet after hours to help each other learn. This 'unofficial' learning suggested a more locally relevant, alternative approach on which the rehearsal process might be based.

When rehearsing *Access Denied* for Ramallah Dance Theatre, I tried to confront this relationship between the dancer and the choreography, so that the dancer was not merely an instrument but potentially a co-owner of the dance. This involved collaboratively creating dances according to the particular abilities of the dancers, rather than in emulation of a foreign idealization of what a dance should look like (discussed further in 9.3). Whilst this was done to more clearly support the unique evolution of a post-salvage culture, it also allowed the rehearsal process to remain more socially cohesive.

This rehearsal process also resurrected and promoted the earlier (and continuing 'unofficial') rehearsal processes of El-Funoun, through the use of multiple pedagogues. The roles of dancer and trainer often became interchangeable, as many points of view contributed to the improvement of how a specific dance was executed. This supported a post-salvagist desire to maintain a collective involvement in the evolution of cultural products.

9.3 Dance creating

9.3.1 Defining 'dance creating' as an evolutionary process

This thesis considers cultural change as a secular process. Innovative memes (cultural ideas) emerge through the confluence or adaptation of other memes already existing in the wider cultural environment, rather than arriving into the world through divine or supernatural intervention. For dance as an art form, such innovation can involve mixing existing aesthetic principles, movement ideas and other cultural phenomenon together with observations from the natural world, resulting in new aesthetic principles and movement ideas that are markedly different than what existed before.

This thesis also considers cultural change to be random. Individual cultural changes are not directed or controlled by the cultural system, although they are subject to deliberation within human minds. Such deliberation might be described as a creative process, with creativity here relating to both ideas that are new to the world and ideas that are familiar to the world but new to the individual engaged in their creation (Craft, 2005). The important distinction in the latter case is that the idea has not emerged through memetic transfer, but through a process of individual discovery.

Such creative adaptations are not reliant upon some sort of inherent creative genius in particular individuals, but might be understood as a phenomenon that can be nurtured within all individuals by the cultural environment (Duffy, 1998). Whilst there is no evidence that individuals can be educated to become inherently creative (Gowan, Khatena & Torrance, 1967; Stein 1974; 1975; Mansfield et al, 1978; Vernon, 1989; Ryhammar & Brodin, 1999), a cultural environment can foster an organizational climate that stimulates innovation and creativity (Taylor, 1972; Amabile, 1988; Ekvall, 1991; Isaksen, 1995). Such a paradigm-breaking climate within social groups presents demands for new memes and supports their emergence through collective nurturing (Cropley, 1992; Rickards, 1997; Mcfadzean, 1998; Kyriacou, 2001; Craft, 2005).

The creative realization of new dance ideas has been the focus of many improvisational activities, as discussed previously. Although following an individual learning (as opposed to a cultural-learning) process, these activities can still be

considered as culturally relative, and thus capable of exerting cultural hegemony. For example, the emphasis on the self-actualization of the individual within certain dance education techniques of Rudolph Laban has come to form the basis of numerous dance creation-through-deconstruction improvisation processes in the West (Haynes, 1987; Smith-Autard, 1994). Whilst Laban's method of analyzing movement may have universal applications (an issue not being addressed here), this method of dance deconstruction can promote a relative cultural value: the emancipation of the individual (Hayek, 1960; Lal, 2000). This cultural value positions the individual at the core of aesthetic decision-making, as opposed to a clan, community, or some other social structure or spiritual meta-narrative. As discussed in 3.4, this can conflict with a post-salvage desire to maintain certain meta-narratives and social constructs as the basis of aesthetic ideals, and might subsequently lead to cultural alienation rather than cultural cohesion.

So whilst creative adaptations may themselves be considered random and beyond the control of a cultural system, the specific processes used to foster a creative climate and nurture innovations can be seen as capable of promoting culture-specific values. An analysis is therefore required into how the process of creating dance might have been subject to such insidious hegemony in the CWB community, and how the process of dance creating might be made more relevant to post-salvagist interventions.

9.3.2 The rise of composition in the CWB

The creative process might be considered central to traditional social dance practices in Palestine. Within a celebratory dabkeh, for example, the *lawih* (dance leader) is charged with extemporaneously directing the structure of the dance (see 7.2.2). This involves improvising with the arrangement of codified dance movements for the dancing line, giving verbal and visual cues to musicians and dancers regarding the sequence and number of repetitions of certain steps. It also involves improvising with a wider range of less defined movements in solo sequences in front of the dancing line (Van Aken, 2006). Similar improvisational approaches can be observed in various dance/movement contexts, undertaken by both men and women, in late 19th and early 20th Century Palestine.

Whilst improvisation appears to have determined the structure of dances in social contexts during this era, it is uncertain to what extent the dances put on display for tourists were pre-determined through a process of composition, or choreography. The difference between improvisation and choreography might be considered in terms of the process of critical deliberation that allows the creative actions in choreography to be reflected upon and judged prior to being presented as a dance product (Duncan, 1927; Sheets-Johnstone, 1981; Lavender & Predock Linnell, 2001; Ashley, 2002; 2003). From this understanding, in an improvised dance the process of creation is the dance product.

If this suggests that through “thinking in movement” (Sheets Johnstone, 1981, p.400) critical reflection is not apparent within the creative process however, the concept of improvisation is oversimplified. Improvisation, particularly when considered in non-Western cultural contexts, can involve constant and immediate reflections upon the appropriateness of movement decisions, before those movement decisions are enacted (Puri & Hart-Johnson, 1995). Within a dabkeh improvised at a social gathering, for example, it is apparent that critical movement decisions are motivated by various non-kinesthetic factors. As Van Aken (2006) pointed out, the *lawih* considers the competence and mood of the musicians, the dancing group and the tempo of the wider social environment when selecting movement choices. Even the movements during solo improvisation sections are not drawn from “the world of possibilities at any given moment” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1981, p. 400), but from within certain parameters critically assessed as relevant by the dancers for the occasion. As such, both improvisation and choreography can engage critical reflection within the creative process, although with drastically different amounts of time for decision-making.

From the history already discussed, it would appear that a choreographic process became prevalent in local presentations of dance as a performing art in the CWB during the second half of the 20th Century. This radical shift in the creative process from improvisation to choreography can be attributed to various causes. These include:

- Foreign aesthetic hegemony. As discussed in 7.2.5, the composition process was introduced into the CWB through the Ramallah Nights Festivals,

patterned on European methods of folkdance production. These performances valued a precision and conformity of movements in the dancing ensemble over spontaneity and diversity, and thus utilised a process of composition and rehearsal.

- The collective determining of cultural identity. As discussed in 7.3.6, Palestinian nationalist salvagists increasingly sought to define an authentic vision of Palestinian heritage through dance. The process of composition allowed for the considered filtering of various local dance ideas in order to determine versions that were considered appropriate within this representation.
- The politicized appropriation of dabkeh. The construction of a national dance led to dabkeh being deliberately taught across new classes and social groups. By replacing the lawih with a predetermined sequence of movements, the previously mentioned definition of cultural identity could more clearly be maintained through memetic transfer.
- The collectivization of innovation. The changes to dance movements by post-salvagists emerged through a process of collective deliberations rather than individual fancy. The process of composition allowed such innovations to be considered, understood and sanctioned by others before being presented as a collectively constructed dance product.

The process of composition varied amongst post-salvagist dance groups during this era.

During the 1980s, post-salvage groups made some challenges to this process of choreography by collectivizing the input and retaining a freedom within the final performance for improvised changes. Former El-Funoun and Juthoor dancer Serene Huleileh (2003) describes how the dabkeh itself was like a shared possession and the dancers felt a liberty to mix different floor patterns and blend different movements, even changing the movement's shape somewhat during performance. Dancer Lubna Ghanayem (personal communication, July 5, 2006) describes a similar process in Sarreyet Ramallah. Whilst the choreography was generally presented to the group by

the choreographer, the performers would often improvise and adapt choreographed sequences during performances. This contributed to a sense of collective consensus in the composition process: the choreographer tended to present composed material that the dancers were comfortable performing, knowing they would change it onstage if it was not.

By the 1990s, the choreographic process increasingly became the preserve of single individuals with greater authoritarian control. Movement material continued to be generated by the dancers to contribute to the final product, but choreographic decisions were increasingly made based on the aesthetic ideals of singular choreographic visions, and enforced in performance. This mirrored a shift in the relationship between dancers and the choreography; from dancers being co-owners of the choreography to dancers being instruments of the choreography. This led to the dancers being subject to replacement, rather than the choreography being subject to compromise.

Within the artistic management structure of El-Funoun, a choreographic committee was repositioned above the individual choreographers, in order to maintain a sense of collective consensus in artistic products. To extend this collectivization, the individual responsible for rehearsing the dances was not placed under the direction of the choreographer who created the work, but answered directly to the choreographic committee. Whilst regular meetings were held in which all the dancers were invited to voice opinions, ultimate artistic decision-making remained within the choreographic committee.

By the beginning of the 21st Century the process of choreography pre-determined the movement ideas presented in virtually all public displays of dance as a performing art in the CWB. Certain dances had semi-dramatic improvisational moments, but these were generally on the peripheries of the dance, filling-in time between choreographed sequences. Improvisation in itself did not seem to be promoted as a serious artistic product by any local group.

9.3.3 Dance creating in El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah at the end of the 20th Century

During 2000 and 2001 I was involved as a choreographic consultant in the processes of dance-creation being undertaken by El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah. This consultancy was directly related to the productions of Sareyyet's *Al-Birjawi* and El-Funoun's *Haifa Beirut and Beyond*. The creation of dances through choreography in these productions followed a four-stage process that has commonly been considered in terms of conceptualizing the choreographic idea, generating movement material, composing the movement material and staging the dance product (e.g. H'Doubler, 1925; 1957; Wigman, 1931; 1966; Hayes, 1955; Laban, 1956; 1966; Humphrey, 1959; Hawkins, 1964; 1991; Horst & Russel 1972; Dunn 1972; Haynes, 1987; Smith-Autard, 1992; 1994; Lavender, 1996; 2000; Lavender & Predock-Linell, 2001; Ashley, 2002; 2003).

