



كلية الدراسات العليا

برنامج الماجستير في النوع الاجتماعي والتنمية

الفنون الأدائية والتغيير الاجتماعي ضمن سياق استعماري في فلسطين في الفترة بين 1960 وحتى 2012؛ نظرة على أثر التدين والانتماء الطبقي على علاقات النوع الاجتماعي في الفنون الأدائية.

**Performing Arts and Social Change under Colonialism in Palestine during the period 1960-2012; View on Impact of Religiosity and Class on Gender Relations in Performing Arts.**

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توقيع أعضاء اللجنة

الدكتورة إصلاح جاد:

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To Freedom, when rooted as our habit

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## الملخص

على اعتبار أن الاستعمار يعنى أساساً بعلاقات القوى التي تفرض على الإنسان، ومعتقداته، ونمط حياته، فإنه يلعب دور رئيسياً في تطور علاقات الانسان المؤدي، وفي مسيرة تطور الفنون الأدائية عامة. تنظر هذه الدراسة إلى وعي المؤدي/ة حول رسالته/ا المقدمة من خلال الأداء على اعتبار تأثيره بدرجة تدينه أو تدينها، وتأثره بالطبقة التي يعتبر أو تعبر نفسها منتمية إليها، وتأثره بعلاقات النوع الاجتماعي السائدة ضمن سياق استعماري، والتي تحكم بالضرورة تمثلات جنسانيته أو جنسانيته.

وما يدعو الجدل في هذه الدراسة أنه لطالما أن المسرح والرقص هما أداتان يستخدمهما المؤدي المنقف من الطبقة الوسطى من أجل التعبير عن واقع واهتمامات مجتمع ما ثقافياً، فإن مستوى الوعي برسالة الأداء لدى المؤدين الفلسطينيين من هذه الطبقة يحتكم لمؤثرات عدة متعلقة بدرجة التدين، والانتماء الطبقي، إضافة إلى علاقات النوع الاجتماعي السائدة، جميعها ضمن سياق استعماري. والاجابة المفترضة لسؤال البحث هي أن للمؤدين في فلسطين وعياً ذاتياً (فردياً) وجمعياً حول رسالة الأداء، إلا أن وعيهم ومفهومهم فيما يتعلق بكيفية توظيف الجنسانية للمؤدية وللمؤدي من خلال الأداء، تساهم في تقليل عدم المساواة في النوع الاجتماعي في الاوساط الأقل تديناً، وفي الأوساط التي تنتمي للطبقة الوسطى حيث الوعي بالمساواة المبنية على النوع الاجتماعي أكبر.

إن الدراسات المتعلقة بالفنون الأدائية الفلسطينية، المسرح والرقص تحديداً، تبين أن النساء الفلسطينيات فاعلات في مجال الأداء، إلا انها لم تحلل العوامل المؤثرة على أداءهن مثل درجة تدينهن، والعوامل الأخرى. كما أنها لم تدرس هذه العوامل لدى المؤدين الذكور أيضاً. عربياً، وفي القرن العشرين وما بعد، شهدت الساحة السياسية والاجتماعية نهوض للتيارات المحافظة، والداعية الاسلاميين، ممن اثاروا نقاشات جادة فيما يتعلق بتنشيط وتحريم مشاركة مؤديات فاعلات في مجال السينما والتلفزيون، على اعتبار عدم شرعيتها وتماشيها مع احكام الله، مما أدى بالكثير للانسحاب من مجال الأداء.

وتعتمد هذه الدراسة المنهج الكيفي من خلال توثيق مشاهدات في مجال الفنون الأدائية وتنفيذ مقابلات شبه بنائية مع ثلاثين مبحوثاً ومبحوثة في مجال الفنون الأدائية في فلسطين، وتحلل تجاربهم وأنماط حياتهم بما يخدم فرضية ومفاهيم البحث.

وتضيف هذه الدراسة قيمة نظرية واجتماعية سياسية. من خلال الاجابة على سؤال الدراسة تتفتح الآفاق للفهم والتنظير حول الطبقة الوسطى الفلسطينية مما يتيح للباحثين لفهم العلاقة بين هذه الطبقة وممثلها فيما يتعلق بالمساواة بين الذكور والاناث في المجتمع الفلسطيني.

وخلص البحث إلى نتيجة تشير إلى أن المؤدين في المسرح والرقص لديهم وعي فردي بالرسالة من الأداء يطرحه المؤدين بقوة والذي يتقاطع بالضرورة مع الهوية الجمعية الفلسطينية. وإن هذا الوعي الفردي قام على مدار فترة الأداء التي يغطيها هذا البحث بتطوير تكتيكات تتسجم مع الاوساط الدينية المختلفة، ولا تقتصر على الاوساط الاقل دينية فقط. إضافة لذلك، وعلى الرغم أن المؤدين أظهروا انتماء للطبقة الوسطى، فإن التكتيكات التي ناوروا بها القوى المهيمنة على فكرهم لم تنعكس بالقدر الكافي على وعيهم بالمصالح الجندرية لمجتمع المؤدين، وبالتالي اقتصرت على تكتيكات تكيف، ولكنها تتفاعل عضويًا وباستمرار لتحقيق التغيير.

## **Abstract**

While colonialism is concerned with power relations over humans, beliefs and life style, it has played an important role in the development of those human connections within the process of performing arts evolution. This study perceives the awareness of a performer as confined to the degree of his/her religiosity, class he/she perceives him/her self to belong to in a colonial context in addition to the prevailing gender regimes that lies effect on his/her use of sexuality.

I argue that while theatre and dance are main tools for an intellectual performer of the middle class, to represent the situation and needs of a society culturally, then the level of awareness among performers in Palestine is subject to diverse influences pertinent to the degree of religiosity and class and gender regimes which are decisively confined to influences of colonialism. In this research I will study if Palestinian performers define an awareness of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, and the ways female sexuality employed to serve it. I will study this definition of awareness as conditioned by religiosity, the class they perceive themselves to belong to, and the prevailing gender regimes, notwithstanding colonialism influence over the Palestinian culture.

The tentative answer to this question is that Palestinian performers have diverse (subjective or collective) definitions of awareness of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, yet their definition of the ways female sexuality being employed contributes to confronting gender inequalities as they show and perform in less religiosity mediums, and belonging to middle class that is gender aware.

This study follows the qualitative research method through observing productions on the field of performing arts in addition to analyzing a total of thirty interviews with Palestinian male and female performers. Analysis focused on their life style and experiences that serves the hypothesis and research concepts.

Studies on Palestinian performing arts, including dance and theatre, have shown that women are active participants in performance; however did not analyze factors that influence women's performance, like religiosity within a colonial context.

This research adds both a theoretical and a social-political significance. By answering the research question, new dimensions on the Palestinian middle class theorizing will be produced, making it possible for scholars to define the relation between middle class and the dynamics of its agents towards equality between women and men within the Palestinian society.

This research concludes that Palestinian performers of theatre and dance have subjective awareness of the message conveyed by performance which decisively crosscuts with a larger collective identity. This subjective awareness develops its tactics to manipulate power systems of religiosity yet not collectively reflecting a strategy that confronts gender equality through performance. Those tactics are found adaptive to all religiosity media, not in less religiosity ones only. Moreover, even though performers showed belonging to the middle class, yet tactics of manipulating power systems over intellect have not reflected enough to their awareness of gender interest within the performance community, so they remained a tactics of adapting, but organically interacting to achieve change.

## **Introduction**

Culture of a certain nation is a crucial constituent of its identity, and is constructed collectively. Culture in its abstract form by Kananneh is seen as the group of means and a mechanism of living entrusted by a nation, notwithstanding the biological factor on their living, and is mainly acquired across generations through symbols and codes that reflect the nation's needs and interaction within it. It is divided into two types: the formal and the popular culture, where the formal is introduced by the religious institutions, education or constitution, while the popular is introduced arbitrary, orally and through imitation and observation of generations to their precedent (Kananneh 2011). Also culture in its advanced form as seen by Said is the product of the social and political realm and adds to their progress, but is presented aesthetically 'all practices, as the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative economy from the economic, social and political realm and that often exist in aesthetic forms' (Said 1994: 280), then culture plays a role in determining the identity of nations within the global context. Performing arts in Palestine are the representations through which Palestinians have produced their way of living, needs and interactions. They are a representing form of the Palestinian identity aesthetically, a share of contribution to the identity formation of the Palestinian realm under colonialism. Within this aesthetic draw, Palestinian performers are expected to choose ways through which they represent their individual or the collective aspiration of freedom. As 'culture and the aesthetic forms it contains is derived from historical experience, within the global process' (Said 1994: 280), then performance in

Palestine acts to represent the Palestinian historical experience under the colonial regime that impose hegemony over the Palestinian culture. Reflections on performance representations of the Palestinian historical experience is connected to the global processes of hegemony, among them are religiosity, class and the gender regimes (Mohammad 2002). This definition of culture paves the road for this study mainly by introducing culture while constructed locally, by the continuous representation of the Palestinian collective identity, and globally by the interacting of local and global histories and experiences. Whether the Palestinian cultural production in this sense is able to add value to the formation of collective awareness, that organizes the society towards social change within the colonial draw, is subject to human connections of religion, class and gender regimes.

Addressing theatre and dance only, among the other performing arts which include opera, singing, and other forms, is due to the relevance of theatre to dance throughout history, and to the scope of this research with the availability of those arts in Palestine. Dance and theatre are introduced widely in Palestine because they are derived originally from the existing arts in the Palestinian society before the modern era. Dance and theatre are participatory actions which the Palestinian society showed interest in joining (Rowe 2009; Ghunaim 1987). This research introduces dance and theatre in Palestine together as the majority of both performance arts are interrelated; meaning that what is called theatre includes body movement that might be considered a dance routine. Also, what is considered a dance includes drama in its overall theme.

Moreover, means for their evolution are not money consuming, and depends on humans' bodies, more than technique systems or special architect of buildings to produce better vocal atmospheres as in opera and singing. Those performing arts will be highlighted through this research, leaving other performing arts as media of research for scholars.

This research perceives performers as males or females, and then links circumstances of their participation to the general understandings about gender regimes. It defines a performer as the person who uses cultural production, theatre or dance, as a tool to convey a message (individual or collective) to the society. By individual message in performance, it is meant here the subjective reflection to a performer's needs and interests that either complies to or diverges with the society. Meanwhile, by collective message in performance, it is meant the objective vehemence of the society's interests and needs crosscutting by its individuals, and reflected by a performer in order to encourage the flourishing of this society. Generally, collective messages in performances aim at supporting a collective identity of this society (Darraj 2008).

In a colonial context, the objective vehemence of the society's interests and needs were mainly driven by religious and national collectivities. Studying possibilities of forming collective messages of performances are found essential to understanding the role of performers in a colonial context. The evolution of the Palestinian nationalism has been shaped in connection with the formation of the Palestinian collective identity (Khalidi 1997). The period between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> did not show much interest in declaring collective messages on the wider

scale. Villagers participatory performances managed to reflect on the local interests of the village population (Rowe 2009; Tamari 2009), whereas clear interest in collective religiosity was reflected in performances at monasteries or in political associations (Abu Hanna 2005; Muslih 1988). Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Palestinians have started to show signs for collectivity while dwelling threats to their being. Performing arts were seen to reflect on collective Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation.

The time span of this research focuses on the past fifty years for reasons related to addressing performance while the emergence of the Palestinian nationalism. It also focuses on the interval where it is thought that less religiosity is prevailing over performing arts themes. In addition, it considers availability of literature covering this period, as with the Ramallah festival.

Given the societal development during the twentieth century, three types of collectivity are derived which are the religious, the national and the feminist collectivities. While the religious collectivity of performance has proven an extended influence over the Arab and Palestinian performance through history (Al Rai 2003, Abu Baker 1998), national collectivity has started to influence the Arab and Palestinian performance with the increased impact of colonialism ahead to the British mandate in 1922 (Ghunaim 1987, Abu Baker 1998). However, the national collectivity of messages in performances has followed the internal dispute on the form of nationalism in Palestine as explained earlier, the religious and the secular inspired nationalism (Qubti 2011). At some periods, nationalism conflicted with religiosity and at other times it did not (Khalidi 1991, Qubti 2011).

Although both the religious and the secular leaderships have united against colonialism in the period during the British mandate, yet on the cultural level differences and contradictions remained important as in women issues, mainly in women participation in performance. In the same time women performance was one tool to fuel this contradiction, especially when involvement in performance in front of the public was considered an act of collaboration with the colonial claims of liberating women by destructing their obedience to the choices of men. Participation of women in performance, before the period of this research, is not an individual choice, but a familial or a collective one (Abu Baker 2011; Ghunaim 2003). The third type being the feminist collectivity of messages in performance has been supported by women participants in performance, yet with undeclared support of the national movement, in Palestine. Feminist collectivity was devoiced in the literature reviewed. It was also devoiced by literature produced on history of theatre and dance in the world as well. Reasons will be explained later, as related to the powerful regimes over women sexuality.

## **History of Theatre and Dance**

Sharing one collective message of a performance is linked to global regimes; whether pertinent to religion, class or gender. Perceiving theatre and dance through history has revealed great connection between theatre and dance with those prevailing regimes. Understanding the historical experiences of performing arts is essential to determine the impact of those global regimes over performers, and the ways they emerged individually and collectively to achieve change on

those regimes or to assert compliance to them. Pertinence of theatre to dance has originated in the Greek religious festival acts to serve a cohesive goal which is celebration of religion. Drama is first found in dances like the dithyrambic dances, which are popular dramatic dances performed outdoors and demonstrates singing of celebrative songs to praise the god Dionysus (Barwick 2002; Abu Baker 2010). As for the East, in India, where theatre has first appeared, close relation featured Indian theatre and dances, as languages like the Sanskrit and the modern languages barely distinguish dance from drama (Nahas 2002). Religious dramatic acts were connected to wealth and fame, for during the 5th century B.C, Greek writers were the actors of a dramatic work like Euripides; they were seen as among leading members of society. Writers featured with education and money were the main composers of dramatic works (Barwick 2002).

One main goal of the Greek dramatic works was serving the life style of the population. By mainly revolving around religious preaching and entertainment of the public, Greek dramatic works had huge influence over the life style, as some works performed from morning until evening. Masks were used on stage as a technique constructed to produce new patterns that describe or depict change within the society, and the change sought refers to further obedience of gods. Masks also enabled representation of more than one character by the same actor and helped men to represent the parts of women. Women in Greek drama were not allowed to perform and were replaced by male actors who imitated their distinctive organs with wooden sticks at their breasts, adding up a cynical atmosphere to the play. As women were considered inferior to men in all life

standards, reflection of women inferiority was noticed in the dramatic works, and if seldom appeared on stage, they were only seen with black slaves (Barwick 2002). 'The status enjoyed by women gradually deteriorated to the point where they were treated as property that could be pawned, abandoned, or given away to anyone' (Ramanathan 1998). This status has taken centuries to reverse. Even with its reversal it is still confined with global regimes and interest which makes the battle ongoing.

During the middle ages, in many of the Greek and Roman theatre, aim of the dramatic dances continued to be religious; likewise aim of theatre centuries ahead. In Spanish works, theatre was used as an instrument of propaganda 'to delight and indoctrinate the masses' (Barwick2002). Theatre in this respect is seen by Barwick as 'cross-cultural', since it mediates between the high art culture resembling the educated as well as the rich, and the popular culture resembling the uneducated and the poor. It also mediates between the sacred and the secular in terms of life representations of each ideology, and between different nations and language groups in terms of shared experiences and human characteristics.

By the 17th Century, romances ceased to be written by respectable authors, and were shaped by reprints of the most popular literary romances and reworking of stories in various forms, yet pressing the comedy of its nature. For the Roman theatre, actors were known as foreigners and low orders, since appearing on stage for the sake of money was given the stamp of prostitution, especially that of women's participation, an activity which brought 'infamies' and loss of social status (Gibbs 1999).

Status of women in theatre seemed to have been similar in the Arab communities and the non- Arab communities as well. The early Arab dramatic works Ta'ziya, Shadow plays and mimicry are first known during the medieval Arab period until the end of the nineteenth century mainly in Egypt and Syria. Prevailing beliefs about the Arab dramatic do not consider any dramatic acts earlier than the nineteenth century as theatre. 'For a long time the predominant belief was that "the theatre" did not exist in Third World countries, that theatre owed its literary heritage to Shakespeare, Moliere, Calderon, and a few others. At the beginning of this century [ 19th century], Brecht and Artaud proved to the West that new values could come from the East, theatres in Asia, Africa, Latin America that are not simply belated attempts at imitation of Western theatre but which have their own rules, forms, and identity' (Khaznadar and Deak 1973, 34). As Arab women were denied from participation, their parts were played by men too (Mouathen 1981). Influence of playing the parts of women by men may have reflected on the development of the Arab theatre, which represented women at their absent voice, with less interaction with their needs and interests, a thing that this research will recount in relation to the Palestinian dramatic works in the period between 60s of the twentieth century and nowadays. While devoicing women prevailed in the non- Arab dramatics in as much as it did in the Arab dramatics, yet a divergence is cleared between them at certain historical crosses, which can be explained when we come to realize the impact of colonialism over its development.

Participation of Arab women in performing arts is witnessed in the twentieth century in the formations of performance in two fields; the first is the production

of theatre scenario and in producing theatre, as witnessed among Arab women like Rose Alyousef and Fatema Rushdi, during the first half of the twentieth century, but declined later as alluded by Abu Baker to the decreasing interest among women in playwright and producing, and whenever they are active they usually tackle subjects limited to their own sex interests. Women who involved in producing a drama or writing a scenario are much less in numbers compared to men who involve in the same functions, and had less diversity in the topics tackled than those tackled by men (Abu Baker 1998). Women are more found backstage preparing the stage decoration and props, or in training of dancers who appear on stage. This state of relation between women and theatre is also known about women as playwrights and producers in other parts of the world, not only for women in theatre among the Arab communities ( AlRai 2003, Abu Baker 1998).

Some examples are presented by Abu Baker on theatre in the Arab communities. As for playwriting, Fathieh Assal from Egypt, or Awatif Na'im from Iraq, or Naeila Atrash from Syria and Sawsan Darwaza from Jordan, all of them producing in the second half of the twentieth century, he claims, have not succeeded in the scenarios they offered in theatre, to propose an influential feminist vision. On the contrary, they offered a feminist vision, yet from the perspective of men, i.e. a patriarchal background (Abu Baker 1998). This explains the messages conveyed within theatre as a male interest production rather than gender balanced or even feminist. Moreover this entails that collective messages

in performance is also subject to gender analysis<sup>1</sup>. Some attempts to rethink existing gender relations on the Arab level have, as stated by Abu Baker in his analysis of theatre of Arabs in the late twentieth century, headed extremes in women sexual liberty which have negatively affected the emancipation vehemence of women. It has over-assessed the main interests and priorities of women liberation at the period<sup>2</sup> (Abu Baker 1998: 73).

However, when women introduce themselves as performers it is a different story. This component reveals the image of women on stage the way it is accepted within the society, or in other cases that may make it acceptable to use sexuality (her body as a sexual entity), including the group of elements combining to control the use of body in performance, to convey individual or collective messages<sup>3</sup>. The gender balanced message which a performer may seek to present will be subject to the collective vision of performance, whether introducing male interests, or women interests, and in what extent are they being balanced to produce a performance that invites more audience. Adding to that, the individual interest of

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<sup>1</sup> It is important at this stage to differentiate between playwrights producing for the support of women issues alone, the feminist, and for a gender balanced society which supports for women and men's relations and interests within the societal evolution, of which responsibility lies on both women and men. Even if an attempt to create a gendered balanced approach is introduced by women and men, they tend as much to avoid any major clashes with existing gender relations within the society.

<sup>2</sup> Example on this, two plays produced by N'uman Ashour in 'Jens Al-Harim' in 1960 meaning women kind, and Yousef Al Anni in 'Soura Jadida' 1967 meaning a new image, both plays introduce women issues. The first play focuses on polygamy while picturing reflections of society in a realistic manner, while the other introduces the same topic, but with an intention by Anni to empower the young woman in the play to take action in order to change on the realistic picture and to break the image of a virtuous woman imposed by a patriarchal society. Both plays did not succeed to include a collective state of support of women empowerment within a society.

<sup>3</sup> All of the issues discussed regarding women as playwrights or producers will be added to the very important element of appearing on stage for a female performer.

a performer is important, specially the woman, in balancing the interest of the collective with the subjective.

## **Research Question**

Giving significance to the Palestinian experience, and while Performer of theatre or dance (Male\ female) is a person who uses theatre or dance as a tool to convey a message (individual or collective) to the society, this study lights above what controls the relation between performers and confronting gender inequalities mainly through exploring the use of the body, its sex and its representations before involving in its gender role. It assumes that performers belong to the middle class and act within a relevant life style and mentality. In Palestine the awareness of the performers of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, and the ways female sexuality being employed, is not given enough attention, neither its relation to confronting gender inequality in the society. This study perceives the awareness of a performer as confined to the degree of his/her religiosity, class he/she perceives him/her self to belong to in a colonial context in addition to the prevailing regimes that lies effect on his/her use of sexuality. As for the fifty years life span 1960- 2010 of the Palestinian performance addressed within this research, performers could best be categorized within two generations, which are not monolithic nor necessarily holding contradictory views: the old generation of performers are those who became trainers later or do not perform anymore because they are aging above 50s, and the new generation of performers who perform currently within a troupe and consistently, or who perform currently

within different troupes and do not belong to one troupe. While this analysis shall focus on demonstrating both performance generations; context of their performance in relation to the research questions are addressed, and in some places comparing and contrasting between them takes place.

I argue that while theatre and dance are main tools for an intellectual performer of the middle class, to represent the situation and needs of a society culturally, then the level of awareness among performers in Palestine is subject to diverse influences pertinent to the degree of religiosity and class and gender regimes which are decisively confined to influences of colonialism.

In this research I will study if Palestinian performers define an awareness of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, and the ways female sexuality employed to serve it. I will study this definition of awareness as conditioned by religiosity, the class they perceive themselves to belong to, and the prevailing gender regimes, notwithstanding colonialism influence over the Palestinian culture.

## **Hypothesis**

The tentative answer to this question (after literature been reviewed) is that Palestinian performers have diverse (subjective or collective) definitions of awareness of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, yet their definition of the ways female sexuality being employed contributes to confronting gender inequalities as they show and perform in less religiosity mediums, and belonging to middle class that is gender aware.

## **Need Statement**

Studies on Palestinian performing arts, including dance and theatre, have shown that women are active participants in performance; however did not analyze factors that influence women's performance, like religiosity within a colonial context. On the Arab level in the twentieth century, increased interest of conservative groups, Islamic preachers has put effort to encouraging performers of drama on TV an cinema to declare withdrawal from the performing arts arena, as an act that disobeys god's rule, and many grand icons of performance like actresses Suhair Babli, Shadia, Hanan Turk, Hala Shiha, and Hana' Tharwat, also singers like Yasmin Khayam and Suzan Atieh, have all declared withdrawal and resignation from the performing arena, stressing that they ceased due to reasons of complying to god's rule of not displaying their bodies as a tool to get money and fame from. This research is focusing interest on participation of women in theatre and dance troupes given the increased phenomena of female performers withdrawals, meanwhile, a phenomenon of the increasing number of theatre and dancing troupes is pouring to the surface, as festivals of performing arts are increasing around Arab countries and Palestine due to the increased interest in participation in performing as well as to increased opportunities for better performance that is supported by external expertise. It appears on the surface that intentions and justifications regarding performing arts have diverged across history which reflects divergent cultural roles and references, as well as increased dichotomy of conservatism and secularism under a hegemonic atmosphere over religion, class and gender regimes.

At the side of the growing interest in performing arts by women and men performers in Palestine, growing hostility against this interest has coincided, indicating an undeclared discrepancy with the process of performing arts evolution. Figures of theatre in Palestine have been confronted by vaguely declared parties, as with the assassination of Jouliano MerKhamis in April 6<sup>th</sup> 2011, whose assassins were not announced by the PA police, having the prevailing discourse on the major expectations on his death referred to radical Islam, as stated few days following to the assassin by WAFa, the Palestinian news and info agency. His involvement in theatre was predicted by news agencies, as well as theatre community in Palestine, as the main reason for his assassination. At another occasion, figures have exhausted themselves to death pleading for audience to their creations which are consistent with the nationalist state of being, as with François Abu Salem who was declared suicidal on October 2011. Such incidences are not completely detached from the colonial context whenever the history of performing arts has been subject to deformity of influential colonial elements to its techniques and themes, as well as to violations of the Israeli military forces. Those incidents are also not detached from the social context that stains forms of art as irrelevant to the Palestinian traditional society and in constant skepticism of its impact over the existing social relations, and the struggle for liberation. Those factors reflect on the urgency of establishing a relationship between performers and performing arts in a colonial context.

## **Methodology**

This research is conducted in a two years period. Information and access to as much theatres and dance troupes, and recorded material on their performances in the West Bank and the occupied Palestine in 1948 was made. Gaza Strip is covered in this research through recorded performances and not through interviews due to a constraint created by the Israeli occupation on mobility. As a researcher, belonging to a middle class and taking part in the cultural activity in Palestine among the audience of performance mainly at Ramallah, where a great number of performances take place, and where according to Taraki it has allowed residents of the town reclaimed public space, where new spaces are created to accommodate the new thirst for urban pleasure after the Oslo agreement (Taraki 2008). I found fewer difficulties in approaching performers from the surroundings except the major difficulties of approaching those from the occupied Palestine in 1948, and from Gaza. However, analysis is not only based on Ramallah resident performers, although the majority is, but includes those performers from the occupied lands in 1948 like in Nazareth, Galilee, Hebron, Bethlehem, and from Gaza Strip.

