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# FOLKLORE TALES AND OTHER ORAL EXPRESSIONS IN PALESTINE

Huda Odeh and Peter Laban

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## About the EU Funded Project “My Heritage! My Identity!”

In 2018, the European Union provided a grant to fund a project titled, “My Heritage! My Identity!”<sup>1</sup> in Palestine. The project is being jointly implemented by four partners: AFRAT - France ([www.afrat.com](http://www.afrat.com)), Bethlehem University / Institute for Community Partnership - Palestine ([www.bethlehem.edu](http://www.bethlehem.edu)), Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People - Palestine ([www.pcr.ps](http://www.pcr.ps)) and TÉTRAKTYS - France ([www.tetraktys-association.org](http://www.tetraktys-association.org)).

It aims to contribute to preserving and promoting cultural heritage located along the community-based walking Masār Ibrāhīm (trail) in Palestine, in an effort to enhance Palestinian citizenship and identity.

What’s more, the project offers activities that will contribute to the cohesiveness of the Palestinian people. It promotes inclusion and trust and aims to create a sense of belonging in order to positively influence relations among the diverse groups in Palestinian society.

For more information on the project, please visit the project website at the following link: [www.myheritage.ps](http://www.myheritage.ps) and the Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/myheritagemyidentity](https://www.facebook.com/myheritagemyidentity)

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<sup>1</sup> The original title of the EU project was “Promoting Governance and Citizenship in Palestine”. EU project reference: ENI/2017/390-692.

## About the research process

The present research project has been developed within the framework of the EU funded project “My Heritage! My Identity!”.

The four project partners collaborated with academic experts from Palestine and France to identify six topics related to Palestinian cultural heritage. A scientific committee was established at the beginning of 2018 to select relevant topics.

The scientific committee is composed of the following scholars:

### Palestinian researchers :



**Omar Abed Rabo**  
Research fellow and lecturer of History & archaeology at Bethlehem University



**Nazmi Amin Jubeh**  
Department of History and Archaeology, Birzeit University. Expert of Cultural Heritage

**Jamil Khader, Ph.D.**  
Dean of Research at Bethlehem University

**Zahraa Zawawi**  
Assistant Professor at An-Najah National University, Head, Urban Planning Engineering Department

**Wael Hamareh**  
Scientific Committee Director – MOTA

### French researchers:



**Manoël Pénicaud**  
Research fellow and lecturer of Anthropology (Institute of mediterranean, european and comparative ethnology)



**NajlaNakhlé- Cerruti**  
Research fellow in Arts &Litterature (French Institute for the Near East)



**Pauline Bosredon**  
Research fellow and lecturer of Geography & Urban planning (Lille University)



**Kevin Trehuedic**  
Research fellow and lecturer of History & Archaeology (Paris Est- Créteil University)



**Jacques Barou**  
Research fellow and lecturer in Ethnology & sociology (Political Sciences Institute of Grenoble)

The scientific committee identified six topics, five of which were selected for completion:

- The maqāmāt as a place of popular practices: evolution and diversity
- From terraces to settlements: the testimony of Masār Ibrāhīm landscapes
- “The one who has olive oil will never be poor”. Material and political aspects of a Palestinian symbol.
- Architecture and ways of living: traditional and modern Palestinian villages and cities
- Hikāyāt Palestine through the Masār Ibrāhīm: dialects, oral memories and histories

Furthermore, the members of the committee have been involved throughout the research process to support the researchers.

Finally, three Palestinian members of the committee, Dr. Al Jubeh, Dr. Abed Rabo and Dr. Khader, were in charge of the final proof reading and copy editing of the research projects.

To discover the five researches, please visit the project website: [www.myheritage.ps](http://www.myheritage.ps)<sup>2</sup>

## About the Authors

**Huda Odeh** was born in Nablus but has been living in Ramallah since the age of 3. She obtained her BA in Linguistics and translation diploma from Birzeit University in 1987 where she worked for one year before joining the Red Cross in Jerusalem until 1995. She studied community development in Lyon-France, while she was working with Ma’an Development Centre as projects coordinator in 1999-2000. Shortly after, Huda worked as a country coordinator for FCD, a Belgian development NGO, supervising their program in Palestine in partnership with Palestinian NGOs. Since her graduation from Birzeit University, Huda has been voluntarily and professionally active in the Palestinian cultural scene. She has joined El-Funoun Dance Troupe and other cultural

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<sup>2</sup> To quote this report: Odeh H., Laban P., 2019. “Folklore tales and other oral expressions in Palestine”, EU funded project “My Heritage! My Identity!” (ENI/2017/390-692), available at: [www.myheritage.ps](http://www.myheritage.ps)



organizations where she has been contributing her effort and time. She acted as the deputy director at the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music for 11 years where she has developed a professional career in resource development and program management. In late 2011, she started working as an independent consultant in the cultural sector; she has developed and monitored projects for various organizations (Qattan Foundation, PAN Program, Al Sakakiki Cultural Center among others), gaining extensive expertise in networking among diverse stakeholders and management of art and cultural organizations with a particular focus on resources development.

**Peter Laban** was born in former Netherlands New Guinea and has worked most of his professional life in or for developing countries, initially in West and East Africa and later in South and South-East Asia, with diverse organisations such as FAO, the Netherlands Development Cooperation (1974 – 1986), IAC/Wageningen and ETC Foundation in the Netherlands (1986 – 2002). Since 1996 his focus has shifted to the Middle East, where he first worked on participatory agricultural development at the community level in Egypt. Since 2002, he has been residing and working in and from Palestine, and has been focusing his work on the institutional aspects of development programmes and on supervising sustainable land and water resource management in the Middle East with CARE, IUCN and Oxfam. In these programmes much emphasis was placed on stakeholder-led participatory planning and implementation at community and Governorate level, engaging and facilitating coordination of stakeholders and strategic planning in the water and pastoralist sectors of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Yemen. He has undertaken project and thematic programme evaluations, organizational assessments and impact studies in the oPt and elsewhere. He is also interested in the cultural and performing arts sector, notably of Palestine with work done on impact of music education on youth studying music and on oral traditions and cultural and natural heritage. Peter has two Msc degrees in tropical soil science and forestry (1974) and rural economic development (1982) from Wageningen University. Since 2014 he has been working as an independent consultant in Palestine.



## Introduction

The project “My Heritage! My Identity!” is a consolidated effort of four partners who aim at “preserving and promoting Palestinian heritage along the **“Masār Ibrāhīm”**. Through a set of activities, in capacity building, networking, awareness raising and fostering knowledge, the project seeks to enhance Palestinian citizenship and identity, to promote inclusion and trust, and to create a sense of belonging in order to “influence relations between the diverse actors in Palestinian society”. The focus on Masār Ibrāhīm as a community-based hiking trail, encompasses a mosaic of tangible and intangible cultural heritage that reflects the diversity and richness of historic, religious and social life in Palestine. This project, therefore, aims at “[consolidating] social cohesion between the different components of the Palestinian population through the re-appropriation of historical and cultural heritage along the Masār.” With funding from the EU, the four partners started implementing the project activities, targeting diverse groups of beneficiaries and working on different levels. Investing efforts in multi-level relationships shall influence peaceful relations between people in a complex and fragmented Palestinian society. To do so, this project follows a multi-faceted approach: research, promotion and preservation.

A first activity, in which the project partners have embarked, was establishing a research committee, which has identified six heritage research topics relevant to the Masār. One of the topics was **“Ḥikāyāt Filasṭīn: dialects, oral memories and histories”**. This is the topic proposed for this research paper which was assigned after an open call to two experts in the field of heritage and scientific research. The main purpose of this assignment is the documentation, analysis and categorization of the oral traditions that are passed on in the communities along the Masār Ibrāhīm. Incorporating a research dimension in this project shall contribute to giving more value to the existing traditions and popular heritage, and increase people’s ownership and pride in their own roots and identity. This will be further consolidated by making good use of the research results as inputs for creating tools that will be used for increasing awareness and training activities targeting a large number of groups. This document is the final product of the two experts’ work over a period of two months, which included in-depth document reviews, interviews and synthesis of main results.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Table of Contents	7
1. General Background	9
1.1 About Masār Ibrāhīm	9
1.2 Other initiatives for the preservation and promotion of Palestinian heritage	10
2. Approach and Methodology	12
2.1 Preliminary contextual research questions	12
2.2 General reflections leading to an iterative approach	13
2.3 Methodology	16
2.4 Document research	17
3. Conceptual and organizational framework	18
3.1 Clarifications of background and terminology	18
3.2 Conceptual framework for the research study	21
3.3 Short descriptions of the oral forms of expression in Palestinian folklore	23
3.3.1 The oral tales	23
3.3.2 Other forms of oral expression	24
4. Analysis and description of different folk tales	25
4.1 General Overview	25
4.2 <i>Kiṣaṣ</i> , epic and adventure stories	27
4.3 <i>Hikāyāt</i> , fairy tales told in the family circle	29
TOPIC 1: The individual’s identity	31
TOPIC 2: The Family	34
TOPIC 3: Society and the wider environment	37
4.4 <i>Dhikrayāt</i> , oral memories of recent history	41
5. Analysis and description of other oral forms of expression	44
5.1 Songs and poems	46
TOPIC 1. Family ceremonies	48
TOPIC 2. Religious ceremonies	57
TOPIC 3. Agriculture-related rituals	60
TOPIC 4. Children’s songs (by and for children)	62
TOPIC 5. Patriotic songs/resistance songs	64
TOPIC 6. Other songs	66
5.2 <i>Amthāl</i> “Proverbs”	67



5.3	“Hazazeer” or “Uḥḍjiyyāt” Riddles:	70
6.	Oral expressions in Palestinian Contemporary Art	72
6.1	Political context	72
6.2	The role of visual arts in shaping Palestinian cultural identity	72
6.3	Performing arts (music, dance, theatre...)	74
6.3.1	Performing arts, a recovery over the last 70 years	74
6.3.2	Artistic political resistance over the last 70 years	77
6.3.3	Oral and traditional expressions in performing arts	84
7.	Synthesis and recommendations: What, Why and How	87
7.1	Overview of main findings (the what)	87
7.2	Oral expressions researched (the what)	92
7.3	Relevance of oral traditions for national cultural identity and social cohesion (the why)	95
7.4	Recommendations (the how)	97
	Bibliography	102
	Web-site links	105
	List of interviewees	109
	ANNEX 1. ḤIKAYĀT EXAMPLES	110

## 1. General Background

### 1.1 About Masār Ibrāhīm

The name “Masār Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl” can’t be by-passed without making a historic reference to the Prophet Ibrahim who, according to tradition, arrived at least 4000 years ago in the land of Canaan coming from “Ur or Urfa” (the biblical name of what is known today as Sanliurfa) in southeast Turkey. Perhaps here the Masār (trail), symbolically celebrates the kindness and hospitality known about the Prophet Ibrahim and his family throughout their journey in the region. The story of the Prophet Ibrahim is shared among the spiritual traditions of Moslems, Christians and Jews and as such has been kept alive to this day. In trying to follow the footsteps of the Prophet Ibrahim, an initiative was conceived by “William Ury,” an academic working in the field of peace & negotiations at Harvard University, who had an ambitious vision: an initiative to connect, by means of a long-distance path, places associated with the biblical patriarch Abraham, a figure revered in Islam, Judaism and Christianity. It begins among the ruins of Harran in Turkey, where tradition has it that Abraham first heard the call to “go forth”, and when (and if) it is completed, the route will pass through Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Palestine (Peter Beaumont, 2015)<sup>3</sup>. “What the path offers,” Ury said, “is an opportunity for people from around the world to remember the common history of humanity”. As the BBC writes, “In a region that often makes headline news..., the Abraham Path reminds visitors that this was the place where people first grouped together and formed the bonds of settlement” (BBC, 2013)<sup>4</sup>.