Within both El-Funoun and Sareyyet, the initial process of conceptualizing the dance production was quite removed from the dance studio or physical activities. As both stories alluded to the Palestinian Nakba (see 7.2.1), their creation involved particularly sensitive political content. The dance stories were first scripted, either by the group of choreographers working on the project, for El-Funoun, or by the individual choreographer with input from other non-dance specialists, such as dramaturges, writers and musicians, for Sareyyet Ramallah. This meant that the ideas to be expressed through dance were considerably pre-determined before any physical activity exploring the aesthetic form of the dance took place. Upon entering the studio to commence movement generation and composition, both productions had very specific requirements and detailed agendas that had been verbalized, understood and agreed upon by the participants in the process.

The subsequent process of movement generation involved contributions from the dancers in the group, who were given verbal or visual stimulants and music and directed to improvise dance ideas (as described in 9.2.5). In El-Funoun this generally involved all the dancers in the group, whereas in Sareyyet Ramallah the choreographer generally worked on movement generation with just a select group of dancers.

This led into a process of composing the dance itself. Within both El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah this was generally undertaken by the choreographer alone (or working with an assistant) in order to define the dance ideas that had been generated and compile them into a dance sequence. This often involved viewing video-recordings of the improvisation sessions, in order to re-create the ideas presented within them. Following this composition process, the dance sequences were taught to the dancers in the group as a set choreography. Occasionally, although relatively rarely, the composition process was integrated with the movement generation process, with the dancers and choreographer directly collaborating on the creation of the new dance. Within El-Funoun, the composition process was followed by a review of the work by the entire choreographic committee, to consider how the work reflected the committee's mutual artistic vision.

The composition process also involved setting the dance pieces to a musical accompaniment. In both groups, this music was pre-recorded and so the dance composition followed the musical score. Whilst the score for *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond* was commissioned for the production, it was conceived at a considerable distance from the dance creators and thus underwent a somewhat distinct conceptual process. Composed by Lebanon's renowned Marcel Khalife, the recorded Western orchestral score was presented to the group in its entirety. Even after revision this recording did not satisfy all of the choreographers involved in the production, particularly as its sound contrasted with the more familiar folk music styles that had previously been used by the group. As each choreographer was responsible for different scenes, only a portion of this score was ultimately used by the production, and an eclectic mix of other recorded folk music filled in the rest. Whilst not commissioned for the production, the recorded score for *Al-Birjawi* was similarly pre-determined in the conceptual phase and thus the movement ideas were adapted to follow the score during composition.

Finally, the process of staging involved rehearsing the production (see 9.2.6) and adding various dimensions to the choreography prior to its presentation, including props, set costumes and lighting. In both productions, the choreography was presented in a proscenium arch theatre, and the transfer from the studio to the theatre involved

less than 20 hours of rehearsals, with little change of the choreography during this transfer. Whilst certain props had been fairly integral to the movement generation and composition phases, more were added at this stage on the peripheries of the dance. The costumes were designed at a considerable distance to the other phases of the production (for *El-Funoun*, they came from Lebanon, for *Sareyyet Ramallah*, from Nazareth) and were only introduced following the composition phase. Minor parts of the set were introduced during the final phases of rehearsal, but larger structural elements were only introduced once the production was in the theatre. Similarly, the lighting was mostly considered once the production had moved into the theatre, although certain moments in the composition had been designed with specific lighting effects in mind.

Observing the conceptualizing of ideas, generation of movement, composing of dances and staging processes thus contributed to my subsequent approach to local dance creating interventions, particularly within the work of Ramallah Dance Theatre and the extended choreographic workshop series with Sareyyet Ramallah in 2003.

9.3.4 Creating performance concepts

The 1948 Palestinian refugee crisis or Nakba (which *Al-Birjawi* alluded to and *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond* directly addressed) might be considered as a conceptual theme shared by these two productions. Within the conception of both productions there was also an intention to reconnect with this past and, through re-interpreting it from a contemporary perspective, affirm a sense of continuing collective identity. Conceived through collective input from the choreographers and other local cultural advisors, the two productions sought to present multiple perspectives from within the community, whilst not addressing external perspectives on the historical conflict. The subsequent interpretation of this conflict, whilst grounded in historical research, unabashedly maintained the subjective perspective of the local community and did not seek to present what might be considered a postmodernist uncertainty over collective narratives. As a result of these factors, both productions might be considered as post-salvagist in their conceptual intent.

The manner in which both productions were conceived perpetuated legacies of salvagism and foreign colonial hegemony however, thus impeding their more

complete expression of a post-salvage ideal. These concerns might be considered in terms of the era and locations the productions were set in and the separation of the conception of the production from the processes of movement generation, composition and staging.

By commencing the dance stories in a romanticised 'untouched' pre-1948 rural Palestinian context, these productions continued a format that had been established by salvagists (see Chapter 7) and followed by all of the major dance productions in the CWB since the 1960s. Palestine, even in the CWB, was being conceived of from a position of exile (Bowman, 1994). In reinforcing this salvaged impression, the basis of local collective identity was positioned in a distant location, a place that could be yearned for rather than experienced.

Following a post-salvage paradigm, the conception of ideas for Ramallah Dance Theatre began with the ontological question- *what are we now, because of what happened then and what is happening to us now?* This emphasized the idea that the community and its heritage are present and continuing, contrasting with the more salvagist investigation into- *how can we relive what we were then?* This might be seen as instigating a temporal shift in conceptions of identity within local dance production. Artistic impressions of the living community, of contemporary struggles and traumas, were used to illustrate the way in which historic cultural values continued within the community. Whilst this approach did not refute the possibility of creating dance pieces set in historic periods and rural locations, it did challenge the salvagist idea that the representation of collective identity is limited to such contexts.

Another post-salvage concern within the El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah productions related to the distancing of the conceptual process from the processes of movement generation, composition and staging. To a large extent the conceptual goals had been rigidly decided well in advance of any dance exploration, leaving the movement generation process to simply explore how to express these ideas. As an extension of the shift from improvised to choreographed performances introduced in the 1960s (see 7.2.5), this process further pre-determined the outcome of the dance prior to any physical activity. This might be considered problematic from a post-salvage paradigm because it leaves little opportunity for a dance's conceptual ideas to

be revealed through movement and the choreographic process. If dance as an art form is to be considered a means of actually having ideas and not simply expressing ideas (Robinson, 1982), then such detailed pre-determination outside the dance space might be considered an impediment to such realizations. Moreover, as discussed in 9.1.2, a 'politics first, aesthetics second' approach can subsequently diminish local aesthetic (and thus cultural) autonomy.

Within the Ramallah Dance Theatre productions, therefore, the conceptualization process was repositioned across the other choreographic processes. In doing so, the conception of choreographic ideas for the production continually responded to realizations introduced through the movement generation, composition and staging processes. For example, when particular thoughts emerged within the studio during movement experimentation, these ideas sometimes became starting points for new scenes that were not in the formative design of the production. As a result, the final dance product was quite distinct from the initial ideas for the production. This particularly allowed the aesthetics of the movement ideas to respond to, and be shaped by, the philosophic enquiry. In doing so, dance movements did not simply provide a vehicle for ideas conceived through other mediums.

Similarly, a lack of interplay between music and dance eventuated through the creation of the musical score from a distance. This contrasts with more traditional processes of dance production in the CWB, in which musicians playing live responded to the dancers and vice-versa. Whilst the use of pre-recorded music was continued within the work of Ramallah Dance Theatre, future post-salvagist productions might seek to re-invigorate this artistic interaction between dancers and musicians. Even if it did not involve musicians playing live at dance performances, it might at least allow for a process in which, for example, the music could be composed simultaneously with the composition of the dance, stimulating it and being stimulated by it.

9.3.5 Creating movement material

The generation of movement material for both productions sometimes followed the creative improvisational methods discussed previously: dancers from the groups were given verbal or visual stimuli and directed to physically improvise with these ideas to

various pieces of music. At other times the choreographers devised the movement in private and subsequently taught it to the dancers as a complete dance.

Within this process of movement generation, dance ideas were innovated through blending established local dance ideas, emulating and adapting choreographic ideas from foreign dance forms, or investing diverse physical actions with dynamic qualities related to dance aesthetics (speed, force, rhythm, etc.). This latter mechanism seemed most popular amongst the dancers when the dance idea could be recognized as sourced from other functional non-dance activity from daily life (e.g. bidding farewell, carrying a burden, sweeping, etc.). Dynamic dance movement that managed to suggest such collectively recognizable actions were more vigorously recalled, discussed and emulated by other dancers than more abstract dance movements. In the collectivized choreographic environment (particularly in El-Funoun), movement with collectively understood meanings led to collective discourse rather than just personal aesthetic appreciation or artistic contemplation. This further suggested a post-salvage intent within their choreographic process: the promotion of cultural cohesion through mutual understanding. This contrasts with what might be considered a process of cultural disintegration and alienation through the unlimited interpretation of movement symbols.

Whilst much of the movement ideas generated for these productions expressed collectively understood meanings, the source of these movement ideas did not always connect with the historic contexts being presented. This was particularly a concern from a post-salvage paradigm. The piece *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*, although telling a fictitious story, sought to reveal/reinforce *the* truth about a local historic event. Set in a fishing village in northern Palestine and then a refugee camp in southern Lebanon however, the physical experiences being expressed by this story were well beyond the actual experiences of the dancers and choreographers involved in the production. Most had spent their entire lives in an urban centre in the mountainous CWB with relatively limited access to the coast. None had actually cast nets or fished from a boat, stood on the shore and waited for boats to return, repaired nets or actually engaged in any of the activities being depicted. The physical experiences of fleeing a community and living in a refugee camp in southern Lebanon were similarly unknown. As the artistic expression of these experiences was also not already present

in the traditional repertoire of dance movement known to these dancers, the movement material generated by the choreographers and dancers for these scenes had to be drawn from secondary impressions of the events being portrayed. These included artistic representations of fishing villages made by other foreign dance groups and dramatizations of Palestinian refugees presented on television. Their subsequent movement creations may have provided an authentic representation of how people in the CWB in the 21st Century imagined a Palestinian fishing village/Lebanese refugee camp sixty years earlier. It did not offer any new authentic physical detail, however, regarding the actual experience of such a fishing village/refugee camp.

Whilst such an imaginative basis might be an appropriate starting point in other approaches to the performing arts, within a post-salvagist production this might be considered particularly problematic. The affirmation of a community's existence through art can require more convincing authenticity in the physical detail.