I have conducted a total of 30 semi- structured interviews with women and men performers who are thought to be middle class performers, as it is the interest of the study. Targeted interviewees are performers aging above 18 years old, and who have at least participated in 3 performances during the period 1960-2013. The number of the interviewees represent each of the currently performing troupes, and representing both theatre and dance troupes. The number of

interviewees is proved sufficient to enable developing an understanding of the general conditions related to the research questions and its concepts. Already produced and broadcasted interviews, recorded material, were also utilized and analyzed to serve the purpose of the study. Provided information through interviews was analyzed and conclusions were related to the hypothesis stated in light of the theoretical framework developed. Interviews and recorded material data is reproducible in the sense that same questions can result to same answers under the current situation and with same interviewees, except that names of interviewees are not mentioned for the sake of their safety. Raising taboos of sexuality and religiosity may, even if possibility is minimal, lead to involving interviewees in problematic state of affairs with some society members, mainly extreme fundamentalists. It was the decision of the researcher not to mention names of interviewees, except for Amneh Rimawi, François Abu Salem, Radi Shehadeh and Saliba Totah who were already mentioned in previous researches.

As for the fifty two years life span 1960- 2012 of the Palestinian performance addressed within this research, it is justified by two main reasons: the rising of nationalism where addressing the varying collective messages of performance is possible and the other reason is due to availability of literature and interviewees whom are still active in the performing field. Moreover, within this time span, performers could best be categorized within two generations, which are not monolithic nor necessarily holding contradictory views: the old generation of performers are those who became trainers later or do not perform anymore because they are aging above 50s, and the new generation of performers who

perform currently within a troupe and consistently, or who perform currently within different troupes and do not belong to one troupe. While the analysis focuses on demonstrating both performance generations; context of their performance in relation to the research questions are addressed together, and in some places comparing and contrasting between them takes place, especially at their definition of religiosity.

As for the available material on theatre and dance in Palestine, it has been much archived and located in Palestine TV channel premises or at the troupes' archives. At Palestine TV, performances of the period 60s- 80s were fetched, yet the archive in itself is located at the TV main premises that used to be in Gaza Strip where there is no possibility to reach under the current political and colonial condition. After 2006, the main premises shifted to start in Ramallah and from what was found about performances was mainly the festivals of Birzeit, in addition to Abu Alajab, theatrical performances at Qasaba theatre, performances for Qalqilia and Gaza Dabkeh troupes, and theatrical performance in Gaza Strip dated in 2009, as well as other theatrical performances from Al Manarah festival, Palestine international Festival, Palestine Contemporary dance festival. In addition to what is documented, since 2006, two talk shows at the Palestine TV channel have been interested in documenting experiences of performers in theatre and broadcasting them.

Among the documented material, I have been interested in addressing recorded material on the talk shows and what have the performers added that may meet with my research question. Moreover, I have been interested in the troupes

performing at location where I cannot reach because of the Israeli occupation in Gaza Strip and the lands occupied in 1948, in addition to shows performed long before the year 2000 where I was not able to attend as part of my life routine. The analysis of recorded material criteria is based on main concepts linked to the research questions: number and sex of actors, stage decorations, theme of the performance as seen by analyzer, target audience, linkage to occupation, link to women topic and religious topics. Analyses concluded few remarks regarding the appearance on stage for the group of performers as a unit of analyses and not individuals. Individual interviews served analyzing the individual features relevant to the research question.

Therefore I came to focus my visual analysis upon what was titled while available on hand on: Abu al Ajab theatrical performance 1995, the Nazareth troupe performance “Abu Saleh”, opening of the Birzeit festival in 1995 where Sarryet Troupe performed and the Popular Arts Troupe performed. Most importantly, among the recorded material, there I found recorded material that belongs to my family heritage, as my father, Saliba Totah, was a producer and a performer of theatre and dance. It is from this part that I grew interest, and owe gratitude in conducting this research.

As for analyzing material of the interviews, I have related to the measuring the concepts within this research. Semi-structured interviews allowed exploring new themes as in ‘popular religion’ and the differences on defining religiosity among the two generations of performers. Moreover, semi structured interviews, served in revealing the extent to which performers share prototypes and mentalities in

terms to their view of performance, its messages and its relation to the concepts introduced in the research. At the end of the research, it is found that most majority performers belong to the middle class, and they act towards a collective message of performance mainly, but are in constant strife to reveal individual ones. The way they define and reveal the impact of religion over their activity in performance is close, and they act an intellectual troupe towards social change, with contribution to eliminating gender inequality, yet with less strategically.

The result of this research will be disseminated to performing troupes in Palestine, especially that interviewees belonging to those troupes have expressed high interest to receive the results. It will be disseminated to related institutions in performing arts, or in social science research. This study will be translated to the Arabic language in order to serve the Arabic speaking Palestinian community as it includes documentation of historical experiences in performance under colonialism, and therefore will be disseminated inside Palestine if published. Moreover, it is produced in the English language to be disseminated to the English speaking communities worldwide, especially that introduces knowledge regarding a resistive act through cultural expression by Palestinians and impacted by colonial regimes, which is worth sharing with other cultures. It also introduces demonstration of the imperial contribution to the reiterating of feminization of culture in Palestine, and the reiterating of gender inequalities in Palestine. Most importantly, it introduces unity of Palestinian cultural behavior in Palestine, including what is now known as state of Israel, the occupied Palestinian lands in 1948.

My position as a researcher at the Institute of Women Studies at Birzeit University, who is close to the performing community in Palestine, enabled me to combine academic knowledge on social sciences, mainly on gender, to the imperial space of performance in Palestine where less theory is introduced by scholars. The behavior of the body is less addressed in the Palestinian culture, nevertheless very indicative of the evolution of the Palestinian society. It is recommended that future researches will address Palestinian performers at the Diaspora while addressing impact of same human connections as religiosity and class. Moreover, it is recommended that sexual diversity is addressed among performers; especially that performance is all about setting the body and mind free of hegemonies.

The main concepts of this study are:

Collective/ individual message of a performance: the collective message conveyed in performance is reflected by the objective vehemence of the society's interests and needs crosscutting by its individuals, and reflected by a performer in order to encourage the flourishing of this society. Generally, collective messages in performances aim at supporting a collective identity of this society (Darraj 2008). The individual messages on the other hand is the subjective reflection to a performer's needs and interests that either complies to or diverges with the society.

Operationalization of concept: what are the reasons that encouraged performers to join the troupe? What is the message they wish to convey to the audience society?

Middle class intellectual performers: A performer is seen as the person who uses cultural production, theatre or dance, as a tool to convey a message (individual or collective) to the society. An intellectual is the person ‘whose function in society is primarily that of organizing administering, directing, educating or leading others’ (Gramsci in Forgas 2000: 300). An intellectual performer of the middle class in this case is the person who seeks culture to organize and lead the population, the audience, towards achieving the higher awareness of the historical value of a performance, and arrives with it to the point of realization about their function as well as their rights and obligations. Moreover, the intellectual in this case is the person who leads the tactics to negating strategies implied by the system, in this case colonialism.

Operationalization of concept: Middle class performers will be measured in their life style: their income rate is medium to high, or not. They achieved a graduate or above level of education, or not. Join into political or social parties, or not. Expose to various communities, or not. Are in constant need to seek better work opportunity or not. Have the ability to express ideas, beliefs and concerns or not. Attend meetings of troupes (dance, theatre), exposure to media, apply researches on same or other fields, or not.

Religiosity of performers: the state of religion and belief in the mind and life style of performers where they base their act upon and dedicate their life style to it.

Operationlization of the concept: is to be measured by the means where performers show religiosity on the individual level: fulfills prayers and obeying religious commands, or does not. Do Abandon taboos of alcohol or not, and

against religious laws of sexual relations, or not. Are committed to religious veils at a certain period of their lives, or not. Accept other humans and people from other religions, or not. Accept and promote concepts of performances which include religious preaching, or not. Do conflict with religious dress culture, or not. Express obedience to the social norms inspired from religious preaching or not. Do wear makeup on stage or not, involving bodily moves, sounds and communications with others or not. Perceive religion as a tool against ignorance, or not. Perceive religion as a tool against colonialism, or not.

Gender inequalities: Gender regimes are enrooted and enforced within a society to reflect on a certain power relation. While gender is seen as a balanced relationship of society members mainly those between males and females, then for performers of theatre and dance it is considered an essential human connection that regulates relations among performers. Gender inequalities are resulted by powers imposing hegemony over gender relations.

Operationlization of the concept: Gender regimes in performance are to be measured through: performance stems from personal beliefs and interests, or not. There is reconciliation with the body as productive, or not. Has the ability to make statement about oppressive situation and reflect it, or not. Has the ability to take decisions, to express talent, or not. Do conflict with familial (patriarchal) beliefs, or not. Do have suppressed skills and capabilities, or not.

Sexuality: Sexuality to Foucault is not sex, as sex is 'internal to the apparatus of sexuality, and the consequent idea that what must be found at the root of that apparatus is not the rejection of sex, but a positive economy of the body and of

pleasure' (Foucault in Gordon 1980:190). Performers in this respect utilize their bodies not only for matters of pleasure, but also for matters of moral conveyance, to an extent that in certain point pleasure is compromised. Compromising pleasure is usually forced by internal and external forms of powers. The apparatus of sexuality to Foucault stands for 'a thorough heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, and architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, and scientific statements, philosophical moral and philanthropic propositions. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements' (Gordon 1980: 194). Sexuality in this respect is essential in the study of performing arts, where representations of the body of a performer are forced by powers that run in great influence over gender relations on the performer's level individually with his preferences and choices to use his/her body, the performing group level, and then on the society level.

Operationlization of the concept: they consider their participation as an act of body liberation that complies with the limits of Palestinian cultural heritage; develop it or detaching from it. While training or performing, they prioritize the national identity in performance or an individual one. They consider the form of performance as an authentic performance, or not. They value western style for performance as more expressive of the self or the collective, or not. They perceive certain power dominion (religious, cultural heritage, colonialism) over their performance on stage and while brain storming, or not. They perceive a relationship between religion and performance or not. They believe that performer's body (women and men) are liberated through performance in

Palestine or not. They believe in the performance as a tool to gender inequalities elimination or not.

The first chapter of this research demonstrates the tight bondage between human connections which impact performing arts, and colonialism. Links are made between religiosity of performers under colonialism and the messages conveyed by their performances. Religiosity of performers is tracked by the religiosity of performances produced. It reflects on the religiosity of the audience society and the extent to which religion has played role in defining the means for defying the colonial regime. Performers own religiosity is mentioned in the literature reviewed in chapter one, but is to be measured by the means where performers show religiosity on the individual level.

Class formations in Palestine are tracked with the evolution of the modern Palestinian society, which produced the Palestinian elite and peasantry with new preferences and reflected on the Arab and Palestinian nationalisms, in addition to the collective messages implied by performances of dance and theatre accordingly. The Palestinian middle class tracked in the literature provided, demonstrate the role of this class under colonialism. In chapter two later on, middle class performers were tracked as forming intermediaries for change within the Palestinian society. Middle class performers will be measured in their life style mainly.

Gender regimes in Palestine are linked to the power relation stressed by the colonial engine. Influence of colonialism over gender relations lead to impacting relations among performers and the way they represent their sexuality. In chapter

one, an assumption is tracked that even though performance formed a tool for change by women within the national struggle, but the inability of the women movement to organize around an agenda that serves their interest which intersects, but is not driven by the national struggle agenda, has put women to produce the confusion regarding their body representation, making it led by the patriarchal drive of the national struggle which is in its majority religious.

The second chapter of this research demonstrates the middle class role in performing arts. It decides what constitutes a class and the middle class, and why the middle class is capable of acting as an intermediary for change through performing arts specially. It hits the door to question that performers either did not show awareness of gender interests within the society, or they did not intend to initiate a clash with the communities' stereotype of women as it is not priority to their national struggle. Accordingly, the question of sexuality is repressed. It questions the relation between the religiosity of middle class performers and their contribution to performing in support revealing sexuality as one step towards eliminating gender in equalities.

In the third chapter, focus is given to relating the religiosity of performers as individuals and the extent through which performers use their sexuality (use of body), to reflect on both individual and collective interests that contrast with superior powers imposed over their life style. It will study the way sexuality has been used as an imperial tool where to reiterate the existing hierarchies within the society, and the role of religion in defying or conforming to it. It explores the

extent to which women's bodies have been silenced because of their and the societies degree of religiosity, or it is after all an imperial tool of dominion.

## **Significance**

This research adds both a theoretical and a social-political significance. By answering the research question, new dimensions on the Palestinian middle class theorizing will be produced, making it possible for scholars to define the relation between middle class and the dynamics of its agents towards equality between women and men within the Palestinian society. Studying the contribution of the middle class to a discourse of equality between women and men could not have been done without analyzing and understanding issues related to middle class women and their efficiency to raise those issues within this class. Having formed within a colonial context, the Palestinian middle class, uprooted by colonialism or forced to form outside of Palestine or under the Israeli occupation rule inside the occupied land in 1948, it contributes to providing profound insight of middle class female contribution towards confronting gender inequalities in a colonial context. Moreover, this research adds value to the importance of performing arts in articulating injustices, inequalities in a colonial context and concerns of the Palestinian middle class and helps to disseminate it within the existing discourse.

## **Chapter One: Performance in a Colonial Context**

Performing arts are means of expression for humans. Relation of performing arts to human connections; religion; gender regimes and class formations, is important to understanding its impact on societies. While colonialism is concerned with power relations over humans, beliefs and life style, it has played an important role in the development of those human connections within the process of performing arts evolution. The colonial vehicle over Palestine has been fueled forward to the First World War 1914-18, when the Zionist plans to establish a Jewish nation in Palestine was put into practice. Prior to its massive march to Palestine, the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the colonial powers of France, Great Britain and Russia was made true by the Sykes- Picot<sup>4</sup> agreement. While the Zionist movement all over the world has won the support of those great powers, it has put Great Britain to use this support in order to counterbalance the French claims over Syria and Lebanon, and to have its strategic location to its expanded dominion within the route to India. Palestine and Trans-Jordan were put under the British Mandate under the slogan of the technical aid of gaining independence (Rodinson 1970; Domani 2011; Manna' 2003). While the British mandate maintained its announced slogan, yet a practice of the Jewish nation formation promises

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<sup>4</sup> Following the British military defeat at the Dardanelles in 1915, the Foreign Office sought a new offensive in the Middle East, which it thought could only be carried out by reassuring the French of Britain's intentions in the region. In February 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement (officially the "Asia Minor Agreement") was signed, which, contrary to the contents of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, proposed to partition the Middle East into French and British zones of control and interest. Under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Palestine was to be administered by an international "condominium" of the British, French, and Russians (also signatories to the agreement). Read more in [www.palestinefacts.org](http://www.palestinefacts.org).

coincided, 'A new and hypocritical formula for colonization disguised as benevolent aid' (Rodinson 1970: 25).

### **Colonialism and Religiosity of Performers**

One strength point of theatre and dance is that they offer a society what it prefers in order to keep the society interested in the performance. Sometimes theatre and dance introduce new preferences, for example sexual diversity, that remain rejected by a society for long, until the society is led into absorbing or denying them, and may not necessarily be led by performances alone. Religiosity of a performance is mainly measured by the religiosity of performers involved in it, and vice versa. The phases within history which reflect close attachment to religious themes do reflect the extent to which this society, being performed to, has religious preferences, and the extent to which performers also have religious preferences, but less is mentioned in terms of performers' religiosity. Performances produced in Palestine as part of southern Syria and after, have showed convergence at some periods and divergence at other periods with the religious themes. While Colonialism is claimed to have played a dominant role in leading the society's religious preference in performances, religiosity of performance is essentially linked to the colonial practices. Also, in the same time, tracking religiosity of performance is essential to decide on the religious preferences of performers themselves and the extent to which religiosity served the messages implied within the performances they do.

Documented performances in the Southern-Syria area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century show that the increased interest in religious themes in performance is linked to the emerging colonial goals of the British and the Russian powers. An important linkage is found between emphasizing religious themes in performances, taught performances in schools administered by Western parties, the cultural hegemony of Britain and Russia, and the process of modernizing of Palestine by those Western powers. While the Western powers perceived themselves as supporters of the modernizing or enlightening of the indigenous (Rodinson 1970), Christianity was considered one common element, therefore was an important tool for intervening with the indigenous. While the indigenous have been very keen to spread out the religious doctrine, performing arts at schools were one way of practice by Christians and Muslims. However, patronage of religion was not yet perceived by the Palestinian population as a colonial act, especially during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consciousness among creators of theatre regarding any colonial approaches is not proven when it comes to the relation between religiosity and colonial goals (Ghunaim 2003).

Religious affiliations and prejudices within the colonial context were found enhancing in face of the Zionist draw. Instead of gaining independence gradually by the support of the mandate administration, the indigenous people faced more subjugation, and an increased pressure of the Zionist groups that is supported by the mandate was witnessed, putting them under frustration and riot, mainly an anti-Zionist riots. The British government have used several colonial practices to limit the Arab resentment, by using force or other policies like 'divide and

rule' (Rodinson 1970; Manna' 2003; Khalidi 1997), meanwhile increasingly immigrating Jews with the furthered support of their civil administration has maintained the riots of the indigenous people in defending the Arab nationalism<sup>5</sup> and Islam against the Zionist movement. This policy stimulated minorities against one another, having varying support from the varying powers. Religious groups were one factor to the divide and rule policy. Internal disputes within the Palestinian leaderships and against the inflation of the external support of Christians, which was justified with protection and enlightening causes, added to enhancing religious prejudice (Qubti 2011). Religiosity was enhanced, as in the formation of religious groups like the Moslem-Christian society and the Moslem Youth society which focused on religious preaching in order to prove either utmost nationalism against colonialism, or utmost convergence with the religious claims it brought as a mean to divide (Rodinson 1970).

Among the documented work on religious themes in performance during the period until 1948 was in 1834, when a British Orientalist Marshall Marmoun has explained in his diary when he visited Bethlehem and had the chance to attend a theatrical performance in a Catholic Monastery. He also mentioned that he attended two other performances documented on Sheikh Yousef Assir's

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<sup>5</sup> In response to the British mandate, Palestinian leaderships of the Ottoman period gained a political credit and played an important role in the development of the ideologies of the collective against colonialism. While the colonial policies of the England and France contributed to this development, but the Palestinian internal leadership and other internal factors had their influence. While Syrian leaderships proposed an agenda for Arab nationalism that have its own internal dispute between the secular and the religious, Palestinians had similar dispute in addition to concerns regarding prioritizing the Zionist inflation in Palestine. Therefore, An Arab nationalism was put in table as an ideology, but a Palestinian nationalism dominated, even though with some collaboration with the British administration especially by the old- traditional leadership. Mohammad Izzat Darawzeh proposed a secular Palestinian nationalism, yet was directly attacked by the British administration (Khalidi 1991, Qebti 2011).

‘Suliman’s Rule’ and ‘consequence of Bad Child Bearing’ (Rowe 2009). Those performances mainly propose religious themes, even though one of them demonstrated the Muslim doctrine and the other represented the Christian one. He also relates to a vivid influence of the religious themes to the performing activity at the time, which started by Christianity and then expanded to Islam<sup>6</sup>.

Creators of theatre during the period have considered themselves as promoters of a religious doctrine, not realizing that it was one entry point to colonialism in Palestine, which is introducing western tools for expression that may deform the originally expressed ones, like the mimicry and shadow plays<sup>7</sup>. Western styles have not only targeted and impacted an increased number of believers, but have unpurposely introduced new patterns and techniques to the performance, which are westernized, differing from those known earlier like the shadow plays( Al Ra’I 1990, Ghunaim 2003). Within this transformation to those new forms of performing, the closed theatre, breaking from Shadow, Mimicry and Ta’ziya forms of dramatic, women as performers have started to be seen on stage, and closed theatres were envisaged by its introducers as a modernizing step of the indigenous people, as techniques of the modernizing west are introduced to the less modern community, were women are encouraged to participate (Ghunaim 2003).

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<sup>6</sup> Apparently starting by Christianity coincided by the infiltration of the colonial interest in the area, the British, Russian and French. Attempts were made by the indigenous to oppose the increasing powers of the Russians and later the British early in the twentieth century with their introduced schools of culture. Monasteries have used theatre to support for the Christian faith at schools, and have encouraged Muslim parties among Palestinians to utilize theatre to maintain and support the Muslim culture as well, and also to defend against the British colonizing power (Ghuneim 2003; Abu Hanna 2005).

<sup>7</sup> The religious themes at the monasteries for example, were conducted to further preach for belief in God, yet in the same time to introduce the western style of theatre after the successive travel of recourse persons like Yousef Wahbeh and others to gain education regarding this style. It was also introduced through traveling nuns coming from the West who have taught performance at schools (Abu Hanna 2005).

However, on the other hand, conditions of performance were proved to be deteriorating as years under colonialism have passed. Claims introduced by the west as the enlightener have shifted to produce a reverse effect. Counter productions emerged by the indigenous that sought retaining their collective being despite the reverse practices of colonialism. Following to the UN partition decision of Palestine<sup>8</sup>, least artistic and theatrical activities were seen in the area called the West Bank, especially that the harsh displacement as well as violence that resulted by the Israeli occupation has left the population in miserable social and economic situation, giving main priority to providing basic life needs (Ghuneim 2003). The Jordanian rule 'provided the West Bank society with a network of commercial, political and cultural ties' (Tamari 2009: 18), which were only controlled by the Israeli occupation.

Fractured collective identity was witnessed during this period, between supporters of nationalism, pan-Arabism and the religious influence over each ideology emerging, and the three administrations over Palestinians; the Egyptian, Jordanian and the Israeli occupation. This fracture has led to enhancing need for performances to express the varying visions and ideologies, though indirectly. Activism on theatre was seen by clubs or societies which cared for culture, schools and individuals showing growing national concerns (Saliba Totah, Interview 2012). Exchange of expertise on theatre and dance was encouraged as in the Ramallah Summer Festival in early 60s. The same applies to the theatrical troupes in the northern part of Palestine in Shafa Amer in 1954, Ebelin in 1955 as

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<sup>8</sup> The period between 1948 and 1967 has had 21% of the total lands of Palestine under the Hashemite rule in Jordan, and 1,33 % under the Egyptian rule (Manna' 2003; Hilal 2006).

well as 5 emerging theatrical troupes among them are ‘ the popular theatre’ in Nazareth 1964, and ‘the Modern theatre’ in Nazareth 1965. In Ramallah Jeries Moughanam, actor and producer of the Modern Theatre from Ramallah, produced 10 performances among them the “ The Confession Chair”, the Sour Grapes”, and Saliba Totah, actor and producer of Samah Theatre, and the Catholic Club troupe, produced another 10 performances. In Gaza a theatrical troupe was established in 1965 “Al Shomou’ Al Masrahia”, and another one “Al- Amal troupe for Art and theatre later in 1984(Ghuneim 2003).

#### **Ramallah Summer Festivals**

Ramallah summer festivals in 1962- 67 demonstrate an example to the attempts for creating a collective movement of performing arts. Newspapers, namely Palestine Newspaper has provided documentation on this festival and the criticism around it. It provides information about participants, and trainers, and it also provides reflection of audience as well as other local and regional situations. In a newspaper article not dated, it is stated that Jouda Hanna Jouda, a Ramallah figure, has proposed the festival to Ramallah Municipality in 1961 and gained approval from the municipality council, and had the support of young scouts women and men from First Ramallah Group (Sarriyeh) whom were trained on folkloric dance and Dabkeh by a Syrian trainer Adnan Hanini and performed at the festival in 1962 and 1963 with stated 100 young performers among them women and men, in addition to 30 thousand audience, among them are citizens and tourists. In all cases introduced about this festival, collective religiosity of

performers and performances was hardly noticed, yet was considered by trainers whenever they target their audience with a performance. Here it is found that for the first time religiosity of a performer does not reflect on the religiosity of the performance, taking into consideration the diversity within the society concerning religiosity.

The festival was local for Ramallah citizens aiming to support 'tourism during summer' in addition to 'encouraging popular and folkloric arts'. The article stressed admiration of one performance by women titled 'Samah' with a photo that had women with half covered faces and Palestinian style dresses. The same article states that in 1964 the festival was launched with further vehemence, when a dancing troupe was established and performed that year 'Ramallah Folkloric Arts Troupe of Jordan'. The troupe joined more than 150 participants and continued to perform until 1967. In an interview with a singer Atieh Shararh who performed in this festival, he expressed that this festival is an attempt to create a special folklore to Ramallah, in parallel with the attempts made in Cairo, Lebanon and Tunisia. He stressed that this festival is an opportunity to promote with it, if it performs in the different places of the world, the Palestinian cause. Another article dated 12\3\1967, praises the achievement of Ramallah Summer Festival, as well as other festivals organized in similar trends in other places like in Jericho 'Orange Festival' in 1965, Nablus 'Olive Festival' in 1965 and in Hebron, where it was planned that 'Grapes Festival' would be organized, but those festivals seem not to have continued their yearly ritual as did the Ramallah Festival, except for Bireh Festival which was mentioned to be organized for two years successively.

In an another article at Palestine newspaper 1965, not dated raised the issue of plagiarism made by the Jordanian Radio channel when they changed the script of the songs prepared for the festival as a Jordanian cultural heritage, and in answer to it, the Mayor of Ramallah sent several letters to the Jordanian Minister of Media refuting the act with no answers given back, even though the West Bank was considered part of the Jordanian area of rule.