Encouraged by the “Ury Initiative,” a Palestinian Chapter of Masār Ibrāhīm started in 2008 by a collective of three NGOs: Rozana Association in Bir Zeit, Siraj Centre for Holy Land Studies, and the Palestine Wildlife Society in Beit Sahour (Masār ibrahim.ps/homepage). They have been working together and with other partners and CBOs on developing and sustaining the section of the Masār in the West Bank. “Masār Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl” is known today as a community-based hiking trail connecting more than 50 villages and cities along a 330 Km path, extending from Rummana, to the North of Jenin, passing through Jericho and Jerusalem until Beit Mirsim, to the Southwest of Hebron, the burial place of the Prophet Ibrahim and his wife Sara. With a socio-

<sup>3</sup> Beaumont P., “Walking Through Israel and Palestine: Why the Abraham Path is an Exercise in hope”, *the Guardian*, 11 December 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/11/abraham-path-israel-palestine-walking-tourism>

<sup>4</sup> Echoes of an ancient land through Turkey’s Abraham Path, 2013, Jess Lee <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20130404-echoes-of-an-ancient-land-along-turkeys-abraham-path>

economic and developmental approach by the Palestinian initiating partners, tourists can trace the paths of the Prophet Ibrahim in the West Bank. “[The] Masār Ibrāhīm is more than just a hiking trail. It is a means of meeting and making connections with Palestinians and hikers from all over the world. Masār Ibrāhīm does not only invite hikers to experience nature, but also to exchange their perspectives by sharing common values and tolerance for acquaintances along the way.”<sup>5</sup> According to George Rishmawi “Starting with about 2000 hikers, the Masār has received a total of about 70,000-80,000 hikers over the last ten years. The Masār Ibrāhīm al-Khalil makes us discover the historic, cultural and religious narrative of Canaanite history in Palestine” (Georges Rishmawi, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Other initiatives for the preservation and promotion of Palestinian heritage

This research study has identified a number of related initiatives that already work on giving value to and promote the diversity of cultural heritage in Palestine as a major component of its identity. Quite a number of Palestinian NGOs are using the available and documented knowledge of and insights on Palestinian popular heritage to serve their objectives and programs. As discussed in detail in Chapter 6 below, Performing Arts organizations, particularly those working in music, dance and theatre, artists and artistic initiatives have been pivotal in disseminating Palestinian traditional dance, “*Dabkah*,” and music, and transmitting the Palestinian “*Hikāya*” to diverse audiences locally and internationally.

### Documentation Centres

With regard to existing documentation and resources, in 1972 the Society of In‘āsh al-Usra, has established “the Research Committee for Social and Palestinian Popular Heritage” which was later named as the “Centre for Palestinian Popular Heritage,”<sup>7</sup> the first of its kind after the 1967 war. Since then, the Centre has been publishing the only heritage specialized magazine “al-Turath wāl Mujtam‘a” – Heritage and Society, which includes valuable studies, articles, book reviews, proverbs, stories, and songs about the different Palestinian oral traditions. The Centre for Heritage Studies has published valuable publications by different researchers and has hard copies of hundreds of popular proverbs, which await to be classified and electronically archived. The

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.travelpalestine.ps/article/153/>

<sup>6</sup> George Rishmawi, interview, Al-Ayyam newspaper, 13 August 2017.

<sup>7</sup> After 2005, it became “The Centre for the Studies of Heritage and Society”



Popular Art Centre (PAC) has archived about 220 hours of live-recorded songs from all historic Palestine as part of its program between 1994 to 1998, and produced two CDs from this rich material. They are categorized and used as a rich source for authentic lyrics and tunes of traditional songs and music; they are at the disposal of dance and singing groups and scholars in the field. PAC aspires to continue this field research to cover the coastal areas, including the Gaza Strip.

Tamer Institute (a community education institute established in Ramallah in 1989) has an interesting track on handling oral traditions. This is done through the active involvement of the young generation, usually school students in the different governorates, where Tamer has established the “reading clubs” since the early 1990s. These groups or students were trained to be the collectors and writers of the accounts of oral traditions and oral history. This process and the compiled stories are considered an enriching tool of learning and development for this young generation. Tamer Institute then publishes them in the form of high quality interactive and well-illustrated books for children and youth as part of its “publications unit.”<sup>8</sup>

The Palestinian Ministry of Culture (MOC) has been working on collecting and archiving a huge record of intangible popular heritage to be launched as the “National Archive of Heritage” when completed and financed. For this endeavor, the Ministry has been publishing different publications on the subject by renowned researchers and folklorists. It has also formed the initial national list of heritage items, including 18 items, which are still in progress<sup>9</sup>. There is also an important effort made by the Ministry of Education in schools, by encouraging extra-curricular activities on the subject, among others.

In addition, the opening of the Palestinian Museum in 2015, as a flagship of T‘āwon-Welfare Association, “presents and engages with new perspectives of the Palestinian history, society and culture.”<sup>10</sup> The Museum has an online portal –Palestinian Journeys, and has just completed the collection of 18,000 documents of photographic, audio, film and other material as a first phase in

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<sup>8</sup> [www.tamer.org](http://www.tamer.org)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.moc.pna.ps/article/1859/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.palmuseum.org>

creating a digital archive for about 145,000 documents over 3 years.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, “there are 32 museums in Palestine which received about 358,000 visitors in 2017.”<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, many initiatives in alternative tourism through hiking and more recently through cycling and climbing have emerged in the last 5-10 years. Initiatives like Al Rozana Society, Shat-ha, Pal-Tirhal, Safar Tijwal, Imshi, Kan‘aan Rangers, Palestine Wild Life Society, Abnā Kanaan, are among these initiatives.

Finally, a number of well-documented and published studies are available, the most important and relevant among them are referenced throughout this research paper.

## 2. Approach and Methodology

This research intends to make an inventory and synthesize the scientific research that already exists on the topic of oral traditions and memories, and fill the gaps through field research when needed. To do so, the research process has followed an adaptive and iterative approach in view of the availability of scientific research and other relevant documents.

### 2.1 Preliminary contextual research questions

In order to engage properly in this research study, a work methodology was drawn by the researchers and a number of preliminary questions were formulated as pointers to find information<sup>13</sup>:

1. To better comprehend the focus and aim of the research: *What is **the history of Masār Ibrāhīm** and its geographic boundaries? What are the limitations of this research? Where is the Masār situated in historic Palestine?* Chapter 1 presents initial information on the *Masār*, and Chapter 7 gives further reflections.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.maannnews.net/Content.aspx?id=965671>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=3077>

<sup>13</sup> Approved research plan and guidelines

2. On the topic itself: *What are the **different types of “oral traditions”**? What are the different forms in which “the oral traditions” are expressed in Palestinian heritage? What is the definition and main features of each? What do we mean by “orality, oral traditions, hikayāt, memories and histories”?* Aren't they an outstanding part of the Palestinian intangible heritage? An attempt to respond to these questions and categorize these terms is presented in Chapter 3, while Chapter 7 elaborates further on this classification.
3. In relation to **other initiatives** around and outside Masār Ibrāhīm and to possible synergies: *What other organizations are doing around and beyond the Masār? Which organizations? Are these activities documented? In what format?* Chapter 1 gives relevant information on Documentation Centres; Chapter 6 presents information on the visual and performing arts organizations that work with oral traditions.

## 2.2 General reflections leading to an iterative approach

At the start of the research process, a first quick scanning of electronically published material informed a first tentative outline<sup>14</sup> based on important themes that are the subject of oral expressions such as:

- a) Social events: Weddings, mourning, households, family and children.
- b) Religious rituals/ceremonies.
- c) Economic activities (harvest seasons, olive orchards, water, market, others).
- d) Political influences/Memories and stories of Al-Nakba of 1948 and Al-Naksa of 1967.

However, as work progressed, it became evident that it would be more productive to work according to the different **forms of oral expressions** (tales, songs, proverbs, etc.) and to explore within each form which of the above thematic subjects are captured and how<sup>15</sup> (first iteration). On the one hand, most studies deal with oral traditions according to distinct forms of expressions, while on the other, each form has its own subdivisions in themes and topics. In view of the scope proposed for this research assignment, it became also evident that there was a need to reflect thoroughly on and clarify the terminology before proceeding further. Related questions are mentioned in Section 2.1 above and Chapter 3 proposes clarifications on what is meant by terms

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<sup>14</sup> Research paper outline and research plan for this research study

<sup>15</sup> For this, a list of semi-structured questions was developed to guide the research (literature research and interviews, so as to ensure the best coverage of the aim of this research study.

such as “*orality, Hikayāt, traditions...*, *Dhikrayāt “memories”, etc.*”; from there a move was made to develop a more precise identification of different forms and themes of oral expressions (second iteration). This has led to propose the categorization of different **forms of oral expressions and related themes and sub-themes** as summarized in the table in Chapter 3. Consequently, this research paper is organized according to these proposed categories and discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and 5.

The search for relevant scientific research papers and other documents on oral expressions that relate specifically to the Masār in general and its localities has been disappointing. In the initial guidelines for the research<sup>16</sup> it was suggested that researchers indicate the extent to which documented information relate directly, indirectly or only in general terms to Masār Ibrahim. In fact, with regard to all the researched categories of oral expressions, we have found very few sources or nothing at all which relate directly to the Masār’s communities, and few (especially songs) related in an indirect way. Hence most of the material that was identified and examined relates only in a general way to the Masār. For each category, there is a different explanation. The traditional tales (“*Hikayāt*” and “*Ḳiṣaṣ*”) are almost of a universal value and nature. They are common to the whole cultural-geographical Levant area; the same fairy tales and “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” are narrated in very different parts of Palestine and this region, albeit with variations that acknowledge the specificities of an area (desert, coastal, mountains) and dialect as a distinctive factor (urban, rural and Bedouin dialects). The same applies more or less to the “*Aghānī*,” proverbs and riddles. For the “*Dhikrayāt*”, the memories/tales of recent history, there seems to be a very different reason for not finding enough sources directly related to the Masār. While Palestinian society was under extreme shock after the calamities of the Nakba, there were as on the whole very few initiatives taken to act immediately on documentation of all the terrible stories. Serious work on oral history collection started only in the early 80s. This was different for the Naksa, which witnessed a whole range of new initiatives of resistance, of political, social and/or cultural nature as described in Chapter 6. However, at the same time, there seems to have been quite some restraint to document personal and collective events and stories; one may say as a kind of self-censorship for various political and social internal and external reasons, be they the Israeli occupation or internal rivalries<sup>17</sup>. More details on this are given in Section 4.3, as well as in Chapter 7.

<sup>16</sup> Research Plan and Guidelines

<sup>17</sup> As is also mentioned in different field interviews



This glaring absence of specific documentation on the Masār has necessitated the alteration of the research approach and the introduction of a third and important iteration. In order for the research to be useful and relevant for the overall project, “*My Heritage! My Identity!*”, it was necessary to expand the scope and boundaries of this research, and to provide a broader framework on traditional and recent oral tales and expressions. Since these oral expressions are part of the intangible Palestinian heritage the research asserts that most of them can be of importance for the work that is foreseen to be done by the project around the Masār; this can be manifested in specific cultural and artistic activities or in educational and awareness raising ways. To make this possible the research has engaged in identifying and analyzing as many relevant documents as possible for each of the different categories of oral expressions, within the time given. The results are presented in Chapter 4, 5 and 6. It may be evident that this has necessitated investing substantial research time quite beyond the scope and mandate of this research assignment. While for some of the oral expressions this could be done in a more or less exhaustive or satisfactory way (“*Hikayāt*”, “*Aghānī*”/songs, amthāl “proverbs”), this may be less so for the “*Kīṣaṣ*” and “*Dhīkrayāt*”. To note still that it will require substantial extra time to explore further relevant documentation for these last two categories.