Although presenting more of an allegorical reference to the Nakba, the establishing of a credible cultural past was also important to the production of *Al-Birjawi*. The impressions of ancient village life were similarly imagined by 21st Century urbanites however, with little tangible experience of the scenes being depicted. So whilst the conception of these productions had been informed by historical research and a desire to reconnect with the past, the generation of new movement material was not.

As such, within Ramallah Dance Theatre the movement for each particular scene (being arrested, tortured, held at a checkpoint, interrogated, separated from family, held under curfew) was generated through investigating the lived experiences of the dancers. Because the conception phase was integrated with the movement generation phase, the authors of the production could respond to the available experiential resources in movement generation and adjust the concept accordingly.

This would not necessarily be the only post-salvagist way of investing a danced work with authentic details. Alternative approaches might involve the dance artists engaging in physical workshops with individuals who have an experiential knowledge of the activities being represented, and subsequently choreographing the production

with or through them. It might alternately involve the dancers observing or undertaking the actual activities that form the basis of such movements, in order to identify relevant details.

In either event, a post-salvage movement generation process positions the dancers and choreographers as investigative researchers and discoverers of movement ideas, and not just vehicles of familiar (and possibly colonized) movement expressions. Through such investigations, the dancers identify the “vast range of social practices built on strictures of embodiment which form the tissue of everyday enactment” in the local social context being portrayed by the dance (Desmond, 2003, p.2). They seek local physical knowledge from the collective past and present, and thus invest local meanings within new danced movements. This, in turn, contributes to the aesthetic growth and complexity of local post-salvage culture.

9.3.6 Creating dance compositions

Composing dances within El-Funoun involved gaining a collective consensus on the choreographic product through review by the choreographic committee. The composing process within Sareyyet Ramallah was under the ultimate control of the choreographer, although this was subject to advisement from various dance and non-dance specialists involved in the production. As such, it could be argued that both productions prioritized collective opinions over any need to form a totally independent and personal creative vision. This might be seen as supportive of the post-salvage ideal to form cultural products that reflect collectively held ideals.

In both productions however, little opportunity was provided for improvisation by the dancers within the performance. Whilst certain dramatic scenes allowed for the use of impromptu gestures, most of the dance sequences were carefully pre-determined. This followed a dance production method that had been introduced from Europe through Lebanon in the 1960s and perpetuated by salvagists as a means of defining local identity (see 9.3.2). This continual use of the compositional process might be seen as undermining the local tradition of valuing an improvisational ability in dance.

Within the choreographic workshop that I conducted through Sareyyet Ramallah in 2003, the group examined the much broader use of improvisation within

choreographic products. In order to avoid rampant individualism within improvisation and a loss of collective conceptual intent, we examined the use of pre-determined guidelines and techniques such as flocking. Flocking allows dancers to form simple and complex aesthetic relationships in performance without being under the constant control of a choreographer or central governing agent (Hagendoorn, 2002). This was undertaken within the workshop context with the intention of re-invigorating faith in the traditional skill of improvisation within performance contexts, another post-salvage aesthetic ideal.

Within Ramallah Dance Theatre, we re-positioned the relationship between the dancers and the choreographer as collaborative. Whilst the dancers were used to being integral to the movement generation processes, the making of compositional decisions at a distance from the dancers had contributed to their alienation and sense of being an instrument of the choreography. Determining from the outset which dancers would perform in which dance pieces and subsequently composing these dances *with* (not over) them further emphasized a sense of collective consensus within the dance creating process. This can be seen as contributing to a post-salvagist social ideal.

9.3.7 Presenting dance beyond the theatre

Within *Al-Birjawi* and *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*, the process of staging (or preparing the dance product for public presentation) reflected less post-salvage idealism than the previously discussed phases of conceptualization, movement generation and composition. During this process, set creation and costume design were only marginally integrated with the movement generation and composition phases. As such, when these elements were introduced they acted as mostly a frame for the choreography, surrounding the dancers with a museum of iconic images that were for display rather than a living environment that the dancers could interact with.

Within Ramallah Dance Theatre, the set and props were introduced early in the conceptual process, so that dance movement could be generated and composed *with* these items, rather than simply *within* them. Perhaps more radically, Ramallah Dance Theatre challenged the use of proscenium-arch theatres as the only forum for expressions of local culture. Although performing the production *Access Denied*

within a theatre, six short dance pieces were also created and digitally recorded in various locations, and subsequently broadcast on local television. Whilst local staged dance productions had previously been recorded and broadcast, this represented the first time local dancers had actually created dance *for* the camera, in which moving pictures are used for the actual construction, and not just reconstruction, of dance pieces (Carroll, 2001).

Several factors would suggest that digital forums (television, the internet, etc) are far more appropriate than theatres for the dissemination of dance as a local cultural product. Within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, there are more local television channels than functioning theatres, more local professionals working in television production than theatre production, more local institutes dedicated to training professionals for work in television than in theatre and more local audiences geographically able and culturally inclined to access television than live performances (Ibrahim Hussari, personal communication, May 15, 2007). Furthermore, digital technology can prove a less expensive and more adaptable vehicle for exploring local dance aesthetics, contexts and locations, particularly for sectors of the community (such as women) who feel excluded from/intimidated by the more public process of live performance. In relation to local aesthetic traditions, digital technology can capture and promote the aesthetics of improvisation and spontaneity more convincingly than live theatre.

Whilst this does not mean that the production of dance videos should replace the production of live dance performances, the factors presented above do present a compelling local argument to post-salvage dance artists. From an anti-hegemonic, multi-lineal evolutionary perspective, a dance culture does not *need* to pass through phases of producing dance theatre before 'progressing' to dance videos. Nor does the proscenium-arch theatre represent a native technology anymore than television does. In utilizing more accessible cultural mediums such as video and television, post-salvage dance interventions might challenge an idealism that seeks to distinguish the popular from the traditional (Doolittle & Elton, 2001; Strother, 2001). Whilst comparisons between recorded and live performances are inevitably contentious, the degree to which insidious hegemony guides the artistic selection of theatre over television in the CWB deserves deeper investigation by post-salvagists.

9.4 Dance evaluation

9.4.1 Defining dance evaluation as an evolutionary process

For dance ideas presented in an artistic context, the evaluation process (and thus the evolution of a dance style) is often guided and facilitated by public expressions of criticism and appreciation. The definition of such public dance evaluation, as discussed in this section, is distinct from the previously discussed critical process undertaken more privately by dance-makers during improvisation and composition. It also differs from more generalized public criticism on the generic concept of dance (see 8.3.2). Dance evaluation here refers to a verbalized, analytical reaction to a specific dance product, an expression that is directed to both the dance-makers themselves and other participants in the wider cultural system. Whilst an individual's decision to copy new dance ideas may often occur non-verbally, it could be argued that collectivized decisions to copy a new dance idea (or stop copying an existing dance idea) within a cultural system are very influenced by such verbalized discourse.

The goal of this discourse might be to produce a “hypothesis of what makes dance hang together and communicate its images so that they are remembered” (Denby, 1949, p.15). This contributes to the compilation of a history of a particular artistic theory, thus further defining the artistic intent of subsequent dance products (Danto, 1964). Whilst relying upon the stimulus of a specific dance product, such critical expressions have an independent value that extends beyond this original connection to the dance product, capable of influencing collective decisions about the wider cultural system (Van Camp, 1992). Such dance evaluation thus maintains an essential function in the evolution of a cultural movement such as post-salvagism, as it extends the significance of a particular dance product into the community's value system, and extends the community's values back into future dance products (Margolis, 1965).

When transferred to a more permanent media, these verbalized evaluations can serve a further purpose, in providing a tangible record of an ephemeral dance event (Miller, 1993). This function presents philosophical concerns over the dance's identification, the dance's ontological status and the critique's epistemological implications, however. These concerns largely exist because within dance criticism there is this additional burden of *having to* represent the subject of the criticism. Unlike

evaluations of literature, visual arts and even music (all of which leave a more tangible historical record of the original subject for others to experience and consider for themselves), the ephemeral nature of live dance performances often means that the published criticism also becomes the historical reference to the dance product itself (Van Camp, 1981).

Whilst this issue of representation within artistic criticism is in itself contentious, such controversy is exacerbated in a cultural environment where distinctions between dance as art and dance as social or political ritual are not always clear. As discussed in 3.2.3, determining which cultural items might be considered an artistic expression within a particular culture, and thus subject to *artistic* criticism, can often lead to foreign ethnocentric impositions. As this section reveals however, there is within the CWB community a strong critical consciousness that is actively evaluating both the content and form of local dance products in terms of their artistic value, even if such criticism has not always made itself evident in more permanent media such as literature. Who contributes to such commentary, the criteria that they use for evaluation, and the forums that they use to disseminate such evaluations demands further investigation from a post-salvage paradigm.

9.4.2 The politicization of dance evaluation in the CWB

My research into historical literature on Palestine has revealed no published analysis of local dance practices by indigenous writers prior to the start of the 20th century. Within existing ethnographic literature on local cultural practices, I have also found no references to alternative mediums (such as oral forums) through which dance may have been evaluated prior to the 20th Century. This does not suggest that presentation of local dance products was never subject to, or guided by, aesthetic criticism. Whilst nationalist salvagists (e.g. Hamdan, 1996) have argued that decisions in a dabkeh were always based on traditional values and governed by an existing social hierarchy through the *lawih*, later ethnographic studies investigate such an assumption. Mauro Van Aken's (2006) study of dabkeh amongst Palestinian refugees in the Jordan Valley suggests that the performance of the *lawih* is assessed by aesthetic standards in contemporary social settings, as a poor *lawih* can be replaced by a more dynamic and musically sensitive *lawih* in the dabkeh line. As such decisions appear to occur spontaneously, it is uncertain whether or not any analysis or feedback on a *lawih*'s

choreographic decisions are ever presented publicly. It would require an extraordinary presumption to conclude that throughout history even the private reflections on local social dances never involved aesthetic criticism and that the propriety of social ritual determined all local assessments of dance.

The earliest literature on local dance by Orientalists, anthropologists and Zionist pioneers mostly described the dances generically as a representational feature of the people. When judgment over a specific dance product was sometimes employed, it was more in the form of an etic commentary for foreign readers: the dances were assessed according to foreign aesthetic ideals and were not intended as a guide for local dance-production.