In addition to this coverage, the same newspaper has posted several articles that showed a considerable critic of the performing arts movement. Criticism tackled the authenticity of performance, especially that almost all trainers are invited from Lebanon and Syria which reflected on the 'Lebanonization' of performances in techniques and props, and the negation of local expertise in training. It also tackled nationalist or patriotic themes, in 3\7\1965, the importance of encouraging folkloric, stated by a Lebanese trainer Wadi'a Jarar, art as a mean to support the Arabic values in face of the image created about them by the West, which necessitates a study by performer of all the locations with its folkloric features like dances, dabkeh types, songs and rituals. Another Lebanese trainer, Geita Salameh, stressed the need to maintain authenticity of performance in order to gain praise of a performance. Moreover, it tackled weaknesses of the festival as perceived by the trainers. Marwan Khouri, a Lebanese trainer expressed that 'traditional mentality', stands against forming professional folkloric troupes, which perceives art negatively. He also stressed that art and performance should be considered by teachers in schools, and that artists should further their languages acquaintance in order to learn more from other cultures. Hani Mansour,

the theatrical producer, stressed weaknesses of lacking spaces suitable for performance of theatre. He also expressed the dilemma of women participation in theatre, despite the increasing participation of educated women in theatre, yet social conceptions are still degrading to this form of Art. He linked the participation of women with a cultured society that is produced whenever high quality performances are offered to them. He believed that the absence of an academic approach to the Arab theatre obliges theatre people to inspire from the world theatre.

This case of Ramallah Festival draws conclusions regarding the collectivity of cultural behaviors in dance and theatre, acting against colonialism. While this festival encouraged other festivals in other places, its main aim was to support the economic and cultural aspects of Ramallah mainly. Moreover, although it spoke of Ramallah as the main focus of this festival, yet mature interest to spread its potentials to the world was one step to gaining support for the Palestinian values and the Palestinian cause respectfully. Although a Palestinian collective identity or religiosity was not mentioned, and that all media coverage mentioned the West Bank as part of the Jordanian Kingdom, however acts of refuting plagiarizing of the local cultural heritage indicate an interest to preserve the evolution of the local culture. Religiosity of performers was witnessed even though not imposed over the performance, which indicates another message sought by performance than religion promotion. The cultural behavior has yet maintained respect of social morals which are originally inspired from the domination of religion over the society's social and cultural aspects of life. In addition to that, the continued

interest of the Ramallah municipality to introduce the Lebanese expertise who expressed their opinion of the local art is indicative of its strife to create and maintain an authentic folkloric art<sup>9</sup>.

The period ahead to 1967, performances have barely raised religious themes, but rather collided with social stereotypes which are either evolving as a reaction to religion or to colonialism (Ghunaim 2003, Shehadeh 1998). In 1975, Amneh Rimawi joined the theatre group *Dababis* (meaning Stirring up or being critical) started in 1973 with 10 male performers and 3 females. As she believed then, ‘women should participate in theatre work, at the time when women participation did not exist. The Palestinian society rejects the idea that women could appear on stage’ (Augustine 1993: 76). She updates ‘we all knew that women participation in all life fields is important to the national struggle, and we served women’s issues within our works as we believed that liberating women is one step to the national liberation. We complied with the dress and cultural code of villages when we performed there and people accepted us when they realized the moral behind the performance. Even members of my extended family, among women, who did not accept me performing in front of the public, were satisfied and proud of me after I performed, I being a villager’ (interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012). As she participated with women among her friends, she couldn’t but articulate difficulties faced by their families and the general society like exposure of body to the community, mobility between villages and towns for performers, and dress code, in addition to danger resulting from Israeli practices against performance by

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<sup>9</sup> Introducing Lebanese and Syrian trainers could be an important clue to the cultural behavior that sought roots for an Arab collective identity against the Western, or colonial influence.

Palestinians (interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012). She compared women participation in theatre activism and in voluntary work as reconstructing roads and buildings at refugee camps and villages as similarly received by the society, leading to improper behavior. Women were faced by the Islamic brotherhood religious groups and conservative forcers, ‘ they even announced their refusal of our performing activism in mosques and a friend of mine was attacked and threatened once’ ( interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012), and also severely faced by the Israeli occupation. The Israeli occupation put restrictions over the theatre activities of Dababis which turned to cause her end her activity in theatre and after that Amneh was put in jail. She explains ‘the military governor of Ramallah [of the Israeli occupation] told us that Dababis was perceived to be almost as dangerous as the PLO. We were not the only theatrical group that ended its activities. As group popularity increased, so did the Israeli repressive measures. Checkpoints were set up on the roads to performance, censorship was tightened and group members were arrested and imprisoned. Despite the successful performances of those theatrical groups, the national agenda as well as the occupation practices were continuously affecting women’s choices in performances. Women seemed still suppressed on the individual level, as they barely addressed feminist agenda within performance apart from the national one. They were also suppressed on the collective level as they barely addressed the feminist agenda in face of the Israeli practices’.

The period after the signing of the Oslo agreement<sup>10</sup> has witnessed changes on attitudes regarding cultural activism. Culture shifted from a resistive act into a more documenting role of the past experience of resistance against the Israeli occupation and the catastrophic past lived by Palestinians. Commemorating the tragedies was the main role of artists like in ‘Haifa Beirut and Afterwards’ performance by Al-Founon dance troupe and ‘Birjawi’ performance by the First Ramallah group dancing troupe, with a clear disappointment resulting from the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 which exemplified that the resistive act in dance and theatre together with other forms of resistance was backstabbed by the political leadership when a turn over the forms of resistance ended with less expectations and recognition of the state of Israel by the leadership. Collective messages turned into myths for performers, and no longer was vehemence witnessed.

Fracture on the national stance reflected on the cultural one. While commemorating the tragedy in an attempt to bring together the Palestinian collectivity, many of the arts productions reflected on the inevitable fracture. Individualism replaced collectivity. Theatrical and dance troupes couldn’t define their stance between celebrating the peace process with less practices of the Israeli occupation against their activism, and refuting it by their performance. The Palestine international Festival organized by The Popular Art Center in Ramallah since 1993 in Ramallah alone and in 2005 in the other Palestinian cities is an important example reflecting on the change on the Palestinian national stance.

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<sup>10</sup> Oslo Accords, officially known as “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements”, is a document signed by the PLO and representatives of the State of Israeli occupation in September 1993 [www.palestinefacts.org](http://www.palestinefacts.org).

Festivity followed the interest of the new agenda of the political leadership. Having the Palestinian leadership PLO inside Palestine, new visions on a state building emerged, leading the Palestinian cultural active bodies interested to reflect on those visions by establishing symbolizing activities to the liberation sought and openness to the whole world to celebrate with Palestinians their culture.

The second intifada, having difference from the first intifada where more popular activism was noticed and performance was one way of this activism, and the militarized trend mainly limited to the Israeli checkpoints spots (Hamammi and Tamari), has added to the diminishing of the Palestinian intellectuals from the popular scene, and their contribution to the second uprising was less credible if compared to the military part. This resulted in the enhanced individualism among artists and mainly performing arts like in productions of 'Abou Obo: the butcher's market' by Abu Salem which focused on the state of living when the Palestinian worker mainly self centered, and the production of 'The Chairs' and 'The Virgin and Death' translated from other language, with less connotation to the Palestinian society, except for minimal indications.

While the Palestinian national arena has drowned in a dilemma of identity, reflecting itself on the political surface, and with the increased internal dispute of the political factions over means of resistance and solutions regarding the peace process with the Israeli occupation, it is found that the enhanced aid of the Palestinian civil society by international agencies has flooded over the cultural sector, mainly to support initiatives that support positive images of Palestinians

even though under an internal political dispute. Cultural activists shifted interest from the political representation of the Palestinian identity and a new atmosphere of individualism was growing as a mean of representation. The decrease interest to reflect on a collective message of a performance made less the impact of religious collectivity over performance. The openness to technology and media has put new Palestinian individual interests to reach out to the external world and opportunities were sought outside Palestine or inside it with an external support. Performing troupes involved more to tracking new techniques of performance and to introducing new cultures, yet cared less to the diverse local preferences. Revival of festivals took new shapes. The Contemporary dance festival is organized annually by First Ramallah Group 'Sarriyeh' since 2006, with a majority of international troupes' participations, limited in 2012 to one performance by the 'Sarriyeh' local performance. Some of those festivals have emerged since long time and were revived recently like the Wein A' Ramallah festival which was organized in its tenth version in 2000 and stopped until the year 2010 where it was reorganized on an annual bases<sup>11</sup>.

After demonstrating milestone Palestinian performances achieved in the periods between late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, religious preferences were found dominating during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and mid 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Festivals types of productions were revived later after the second intifada, with their majorities supported by external fund like the 'Al Manara Days of Theatre' organized by Al Qasaba theatre in Ramallah in 2010 and 2011. Al Qasaba theatre has established the Drama Academy in 2009. Director of Al Qasaba theatre highlights 'Because there is no school, institute, or university that teaches drama; because of the shortage of professional actors and directors, especially women; and the dearth of professional drama teachers to teach at the various theater schools and institutions, we find that the Palestinian infrastructure has a great need for such a cultural and creative institution. I have long dreamt of creating an institute or an academy for theater arts'. This academy is foreseen to establish a partnership with a foreign body that will help develop the capabilities of performers' (Ibrahim 2009).

century, but less dominating in the period following. Religiosity was one defense tool for the indigenous against ignorance, as seen infiltrating at schools to promote for morals, and against colonialism, as in the Arabising of performance. However, what remains not addressed is the extent to which performers have realized their religiosity as an important tool to their implied messages as collectively defying colonialism. This research will examine the period in the second half of the twentieth century and its performers, whether they recognize religiosity as a main tool to the message they reflect through performance, even through religious themes are found minimal in performances of that period, and why have religious themes ceased to influence in spite of the growing of interest in religious style of life.

### **Colonialism and Class Formations**

In the evolution of a performing troupe, class awareness is essential on the level of the performer and the troupe as a group. Class awareness on the level of the troupe is a dominant factor to establishing a collective message of the performance that encourages change within the society performed to. Class awareness was important to the evolution of the Arab nationalism in Palestine. In the same time the colonial engine has fueled the modernity engine in the life style of the indigenous in Palestine, it has decided on the class formations of the Palestinian society and performers, mainly producing a Palestinian middle class (Rodinson 1970) ( Hilal 2006). While colonialism has led the modernization of the Palestinian urban centers, drastic shifts were noticed on the life style of

Palestinians at the urban centers, not only on the economic relations, but also on the social relations and social status which created a contrasting state of powers over the cultural expression, even though the cultural expression proved evolution under its surface.

The modernization process has impacted the socio- economic relations in Palestine which led to the establishment of a classed society. During the modern period, living shifted from agriculture based until late nineteenth century to 'control of nomadic incursions on the peasantry, substantial demographic growth in the country side, and the establishment of the network of transportation that linked the village to regional centers and the demand of the external market' (Tamari 2009:5;Young 1993). As for Tamari, ownership of the land turned from 'communal ownership to ownership by absentee landlords and from subsistence farming to monetization, commodity production, and the export of agricultural yield'. This process of change in land tenure introduced was through the successive British practices of colonialism. It was labeled as mentioned earlier with the slogan of aiding the indigenous to modernize. Education was enhanced and support for establishing new class formations has taken place (Rodinson 1970).Enhanced modern economy and widening of education, in addition to introducing administrative positions within the Mandate authority apparatus which employed good number of the indigenous, have led to producing a middle class, a militant close to people intelligentsia (Rodinson 1970) ( Hilal 2006).

The growth of the Zionist being in Palestine went uncontrollable, even by the British Government, especially when the Peel report<sup>12</sup> which suggested partition of Palestine into three states, an Arab and a Jewish where the third to contain Jerusalem under the rule of the British Government. Terrorist Zionist organizations took the lead in an oppressive movement against Palestinians up until 1948, with support and facilitation of the British rule, leaving Palestinians fighting against both antagonisms (Rodinson 1970). Deterioration of the situation, having dual- shaped colonial force, the mandate and the Zionist, has put further pressure. The growing intelligentsia joined the riots with the various literature, theatre and eloquence expressions. This intelligentsia established the early notion of nationalism in Palestine which became the vision of middle class intelligentsia. One example addressed by Musleh while discussing affiliations of the political groups towards nationalism in Palestine, who expressed the Arabic Club 'Al-Nadi Al Arabi'. This club was mainly led by the Nashashibi family political organizing leaders. They organized against the establishment of homeland for Jews in Palestine, and supported that Palestine must be part of the greater Syria. Other leaders claimed for a Palestinian nationalism that is not part of greater

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<sup>12</sup> In their Report of July of 1937, the Peel Commission attributed the underlying cause of the Arab revolt to the desire of the Arabs for national independence and their hatred and fear of the establishment of a National Jewish Home. The Commission recommended freezing Jewish immigration at 12,000 per year for five years and that a plan for partition of the land be developed.

With regard to partition, the Peel Commission advised that "the most strenuous effort should be made to obtain an agreement for the exchange of land and population" following Churchill's perceptive comment that the implementation of Zionism presumed a policy of population transfer. The Peel report suggested that in the last resort, "the exchange would be made compulsory." The precedent cited was the Convention of Lausanne (1923), which provided, on paper, international legal sanction for the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. The Peel Commission recommendation for partition was rejected by the British Government and there was no further consideration of the idea of population transfer.

Syria. He documents that this club has used performance to mobilize people as a play was performed about a Jew hostess in a coffee shop who flatters wealthy Arabs and puts them to give up their lands for her, as a sign of the practices on land confiscation (Muslih 1988: 169). Another example of this growing nationalism was the missionary schools, which despite the colonial interest; they have paid attention to the need to support the education of Palestinians by arabising the modern form of education. Language, mathematics, sports and singing religious hymns and acting were the main subjects being taught (Abu Hanna 2005). Sakakini and Zueiter were key teachers who have put efforts to harmonize modernized education with the Arabic culture (Sakakini 1955, Zueiter 1994).

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when cultural aspects of life at the urban centers were becoming more attached to the modernized style of life rather than the authentic style; cinema was introduced, scouts groups were formed and forms of Western dances and theatre were seen more usual. Shadow and mimicry performance, known in Yaffa or in Gaza during festivities or occasions, they were less considered among the newly introduced urban trends of cultural performance, mainly among the elite. However, milting with Westernized trends of cultural expression have influenced, but not fully suppressed or erased the traditional participatory performances neither at the urban nor at the rural sites (Rowe 2009, Tamari 2009). Contrasting preferences in defining nationalism among the elites and the population were put in power; those supportive of authenticity (shadow and mimicry), and those supportive of modernization. Even if modernization was

supported by the colonial regime, but at the local level, there existed a veiled dispute regarding the shifts on life style between the elite and the population, leading to a state of contrasting powers over cultural performance up until nowadays (Hilal 2006).

During this period up to 1948, increased connections with the Western ideologies and life styles were noticed among Palestinians mainly the bourgeois, and signs of western cultural influence were absorbed. Among the clues in hand to the exposure to the Western practices according to Ghuneim, the 1822 conquer of Muhammad Basha to Palestine as well as the creation of the Suez Canal in 1869, the British mandateto Palestine in 1918; have all increased interaction between Arabs and westerners, which does not necessarily put us to assume that it has not started earlier. Translation and language acquaintance have also promoted for the introduction of Palestinians to the Western literary movement of Drama, as many famous works are turned from French and Italian by translators like Paul Shuhadeh, Elias Nasrullah, Muhammad Ala' Aldien, and Bandalli Al jouzi. Among the first documented theatrical performances of Hamlet was performed in Gaza 1911, because of the close ties with Egypt due to the conquering of Palestine by Muhammad Basha. Three male Palestinians participated in the performance. After then a performance in Jerusalem at the Saint George School was conducted and another theatrical performance has taken place in 1944 by 'The Youth Acting Group' in Jenin. By 1948, the total number of theatrical troupes in Jerusalem has reached to thirty troupes (Ghuneim2003) (Young 1993). The increase on number

of theatrical activities is related to the increase in the abilities to use performance in its western style to express aspiration of religion or national freedom.

The theatrical performances mentioned to belong to this period of history have emerged at the big urban centers like Haifa and Jerusalem of Palestine, leaving villages, with less power to cope with the evolution at the urban part where administration, facilities and norms are becoming supportive of the modern cultural behavior (Rowe 2009, Ghunaim 2003, Shuhadeh 1998), but most importantly with less documented activism. Moreover having Palestinian elite established after colonialism concentrated at urban centers like Haifa and Jerusalem has probably left the interest on theatre, especially on its western style, to those elites and by them. These elite were established at the side of growth on the coastal cities due to the enhanced manufacturing and export. This class was not able to develop an adequate investment of manufacturing, as the successive pressure of the Zionist organization which put Jews in successful positions of manufacturing and administration. The Palestinian elite were becoming dependent on the British policy which supported the increased Jewish power, and was not able to compensate for the decreasing opportunities of employment of Palestinian peasants at the villages (Tamari 2009). The evolution of nationalism at this stage was promoted by the elite at the cities with modernized vision, and also promoted by peasantry at villages, yet with authentic vision.

Within the dichotomy between the urban and the rural in terms of absorption of the western culture and nationalism, literature provided have showed cultural activism of peasants, mainly seen at the Festivities of Moses and Rubin Shrines,

parallel to the activism witnessed at the urban centers. Collective themes were produced by the popular urban culture and then exported to the high culture where it is reproduced by modern techniques. At the Rubin annual festivity, before it was abandoned in 1948 by the Israeli occupation, and despite the increasing interest in inviting well known theatre actors from Egypt (Tamari 2009), communities have shown vivid interest in attending it, especially among peasants from neighboring villages, who would also practice their own festivity rituals, especially of dabkeh. Peasants have also attended and enjoyed theatrical shows produced within this festival<sup>13</sup>.

Growing of nationalism continued to be shaped under the Israeli occupation in the period 1967 through 1993. The Israeli occupation continued to impact the indigenous people, its elite and peasantry in defining their nationalism. The need to express riots and refusal of the Israeli occupation among the indigenous led to the appearance and proliferation of performing art, dance and theatre that became a tool for national resistance (Mohammad 2003, Rowe 2009), not only for festivity and celebrations. The establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), with its branched political parties, has led a political agenda of resistance and included social and cultural aspects<sup>14</sup>. The declared support of

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<sup>13</sup> Historians on the Festival, like Elias Rantisi has proved the wide participation of women in this festival and in many times participation in mixed shows for men and women (Tamari 2009; Manna' 2003).

<sup>14</sup> The establishment of PLO determined a collective notion of nationalism where all Palestinians expressed their national identity through organizing with its agenda, and it became the representative of their entity. PLO included<sup>14</sup> "Culture and Media Department" to its departments of action in 1974. This department was responsible of supervise the cultural activities organized under the patronage of PLO in Palestine and internationally, in addition to supporting participation in the local, Arab and international cultural forums.

PLO was to Palestinian produced literature, singing, theatre, in addition to archeology and popular heritage.

The extensive strength of the political fronts through the PLO after the defeat of the 1967 war has raised interest among society members and political parties' members to include cultural activism to their community mobilization, especially after enforcing the Israeli occupation's military rule on prohibition of forming the cultural clubs as well as the workers unions, in addition to enforcing censorship regulations on cultural activities among Palestinians (abu Salem 1985; Ghuneim 2003, Mahran 1992). A cultured society was born with the infiltration of progressive thought which turned interest to art activities as forms of resistance against the Israeli occupation, indicative of nationalist collective message of theatre. A considerable proportion of theatre produced during that period has supported leftist views (interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012) which bases the conflict with the Israeli occupation as class- based, especially that the majority of Palestinians have turned into proletariat inside Israel (Mahran 1992; Taraki 2006; Tamari 2009).

Literature has shown that renewed approaches to techniques were introduced to guarantee a democratic aspiration. Traditional forms of scenarios, actors and producers were surpassed and replaced by a new voluntary spirit marking the relation between performers and producers as interactive to serve the national collective message produced by theatre<sup>15</sup> (Anis 1979; Mohammad 2003). Inspiration from the life style of the local was perceived through many theatrical

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<sup>15</sup> This turning point reflected Palestinian's intentions to redefine their nationalism apart from the surrounding countries, through articulating their own aspirations of freedom.

works, especially those of Al- Hakawati theatre, Ballalin (1971-1978) with 19 male performers and 4 female performers, and the Wonder Box (1975- 1977) with 3 male performers during the seventies<sup>16</sup>.

#### **Al Hakawati Theatre Experience**

While the main message of theatre in Palestine during that period has been ‘a form of nationalist education’, named as the resistance theatre (Mahamid 1987), Al- Hakawati Theatre, established in Jerusalem in 1977 and banned by the Israeli occupation during the first intifada, had launched its activism with an understanding that while ‘the West Bank was under Jordanian rule; theatre was more a way to learn English or a fancy way to spend an evening. It didn't have any interaction with people's needs. I'm [François Abu Salem] not so sure today that people actually need theatre, although it is a basic human drive to express yourself with the simplest but most complicated of all means-your body and your voice’ (Abu Salem 1985: 231). As the director of the troupe, he insists that there existed traditional roots to the Palestinian theatre, ‘There are many kinds of body expression in traditional Palestinian culture, but no one calls it theatre as such. And artists also have an ambition of not following in the footsteps of folklore’ (Abu Salem 1985: 231). The troupe showed belief in the role of theatre in promoting for political change. Thus, it aimed to create a theatre that combines folklore and the Palestinian culture to modernity, a hybrid theatre, since ‘[T]he reliance on tradition and folklore can trap one in imitation and repetition. Rather it

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<sup>16</sup> In the years 1967 through 2000, there appeared around 30 theatrical troupes around Palestine. Among the bibliography of published plays in Palestine there appeared 50 playwrights among them are 8 female playwrights (Anis 1979).

was necessary to find the essential in folklore, to be inspired by its spirit and rhythm, molding it into a form appropriate to [the] modern age' (Slyomovics 1991: 23). Tracking members of this troop, it is found that the majority of performers are mainly from cities like Jerusalem and Jaffa, not villages.

Although Al- Hakawati building had been closed down by the Israeli occupation fourteen times between May 1984 and March 1987 and seven times between March and May 1987, it has managed to reach out for as much community through performing in schoolyards of villages. Performers believed in the power of theatre, as in theatre Palestinians are in power to design their present and future, 'performance changes the nature of occupation by placing "suffering in the land" in a Palestinian theatrical framework. The storyteller, through comedy, children's puppet theatre, and traditional epic singing, takes command of a state of affairs he is powerless to alter. By making his life his own in this way, Ibrahim [performer of the troupe back then] believes he experiences an encounter or a reunion with his Palestinian self'(Slyomovics 1991: 24).

On the other hand, there appeared many constrains facing the development of theatre in Palestine during the twentieth century, as seen by Al Batrwai, while in view of Al- Hakawati experience, which appear to their disposal, have provided around those constrains to refute them and mainly stressing the collectivity of its themes: first, theatre until 1987 was only limited to main towns like Jerusalem and Ramallah, with only educated people able to attend. However, the experience of Al- Hakawati indicates interest and practice of troupe to reach for villages around Palestine where audience have widely admired the relevant themes performed, yet

the hard restrictions as well as censorship imposed by the Israeli occupation has prevented spread of theatre around Palestine.

Second, within those towns there existed no established theatres, places to perform in, where popular performances can take place. However, the experience of Al- Hakawati theatre has reflected on the ability to perform in schoolyards of villages, a thing which will promote the investment of the existent potentials within the community that is performed in, increasing the audience identification with the performance although not produced at their villages. The ability to connect with troupes that articulate the interest of the rural areas has increased the collective recount of the Palestinian identity during the seventies and eighties as its main goal was raising awareness regarding the national themes, stressing its collectivity. This connection was not made possible during the periods that followed, as the Israeli occupation has made less connection between the Palestinian geography during the first intifada and the second intifada which left its influence on the period between and after them.

Third, the educational system has not taken theatre seriously within the school curricular and in universities, adding to that the lack of resources as well as the continuous Israeli practices against making it possible. Fourth, theatre is connected, as for many Palestinians' conservative conceptions with low ranking ethics, not allowing sons, and more strictly daughters from participation in theatre troupes (Mahamid 1987). More dominantly at the period between 1967- 1987, the Israeli occupation forces has prohibited social gatherings, festivity as well as all kind of performances laying under the resistive culture and nationalist education.

As for Al- Hakawati theatre for example, says Abu Salem, ‘the permit [gained by the Israeli occupation authorities in Jerusalem] for our play Mahjoob, this play was withheld at first but we won the case on appeal. Once you get the censor's permit, you are faced with all sorts of other pressures. For example, when we perform in a village where there is no theatre we have to perform outdoors or in a schoolyard. Sometimes the police come to us and say we need another permit from them, besides the censor's permit, which is not true. Or [an Israeli] government ministry sends a telegram to the schoolmaster on the day we arrive in the village, saying "Don't give them the use of the school because they are subversive." And you have to fight it, for the schoolmaster in fact is allowed to give you the place. But by then it's not a question of legality any more, but of pressure’ (Abu Salem 1985:233). Such prohibition has increased many families concerns about their sons and daughters’ participation in risky activities where expression is not secured under an oppressive occupation. The involvement in the national movement, through theater, was weakening traditions but the Israel harassment increased people’s fear for the safety of their children.

#### **Theatre in the Occupied Palestine in 1948**

Theatre experience inside the Occupied Palestine in 1948 has shared similar characteristics of theatre in other parts of Palestine. The dismantling of Palestinians after the year of Nakba 1948 has put those who stayed at home under the military rule of the Israeli occupation until 1965. Restrictions on Palestinian mobility and expressions were forced. The Paradox of integration within the enforced state was exemplified in theatre. While theatre in the West bank was

employed in that period to support for resistance against the Israeli occupation, confusion is noticed on the lands occupied in 1948. Artists of performance, facing more intense violations by the Israeli occupation, have been trapped between their need to fight for existence and then against violations. The Rising Theatre experience in Haifa (1967-1977) demonstrates the key characteristics to the context through which the Palestinian theatre in the occupied Palestine in 1948 has developed. In a study of the Palestinian theatre in Galilee, Haddad demonstrates the impact of the political situation behind establishing the Rising Theatre and its ending. She alludes to the need for the cultural representation in theatre by Palestinians inside the occupied Palestine in 1948, especially while the Israeli theatrical performances have started to gain strength, akin to all cultural sectors. Practices of the Israeli occupation against the spread and development of the Palestinian cultural identity has led to the extreme deterioration of the financial resources of the theatrical troupes like the Rising Theatre (Haddad 1994). Moreover, as expressed by Shuhadeh, a performer, he relates to the paradox on the Palestinian Identity after 1948 as resulting from the military enforcement of the state of Israel over the Palestinian land as well as the neglecting of Arabs to the status of Palestinians living in the lands confiscated, has created a repulsive front by intellectuals that varied in views towards the state of Israel, especially on the cultural level (Shuhadeh 1998). Some parties preferred organizing activities under the supervision and management of the Israeli authorities, especially that Palestinians living there pay taxes to the Israeli

authorities, while others refused to conduct any activities under the supervision and management of the Israeli occupation.