Even so, the search for relevant scientific research papers and other documents on the narrated oral expressions in general did not turn up much. While there is quite a few articles and papers that articulate how important it is to document and create awareness about the rich heritage of Palestinian folklore and oral traditions socially, historically and politically, there are a few scientific studies that effectively analyze these oral expressions in a scientific way. One great exception needs to be made here for the “*Hikayāt*”, the oral fairytales of Palestine, that have been researched in great depth by Muhawi and Kanaana (1997). This has allowed indeed a more detailed description and analysis of these oral fairytales in Section 4.2. To do the same about other oral expressions will be beyond the mandate of this research project, while it remains unclear whether this may deliver the same results for the “*Hikayāt*”. This observation maybe a basis for further research and documentation.

As for dialects, it is worth noting that dialects are a cross-cutting issue in the sense that all oral traditions adopt the dialect of the region where the tradition comes from and is collected. Moreover, there are always new local words and vocabulary which are integrated by the narrator



to let the listener better understand the meaning, but without changing the content and messages of the orally transmitted theme. A more detailed reflection on dialects is given in Chapter 5.

## 2.3 Methodology

With the above reflections and approach in mind, the work for this research study can be divided into four main activities:

A literature review of existing and available scientific research and other documents on oral traditions in Palestine in their different forms and themes that seem to be of relevance to the project around Masār Ibrāhīm, even if only few of them relate specifically to the Masār. Chapter 3 presents a categorization of these forms and themes. Chapters 4 on oral tales and 5 on other forms of oral expression provide, as best as possible, a comprehensive picture of what exists in available documents. More details on the documents research is given in section 2.4 below.

Field interviews: In view of the rather limited availability of documents that focus specifically on the localities of Masār Ibrāhīm, field interviews with knowledgeable persons focused on the extent to which these oral expressions are still alive and used in the localities along the Masār and if relevant, how they could be revived. Outcomes of these interviews gave indications for what oral expressions and themes can be selected for further work (outside this study) on awareness raising and education to preserve and promote the rich Palestinian cultural heritage; this is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Interviews with the art sector: Another series of interviews targeted visual artists and performing art practitioners to explore their use of oral traditions. The interviews explored what role and influence oral traditions have and can have in their contemporary artistic productions, and how artistic productions can be made useful to preserve these oral expressions. Chapter 6 highlights the outstanding examples of artistic works in dance, music, theatre and visual arts realized by artists and cultural organizations, and explores the potential for transmission and incorporation of oral traditions through contemporary expressions. To draw synergy and future plans with these entities by the project management and partner NGOs, recommendations are given in Chapter 7.

A synthesis with recommendations on the above researched and collected information.

A synthesis of and gaps in researched documentation, knowledge and awareness on the different oral traditions are mentioned in Chapter 7. Some of the recommendations focus on how to develop educational tools and awareness programs based on the different categories of oral traditions discussed in this research paper.

## 2.4 Document research

For this research, as requested, emphasis is given to the study, i.e. identification and categorization, of existing scientific published (formal publications) and “grey” literature (project reports, informal documents, etc.) and other documentation on oral folk stories through website and library research and meetings with selected organizations in Palestine. In an early phase of the research process, and in consultation with the project management, it was decided not to give a primary focus to documents that analyze the background, history, relevance, and the social, cultural and political implications of oral expressions. The focus should rather be on publications and other sources that document and categorize the oral expressions themselves for their significance to Palestinian society.

While there is a wealth of articles and publications in Arabic on websites on background and discussion around oral traditions, there are few resources relevant to the categorization and analysis according to forms, themes, topics and localities; there is only a small number of publications, mainly books, that relate and provide detailed examples of such oral expressions. Hence, an important effort had to be made in direct library research in different places.

### 3. Conceptual and organizational framework

#### 3.1 Clarifications of background and terminology

In order to reach the expected output of the research, it was necessary to bring consistency to the terminology. This was done by clarifying the general frame and the specific area of the research that was included under the general term of “oral traditions.”<sup>18</sup> The summary below provides a clarification/description of where these terms are derived from.

To give a brief historic background to the subject, it is worth noting that the interest in the study and documentation of Palestinian heritage dates back to the late Ottoman period. Mousa Aloush writes that “Particularly by German scholars following the signing of a cultural exchange agreement between the Ottomans and the Germans; they started studying the Palestinian society through its own popular traditions. Other Europeans, who came to Palestine, were from England and Finland, while others came from the USA and Russia. Many of their works on all aspects of popular life was documented but remained in their languages without translation into Arabic and had often a rather orientalist flavor. The British interest, which started in the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has increased after the British mandate over Palestine where they have established a unit specifically for this subject” (Aloush, 2018). A number of German scholars and orientalists like Gustaf Dalman, who published “*Work and habits in Palestine*” and the “*Palestinian Diwan*”, Hans Schmidt and Paul Kahle who wrote “*Popular Stories from Palestine*” and the Finish Helma Grangvist who wrote three books on Artas village, were among the best known because of these important publications. This interest by the Germans encouraged many Palestinians who were also interested to learn German like Tawfiq Can‘aan from Beit Jala and Jeries Mansour from Birzeit.

However, Salim Tamari wrote that “studies published between the two world wars by the pioneers like Dr. Tawfiq Can‘aan<sup>19</sup>, and others around him who focused on the ethnography of the

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<sup>18</sup> The researchers based their clarification of the term on the definition given by different researchers and as formulated by the Ministry of Culture: the Intangible, oral heritage includes *hikāyāt*, *Aghānī* “songs”, *ḳiṣaṣ*, *alghāz* - *uḥdjiyyāt* “riddles”, *amthāl* “proverbs, popular saying,” and oral history, and legends on battles and natural catastrophes, carried by the old generation <http://www.moc.pna.ps>

<sup>19</sup> For more details about Tawfiq Can‘aan, see: Nashef, K., “Tawfik Canaan: His Life and Works”, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, issue 16, 2002, pp. 12-26

Palestinians, laid the strong foundations for the research on popular heritage in Palestine and the Arab world in general” (Tamari, 2004). Nevertheless, this “has not formed a Palestinian folkloric movement. These early attempts were minimized after the Nakba of 1948, and the disruption of Palestinian society. After the 1967 war, the Palestinian national movement was revived, and this was a new and important phase for the development of a folkloric movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. With the establishment of the PLO, resources were channeled for the protection of the Palestinian heritage through establishing folklore research Centres, museums, dance groups, festivals, whereby the Palestinian folkloric movement has become the most active in the Arab world in the 70’s and 80’s of the last century” (Kanaana, 2017). In view of the different wars, turmoil’s and political development in Palestine, this interest in folklore has been growing and translated in different ways.

To understand this historic development, we have to clarify the terminology linked to our research. Our main reference here are the clarifications given by Dr. Shareef Kanaana who starts by making a clear and “vertical” distinction between the “formal” and “informal” culture of any society, both of which form the identity of a nation. “The “formal” refers to what is transmitted from one generation to the other through formal institutions such as education, religious, laws and regulations. The “informal” culture or style of popular living is a spontaneous collective outcome that expresses needs, feelings and sentiments of people in general, transmitted through the generations and groups, orally and spontaneously by imitations, observations and similes. However, symbols inspired by popular culture are the most important factor in forming collective identity, its protection and sustainability” (Kanaana, 2017). A “horizontal” distinction between these types of cultures, according to Kanaana, can be made between “heritage” and “non-heritage”. Heritage is usually divided into “tangible” and “non-tangible”. Examples of tangible heritage may include architecture, costumes, archeological sites, handicrafts, etc. Our interest here is the “popular cultural heritage” of Palestinian society which is referred to as “folklore” as a western adopted term (Kanaana, 2017)<sup>20</sup>. This “popular heritage” or folklore has at least ten different features (Kanaana, 2017). Among these features, “orality” is an important one. Orality and oral traditions are the focus of our research; they include “*Aghānī*” (songs), “*Kaṣā’id*” (poems),

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<sup>20</sup> The origin of the word “folklore” comes from two syllables: “folk” meaning people, and “lore” meaning knowledge of wisdom, according to the definition proposed by William J Thoms, in 1846 referring to people’s beliefs, legends, traditions, songs, stories, proverbs.

“*Hikāyāt*” (fairy tales), “*Kiṣaṣ*” (legends and epic adventures), “*Alghāz-uhdjiyyāt*” (riddles), and “*Amthāl*” (proverbs). These oral traditions have prompted a lot of research and activities that aimed to revive, protect and promote them; they are on the top of the list of popular/non tangible heritage. Some researchers call it also “popular literature”; Dr. Abd Ellatif Al-Barguthi uses the term to describe “all what is considered oral arts that are transmitted in the local inherited dialect, with anonymous authors and is part of folklore. It contains prose and rhythmic literature where songs and poems are part of the rhythm, and proverbs, stories and fairy tales are part of the prose” (Barguthi, 1989).

These traditions reflect people’s daily, social and spiritual life. Oral traditions or expressions are vehicles for transmitting knowledge, social and cultural values of any society through the generations, which form the collective memory of a society and people. In Palestine and in other regions, these expressions or forms of transmission find their roots in many cases in the historical and societal context of thousands of years. As Dr. Kanaana writes “Some have reached us from ancient cultures like the Pharaoh’s, Assyrian, Phoenicians and others, while other stories might have reached us from the ancient cultures of China and India” (Kanaana, 2017). They have been evolving and changing in view of the different historic events and often to related turmoil that prevailed in Palestine. They are not stagnant forms but continue to be transmitted, exist and develop.

The term “*Hikāyāt*” according to many scientists (Muhawi and Kanaana, 1997; and others), is restricted to fairy tales and fables. This research study uses this precisely defined term of “*Hikāyāt*” for fairy tales and fables, and uses the title/heading “*folk tales and other oral expressions*” as the overall container for all of the above oral traditions. Other folk tales will deal with the “*Kiṣaṣ*” and the “*Dhikrayāt*”.

In view of the particular Palestinian context under occupation, oral memories describing the Nakba of 1948 and other political and resistance-related events have become an important part of the transmitted oral traditions of Palestine, as they are part of the collective memory. For this category of stories, the term “*Dhikrayāt*”, “oral memories of recent history” is used, which includes stories of the recent history and daily social life, as described in the table below (p.14).

It is important to clarify here the term “oral history,” which according to Dr. Adel Yehia, “is the term broadly used among scholars to refer to the “history of life”. It is the study of the recent past through eyewitness narratives; it is people’s oral narratives of their lives, experiences, observations and events particularly those they have personally gone through or witnessed. Collections of such oral narratives or memories are done through recording audio or video personal interviews” (Yehia, 2002). These oral memories or “*Dhikrayāt*” have become crucially important in asserting the Palestinian narrative as part of protecting Palestinian cultural identity and the struggle to remain recognized as a people with its own culture, heritage and societal principles. Al-Rowat Studies Centre strongly states that “Through narrating their own stories, Palestinians contribute to the enrichment of a principled Palestinian account and formation of a collective Palestinian narrative” (Al-Rowat, 2017). This research project explored what is documented as stories related to the recent political history in Section 4.3. The traditional tales, the “*Kiṣṣa*” and the “*Hikāyāt*” are respectively discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

### 3.2 Conceptual framework for the research study

Almost all of the forms/expressions of oral tradition deal with sets of different themes or topics, which reflect and transmit all dimensions of society: family, social, political, economic, spiritual and environmental.

To capture all the distinct forms of oral traditions, each with its own subdivisions in themes and topics, it was necessary to develop an organizational framework for the whole arena of forms/expressions and content. This allows for giving a distinctive description for each form, its origins, main features, themes and utilization in people’s lives. As the research study evolved, an overall distinction in forms/expressions was made between TALES and OTHER FORMS of oral tradition. The graphic proposed below helps to clarify terminology used when studying “oral traditions” while at the same time providing an organizational framework, a sort of hierarchical order, of different forms in which oral traditions are expressed and researched in this document.

