TRADITION AND CHANGE IN YEMENITE DANCE IN ISRAEL

by Noemi Bahat-Ratzon

Dance as Part of Folklore — Dynamics of Tradition and Change

Traditional dances of the different ethnic communities in Israel, being, by nature, affected by changes and open to endless innovation, are a dynamic element in Israeli dance.

Many of the dances brought to Israel by the Yemenite Jews are still danced in the family circle and in community gatherings, and are also increasingly seen in new contemporary settings, beyond the family and Yemenite-community context. In the development of Israeli folk dancing, Jewish-Yemenite dance patterns are indeed strongly in evidence. The traditional dance of the Jews of Yemen, as seen in Israel, may therefore be considered on three different levels:[1]

- on the traditional-family-community level, as practiced today among the Yemenite community in Israel;
- in Israeli folk-art, as seen in the folk-dance revival and in other cultural contexts, not specifically related to one particular commuity;
- in artistic dance and public performance in its various forms, best known through the "Inbal" Dance Theatre.

Although this article is primarily concerned with dance, it should be remembered that in Yemenite-Jewish tradition, dance merely forms part of one whole, the other two components being poetry and music.

First-hand Observations

The subject of dance among the Yemenite community in Israel can only be understood on the basis of close familiarity with the community itself, their opinions, their stories and their attitudes. My first task is therefore to present first-hand information, using the scientific-professional tools at our disposal today.

This "inside knowledge" can be acquired only by listening, watching and study. In addition, and at the same time, one needs to follow Israeli ethno-musicological research which, though a relatively young science, offers the beginnings of an attitude towards dance as one of the elements of Jewish folk traditions.

I shall put forward two ways of following the process of tradition and change in dances of the Yemenite community in Israel during the period investigated:

- the dance tradition as observed by the researcher — even though such observations may be limited;
- the dance tradition as observed and discussed by the Yemenites themselves.

Research on Yemenite Song and Dance in the Early Years of Jewish Settlement in Palestine

Within the limits of the present work, it would naturally be impossible to present the entire volume of existing relevant research. I have therefore confined myself to but a few selected extracts which will convey the duality of tradition and change as some of the outside observer's tools.

Some of this early documentation is found in the work of Israel's ethno-musicological pioneer, A.Z. Idelsohn. In an article published in 1909, describing a Yemenite wedding, he writes, *inter alia*[2]

> ...If you have never been at a Yemenite wedding, then you have never seen such merrymaking!
>
> It starts three days before the marriage ceremony, with the shaving of the groom. The relatives gather, light large ritual candles and begin to sing and dance. Two men move into an ancient kind of body movement dance, and clap hands, while another beats a drum. They sing special shaving-ceremony songs and from this point the celebration begins, continuing through seven days of feating, night after night, until past midnight.

> ...and in their ecstasy, their song and dance, they have many similarities with the Hassidim — these latter, in fact, took many customs, such as dance and especially music, from the Russians, but how this came to the Yemenites is unknown.

Idelsohn's last comment raises a number of questions today, though this is not the place to enlarge on the subject. I allow myself only to comment that researchers have pursued this idea of comparison and search through Jewish dance since ancient times, offering numerous explanations and theories. Just as one example, I quote a short exerpt from Gurit Kadman's book[3] — written about eighty years after Idelsohn's research:

> ...Two Jewish dance creations stand out for their originality, independence and richness: Hassidic dance and Yemenite dance. They developed in different environments, thousands of miles apart, and are in every way different. But strangely enough some of their characteristic and movements bear a certain resemblance to each other. The ecstasy, for example, the religious fervor and devotion, the eyes raised to heaven, arms outstretched, fingers snapping. Could we be looking at the vestiges of an old tradition originating in Bible times?