The first indigenous writing that appears in the literature on local dance products comes from promotional material presented as part of the Ramallah Nights festivals in the 1960s. Whilst this provides no actual analysis of specific dance products, it does begin to promote the selection of dance ideas according to Pan-Arab salvagist ideals. This approach can be seen continuing in the 1970s through the annual local journal *Heritage and Society (al-Turath wa-'l-mujtama)*, although promoting Palestinian nationalist salvagist ideals.

The Birzeit University dabkeh competitions at the beginning of the 1980s provided a more definitive example of public dance evaluation of actual dance products. A panel judged the entries, provided comment and selected a winner. As oral expressions, these evaluations unfortunately left no written record. Abdel-Aziz Abu Hadba, one of the judges on the panel (which was predominantly comprised of folklorists), recalls that the assessment was made according to the historical purity and authenticity of the performance (personal communication, July 3, 2004). Salvagism can thus be seen being employed locally as a particular artistic theory for criticizing specific dance products.

The literature subsequently produced by El-Funoun (1984; 1986a) and Al-Kurdi (1994) gathered such commentary however, and highlighted what might be considered the widening gap between salvagism and post-salvagism through reflective commentary on *Wadi Tofah* and *Mishal*. As mostly a process of self-analysis by the

dance-makers themselves, this literature is not highly critical, but it does serve to promote the rationale behind their innovations to the wider public through verbal discourse (see 8.1.4).

Perhaps as a result of such published commentary, by the mid-1980s published critical reviews began to acknowledge, and appreciate, that artistic theatrical presentations of dabkeh were evolving into what could be identified as a more post-salvage phase. In a newspaper review of *Wadi Tofah*, Sami Aboudi (1984) emphasized the value of El-Funoun resurrecting authentic heritage whilst appreciatively noting its deliberate adaptation within their productions, particularly as a vehicle for the Palestinian struggle for independence. Post-salvagism was thus emerging in the critical consciousness of the community as an art movement not incompatible with the nationalistic goals previously served by salvagism.

The evaluation of such innovations did not necessarily distinguish them as artistic products, however. Within an interview, local folklorist Sherif Kanaana explains how staged dabkehs may be evaluated:

A judgment which will be decided by the passage of time. One of the dabkas may spread and become common to be performed in weddings and celebrations, while its designer may slip into oblivion, and thus it formally becomes folklore; but if it is not appealing, it will be forgotten and neglected. (cited in Al-Kurdi, 1994, p.228)

This positions staged dabkeh as merely a step within a wider process of cultural renewal aimed at re-invigorating dabkeh as a social dance practice. Contributing to what has been described as a “third existence” for social dance practices (Nahachewsky, 1995, p.13), this evaluation method is less inclined to assess the artistic merits of a staged folk dance as a final product. For post-salvage dance products, this absence of a distinction between dabkeh as a social practice and dabkeh as a performed art can be seen perpetuating a salvagist approach to the cultural evaluation.

Staged dance productions during this period generally tended to experience the same style of published criticism that was directed towards local theatre, art and literary productions: an overwhelming emphasis on the political significance of the work,

rather than an analysis of its aesthetic rationale (Taraki, 1991). The criticism that *was* aimed at the aesthetics of local dance (e.g. Alqam, 1994; Abu Hadba, 1994a; Hamdan, 1996) tended to be broad and generalized, focused on trends rather than specific dance pieces. This process of what might be called untargeted criticism may have resulted from a desire to not create animosity with specific members of the community, or perhaps to not limit the criticism to certain dance productions, or perhaps because these philosophical reactions did not emerge clearly for the authors from a particular theatrical experience. Whatever the reason, harsher published criticism was usually shrouded in more generalized cultural laments, avoiding any direct blame or analysis of particular performances.

Whilst local dance criticism in literature is sparse, oral forums have provided a far more detailed evaluation of specific productions. Since the 1980s, both El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah held open forum discussions within their studios in which members of the public were invited to present their responses and feedback to the new production, and dance-makers were given the chance to verbalize their artistic rationales. Within these often contentious and heated meetings, critical responses related to the authenticity of historical representation, the appropriateness of the costumes, the styles of music, the cultural symbolism, the use of narrative structures and (to a lesser degree) an analysis of the adaptations and innovations within the choreography. Those gathered at such meetings were generally supporters of the dance groups, and their assessments generally measured the latest production against the group's previous productions (Mohamad Atta, personal communication, July 5, 2004; Ibrahim al-Hussari, personal communication, May 15, 2007). As such, these forums served as a very relevant cultural barometer for the groups, enabling them to gain a clearer understanding of how the community felt about specific artistic decisions. Whilst guiding future dance productions, these forums also served to support a collective critical-consciousness focused on dance creation in the community, and more clearly articulated goals that might be considered post-salvage. In doing so, these open forum discussions began to define a specific history of artistic theory for artistic products of a post-salvage nature.

Although these forums provided extensive criticism for new choreographic products, the oral expressions were not transferred to published literature and thus did not

become part of the public record. It would appear that their influence remained limited to the memory of those attending the meetings and, whilst influencing the work of specific artists, did not ultimately contribute to more collective aesthetic understandings within the wider community.

Similarly, the results of a post-performance audience survey conducted by El-Funoun (in conjunction with their 1997 production *Zaghareed*) were not published. The influence of these diverse voices might thus be considered restricted to the members of El-Funoun.

9.4.3 Evaluations of CWB dance art at the beginning of 21st Century

Following the onset of the second intifada, much of the dance literature stimulated by local dance productions and published in local newspapers, magazines and websites generally served to lead readers into other issues related to the political situation (e.g. Bahour, 2002; Birzeit University, 2004; Geday, 2006). Such articles usually praised the dance production for occurring in the midst of such oppression and suffering, then went on to discuss the impact of political events on arts and culture in general. The local dancers contributing to this thesis felt that the locally published articles did not usually provide detailed insights into the choreographic product or an assessment of the dance's artistic value, and did not distinguish innovations in dance pieces beyond broad labels such as modernist or traditional. Yousef Ashayeb, a prominent local journalist known for regularly covering dance events, explained to me that he had no formal education in dance or specialist dance knowledge. Utilizing a non-empirical approach of simply expressing what one likes and why one likes it (Bell, 1934), Ashayeb's reviews of dance performances were based on his subjective reaction to the performance rather than a technical analysis based on any particular theoretical understandings of dance art. Whilst this subjective reaction often stimulated further reflections on the local socio-political situation within his writing, Ashayeb asserted that it also prompted general assessments of the dance productions. Ashayeb's more severe technical or aesthetic criticisms were generally not presented for publication however, out of concerns over offending the dance artists involved in the production (personal communication, May 15, 2007).

More intense criticism was delivered within the open forum discussions that continued to take place following the premiere of new dance productions. Whilst these sessions provided feedback from community members to the artists involved in the production, such ideas were not disseminated further. As dance-makers from different groups did not attend each other's open forum discussions, I would argue that the impact of the critical ideas generated within these discussions tended to be limited to the artistic parameters of each dance group.

Although perhaps the most qualified to provide an aesthetic analysis of dance productions occurring in the community, locally practicing dance artists only published articles relating to their own dance productions. Even these articles tended to reflect more upon the politically charged circumstances of the creative process than on the creation itself (e.g. Barghouti, 2002; 2004a; 2004b; 2006; 2007; El Funoun, 2004a; 2005; Sareyyet Ramallah, 2005; Haramy, 2006). Mostly presented in the form of promotional literature than critical self-analysis, these writings briefly described the dance piece, the conditions of rehearsing and performing under military occupation, and stressed the importance of this type of artwork in such difficult times. In a locally published article reflecting upon their production *Haifa, Beirut and Beyond*, El-Funoun (2004a) notably included some written critiques that had been sent to them by leading members of the community. These provided some external aesthetic reactions to the production, although they were edited for publication so that only the praises and none of the negative criticisms were included⁴⁴.

Some articles also continued to express untargeted criticism, generally lamenting local trends in dance without specifying a particular dance performance (e.g. Barghouti, 2004a; Hammouri, 2006). These criticized general phenomena such as local dance products stagnating in a museum-like state, obsessing with their own victimhood, or presenting a superficial, colonized impression of local traditions. Whilst these comments contributed a vague speculation on artistic weaknesses in local dance culture, the lack of specificity made it difficult to determine where such criticisms should be applied.

⁴⁴ The unedited commentaries are provided on the El-Funoun website (El-Funoun, 2004b).

Several analyses of CWB dance productions also appeared in foreign publications, as a result of foreign critics attending local performances or from an international tour of a local dance troupe. Whilst these generally focused on the political context and the symbolism of dance being produced under such conditions, some analyses have provided a greater degree of aesthetic and artistic criticism, evaluating the actual choreography in greater detail (e.g. Foyer 2004; Kourlas 2005). These writings have described choreographic moments in the performance, suggested why they have or have not resonated with the audience, and considered what would improve the performance. Whilst these writings sometimes speculated upon the local ideals that the dance is building upon, to a large extent these assessments were based upon foreign (e.g. modernist/postmodernist) artistic criteria.

Whilst most contemporary foreign writings have been politically sympathetic, oppositional political paradigms have also occasionally contributed to an analysis of local dance. The article *Body as War Zone* by Ronit Land (a Representative for Dance Matters in the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Arts) is notable for its politically antagonistic stance and its evaluation of local dance practices according to the vaguely defined ideals of contemporary Western dance. Opening with some generalized statements on the mercenary brutality of the indigenous youth and the stagnant backwardness of the indigenous women of Palestine, Land makes the following assessment of dance in the CWB:

It is a stunning fact that for many Palestinian artists only a painful encounter with the dance space is a meaningful one. The room itself is a cause of pain, an exact reversal of the therapeutic myth that dance should be a cure to all ills. Rather: what doesn't hurt has no artistic meaning. . . . Charged with hatred, frustration and a propensity to violence, space becomes a symbol for hostility. . . . It is true that since the Oslo Accord it has become clear to the Palestinians through contacts with international artists how much "making up" they have to do to show their work in the contemporary Western dance scene. But the very real spatial situation and the resulting ideologising of space in dance point their own choreographic goals in just the opposite direction. (2001, p.11)

Published in *Ballet-Tanz International*, Land's article presents more of a cultural commentary than a dance critique, as the evaluation is of 'Palestinian' dance culture rather than the specific, unidentified dance pieces viewed by Land in the CWB in 1999.