Palestinian Popular Heritage/Folklore						
Intangible Expressions						Tangible Expressions
Oral Traditions						
TALES			OTHER FORMS			
<b>Ḥikāyāt</b> (Fairy Tales and Fables) related to	<b>ḳiṣaṣ</b> (legends and Epic adventures )	“ <b>Dhikrayāt</b> ” (recent oral history memories)	<b>Aghānī</b> “Songs” and <b>ḳaṣā'id</b> “Poems” for	<b>amthāl</b> “Proverbs” for	<b>Alghāz-uhḍjiyyāt</b> Riddles on	Architecture
Individual Identity	Biographic epics (sira)	Stories about heroes of the 1930s	Weddings	seasons and weather conditions	The political	Embroidery
Family	Legends	Stories related to the Nakba (1948)	Mourning, lamenting	social trends and values	The economic	Pottery
Society	(Bedouin) adventures (ghazw and mugamarat)	Stories related to the Naksa (1967)	Collective work and seasons (economic, environment )	Characteristics of cities	The intellectual	Clothes
Environment		Stories of the Intifadas	Religious ceremonies and seasons	Health issues	The human being	Other handicraft
Universe			Children	Feasts and superstitions	Natural features	
			About tales and Ḥikāyāt	Metaphors of factual life	Animals	
			Patriotic			

Section 3.3 elaborates on the distinctive descriptions of the main forms of oral traditions researched in this document and of the different themes that are covered by each of these forms. Chapters 4 (stories) and 5 (other forms) give a comprehensive idea of the diversity of oral traditions in Palestinian culture, and present short examples of stories, poems, etc.

### 3.3 Short descriptions of the oral forms of expression in Palestinian folklore

#### 3.3.1 The oral tales

The tales, with their different forms, are the backbone of popular heritage or folklore and its oral tradition. Distinction is made between the folkloric tales and the stories of more recent history.

**The folkloric tales** encompass two distinctive types according to the definitions of Muhawi and Kanaana, 1997, in their book “قول يا طير” (*Speak bird, speak again*)<sup>21</sup> (translated into Arabic and French).

The “**Ḳiṣaṣ**”: epics (“*sīra*”) or legends which are inspired by historical or religious events or adventure stories, told by men or popular narrators (the *hakawati*) in the “*Dīwān*”, the men’s meeting place in one of the houses of the community. The “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” are further described in Chapter 4.1.

The “**Ḥikāyāt**”: fairy tales and fables told mainly by older women in the close family circle, giving a moral at the end and mostly addressing behavior and family relations. The main themes these fairy tales deal with concern: (1) the individual and his/her identity; (2) the family and their internal relations; and (3) the wider society, the physical and economic context and the universe/spiritual dimension. In an often-metaphoric way, these fairy tales unravel the unspoken feelings and sentiments that are often placed in the taboo sphere; they help the listeners to understand and live with these often-contradicting feelings. The “*Ḥikāyāt*” are further described in Chapter 4.2

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<sup>21</sup> The Arabic title “Qul ya ter . قول يا طير. French title “*Il était plusieurs fois ...; contes populaires palestiniens*”



It is worth noting that other folklorists and researchers have given different classifications to the ‘stories’ or tales. For example, Omar Al-Sarisi gives 18 different types of stories according to an interview with Hamza Aqrabawi, who says that any classification according to themes can be considered fine.<sup>22</sup>

### **“*Dhikrayāt*”, oral memories of recent history:**

This third category of tales concerns the popular and political/resistance-related stories that are remembered and narrated by people, especially in the period from the 1930s onwards. In view of the different wars and the occupation, particularly the major massive uprooting of the Palestinians in 1948 and in 1967, these critical events have given birth to another form of stories for the Palestinian people that can be labeled as “resistance stories”. For example, they can be related to popular heroes back in the 30’s, or “stories of the Intifada”. This is what scholars call “oral history”, given the term “*Dhikrayāt*” in this research paper.

In fact, the question of the reliability of these oral or eyewitness sources is questioned. As Dr. Yehia phrased it, “the reliability of oral testimony is not complete. Memories are often based on perceptions and expectations, and are customarily affected by the state of mind of the narrator at the time. This however, does not mean that the oral testimonies especially of eyewitnesses are invalid” (Yehia, 1999).

### **3.3.2 Other forms of oral expression**

These other forms of oral expressions are presented in the form of **songs, poems, proverbs and riddles in Chapter 5.**

### **Aghānī wā kasā'id “Songs and Poems”:**

As a tool for expressing different human feelings, songs usually accompany collective ceremonies and occasions; wedding songs and traditional dance forms are the most known. There are also either children’s songs sung for children like the “Lullabies” or other songs repeated by children. There are songs for religious celebrations. In view of the different political and historic developments in Palestine, there are political and resistance songs, which have developed in

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<sup>22</sup> Interview 8/10/2018, Hamza Aqrabawi, a popular narrator and coordinator of Ḥākāyā Festival in Palestine

different eras. Different categories of traditional songs are given in detail in Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 covers the transformation of traditional expressions and their influence on the contemporary artistic expressions.

### **Amthāl “Proverbs”:**

Proverbs are concise phrases giving a wise thought and a strong meaning, which is popular and well known by a large number of people. They describe or give meanings to the sum of daily life practices; therefore, we can categorize proverbs according to the different occasions, seasons, rituals, ceremonies and simple daily life practices as will be detailed in Chapter 5. Anecdotes are integrated in proverbs where many of these anecdotes or jokes are formulated in a proverb but is given in a humorous or even a sarcastic mode.

### **Riddles**

Riddles – in Arabic “*hazazeer*” or “*uḥḍjiyyāt*” are also orally transmitted, short phrases like “*amthāl*”, yet they contain intriguing words, which are simple but have deep connotations; this indicates the popular roots of riddles and their contribution to forming collective traditions. They also have political, social economic and mental features and dimensions as detailed in Chapter 5.

Although people link riddles to entertainment, they are one of the oldest creative forms, which appeared in different cultures. Some scholars even believe that it was the first intuitive reaction of the first humans to understand the secrets of nature and, therefore, reveal many features and facts, which have formed their development over the centuries.

## **4. Analysis and description of different folk tales**

### **4.1 General Overview**

As proposed in Chapter 2, oral traditions and memories were divided in this research into two main groups, the tales and stories, on the one hand, and the songs, poems, proverbs and riddles

on the other. The tales and stories are dealt with in this chapter; the second group in Chapter 5. Among the tales three very different categories are distinguished here: *the “Kīṣaṣ”*, the epic adventures and legends; *the “Ḥikāyāt”*, the fairy tales and fables; and the *“Dhīkrayāt”*, the oral memories of recent history.

This division is based on the distinctions made by Kanaana (2007)<sup>23</sup>, where he divides tales or collective narratives in traditional ones and more recent ones. The traditional or fairy tales are those told by Palestinians, mainly peasants in rural areas, who lived more or less a stable homogenous life in the period up to the Nakba of 1948. The beginning of the *“Nakba”* signaled a critical rupture in Palestinian life, society, culture and hence also in the type of narrative. These traditional tales are typically different in men’s and women’s tales. As will be discussed below, the men’s tales are generally associated with truth and believability (4.2), while the women’s tales are associated with fiction and imagination (4.3).

After the political upheavals of 1948, many changes occurred in the types of narratives, the styles of narration and the customs around them (Kanaana, 2007). Indeed, quite a different type of narrative, or **oral memory**, came into being, which more or less replaced the traditional men’s tales in particular. This third category of tales, the *Dhīkrayāt*, is further discussed in section 4.4.

Other factors that worked against the persistence of traditional folktales is the invasion of Palestinian homes by TVs and other modern mass media in the early 1970’s. This was confirmed to the researchers through the field interviews.

Most of the research done on traditional folk tales stems from three different sources (Kanaana, 2007): (1) the oral histories recorded over the last 50 years from men and women old enough to know much of the traditional folklore; (2) folklore literature published by European orientalists in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and (3) folklore records collected since around 1920 by native Palestinian folklorists trained by European orientalists, and preserved in books and articles, mainly in English, French and German.

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<sup>21</sup> Kanaana, S., 2007. *Half a century of Palestinian Folk Narratives*. In” This Week in Palestine. Issue nr 105, January 2007. [www.thisweekinpalestine.com](http://www.thisweekinpalestine.com)

## 4.2 *Kīṣaṣ*, epic and adventure stories

The “*Kīṣaṣ*” are mainly historic and epic stories and legends narrated among men in the “*Dīwān*”, the meeting place for men in the community. Although as youngsters, boys have been nourished by the tales of the “*Hikāyāt*”, the imaginary stories told mostly by women in the family circle (see Section 4.3), when growing up and getting inserted in the men’s world they tend to avoid the *Hikāyāt* story telling events, finding it rather unmanly, just good for women and children. The “*Kīṣaṣ*” are of a whole other nature, and tend to be more realistic and probable than “*Hikāyāt*”, although they have often not taken place in reality. But they could have passed for real and usually tell of heroic deeds, escapades, bizarre landscapes, long-lasting love affairs, sacrifices and supernatural forces. Most of them were composed in the Mamluk period, roughly between the thirteenth and sixteenth century. Also, here different categories can be distinguished (Muhawa and Kanaana, 1997; Kanaana, 2007): the most preferred ones are the “*Sīra*”, epic biographies of men that may have or may have not lived. They may or may not have a historic factual basis, but still provide a highly colorful and skillfully-structured panorama of the past (Kanaana, 2007). Examples of this include the stories of Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, or ‘Antara bin *Shaddād*. Generally, they are told in a chanting style and accompanied by the *rababa*, a music instrument with one string. Another category is the stories of attacks (*ghazw*) and adventures (*mughamarat*) of the Bedouin, also called “*mini-sira*”. They are usually shorter, less sophisticated and less structured than the “*Sīra*”. A third category in the “*Kīṣaṣ*” are the legends, either religious stories about prophets, saints, tombs, shrines and sanctuaries or legends that interpret names of local sites such as caves, wells, hills and springs or family names and nicknames (Kanaana, 2007). Also, the legend has some truth in it, but many exaggerated additions have accumulated in it over time. This opinion is also shared by Dr. Idris Jaradat (2015) who states that “legends have been connected to popular and religious rituals inherited through the generations and came out as a result of cultural and geographic diversity of Palestine.” Dr. Jaradat continues by saying that “these legends have also been connected with the “*maḳāmāt*” spreading in Palestine; there are about 500 “*Maḳām*” in Palestine, which people can’t attack or destroy.” Dr Jaradat attributes the legends around these “*maḳāmāt*”, which are either a tree, an old shrine or a cave, to the religious factor.

According to Nimre Sarhan, in his Bibliography of Palestinian Folklore, “legends carry religious beliefs and justifications. For Palestinians, as monotheists, legends contain stories related to

God’s beloved or selected prophets; some legends might be about “*Walī - awliyā*” whom God has privileged with miracles”. Sarhan gives at least two legends on Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl, and two about Al-Khadir (St. George) (Sarhan, 1989). In the following Box some other legends on prophets are mentioned.