To return to Idelsohn, whose evidence dating back to 1918 is written in a somewhat flowery style of that time, but is nonetheless a faithful record of what he saw[4]:

> ...to create the mood, the Yemenites begin the dance along with the recitation, with the beat of the music. Only the men dance — the women not even being permitted to watch. The women, moreover, are not even allowed to be in the same place as the men at their celebrations. The drinking and festivities are confined to the men, while the women sit in a special room with the bride.

Idelsohn spotted the foundations which characterise the song and dance of the Yemenite Jews. His description makes fascinating reading in itself. In 1925[5] he writes the following:

> ...The dancing accompanying the singing outside the synagogue is mandatory in the Kabbala and the Massora. For in archaic times all ancient peoples danced at each festival especially during worship...
>
> ...Among the Yemenites, instrument-playing occupies an important part of the dance, especially in wedding songs. Thus the couple break into dance to the beat of the drum, accompanied by hand clapping, and twist and twirl in a manner imitating two lovers, in the Kabbalistic, allegorical sense of the Almighty and the People of Israel: contesting, disliking, being jealous, angry, begging forgiveness, bowing, expressing longing and spreading out arms on the part of the bride, i.e. Israel — and reproving, chiding and moving away, on the part of the groom, i.e. the Almighty. Until finally the latter takes pity, forgives and the couple then move into a fast and very animated dance accelerating and becoming more and more ecstatic. At the same time the voice pitch also rises, as explained above, to the highest register.

A reliable source describing the place occupied by song and dance in Jewish-Yemenite tradition is found in Rabbi I. Kafah's bok **Yemenite Traditions.** On the subject of women's song and dance he writes, *inter alia:*[6]

> For the women in the bride's house, Monday is an important day... it is the day for the women to decorate themselves with *henna, hakash* and *tetrafa.* On that day a large number of women are invited and one of the players and dancers...When the women are assembled the bride is dressed in gorgeous robes...the player sings and drums as her assistant sounds the cymbals to a slower beat, in time with the song; the songs are usually love songs, elaborating on the wife's role in life as a married woman, her rights and duties, the pleasures and hardships of spinsterhood, and the woman's obligations to her husband and children. All the women's songs are recited from memory. The drum-player, herself also the reciter, always adds new lines of her own invention, in keeping with the time and place. After this "YIVTA'U BALHARIWA" — expert dancers come forward to dance before the bride. The drum and cymbal players accelerate their playing to stimulate the dancers; at this point the instruments are played without an accompanying text.

The dances and songs of the men are expounded on at length in Rabbi Kafah's book and anyone wishing to know more about the customs and practices of the Jews of central Yemen would be well advised to refer to this book. I shall quote just one example concerning the dance of the men[7]:

> ...The most accomplished singers, invited in advance, start singing. They usually begin with *nashid* and go on to poems sung to light melodies and dancing rhythm. Now and again they change the tune to refresh and entertain the company.
>
> The dancer performs in the middle of the room. However, not everyone dances, for it is no honor to be a dancer, male or female, in fact the opposite. They would say "man rakath nakath" (he who dances disdains himself). In our time there was an old man, an entertainer and a wonderfully light-footed dancer. Whenever there were a few weddings in the town at the same time, the young men would ask: Where is Yehya "sharyan"? Without him they found the dance lacking... He was a weaver by trade but it did him little good... Despite his poverty and hardship he never made a penny from anyone, and when he came to dance and entertain at weddings he did it purely to fulfill a *mitzva* (religious injunction).

From Rabbi Kafah's words one may gather that there is a certain contradiction in the attitude towards dance and the dancer. Further on we shall see that this ambivalence accompanies the Jews generally and Yemenite Jews in particular, throughout. The generation gap, the gap between the Rabbinical establishment and the community in general is evident in the continuation of Rabbi Kafah's description:[8]

> When the Rabbis leave, the party becomes more relaxed and jolly; young novices come and sit next to the bridegroom.

> Likewise the young poets take the initiative and start showing off their prowess, either alone, or with the help of one of the professional singers. As the atmosphere grows more pleasant, a few *narghilas* are brought in and whoever so wishes "can come and croak."