Theatre activists have faced obstacles targeting its collectivity: the first party has faced interruptions of the Israeli authorities or the rehearsals and attempts to influence the content of the theatrical performances that appeared, as in the experience of the Rising Theatre when its activities were conducted while hosted at Beit Al Karmeh, Arab-Jewish Center was established in Haifa in 1963 for the purpose of bringing together Arabs and Jews and educating towards coexistence, neighborliness and tolerance by means of cultural and artistic activities, festivals, meetings and community activity. Since Beit Al Karmeh was considered as part of the state's institutions, several attempts were made to interfere in the contents of the performances, aiming at de-Arabization, and lessening calls for Arab unity, which led to the resignation of a number of members, where others remained for financial causes related to their living, yet afterwards, all members have resigned. The other party, on the other hand, which refused to conduct the activities under the supervision and management of the Israeli authorities, like the Rising Theatre after detaching from Beit Al Karmeh, they have also faced increased interruption of work, in regards of periods of rehearsals as well as in contents of performances by the Israeli authorities whenever a performance has taken place, adding to that the financial crisis pertaining to funding the performances they did which led to its downfall again. Performers felt detached from their products whenever those products are linked to the state representing majorities among Israeli's, and ungratified by the surrounding Arab communities.

Despite the political impact on the development of the Rising Theatre, the social cultural impact must be highlighted too. After detaching from the Beit Al Karmeh, the Troupe was able to organize under the supervision of a popular council, and during the launching meeting conducted under their supervision, a performance was conducted at the meeting, however it did not succeed to attract audience to their troupe. Haddad relates this failure to not being able to relate to the interests and needs of the population, especially that the script is translated from a western play (Haddad, 1994).

Haddad documents at least 5 theatrical troupes in addition to the Rising Theatre mainly in Nazareth and Haifa. She also documents the first appearance of women in theatrical performances in the fifties. Among the 17 theatrical productions, at least 2 women have participated. At some periods the number of women has decreased to 1 which made the troupe to announce for female participants, where 3 women joined among them were 2 from Jerusalem which increased the financial implications as well as the social constrains about their participation (1994).

Colonialism has determined the formation of the middle class and its performances and has fueled a dichotomy between the elite and the peasantry. The establishment of a Palestinian middle class in Palestine has firstly collided with the peasantry in states of modernizing of the life style, but organized later on under the PLO agenda within a collective nationalism. Modern performers growing at the cities, performed in villages as per their agendas, and they praised the authentic festivities. However, the Israeli occupation seemed to be the major impediment against performing in villages, not the peasantry itself. Performances

censored by the Israeli occupation aimed at fracturing the growing collective nationalism created under the umbrella of the PLO. The Israeli occupation has made less connection between the Palestinian geography during the first intifada and the second intifada which left its influence on the period between and after them, and added less to class unification towards a collective awareness. Most importantly, the Israeli occupation has stood against participation in theatre and dance through prohibiting cultural activism which promoted for a collective nationalism. However, what remains not addressed is the extent to which performers have realized their class awareness as an important tool to their implied messages as collectively defying colonialism. This research, mainly chapter two, will examine the period in the second half of the twentieth century and its performers, whether they recognize class awareness as a main tool to the message they reflect through performance.

### **Colonialism and Gender Regimes**

Gender regimes are enrooted and enforced within a society to reflect on a certain power relation. While gender is seen as a balanced relationship of society members mainly those between males and females, then for performers of theatre and dance it is considered an essential human connection that regulates relations among performers. In the one hand colonialism policies of rule sought liberation of women as a reason to their presence at the colonized; yet women involving in performance were seen as collaborators with the colonizing forces and therefore bad reputed. Women's participation in theatre and dance is put in the surface of

taboos while resisting against colonialism. On the other hand, the national movement has made efforts to introduce women as a partner of achievement against colonialism to establish a counter image regarding women's contribution to the national struggle.

During the seventies of the twentieth century, support of women participation in cultural activities was thought to be guaranteed through the women issues department of the PLO. The women movement intersected within the political parties and played an important role in the organized riot against the Israeli occupation within the frame of this department until 1993. I here assume that, even though performance formed a tool for change by women within the national struggle, but the inability of the women movement to organize around an agenda that serves their interest which intersects, but is not driven by the national struggle agenda, has put women to produce the confusion regarding their body representation, making it led by the patriarchal drive of the national struggle which is in its majority religious. In order to track this assumption more widely in chapter three, illustrating the origins and dynamics of the Palestinian women experience within the national struggle and in the process of empowering themselves, and as a main support to their participation in performing arts is essential. Intertwined national and feminist agenda went in parallel with a conservative view of performing arts with the Israeli practices against resistive performance. There is a clear bondage between the development of women participation in performing arts in Palestine, and the development on the Palestinian cultural, social and economic life of women, and the evolution of the

women's movement. The Palestinian women's movement, although changing in its leadership class over time, yet is considered the breakthrough which facilitated for women participation in performing arts. Performing women have joined the Palestinian collective interest and theatre was considered a space to practice national struggle as well as self empowerment.

The Palestinian national movement has developed drastically on two major spots of the history *Nakba* and first *intifada*, women's movement have also witnessed and contributed to this development (Jad 1990; Najjar 1992; Khoury 1995). Since its evolution during the early twentieth century, women within the women movement were proved hard workers household and in agriculture, even ahead to the *Nakba* years, when women unions have increased in numbers and branches inside Palestine or in the Diaspora, serving social and economic needs among women and more widely the Palestinian society at their locations, yet the economic activism of women in the criteria practiced by leaders of the national movement has not achieved a notable change on women social status. Jad analyzes the situation as 'attitudes, values, and traditions of the Palestinian society at the turn of the century [20<sup>th</sup>] were condescending to them. In the presence of a patriarchal and reactionary society based on religion and its laws, women were prevented from inheriting the land, and their role was considered a part of housework' (Jad 1990: 126). She explains that achievements of the women's movement in Palestine had, along the time up until the first three years of *intifada*, its agenda integrated within the national agenda, whether represented by elites or leaders of charity organizations, or the general union of the Palestinian women.

Therefore, the women movement couldn't handle the internal dispute of its political affiliations and broke into four women unions that follow the main four political factions PFLP, DFLP, PCP, and Fateh (Jad 1990).

Even though the feminist agenda was postponed to after the termination of the national struggle as thought by leaders of the political parties, yet increased participation of women was noticed. In performance, at the level of representation of the body while compliance to the national goal, during the 20s, organized women in demonstrations were either surrounded by scouts or behind men who participate in order to give protection or social support of their bodies as they demonstrate. However, ease of body representation has notably developed later as they have taken part in arm resistance, hijacking planes, throwing stones, and in demonstrations and imprisonment, in addition to literary and theatrical activities (Jad 1990). Apparently, having worked on women participation in mixed activities with men, and outside the house in many of those patriotic activities, have changed the stereotype about women's body representation. Women themselves have gone into internal debates concerning their dress codes, especially that while struggling against gender inequalities had to consider the societal reflections regarding women's activism. While they decided to 'put off the veil to serve the homeland' during the 20s demonstrations (Jad 1990: 127), they complied with the calls of the Islamist movement calls to put it on while demonstrating against occupation during the first intifada.

Performance formed a tool for change by women within the national struggle. During this period, illiteracy eradication programs have started especially that of

Birzeit University and the early childhood center, and performing arts were used as supportive learning techniques. Women, parents and children found performing arts as theatre a closer method to the absorption of knowledge among women towards national duties and rights (Najjar 1992: 188). However those performances were done on the level of women audience, parents and the public wherever children are the performers. Moreover, during the 70s and after, women in the unions of women used theatre as a tool to promoting collective identity and therefore dared not exceed it to a certain extreme where individual interest of women or private interests are tackled (interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012). Theatre served as intermediary to national mobilization rather than individual. As for the voluntary movement that emerged by the unions with implicit affiliations to the political movements, women were noticed as active participants in volunteerism and theatre was considered a voluntary activity that mobilizes the community politically. Amneh Rimawi with extended activities in trade unions considers theatre, as she was active during the 1970s, as targeting social and political messages. ‘The theatre is highly politicized, but it examined not only the occupation but also the Palestinian society itself’ (Augustin 1993: 76). She updates, ‘women with progressive father like mine were lucky to participate in performance, but other women were criticized and even attacked by conservative religious parties, the Islamic group’ (interview, Amneh Rimawi 2012).

Within those accomplishments on the women’s right level, less has been articulated or shaped into policies among the women movement regarding women participation in performing arts. Except for the direct articulation within the

experiences at the popular movements, activism in performing arts remained silenced. This refers to the inability of male authors or producers of performing arts to join women needs with the collective message they convey through the performance they produce (Abu Baker 1998). Also presentations of women sexuality are noticed contrasting with the collective pledge under a colonial or imperial context. Women participation in performance maintained at the circle of taboos within the resistance movement. Nevertheless, the development of women movement, whether in favor of the national struggle or women's right struggle, it has definitely smoothed the road toward the current participation of women in performance (Abu Baker 1998).

Collective representation of women has maintained within a degrading impulse despite the slight increase on female participation and the measures taken by troupes to reverse this collective representation. According to Mahamid, until 1987 women usually stop their activism automatically as they get married, were acting starts to be 'shameful' to the mother. Yet this does not only apply to women. Participation of men is also negatively influenced by marriage, but men are more capable of choice than women, whether to resume or to stop their activism. Some theatrical troupes have involved in voluntary activism among the public in order to change negative conceptions about theatre, especially of women's image as actors in theatre. Other troupes have organized shows that demonstrated new perceptions of women. Abu Salem commented on one show, he produced which was performed around the year 1985, '1001 Nights of a Stone Throw', he thought of a Palestinian women as 'the only ones who have preserved

anything in village society, who are actually constructing and not just pretending to construct. She's productive economically, cares for the children and home. She has to carry with her the entire past. My idea was to try to show her on a throne, where she really is, because in villages an elder woman often does get this kind of respect. She becomes a wise woman who transports from the past all the knowledge necessary to reproduce and grow, whether it's popular medical knowledge or wedding songs. The men no longer have that role because they have become complete slaves, doing the 'dirty work' in Israel'.

The change on the political agenda after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PA) in 1994 and the peace process have reflected on the forms of riots against the Israeli occupation. International support of gender issues, in addition to support for expression opportunities among the marginalized groups, mainly women have been prioritized by the donors support. Only with the inflation of the international support to the Palestinian civil society that interest in Palestine has started to define Palestinian theatre and dance as performing arts. This research is focusing interest on participation of performers in theatre and dance troupes, meanwhile, a phenomenon of the increasing number of theatre and dancing troupes is pouring to the surface, as festivals of performing arts are increasing around Palestine due to the increased interest in participation in performing as well as to increased opportunities for better performance that is supported by external expertise.

Literature demonstrated that gender regimes powered by colonialism has put women issues as commodities for the struggling powers to prove their supreme.

Performance was an essential tool for change by women within the national struggle, that supported for their interests within the existing gender regime, however what remains not addressed is factors within this gender regime that controls their body representation, whether religious, social, class based factors which reflected on the organization of women in determining their interests to eliminate gender inequalities under colonialism. Also, having realized the existing gender regime as an important tool to defying colonialism in the messages they implied in the performances. This research will examine the period in the second half of the twentieth century and its performers, whether they recognize gender regimes when they reflect on the message of performances.

## **Chapter Two: Middle Class Role in Performances**

Chapter one demonstrates the impact of colonialism on the formation of a classed society in Palestine. An early formation of a middle class was fueled by modernizing the Palestinian rural areas, and a dichotomy between the elite and the peasantry was created. However, while the formation of nationalism was an important element to its organizing, the practices of the Israeli occupation stood against class organizing and unity to achieve a collective awareness. This chapter will contribute to the understanding of the Palestinian middle class and its performers while forming an organic group that utilized performing arts as a tool to leading and promoting change within the society. It will track the main characteristics of the Palestinian middle class and introduce experiences of the Palestinian performing arts to evaluate its contribution to forming this organic group that builds its performances on a collective awareness which not only defies colonialism, but also defies gender inequalities in Palestine.

On the other hand, this research will track religiosity of middle class performers, and its impact over their interest and preferences within the collective awareness they grow within a performance. In chapter one, religious preferences were found dominating over the Palestinian intellectuals forming the elite during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, and religiosity is found less dominating on them in the period after. It stressed the need to address the extent to which performers as individuals have realized their religiosity as an important tool to their implied messages when collectively defying colonialism. This chapter will track the religiosity of the middle class performers as a group in the troupe, and its share to

the messages they perform. It tracks the Palestinian experience in performing arts to determine the extent to which performers as a troupe have realized the religiosity of their performance as an important tool to their implied messages as collectively defying colonialism.

In order to define the relation between the message conveyed through a performance and the performers performing it, it is worth connecting them with the power and prestige of the social groups where the performers belong. Performing for gender equality inclines the need for a collective awareness among performers on gender interests within the national struggle, which they reflect in the performances. The first chapter concluded that gender regimes are powered by colonialism, and in the same time performance was an essential tool for change by women within the national struggle. Performance supported for women's interests within the existing gender regime. This chapter aims at tracking the Palestinian performing arts experiences to examine the group awareness of the performing troupes, whether they recognize gender regimes when they reflect on the message of performances. It will review if performers can organize and lead collective activism in confronting gender inequalities as they perform to convey a collective national message.

### **The Middle Class**

Social change analysis might not exclude the economic aspect, especially the economy as well as the social strata of which performers are related. Modes of production are the main dominator of the social class humans belong to. However,

Weber adds to the economic dimension of social stratification two other dimensions, power and prestige. He contributed, that property differences generate classes, power differences generate political parties, and prestige differences generate status grouping or strata (Tumin1985). This research hypothesizes that performers of dance and theatre in Palestine belong to the middle class, focusing on that producing a performance is a product by a social class, even though not economic as in the form of commodity. At some professions, where no commodity is produced, social class is decided at the middle between those who are producers and those who are owners of the product. Property to Marx is the 'fundamental determinant' or substructure, while the superstructure 'is assigned to power, cultural modes, forms of family life, educational processes and other such factors that may, and often do, reinforce the differences initially generated by differences in property'( Tumin 5, 1985) and are generally relevant to social strata. Given as much vehemence to cultural modes and life style in deciding the social class where performers belong, it is important to decide on the extent to which property, power and prestige have influenced the performing arts participants in perceiving their social class, and reflecting on collective messages.

Middle class is the hub through which middle class performers organize towards ideas and thoughts to create a certain awareness that they offer to the audience. The performance in this sense is an artistic representation of a change sought in society by the middle class. According to Marx, change is inevitable when lower classes have the enough class awareness as well as understanding of all the social

paradoxes and contrasts with other classes, enabling it to make real a change on the social system that obeys its ambitions (Smelser 1973). Marx and Engels mean by social class, the unit of analysis in the process of social change, the working class and the bourgeois. Afterwards, studies have added the notion of the middle class as concentrated in the middle between the upper and the lower class (Smelser 1973). While middle class characteristics vary depending on its members, it includes small manufactures or guilds as well as artists and peasants, workers, white collars, educators and intellectuals; it only shows rebellious acts whenever members' standards downfalls to the proletariat class line (Levine 1998, Hilal 2006, Raynor 1969).

Middle class performers are given a greater highlight in this analysis as the cultural capital is the main property of the middle class, in addition to other forms of property possessed by middle class members throughout history. The stratum of middle class members supports their autonomy over the public opinions, as a result of their multiple affiliations (Hilal 2006, Mills 1956, Bottomore 1992). Middle class plays an important role in the countries where it is present, through its contribution to the national economy, its role within the social unions, political parties, religious representation, and in media as well as in the cultural production of that country. Studies and contributions on groups which joined the middle class in Europe and America have shown the role of its members as active participants in promoting for the interests of their class as well as the lower classes (Mills 1956, Shanin 1971). Characteristics of the middle class in Europe and America describe the relations between members of this class, and between other classes,

as based on economy and social strata. By highlighting this relation, and raising the conclusions of other Palestinian scholars, it is possible to draw some lines about the Palestinian middle class.

As Palestine has mainly been comprising of a peasant society at the early beginnings of the twenty century (Tamari 2009), differences and similarities of the history of the peasants' masses between Europe and America could assume some characteristics of the Palestinian peasant masses in the modern history, especially when colonialism has led to enforcement of modern aspects to the colonized entities, like transport facility and new forms of economic relations. Formation of the peasant groups is connected to the social unity of this group as well as its ownership of property. Prior to the Civil War in America 1861, led by Abraham Lincoln against slavery expansion in the states of America, where no clustered villages of farmers have formed but rather a scattered groups around the country, with individual capitalist interests, peasants had formed the 'numerical ballast of the independent middle class' (Mills 1956: 4), however, as 'the producer is older than the market in Europe' (Mills 1956: 4), having peasants under feudalism for long time, and having peasants concentrated in villages and mainly based on subsistence, peasants in Europe have formed 'a narrow stratum in the urban centers' (Mills 1956: 4). While the four hundred years of struggle with the feudal system in Europe, Capitalism in America has preceded the Civil War. Changes on the peasant groups were inevitable throughout the change to Capitalism. Since owing of a property was of the main achievements of the Capitalist world, in America, industrialization has served the enhanced

introduction of markets to the rural areas. Small businessmen and entrepreneurs, with growing ownership of property, have grown into a huge stratum within the American society at its rural areas, which formed a huge ballast of the middle class. Small entrepreneurs comprised small farmers and small producers, and sometimes large landlords and merchants, with variance in substance farming and mercantilism, government control of foreign trade to ensure security of its state, as well as high trade as the bases of its structure (Mills 1956). However, invading of the private property by the rich, while poor were plundered slowly and legally, has led to the transformation of the type of property the middle class had into a new form of property leading to the emergence of a new middle class. The new middle class has joined less owners of property, yet increased percentages of the white-collar people on salary (Mills 1956). Labor market was the main chance for its members to receive income and social strata.

However in Europe, in France specifically, early in the 19th century, poverty and lack of education as well as science application, and the diverse types of production by peasants resulted in lacking wealth of social relationships among them. As self sufficient families, which in a wider range formed villages, owned diverse types of product, they cannot form a class of its own that enforces its interest. They went through alliance with the bourgeois, the social class with ownership of the Capital, during the revolution, and then with the urban proletariat, the working class having minimal or no property, by the rise of capitalism in order to fit. Ownership of land was not among the achievements of the peasantry in France (Shanin 1984).

Groups which joined the old and new middle class in Europe and America are similar despite the diverse history of its formations and alliances. The diverse interests of the multiple groups within the middle class have made it loose social unity, and even within the single group as in the peasants. As Marx perceives middle class members detached from production relation, yet involve in the relations including distribution of products, therefore they lose a specified location in the product extends, and they respectively loose the objective basis for a social unity (Hilal 2006).

However the uniting element of the middle class generally is its relation with other classes within society. The middle class is perceived to be leading to stability, especially as it mediates between the contrasting interests of the Capital and work (Hilal 2006). If performing arts are artistic representations of the society, then performers of the middle class are those who mediates between the capital and work through their bodies in a performance. This process of mediation reflects the awareness needed among performers to produce collective messages that eliminate gender inequalities. According to Droeber, Middle class is capable to attain but not possess resources, privilege, higher education and opportunities, all allowed by the higher class, the Capitalist. The capitalist class in the one hand has no interest to improve the social conditions that prevails within a society, especially that the prevailing social relations serve the capitalist interest. The capitalist seeks to develop its capacities within its frame only. The proletariat in the other hand does not possess the means and capabilities to attain resources which enable it to achieve noticeable change on the surrounding social conditions.

Therefore, the middle class remains the only capable of means and resources, as well as the well to achieve change on the social conditions that benefit its members (Droeber 2005). As for Hilal, he demonstrates three theories of the new middle class. The first theory perceives the middle class as descendant of the bourgeois or the ruling class and has similar characteristics. The second theory perceives it as descendant of the proletariat and has similar characteristics of it. The third theory perceives the new middle class as emerging with the advanced technology where societies have turned into liberal peaceful societies that has no class divisions and political conflicts (Hilal 2006). Most importantly, it has tendency to speak up in public spaces, and to celebrate its members.

Not only direct relation to other classes is essential for middle class performers in achieving change, but also the degree of religiosity plays an important role in designing its choices towards the change sought. In a quantitative study about middle class religion and social values in 13 countries of the world, it is found that 8% of the middle class in Bulgaria believe that religion is very important in one's life, 60% in India, 60% in Egypt and 30% in Argentina, 32% Poland, 73% in Brazil, 33% in Mexico, 78% in S.Africa, 60% in Malaysia, 34% in Venezuela, 22% in Ukraine, 14% in Russia, 39% in Chili (2009). The percentages in hand demonstrate that the middle class plays an important role in leading and promoting for religiosity within the country it resides. The more the religiosity is spread within a country, the more the middle class members believe that religion is very important in their lives, not somewhat important and not unimportant at all in their lives.

### **Middle class in Palestine**

Given that middle class functions in relation to other classes and is highly influenced by its member's religiosity and their prioritizing of religion, then it has a major link to the colonial context through which this class has emerged in Palestine. Studies on the formation of a middle class in Palestine are minimal, yet this ought not to undermine the fact that possibilities and chances of having such class formed could serve to better understanding for means on social change. Within the Palestinian context under the Ottoman Rule, the Palestinian village has had many similarities to the Turkish ones, as they 'belong to their village in a way they belong to no other social group' (Shanin 1984: 40), has similar village organization, relation with other villages, and tend to be conservative (Tamari 2009) (Shanin 1984). Feudalism was at its highest, with increasing influences of colonial forces and their opposites during the late 19th century. The Palestinian society has lived hundreds of years under feudalism, and Capitalism was only introduced with the rise of the Western influence when it introduced modernization to the urban Palestine (Young 1993), bringing with it the new techniques of performance. Features of interest in educating people started at the time of the Russian missionary to Palestine, where increased number of Palestinians has joined to an enhanced quality of education. Having the Ottoman Empire more dependent of the Western support, infiltration of the Western influences has justified itself by the slogan of protecting Christians (Rodinson 1970), and the Russian missionary has justified its missionary through retaining the Christian Orthodox glory under the ottoman rule, being intruded by the French

and British alliance with the Ottoman Empire (Khalidi 1997; Manna' 2003; Abu Hanna 2005).

Performances and cultural activism in this sense are not considered economic production but rather intellectual cultural, which provided the bases for the emerging middle class in Palestine (Hilal 2006). Moreover, the growing interest in religiosity, as promoted by colonialism, has added to the formation of those intellectuals, whom have formed the Palestinian middle class. Missionary schools, despite the colonial interest, as well other local schools have paid attention to the need to support the education of Palestinians<sup>17</sup>.

The main interest of the Palestinian intellectuals was focused on literature and translation which served the increased interest in performance as it was introduced at the time, when translation of western plays infiltrated, and adaptation of the European performance themes was becoming a trend. In their strife to create a modernized Arab intellectual medium, they had to face features of Feudalism that have prevailed in Palestine until early in the twentieth century. In that period, promotion of the theatrical activity was supported by the aristocratic families who are able to travel and attend performances in other languages (Ayoub 1978), especially prior to the rupture of Palestine from greater Syria following the Sykes Picot agreement when it became subject to the British Mandate. The social organization was bound by kinship and ties of patronage, 'cities and villages [...]

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<sup>17</sup> Language, mathematics, sports and singing religious hymns and acting were the main subjects being taught (Abu Hanna 2005). Many of the teachers who have graduated from the Russian schools were sent to teach in Lebanon. Others grew as remarkable Palestinian intellectuals and teachers inside and outside Palestine among them are Khalil Beidus and, Khalil Suleiman, while some of them have played role in organizing the riots of the Palestinian society against the British colonizing force (Abu Hanna 2005) ( Sakakkini 1954).

were bound by ties of patronage and other feudal alignments' (Tamari 2009:4). By the end of the ottoman rule, despite the modernizing process of Palestine, Tamari demonstrates that 'the Palestinian society was still divided by lineage units and other forms of kinship and quasi-kinship identification in which class formation was hardly visible at the time [...] A consciousness mediated through other identifications that they believed to be primary, mainly regional loyalties, religious affiliations and clan affiliations' (2009:5). However, after years of the British rule over Palestine, the new elite has formed at the urban centers comprising of those intellectuals, as well as the coastal bourgeois mainly in Haifa, Yaffa and inside Jerusalem, of which an employed members at the mandate authority have joined. It has lessened the rural autonomy and contributes to the formation of power and prestige among residents of the rural areas and features of class formation has started to emerge.

The economic situation has transformed in characteristics under the British colony, especially when origins of Palestinian aristocracy, where the rule of the privileged class, emerged. Tamari drives several conclusions on the social stratification in Palestine at the period prior to 1948 and after. By the end of the Ottoman Rule, transforming into modern Palestine has introduced change on the characteristics of the Palestinian village from subsistence based agriculture to commodity production based agriculture aiming at yield export (Tamari 2009: 5). The Palestinian elite though have formed outside the villages especially that constructing the railroad line between Nablus, Jerusalem, Haifa and Beirut have encouraged transportation and concentration of the elite at the urban centers.