**Box 1. Some examples of legends about the prophets, as part of the “*Ḳiṣaṣ*”**

- ❖ Lot’s dilemma – the cousin of Ibrāhīm: The white flower of innocence...about a girl from Artas
- ❖ Solomon’s pools
- ❖ Legends of Bethlehem
- ❖ Mar Saba Stories (source: Issa Massou – Religious stories from Bethlehem)
- ❖ al-Khadir Tales

As mentioned above, shortly after 1948, traditional story telling changed in different ways. The “*Ḳiṣaṣ*”, the traditional narrative genres associated with truth and believability, the men’s genres, ceased to be used as frequently as the “*Hikāyāt*”, the genres associated with fiction and imagination, the women’s genres (Kanaana, 2007). They were very quickly replaced by the stories about the war and the lost country. Possibly this fast change is due to the fact that the traditional “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” are related to the immediate environment and geography of a place from which people got disconnected in the wake of the Nakba. In addition, men tend to consider the traditional tales increasingly irrelevant under the drastic new circumstances of 1948 and afterwards, especially for those who had to flee and settle elsewhere, the refugees (Kanaana, 2007). When asked about the change of narrative after 1948, the interviewees also confirmed this. The Box below provides a very small sample of titles of “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” that were told before 1948. During the interviews, references were made to some stories that were also circulating about popular heroes, or feudal landowners at the time. “It was difficult for us as children, to believe, if such stories were true or exaggerated making them unbelievable like the story of the feudal Salameh Ali, from Dura”<sup>24</sup>

**Box 2. Some examples of “*Sira*” or traditional epic legends, as part of the “*Ḳiṣaṣ*”**

- ❖ Abū Zayd al-Hilāli (epic about pre-Islamic hero)

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Yousef Nassar, Manager of “Kana’an’s Sons Society for Heritage Conservation” Dura, October 30, 2018

- ❖ ‘Antara b. Shaddād (about a pre-Islamic hero)
- ❖ Mansour Bin Nasser (researchers refer to it to be from □ al-‘Attara village located 15 kilometers Southwest Jenin.)
- ❖ Im al-Nuthour (a woman hero)
- ❖ Madjnūn Laylā “the Madman of Laylā”, or Madjnūn Banī ‘Āmir (a love story)
- ❖ Gilgamish (from Iraq)

Source: interviews and common knowledge

### 4.3 *Ḥikāyāt*, fairy tales told in the family circle

This chapter focuses on the “*Ḥikāyāt*” as an important form of the oral traditional expressions. In its strict sense the “*Ḥikāyāt*” (fairytales, “*contes de fée*” in the French language) only deal with stories mostly told by women narrators in the close family confines of the house around an oil lamp or a fire in winter. It is only one among other forms of oral traditions such as songs, poems, proverbs, the “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” and the “*Dhīkrayāt*”, discussed in other sections. The “*Ḥikāyāt*” tell about fairy tales and fables and have often a mythical, artistic and educational nature. Just like other fairy tales “*Ḥikāyāt*” are not time-bound or space-bound. There is hence no or little indication of being specific to a historical period or a specific area.

For this literature review, the division of the “*Ḥikāyāt*” among different themes follows a very authoritative and exhaustive study on Palestinian fairy tales by Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana (1997). The different themes as defined by these scholars can be organized for our purpose into three main categories: (1) the individual and his/her identity; (2) the family and its internal relations; and (3) the wider society, the physical and economic environment and the universe with its spiritual dimensions. For each theme, a short synopsis is given below (based on Muhawi/Kanaana, 1997). As argued in an exhaustive Ph.D. dissertation by Farah Abū Bakr Al-Khammash (2014) with regard to the fairy tales presented and analyzed by Muhawi & Kanaana, these fairy tales reinforce the discourse of cultural resistance and cultural identity. As mentioned, Palestinian folklorists have sought to collect, document, analyze and translate pre-1948 Palestinian folktales to fight forgetfulness, denial and falsification by the Israeli settler-colonial

narrative, while connecting memory to different generations across time and space, and hence creating a narrative of continuity. According to Al-Khammash (2014), the collection of fairy tales by Muhawi and Kanaana, referred to in this section of the research paper, is an outstanding example of such a collection. The research study of Al-Khammash itself provides an in-depth analysis of the Palestinian folktale genre and its power in framing Palestinian memory.

As mentioned earlier, the “*Hikāyāt*” did not lose its importance in Palestinian society the way “*Kīṣaṣ*” did. The fairytale has survived, but is much less vigorous than it once was. They are now more often heard among women in refugee camps than among Palestinian women who stayed in their original home-towns and villages. This could be because fairytales are told within the context of the extended family and deal with the concerns of women within the family and that despite all the disruption that occurred within Palestinian society, or maybe because of it, have managed to stay much intact, and have actually become much stronger, especially among Palestinian refugees. Several studies have shown that solidarity within the extended family has become the most important survival strategy for Palestinian refugees. Another possible reason for the survival of traditional fairytales is that they are fictitious and imaginary and connected with basic human needs and desires and thus not highly influenced by immediate changes in the society and political environment as a whole (Kanaana, 2007).

**It needs to be noted that very few of the fairy tales presented here make a link to a geographic location let alone to the Masār Ibrāhīm. Where a geographic reference is made, this is indicated in boldface** and was verified through the field research. In these cases, the reference is made to the place where the fairy tale is collected. This does not mean that the tale is specific to that area. In reality, these tales are common to Palestine and the whole Arab world and are narrated in many different places, albeit with slight variations and sometimes under different names, as for example the fairy tale of “*the cicada*” that in another version is known as “*the little cockroach*”. Moreover, dialects of the narration as well as some vocabulary are features that give indication about the geographic and social dimensions of the same “*Hikāyāt*.” Many of these fairy tales, especially under the first categories (identity and family) deal in a metaphorical way with the unspoken feelings and sentiments often in the taboo sphere that people are experiencing; they help them to understand and live with these often-contradictory feelings. Note that language is often used and situations described that are largely taboo in common life. These



fairy tales translate and bring to the surface the essential matters in human relations of the Palestinian culture and social fabric. Therefore, they are important for social cohesion, cultural heritage and Palestinian identity.

The main text of this report provides for examples of the themes dealt with in the different tales presented by the different authors referenced. The other tales documented are shortly abstracted in Annex 1 that organizes the different fairy tales collected and presented according to these themes and their key notes.

### **Short synopsis of each theme/topic in the Hikāyāt**

#### **TOPIC 1: The individual's identity**

##### **Parents and children (individual identity)**

In one tale, the silent wish of a mother for a daughter is revealed, while at the same time it expresses how the daughter's wish for liberty may endanger the family's honor ( *Tunjur Tunjur* (طنجر طنج) ). In two fairy tales the important mother/son relationship is dealt with, and notably how the change of roles of the son and sexual jealousy viz`a viz the daughter-in-law (*The wife who marries her son*) or the mother's need for attention from her son and sexual jealousy ( *Swes*, شويش شويش), push her to marry him. In two other fairy tales "*The beloved and the blemished one*" and "*The golden bowl*" the often-problematic father/son relations are discussed and notably the son's struggle for independence and individual identity is emphasized through challenging the parental authority. **The last tale makes a reference to Upper Galilea.**

##### **Brother and sister rivalries (individual identity)**

One of the fairy tales ( *Half-half – nus nseis* نص نصيص ) expresses siblings' rivalries, by exaggeration, as in polygamy situations, but also the spirit of generosity that characterizes the hero or heroine. Another one (*Sumac, son of a whore, sumac!*) presents a hostile sister/brother relationship with the sister being a *ghūl*, while emphasizing the family's honor as one of the most important assets of a family that cannot be transgressed.



The other three tales note-attitude of eternal love and tenderness between brothers and sisters; the protection given by the brother to his sister and the risks taken by a sister to save her brothers (“الطير الأخضر” *Green bird*”, “بقرة اليتامى” *The cow of the orphans*” and “ليليل الصياح” *The nightingale crier*”), but also as in the third one, the jealousy between sisters especially when one of them gets a first child. In a very delicate way, the taboo subject of sexuality is dealt with. The fairy tale of “*The Mother of Rags*” relates the jealousy of the older brothers and sisters towards their youngest sister, the preferred one by their mother.

### Box 3. The Mother of Rags

The youngest sister was always known to being busy with spinning, weaving and sewing. When their parents left for Mecca, the older children threw the young one’s little chicken in the well. They helped their sister to go down in the well to save her chicken, but then disappeared so that she could not get out of the well. In the well (an important object for many superstitions) she discovered a path that led to a palace. She entered but hid in a cupboard of a toilet when someone approaches. It was the king who needed to go to the toilet. When done, she cried out that she was the daughter of his fart and he adopted her. When her mother came back from Mecca, she brought presents for all the children, the biggest and most beautiful one being for her youngest daughter. When she asked where her youngest one was the others told her that she disappeared and her mother was very sad. In the meantime, the adopted daughter of the king married his nephew, a handsome man during the night but who transforms into a bird during day time. Flying around he often sat on the house of his wife’s family and heard the brothers and sisters speaking about the present for their young sister and where the mother had hidden it. He entered the house and tried to take the present with him, shouting “this is the present of the Mother of Rags” but was chased away every day by the sisters and brothers. One day, when the mother saw this happening she understood and said let him alone, I want to hear what he says and to see what he does. **Fairy tale collected in the Bethlehem area (Husein and Kanaana, 2008)**

### **Sexual awakening and gallantries (individual identity)**

The five fairy tales illustrate the first sexual sentiments and how to communicate these to the person in question: “*The little bird* العصفور الزغيرة ” and “*Jummez bin Yāzur* جميز بن يازو , *the chief bird*”. **The second fairy tale makes reference to Yāzur, a village in the coastal plane about 6 kilometers east of Yaffa.** In “*djbeineh* جبينة” a girl tries to hide or deny all these confusing feelings awakening in her. This tale of “*Father Sackcloth*” deals with the sexual pre-sentiments that create such confusion in a little girl that she wants to cover herself entirely in an ugly sackcloth, so that nobody wants anymore to touch her. Only later when she is more confident she accepts her sexuality. In “شاهين Sahin” it is the girl who takes the initiative, is more mature and who makes *Sahin* conscious of his virility. The tale completely reverses the roles young men and women have in traditional society. It also shows how boys are troubled by these awakening sentiments and how they could deal with it. In three of the fairy tales, the heroes/heroines disguise themselves to mask their confusions about these delicate and taboo feelings. In the other two tales, strong use is made of metaphors (as in many other fairy tales) to make it easier to convey the culturally complex messages of the tale to the young and older listeners, messages that are difficult to transmit directly. These five fairy tales also illustrate in a way the power women have thanks to their sexuality, at the same time exposing the conflict between this female sexuality and the social superiority of the men.

### **In search of a partner (individual identity)**

In a very realistic way the fairy tale of “*the brave lad* الشاب الشجاع ” makes clear the interaction of the social forces and exigencies that determine the quest for finding a partner. It shows how “*the brave lad*,” who searches for a female partner receptive to his approach and who desires to help him, has first to neutralize an authoritarian power (killing a *ghūl*) before asking the hand of the young girl in marriage. The tale of “*Gazelle* غزالة ” describes how the hero has to capture the spirit of *Djinn* by killing three monsters who threaten the village, and only by passing a test could he ask for the hand of the girl in marriage. **The Gazelle fairy tale is collected in Turmus’ayya, between Nablus and Ramallah, not too far from the Masār Ibrahim.** In “لولبة *Lolabe*” the quest of a young boy to marry *Lolabe* is linked to the realization of a wish that will benefit all the inhabitants of the town, and especially the poor and the miserable. The fairy tale of “the Coat of Feathers” is about how a girl finds her partner.

#### **Box 4. The Coat of Feathers**

A mother expresses her desire to have a girl, even if it is in the form of a chicken. And so happens, God has honored her wish. When the chicken has grown up, she wants to leave the house and find fruit for her mother. Near a water basin in the garden of the palace she sheds her feathers and becomes a beautiful girl. After her bath she puts on her coat of feathers, collects the fruit and returns home. The prince discovers her and wants to marry her even if she is a chicken. His mother refuses until she discovers that the chicken is the beautiful girl she met in the palace of the king. And they were all happy. The tale possibly projects the often-existing early resistance of the husband's mother to her daughter-in law. **Fairy tale collected in the Bethlehem area (Husain and Kanaana, 2008)**

In the four fairy tales a test has first to be passed, often an act for the public good (for example killing a bad spirit or the monsters) has to be achieved, before an intimate desire can be realized. This act in the name of public good must also demonstrate that the young lovers are capable of working together; cooperation is necessary to break the lines of parental authority and to build the new lines of reciprocal love and marital cooperation. The fairy tales also note the complexity and importance of the female role. In a cultural and social context where the choice of a partner is of vital importance to the community, those who persist to make their own choices have to make many sacrifices (the quests) to attain their goal. Defeating the supernatural forces of the djinns or the superhuman forces of a ghouls symbolizes this quest, where ghouls and djinns often represent in an imaginary way the obstructive parental authority and their protectiveness and excessive love.