The above are but a few examples of descriptions in the research literature now at our disposal, to convey an idea of the singing and dancing of the Yemenite Jews in Yemen.

Characteristics of Yemenite-Jewish Dance

In order to relate to tradition and change in Yemenite-Jewish dance, the special and unique features of this dance must be enumerated, together with the principles which bring it within Jewish traditions of song and dance in particular and within the category of folk/traditional song and dance in general. (These characteristics will form the basis for comparison later.):

Linkage of the dance with a social event — The dance is not a separate performance in its own right, but belongs to a family-community occasion; it is woven into the poetry and song and occupies an important place in the festivities.

The dance fulfills a *mitzva*, a religious injunction — e.g. "to gladden the bride and groom."

The dancer does not dance for a livelihood — There is no such thing as a professional dancer, that is, someone who earns his livelihood by dancing, but although any male may take part in the dancing, there are some outstandingly accomplished dancers who are very much in demand and appear frequently at festive gatherings. Among the women there are dancer-songsters known for their mastery of song and dance, but at wedding ceremonies the women and girls of the immediate family join in, considering it their duty and privilege to gladden the bride on her wedding day. On many festive occasions women join in the dance and the more the event breaks out of the arrow family circle and extends to the larger family circle or the community as a whole, more women join in and change places.

The men's dance is danced in a room — In the traditional setting the number of participants ranges from one to four, usually a pair or two pairs. As they dance the dancers can change partners, rest, then take their place again in the dance. **In the women's dances** the settings are more flexible depending on the occasion and on the area of origin in Yemen. (This article deals with women's dance only to a limited degree, for purposes of comparison with certain characteristics of the men's dance. Women's dance is a research subject in its own right, outside the scope of this article).

The dance area is restricted. This evidently was dictated by restricted living space, and the need to hold the festivities in small rooms crowded with guests. From this there developed a particular dancing style, rich combinations of movement, based on a vertical plane.

Combination of fixed basic patterns and improvisation — Among the women we find basic foot patterns only, and the more delicate, refined and stylised they are (the *da'sa* dances) the more they depend on foot work, with the body passive and reacting with great restraint. The lack of symmetry in the rhythm structure of the music and the interplay between the basic step pattern and the melody add a special flavor. The men's dances are based on basic patterns and improvisations, the steps being based on patterns familiar to every dancer. These steps are learned by watching and imitating. The dance always begins with the coordination of steps — from the simple, familiar and trusted to the richer, more complex, movements. The patterns can be chosen and combined by the leader (see below). Hand, head and torso movements are improvised and performed simultaneously with the foot movements, each dancer deciding for himself how and when to perform them.

Leading the dancers. The dance is led by an expert dancer; usually the eldest is recognised for his skill in the basic dance patterns as well as being a great improviser (as he is expected to be). The leader works closely with the singer through eye contact, coordination between the dancers being maintained by means of hand gestures (finger pressure, and hand grasp) as well as eye signals. The setting of particular patterns, and the game of combination and choice are the very foundation of dance among Yemenite Jews, offering variety, change and surprise.

This combination of qualities is characteristic of men's dance, which is an aesthetic experience to watch. The women's dance is far more restrained and, as it were, more demure, though still very colourful, all the more so as one becomes accustomed to the dance language.

Poem-music-dance Interplay. In the women's dances the words of the song are in Yemenite-Arabic and based on subjects relating to the woman's life.[9] In the men's dances the poem is the basis for adapting the melody

and the continuity of the song. The poetic meter is played off against rhythm of the music. The singer will always choose the tune that fits the poem and the various stages of the dance stem from this.

Incorporation of written and oral tradition. The written word and the poem belong inseparably to the Yemenite Jew's spiritual world.

Unlike the women, who for the most part are illiterate and whose songs have been handed down by word of mouth only, the written poems and the poems collected in the Diwan are used by the male singers during dance, who, even if they know the song by heart, continue holding the book as they sing. The melody and dance have been handed down orally from generation to generation, thus creating a unique combination of written and oral tradition, with which there is nothing to compare in other folk cultures.