By maintaining foreign ideals within the evaluation however, Land's contentious analysis highlights post-salvage concerns over local agency in dance criticism. These concerns also apply within the more appreciative critiques that assess local dance products by foreign ideals and are designed for foreign, rather than local, readers. As Edward Said queried, "Who writes? For whom is the writing being done?" (1983b, p.7). Spurious understandings of a colonized cultural group can become dominant narratives through such colonial evaluations of a community's cultural practices (Asad, 1986; 1994). In the particular context of a traumatized community, an etic critical analysis can impede the evolution of post-salvagism if it manages to undermine local standards of evaluation.

The evolutionary process of selection is critical to post-salvagism as it allows a community to evaluate its own cultural direction. As Mahmoud Abu Hashhash (2006) observed however, the absence of public discourse on local dance products has led to an uncertainty over the diversity and integrity of such dances. Sidestepping this literary void, foreign analyses of local dance culture have drawn their own conclusions regarding the artistic intent of dance products in the CWB. As such, it is of an immediate concern for post-salvagism that the local community itself become more apparent and involved in the evaluation process. This leads to questions over who should participate in such evaluation, the criteria they should use, and the most appropriate forums for disseminating these evaluations across the community. Addressing these issues, the following sections consider how post-salvagist cultural interventions might support the evaluation of local dance performances.

9.4.4 Who evaluates?

Whilst the contemporary literature published on specific dance productions in the CWB reflects a paucity of critical analysis, the open forum discussions on local dance productions display a strong local inclination towards critical discourse. The range of participants in these discussions tends to be relatively limited, however. This might be seen as problematic from a post-salvage perspective. As post-salvage interventions seek to support both cultural diversity and cultural cohesion, the purpose of evaluative forums is to gather and clarify various cultural understandings from the community in order to identify a mutually compatible ideal. The contemporary divisions amongst

the local indigenous population regarding local cultural directions, highlighted in dance by the Qalqilya controversy (see 8.3.2), might be partially attributed to a perceived lack of inclusion in such cultural decision-making.

Post-salvage processes of artistic evaluation in the CWB would thus be supported by interventions that seek to collect a broad diversity of local viewpoints. The inclusion of such a spectrum of views might challenge any local perception that artistic decisions are being made by an elite branch of the community who do not share values held by the rest. It would also allow for these diverse viewpoints to be heard and considered by dance-makers, thereby guiding their future creative processes. Whilst El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah have arguably undertaken such a process within their post-production public discussions, the fact that the dance-makers themselves were hosting these forums might have placed certain limitations on the critical discourse presented, and on those participating. Whilst the absence of dance-makers from other groups in such investigatory dialogues is of particular note, the inclusion of community members from more diverse social backgrounds might also be considered essential if these forums are to reflect wider cultural views.

Additional forums might thus be required to make such evaluations more comprehensive. Those with a less direct connection to the artistic production process might be better positioned to collect diverse evaluations in far greater depth, and collate a wider range of opinions. This pushes the responsibility for dance evaluation beyond the concern of the dance-makers themselves and onto others in the community. It also raises questions however, over who would be the most appropriate facilitators of such evaluative interventions.

Whilst an anxiety over evaluating any art from outside one's own gender, class, ethnicity or race has become quite common in Western discourse (Banes, 1994), the comprehension and appreciation of an artistic theory is not reliant upon (or even always served by) personal familiarity through such inherent factors. The degree to which anybody can participate in the artistic criticism of a dance work might be informed, more than anything, by their understanding of the particular history of artistic theory that the work is based upon (Danto, 1964; Osborne, 1971). A desire to promote such an understanding to both the artists and the public could provide

anybody (regardless of their socio-cultural background) with an *aesthetic authority* in such dance criticism (Lavender, 2000). Alternatively, those who seek to have their evaluations accepted as pre-eminent simply because of their artistic, social, political, economic, religious or cultural status exert a more *institutional authority* in dance criticism (Lavender, 2000).

The use of such an institutional authority might be seen as an impediment to the investigatory nature of post-salvagism, as such authority does not lead to greater cultural awareness within the community. Conversely, the ability to stimulate deeper understandings of post-salvage dance products through the use of an aesthetic authority might be considered the most valuable qualification for those guiding such a selection process in the wider community. As such it does not necessarily matter who guides the evaluation process, so long as they are able to understand and articulate the history of artistic theory that the dance product is building upon.

9.4.5 By what criteria?

The criteria by which post-salvage dance products might be assessed is possibly the most fundamental concern for post-salvagists. What is the history of the artistic theory of post-salvagism? How might a local dance product be assessed as an extension of this history? Interpreting such a criteria has been the primary goal of this thesis. It is hoped that any such understandings rendered through the historical and ethnographic investigations of Chapters 5-8 might serve to liberate post-salvage dance products from the less relevant ideological assessments, such as postmodernist and salvagist.

The process of evaluation ultimately seeks to clarify and emphasize the cultural purpose of post-salvage cultural products. As discussed in the previous chapter, post-salvagism evolved out of salvagism as local artists adapted their cultural heritage in order to make it relevant to their contemporary environment. This was undertaken in order to maintain a sense of cultural cohesion and defy deculturation under the circumstances of overwhelming collective trauma.

Post-salvagist interventions aimed at evaluating local dance performances would thus need to examine both the historical and contemporary relevance of the dance performance. This would involve investigating the dance's aesthetic qualities, to

consider how any innovations extend the aesthetic principles presented by previous innovations. It would also require investigating the ways in which such innovations might (or might not) foster a deeper recognition and valuing of *the continuation of local community*. In this sense, post-salvagist evaluative interventions would seek both aesthetic and ethical answers from artistic innovations.

This emphasis on rebinding the community and strengthening the sense of connectivity through collectively significant symbols could be undermined through more post-modern “antijudgmentalist” practices of “subjective pluralism”, in which no particular way of looking at art is determined to be better or worse than any other (Lavender, 2000, p.95). A post-salvagist paradigm would argue that for local cultural innovations to contribute to the evolution of a culture that maintains a sense of local community, rather than dissolve into the individualism of post-historical culture (Danto, 1997), the criteria by which the art is produced would need to be acknowledged in even the most subjective of analysis.

So that the critique does not become salvagist, the artistic criteria for evaluations would need to remain dynamic, continually adapting in response to the contemporary social environment. Those undertaking post-salvagist evaluations would continually need to analyze and articulate the connection (or disconnection) between new artistic products and the local history of artistic theory.

9.4.6 Through which forums?

Public meetings have provided one popular method of expressing evaluations of dance products. These forums allow for discussion and debate between dance-makers and dance observers, offering access into discourse for people less comfortable with written expression. It could be argued that in contrast with the one-way expressions of a printed critique, such forums serve to stimulate a collective critical consciousness through dialogue rather than proclamation. The semi-privacy of ideas expressed in such forums, accessible only to those in attendance, might also be considered liberating for those who wish to express their opinions reservedly.

As previously mentioned, post-salvage interventions might seek to extend such oral forums beyond the confines of the dance-makers’ own studios. Critical discussions in

schools and universities, and through electronic media such as web forums and talk-back television and radio, might stimulate a wider array of local rationales and attitudes towards contemporary innovations in local dance products.

For a cultural movement such as post-salvagism to evolve however, there becomes a need to document opinions expressed in such oral forums. Such documentation allows those that were not in attendance to benefit from the evaluations and those that were in attendance to more easily reflect upon them. Moreover, public documentation (rather than private records held in an institutions own archives) can be particularly useful in rendering such evaluations a possession of the wider community. Whilst this might take the form of published literature, it could also include electronic forms of broadcast that leave a record the public can access (such as webpages or audiovisual records).

Publishing a critical evaluation of a dance product within a community is, however, not unproblematic. Within my own dance writings in CWB publications, I have gradually shifted from writing supportive articles that simply promote local dance productions (Rowe, 2003b; 2004a), to more critical articles that analyze not just the political significance but also the aesthetic and artistic content of the work based on my growing understanding of local cultural values (Rowe, 2003d; 2005a; Rowe, Awadallah & Karkar, 2006). This has inevitably involved critiquing dance groups that I formerly worked with, which has occasionally been socially problematic when group loyalty has been expected to preside over such participation in public critical discourse. Such impartial public analysis by those with knowledge of the dance-makers artistic intent might be considered particularly important in a cultural arena where political sympathies have the potential to lead towards unrealistic conceptualizations of artistic merit and ambivalence towards actual artistic concerns. By prioritizing the West Bank's wider cultural evolution over any particular group's cultural status within such publications, I have invested some faith in the resilience of local dance groups and their ability to survive, and respond to, public criticism. Cultural interventions that encourage the publication of such analysis by members of the local community might thus support the evolution of post-salvagism.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

This research can be seen making several new contributions to various fields of knowledge. I highlight these here, beginning with the conclusions that I have drawn on theoretical approaches to the evolution of dance in traumatised communities. This is followed by a summary of the historical examination of the past two centuries of dance in Palestine and the CWB, in the context of ongoing socio-political disturbances. I then present the recommendations for local dance interventions that seek to support the evolution of a post-salvage dance movement in the CWB. I conclude with a consideration of how the new knowledge revealed here might be applied in more diverse locations and research contexts.

10.1 Theoretically framing the evolution of dance in a traumatized community

This study has investigated the function of a cultural interventionist in a traumatised community, from a perspective that is critical of cultural imperialism and the ‘developmental’ paradigm. In doing so, the research presented here has delved into a particularly controversial cultural narrative and region of the world- the history of dance interventions in Palestine.

Addressing this controversy, this thesis has set what would appear to be an academic precedent by avoiding more commonly used ethnic, religious and geo-political labels and only referring to the researched group as the indigenous population of Palestine. This has been done to emphasize that it is the processes of colonization, dispossession, exile and foreign military occupation that have dislocated the population from the social environments that previously sustained their culture, and politically marginalized them from the power-bases that censor their socio-cultural activity. Whilst acknowledging that the indigenous population of Palestine in (what has been called here) the CWB currently identifies with the wider imagined community of Palestinian nationalism, the more intimately experienced community of the CWB has been examined as the most immediate reference point for local cultural decision-making processes.