Moreover the increased wage labor in benefit of the British mandate before 1948 has also increased the gap between landlords and peasants workers, all which led to capitalist relations. Hilal, too, tackled the main characteristics and forms of the progression of the Palestinian middle class before and after the Israeli occupation in 1948. It has evolved at the coastal cities and in Jerusalem, forming 5% of the population in 1930, mainly featured by diversity of thoughts, and less conservative attitudes. Middle class was more capable of travel, mostly tending to producing literature like biographies (Hilal 2006). The middle class has lost its resources for living, work opportunities, institutions, as well as its economic capital after 1948. However, the cultural capital was maintained, and has enabled the transferred Palestinian middle class to retain its place within the societies it ended up at and were integrated within the middle class professions of those societies (Hilal 2006). The expelling as well as dispersal of Palestinians from their lands after 1948 by the Israeli occupation has promoted further decline on subsistence agriculture inside Palestine leaving majority of the capital outside it (Tamari 2009). The Israeli occupation has contributed to shaping the development of the classed society in Palestine. Due to the Israeli military occupation of Palestine, 'the Palestinian elite constituted the bulk of the tens of thousands of the Palestinian Arabs who fled the country' (Tamari 2009:11). The Palestinian peasantry was 'uprooted, dispersed, and reconfigured in three different social formations'. One fourth of them turned to an 'underclass of peasant workers, remained in the state of Israel', and one third remained in their villages under the Jordanian and the Egyptian rules, where the rest counted as refugees at the

neighboring countries. The Palestinian labor force on the other hand was incorporated to the Israeli economy, even after the Palestinian Authority was established (Tamari 2009).

The Israeli occupation has a decisive role in denouncing a Palestinian peasantry. It enforced restrictions over the local Palestinian products and water sources, and put it to compete it with lower prices produced by the products of the colonies. The disappearance of the Palestinian peasant has not led to the emerging of the local working class with its extended relations to other classes within the Palestinian society, but to a working class inside the Israeli colonies. According to Hilal, many groups within the middle class have not developed naturally because they have formed at the exile outside Palestine. By the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the existing groups of the middle class were joined by members who have returned to Palestine, middle class which formed outside Palestine, and those who have joined to work at the governmental sectors professions, as well as the non- governmental organizations which have increased widely in number after 1993 (Hilal 2006), with a mentality of the middle class.

Given colonialism as the main reason for loosening a socio- economic unity of the Palestinian society before 1948, it has led to forming separate heterogeneous geographical units that are ruled by different entities. The deformity of economic and social aspects of life in the Palestinian society was accompanied by the fading peasantry, expelling of Palestinians outside Palestine and the decline of the labor movement which was strong during early forties. The coastal cities lost their population and the internal cities remained small sized in population and

industrial activity, with focus on kinship relations and localized cultural formations which left them less capable of producing a working class, neither a considerable middle class (Hilal 2006).

The period ahead to 1948 has enforced change on the Palestinian social fabric. Division of geography into territories of Palestinians living within the occupying state of Israel, here approved as Palestinians living in occupied Palestine in 1948, the West bank and Gaza Strip, have enforced different characteristic of each periphery. The Palestinian middle class has developed in an unpredicted manner after 1948. Apart from that which has grown at the countries at the Diaspora, inside the occupied Palestine the middle class, in much the same as the working class, continued to be fractured, especially that the work place provided less space for the workforce that belong to this class, therefore unemployment prevailed and more immigration practices has taken place to outside Palestine (Hilal 2006). Parallel, the working class which formed to a large extent to be producing for the benefit of an Israeli capital, lost its class consciousness and unity, and the uprooted peasantry have led to the formation of a rather consuming society in terms of economic product. The major activity remaining among Palestinians was focused on the political as well as the intellectual part. Formation of the political parties which at many periods supported for the creation of a Palestinian working class that produces for its own, in the form of resistance against the Israeli occupation. Intellectuals within those political parties were active in organizing as well as leading the process of recreating the Palestinian working class. However a considerable number of the political parties intellectuals have not been part of the

working class themselves; therefore left at the side of the circle of influence on the working class and were only able to speak to the middle class they have emerged from ( Hilal 2006).

The period after the Oslo agreement has witnessed the return of the high education middle class individuals, forming up to 48.5% of the returning population in 2000. This has enlarged the capacity of the middle class and created stability on professions related to the public sector, in addition to the private sector as in the investment, trade as well as the banking fields. During the second intifada in 2000, members of the middle class have not been impacted by shortage on average income, but more influenced by the neglect of society to it on the social and political level, especially that the military form of the second intifada has left no space for utilization of the middle class intellectuals' political awareness (Hilal 2006).

In conclusion, the mentality of the middle class remained dominating and cultural production is seen in performance production. Modernization of Palestine and concentration of the Palestinian educated elite at the cities has put these elite into utilizing its education to fight against colonialism side by side with the Palestinian peasantry. Class formations were seen until 1948; however each of the classes were weakened by the Israeli occupation after. Expelling the Palestinian elite, as well as the deconstruction of the Palestinian peasantry into a subject-peasantry under occupation were the main weakening practices. However, political parties which emerged have maintained the Palestinian working class even though under the Israeli occupation pressures. They have also maintained the education and

reproduction of the Palestinian elite who did not efficiently reflect the needs of the working class. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 has retained part of the expelled middle class, whose practices were similar to the middle class, yet with less productivity. The practices of the educated or spokespeople of the middle class was lessened to the minimal and within the non-governmental organizations after the second intifada, been militarized. Within this wobbling trend of the Palestinian middle class, its agenda to contribute to the national struggle was wobbling as well. This research will utilize the characteristics mentioned about the middle class to draw an application on participants in theatre and dance. It tends to answer the question whether performers perceive themselves as middle class members, and to what extent they were able to organize within this class while demonstrating performers' capabilities in social change through dance and theatre.

Given the conclusion that the majority of Palestinians have shown elements and possibilities for forming a middle class in the period between 1948 until the moment, the Palestinian middle class has played varying roles between the political and the civil societies, where least interest was given to the production relations within the Palestinian social groups. Notable presence of the middle class intellectual who joined and led the organizing of the population within the political parties, as well as the national cause, have diverged into organizers within the civil society organizations as well as the formal sector ( Hilal 2006). Colonialism has determined the geographical fracturing of the Palestinian middle class, but was the main target though which middle class members have organized

to refute. The middle class members organizing to serve the proletariat interests against the Israeli occupation supports the claim that cultural production of middle class contributed to social change in Palestine. However what remains not addressed is the possibility through which middle class intellectuals in performing arts may organize towards confronting gender inequalities through performing arts. What is needed now is to study performers as middle class members, whether they show awareness of belonging to it, and if they ever achieved any unity within the stratum.

#### **Performer as an Organic Intellectual**

Understanding middle class intellectuals in performance will support in analyzing the possibilities that they may support in creating a middle class that is capable of confronting gender inequalities through performing arts, having organic intellectuals among its performers. One's culture is directly influenced by connections with others within the nation, and has his or her function in life complying within the general frame of the nation's culture. Gramsci defines culture as the 'discipline of one's self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligation'(Gramsci in Forgas 2000: 57). Then culture to a middle class performer, who produces culture through dance and theatre, is the awareness needed to achieving social change. An intellectual in this case is the person who seeks culture to organize and lead the population, the audience,

towards achieving the higher awareness of the historical value of a performance, and arrives with it to the point of realization about their function as well as their rights and obligations. Moreover, the intellectual in this case is the person who leads the tactics to negating strategies implied by the system, in this case colonialism.

According to Gramsci, intellectuals are found in all groups of a society and they vary in their influence over this group, an intellectual is the person 'whose function in society is primarily that of organizing administering, directing, educating or leading others' (Gramsci in Forgas 2000: 300). Therefore there appears a strong relation between the intellectual and the social class he or she belongs to. For him two types of intellectuals appear: the traditional and the organic. While a traditional intellectual form his/her intellect from the extended relation through history between social classes, an organic intellectual is the main element in organizing and activating the class he or she belongs to (Gramsci 1971). Intellectuals are mainly 'political or cultural intermediaries' (Forgas 2000: 300) who maintain or reproduce the economic and social order. Importance of organic intellectuals lies in their contribution to the materialistic production, as well as in the political participation that speak out of their class awareness, which leads to supporting the interest of social class they belong to, and to social change accordingly. Within the frame of the Palestinian performers, it is found out that collective themes like right to return or pledge for freedom from occupation were highlighted, yet with less organized collectivity that is being promoted on the level of individuals. Here I assume that the inability of Palestinian intellectuals to

organize and direct and lead the Palestinian society to social change has put them into defining certain ‘tactics’ to defy the major hegemony, while hoping to eliminate it as in stressing voluntary initiatives and folklore. Intellectuals placed within a spatial system of hegemony by colonialism use performing arts as ‘opportunities seized’ to reflect on refusal of this hegemony in the forms of deciding on a collective awareness of the national struggle (Certeau 1984: 20). As intellectuals they seize the colonialism as an opportunity to take decisions towards social change through a national struggle, but have gender regimes been realized as major system that is unlimited by time, as much as colonialism is? This question remains unsolved by the literature reviewed.

### **A Middle Class Performer as an Intermediary for Change**

If we declare that organizing in social classes is inevitable to achieve social change, then literature reviewed on theatre by Arabs and Palestinians indicates that theatre is produced and performed by the educated, with similar characteristics of the middle class intellectual, especially among women as those educated were able to become playwrights or actors or producers of performances like *Rose al-Yousef*. It has on the long run contributed to change. What is documented about audience of theatrical works has revealed variance since the evolution of Arab and Palestinian theatre. In the pre-modern era, Original mimicry and passion plays were most admired by the richest and the most educated, yet interest seemed to have decreased among the higher classes with the evolution of new art works and shows were only limited to the poorest and to

children. As the European theatre style is introduced, more activism of women was noticed, yet it is not decided if the audience included men and women. During the time religious themes continued to interest the audience, yet nationalist themes have taken dominant parts on the Palestinian theatre as well as in the surrounding countries (Al Ra'i 2003; Ghuneim 1987; Abu Baker 1998).

Addressing the experience of Al- Hakawati is important as it demonstrate the extent to which this troupe has formed an organic group within the middle class. This troupe was able to reach out both the higher and the lower classes, in addition to the Israeli occupation system which banned it activism when their contribution to the national struggle went obvious. However this troupe, forming an organic troupe showed less interest in gender interests, even though succeeded in raising collectivity regarding the Palestinian struggle against occupation. Abu Salem clearly describes the reaction of village population to the national theme they provided through the shows they performed outdoors in villages, 'The villagers are amazing they are part of the performance. They have a tendency not to sit down and listen; they yell out their reactions. It's usually a huge crowd, outdoors. People wait for us and we come once a year. They all take part in setting up the stage, and so on' (Abu Salem 1985: 233). Aware of the political context and its impact over Palestinians, performers had innovated theatre that stands against the oppressive life style under occupation. Performers came closer to the poor and the diminished and addressed their lifestyle interactively, setting an organic relationship to their society despite harassments of the Israeli occupation. Intense censorship on plays and imprisonment of actors has added to the

decreased participation of women in theatre. One member of the troupe, Radi Shuhadeh, has initiated publicity to performances in face of the dominant Israeli curfew calls:

*"During Ramadan he toured Al-Mukabber, a suburb of Jerusalem, in a car with a loudspeaker mounted on it, inviting the residents to attend performances in the main square. His amplified announcement mimicked the orders of the Israeli military government, whose public pronouncements generally presage disaster. Instead of curfews, arrests, and imprisonment, the townspeople were enjoined to attend a storytelling session and to rejoice: El-Hakawati had learned the secret of the trade. Now after long suffering under occupation, the Hakawati is himself a governor; not a Military Governor but a Theatrical Governor [...]: "O people of al-Mukabber, by order of the Theatrical Governor, it is absolutely forbidden to remain at home, switch on your television sets or radios, and otherwise not be there in the town square directly after the cannon shot-not the Military Governor's of course, but the breaking of the fast cannon-shot signal. [. . .] El-Hakawati will be there, awaiting you." (Shehadeh 1988b:12)*

Not only has Al- Hakawati theatre reached for villagers, but has also reached for common characteristics of the Palestinian society, especially those appeared common under occupation. Theatre in this respect has the mastery to say, and mastery to influence. Less vehemence was given to religious themes, and religiosity of performers was not the reason that gave mastery to the performance, but rather the national collectivity in itself. Patients from nearby hospitals were specially invited for the premiere of *I Must Have Light* on December 31<sup>st</sup>; the stage and audience overflowed with wounded:

*“The setting is a dark room where 'Ayub (Arabic for Job or patience), is seated in a wheelchair suffering from paralysis of the hands and feet. To cry, to laugh, or to go out are forbidden acts. Darkness, he is told, is good. He needs his medicine but he needs light to find his medicine. Salaymeh faces the audience. By playing 'Ayub, 'Ayub's mother, a sorceress, assorted neighbors, and friends, he tells the story of the events that led up to his current plight. After the onset of his disease, his mother took him to a fortuneteller and sorceress instead of a doctor. She prays for his recovery, chants, and throws mysterious unguents into the air. Friends visit to tell him that his case is famous. Salaymeh punctuates the drama of his solo narrative with ineffectual attempts to light matches. At last, he succeeds in throwing a lighted match into a standing lamp. The stage appears to burst into flames, and then 'Ayub falls to the ground in darkness” (Slyomovics 1991: 26).*

Apparently, performing during Ramadan on timing to encourage and inviting wounded by Israeli occupation practices to attend a performance where a paralyzed performance strives to light his way where he can find his medicine, has definitely not only aimed at entertaining the audience, but to put them in responsibility of the reaction of the performers. Susan Slyomovics, commented ‘ I saw and participated in performances [...] and noted the frequent, enthusiastic collaboration of the Palestinian audience, I am granted only a glimpse of the intensity of audience identification with the actors, an identification based upon the relentless daily grind of indignity, terror, and deprivation that is shared by all of them’(1991: 27). The audience seemed to have identified with the role

introduced by the female performer as pertinent to the existing social standards, even though degrading for women.

The above interaction with society to produce collective messages of a performance is an important example to the level of intellect a performer need to arrive to in order to address a national collective message which provokes social change. Women's state of being in the performance reflects a degrading stereotype of society towards women, but did not try to reverse or change it. There was a chance for the troupe to introduce a certain elements to eliminate gender inequalities, but did not. This could be referred to the fact that the troupe did not want to tackle taboos like women status within a society, or performers did not have the adequate gender awareness to tackle it. This leaves a question regarding the extent to which performers formed an intermediary for change through performing arts on the cultural level. Moreover, Literature provided on the experience of Al- Hakawati, has revealed praise for storytelling as an art, with multiple successful performances that recalled the Palestinian folklore in confronting with the Israeli occupation practices, yet women as solo performers, storytellers on stage, were barely mentioned. It also appeared within the literature found on this troupe that one Palestinian woman has performed, where the majority of women parts in other performances were done by an American Jew woman, one of the founders of the troupe, Jackie Lubeck, as in *The Story of Kufur Shamm* and in *Mahjoub* (Slyomovics 1991). The above case of Hakawati theatre, despite its success in organizing, leading and directing for the collective nationalism through performance, yet reassures that participation of women in the

different places, village, city or camp, is still controversial. Performers either did not show awareness of gender interests within the society, or they did not intend to initiate a clash with the communities' stereotype of women as it is not priority to their national struggle.

On the other side, if the leftist movements are addressed as contributors to change, it also remained criticized. Jaradat demonstrate weaknesses in having failed to establish its cultural institutions to speak of its ideologies that are reflective of the population and their needs. It failed to establish a theatre of its own, and alluded by Rimawi and Abu Dehu to the practices of the Israeli occupation against political parties (interview Rimawi 2012 and Abu Dehu, 2011). Its relation to intellectuals was only limited to obedience to justify the policies of a certain party and least internal discussions, evaluations on the intellectual level was achieved. Moreover, Intellectuals from outside the leftist political party were not considered an intellectual therefore least opportunities were left to controversy concerning the cultural reflections of those parties as they have not supported dialogue with any parties from outside. The fact that intellectuals have not been able to form a strong body of interaction with the political party's policies and practices have lessened their role in the support and evaluation of the political party's roles, mainly the cultural. This leaves them unable to become organic within the societies they sprout from. According to Jaradat, culture in their times has turn into categories, prejudice 'sectarian', that took the place of patriarchy' (Jaradat 1999). The scattered achievements on the level of mobilizing towards establishing a social class, with its intellectuals is well represented in Jaradat statement that adds to the

dilemma of collective message in performances against imperialism, that distracted, but not totally prevented their ability to form a social class that produces a collective message.

In his book 'The Arab Modern Theatre', Shawool demonstrates the main constraints facing the Arab theatre during the seventies of the past century and ahead. He explains a dilemma where participants on theatre have lost the sense of belonging. Despite the tendency to relate to the folklore and cultural heritage, he depicts the extent to how it has not provided a dynamic representation of society, and turned into a consumption of cultural activity leading to cinema and television to emerge. Losing the dynamic relationship between theatre, participants and society has left theatre performed for the sake of festivals and nationalist occasions only, not a daily living experience enriching the human and cultural self of a society (1989). Moreover connection to the nationalist occasions and festivals means a connection to the institution of the ruling system that left less opportunity to dynamic criticism. Shawool does not stop to demonstrate constraints only, he also relates the dilemma of lacking the sense of belonging to lacking possibilities for creativity in a theatrical production. Lacking creativity in dealing with the values of a cultural heritage does not produce a dynamic theatrical show that interconnect the production with society and heritage. Moreover, creativity has been much neglected as consumerism has brought the need for more commercial shows that respond to the deterioration on the ideological approaches of the Arab societies as well as social visions towards change or development. Finally Shawool analyze the influence of bureaucracy within the ruling system

institutions that leads to less democratic approaches in supporting theatrical production. For him, less possibility was left for creativity in theatrical production that has not prepared for a pure identity of the Arab theatre.

If performers during the period until the end of the first intifada in 1993, with leftist views and with less participation of women, were able to reach for as much population and create a state of mobilization towards the national cause, then they succeeded to produce quality performances which are popular and influential, however, performers, in that period have complied to the national movement in compromising a feminist collectivity to the period after liberation. However, in the period after Oslo agreement signing, increased participation of women is witnessed, with less emphasis on the national cause. This participation was mostly centered at the urban center, and then feminist collectivity was also compromised because at rural centers, less participation and performance is witnessed. Recently both national and feminist collectivity of performances are not influential over performance, and are replaced of individualistic messages of performances which oppose an increased religious extremism at the rural and urban centers which find no excuse for individualist performances of women. In as much as Palestinian performers were close to becoming intermediaries for change, it was a gender awareness collectivity of messages within the national struggle that needs to be measured.

### **Chapter Three: Religiosity and Women Sexuality**

Chapter one of this research arrived to conclude the need to address the extent to which performers as individuals have realized their religiosity as an important tool to their implied messages when collectively defying colonialism and eliminating gender inequalities. Given that enhanced religiosity contributed to the formation of the Palestinian middle class intellectuals in the period prior to 1948, as in the inflation of missionary schools and political leadership, and that the Palestinian nationalism was fed by those intellectuals. Also, given that religiosity plays an important role in the choices of members in the middle class, however on the level of Palestinian performance ahead to 1960 where less vehemence was given to religious themes, and religiosity of performers was not the reason that gave mastery to the performance, but rather the national collectivity in itself, then the overall study of the religiosity of performers as individuals is essential to better realize their motivations and sexuality ( use of body), to reflect on both individual and collective interests. This chapter will tackle the impact of religion on performer's sexuality in performance.

Before introducing sexuality, it must be distinguished from sex. Sexuality to Foucault is not sex, as sex is 'internal to the apparatus of sexuality, and the consequent idea that what must be found at the root of that apparatus is not the rejection of sex, but a positive economy of the body and of pleasure' (Foucault in Gordon 1980:190). Performers in this respect utilize their bodies not only for matters of pleasure, but also for matters of moral conveyance, to an extent that in certain point pleasure is compromised. Compromising pleasure is usually forced

by internal and external forms of powers. The apparatus of sexuality to Foucault stands for 'a thorough heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, and architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, and scientific statements, philosophical moral and philanthropic propositions. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements' (Gordon 1980: 194). Sexuality in this respect is essential in the study of performing arts, where representations of the body of a performer are forced by powers that run in great influence over gender relations on the performer's level individually with his preferences and choices to use his/her body, the performing group level, and then on the society level.

History of Arab performing art entails repression of sex through forms of power that monitors the declaration of one's sex and the everyday practice of it. Performance in this sense is a representation and a declaration of the sex within the power apparatus. Representation of the sex and expressing it through performance serves, as in the Foucauldian view, in utilizing the sex within systems of benefit for the collective or the society. It does not express the sex of performers to demonstrate the allowed and the prohibited in it within the society, but to explain the way each performer, women and men, utilize his or her sex to reproduce the future in good (Hashem 2004). If within performance, each performer celebrates his or her body in a mixed pleasure of the self, the sex, and the collective, then it is worth exploring how power as a complex strategy that the society develops to control the pleasures of the performers has affected the awareness of the messages they seek to perform using their bodies. One form of

power in this study is religiosity, which invests in and fuels the existing representations of the sex it controls. Moreover, it defines the holder of power and the subject to this power within the society.

While sexuality is thought to be enrolled within a frame of relations between discourses and institutions, performing arts could take part in this frame, and then sexuality apparatus enrolls as an imperial tool that controls both the individual and the collective presentations intended by a performer. There is a continuous influence of societal discourses and institutions over the use of a performer's body in his or her representation of the performers' bodies as well as the societal body, and the performer is in constant compliance or opposition to them. Religious preaching in this case is engulfed within the social institutions and discourses, where a performer acts in accordance. 'The apparatus is essentially of a strategic nature, which means assuming that it is a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilizing them, utilizing them, etc' (Gordon 1980: 196). Relation of religion to performance through history have shown that performers have maintained ties with the societies interests that are inspired from the religious culture, to preach for better human behavior or to despise another. This act in itself, while reflected in performance, is a space for audience and performers too to rethink the values and culture that they build their behaviors on. Certainly, less discrepancy with the religious culture is possible, yet a chance for it remains possible within one's self. The proposed strategic nature of the apparatus of sexuality in light of performers' interactions is also seen as implied within the recurring local and external

manipulation of relations of forces that are aiming to develop performances within the western trend or authentic stillness, blocking their authentic attempts for development, and utilizing them towards a subordinate culture. Religiosity is also employed here to stress this manipulations. In this case, manipulations presented by powers of institutions and discourses within the apparatus of sexuality are the main target through which performers have to struggle. Moreover, Performer are struggling against what is defined by Foucault as 'Immediate enemy' not 'the chief enemy' (Rabinow 2003: 129), meaning that strategic powers are in control over the strategic nature of relations within the performing arts field leaving performers as individuals involved profoundly in struggling against the immediate manipulations, rather than the chief ones, therefore they are found struggling against the 'technique of power' on the everyday life rather than the ideology of it. Religiosity and sexuality in this sense enrolls to encourage and discourage the process of manipulations. Palestinian performance demonstrated in literature has clearly defined their social interest as national, but were not able to detach from the cultural background that inspires its values from religion. Clashes with religious preaching decreased, as seen in the dress and contemporary performance, possibilities for attracting audience, and therefore they eliminated clashes as a tactic. The use of a performer's body, complies with this tactic too. This tactic, while avoiding clashes with religious preaching, could serve social reform, not social questioning of existing values, the immediate not a chief enemy.

In another aspect of the Palestinian context, imperialism invests strategically in the discourses and institutions concerned with the sex and the body, which highly and uncontrollably influence the forms of struggle preferred by performers. Foucault states three types of struggles 'against forms of domination ( ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation that separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others, and against forms of subjectivity and submission' (Rabinow 2003: 130). This chapter will explore that while performers' individualism has been supported by social ideologies, as explained in chapter two, to produce them as intermediaries of change to struggle against forms of exploitation produced by the West, and while they were driven by religious interests, however performers were not prepared enough to struggle against forms of domination and submission produced through imperialism as a superior power, nor against dominion of religion.

A first sign of imperial dominion is found in literature provided on collective messages of performances in Palestine during the twentieth century. It proved that performers have inspired their techniques from the French or the Italian theatre, a foreign influence that is westernizing and is widely noticed in themes and techniques. The first theatrical performance inspired from the Western theatre started in Egypt when Maron Naqash who performed the 'The Miser' by Moliere in 1847 in Lebanon, part of Syria at that time. His adaptation was not lucky because the audience found no muse in it. His performance was not admired by the public as it was inspired from literary works that were not entertaining to the

Arab population who were accustomed to performances that are relevant to their life style, like the shadow performance<sup>18</sup>.

### **Arabising of Theatre to Conform to Religiosity**

Arabising of the western theatre could be considered as one way to oppose the imperial engine, however the realization of this opposition among leaders of theatre was not declared as an act of defiance as much as intercommunicating with other cultures to elevate aspects of creativity and professionalism. Religious views were seen vital in the way Arab perceived the Western theatre. For example in Egypt, until the revolution in 1952, less interest was given to theatre in Cairo, as it cared less to addressing the needs of the population, adding to that the emergence of Cinema as an art that attracted the majority. Western techniques were not preferred by the religious groups as in the brotherhood party. In Syria too, interest grew in theatre when a national theatre troupe was established in 1959 (Al Ra'i1999). Before that period less interest was noticed in theatre due to the growing dissatisfaction demonstrated by conservative parties which have combined the religious themes with nationalist themes and disagreed with imitation of characters and with female participation in the performance (Gibbs 1990). However in Lebanon, theatre flourished among the active playwrights and performers. Priests or students related to the Maronites and Jesuit schools in

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<sup>18</sup> Other attempts were done by Sanou', a Jew 1839-1912, and Al Qabani, originally Syrian but performed in Cairo and Lebanon and sometimes in Syria. Qabani, however, realized the need to integrate popular songs as well as Arabic poetry to the performances of Western plays, and were inspired from the needs and interests of the public therefore his performances were more admired than his precedents (Al Ra'i 1999)( Gibbs1990). After them came Adib Ishaq (Syrian 1856- 1885), Eskandar Farah (Syrian1851- 1916) as well as Salama Hijazi (Egyptian 1852-1917) as playwrights and actors.