The structure of the dance. The men's dance is built upon the *Diwan* sequence: *nashid-shira-hallel.*[10] The *nashid* is an introduction. It is sung in a free style in which the movement makes its first appearance signifying the "invitation" to dance. The dance itself is performed to the recitation of the *shira* (poem) only. The *hallel* is the final part consisting of singing only, without any dance. Sometimes the *hallel* is sung in several voices and contains a kind of benediction over the celebrants, the company and the dancers.

The Dancer's Image Among the Jews of Yemen

The attitude of the traditional community towards dance and the dancers is full of contradictions, starting with prohibition of dance and refusal to tolerate it, as a harmful influence, and ending with a very positive attitude towards it, admiration for the dancer, viewed as being blessed with an unworldly gift. In traditional society dance is an integral part of daily life, and therefore the establishment supporting the society will try to use it as a tool with whose help the behaviour of the individual and whole groups within the society can be tuned to the leader's wish. Within the community, dance serves as a ceremonial-entertaining and organizational framework and at the same time as a valve for releasing pent up pressures and a means of bringing out a feeling of unity and brotherhood.

The example before us concerns dancers who, as we have said, are not "professionals" by accepted definitions, but whose skill and proficiency in their art is uniquely theirs. Needless to say, the professional dancer who has not grown from within the community, cannot acquire the same dancing skill as that expressed by anonymous dancers or those whose reputation has spread far and wide amongst members of their community.

The status of a Jewish dancer in Yemen was based on the attitude of Jewish tradition towards dance[11]. In Yemen also the dancer's status and the general attitude towards him is not something that can be explained simply, but a compound of contradictions.

In Rabbi Kafah's book we find in the margin, next to the remark "every dancer disdains himself"[12], as they used to say in San'a, the following comment:

> "...This is unlike the rural Jewish population's attitude towards dances and dancers. They loved dancing and greatly admired the dancer, and you will therefore find among them people old and grey who would not miss an opportunity of going on a round of bridegroom celebration dances."

An example of such a situation amongst the Yemenite community is reflected in a talk with some Yemenite Jews now living in central Israel. With one exception, all the speakers are members of one extended family hailing from Manakha — the exception being a former Sana'an who married into the family. Living as they do in the same neighbourhood they maintain an active family life in which song and dance play an important role: on festivals, holidays and at every family event, as is the custom with the Manakha community. Referring to those not from Manakha but who joined them, they would say: "We've converted him," or "Now he's one of us".

The following quotations are taken from a conversation about attitude towards the dancer, recorded in 1981 (the excerpts are given here verbatim, though without mentioning the speakers' names).

> "...With us, back in Manakha, that's how it is. We sing, we dance. On Saturday nights we'd have a great time! Here in this country people look up to the dancer. They envy anyone who can dance (points to someone in the group who comes from San'a) — See him? — he's a San'an, he's like a dummy, a lampost. I mean, till he married my sister... And now wherever he goes they're all jeaous of him because he can dance...
>
> "..It's interesting, he's accepted in the group. Before, he was a nobody, now it's changed..."
>
> "In Yemen there were very big differences. There was no contact. ...With the San'ans it was dull, kind of slow, very slow... With us it's lively. We do more trilling, singing and dancing..."

The Crisis of Immigration to Israel — Collapse and Resuscitation of Frameworks

The crisis in community/self-image brought about by immigration to Israel was severe and lasting. No immigrant, it seems, no matter where from, can avoid an identity crisis.