## **TOPIC 2: The Family**

### **The newly wed (Family)**

These fairy tales explore different ways to make the best of a marriage, and this especially in its initial phase, just after the wedding. As we have seen in “in search of a partner”, the compatibility of the newly wedded partners is crucial to succeed a harmonious marriage, and hence, in the social Palestinian system, the choice of the right partner is of extreme importance. There are,

therefore, many reasons for the newly wedded to be concerned when the choice is made by their parents, and for the parents, when the choice is made by the two young people themselves. In three of the fairy tales, either the newly wedded or the parents discover that the right choice has been made: “العجوز والغولة *The old woman (hag) and the ghoule*,” “الست تتر” *Dame Tatar*,” “الخنفسة/Cicada” and “شوقك بوقك” *Soqak Boqak*.” “الشاطر حسن” *Hasan the streetsmart*” is blends two different tales, one about the conflict generated by the sexuality of the hero’s mother, and the other about the battles the hero, Hasan the Brave, has to wage against the enemies of his father-in law. The story of “الخنفسة” *The little cockroach*” or “*the Cicada*,” relates how a young woman leaves the house to find her husband – in traditional Palestinian society a mother will never allow this. Nonetheless she finds herself the husband who meets all the criteria as recommended by her mother. At the same time the fairy tale stresses the importance of loyalty in a wedded couple and the need to come to each other’s rescue.

**Box 5. الخنفسة The cicada or the little cockroach (two variants of in essence the same fairy tale)**

The cicada or the little cockroach came into life when a mother asked God to give her a daughter, even if it is a cicada/cockroach. The cicada/little cockroach got to an age to marry and she went outside looking for a husband. Two candidates, a camel and a bull were refused by her mother (too big), but the third one, a rat (a mouse in Muhawi/Kanaana), was accepted and they married. Later, when she was looking for water, she fell in the well and cried for help. A horseman passed by and she asked him to call her husband the mouse/rat, threatening him that if he would not do that he will be glued to his saddle and not able to come off the horse. The horseman ignored her and arriving home he could not leave his saddle. He remembered what the cicada/ little cockroach had said, and called with a loud voice for the rat. The mouse/rat came quickly and tried to save her. Using his tail, he managed to get the little cockroach out of the well and lived on in their little paradise; it demonstrates the loyalty between a wedded couple.

**The little cockroach fairy tale is collected in the Bethlehem area (Hussain and Kanaana, 2008), the same story but under the name of cicada, is situated in the Galilea and mentions Akko and Lake Tiberias (Muhawi and Kanaana, 1997).**

## Husbands and wives (Family)

Also under this sub-theme, sexuality is an essential topic. The fairy tales provide the opportunity to approach these issues more openly, as in “real life”, it is almost taboo to discuss them. A key concern remains to be the man’s virility, for both wife and husband. The fairy tales explore the different compartments of men and women, noting that especially the men are more afraid of not having the virility required, even when women in public are very careful to demonstrate openly their sexuality. In society virility is closely linked to fertility and the different tales presented illustrate very openly all the problems this can create especially for the wives. Having no children or rather, no sons, is at the heart of the problems that are recurrent in all the tales in this group. The absence of descendants and especially sons is at the heart of the concerns and problems married couples are facing and expressed in “إم عيشة” *Im Ese* and the other fairy tales. With time the frustration about the couple’s sterility brings husbands to accuse their wives for it. Also in the fairy tale “منجل” *Minjal*, the wife whose name is the word for an ordinary instrument (sickle) bears the consequences. She has to insist she is called for in a way that guarantees the respect of others. **The fairy tale “Minjal” was collected in Upper Galilee.** In “قضيبي الذهب بوادي العتيق” *Verge d’Or of the Cornalyne valley* the fairy tale highlights the bad side of sexuality where the anxiety of the husband about his virility is explained by the sexual voracity of the three wives. The fairy tale of “إم السبع خمائر” *The women with seven leaven “seeds”* makes clear the hypocrisy of the husband, who when confronted with his sterility and hence his presumed inferiority he beats his wife to compensate for his frustration or accuses her of having a secret lover. For a woman the frustration of sterility is even bigger, as in a traditional society a woman without a son has practically no identity and security. The tale touches an essential point that only when the wife gives birth to a son, she is considered and treated with care and respect.

## Family life (The Family)

The theme under this section deals especially with the conflicting loyalties to the parental extended family and the new young family of a husband. The “بيط قفاقيس” *Chick eggs* fairy tale brings to the surface the potential conflicts related to a polygamy situation and in this case between the husband’s wife and his daughter who represents his own mother and his family of birth. In “غولة شرق الأردن” *The ghoul of Trans-Jordan*, the tale elaborates on the conflicts brought about by the extended family. Divided between his wife and his family of birth, the husband, at

the price of his life, chooses his parental aunt. The king in “دبة المطبخ *The little kitchen bear*” has to divide his fidelity among his earlier wives, who unite against a new and beautiful one. The latter one protects herself by kidnapping her new husband, the king, in the metamorphic disguise of a djinn. In general, and in this tale the oldest wife will triumph. The fairy tale of “مقطعة اليدين *The woman with the amputated hands*” also elaborates on problems related to the extended family. The husband chooses here to believe his wife rather than his sister, bringing him to a difficult situation. The sister, however, is kind, forgives him and receives him back in his natal family.

**Box 6.** نعبيس Nbayyis (Sleepy) In this fairy tale the only son is torn apart between his two families by the supernatural forces of a Djinn, personified by his wife, who wants him to renounce his own family. The forces of the djinn, however, are fought against so as to re-integrate the son in his proper family. The implicit moral that one can draw from three of these fairy tales is that the parental family bonds are so strong that they can even defeat the forces of a Djinn.

### **TOPIC 3: Society and the wider environment**

#### **Society (society and the wider environment)**

The series of fairy tales in this section deal in a metaphoric way with those relations of the individual and society that are not strictly part of the family realm, notably concerning values of being a good neighbor and help to others in distress. The tales relate how such social harmony can be tipped off balance, when persons with qualities or having something that others are jealous of, attract negative forces. Although not explicitly mentioned, the power of the “evil eye” is considered an important instrument of such jealousy, notably about children, fortune and sexuality. The destructive actions are often personified by ghouls or djinns. The fairy tale of “إم عواد والغولة *Im Awwad and the ghoule*” relates how important it is for women to go together to the water source not only to feel safer but also to enjoy each other’s company. Nevertheless, jealousy becomes important when one of them gets a son because of his economic value and being a source of power. In “بنت التاجر *The daughter of the merchant*”, the neighbor comes to the rescue of a girl, but also assumes the role of the father in his absence. Living on her own attracts the negative forces and even more so as living alone make others view her as an easy girl. In the fairy tale of “الحطاب *The woodcutter*”, the accumulation of fortune by the woodcutter triggers the

jealousy of his neighbors. When norms of honesty and integrity are violated, this will, however, be at the price of a severe and justified punishment. The tale of “السماك” *The Fisherman*” relates how the extreme beauty of the fisherman’s wife attracts jealousy, while her sexuality makes her an object for the King to possess. In this tale, the family in law helps the fisherman when he is in difficulty and his woman neighbor has taken care of him by preparing his meals.

#### Box 7. **رمان حب Pearl of Pomegranate**

The tale describes how Pearl suffers, as she is considered “special”, so much that her mother gives her a pair of golden sandals. Her beauty and loyalty make people jealous and her misadventure with the king in the beginning makes her flee from one locality to another, symbolizing her fleeing from a bad reputation. The two merchants help Pearl out of a sense of social obligation. They lodge her for the night and when their shops are destroyed their respective neighbors help them in turn by organizing a money collection.

#### **Environment (Society and the wider environment)**

The fairy tales in this group differ fundamentally from the tales in the other categories, both in structure and the kind of message they contain. They are told in a strict and repetitive formula in a circular structure, leaving little space for the narrator for her/his personal touch. Where in these fairy tales the individual is perceived to exist in a harmonious interdependent relation with the environment, the tales illustrate and warn against what can happen when one of the links in the relational chain is perturbed and this harmony is breached. The fairy tale of “العنزة العنيزية” *The little goat*” (similar to “The wolf and the seven little goats” in the occident) tells the story of how a hyena (in other versions a ghoul) tries and succeeds to trick the three little goats that remain in the house, pretending he is their mother, when their mother is absent. The hyena devours the little goats and then the mother challenges the hyena and pierces his belly. The little goats are freed and the natural order is restored. To be noted: in this tale the domestic animals are allied to the human beings (the domesticated forces) and the wild animals that help the hyena, representing the savage forces. **Also in the tales collected in the Bethlehem area (Hussain and Kanaana; 2008).** Here the hyena is presented as a jackal.



In the tale of “العجوز واليس” *the old woman and the cat*” there is a chain of events that risks to put in disorder the natural and harmonious relationships in the people’s environment. The cat (as semi domesticated/semi wild animal) jumped on the milk an old woman wanted to give him and spoiled the milk; the tail of the cat was cut off and the cat had to see how to restore this order through a chain of linked actions. The cat managed to do so and the tale in essence relates how a cat can be domesticated. In the fairy tale of “بعيرون” *Crottinet, the little dropping*”, a ghou, in the form of a “crottinet” devours all the people around him (the belly expresses the greed that the ghou personifies). The “crottinet” is born as the son of a mother who wished to have a child, even if it is in the form of a “crottinet”. The ghou/crottinet is slain and her belly opened by two blind people and all the people swallowed are freed from his belly in their original condition. Order is restored and the ghou in the end was not that dangerous if it can be slain by two blind people. Getting devoured by a ghou is one of the strongest parental fears have about children in Palestine. **Also in the tales collected in the Bethlehem area (Hussain and Kanaana; 2008).** In the fairy tale of “*Dame louse*” a critical link is not only perturbed but even destroyed. It relates the critical consequences this has for all the other links in the chain of interdependent relations: from the shattered jars, the dried-up spring, the bird that has lost its plumes, the dried-out olive tree, the lame sheep, the lost manure, the weeping louse and her burned and dead husband, and the flea. This will make it impossible to reestablish the links and there is no retour to the initial natural balance. The fairy tale about “*The ghou* الغول” **collected in the Bethlehem area (Husain and Kanaana, 2008)** is another one that employs a kind of formulaic structure. It relates how a ghou receives a young woman who has to deliver a child on her way to her mother. The ghou wants to devour all the food reserves the young woman carries with her. By the repetitive way of asking for more food we learn about the most typical ingredients of a Palestinian kitchen. Flower, sugar, oil, dry figs .... She manages to escape; the ghou follows her and at her mother’s place the ghou is burned by boiling oil thrown over head and explodes.