Lebanon were mostly involved in theatre (Gibbs1990). The plays performed at the time that had the least number of women among actors, limited to sisters or wives of playwrights, or among audience. Whether religious views agreed or disagreed with the western style in the period until the fifties of the twentieth century, the theatrical troupes were active having heydays and downfalls dependent on pertinence of topics and performance to the life style and cultural interest of audience, which were crosscutting with national and religious culture. It was only when theatrical performances, influenced by the western style, have introduced elements related to the local culture within its theme, that they were attended by the public. While this culture inspired its moral from religious preaching, then religiosity was not exactly a tool of defying the western tool of theatre, but in many times a promoter of it.

Exploring the authenticity of the Arab theatre adds to understanding the way western theatre interconnected with other cultures, also the way the western view of the Arab theatre has shaped its evolution. Authenticity of the early Arab theatre in the modern form has been discussed through works produced on the evolution of the Arab theatre. Apparently there appeared no pure Arab theatre produced, especially that interconnecting with varying cultures has inspired and influenced techniques and themes. Westernizing epoch of those Arab dramatics reproduced them in a modern form that has been adapted until nowadays. Reproducing those dramatics in the western form has mistreated techniques that added to its authenticity, yet the impact of this mistreatment has not until now been analyzed when it comes to the performer and his/her struggle against the imperial powers

presumed within the sexuality apparatus that shape the use of their body in performance. Successes and failures have marked the evolution of the modern theatre in its western style, however, its contribution to confronting gender inequalities through sexuality representations in Palestine are also yet to be studied. Imperialism has utilized discourses available by Orientalists<sup>19</sup>, and its institutions to approve its ideology upon performance of Arabs, and in the same time Arab performers have invested in refusal of this ideology. However, while Arabs dramatists invested their theatre to refuse imperialism, they have neglected that the theatrical techniques they have been using is western in its origin.

The Main characteristics of the Arab theatre in the modern period as a result of Arabising theatre, late 19th century until the middle 20th century<sup>20</sup>, demonstrated that enabling achievements. It resulted in Arab religion men forming theatre to serve religious messages, as an imitation of the Western activity of theatre that serves religious messages (Gibbs 1990; Al Mouathen 1981; Manna' 2003). Moreover, Christians and Jews imposed less control over women participation in public activities with men, as well as over veils necessity for women as it was not a necessity for Christians and Jews. However, during that period, the attempt to

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<sup>19</sup> 'Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects' (Said 1979: 19),

<sup>20</sup> Achievements were: first playwrights were most usually the actors and were often the scene directors. Second, theatre was admired by the Arabs when it tackles their interest (Al Ra'i 1999). Third, Actresses for women parts were done by women starting in the twenties of the twentieth century like Munira Al Mahdieh and Hind Qawas, and notably among Jews, the wife of Qerdahi the author 'Laila' in Syria, and Christians most evidently in Syria, especially that playwrights needing female actors could only ask their siblings' help therefore the theatrical activity was familial in type. Religious attachment to theatre was maintained. Performance complied with religious preaching, but actors and producers compromised some values like women appearing on stage to serve the Arabising of theatre. Christians showed interest in theatre as more exposure to foreign works related to religious themes was noticed.

forming the Zionist discourse on the Israeli nationalism as a (Euro-) Israeli nationalism has influenced the later understanding of the cultural relationship between Arab-Jews and Arab- Christians, as having closer relationship to the westernized introduced thinking through colonialism (Shohat 2006: 210- 215). Such supposition is closer to the enhanced participation of Christians and Jews in cultural activities as theatre that has taken the western form, than did Muslims.

On the pre-modern period too, religiosity prevailed in theatre yet with more attachment to the life style. There appeared Arab, and non-Arab, scholars who defended that an Arab theatre did not exist until the nineteenth century<sup>21</sup>.

This dilemma of contrasting views regarding performance has coincided with its evolution. The need to use body is proved essential to the production, the preaching and the support of population's needs, and most dominantly the need to connect with the powers they comply to. Degree of religiosity in this case plays an important role in the extent to which sexuality is employed. Compliance or

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<sup>21</sup> Reasons for not relating to the existence of theatre earlier, in its European form, were given to the style of life of Arab Bedouins that is mainly dependant on traveling between places for food and water, which contradicts the nature of the European theatre which is established in one location. However dramatic works like mimicry, shadow and passion plays, known earlier since the medieval Arab period, were present in at least Syria and Egypt, and were richly influenced by the successive traveling among Arabs (Mouathen 1981). Moreover, performers having the life style of Arabs were less attentive to the ways they have utilized their body to convey the message behind a performance. Following the religious institution, performers were to obey its preaching and promote it acceptingly, with their bodies remaining undefined, behind a shadow, or following the rhythm of other bodies, with less emphasis of individuals' contribution to the collective art of performance.

The second reason is relevant to religion; some religious views demonstrate that any imitation or recreation of human beings is prohibited. Some scholars draw to the fact that producing puppets and making them come to life is a transgression on God's restricted area of creation. Others have easier discontent with theatre and performing, as the imitation of men by men on the live stage has no creation of objects taking place (Chelkowski 1984). While some explanations insist that theatre represents creation of objects, some explanations to the religious references refuted relevance of theatre to the circle of taboos, especially that the origin of dramatic acts had stronger roots in the pre- Islamic eras (Mouathen 1981).

discrepancy with the superior power is one form of surviving the sexuality apparatus as introduced by Foucault.

Prohibited participation of women in the Arab theatre is the third reason for not relating to the western style of theatre in its modern period. Participation of women is at the core of the conflicted relationship between Arab elites, modernity, and the way imperialism constructs and feeds sexuality to assert males power, discourses and institutions. As women were denied from participation, their parts were played by men (Mouathen 1981). However influence of playing the parts of women by men may have reflected on the development of the Arab theatre, which represented women at their absent voice, with less interaction with their needs and interests, a thing that this research will recount in relation to the Palestinian dramatic works in the period between 60s of the twentieth century and nowadays. Even though this was the case in the western theatre too (Barwick 2002), however the time when the western theatre was introduced to Arabs, modernism was already achieved at the west as perceived by the westerners.

The development of theatre by Arabs demonstrated above drives into concluding two view points. One view point reveals that Arabs drama is not a native Arab art and is not a developed art, i.e. Western styled, and therefore did not exist before the nineteenth century<sup>22</sup>. This entails that shadow plays could be an Eastern dramatic work and not necessarily an Arab. One main feature of those shadow

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<sup>22</sup> According to Gibbs, attempts of Arabs are inspired from other eastern dramatics which are also not developed. For him, shadow plays started around the 12th century and continued until the 19th century in the sake of popular entertainment owing more to Turks than to Arabs; modeled on the Turkish pattern, which is inspired from Chinese theatre, with a local background (1990). 'Many Chinese scholars also believe that the shadow theater spread to the East from China via Persia through the agency of the Mongol armies that it spread to Southeast Asia with Chinese migrants during the fourteenth century' (Chen 2003)

plays is that they were performed in the Turkish language, where only the aristocratic and rich communities among Arabs were able to attend them as they could speak Turkish. According to Gibbs, wealthy Arab people had hand in financing those shows but not to finance creating them in the Arabic language. This point of view lays its defense on three main conditions: the Turks and Persians had no developed theatre, not a western style theatre, so that by getting in close contact with them, Arabs were not able to absorb features of a developed theatre. Contact with the Turkish theatre was done by one layer of the society which is the rich whom does not necessarily include the composers and the actors. Moreover, women were not allowed to get on stage, especially if not veiled in majority of the performances.

The second view point demonstrates that drama is an original Art of Arabs. Mahamid, in his book 'the Palestinian theatre in the West Bank' insists that the Arab theatre, which is mainly performed by water springs and centers of cities, has main characteristics that distinguish it from the European theatre. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, shadow plays and storytelling were the main Arab theatrical activities<sup>23</sup> (Mahamid 1987). Performances were inspired from real life that has not only presented morals, but has also focused on defending against the colonial regimes imposed on the countries of the East, as well as in Palestine. It has served the popular interest and therefore it was considered a popular theatre at the time.

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<sup>23</sup> One main activity was the Festival of Arts organized annually in Iran which started in 1966 and has only included theatre troupes from Asia performing Eastern theatre, among them are Arab troupes with women as performers (Khaznadar and Deak 1973).

However, I conclude that until the nineteenth century, there appeared no purely originated Arab theatre, except for mimicry. All dramatic works performed by Arabs are inspired from Eastern non- Arab theatre elements before the nineteenth century and by Western dramatic elements in the early nineteenth century and after. Moreover I also conclude that, in the Eastern respect, and for Arabs as well, the dramatists held an interest in religious collective message rather than in individual preference for their body usage. The use of their bodies served well their compliance to their religious culture that was either introduced in a western or a non- western technique. Their use of body was subject to the preaching and codes of religiosity of the society they performed to, and they were part of it.

### **Arabizing of Theatre in Palestine**

Given the fact that the majority of the Palestinian population until 1948 was dependant on agriculture for living<sup>24</sup>, less cultural activity was perceived and reflected on the memberships of the parties. Main activities were seen as part of the life style of villages and cities during familial occasions and have taken a participatory approach. Among the leaders of those political parties, there appeared intellectuals<sup>25</sup>. The intellectual group seemed to have little interest declared on the cultural activity like theatre and dance (Zabin 1991; Khalidi 1997).

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<sup>24</sup> 64% of the population worked in agriculture in 1922

<sup>25</sup> On the field of literature like Mousa Al Khalidi, and education like Is'af Nashashibi, who were able to reflect in writing and colloquially the political agendas of refuting the successive immigration of Jews to Palestine, as well as producing literature refuting the Balfour declaration as well as the partition decision.

The period after 1948 has witnessed similar prioritization of the political agenda against the Israeli occupation. Yet more interest in the social awareness about the Palestinian identity has increased, especially when more mobilization of the nationalist movement has strengthened<sup>26</sup>. The evolution of the national movement represented by the proliferation of political parties in Palestine, was crucial in developing a vibrant cultural resistance to the occupation, Said notions of anti-imperial resistance cultures is highly relevant to the case of Palestine, where resistive acts have emerged and developed mainly on the military, and popular strands, and then culturally. However, the harsh practices imposed by the military occupation have forced extreme regulations over the mobility of Palestinians as well as the cultural life accordingly. Cultural activism was more possible within students' frames at schools and universities, unions or within clubs that show less affiliation to the national movements with its military work (interview Amneh Rimawi 2012). The Palestinian modern theatre has mainly utilized the western technique.

In as much as the Palestinian performing arts are concerned, power relations and forms of domination over discourse and institutions regulate the performers' sexuality. The authentic vs. modern performance discussed have played an important role in regulating performers' sexuality, and resistance has dominated over the structures that led the cultural expression tendencies among Palestinians, mainly those of performance. Religious background yet was maintained as a

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<sup>26</sup> The socialist party reestablished in 1982, has declared, within its party program, support to all forms of cultural activities, resistance forms against the Israeli occupation, among them are the literary movement, popular arts folklore and cultural heritage, as well as the theatre movements (Popular Party Declaration of Internal Law 1983)

dominating factor. Whenever they involved in a performance, the national discourse placed its weight over the production, the props of performers which had to comply to the Palestinian dress code, even if the theme is not national. Performer's bodies, mainly those of women had to comply with the Palestinian dress code to prove nationalism which is mainly inspired from the religious culture, more than did the way men appeared on stage<sup>27</sup>.. Detaching from religiosity is worth questioning in the period after 1994, despite the rise of the Islamic movement in Palestine. Breaking the power imposed by norms of performance in Palestine may be considered a way of resisting the traditional and rigid style of dance, it is found for example in the contemporary dance in Palestine, performers are found subject to the discourse of dress code of the newly introduced performance, 'sleeveless shirts and tight trousers with bare feet'. While performers resist one power or discourse, they find themselves, not aware, reoccupied by another.

### **Sexuality as an Imperial Tool**

By the end of the 19th century, following to the end of the Second World War, the revival of nationalism in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine has reflected in turning many of the Passion plays Ta'ziya and Shadow plays from Persian and Turkish into the Arabic language. Performing in the Arabic language has decreased its limited audience among the rich only, who could speak other

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<sup>27</sup> The *Kuffiyeh*, the Palestinian scarf a symbol of patriotic activity was maintained in dance performances for long time, until recently after the first intifada ended, having increased individualism that left less the Palestinian dress as a major part of the performance and modern fashion clothing is witnessed for women and men on stage.

languages, and more population could attend and understand the language of performances especially in Egypt and Syria<sup>28</sup> (Gibbs 1990). However, during that period, the theatrical activity in Egypt was interrupted when King Farouk government have decided, prior to his knock- down, to close local or popular theatre to avoid spreading of diseases among the crowd of audience, and five shadow performances remained of which one showed for higher society, while others performed in permanent coffee houses, or in fish markets like in Cairo, where more trafficking and interaction with people is possible<sup>29</sup>. However, this literature provided on the interruption of the theatrical activity only depicts a representation of Western scholars of the causes behind closing those theatrical works. Given the colonial activism in Egypt and Syria early during the twentieth century, with its relation to the Arab authorities, it could not be decided if those performances were prohibited because of diseases or other causes relevant to imperialism like refuting any attempts to develop and maintain an authentic culture that may lead to compete with the western cultures.

Given the imperial power, struggle over geography on the surface of the world revealed greater innocence, as Said puts imperialism as ‘that struggle [...] is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings’ (Said 1994:6). Following to the colonial regimes that forced itself over the Arab Area, mainly in Egypt and Syria and despite the dismantling of their structures later on, yet ‘ha [ve] in one way or another continued to exert

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<sup>28</sup> Syria and Egypt were considered the most important geographical spots for Arabs (Al Mouathen 1981), which played a main role to enhanced infiltration of the Eastern dramatic works within the Arab culture.

<sup>29</sup>Notable is the overlap between the decline of the power of eastern influence on Arab theatre and the enlarged interest of western scholars in the cultural life of Arabs (Gibbs 1990).

considerable cultural influence in the present' (Said 1994:6), where is evidently noticed over culture. This means that there appeared a strong relation between the growing of the imperial struggle, not only on geography as colonialism, but on the life style, ideas and presentation of culture between the authentic, i.e. already existing and people believe is connected to their identity, and the intruding culture. It is important here to contrast between the interconnection of cultures, as in interconnecting between the Arab dramatics with the eastern ones in forms of exchange and influence, and between imposing influences on culture within a system of power. In both cases performers are found in need to struggle against or with discourses imposed by those power systems. Powerful forces imposed by military have enforced new forms of ideas, images and imaginings which lead to those new forms to dominate, as they become the powerful discourse. While some of the population admired those new forms and practiced them, yet they may not deny the existence of a culture that preceded the imposed new ones. The powerful discourse of modernizing the eastern culture through the western influence has created a dichotomy that mistreated the early Arab theatre. Along with the continuing power of the powerful came the downfall and vanishing of what is thought to be authentic. Theatre and dance as forms of authenticity were easy models to fit into the imperial system. Its undefined authenticity has left less resistance to its modernizing into the western form.

Within this wide dichotomy of the East and West spectacle, Anne Macklintok introduce san understanding of this dichotomy as fundamentally, even before was politically and socially constructed, provoked by males interests in power. She

describes the crisis on male imperial identity as a scene of megalomania. "Fear of being engulfed by the unknown is projected onto the colonized as their determination to devour the intruder whole" (Macklintok 1995: 27) This fear of the colonized rebel, led to practicing a reiteration of the feminized prototype, which justifies a male control over them, and respectfully the maintained male control over cultural activism. Reiterating the need to involve women in cultural activism, while picturing the indigenous women as backward and passive due to male control over them, and while mistreating indigenous women activism within their own societal standards, male power of the indigenous society was threatened by the new standards proposed by the modernizing process and a counterproductive methodologies towards women equality has taken place, hence reasserting a justified control of the imperial powers.

While feminization of culture, the maintaining of culture under a patriarchal control with passive reflection on female participation, has been one main focus of the colonial and imperial structure (Said 1994, Stoler 2004), practices of modernizing the Arab dramatics, dance and theatre, depicts a fertilizing process by the Western male form to the colonized. It has produced a culture of acceptance of the process of feminizing the colonized internally and externally. Literature reviewed entails a depiction of Arab, mainly Palestinian women as inferior bodies that need to be emancipated from the Arab or Palestinian patriarchy. Literature provided is in its majority done by western men, justifying themselves as guardians of change, it has put them into creating a system of maintained sexual submission and positioning of Arab women. Even though they

criticized the indigenous male superior patriarchy over females' expression, yet those imperial bodies do in themselves practice superior patriarchy over the whole Arab community where it is existed 'the chief enemy' (Stoler 2004), by reiterating the inferior depiction of Palestinian Arab women, and creating a high modern culture in the rural areas that encourages gender equalities and excluding urban areas.

Internalizing practices of the introduced Western culture, in theatre and dance, among the indigenous population is more indicative of a class and power relations, as male power of the indigenous represents the assertive dichotomy between the authentic and the westernized, and as intermediaries of change are shifted into the high culture of modernizing powers which is western in type, and decreasing among the middle class as it is spreading in the Diaspora. Imperial powers justify the difference between the culture they practice at their communities and the one they fertilize the colonized communities with, by stressing that while colonizers communities are diverse, yet not problematic (Stoler 2004). Therefore, it is concluded that as the imperial structure creates superior cultures and boundaries that separate the colonizers from the colonized, performing arts at the colonized are explained as problematic, having no freedom of female participation and expression, a recurring practice to maintain dominion over the colonized. Therefore the modernizing process of theatre justified by the absence of female helps reiterating the cultural dominion over the colonized.

Cultural imperialism has an apparent influence over the development of the Arab theatre, yet adding to it the extended colonial on-ground practices over theatrical

and dance activities by the Israeli occupation. Impact of cultural imperialism on the formations of modernity in Palestine and its impact on the religious reflections and on geography are highlighted mainly in the forming of the Palestinian middle class with its organic intellectual. It is found that organic intellectuals were not effectively formed while the military and popular resistance against occupation, and that religiosity was a denouncing factor to body expressions of individualism within the religious moral of performance in the less influenced by modernism geographies in Palestine, mainly villages. Moreover, indication to silencing of women is caused by geographical colonialism, imperialism or religious ideologies, or is it after all a male perception of the world. Anne McClintock draws “Imperial discourses that divided colonizer from colonized, metropolitan observers from colonial agents, and bourgeois colonizers from their subaltern compatriots designated certain cultural competences, sexual proclivities, psychological dispositions and cultivated habits” (McClintock 1995:8). This means that while performers tend to eliminate gender inequalities under an imperial discourse, it appear that existing hierarchies were reiterated, or emerged in the case of defending against women participation in performance as it is dangerous whenever the Israeli occupation interrupt it. Degrading conceptions of women participation was internalized, while imperial discourse claimed the need to modernize women means of participation against the Arab male power.

Stoler also states Foucault’s explanation of the emergence of ‘bio-power’ as a result of the proliferation of sexuality and the discourse about it in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She explains it as political technologies that ‘brought life and its

mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/ power an agent of transformation of human life' (Stoler 1995:3). This explicit transformation of the private human life into a public one that is controlled by the colonial power has a major contribution to the transformation on conception of exposure of female sexuality as a performer. This brings about the question: in what ways were gender inequalities essential to the structure of imperial authority. Given the variance in modernism among the different Palestinian places, contribution to female sexuality is decided by the degree of religiosity at the different residencies. This study will examine the gendered term of religiosity as fundamentally structuring the imperial, and colonial, authorities.

The nationalist movements, gaining independence in the various Arab countries, have formed an Anti-imperial front which has influenced the theatrical themes adopted during the twentieth century. More attention was given to the nationalist themes and satire of the political situation than to the authenticity of the Arab theatre. According to Haif, nationalist performances have found huge success, yet a constructive technique that adds to the authenticity of the works was not found. Mimicry was not the form of theatre used to produce the nationalist themes; those themes were performed to oppose imperialism, yet using the imperial tool which is the western theatre style. Losing the authenticity has created a gap between the performance, the written script, the audience and the culture of theatre (Haif 2002, Munei'i 2002, Bulbul 2001). Eventually, resistance of imperialism has failed to use other tools of resistance, but the western tool, tool of Empire, which asserted its culture. In a critical view of the Arab Modern theatre, Burshaid has contrasted

between the European experience on theatre and the needs of Arabs. He states that performances inside close areas and rooms as in the European theatre is not suitable to the Arab communities which seek festivity in performances with huge number of audience that belong to all society layers. Performing for smaller groups can only obey the needs, culture and language of those small groups; it ceases to represent a microcosm of the whole society (Munei'i 2002). Apparently the recurring failure to resist the Western dominion could be alluded to the failure to reproduce or reactivate the culture being diminished and suspended by the system of imperialism. As Said explains 'unless the representations of imperialism begin to lose their justification and legitimacy, and unless the rebellious 'natives' impress upon the metropolitan culture the independence and integrity of their own culture, free from colonial encroachment'( 1994:241), Arabs will still inhabit within the dominion of the empire. In the case of Palestine, a doubled resistive act is indicated to the reclaim of the land, being occupied by Israel, and then to react to its own culture on parallel level. What is not answered until now is to what extent has the formation of the middle class added to the integrity of Palestinian performers with their culture and how has religiosity impacted it. Literature reviewed conclude that while artists in Palestine, considered middle class members, were not able to consistently act as intermediaries for change, especially that gender issues where not addressed at their productions and religiosity was one aspect to impact it. Therefore integration of performers to culture was highly noticed, but not influential to achieve change. This research will examine this theory.

## **Chapter Four: Analysis**

This section is designed to examine the questions raised earlier, with regards to the reviewed knowledge on performing arts in Palestine. Closer contact with performers has enriched the analysis. As a researcher, belonging to a middle class and taking part in the cultural activity in Palestine among the audience of performance at Ramallah city, where a great number of performances take place, and where according to Taraki it has allowed residents of the town reclaimed public space, new spaces were created to accommodate the new thirst for urban pleasure after the Oslo agreement (Taraki 2008), I found fewer difficulties in approaching performers from the surroundings except those from the occupied Palestine in 1948, and from Gaza. However, analysis is not only based on Ramallah resident performers, although the majority is, but includes those performers from the occupied lands in 1948 like in Nazareth, Galilee, Hebron, Bethlehem, and from Gaza Strip. The analysis tackles two main aspects which are the religiosity of performers and their class. Within each of the two aspects sexuality is demonstrated in a colonial context.

### **Religiosity of performers**

The literature reviewed attempts to demonstrate that performances converged with the religious themes at some periods of history and diverged at other periods. The religiosity of performances is tracked to indicate the extent to which the Palestinian society being performed to has religious preferences. It also demonstrates that religiosity of performance is essentially linked to the colonial

practices. Religiosity was one defense tool for the indigenous against ignorance of the colonial goals, as seen in the Arabising of modern performance. Milestone Palestinian performances had religious themes dominating during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, but less dominating in the period following. This means that less religiosity is witnessed in the period of this research 1960-2012. While literature reviewed did not arrive to conclude the extent to which performers, not only produced performances and audience, also have individual religious preferences, as they perform to achieve change within the society, this section is assigned for this task.

Performers addressed through this study comment on whether they have realized their religiosity as a tool to defy colonialism. They demonstrate their understanding of the notion of religion. It is mainly perceived and expressed by performers as a popular tradition where they inspire the good practices and denounce the undeserved practices to them, aiming for the growth of society. For them, religion and its values flaws in harmony with the messages that they create for the audience society, yet in ways that stress on its popularity, its implied human ethics of diversity and acceptance of others opinions, and on its spirituality. Such values as they perceive them fall at the heart of their performing themes.

Moreover, performers expressed that their body representations, as well as the way they utilize their sex through performance, do not contradict with their own religious views, even though showing discrepancy with the prevailing religious practices and preaching; mainly the Shari'a. Majority of performers have

expressed commitment to the popular aspect of religion which gives their behaviors and the values where their behaviors are derived from a specific legitimacy in the social arena. Values derived from popular religion secure a space for performers' feeling of engagement to their society, and an outward representation of their sex, even though they do not follow religious laws. It keeps them engaged to the 'strong codes of behaviors and motivations among believers' (Giddens 2001) even though not fully confined to those behaviors and motivations. The popular religion, in the sense expressed by performers, is consistent with the definition of popular religion by Ballemare. 'It is not monolithic, but refers to a multiplicity of symbolic forms and practices that are shaped by historical contexts. All religious phenomena operate in the midst of concrete social conflicts shaped by asymmetrical power relations' (Ballemare 2005). They realize the powerful impact of the religious preaching over their performing preferences and their body representation in it, and over the society's preferences.

In parallel with popular religion in china, it develops as to depend on formal religion with its institutions but is not bound by particular understanding of institutional religion and its commands. 'Popular religion in the sense of common religion also hides potentially significant variation without specifying particular people, times, and places, or naming particular understandings of institutional religion (i.e. the orthodoxy) or the powerful religion, nor specifying a conflict where one standard of living is imposed on the society' (Teiser 1996). Both generations do not stand at opposite sides of it. It is the form of religion where old

generation performers, as they stressed, grew up with, and the one that continues to support their motivations in performance. As for the new generation, it is the form of religion where dialogue is possible with its promoters to find spaces for their interests to grow under stern religious preaching.

While popular religiosity is a broad category of religiosity that is necessarily defined in relation to the institutional religion, it involves a defense of the popular interest in face of a dominating one (Teiser 1996), and therefore represents a continuous strife for the old generation performers towards maintaining their performing activity in a conservative media. As for the new generation, popular religiosity to them emerge from a continuous state of controversy with the traditional religious institution, as in the preached for commitments to a certain life style that is religious. They also contradict with the secular institution emerging within the popular religion which in its role preaches for a certain life style that is confined to a collective national identity rather than to an individual identity.