The following are some exerpts taken from evidence recorded by the late I. Adaki, referring to the early period of Yemenite immigration to Israel, as sent out in a paper by Dr. A. Bahat.[13]

> "...I often went to Yemenite and other song evenings. In the latter there was no trace of Yemenite songs. I asked why this was so and discovered that the reasons were negative: the Yemenites had an inferiority complex about Yemenite songs and would therefore only sing in their own neighbourhoods. Once I was invited to a wedding, the first I had even attended in this country. All the Yemenite Rabbis of Jerusalem were there. I was interested to hear the Jerusalem singers. Two of them burst into the song "Eleh el kol ve-ya rav algalali" (from the Yemenite Diwan) — partly in Arabic, partly in Hebrew. After three verses they stopped singing when some Ashkenazi and Sephardi guests arrived. Having welcomed the guests, the singers started singing the Sephardic version of "Sha'ar asher nisgar kuma pta'hehu" though with Yemenite pronunciation. When I asked why they stopped singing the first song, they told me frankly that Yemenite song belongs in the diaspora and is not to other people's liking: "The Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews laugh at us when we sing." I felt the insult to Yemenite song. I had two choices: either to leave the party out of a sense of disgrace or to demonstrate in my own voice the affronted Yemenite song. Without being asked I sang with feeling, carrying on their first song, but to a dance rhythm. To the astonishment of all the guests, who didn't know me at all, I ended the song with a Hallel (words of praise) to the bride and groom, as customary. The non-Yemenite guests responded with enthusiastic applause. I asked them: What d'you think of Yemenite singing? Do you like it?
>
> They all said: It's so happy, it's delightful. Since then I have felt it my duty to disseminate it, that all may enjoy it."

The essence of this process for Menahem Arussi, dancer, singer and teacher of the Diwan poetry, song and dance to the younger generation, himself from Manakha, can be summed up in one story. For him, the following event, which he constantly recalls with great emotion, above all symbolizes the return to song and dance, as he knew them from home. We recorded it as described by him in 1977:

> "When I arrived here, in this country, I gave up dancing. I thought it wasn't suitable for this place, and that no one wanted to see or take part in the dances they did in Yemen any more. I thought all that was forgotten.
>
> One day a woman, a complete stranger, came to the place I worked at — later on she told me she was called Gurit Kadman. I'm working and she's sitting on a heap of rocks on the building site. I had no time for her. She told me that she had heard we had some nice songs and dances, and that I could sing and dance. I told her I'd finished with all that. Here in this country it wasn't needed. She then said she refused to move from that rock till I promised her I would dance the way we did in Yemen again. At first I didn't know what she was talking about. It took me a while to realize this was important to every community and that I too, Menahem Arussi, should be the way I want to be without being ashamed. Just the opposite. She was a clever woman and to this day I owe her a lot for helping me to understand how important it is. I'll always remember her for that."

Interest from outside, and feedback from Yemenite songs and dances reaching the public through the media and through art forms, give those who preserve the tradition a sense of pride. The idea of their local culture taking its place among Israel's traditions (and the fact that different traditions can be maintained side by side) is becoming more and more feasible and promising. The cardinal question of maintaining a rich community life with customs brought from home, in Israel, side by side with the endeavours of all immigrants to become integrated in the country's life in as short a time as possible, has challenged each Yemenite immigrant to choose his path and his order of preferences for himself. Despite the new life-style and the breaking of accepted conventions, which, for a while, relegated dance to a back seat, dance returned, re-asserting its position in family and community life, particularly where larger groups of the same community live in the same neighbourhood.

The return to the heritage from home and reinstatement of the tradition of poems and dances handed down as part and parcel of everyday life in the Yemen, was made possible by a number of complementary factors:

1. the need to preserve tradition generally as a means of shielding and strengthening the family and the community;
2. the wish to maintain the live tradition of song and dance as a means of restoring and nurturing the self image and thereby the family-group-community image;
3. the challenge to the general trend of "becoming Israeli" at any price and the quicker the better; but equally, a declaration of "independence" and maturity in the face of those bodies pursuing the immigrant absorption ideology, as it used to be, considering the "ironing out" process, the only way to achieve a unified and consolidated State.