In considering a theoretical framework for the study, an extensive cross-disciplinary examination of existing academic literature on the evolution of dance in traumatised

communities has revealed several gaps in current theory. These relate to contemporary academic conceptions of evolution, dance, trauma and cultural modernity.

Analyzing how contemporary theories of cultural evolution might be read from a post-colonial paradigm, I provided a theoretical basis for research into the evolution of traumatised cultural systems. This distinguished the process of evolution from diffusion and identified culture as phenomenon that is inherently struggling for stasis, not change. By positioning cultural change as a secular process, cultural innovations were attributed to the interaction of existing ideas and impressions of the natural world within human minds. These innovations were considered to be random because, whilst guided by certain ideas existing in the cultural system, they could not be controlled by the cultural system as a whole.

This understanding of cultural evolution was used to challenge existing theories of the evolution of dance in the literature, which were identified as ethnocentric as result of positing culturally-specific *signifiers* of evolution. A focus instead on the *process* of evolution allowed for the identification of what has been described here as dance's evolutionary algorithm: dance ideas are maintained in a cultural system through a process of dance learning, random changes occur through a process of dance creating, and some of those changes are subsequently selected for repetition through a process of dance evaluation. This algorithm underscores the idea that dance is a culturally mediated phenomenon. The performed and even participatory dances of any given community are interdependent parts of the socio-cultural experience of that population. Whilst not seeking to prove this evolutionary theory, this thesis has benefited from such a paradigm as it has guided an analysis of the local dance interventions that seek to evolve, rather than immobilize, indigenous cultural heritage. In particular this paradigm has helped reveal insidious hegemonic ideals within the structural foundations of cultural production in the CWB.

In considering the impact of traumatic social events, it was observed how dance can act as a carrier of trauma. Transmitting a mood of trauma across a population, dance has the capacity to bind a community in a sense of collective solidarity. In the context of such collective-trauma, this analysis also considered how the evolution of a

particular community's dance practices might be impeded when various other environmental factors that sustain that community's cultural system are damaged. This can lead to the extinction of certain dance practices, or their evolutionary immobilization when they are revived through a salvage paradigm. The various psycho-social, political and philosophical causes of a salvage paradigm suggest that it has the capacity to maintain an intense hold on a community's sense of collective identity.

Emerging from this salvage paradigm however, a community's need to maintain a contemporary relevance for their collective identity can re-instigate a sense of cultural dynamism. At the same time, the impact of foreign cultural hegemony (particularly although not exclusively in post-colonial populations) can lead to an uncertainty over the direction of such renewed cultural evolution and fears of deculturation. This can create a contentious modernist/traditionalist dichotomy within a community and further destabilize the community's cohesion.

The uncertainty over cultural direction is exacerbated by the labels used to describe variations of modernity, such as modernism, postmodernism, contemporary and post-colonialism. Seeking to give greater definition to a particular ideal emerging out of the salvage paradigm, this thesis introduced the terms salvagism and post-salvagism. Distinguishing these two modes of cultural production from each other and from various other contemporary cultural paradigms, several salient points might thus be posited.

Firstly, post-salvagism promotes a vertical realignment between the genetic and the cultural evolutions of a traumatized community, so that the cultural practices of a community's ancestors are retained as a central feature of its cultural present, and guides its cultural future. Whereas salvagism attempts the same but is continually hitting the barrier of contemporary reality because it attempts to immobilize tradition, post-salvagism can be seen as a more flexible and thus sustainable ideal. By adapting to shifts in the social environment, post-salvagism allows for heritage to be perpetuated through a process of continuous negotiation with local contemporary needs. As post-salvagism seeks to re-connect with the dislocated cultural past

however, it differs from modernist tenets that would constantly seek to create a distance from local cultural heritage.

Secondly, as post-salvagism builds on the collective cultural past and the collective cultural present, the aesthetic intent of post-salvagism is to invoke deeply communal (rather than deeply personal/individual) expressions and understandings of the social environment. Through post-salvagism, the connectivity amongst (rather than the alienation within) the community is explored and expressed. Even when presenting contentious artistic challenges to local socio-cultural ideals, a collective consensus on the future direction of local culture remains a central tenet of post-salvagism: cultural expressions that would divide the community along ideological fronts rather than unite the community in common understanding therefore conflict with post-salvagism's principal goal of fostering a sense of community cohesion. In this sense post-salvagism differs from post-modernism, as it expresses a will to maintain certain meta-narratives that bind the community.

Thirdly, post-salvagism is (what has been described in this thesis as) anti-hegemonic, as it refutes the notion of hegemony and tries to maintain autonomy in local cultural decision-making. In doing so post-salvagism challenges deculturation, which can occur through overt and insidious processes of foreign hegemony. It also challenges the counter-hegemonic approach of salvagism, which fosters a relational dependence in cultural growth by maintaining a perpetual contrast with a cultural Other. Post-salvagism does not thus refute interaction with other cultures and communities, but invests faith in local judgment and historical values when making decisions on local cultural issues.

This distinguishes post-salvagism from other prevalent cultural ideals (such as multiculturalism or fundamentalism), which might be more intent on fostering the resolution or perpetuation of political conflicts between differing cultural groups. It also distinguishes post-salvagism from any developmental paradigm that seeks to define local cultural evolution through ethnocentric, unilinear notions of progress and modernization.

10.2 The history of dance in Palestine and the Central West Bank

The pre-salvage, salvage and post-salvage phases of dance in Palestine and subsequently the CWB reveal a complex historical narrative that is inexorably tied to the socio-political upheavals of the last two centuries.

It would appear that within early 19th Century Palestine an elaborate socio-political order maintained several overlapping spheres of cultural idealism, between urban and rural environments, the wealthy and the poor, and differing religious sects. Whilst there is no evidence of a national identification, or attempts to construct a cultural hegemony that united and distinguished the population of Palestine from the surrounding region, it would seem that local cultural practices contributed to the maintenance of a social cohesion amongst this region's population. It does not, therefore, appear to have been experiencing the socio-cultural anarchy suggested by colonial historians.

Very little survives in the way of cultural documentation from this era, however, making it difficult to construct a detailed impression of the dance practices of the region. That which does exist suggests that dance was a very central part of communal celebrations. Although records of more diverse dance practices are not apparent, it can be presumed that this reflects the lack of documentation rather than an absence of such practices.

The European-sponsored Egyptian invasion of Ottoman Palestine subsequently instigated a period of massive socio-economic upheaval and cultural transition. The relationship between the community and the land it was living on was radically altered, resulting in a re-distribution of wealth and of access to natural resources. Existing cultural systems were challenged, as a result of both these economic changes and the influences brought from foreign curiosity in the region. The subsequent processes of colonization and repopulation further disturbed this socio-cultural ecosystem, challenging the continuity of local cultural practices.

Understanding the impact of such upheavals on local dance practices during this period is particularly challenging. My research has suggested that, whilst much was

written about Palestine by Europeans in the 19th Century, relatively little was written about their dance practices. Most of that which was written comes from travellers with very antagonistic socio-political paradigms and Biblical expectations. Their impressions of local dance practices are generally bewildered, contemptuous, limited to a very narrow frame of reference and based on the notion that local culture had been static since antiquity. The images that they provide do not incorporate more urban cultural practices, perhaps because these were less exotic than the rural practices, perhaps because they were less accessible to tourists. As such, it is possible to see how their writings further contributed to beliefs in Europe that Palestine was inhabited by an unsettled, 'uncivilized' population.

Whilst not comprehensively defining local dance practices or suggesting how widespread they were, these European travelers' accounts do at least provide an impression of the diversity of dance that was occurring at the time. These examples are particularly important when addressing later attempts by salvagists to impose limitations on the nature of traditional dance practices, particularly in reference to the role and function of women in dance and traditional society. They also vividly expose the diversity of functions for dance in 19th century Palestine, greater detail of which was provided by the subsequent salvage anthropologists in the region. Dance was part of celebrations, religious rituals and mourning. It provided stylized patterns for binding the community in joy, reverence, resistance and grief. This latter function, as a carrier of social trauma, presents an interesting precedent in local dance heritage, especially when contrasted with later conceptualizations of the role of dance within dance revival movements.

Perhaps most importantly, this literature illustrates the way that the indigenous population adapted social dance practices during the 19th century, in order to provide entertainment to tourists. No longer simply a means of establishing and maintaining social cohesion, dance became a vehicle for collective representation and cultural identity: dance was being presented to outsiders as a way of communicating to them a cultural impression of the local population. This set an early precedent to the numerous 20th century processes of salvaging traditional dance for the purposes of collective representation.

Given the diversity of dances documented in 19th century Palestine, it is apparent that numerous local dance practices (particularly those related to mourning and worship rituals) ceased within the indigenous culture during the 20th century. This cultural extinction can partly be attributed to the sudden disintegration of rural communities and the urbanization of the rural population, as well as the subsequent exile and dispersal of the wider indigenous population in 1947/48. It is thus difficult to speculate on how much change occurred to local dance practices during the British Mandate era as a result of cultural hegemony from the East and the West. It is possible to observe, however, the processes of cultural representation, revision and adoption that resulted from foreign hegemony.

This firstly involved the representation of indigenous rural culture by salvage anthropology. Whilst this also included the writings of local academics, they were themselves urban and approaching the salvaged culture from a Western salvage paradigm. As this paradigm had, at the time, a relative disinterest in the function of dance and physical expression, dance was generally written out of the culture's history.

Secondly, foreign hegemony in the form of the Islamic Salafya movement also led to the denigration of folk cultural practices within the local rural community. This might have had a particular impact on mourning dance rituals. Ideologically guided by the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood, the local peasant following of this shift can be attributed to the support political Islam gave to anti-colonial movements.

Finally, this foreign hegemony involved the adoption of foreign dance styles from Europe amongst the urban indigenous population. Through schools and social events, local children and adults became engaged in European modes of social dancing. If not directly causing cultural extinction, the combined effect of these factors could have contributed to the de-valuing of traditional indigenous dance practices during the British Mandate era.

The cultural cohesion of the indigenous population was disturbed even more radically in 1947/48. The massive social dislocation caused by the Nakba and the continuing border skirmishes with the newly founded state of Israel provided a highly disturbed

socio-political environment. This disorientated the cultural practices of the displaced population, who suddenly almost doubled the existing population of the West Bank. This, along with the continuing effects of the Islamic reform movement, contributed to a cultural trauma that may have resulted in the extinction of various rural dance practices during this era. In the studies of folk dance undertaken in the subsequent era, various dances related to mourning and religious worship are no longer observed in the rural community, nor are the women's sword dances.