Popularity of religion maintains a balanced relation with the religious society, yet proposes change within it in the form of a tactic against its strategic dominion. Religious preaching did not shift in the period between contemporary Islam and before, yet it is only the popular religiosity mediums that introduced shift within the society towards a secular institution, which in respect, gives space for performances when they do not comply with the religious preaching. Body representation of performers in this respect is better expressed in a secular society. Popular behaviors or popular religious practices in its origin have resulted from a

religious culture where same ideology has prevailed throughout history, nevertheless in minimal or greater levels (Kananneh 2011)(Said 1994). Religious social and political movements have regulated the formal or the ideological culture of religion, and therefore left its impact through discourse over the practices of humans throughout generations in history. After then, by practicing of religion over hundreds of years, religious preaching transforms, among society members, into popular imitations of precedents, where less is preached for, but becomes a constituent part of the society's social and political life. In all cases popularity does not mean replacement of the religion, but a shifting into less dominion of religion, and more command of human choice and intellect, a secularized society. In fact, performance, as a representation of the body and of the society in the form of imitation too, has encouraged tactics that led to questioning of religious power, which were originally regulations and concepts, in order to produce messages that seek change within society. Those tactics result in fewer clashes with the religious preaching, which performers explained them to be mainly emerging from religious political parties.

On the level of religiosity of performers, among the 30 performers, from both generations, three performers declared that they are not believers in God while one refused to declare. The remaining expressed that they are believers in god but in ways that do not comply with the written holly texts, also not within the existing ideology of religion put in practice by existing social and political powers through religious Shari'a, as the majority mentioned. Within the ideology of religion they included fulfillment of prayers and obedience of religious

commands, as well as committing to religious veils at a certain period of their lives. They conflicted with religious dress culture, mainly the *Jelbab*, from a point of view that less is given to preserving and inspiring from the Palestinian folkloric dress. However with *Hijab*, they showed less discrepancy, it is a personal interest, and they would accept it on stage as part of their group performances, but women among performers would not put it on themselves, not now, not later. They show respect to other humans and people from other religions and do not express obedience to the social norms inspired from religious preaching, but rather show respect and interest in inspiring from them and questioning to change them for the benefit of modernism. On stage, they wear makeup and involve bodily moves, sounds and communications with others. One performer mentioned that she prays, and fasts, while all others refused those as against their principles and life style. They also refused rituals of belief and religious commands, in all types, except for those that comply with human ethics and are part of the culture of social union like in Ramadan.

Although the Palestinian society has, after the first intifada, developed into a more religious society that is committed to a mainstreamed ideology of religion and religious order, yet popular religiosity has remained dominating over the older generation of performance in specific. Transformation of the religiosity of society has impacted performers by clinging to its popularity where less obligatory religious act is dominating, which they consider as prim and close minded. As for the new generation, they prefer practicing values within popular religion, even though some express conflict with its connection to a collective identity of

Palestinians rather than an individual one. Apparently a prime and close minded culture is existed within the popular style of religiosity, as expressed by performers, yet it is less dominating over the preferences and messages implied in performances.

Spirituality is a vital element within religiosity. It is the direct relationship that performers create with the divine and is not mainstreamed. It is connected to their feelings that help in developing a message through performance. While correlating a postmodern view of art to religiosity, it is found that spirituality emerges from religion, and art is a mean to represent spirituality in the post modern world. A postmodern representation focuses on compensating the rational explanation of Truths for the sake of non-rationalization of Truth, i.e. the religious doctrine, in an observed act of art, and in producing a reflection of Truth in religious doctrine through visual art (Chapman 2008). In this sense, while performances as visual arts relate to the spiritual part of individuals that engages more in the intangibles of faith (e.g., ritual, sacred space, environment), then performance here is a mean to have a relationship with something without necessarily forming an understanding of it first (Chapman 2008). Palestinian performers understanding of spirituality serves the popular religious values that do not follow a doctrine, and they do not have to abide to, is essential to keeping them engaged to the society that holds and promotes this doctrine in its preached for ideology. Spirituality to them is a mean to establish a relationship with the society, with all its doctrines whether the religious or the non-religious.

One performer from the older generation preferred what he calls the ‘popular’ religiosity, not the ‘ideological’ religiosity, where a relationship of the individual with god is not mainstreamed and obligatory for others. Growing a beard and wearing a *Hijab* were considered ideologies of control and maintained conservativeness among people, but does not necessarily reflect on religiosity and belief in God. However he thinks that there is no contradiction between belief and participation in performance in the popular religious societies. Another performer from the older generation believes in ‘ethics of humanity’ rather than Christianity or Islam religions. She perceives fundamentalism in traditions, which are based on prim and close minded cultures which affected her performing experience. Moreover she emphasized that other categorizations like residence, whether from a town or a village, and power of men within the extended family, they have had great influence over her participation. However after a while within her experience as a trainer, she thinks of ‘religion’ as decisive to participation, whether an individual is Christian or a Mouslem, and also decisive to the extent a performer complies with the religious ideology mainstreaming. She alludes to ‘the political and economic situations which make people turn to religion as a protector’. Another performer from the older generation, he is not a believer and does not obey religious laws, states that Art is an act of intellect, and diversity, freedom of expression, freedom to experience, and liberalism are essentials in life that he would not compensate. ‘Being a believer who obeys preaching of religion would affect the way I do choreography in ways that I will omit a routine where a woman and a man hold hands while performing which I don’t mind, however, as

being part of this society, I do respect its code, especially believers and conservative parties in it. Therefore, I would not encourage foreign troupes coming to perform naked in Palestine'. A performer from the older generation states that she was brought up in a non religious family, and studied Christianity and Islam at school and involved in both rituals, where a mixture of 'popular' religion grew with her personality, even though not a believer while performing.

Another performer from the older generation believes that a performer must balance his life to include spirituality. He believes in God, but is not convinced with many religious preaching, but cannot get along without 'the spiritual frame'.

Another performer, a believer in God, perceives belief as 'style of life', where preaching and rituals are not obligatory, but 'spirituality' is what matters in this bonding with God. 'I do not follow traditional ways of praying, I can pray in front of the sea, I can pray on stage, I use Muslim body language through prayers, even though I am Christian'. When it comes to the new generation, four performers expressed their belief in God but not 'in the way explained in religions, because if you come to certain verses, thinking and questioning are not permitted'. 'Some people prefer to believe because it's easier when they don't want to think'.

Another new generation performer, who believes in god and do prayer and fasts during holly months, she says, ' I pray because it comforts me and it's a direct relationship between me and god, but I do not fully commit to religion and the laws in it and I do not go extreme in conservatism. Religion that I grew up for was a popular one, and my family was not religious. I practice religious commands which don't contrast with my passion in performance'.

Popular religiosity, to performers, acts to serve their ambitions towards a secular institution that operates to host society members among followers of religious preaching and non followers, where compromises should be made by both. The battle though remains in the hand of the two generations of performers and their abilities and tendencies to provide compromises. Spirituality is a tool that performers represent as mutual and, individually constructed, to support for harmonization between members of a secular state, where each represent their relation with the god apart from the general representation of the society. This representation supports less repression of the sex of a performer. A performing group could include varying religiosities, but their overall representation is secular, as stressed by all performers. Each member could express their religious opinion, but the overall produced performance in general is secular.

### **Sexuality and Religiosity**

Sexuality as an apparatus where religion is effective, it decisively reflects on hierarchies within the society, and has been commented on by performers unequally. Hierarchies are much resembled through the impact of religiosity on folklore, nationalism and social norms. All performers' view of religion, in addition to its popularity, necessarily tackles their body representations, its sex representation, its capabilities and limits. Moreover, all performers express that they consider their participation as an act of body liberation, and therefore an act of national liberation despite its authenticity. In fact, adherence to the Palestinian cultural heritage varied. The new generation paid less attention to the authenticity

of performance, mainly the folklore performance, especially that it serves less their interests of improving their individual skills and professionalism and also the liberation of their body through performance. In the same time, they perceive professionalism as decisively intersecting with the Palestinian collective interest of performing for the sake of defying the colonizing power. They believe in the professional performance as a tool to liberation of their bodies as sexual entities first and to gender inequalities elimination, on the personal and societal levels. This does not mean, as they express, that they do not relate to folklore as an essential part of performances that drives the collective defiance of colonization. While performers perceive popular religiosity as a state of relation between individuals and religion that reduces complete superiority of religious preaching over individuals, towards a diverse and progressive society where performance is an act of liberation, then their perception is a mere tactic to survive a conservative culture that discourages performance. The body of the performer and its sex representation, as in the mixing of sexes and exposure of women's sex to the public, is the main clash with the religiosity. Religious preaching here are mainly those in Christianity and Islam which are concerned with dress and body exposure of women and men, and to bodies contact on stage between both sexes and within the same sex. Most decisively they are concerned with women and their bodies' exposure in the public space. Religious preaching by contemporary Islamist preachers on religious Shari'a, stresses that mixing of sexes in public spaces is originally a taboo. Sharawi, Tantawi, Qaradawi and many others have stressed that mixing between sexes is originally is prohibited in Islam even inside the

houses of worship. Sharawi states 'a woman is not to go for work outside its family, unless for extreme necessity which does not allow her mixing with men freely'. For Tantawi, 'mixing with men is provocative of their lust'.

As seen by performers, one stresses that religiosity imposes power over bodies of performers whether males or females 'when being religious, it's a taboo to hold hands with women, to improvise performances which include contact between bodies to reflect on a message, where study of bodies relations are needed'. An old generation performer reflects on power as part of the popular culture where females are 'prohibited from participation in performance in order to be kept protected. Knowing more is dangerous. While performance is a window to knowing more, then it leads to parents protecting them from knowledge'. Another old generation performer explained two types of powers over her participation; one is related to national conservatism which opposed modern performances that did not comply with Palestinian folkloric dress, 'a political party displayed a statement against the performance as putting naked people on stage'. She also referred 'nationalism is the only line people have to commit to and other topics of performance were refused, or barely accepted by the audience'. In this case therefore ' *dabik* (male folklore dancer) or *dabikeh* (female folklore dancer)', as referring to the act of dance that commit to the national theme was more accepted than 'dancer', which reflects a prostitute as represented within the society. She states 'The ideology of religion 'fundamentalism and social traditions; the prime and close minded culture' was the other important barrier to my participation in performance'. At another level, she stresses that power was imposed by society

‘one stigma that was not supportive; that my parents are split which put many people to blame my mother for not raising me on good behavior because I perform. They thought that because the man of the house is absent, I was not raised to behave well’. Another performer relates: ‘sometimes it’s harder to face social norms than to face occupation. If women are side by side to men at work, and in the field since long, and in resisting occupation, then why not side by side with men on stage?’. For another performer, she states ‘my parents are not religious but they care for the image in front of the society and they impose it on me’. On the level of women participation, one performer says ‘ Some women got married and ceased to perform, others got married and went back to performance like me, and some took a break for pregnancy, and for myself I keep delaying pregnancy because I wish to perform for as longer as possible’. Those reflections demonstrate the extent where social norms that are inspired from the religious preaching have power over either participation of performers or means of introducing performance to the society. They are explanations to performers’ developed tactics within a conservative society, all aiming to create a space for their body representation, their individual interest, manipulating the social norms system and nationalism. The tactic of manipulation serves the further participation of women and men in performance for the sake of a national collective message. New folklore with equal opportunities of women to men is being pledged for by performers with less power over their sexuality. Folklore being presented although introducing reversed gender stereotypes, but has achieved further participation of women. A new definition of folklore has resulted.

All performers expressed that authenticity of performances ‘the folkloric performance in theatre and dance’; is a dynamic thing that develops with them especially that ‘what is not authentic to the formers in what we produce now, will be the authentic to the coming generations which will follow us’. Women in the period of this study danced and acted side by side with men, with hands held together and with routines of men done by women. Women participate in choreography of folkloric performance and in producing it, when they had no chance before. Performers, mainly women, complained from the folkloric dress, ‘the dress of women, having many layers, does not show the quality of performance techniques women performers put on stage, and in the troupe this reflects that they care more for the beauty of colors and compliance to the folkloric nerve that women represent through their bodies on stage, more than they care for the quality of performance we put’. In this way, Folklore is proved powerful over performers’ sexuality. Women body’s representation on stage is used as a tool for maintaining the relationship with the precedent values and heritage. Women interest in professionalism was compensated for the sake of reducing clashes with the religious preaching for long time before the contemporary performance started to emerge in Palestine. Contemporary performances that detached from folkloric dress witnessed heightened controversy on dress code of women; especially that performer’s quality of contemporary performance is considered one reason for compensating authenticity of a folkloric performance.

This tactic at some points lead to a discourse of compliance to the social norms which is inspired from the religiosity of society. It is indeed an important part of formulating the collective interest, and mainly leading the national one. The discourse of compliance is in itself a tactic developed to manipulate powers, taboos of performance and body representation on stage mainly women's body, over the formation of a national collective message through performance, where gender equality is put in practice.

In specific, modern and contemporary dance are modes of dance where women and men's dress code detached from the folkloric ones. Sexuality of women was fought by religious order. In 2008, after the opening of the Ramallah International Contemporary Dance festival, a university professor of religion and contemporary doctrines reflected firmly, in a political article on-line, on the festival as dance does not lead to freedom from occupation. He insisted that 'dance does not fit for Muslim nation, especially for a resisting nation for liberation through means put by Allah. Following the holly texts, dance to him is considered forbidden in Islam. Bodily movements and exposure of the body stirs passions, and mixing sexes stirs the sexual needs of men, where all are found in the contemporary dance festival. This festival is based on agility and lightness in movement, and rising and falling quickly, especially among women dancers'. He stressed 'this festival is intruder to our society and it was imported from the West. Our society is committed to ethics, modesty and chastity, not found in the west'. Then he introduced a verse from Quran saying: "God intends to redeem you, but those who follow their desires want you to turn away utterly" (Women: 27), "Those who love to see immorality

spread among the believers- for them is a painful punishment, in this life and in the Hereafter. God knows, and you do not know” (The Light: 19).

The political stand above introduces two types of regulations put in effect over the bodies of performers based on religious ideology: religious, and national. While body movement is forbidden within this religious ideology for being infidel, it has been connected to the religious view of national liberation; mainly that body movement diverges and does not support in the formation of the religious collective national message. Therefore, within the ideology of religion, performance does not lead to national liberation because it is forbidden in Islam and as it is inspired from the west.

On the other hand, the spokes person of the festival introduced its content in 2013 to include the Palestinian participation. He explained “‘From Dust’, the performance from Palestine is an adventure to discover the relationship between family and land, and the long distance between humans and the homeland of grandparents. The story of love and longing of humans while at the exile away from homelands, where humans connect to the memory, the identity, and the homeland’. The other performance ‘ ‘Kuffieyeh’ a Palestinian- Belgium performance that discusses clichés and stereotypes that the west holds about Palestinians, and retains the human part even though governed by Media’. Then he explained that the festival introduces supportive spaces for new talents of Palestinian performers, and solo performances, well presenting the Palestinian well-being among other nations. The discourse introduced here, less focus is given to whether women sexuality is connected to the national interest, in as much

as the professionalism. Women sexuality is contained within professionalism that is practiced towards excellence of performance among other nations.

In another political article, refusal and discontent of the political parties was expressed for organizing the festival during the Palestinian Prisoner Day in 2011. It states 'the families of number of the Palestinian prisoners inside the Israeli Jails have deprecated organizing the dance festival as coinciding with the Palestinian Prisoners Day, and considered it a direct insult for the emotions of thousands of prisoners who do not want Dance festivals which do not result in setting them free. They considered it an act of betrayal to the pain of children away from their imprisoned fathers'. On the other hand, a letter was sent through the International Red Cross from a Palestinian man imprisoned for 9 years to two female dancers who performed at the festival, and he was able to watch them perform through TV from inside the Israeli occupation prison. In this discourse provided to reassures the emphasis of professionalism rather than sexuality of women in performance, he said in the letter: 'I cannot explain the admiration I felt when I watched you perform. I am pleased with the progress the Palestinian woman achieved, the strength developed in her personality, and in her expression growing more sophisticated. I believe in social justice, human values and democracy, in addition to equality between men and women, and the progress I see makes me believe that we are going to better places. Dancing without limits and based on freedom of choice are reasons to celebrate. I wish to live in a free world, and you contribute to taking our society to freedom of thought and freedom of expression. Once I am free, I would like to come to attend one of the contemporary festivals'.

Sexuality has been employed to support the impact of religion over representation of performers' bodies. Controversy on women bodies' representation created by the popular religiosity force which are the performers in this case, and the ideological religious force, whom are the political parties and social norms inspired from Shari'a, in the other hand have put the colonial goal to be reiterated. Dialogue between the society members is at its highest, especially that many folkloric and contemporary performances were interrupted in places like in Qalqilia and in Hebron after the year 2000, but performed with precautions in other places. This dialogue has brought about external powers to play role through foreign fund. Fund has flooded over project that enhances women's participation in performance and to promote for equal opportunities between sexes which left less space for natural dialogue within the society, and fed the contrast between the popular strife of women participation and the ideological preaching against it.

#### **Identity of Performers**

Popular religiosity served performers' self representation of a collective identity better than mainstreamed religiosity, despite dialogue and controversy with the conservative fronts within the society. On the level of the messages that performers aim to imply within their performances, all performers of both generations do consider performance and its messages as important constituents to their identity that is necessarily connected to their collective Palestinian identity. They perform in purpose of self representation within the Palestinian national collective identity. As an artistic expression, participation in performance

essentially begins with a passion and a talent that gradually develops into meaning; once awareness of its motivations and roles within society starts to be defined. Representations on the collective level are accompanied by change on the way they perceive their bodies as a constituent part of their individual identity. Performers, on the one hand, show reconciliation with their individual needs as part of the group, and as part of the Palestinian national cause, they show reconciliation with their religiosity as they express its popularity on the other hand, where spirituality plays an important role.

All performers expressed that the Palestinian collective identity representation was the main motivator for them to involve in performance and each reflected on it significantly. Moreover, multiple individual subjective identities were also considered to have emerged within the collective one by each performer. As for the older generation, many have declared joining troupes in order to participate in the collective resistive act of Palestinians against the Israeli occupation by representing and maintaining the Palestinian identity through performance. For one performer 'Performance reflected on the political awareness of Palestinians on the one hand, and on fighting against oppressing and demolition of the personal romantic identity by occupation on the other hand. This bonding between the collective political identity and the personal romanticized identity, as romanticized in the manner where folklore is highly inspired in the personal life, has motivated performance as a resistive act. According to the older generation, the subjective identity, where individual feelings and concerns are the focused

motivator for performance, is fulfilled within the Palestinian collective identity fulfillment of a troupe.

An old generation performer stated that at childhood attending Palestinian performances was considered a familial participation in the resistance act; however her participation in performance was mainly to fulfill an individual passion 'to perform on a stage in front of a group, and to fulfill your ego and to improve your body's capacities. Also on the other level, performing was equivalent to resistance with stones and I was satisfied with my form of resistance because it rewards and assures my identity as a Palestinian'. Another performer said that he joined the troupe because he wanted to practice art, mainly dabkeh, however after then; he realized that dabkeh is 'complementary to the national struggle'. Many performances for the troupe were canceled by the Israeli occupation forces because 'they realized the impact of art expression as more influential sometimes than a man throwing stones over them. Impact is on the world level, and on the Palestinian level, when you move and mobilize people towards a certain cause through art, you become more influential than political leaders. People went out for demonstrations against the Israeli occupation after our performances'. Another performer mentioned that 'performing troupes were mainly affiliated, supportive or connected to, political parties, which explains the breaking into other troupes soon as breaks on political consensus arises. Belalin and Balalin are two troupes which were originally one, but because of the political discrepancy, they broke into two troupes of theatre. Performing troupes' evolution was importantly a national need. The only producing of folkloric songs was

considered an act of asserting the Palestinian identity. After then, troupes started searching for their artistic identity to complement its goals'. A performer from occupied Palestine in 1948 confirmed that 'at first it was my passion to be seen on stage, but after that I went to perform in Ramallah, and there I realized that I do not want to perform in and with an Israeli theatre. I realized that in theatre I can change mentalities where national stances could be proved'.

For the younger generation, performers came to relate to their personal experiences as the main constituent of their identity which is expressed in relation to the surrounding political and social updates, stressing the quality of technique as an essential to a successful and creative Palestinian performance. Performance for majority of them is a 'personal interest and an ambition to professional performance'. They were encouraged by a supportive family of performance who believe in the performance ability to contribute to achieving political and social change, so they were encouraged to participate when they were children based on parents well and remained part of their life style.

On the level of defining an individual identity, all performers proved that performance has changed the way they perceive themselves. 'When I first joined, I was conservative, shy and knew nothing about women, I felt so shy holding hands with them. But with performance, you are able to look to the right and the left of your head where there are lots of windows, lots of meanings to things, not only one'. Another performer said that she is now not shy of walking down the street without 'hiding my breast'. Another one stressed 'I lost my arrogance. When I thought I should be superior to others because I belong to a wealthy

family and being spoiled, they thought of me without categories and based on my skills in performance. I wanted to change this image of mine so I changed'. Performance to another one 'changed me to a person with motivations in life, without it I would have been a useless guy hanging in the streets now'.

Change on perceiving one's identity is explained, as came by performers, through connecting with a group of performers who show interest in practicing performance in a liberal space, open minded and productive in ways that seek a national collective identity, with an equal contribution of men and women. Change on the individual level has impacted the messages they strived for through performance. In order to expand scope of change, performers think of training others whether in theatre, or in dance. Passing knowledge and experience to others was thought of as a tool to encourage others to go through similar personal experiences which succeeded to change them as individuals. Moreover, training is considered a tool to encourage creating social support to performance in Palestine amidst the growing conservative front in the Palestinian society. Both generations involve in 'dance schools' or 'drama paths' as trainers. One performer says 'I established the dance school to give a message that when children grow loving dance, they should find places to practice it. We joined life skills with dance to build individuals with creativity, productivity, and with interest in professional dance'. Another performer said 'I work with local organizations on workshops that employ theatre in paths that are useful to our life, in topics like non- violence and identity, which I feel very important for Palestinian growing generations now'. Performer training in a school in Jerusalem says 'It's more of an

educational issue. While children are now exposed to Israeli songs, it's a priority to encourage them to sing folkloric songs like 'Dal'ona'. Young girls saw me as a model to nationalism; they listen to the national values that grew with me at my troupe and I influence them. Some things we change in children we work with them, even political parties couldn't change in us like in respecting folkloric songs and reciting them inside the school'. Another performer said 'working with girls on expressing feelings through the body not verbally, is honest and sometimes more influential with children and youth. I have taught 6 grader girls, even though with their heads covered by a veil, but they performed in front of the village people and they accepted them'. Another performer said 'the group of girls at Beit O'ur whom I trained refused their families orders of quitting the troupe to get married, so they arranged a group strike. They refused to go to school and they refused to get out of the house because they wanted to join performance. One of them now is a trainer of Dabkeh at the village'. Performers believe that the change they witnessed on their individual identity has impacted those whom they train, on their individual identity level too.

Individual, social and sexual identities of performers are shaped by their participation in group productions of a cultural performance. Their individual identities are stressed through elevated body perception of a performer's self within the Palestinian national collective identity, even though amidst contrasting religious views of the society. It is an elevated sense of sex usefulness within the national context. Harmonizing their identity with the collective identity includes utilizing the body to represent the Palestinian historical experience within globally

approved standards of performance. They have developed experiences which seek professionalism, and modernized performance style, yet with maintained enlightening from folklore in its majority. Individual identities of performers showed capability of adding value to the formation of collective awareness, which organizes the society towards social change within the colonial draw. Identities of performers are utilized to demonstrate the objective vehemence of the society's interests and needs crosscutting by its individuals, and reflected by them in order to encourage the flourishing of this society.

#### **Performance against Colonialism**

Popular religiosity is enrolled as a tactic of manipulating conservative society's power over sexuality of performers, where created and developed by performers throughout the period 1960-2013. It serves the medium of creativity as detached from the religious ideology put in practice through political statements produced on occasions of performance. Resorting to popular religiosity enables wider spaces for female participation in performance. One performer explains 'women are productive in the field, and at work side by side with men, women are decision makers on the family level, women are capably of designing dances for men, and are capable of doing routines of men, where men are not capable of doing theirs'. Women's capabilities in performance define them as major for the flourishing of performance in Palestine. Male performers in the one hand have arrived to a state of realization that for a group production to survive, female participation is necessary. Popularity of women participation in all life aspect has become their

tool for maintaining women representation performance. Moreover, no creativity and elevation of the level of performance can be achieved without breaking into new forms of performance that is regulated by ethics of humanity, rather than the rigidity of ideology introduced by religious preaching. Therefore popular religiosity to them adapts to the evolution of human relations and does not stop at a certain state of relations regulated by law. Women participation is an act of equality with men that is highlighted in face of religious laws preaching. Popular religiosity to them is not only a tool, a tactic, where individual needs are fulfilled within the fulfillment of a collective, but still a tool for more engagement in decision making at all levels, and in asserting their capability in it. Adapting to human evolution is a wider space for creativity.

Female performers, on the other hand, expressed recurrently that they have realized the achievements on their rights of their precedent female performers and are not ready to decline. The majority of female performers arrived to a state of fulfillment at the level of their sex. They are aware of the role of their bodies within society and they act to develop its capacities through seeking means for professionalism in performance techniques too. The tactic of popular religiosity introduced by Palestinian performers relies on the Palestinian popular heritage of resistance, but also facilitates their interest in seeking professionalism in performance. In this sense, while identities of performers are utilized to demonstrate the objective vehemence of the society's interests and needs crosscutting by its individuals, then the changes on identities through performance has contributed to a collective awareness that is gender aware too.

For each performer, involving in the voluntary type of organizing at those troupes has contributed to the popular defining of religiosity in support for performance evolution in Palestine as a resistive act. Also, given that resistance has taken many forms, not only the military one in the past two decades, performance troupes had the ability to adapt to the new forms. Performers are currently involved in a state of dialectic where they are articulating their contemporary vision of folklore that does not jump over the Palestinian collective heritage, but introduce inevitable modern elements that they perceive as adding to the quality of Palestinian performance in face of the counter image created by imperial powers. In this case, the Palestinian performance movement is putting an important effort to produce counter representation to the inevitable proliferation of modern form of performance, by introducing their philosophy of performance where integrity of their own collective national being is put in engine of production.