Song and Dance Traditions Practiced in Yemen Compared with Present Practices in Israel; as Seen by the Yemenites Themselves

A number of change trends which started with the sung poems and the dances performed, also emerge in situations more protective of original forms. Some of these trends can even now be identified by those involved in their evolution — the Yemenite Jews themselves. For the sake of clarity I have set the situation out in the form of a comparison between dance ceremony as practice din Yemen as against the usual practice today in Israel among Yemenite communities. This comparison is concerned with the men's dances only (the women's dance is mentioned here only for purposes of comparison).

	IN YEMEN	IN ISRAEL
Function or Occasion	a. Family events, e.g. weddings, circumcision ceremonies, etc. b. In accordance with religous injunctions, e.g. "to gladden the bride and groom"	Family and community events including religious and other festivities. Obeying religious injunction "to gladden, etc...", or just to "liven things up".
Dancers	All participate. No professional dancers, though skilled dancers were invited to appear at celebrations. Strict separation between sexes (except in the Haidan district).	All participate, outstanding performers invited, often for a fee. In entertainment circumstances — mixed dancing (influencing form of dance).
Number of dancers	Central Yemen — 2 to 4; North and South Yemen — larger groups also.	Usually 2 to 4. In certain circumstances larger groups, even very large in enter tainment settings (enabled by repetition of a fixed pattern or step).
Location and space	Central Yemen: indoors in a very narrow space. N. and S. Yemen, also outdoors, thus in a larger space.	Both indoors in a narrow space, and, where permitting, a larger space. Sometimes outdoors or in big halls, the latter usually in an entertainment setting, when the traditional form and structure are dropped.
Duration	Corresponds to the length of poem sung, and as agreed between singers and dancers. Usually according to the *nashid-shira-hallel* sequence. When they tire, dancers and singers are replaced by others, enabling the sequence to carry on for a long time.	Shorter than in Yemen. Some singers do not know all the verses. The larger the gathering, the less patience and interest among people; the smaller and more intimate the group, the longer the dance goes on.
Dance material	Opens with the response form of *nashid,* which introduces the dance by weaving it into the *nashid* recitation through gestures preluding the dance itself. The dance gradually builds up with the singing of the *shira* section, starting with coordination of steps between the dancers. As the dance develops it becomes more intricate and animated, the dancers adding their own individual style and variations.	Basic movement material sometimes preserved as remembered from Yemen. But in certain circumstances the wealth of movement is consciously curtailed. Many dancers are particularly responsived to the crowd and the kind of occasion and choose their dance accordingly. Many will refrain from performing the dances in traditional form; some preserve a few outward vestiges of what they call "Yemenite dance".
Fixed and variable in dance	Fixed and optional steps selected from a wealth of possibilities. Sequence built on wellknown elements open to choice, expansion and reduction. Improvised movement (of the head, torso or hands) according to the dancer's personal initiative and style. He is expected to display his special improvisational ability against the background of his mastery of the basic, familiar, fixed steps.	Basic foot patterns generally adhered to. In public entertainment settings the steps remain the sole element preserved, often reduced to a single pattern. Traditional dancers with a firm grounding also preserve and transmit the tradition of improvisation. Such teachers are becoming a rarity nowadays.
Form	The obligatory *nashid-shira-hallel* sequence strictly observed. Dancing accompanies *shira* only, the *nashid* being accompanied by movements preluding the dance. The *hallel* is only sung. Rhythmically, *Shira* songs lend themselves to development of the dance.	Little regard today for conventional structure. Generally, dancing opens with *shira* disregarding the *nashid* prelude. Alternatively, *nashid* is sung with a *shira* lilt and danced. The *hallelot* are unfamiliar to many, and even if known, are often dispensed with out of consideration for the company, who would rather watch dancing than listen to polyphonous singing after a lively dance.