### **The Universe (Society and the wider environment)**

This group of fairy tales elaborate on the relationships between the human being and the divine. A key note is that wisdom consists of the unlimited trust in God’s designs concerning the universe. The main personages in these tales display a simplicity of the heart and the total absence of any treachery. They are happy with the situation they live in, accept their destiny but still undertake to make the most out of it. Destiny (*maktub, kutbe*) in these Palestine tales is understood as



something for which individual action is necessary to make the best of. Destiny is not, as considered in the occident, a blind force over which there is no control. The first fairy tale in this group “اللي وقعت في البير” *The woman who fell in the well*”, tells the story of a young woman, who in trying to help a laborer who was attacked by a dog and fell in the well, fell herself in the same well. Fearing the anger of her brothers about this suspect situation she flees, finds a new place to live, meets a young man and gets three children. Her brothers try to find her, and they do, without recognizing at first their sister and talk with her husband, who appears to be the laborer in the well, then relates the story. The chain of events is explained, their destiny was written (maktub, the name of her first child) but the woman has played an active role in making that destiny happen. It is this action that is rewarded and not the fatalist acceptance of destiny. And everybody is happy again. The nice fairy tale about “الغني والفقير” *The poor and the rich*” relates how a poor woman accepts and is content with her situation, is generous and happy with her husband and has no desire to become rich, but life rewards her attitude and in the end she became a rich woman living in a beautiful palace. The tale compares this with her rich and greedy sister, who did not share even a little plate with her on her visit, for whom nothing is enough and who ends up destroyed by her devouring jealousy. Also the fairy tale of “معروف الاسكافي” *The shoemaker*” relates that the invisible forces will, sooner or later, reward those who are generous, candid, ingenious or naïve. The poor shoemaker who was chased out by his wife from his house in Damascus finds himself in the end as a rich vizier of a king in Egypt. His faith in what has to happen for good or bad is recompensed in the best way possible, by receiving help from the supernatural and the care of his second wife, the daughter of the king. “إم علي وأبو علي” *Im Ali and Abu Ali*”, finally, is the tale of a poor and simple person who cannot feed his family and, pushed by his wife, resorts to the act of divination of what has to happen to others. His good faith and good luck, his simplicity and the support of the supernatural make even the king believe that he is a great diviner and bring him to a desirable position in the royal court. In the book with **fairytales collected in the Bethlehem area (Husein and Kanaana, 2008)**, there are also two tales that seem to connect well to this theme of the wider universe: “خاتم السلطان” *The Ring of the Sultan*” and “النصائح الثلاث” *The Three Advices*”. In both tales the protagonists put their faith and confidence in the higher powers of the divine and in doing so get recompensed.

#### 4.4 *Dhikrayāt*, oral memories of recent history

A distinct category of folktales consists of the more recent stories, oral memories of recent history, which developed during the 1936 revolution against the British colonization but especially since the Nakba in 1948. They relate, on the one hand, to the tales about daily life, and on the other, to more politically factual tales that commemorates the events around the Nakba, the Naksa and the Intifadas and the different confrontations with the Israeli armed militias and later the army and colonists. To be consistent with the two other terms for oral tales, “*Kīṣaṣ*” and “*Hikāyāt*”, as explained in Chapter 3.2, we have grouped these recent oral memories under the Arabic name of “*Dhikrayāt*”, which means “memories”. These tales or oral memories came into being especially because of the strong politicization of narratives after 1948. They are considered the source of “oral history”, which is a term that is largely used by scholars to describe the narrated tales, recorded and based on individual and collective memories of an event or a series of events<sup>25</sup>. This is contrasted to “intrinsic history that records the history of a nation as a whole which exceeds the history of the state or the leaderships” (Sayigh, 1983).

As a counter to the Israeli colonial narrative, oral history has played an important role in keeping the Palestinian narrative, rights and identity alive. Therefore, pioneers like Rosemary Sayigh issued back in 1980 the first accounts of some Palestinians who became refugees in Lebanon. One of the major tragic impacts, in addition to the uprooting of the peasants from their lands, was the rupture of the natural social groups: the village and clans. While many have re-gathered themselves in the Camps, this process was never completed (Sayigh, 1983). In her compiled and edited book “Living Memories,” Dr. Faiha Abdelhadi wrote “The stories of exiled Palestinians convey not only the harsh details of displacement, but also the power of the right, represented in the determination to return irrespective of the passage of time” (Al-Rowat, 2017).

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<sup>25</sup> Oral history entails interviewing people about their perspectives on historical events and everyday life. Recording interviews becomes a way to connect with members of a community while documenting their experiences and endowing an inheritance of knowledge to future generations (source: Thayer Hastings, September 2016. Palestinian Oral History as a tool to Defend against Displacement)

<https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/palestinian-oral-history-tool-defend-displacement>

“In the years following the Nakba of 1948, the Arabic tradition of the “*Hakawati*” (storyteller) was used, according to Nur Masalha, to “shore up against the erasure of culture and memory among Palestinians”<sup>26</sup>.

Two types of narratives took the place of traditional tales: the narratives of war and loss of homeland, and somewhat later, oral memories that relate to the immediate political situation under the Israeli occupation. These new types of oral memories are less sharply divided by gender, and more by period, than the traditional narratives (Kanaana, 2007).

As in many other societies, oral histories evolve at a different pace depending on the overall situation. Slow, accumulative change in the way histories are told, takes place in periods of stability and continuity, as was the case more or less before 1948 in Palestine. Dramatic and radical changes can take place at times of war and socio-cultural and political upheaval (Kanaana, 2007). This was clearly the case in the period starting in 1948 Palestine, when the newly-born State of Israel started a dramatic process of ethnic cleansing that actually caused the refugee problem and that was continued after the 1967 war when the West Bank and the Gaza Strip became occupied. The changes in the kind of tales and ways of expression mentioned above have to be understood in this context. In fact, after the events of 1948, these “*Dhikrayāt*” replaced almost immediately the “*Ḳiṣaṣ*”. This holds almost for all Palestinian men, but especially among the men in the refugee community who were of course directly exposed to what happened during the Nakba. These men’s stories or memories that over time became some kind of legend were told, however, in ways that are very similar to the style of storytelling used in the “*Ḳiṣaṣ*” (Kanaana, 2007). Kanaana (2007 uses the term recent political legends as distinguished from the traditional legends or *Sīra*, and became popular in the early 1970s, after the Naksa (Kanaana, 2007). These “political legends” can be considered a part of the “*Dhikrayāt*”. Next to these, there are also the legends about local heroes from the revolutionary period against the British mandate in the 1930s, and legends around the Intifadas, as have been mentioned several times in the field interviews<sup>27</sup>.

**Box 8. Some examples of *Dhikrayāt* (Abdulhadi 2017),**

- ❖ “*Keeping the fire alive*” – Narrator Amin Mohammad Ali Abd Al-Mu’ti, Safforiyeh, Historic Palestine (22 pages)

<sup>26</sup> Thayer Hastings, September 2016. Palestinian Oral History as a tool to Defend against Displacement <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/palestinian-oral-history-tool-defend-displacement/>

<sup>27</sup> During the intifada, older people started recalling that the events are very similar to the revolution of 1936 (Nimr, S., 2006. “The revolution of 1936 in the Palestinian popular memory”. *AITurath Wal Mujtamaa*, #45, Ina’ash El-Usra Society.

- ❖ “*There is no cause more just*” – Narrator Hamdi Mohammad Matar Al-Khateeb, Jordan (27 pages)
- ❖ “*Ties to the homeland*” – Narrator Mohammad Ahmad Hussein Al-Qadi, Egypt

Another subcategory that could be distinguished among the “*Dhikrayāt*” are the “political jokes” that came especially into being during the first Intifada. Both the political legends and jokes have persisted since, but the number of jokes exceeded the legends (Kanaana, 2007). According to the same author, the political legends are rather told in moments of bigger hopes or greater anxieties, while the political jokes are more abundant in periods of relative calm and then are used as a form of social or self-criticism and social control, expressing ridicule or other sentiments (Kanaana, 2007). For instance, jokes were made around the Intifada, the Gulf War and the Peace Process (Kanaana, 1999). Until now, these political legends and jokes, however, are only sparsely transmitted on paper.

While also women had many stories to tell about the events of 1948 and beyond, and about the good old days in the lost country, they continued telling the fairytales of the “*Hikāyāt*”. Their memories of the recent past are composed of rather short anecdotes from their personal lives and the lives of members of their families, illustrating the destruction, dispersion, injustices, and oppression, which befell their people. A favorite theme in such stories deals with the separation of family members during their escape from the original home town or village, the search for the lost family members—often young children—and their reunion in the land of refuge. For instance, the forceful production of El Funoun “*From Haifa to Beirut and beyond*” relates such a story of separated lovers and a mother’s loss of her child. They are all told almost in the style and structure of the women’s traditional fairy tales (Kanaana, 2007). They form part of the “*Dhikrayāt*” the oral memories of recent history.

**Box 9. Some examples of women oral daily life memories, as part of the *Dhikrayāt* (Abdulhadi, 2017),**

“*The abundance we lived was known by none*” - Narrator Rasheedeh Hassan Mohammad Faddalat, Jordan (25 pages)

“*Our homeland is beautiful, it was beautiful*” – Narrator Firyal Hanna Abu Awad, Chile (20 pages)

“*My dream is to return*” – Narrator Labeebeh Rasheed Abdul Rahman Isa, Lebanon (105 pages)

Finally, under this category of recent oral memories, are the stories about the “role of women in the legends of the Intifada” as they are labeled by Dr. Kanaana in his collection of about 250 stories from rural, urban and refugee areas, but without mentioning specific localities other than Governorates (Kanaana, 2017). Two short examples are given below.

**Box 10. Two Intifada women legends from Jenin:**

A woman challenges a heavily armed soldier by calling him to put down his arms, and fight her bare handed. She puts him down on the ground starting hitting and punishing him. Shortly after that he was screaming calling other soldiers to rescue him and she was hit by them.....

Another story from Jenin: a house of a young boy was demolished because he had thrown a Molotov cocktail bomb on the Israeli army. His mother was “ululating” when this happened. The soldier asked her why was she ululating? She answered that “because we did not have any more stones in our “Ḥāra” (our neighborhood) to throw, now with the demolition we have a lot”

**5. Analysis and description of other oral forms of expression**

Having defined the forms of expressions in Chapter 3, this Chapter presents a detailed description of the main forms of songs (5.1), proverbs (5.2) and riddles (5.3), and their different themes and sub-themes (see table in Chapter 3). As mentioned earlier, these forms, which are part of the collective identity and memory, deal with all dimensions of the society: social, economic, political, environmental and religious. It is worth noting that there is no unified classification of the sub-themes or topics under each form; different researchers in oral traditions/popular literature have given them different classifications.

**On dialects:**

The Palestinian colloquial language is a cross-cutting issue for all forms of oral traditions. This is very true due to its “spontaneous, and efficient forms of communicating messages and topics of all walks of life; it is as such a strong language of expressing feelings and beliefs of the Palestinians” (Jawhariyyeh,1968).

Palestinian colloquial dialect is the spoken Arabic among the people in Palestine. It is derived from classical Arabic, but it is neither written, nor has clear grammatical rules. It is a lively language stemming its vocabulary mainly from classical Arabic and imports only few words from other foreign languages. Its vocabulary comes from the oral traditions of the family and society, the Quran, schooling, newspapers, radios and TV, and some transliteration from other languages. It is an important component of Palestinian identity, which has been under threat like the other components<sup>28</sup>. As for the other forms of oral expressions, it was affected by ancient civilizations. Aramaic, Canaanite and Arabic, were the three languages which have alternated in Palestine; therefore, we find words that come from Aramaic origins (Jawhariyyeh, 1968). Another influence came from the tribes which crossed Palestine, followed by the influence by the Ottomans, the British and recently the Israelis. In view of these different influences, it is not surprising that the Palestinian dialect is quite rich, and strongly expressive. Three main dialect groups are commonly recognized: Bedouin, rural and urban dialects. There are also some vocabularies which are found in one area or community, but not another. To give an example of the influence from the Turks, the following song from **Beit Sahour**, includes an addition of the letters “yeril” in each verse (Fakhri, 2018):

على عراق يرل المبيظ شيرلفت عبد الله  
بير لليمين يمة عيرل الهنا يا روح

This will be difficult to translate, but highlights the Turkish “yeril”

As confirmed earlier in this research, dialects are distinctive features within each geographic and social entity, which is translated into having different dialects between the narration and singing of the same folkloric oral expressions. Not only urban, rural and Bedouin dialects are different, but often within the same community, there are nuances in dialects. This particular aspect

<sup>28</sup> This is a translation by the researcher from the introduction of: The Arabic Dictionary of Popular Palestinian Dialect, see, al-Barguthi A., 1987, The Arabic Dictionary of Popular Palestinian Dialect, vol. 1, Ina'ash El-Usra Society

requires a more specialized study on the origins and reasons of the difference in dialects as oral expressions.