In conclusion, popular religiosity promoted by performers has contributed to the development of performing arts in Palestine. Secularity of performances enhanced women bodies representations in support of the equality between women and men, in spite of the controversy with the conservative society. In the same time, performer's individual identity has been shaped in harmony with the collective Palestinian identity, and is organized for achieving change within society. However, the controversy with regards women bodies' representation remains realistic. Therefore, the Palestinian performing art movement has developed its own tactic on defying the colonial goal, but women bodies'

representations remain unsolved internally and mainly fueled by external funds agendas of colonialism.

### **Middle Class Performers**

The modernized life style of Palestinians under colonialism has fueled the Palestinian performances in the period 1960s until nowadays by introducing the European style of performance that enabled Palestinians to perform on stage, with women taking part in the performance in front of the public. Collective messages of performances reflected on the growing nationalisms that stood in face of the colonial intrusion. Roles of performers within this colonial context are tracked, while belonging to the middle class. While this study chooses to relate to Palestinian middle class performers, they were first questioned about the class they feel they belong to, and then about their roles within this class as performers. In general, all performers declared belonging to the middle class. They refer their belonging to income mainly, as being medium, to their education and to their exposure to other communities and cultures. They also relate to their ability to express ideas, beliefs and concerns freely during the troupes meetings or performances meetings. However less is mentioned, almost never, regarding the way they believe affiliation to social or political parties, or even seeking better job opportunities, as well as research application has attributed to their class affiliation. They showed respect to the political parties and their roles in supporting performance, yet no more than two performers expressed affiliation to a political party. Majority of performers with their profession are employees at

civil society organizations and receive wages of middle class, but are satisfied that such wages can compensate the lack of financial revenues coming from performances, so it is not risky to perform.

Among the older generation, one performer relates to herself belonging to the middle class 'I work and have a steady income, and I have better conditions more than other people. My children go to private schools and we celebrate Christmas'. Another performer says 'I am originally a house painter, a lower class, but changed by time. I studied at the university on the age of 35, and I have a steady income now so I currently belong to the middle class, but I certainly believe in the need of the lower class to rule and I am an example'. Another performer says 'I belong to the middle class. I am connected to social justice causes, but my income and education approves me as a middle class member'. Another performer explains 'being not married, I need a sort of income to keep me within the middle class, and I constantly look for ways to achieve myself in things that leave me a good reputation'. A performer stresses that 'families wouldn't accept their son into achieving a degree in performance, as they would question availability of job opportunities, especially that economy in Palestine is not supportive'.

As for the young generation, performers have focused on education, income and social engagement as main factors which led them to belong to this class. One performer explains 'I belong to the middle class because my income is relatively higher than the workers category. Also the indirect communication and interaction with members within the same class, in the troupe and with friends from the same private school, also put me in this class, even if I don't choose to'. A performer

believes, that 'belonging to the middle class, I use my performance and my participation in the political movements of youth to overcome power equations created by the rich to serve the occupation'. Another performer expressed 'a middle class person is the one with an intellect who analyzes and speaks out ideas for a better future, and that is what we are'.

While middle class performers rely on income, education and social status, or relationships within the same class at the level of the troupe members, they act as a balancing layer of the society that is utilizing its capabilities to feed in the role of a middle class in society. All performers are committed to social justice issues and are interested in social change in their performances which enables them into becoming organic intellectual performers.

#### **Organic Intellectual Performers**

Forming an organic intellectual group is subject to the state where a group of intellectuals perceives the role of performance as used to organize and lead the audience, towards achieving the higher awareness of the historical value of a performance, and to arrive with them to the point of realization about their function as well as their rights and obligations. Organic Intellectuals group placed within a spatial system of hegemony by colonialism is thought to use performing arts as 'opportunities seized' to reflect on refusal of this hegemony in the forms of deciding on a collective awareness of the national struggle (Certeau 1984: 20). As intellectuals they seize popular religiosity as an opportunity to take decisions towards social change through a national struggle. Moreover, other opportunity

performers have seized towards change, where possibilities of forming an organic intellectual group that utilizes performing arts as a tool to leading and promoting change within the society, is mainly seen as based on their voluntary initiatives in a popular religious medium, which are independently productive.

Being a voluntary troupe, donor funding did not affect the group vision and role and did not affect the internal coherence and continuity of the group. This case of voluntary initiative has fueled the concurrent vehemence of performers within the troupe. Performers showed an extent of belonging to the troupe that may not end by the termination of a fund. By providing spaces for diversity, intellect and productivity, those troupes acted as supportive communities to the performers' social stratum that guarantee sustainable effect to its continuity, and guarantee introducing new elements to artistic performance. On the other hand, contemporary dance, as an accelerated interest of donors agendas, has been realized by its performers as 'opportunity seized' to reflect on their professionalism and capability to reflect on their national caused.

Popular religiosity has supported this voluntary spirit of the troupes and stressed the formation of a social support community. Performers expressed that performing troupes in Palestine, with their reputation and their supporters were able to introduce change in performances even though proportionally deviant from folklore. In this case, an added clash to the conservative religious society is seen; the conservative social norms. The early beginnings, in early 90s when modern and contemporary performance was produced to be deviating from folklore, it was not preferred or encouraged by administrations of the troupes. They either agreed

or disagreed with shifting into modern dance. For some troupes that are part of larger cultural community where the troupe belongs, administration did not agree with modern dance, but because performers are part of this cultural community and through dialogue with them, performers were able to perform in the name of the community in total. In other troupes, performers initially performed individually and the troupe did not agree to adopt the performance in its name. 'Despite what we put on stage, whether folklore or modern dance, the administration members of the organization wouldn't abandon us. They did not agree with the type of modern dance we put on stage which was criticized by some groups within the society, but said that whenever you perform in front of the public, you can do it in the name of the troupe'. Moreover, 'performing within a troupe with the space for all to take role has put each of us to understand that performance should obey our ideas and needs collectively, therefore compromises for the sake of collective were seen'. Another performer says 'those coming to attend the folkloric dance of our group wouldn't aim to degrade women in the performance. If they think women shouldn't appear on stage, they wouldn't come in the first place. Therefore the group surrounding our troupe, among fans and friends, they form a protective circle to our troupe. The larger is the circle, the more awareness grows around it. We have social protection against conservatism. The leftist parties and sometimes Fateh support us as political movements. You may disagree with them, but at the end they have secular thought within those movements, they are not ideological ones'. For another performer he expressed that 'belonging to this troupe has saved me the exclusion I faced in the society at

large. Here I practice volunteerism and I am not judged for every opinion; “this is shameful”, “this is disrespectful to God”, and “beware they don’t hear you”. All these I heard at school, even though a private school in Ramallah, by the Sheikh and the Father. Within the troupe, there are no limits for opinion if you are well prepared to discuss them’.

Both religious and social conservatism impact the formation of organic groups of performers. Religious conservatism is mainstreamed through religious political parties with its accelerating strength in the social arena, and social conservatism is randomly organized by non-religious political parties. Despite their denouncing role, yet the harmonizing attempts to decrease controversy with them, being fueled by foreign aid agendas, has left less space for achieving real consensus, unless within a secular institution that respects rights of all parties. One example is Al Founon troupe: being places in Al Bireh city, where a rising of an influential sphere of Islamist parties is positioned, has not affected their activity next to the mosque inside the city. One performer comments, ‘we have been living next to a mosque for 30 years now, and we never faced troubles. We both have mutual respect to each others’. On the contrary, performers of the troupe believe that celebrating the achievements of the performing movement they contributed to in Palestine have managed to increasingly contribute to the political decision towards the secularization of the cultural institutions. However, the same performer explains, ‘however recently we were asked to put down the volume of music during prayers. This took the shape of question in Ramallah, but at one village, girls and boys holding hands while dancing was firmly forbidden’.

The political parties take part in this controversy, even though indirectly sometime. The religious parties express clear stand points towards performance, and reflect it in their ideology in the places that have less diversity. On the other hand, non- religious parties do not take clear stand points towards performance. Performers who express affiliation to political parties, mainly the leftist ones, show clear encouragement to performance in Palestine, however, other performers who have parents belonging to leftist parties; they do not encourage act of performers that is modern in its style. New generation performers themselves express consensus with the intellect enrolled by certain political parties, but not directly affiliated to them. They are not sure if leftist parties would support their activity in performance, but did not disagree or attack their activity. The old generation performers who continued to be part of the performing movement for 30 years and they believe that the formation of the troupes were indirectly connected to political parties, even under changes on the political parties stand points, they believe that performance was more influential than its political parties support. Such sustainable voluntary initiatives proved that support for cultural openness would not be compromised, even though with less support of political parties.

Opportunities seized by performing groups in Palestine were challenging to the religious and social conservatism. Performers, having organized voluntarily and with high inspiration from the needs of the society, they managed to balance the state of conservatism, with less support of the political parties, and with more focus on performers capabilities. The challenge is heightened by the foreign aid,

which support the contrasting agendas of the religious political parties and the non- religious performing bodies, organizations, as its naming has turned to after that establishment of the Palestinian Authority. It left the performing groups in Palestine to deal with the challenging elements of their performance towards change in their society; mainly concerned with the apparatus of sexuality.

### **Dress Code of Performers**

Dress code is considered an important element where performers, within the group or individually, have been influential in introducing change. It is a tangible proof on the evolution of performing groups as organic groups. Insight on performers view point of their performing dress code introduces the way sexuality has played an important part in their formation as organic intellectuals and the confrontation of powers with choices of individuals concerning their bodies. It is also a tangible visual symbol of the collective identity, as seen by the society, which is clear and obvious in performance, and where judgment of it is mostly witnessed. The judgment of the dress code is mainly based on its compliance to or divergence from the Palestinian folkloric dress. Stand points produced by performers regarding performing dress explains the organisms within the troupe in relation to their representation in front of society. The history of conflicting with the religious and social conservatisms can be tracked through the evolution of the dress code of performers throughout the period 1960-2013, mainly those of women. The conflict is explained in the individual interest of performers in professionalism, and the folkloric identity of performance in support of national

cause. For some performers, dress code should be contemporary to depict contemporary ideas, and to hit on the needs of the character within the performance. Others stress that dress is essentially the nerve of the folkloric act that stresses the identity of Palestinians in face of colonialism. For one performer, 'evolution of the Palestinian dress in performance, especially for women, is not detached from society. It is a sort of manifestation that asserts the control of society over what is put on stage. Dress and the way it obeys the folkloric essence was used to criticize a performance. People refused attempts by some people to diverge from elements of their identity, especially after the first intifada. The first intifada was a social movement where all had to comply with, and any divergence was considered against nationalism, and same was with dress after the intifada, when people feared to change any aspect of their collective identity, and among that was the dress of performers on stage. Oslo changed in people, it introduced new ideas and possibilities regarding the collective identity, but change was very slow on the level of every day practices'. For another performer, dress obeys the theme of the performance and guarantees the artistic quality of a performance. 'We generally perceive the dress as connected to the Palestinian identity, however when searching for the artistic identity, we turned into considering the artistic value of a performance as the reference to evaluate our performance, not the Palestinian identity because we reflect on our Palestinian identity through the quality of performance. Here, change on dress comes to obey the evolution on the taste of the audience, that they judge the artistic value of our performance'. Another one stresses, 'Sticking to the same dress code compensates the technique

and we need to rethink the dress code in order to better reflect on the technique'. For another performer, 'creativity is in adapting performance dress from the folkloric medium to serve performance needs, without losing the identity of it'. Dress code does not only stem from preferences on the level of the group performers, but it is also emerging from the society's preferences and social control. 'I cannot put off clothes, even though for characters that serves the message. I once put on a nightgown in a performance, but it was ok for me because it served the message and I did not feel I crossed the limit where I will be very criticized, especially that I passed by experiences during rehearsals where I adapted certain scenes to my beliefs and performed naked woman without getting undressed, and the trainer thought its creative'. For another performer, she stressed that 'for the sake of the message I am ready to put on whatever dress needed on stage. However, I once registered for a workshop on naked performance, but I canceled at last minute because I knew from those who took it that certain moves are done that I don't find myself ready for yet'. Another performer says 'I get into an amazing feeling when performing with a folkloric dress, but at certain experiences, I feel it needs to develop to cope with the messages I want to convey through performance, especially lately when performed to reflect on the youth revolt of the Arab spring '.

It is clear that at some points individual preferences do not fully progress in line with preferences of the society at large. Performers with their dress code and with certain routines on stage involve in dialogue with themselves and with the audience regarding the way they represent themselves through a performance.

This consistent dialogue does not leave performers without being developed organically as intellectuals. Compromises then are inevitable on both sides of the performance. The extent to which compromises are made by performers in order to cope with the society is essential to defining their roles in introducing change on concepts and behaviors. One performer says ‘in a monologue a sexual scene was present where I pull of my dress on my face and represent a particular sexual position. In the performance, I shouldn’t wear pants but I did and I didn’t relate to imitating sounds, so it passed’. For another performer, ‘a kiss scene was omitted when we performed in Jericho and Ramallah, because I felt the society is not prepared to receive it, but I did it in London during the same play. It depends on how is the audience ready to receive you and if you want to get audience to your side, you should make compromises that don’t harm the flow of the performance message. That kiss was not necessarily to the whole theme. Plus, it depends on the other actors, and to what extent they perceive the kiss as part of the character where they won’t receive it wrong’. Another performer says ‘to perform in conservative locations we think of some things that won’t be acceptable while does not harm the overall flow of the performance. A short will be replaced by a trouser here and a close contact of bodies here will be omitted’.

### **Sexuality and Class**

The literature reviewed and the dress code evolution, together, concludes that performers reflected confusion with regards to their body representation, especially that dress code impacts its representations in many social and

individual respects. Their body representations, and their sex declaration, add less to their contribution to an agenda that serves their individual interests as part of their national interest. The assumed reason for that through reviewed literature is connected to the patriarchal drive of the national struggle which is influenced by class and power relations. The feminization of culture to support the colonial regimes ideology of dominion has enhanced the classed society and existing patriarchal gender relations in Palestine. The chief enemy, patriarchies of the colonial regimes, enforced on ground, has fertilized the inferior depiction of Palestinian Arab women, and created a high modern culture in the rural areas that encourages gender equalities and excluding urban areas. The national struggle in result is subject to strategies imposed by the chief enemy, through organized tactics to defy it. Falling under such regimes, performers' sexual representation is subject to discourses of this regime.

Performers contributed to measuring this assumption from their point of view. All performers, not only women, have shown interest in performance as a space to express personal beliefs and interests. They have all shown reconciliation with their body as productive in ways where they have the will and the ability to make statement about oppressive situation and reflect it in performance. Performance to them has enhanced their ability to take decisions and to express talent. A good number expressed that they join reading circles and discussion sessions with peers to address topics related to enhancing themes and techniques of performances. The passing of experiences through the trainings they conduct with younger

generation is considered by them as an act of interaction with the society and its layers.

Women and men in performance, considering themselves middle class members, with middle class life style and mentality, do show aspects of an organic intellectual within their society. It is mainly seen through reflecting on oppressive situations and connecting with communities to perform it as they perceive their social class capable of relating to other classes within the society. It is also seen through the display of the controversy on dress code among male and female performers that led to its evolution, nevertheless not admired by conservative powers. This controversy has not impacted their support of the evolution of performing arts in Palestine. All performers have shown a level of gender awareness that succeeded over the colonial claim of eliminating male power over women, even though with maintained repression of sexuality at some parts. Performers as organic groups realize the hierarchies that limit women participation in two dimensions: those of the gender relations within the society which are inspired from the religious laws, and those of the colonial impact over the flourishing of classed society that created a gap between the rural and the urban centers.

Gender awareness among performers, of the equal roles of sexes in production where individuals' capacities are invested, has been employed by performers to promote for transformations of certainties in performance. Shifting is mainly seen from authenticity of folklore that bares those certainties and inequalities. Some performers consider themselves performing 'folkloric dance', others

‘contemporary folkloric Palestinian dance’, others ‘ Palestinian modern dance’, while others consider it ‘ Contemporary dance’. On level of theatre, performers consider their modes as ‘Palestinian folkloric theatre’, while other consider it ‘modern theatre’.

This diversified and flourishing of styles or performance modes during the past half century reflects on dialectic of identity of Palestinian performance to serve certain gender interests. While performers are the leaders of this dialectic, gender regimes within the performing troupe is decisive, especially that power over sexuality is maintained unresolved. As for male performers, detachment from the authenticity of performance is a tactic to inventiveness in their performance leading to admired creativity and individual growth. Since folklore is the main dominator over the Palestinian performance, ‘contemporary folklore’ is a male performer tactic to overcome its rigidity. For one performer ‘there are up to 24 dance routines in folklore, but our troupe use 100 routines which are not folkloric but are built on and inspired from folklore’. For another performer ‘I cannot do *Sahjeh*, a long dancing routine known in wedding festivities, because it lasts for four hours, but I inspire from it in some routines that people won’t get bored sitting down’. For another performer ‘we do comedy drama, a western style, but with a Palestinian theme’. As for female performers, ‘contemporary folklore’ is not only a mean for inventiveness and individual growth, where body is liberated, but also a space to eliminate gender inequalities found within the rigidity of the folklore. For them they reflect on ‘changing the way women is seen on stage as bad reputed’, and ‘changing the view of women performing femininity roles in

performance', and moreover, 'changing the view of women bodies as taboo of exposure to the public'.

However, despite those achievements on the level of awareness on gender, they haven't yet targeted a collective feminist message through performance. Those attempts remain within the circle of individual strife, not a collective one, especially that women performers do not show support for other women within the troupe, as expressed by many female performers. One performer expressed an individual identity asserting of women 'I love dabkeh performance and what it creates with its audience, but contemporary dance is rewarding to me. Whether I performed it or not, when I get into the training hall, I feel all my blood changes'. However, another performer explains 'female performers do not show enough and consistently organized support to each others, especially in improving capabilities, or in persisting against a certain dress code of performance, or in selection of timing and placing for women to train within. It remains within the level of individual complains'. Another performer expresses that belonging to a troupe within an organization 'gives you, as a woman, space to perform in many places and to gain support and admiration of the society' but at the same time it 'limits your ambitions in terms of techniques and dress, because sometimes I think of things and rehearse on them, but then formally they do not agree on putting it on stage, like in performing naked for the sake of a message, especially that the organization has a good reputation and believes that this scene would be crossing the social limits. But generally they, administration of the troupe, are not

very conservative and they know much about modern performance, but they prefer to limit production so that they don't conflict with society'.

As a result, while feminist individual interest overcomes the collective feminist one among groups of performing women, possibilities of performance troupes in forming organic intellectual group would neglect a collective strife on eliminating gender inequalities. Attempts of gender elimination only serve their tactic to overcome rigidity of folklore. In another respect, voluntary styles of performing groups, in addition to their tactics of surviving rigidity of folkloric dance, have maintained gender inequality elimination goals undeclared so that an imperial claim is not ratified. The stereotype that has been faced by performers is the influx of supporting the local performance capabilities by foreign aid is aiming to enhance detachment from the original Palestinian identity, mainly by exposure of females on stage. Silencing of a collective feminist representation was meant to deny the westernization of performance, also to keep interaction with the society within an organic relationship. Dialectic on their relation with folklore has produced their notion of contemporary folklore where they can find and invent new means to relate to folklore, with less emphasis on women issues so that no direct convergence with the imperial claim, and no complete divergence with the conservative society preference. Apparently, a collective feminist approach is not a priority when it comes to facing local hierarchies, nor in facing the foreign ones. Compromising authenticity for the sake of inventiveness and creativity has constructed the contemporary performance with a folkloric or a Palestinian identity nerve as a tactic against rigidity of conservatism in folklore. Inventiveness

and individual capacities are developed within this contemporary frame, especially where wider choices of selection are available. Contemporary dance to performers includes wide techniques where all performers invent and improvise them and then they all take part in deciding which will be put on stage, however in folklore less space is given to the performer in select routines and comment on them, and the decision is more of the trainer than to the performers. Resorting to contemporary performances serves the reversing of certain stereotype of women's roles within performance, where women capabilities are represented in planning, designing and performing. The fact that a good number of the studied performers are currently holding trainings on performance for children, it is meant to support in the preparation of society into absorbing those reversed stereotypes from an early age.

### **Performance against Colonialism and Foreign Funding**

Although joining into a performing group is a voluntary act where more is given to its success and impact than to personally or financially revenue, yet a growing overview of the society with regards to foreign fund has urged performers to take further actions to prove credibility within the society. The stigma of connecting to a foreign agenda has left performers in a defensive position against the call that they add same to the quality of political decision as did the formal body, especially that both are dependent on foreign aid. Moreover, the majority of the Palestinian middle class is driven by the on ground political decision, the post Oslo political elite, and is either employed at its institutions or promotes its

investment schemes. As middle class members, the credibility of those performers and their performances is connected to the political decision credibility. Inability of achieving change on the political level, as seen by the audience, is represented through the performance. Production of the middle class reiterates a political stance that is emergent from similar class affiliations and interests. Aware of this stigma, Performers have realized their role and suggestions put in practice to reverse it. 'We specify revenues of performances to community charity', as explained by one performer, and 'we connect to people and support in girls participation in diminished locations through intervening in dialogue with families' said another, 'we do not to take conditional fund, and we also make best efforts to depend on our financial resources and not on the foreign aid', a third performer explained. Moreover, the trainings in diminished areas and for children at an early age are thought to connect performers with other classes to keep their production balanced and productive. The voluntary factor within troupes has enabled the above initiatives to reverse the stigma, even though the impact is minimal on society because of the concentration of their performances at the main cities, or some modernized villages near by Ramallah.

On another level, having this shift on performance into its contemporary mode has introduced a new interest of those groups of performers in what they define as a resistance act. While old generation performances have introduced themes of community mobilization against occupation 'our performances used to end with a demonstration where throwing stones over the Israeli occupation forces took place' as said one performer, to serve the political stance of resistance of the

period, it has shifted the interest after then also to serve the shift on the political decision nowadays, the after Oslo period. New generation performance in the past two decades introduced themes of remembrance, and defeat. However, the enhanced individualism for the sake of professionalism, turned into a new ways of resistance, where representation of the Palestinian art is based on its quality that reverses stereotypes on Palestinians as backward nation and incapable. After Oslo, while the political elite denounced the military resistance and launched the peace process, performances trends followed the shift. Less was expressed by performers concerning targeting the mobilization of the Palestinian society to resistance. More was expressed about representations that gain the support of the international community for the national cause through the quality of Palestinian production. The majority of performers stated, they do not anymore produce arts that is admired only because they are Palestinians, victims of occupation, but because of the quality of its production. More emphasis is given to representing the liberal well equipped with knowledge and skills Palestinian identity, which is capable of producing quality art, as any other nation in the world. Others concluded that 'the granting of the non-member state at UN in 2013 puts responsibility on us to perform as well deserving of a state'.

## **Conclusion**

This research contributes to understanding the role of theatre and dance in society. Linkage to religiosity and class in a colonial context deconstructs each of them to serve better understanding to its relevance to performers within dance and theatre in Palestine.

In this research I theorize that if performers of theatre and dance in Palestine convey collective messages in their productions, and their performance is conditioned by religiosity and class, then their awareness of their roles as organic intellectuals is shaped by the representations of women sexuality and the imperial reflections on it. Religiosity of performers is measured by elements that put them to enroll within the society: religiosity of the Palestinian society within the colonial context, the religiosity of themes implied through theatre and dance, and their religiosity as individuals, all intersecting to construct the religiosity impact over the role of theatre in Palestine. In the same way, social classification of performers is also measured by elements that put them to enroll within the society: class formations in Palestine within a colonial context, the class formations among troupes of performance and their audience, and the class awareness among performers as individuals. A relationship between religiosity of performers and the social class to which they belong is highlighted when they develop their definition of the way sexuality contributes to confronting gender inequalities in Palestine. Moreover, it is found that religiosity of performers and the social class to which they belong to; both impact their awareness of the

message implied by performance with regards to eliminating gender inequalities in a colonial context.

The hypothesis of this research explained this relationship above by claiming that Palestinian performers have diverse (subjective or collective) definitions of awareness of the message conveyed by theatre or dance, yet their definition of the ways female sexuality being employed contributes to confronting gender inequalities as they show and perform in less religiosity media, and belonging to middle class that is gender aware. Most importantly, gender awareness is formed with rather suppressed sexuality under colonialism. Methodology entrusted to measure this relationship empirically has deconstructed aspects of collectivity and subjectivity of awareness of messages implied through performance. It also deconstructed to measure religiosity of performers and the social class to which they belong.

This research concludes that Palestinian performers of theatre and dance have subjective awareness of the message conveyed by performance which decisively crosscuts with a larger collective identity. This subjective awareness develops its tactics to manipulate power systems of religiosity yet not collectively reflecting a strategy that confronts gender equality through performance. Those tactics are found adaptive to all religiosity media, not in less religiosity ones only. Moreover, even though performers showed belonging to the middle class, yet tactics of manipulating power systems over intellect have not reflected enough to their awareness of gender interest within the performance community, so they remained a tactics of adapting, but organically interacting to achieve change.

Popular religiosity and contemporary folkloric performance style are two notions articulated by performers to respond to their subjective awareness of the messages implies within performance. Such notions are spaces they create to establish for the feeding of their capacities and inventiveness in performance mode, yet represented within a collective national draw. Literature reviewed has mistreated those notions when formal and ideological styles are discussed, where less tackling of subjectivities, or life styles of the individuals is put in practice. Moreover, as those two notions obey the sexuality apparatus where hierarchies of religious institution and political decision of the middle class are prevailing, then the contribution of gender awareness among middle class contemporary folkloric dance performers who believe in popular religiosity is not capable of defying gender inequalities and colonialism.

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