	IN YEMEN	IN ISRAEL
Leader	Usually an older and more experienced dancer whose authority is clearly recognised. Contact with the other dancers is maintained through eye signals, hand-grasp and finger touch.	Role of the leader not always apparent. In family gatherings with a charismatic leader, the role is traditional, but in a wider setting each dancer dances as he chooses without being directed.
Transmission and teaching	Poems transmitted in writing. Children learned poems by copying, practice and repetition. Men held a copy of the *Diwan* — poetry book — as they sang. People would collect poems, and sing from their own collections on festive occasions. Children learned to sing and dance while participating in the festivities, by observing and imitation.	Many performers sing without poetry book and do not stick rigidly to the text. In some Yemenite communities with a strong awareness of the importance of carrying on the tradition, classes are provided for the younger generation, the teacher being an experienced dance leader. Here too the traditional method of teaching — repetition, observation and imitation — is used and much depends on the teacher's personality. Today there are but few people who possess the necessary qualifications, perseverence and drawing power to sustain such activities.

Conclusion

The present-day researcher of folk traditions within his own society cannot isolate himself from personal involvement in what is happening in the field, claiming to use purely scientific-professional tools in addressing any subject within his research. The degree of involvement, respect and sensitivity is an integral part of the overall work scheme. This natural limitation obliges me to put before the reader the following personal viewpoint:-

1. I permit myself, certainly at the present stae, to refrain from defining what is and what is not "Jewish" in dance. Many have delved into this problem which, in my opinion, is not the central issue of dance research in Jewish traditions today; this article purposely avoids any discussion of the subject.
2. All folk tradition, including the subject of this research, is and must be a product of reciprocity; old versus new, tradition versus change.
3. The researcher interested in the Hebrew culture aspect is especially interested in the Hebraic-Judaic elements which can be indisputably identified:
   a. Attachment of dance to a family, a community, a national event.
   b. The Diwan poetry of Yemenite Jewry as a basis and as a source of influence — on the dances of Yemenite Jews: poetic, rhythmic, programmatic etc.
   c. The "movement language" which characterises a particular community, in this case the musical annotation of the Bible as part of the "movement language" of Yemenite Jews and as some of the material influencing and forming an important element in the movement vocabulary of the men's dance.[14]
4. The physical-political barrier that prevents us from acquiring first hand information on the dance traditions of the peole living in Yemen, and the fact that this, to the best of our knowledge, has never yet been done, obliges us to approach the subject cautiously.
5. The above having been said, I feel free of the obligation to locate "the source", being far more interested in the dances of Yemenite Jewry as seen by Yemenite Jews and, as far as possible, my efforts are centered on breaking out of preconceived theories, study tools and information not relevant to the subject.

Dance as Seen by the Yemenite Community in Israel Today

Many of the Yemenite community regard the songs and dances brought from the Yemen as an integral part of Jewish tradition and, similarly, an integral part of Israeli part and culture. It may fairly safely be said that dance, though not a substitute for a positive self-image, could nevertheless be an important component of this image.

The degree of nostalgia for what was left behind in Yemen, the yearning for what was sung and danced in the old country, is gradually lessening. The more realistic perception of the past also finds its expression

in the attitude to the present: encouragement and nurturing of dedicated devotees.

Here and there one comes across Yemenites who feel their unique folk tradition as an encumbrance and see it as something outdated, that can never come into its own in modern Israeli life.

In the final analysis it may be said that with changes, which are a fact of life, the tradition of Yemeni-Jewish dance continues to exist in Israel as an integral part of the country's cultural and art traditions.

Alongside the forging of new paths in Israeli culture, the degree to which traditions of "the old country" can be maintained, as their practitioners gradually adjust to the new, restricting circumstances of changing times, seems significant. Such qualities invest forms long since thought dead, with outstanding staying power and great importance. These facts raise questions as to the continued existance, the form and the place of traditional folk dance and song in contemporary society. ■

Naomi Bahat-Ratzon is Head of the Movement and Dancing Teachers Department of the Kibbutz Movement Teachers Seminary, Tel Aviv and an ethnic dance researcher.