Whilst Zionism, Pan-Arabism and Palestinian nationalism each sought to salvage the local peasant dabkeh, revive it and display it as a means of representing a particular collective cultural identity, their subsequent processes of salvagism differed markedly.

Having identified the indigenous peasant dabkeh as an ancient Jewish practice that might invigorate a sense of belonging amongst new Occidental colonists in an Oriental land, Zionist choreographers and dancers sought almost immediately to invest the dance with new symbolic meanings. These meanings reflected both a defiant militarism and multi-cultural harmony, as the ideal of an Israeli state sought to both rise from the ashes of the Holocaust and embrace Jews from all over the world. So whilst the dabkeh/debke had been initially salvaged and documented as a frozen form of culture, there was relatively little inclination to maintain it as such. It was soon adapted to reflect the transformative impact of Zionism on the ancient land of Israel, and blended with dances from other regions to reflect Jewish cultural diversity. Whilst the dabkeh continued to be presented as an Israeli traditional folkdance, its source in the culture of the local indigenous population diminished in Israeli public discourse.

The Pan-Arab salvaging of folk-culture similarly posited dabkeh as an ancient practice, one that had survived intact after centuries of foreign (European/ Ottoman) domination. . The public performance of these dances did not emerge (as it had a century before) simply from peasants 'opening the circle' to allow onlookers to watch, however. Having been revived in parallel with the emergence of postcolonial nationalism, dabkeh was deliberately reconstructed to convey both regional unity and a cultural equivalence with European modernity. In order to suggest such regional unity, local dance knowledge (in the CWB at least) was by-passed in favour of a more

centralised 'Arab' knowledge base. In order to prove cultural equivalence with European modernity, this Pan-Arab dance style adopted European aesthetic ideals. This 'local' dabkeh thus reached the stage in the 1960s CWB by way of England, Russia and Lebanon.

Such a peculiar reconstruction of local dance culture was sponsored by the Jordanian government, perhaps in the hope that Pan-Arabism would more readily immerse the West Bank population into a Jordanian national identity. It was accepted by the local West Bank population, perhaps in the hope that such unity would provide a stronger political alliance against Israeli military power. Whilst subsequent local artistic collectives would research local rural dances in more detail, a blueprint for their transformation from social practice to public presentation had been defined by this staging of folkdance in the 1960s Ramallah Nights festivals. As performers from these festivals subsequently formed the basis of dance pedagogy and choreography in the CWB, this method of theatrical transformation became seemingly inherent in local dance production.

Like Zionist and Pan-Arabist salvagism, Palestinian nationalist salvagism considered dabkeh as an ancient and static cultural form, but it wished to reinvigorate this connection with ancient originality as a means of defying ongoing European colonial hegemony (in the form of Zionism) and proving an ancient connection between the indigenous population of Palestine and the land. In doing so, Palestinian nationalist salvagism constructed an impression of Palestinian dance traditions and rejected any radical adaptations to this construction, on the basis that such adaptations weakened this defiance and proof.

The construction of a Palestinian nationalist dance history is distinct when contrasted against the documentation of local dance practices from previous eras. For example, within the discourse of Palestinian nationalist salvagists, no recognition was given to the commercial performances of local dance for foreign tourists during the 19th century. These might have been considered a particularly important precedent in representing local dance and cultural identity to outsiders. Instead the first local transformation of dabkeh from a social practice to a performed art is considered to have occurred in the 1960s through the Ramallah Nights festivals.

Another distinction is the shift in dabkeh from a peasant social practice to a social practice engaged in by all strata of indigenous society. This coincided with a more codified and standardized definition of dabkeh so that it could function as a political ritual defining Palestinian identity.

It is also possible to observe that numerous, very vibrant aspects of the local culture's choreographed rituals were not adapted into either shared social practices or displays of collective identity. Notably absent were the highly energetic and emotive movement sequences related to mourning, as engaged in by women. These might have seemed of particular topical importance given their function in stimulating solidarity through cultural trauma, yet they did not transform into public spectacles or wider social practices within the Palestinian nationalist definitions of cultural identity.

Within the production of dances in the CWB in the 1980s, it is possible to identify local cultural evolution through what might be understood as a post-salvage artistic movement. This movement was fostered within Birzeit University, in an atmosphere that encouraged political declarations of indigenous identity, cultural expression and artistic experimentation. The post-salvage ideal was subsequently more consistently explored off campus however, particularly within the dance groups El-Funoun and Sareyyet Ramallah.

In defining a post-salvage artistic ideal, these artists challenged the prevailing salvagist notion that heritage had been, and should remain, a relatively static phenomenon. By emphasizing a sense of evolutionary dynamism within indigenous culture, post-salvage dance artists sought to contribute to an ongoing sense of collective identity amongst the indigenous population of Palestine. This involved exploring how the local collective past could contribute cultural ideas to the local collective present, and how both could help assure a local collective identity in the future.

Through post-salvagism, local salvaged dance practices were subject to deliberate adaptations. These adaptations were locally justified by several factors, including historical revision, ideological rationales, increasing aesthetic and symbolic

complexity and the practical needs related to transferring a social dance practice into a performed art.

The liberty to make such changes, in a cultural environment dominated by salvagism, can be attributed to the cultural background of the artists involved. As mostly coming from a recently-urbanised rural population, the heritage of dabkeh had not, for them, been appropriated across classes. There was perhaps thus less of a need amongst these artists to prove their allegiance to such cultural practices by preserving them in-situ, as it might be argued there had been amongst the more political/cultural elite salvagists.

The acceptance of such changes and the popularity of post-salvage dance products amongst the indigenous population of Palestine might be attributed to their function as a carrier of cultural trauma. In an oppressive political atmosphere that actively censored textual references to indigenous narratives, dance became a less overt (but vibrant) means of disseminating information about collective traumas and thus inspiring a sense social solidarity and cohesion.

This desire to maintain a sense of an indigenous collective identity thus continued the concern over deculturation previously fostered by Pan-Arab and Palestinian Nationalist salvagists. Whilst there was a strong inclination towards foreign cultural encounters (and a breaking of the cultural siege and isolation imposed by the Israeli military occupation), there remained a concern that in the context of an overwhelming and ongoing colonization process these foreign influences could dilute the solidarity fostered by an indigenous collective cultural identity. This became a particularly contentious issue in the 1990s, perhaps not least of all because the foreign cultural encounters were predominantly involving artists from the West. The indigenous population had little choice in this regard: Europe and North America were the principle economic donors of cultural interventions in the Occupied Territories, and the Israeli government restricted the entry into the Occupied Territories of artists from other (particularly Islamic) regions.

This European focus in international cultural interaction has been particularly problematic for post-salvage dance artists, as they have sought to define their own form of modernity and not succumb to an emulation of European definitions of the

modern. Maintaining such autonomy in aesthetic decisions has been particularly difficult, as even the artistic ideas provided by non-Western sources emerge from artists who had themselves been subject to extensive influence from the West.

As such, it has been harder to identify which evolving dance aesthetics might be local (or possibly even global) and which ones might be identified as specific to Western concepts of modernism. This has increased local doubts over the actual possibility of an evolving local contemporary identity, further suggesting that collective culture only exists through static impressions of an 'authentic' salvaged past.

The mass popular appeal experienced by what might be considered to be post-salvage dance groups in the 1980s thus diminished somewhat in the CWB by the turn of the century, and it might be argued that their subsequent creative production has had a less broadly popular scope. As new ways of representing a collective indigenous cultural identity have been explored (particularly through temporal shifts in the location of such an identity), internal discord within post-salvage dance groups has increased. The struggle to reconcile global interaction with local identity and history and translate this into popular culture remains central to the endeavours of post-salvage dance artists in the CWB.

10.3 Supporting the evolution of post-salvagism through interventions

Having identified an evolving thread of post-salvagism within local dance history, this thesis analysed the ways in which (foreign or local) dance interventions might support such an evolution. This has involved practice-based research with what might be considered to be the leading post-salvage artists and institutions in the CWB. Central to this research was the identification of insidious hegemony within the existing evolutionary processes of local dance production. Several salient points might be considered in relation to these local processes of dance learning, dance creating and dance evaluating.

From imitating the lawih with friends at a wedding to receiving direct personal instructions from a specialist dance teacher, the process of learning local dance heritage in the CWB has undergone radical changes during the past 50 years. This pedagogic transformation can be seen as very influenced by foreign hegemony and

the aesthetic trends of salvagism and post-salvagism. In order to support the vigorous local investigations into both *what* and *how* dance should be taught, I have identified several key issues that might guide post-salvage interventions into dance learning.

Firstly, as the technique training used to improve dancing ability can reinforce aesthetic values in a dancer, a dance technique system built around the existing movement repertoire can support (rather than confront) post-salvage aesthetic decisions. A system of technical exercises that deconstructs the predominant movement ideas in the existing choreography can provide the dancers with a means of comprehending dance sequences from their component parts. This can also give the dancers a more relevant physical/technical preparation for entering rehearsals and a common terminology for addressing particular concerns. Constructing such a technique can contribute to salvagism and cultural stasis however, if it does not continuously adapt in response to the evolution of local choreography.

Secondly, the hierarchical division between instructor and dancer can be addressed. Whilst command-style pedagogy might have an extensive history in various local cultural education contexts, it is a relatively recent phenomenon in dance learning in the CWB. The fostering of multiple pedagogues and reciprocal teaching in practice sessions can allow dance learning to be more collaborative and consensual, with more minds focused on the problem-solving processes of accurately replicating creative ideas and facilitating difficult physiological and kinesthetic demands. Rather than depending on an individual decision-maker to guide this process, such an approach reflects the post-salvage goal of maintaining community cohesion through collective input on cultural actions. Similarly, interventions that also support a shift in the relationship between dancers and the choreography, enabling dancers to feel greater possession of the dances during rehearsal, can foster a more collaborative approach to local dance-making.

Finally, whilst guided-discovery activities are not directly a process of cultural learning, they can support cultural learning through the establishing of relevant parameters. As such, improvisation tasks can contribute more to the learning of post-salvage dance when they emphasize the use of local post-salvage dance ideas. Moreover, improving the retention of dance ideas that emerge through such

improvisation can further the creative complexity of local choreographic compositions.

The evolution of dance creating in the CWB in the 20th Century has been overwhelmingly defined by a single and sudden shift: dance improvisation went from being valued as a dance product to being merely a process within the composition of dance products. This shift can be seen as resulting from the salvaging and rigorous defining of folk dances for the purposes of promoting political ideals. Whilst what I have referred to as post-salvage dance activists have challenged this approach to cultural production, more recent interaction with foreign dance ideals have further reinforced the value of dance products that are composed rather than improvised. Further interventions can revise this however, by promoting different approaches to the conception, movement generation, composition and staging/presentation of dance products.

Firstly, the temporal conception of local cultural identity can be shifted by dance products that are themselves conceived through a reflection of the experienced present rather than the imagined past. By more thoroughly integrating such conceptions of dance products with other choreographic processes such as movement generation, dance composition and staging, realizations made during these processes can contribute to the evolution of post-salvage aesthetics.

Secondly, the process of movement generation can become more investigatory, continually re-examining the local dance history *and* contemporary physicality in order to reveal new insights into local identity. Moreover, a collective approach to the actual investigations within the creative process can further promote the post-salvage ideal of community-cohesion (rather than just individual self-actualization).

Thirdly, improvisation can become more valued as an artistic product in itself and not simply a process towards a product. The composition process can thus act more to facilitate, rather than hinder, such spontaneous creativity in performance.

Finally, the forums used for the presentation of dance products can be radically reconsidered, so that the proscenium-arch theatre does not remain the primary focus of dance products simply as a result of colonial legacy.

Whilst Sibelius (in De Torne, 1937) claims that no statue has ever been erected in honor of a critic, I would argue that without critics we might never know whom we should put up a statue of. Dance evaluation does more than just identify a community's valuable art and artists, however. Dance evaluation verbally articulates for a community how and where adaptations in dance occur and why these are, or are not, effective adaptations. This facilitates a collective involvement in what might otherwise be a dancer's private ruminations, leading to a wider participation in cultural movements, a sharing of ideas amongst dance activists and a closing of the gap between a dance elite and an often bewildered public. In this sense, evaluations can help illustrate a community's own artistic innovations and adaptations, leading to both clarity and plurality in the community's evolving collective direction.

For post-salvagism, publicly available dance criticism has multiple important functions. Firstly, it helps construct the record of a dance culture that has been subjected to massive cultural dislocation. Post-salvage evaluation can identify links between the contemporary and the past, so that heritage *and* its evolution are more apparent within the collective consciousness. In this sense, post-salvage evaluation also identifies for foreign observers the manner in which a local dance work has an evolving cultural intention that is distinct from the pathways undertaken by Western trends.

Secondly, as a post-salvage context is by definition a culturally damaged environment that is particularly vulnerable to deculturation, post-salvage dance evaluations can serve to highlight hegemony in local contemporary innovation. Such an anti-hegemonic process might highlight which dance ideas are being directly imported into the community *only* because they are already valued as art in foreign arenas, and which dance ideas are imported because they have a local relevance.

Thirdly, published literature describing and evaluating dance can serve to rebind a community that may have been geographically separated through collective trauma,

so that those physically separated from a dance event can maintain at least some level of creative and critical participation. For post-salvagism, this increase in collective participation in dance is an essential part of maintaining the community's cohesion.

Fostering the growth of such evaluation requires several actions. Recognizing how much has, and has not, been done is a primary step. As my research has revealed, whilst a critical-consciousness is often applied to dance by the community through oral discourses, these analyses tend to be as ephemeral as the dance events that they criticize. Within the more permanent record of literature, there are very few examples of writings that thoroughly evaluate the aesthetic and artistic merits of a specific dance production *and* provide any sort of descriptive representation of the event. Those that do exist, mostly evaluate the dance by an irrelevant history of artistic theory. This has led to an often a distorted and diminished representation of local dance. There is thus a pressing need for relevant published evaluations of dance to become as numerous as the local dance products in existence. To this end, a post-salvage critical criteria that is relevant for the local community needs to be clarified and refined.

Without such a record of dance evaluations, local creative efforts to produce post-salvage dance may simply be misrecognised and piled onto the vague heap of Western postmodernism, and subjected to post-historical evaluation. Post-salvagism suggests a specific, limited intent, and by evaluating and documenting dance products according to the degree to which this intent has been achieved, post-salvagism as a cultural movement can compete more forcefully with deculturation and thus impede community dissipation.

10.4 The wider impact of this study

Whilst the recommendations presented in Chapter 9 of this thesis are designed to support post-salvage dance interventions in the Central West Bank, this thesis has revealed several knowledge-areas that might be useful for further research in other contexts.

The history of cultural trauma of the indigenous population of Palestine in the 19th and 20th Centuries, as reflected through their dance practices, might support examinations

of local historical trauma in other cultural areas. It might also contribute to the growing body of literature on global dance histories. In particular the history presented in this thesis has indicated new ways of conceiving dance heritage revival, in terms of salvagism and post-salvagism.

Whilst all art forms can be considered from a post-salvage paradigm, the notion of post-salvagism might extend into even more diverse aspects of human culture. The ways in which a traumatised community conceives of its own education, health, economic and political systems, for example, might benefit from research based on a post-salvage paradigm. For communities around the world that have suffered cultural dislocation, particularly for those under (or emerging from) colonial domination, the concept of post-salvagism may resonate and provide a platform from which to view, and be inspired by, their own cultural evolution.

The evolutionary algorithm for dance presented in these pages might also support analyses of dance in other cultural contexts. This has a particular relevance for individuals or organizations seeking to engage and support traumatized communities through dance interventions with concerns over insidious hegemony and local agency. The implications of this algorithm are not limited to such contexts however, and it might provide a framework for examining changes to dance in any cultural environment.

It is hoped that this thesis might thus contribute both theoretical and practical guidance to cultural interventionists who wish to resist cultural imperialism and the condescending, deculturalizing ideals of the 'development' paradigm. Such interventionists, in Palestine and elsewhere around the globe, are providing a crucial line of support for communities that have been shattered and dislocated from the cultural systems that once sustained them. Their valuing of local cultural knowledge and their recognition that such heritage is an evolving phenomenon promotes both global cultural diversity and local cultural cohesion.

Appendix 1 – Interviewee list

Abdul-Hadi, Haider. Director of Legal Department (shariah courts), Qadal Kudar Institution. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Sameer Irshaid) on the 22nd of August, 2005.

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

Abu Hadba, Abdel-Aziz. Director, The Centre for Heritage and Folklore Studies, Chairman, Palestinian National Dabkeh Committee. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 3rd of July, 2004.

Abu-Hashhash, Mahmoud. Dance and cultural administrator, Popular Art Centre, AM Qattan Foundation. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 4th of April, 2006.

Abu-Hijleh, Lana. Dancer and choreographer, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe. Interview conducted in English electronically on the 29th of July, 2006.

Al-Kurdi, Wassim. Dancer and choreographer, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 4th of April, 2006.

Ashayeb, Yousef. Journalist, cultural writer, Al-Ayyam newspaper. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Maysoun Rafeedie) on the 15th of May, 2007.

Atta, Mohamed. Dancer and choreographer, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, Wishaa. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 3rd of July, 2004.

Baker, Noora. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, Ramallah Dance Theatre. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 11th of April, 2006.

Caracalla, Abdel Karim. Artistic Director, Caracalla Dance Theatre. Interview conducted in English in Beirut on the 9th of April, 2003.

Dawoud, Mustafa. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, Sharaf, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dabkeh, Friend's School Dance Group. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Maysoun Rafeedie) on the 16th of January, 2007.

Dimitri, Elizabeth. Principal, St. Joseph's School, Ramallah. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 2nd of August, 2005.

Ellayan, Khaled. Artistic Director, choreographer, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dance. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 7th of April, 2006.

Geday, Mary. Arts writer, *This Week in Palestine*. Interview conducted in English electronically on the 6th of September, 2006.

Ghanayam, Lubna. Dancer, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dabkeh. Interview conducted in English electronically on the 5th of July, 2006.

Hamouri, Iman. Administrative Director, Popular Art Centre. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 5th of April, 2006.

Harami, Lena. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dance. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 7th of April, 2006.

Hussari, Ibrahim. Former director, Maan Television Network, former dancer, Sareyyet Ramallah Group for Music and Dance. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 15th of May, 2007.

Ibrahim, George. Artistic Director, Al-Kasabah Theatre. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 10th of April, 2006.

Jarrar, Bassam. Director, Noon Center for Qur'anic Studies, Al-Bireh. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Hadeel Karkar) on the 9th of April, 2006.

Jarrar-Haddad, Wadea. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, Lebanon. Interview conducted in English in Beirut on the 19th of December, 2006.

Kanaana, Sherif. Professor of Anthropology, Birzeit University. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 7th of December, 2004.

Khalaf, Ziad. Director, A.M Qattan Foundation, Ramallah. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 5th of July, 2004.

Khoury, Suhail. General Director, Edward Said National Conservatory of Music. Interview conducted in English in Jerusalem on the 19th of September, 2005.

Meo, Sani. Editor, *This Week in Palestine*. Interview conducted in English electronically on the 11th of August, 2006.

Odeh, Aida. Proprieter, Grand Hotel (Hotel Odeh). Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 19th of August, 2005.

Qatamish, Khaled. Administrative Director, dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Noora Baker) on the 4th of April, 2006.

Rafeedie, Maysoun. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, Ramallah Dance Theatre. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 10th of July, 2004.

Said, Osama. Dancer and choreographer, Baiyada. Interview conducted in English in Beirut (with supportive translation by Maysoun Rafeedie) on the 11th of August, 2005.

Saleh, Fadel. Teacher and Imam at Al-Ein mosque, Ramallah. Political representative for the Change and Reform Party, Ramallah. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Hadeel Karkar) on the 10th of April, 2006.

Shawamreh, Maher. Dancer and choreographer, El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe, Ramallah Dance Theatre. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah (with supportive translation by Noora Baker) on the 11th of April, 2006.

Totah, Salibah. Dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, Ramallah. Interview conducted in English in Ramallah on the 6th of July, 2004.

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