FOOTNOTES:

1. See: Bahat N and A, **"Music and Dance,"** Manor, Shiloah-Cohen, Sharvit.
2. See Idelsohn, **Shiratam,** pg. 115.
3. See Kadman, pg. 11.
4. See Idelsohn, **Shiratam,** pg. 13.
5. See Idelsohn, **Neginot,** pg. 38.
6. See Kafah, pg. 125.
7. See Kafah, pg. 118.
8. See Kafah, pg. 123.
9. See Gamliel.
10. See Bahat A. **Hallelot.**
11. See Friedhaber.
12. See Kafah, pg. 118 (and comment on same page).
13. See Bahat A. Adaki, pg. 169.
14. See Bahat A. and N. **Scripteral.**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adaqi/Sharvit Yehiel Adaqi/Uri Sharvit — **A Treasury of Jewish Yemenite Chants,** The Israel Institute for Sacred Music, Jerusalem 1981 (Hebrew).

Bahat A. Adaqi Yehiel Adaki — "Fifty Years of Yemenite Singing" in **Tatzlil** no. 19 vol. 10, Haifa 199, pp. 168-172 (Hebrew).

Bahat A. Hallelot Bahat Avner, "The **Hallelot** in the Yemenite **Diwan**" in **Yuval** vol. V, Jerusalem, the Magnes Press, 1986 (Hebrew).

Bahat N. & A. Scriptural Noemi & Avner Bahat, "Some Notes on Traditional Scriptural Reading Hand Movements as a Source to the Dance of the Yemenite Jews" in **The World of Music**, vol. XXIII no. 1, 1981, pp. 20-24.

Bahat N. Status Noemi Bahat, "The Status of the Dancer in the Jewish-Yemenite Tradition," in **Israel Dance** 1982, pp. 9-12 (Hebrew).

Bahat N. & A. Music Noemi & Avner Bahat, "Music and Dance of the Yemenite Jews in Israel — the First Hundred Years of Research" in **Se'i Yona** Tel-Aviv, **Am Oved**, 1983, pp. 415-438 (Hebrew).

Friedhaber Zvi Friedhaber, **The Dance of the Jewish People**, Wingate Institute, 1984 (Hebrew).

Gamliel Nissim Binyamin Gamliel, **Arabic Love Songs of Yemenite Jewish Women — Ahavit Teiman**, Tel-Aviv, Afikim, 1974 (Hebrew).

Idelsohn, **Zemirot** A.Z. Idelsohn, "Yemenite Jews and their Songs," in **Luah Ha'arets**, 14, Jerusalem 1909, pp. 101-154 (Hebrew).

Idelsohn, **Shiratam** — "Yemenite Jews, their Singing and Melodies" in **Reshumot**, 1918, pp. 3-63 (Hebrew).

Idelsohn, **Neginot, — Songs of the Yemenite Jews** (vol. I of the **Thesaurus of Oriental Hebrew Melodies**, Berlin, 1925 (Hebrew version).

Kadman Gurit Kadman, **Rikudei Edot Be'Israel** (Community Dances in Israel) Tel-Aviv, Massada, 1982 (Hebrew).

Kafah Kafah Joseph, **Halichot Teiman** (Jewish Life in San'a), Jerusalem, Ben Zvi Institute, 1969 (Hebrew).

Manor Giora Manor, " 'Inbal' and Yemenite Dance in Israel" in **Se'i Yona**, Tel-Aviv, **Am Oved**, 1983, pp. 399-414 (Hebrew).

Sharvit Uri Sharvit, "On the Role of Arts and Artistic Concepts in the Tradition of Yemenite Jewry," in **Pe'amim** 16, 1981, pp. 119-130 (Hebrew).

Shiloah-Cohen Amnon Shiloah & Erik Cohen, "The Dynamics of Transformation in the Music of Oriental Jewish Communities in Israel", in **Pe'amim** 12, 1982, pp. 3-26 (Hebrew).