Finally, Mousa Aluosh, affirms that the dialect of Jerusalem, is a central one among the Palestinian colloquial dialects, due to the central location of the city. He also wrote that the two German scholars Hans Schmidt and Paul Kahl have studied the dialects in their book *Palestinian Popular Stories* (Aloush, 2018). This research cannot go deeper into this subject, but gives a reference to how dialects are used or influence the other oral traditions as described below.

## 5.1 Songs and poems

Palestinian popular songs, as a major component of oral traditions, are generally linked to Arabic heritage, on the one hand, and the different interactions and impacts of other ancient cultures, including the Assyrians, Greeks, Romans and the earlier cultures that were living in the Palestinian lands. Popular songs in Palestine, as the cradle of the three monotheistic religions, have also been influenced by these cultures and religions<sup>29</sup>.

A large number of resources (especially in Arabic) provide descriptions of the main features of the songs and poems. In her book *Popular Arts in Palestine* Yusra Jawhariyyeh Arnita, who is a musician herself, gives an extensive general definition of popular songs under the theme of popular music: “The popular song among all nations emerge from the same origin, with joint themes reflecting the environment, the psychological state, and the traditions. They are all intuitive songs without pretensions and they are spontaneously sang by unidentified persons, and they transmitted from parents to children. These songs are accompanied by clear images of rituals, traditions and superstitions.” (Jawhariyyeh, 1968). According to Jawhariyyeh and others, and based on a review of some electronic and published sources thus far, the following classification of themes was found most relevant and generally common among many researchers:

- Wedding ceremonies songs (different for men & women)
- Death, mourning/wailing and lamenting
- Religious ceremonies and seasons
- Collective work and seasons (economic and environment topics)

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<sup>29</sup> Jaber, Y., 2017. *The Palestinian Popular Song, a Lantern that Derives Its Oil from Heritage*  
<http://www.alqudslana.org/index.php?action=article&id=6744>



- Children’s songs (by and for children)
- Patriotic songs/resistance songs

Songs transmit different human values and feelings like love, enthusiasm, joy, sadness, dignity, strength, etc. They also translate people’s hopes, aspirations and future visions. They are therefore deeply rooted in the ancient human history as an accompanying expression for dance and movement. Songs also inspire their contents from Arabic heritage in general, from religious practices and from the different cultures. In an article on the development of the Palestinian song, Moatasem Khader wrote “In view of the particular Palestinian context, its religious and social diversity, traditional songs have gone through changes marked by the major recent historic events in Palestine. These recent historic periods can be summarized as: (1) from the early 1920’s until the 40s that is just before the Nakba. (2) after the Nakba of 1948. (3) after the 1967 Naksa. (4) after 1994 – Establishment of the Palestinian Authority”<sup>30</sup>. This research can’t highlight the features of each period in detail, but will reflect the effect of some of the major political events on songs and their lyrics under the section of “patriotic songs/resistance songs” below, and in chapter 6 for the post-Nakba era. There are different genres of songs according to their music frame, the most popular of which are *‘Atāba, Dal’ouna, Shoubash, Al-Samer, Al-Hidjeni, Al-Shruqi, al-Karadiye*.

Geographically, it is not easy within this research to make a clear distinction between the songs and music dominating each locality, let alone more specifically to the Masār Ibrāhīm localities in view of the lack of references highlighting this specific aspect. However, some song lyrics accompanying some ceremonies or dances might give indications to the geographic boundaries of some of the songs. For example, there are songs marking some major events related to a specific village or area particularly related to a named hero but not necessarily in another area. Dialects might also give an indication to the geographic area. For example, songs from urban cities like Nablus and Jerusalem, carry the city dialects (e.g the q/ق, is a/أ ) which are different from songs coming from the rural or Bedouin areas, suggesting that the majority come from the rural traditions. An example of the difference in dialects and some vocabulary is the “*Hidjein*” the Bedouin type of singing from **Al-Rashaydeh in comparison with Tulkarem** (Fakhri, 2018):

<sup>30</sup> Khader, M., 2012. *Stages of the development of the Palestinian Song* <http://alqudslana.com/index.php?action=article&id=646>,



يخلف الزين يخلف عليكوا بخليف الزين

يا حمول الخيل يا هالرشايدة يا حمول الخيل

وكثر الله خيركو يخلف عليكو وكثر الله خيرك

Rashayda Bedouin genre of singing “hijeini” extends some letters, or stresses the vowel “o”

يخلف عليكم كثر الله خيركم وا عجبنا في النسايب غيركم

This is the same verse from Tulkarem with distinct difference in dialect from the above Al-Rashaydeh dialect

Another helpful factor is the environment and topography of the different localities. When asked if there are songs related to the olive harvest in Al-Dhahiriya village, Areefeh and her daughter immediately replied negatively since the area is not known for its olive trees and harvesting season; most of the songs are related to the wheat harvesting<sup>31</sup>.

In addition, gender is an important feature of the songs. There are specifically women’s songs in the different ceremonies, and there are men’s songs like in weddings and lamenting; there are also collective work songs particularly those linked to harvests or house construction. Children songs are also particular since many were sung by mothers as “lullabies” or others taught to children to repeat around the different seasons and occasions like Ramadan. The following section will try to make these links and features whenever possible. Other social and cultural diversity aspects in Palestine are also reflected in the songs and the other oral traditions.

## **Synopsis of each theme/topic among the songs**

### **TOPIC 1. Family ceremonies**

#### ***Songs of wedding ceremonies:***

This is the most frequent type of songs found and still very alive in Bedouin, urban and rural areas. The different ceremonies of a wedding have different songs for men and for women, including different rhythms and accompanying dance. The most common in weddings and mainly men’s songs are: *‘Atāba, Dal’ouna, Sahdjeh or al-samer, Zareef Al-toul, Meijjana, Shubash*. They are usually led by an individual “Zadjal” singer, followed by repetitions from the crowds all in a

<sup>31</sup> Interview Areefeh (70) and her daughter (52), October 31, Ad-Dhahiriya, South Hebron.

spontaneous form using the local dialect. They are accompanied by “*Dabke*” or “*Sahdjeh/Dihiyeh*” or “*al-Samer*”, traditional collective men dances. Basic music instruments like “*Shababeh*” or Yargoul (both wind blowing instruments) or “*Rababa*” – one sting wooden instrument, famous mainly in Bedouin and Hebron rural areas, and a percussion, were used to accompany the men’s songs and dances. Nowadays, an electric play-back or a DJ is more common in weddings in view of decreasing number of popular musicians playing those instruments. This was confirmed in an interview with Yousef Nassar from Dura who said “Although in the past 10 years or more, “*Dihiyeh*” dance came back strongly in weddings as a men’s dance in the Hebron rural area, the accompanying music is a play back, and the singer or “*Zadjal*” sings empty meaningless words which have nothing to compare with the traditional songs of before”<sup>32</sup>. This was also a shared comment in Burqin where the paid famous *Zadjal* – Al-Saba’awi, sings with play-back music. He has introduced “*Dihiyeh*” as a wedding dance in the North, which is attracting the younger generation, but it is different from the original steps of “*Shamaliyeh*” wedding dabke known in the north of the West Bank<sup>33</sup>. Women’s dances accompanying the singing are different and are performed in seclusion throughout the different wedding phases. Women’s songs are usually marked by ululations “*Zaghareed*” blasted throughout the different stages of a wedding celebration, including the proposal (tulbeh), the engagement, the “henna/ Hinnā’”, the trousseaux and preparations, the “*Sahra*” or nightly celebrations before the wedding, the wedding day, and the departure of the bride from her parent’s house to the new house.

There was often a single “*Gawwaleh*” or “*al-bada’a*” as a lead singer, sometimes two singers; a group or two groups of women repeat after her or after both. The role of “*al-bada’a*” has been remarkably diminishing with the emergence of the “DJ” and change of the wedding ceremonies; some of these traditions are still present in remote villages” (Fakhri, 2018). Women’s songs can be also named “*Taraweed*” which carry a slight sad tone especially sung during the departure of the bride from her parent’s home. To encourage her, the following song from **Yatta** in Hebron (Fakhri, 2018):

رِفْرَفْتَ عُلُو جَمَالِهَا وَالْحَرِيرِ وَالزَّيْنِ دَمْلِهَا  
رِفْرَفْتَ عَلَى ظَهْرِ نَاقَةِ وَالذَّهَبِ رَاقَةَ عَلَى رَاقَةَ

<sup>32</sup> Interview, with Yousef Nassar, Manager of “Kana’an’s Sons Society for Heritage Conservation”, Dura, Hebron Governorate, October 31<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Interview: with Bahiyeh Ateeq (55) & Abdelrahman Salameh (72), residents from Burqin.

She fluttered on her camels dressed in silk  
 She fluttered on a camel's back with layers of gold

Wedding songs start from the moment the groom's family asks for the hand of the bride when the engagement is announced. Actually, "identifying the future bride or bride groom, was often happening around the water spring where young women used to collect the water, and young men observing from a distance. Many traditional songs marked these first flirtations" like the following verses (Fakhri, 2018) which were revived and sung by El-Funoun Dance Troupe:

يا واردة ع النبع، يا واردة ع النبع  
 قومي سقيني من الجرة، وحيات عينك يا سمرة  
 وحيات عينك يا سمرة ما بوخذ غيرك بالمرّة  
 O, you who is going to the water spring  
 Give me water from the "jarra"/water jar  
 Because of your eyes, I will not take anyone else but you

Samples of "*Dalou'na*" and "*Ataba*", which are men's songs and among the most popular types in weddings:

Dalou'na:  
 يا طير الطاير في السما العالي سلم عالحو العزيز الغالي  
 واسمك يا روحي ما يروح من بالي إمفيد عاجبيني بين العيونا  
 O, flying bird in the high sky  
 Say hello to the dear sweet one  
 Your name, my soul, will stay in my mind  
 Written on my forehead between the eyes<sup>34</sup>

There are also "*Dalou'na*" dances and songs for women during the "*Sahra*" that are performed exclusively by women (Fakhri, 2018):

<sup>34</sup> Translation from <http://www.barghouti.com/folklore/songs/dalona2.html>

على دلعونا على دلعونا وصلوا ع النبي لا تحسدونا  
وتحت الزيتون فارس ونايم خلو لي الحمام ع راسي حاييم

Al la dalouna, al dalouna

Lay prayers on the prophet and do not envy us

Under the olive tree, sleeping on a mattress

Leave the pigeons flying above my head

According the al Hajjeh Areefeh from Ad-Dhahiriya, there is “*Dahradjeh*” which are also nightly collective women’s celebrations before the wedding where there are two groups of women in something akin to a singing competition; weddings in the old days used to be celebrated over 7 days and nights<sup>35</sup>. As an entertainment and to prolong the nightly celebrations, “*Dahradjeh*” songs are usually by two opposite groups of women...these songs may include lyrics on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or the lighter skinned woman vs. the darker woman (Fakhri, 2018). “*Ataba*”, the most popular for all occasions, comprising usually 4 verses:

بتالي الليل شدوا عا رحالهم حبابي حرج قلبي رحيلهم  
وكم مكتوب من ايدي رحلهم ولا مكتوب ردوا لي جواب

At the end of the night, they prepared for departure

My loved ones whose departure wounded my heart

How many letters, from my hand went to them?

And no letter from them to reply to mine

A women’s marriage song by the friends of the bride during her preparations<sup>36</sup>:

ميلي ميلي يا شجرة السريس

ميلي ميلي يا حاملّة سريس

ميلي ع محمد هالعريس

ميلي ميلي مية اسم الله عليه

Dance, dance O tree of Sarris (mastic or lentisk)

Dance, Dance O carrier of Sarris

Lean towards Mohammad, the bridegroom

<sup>35</sup> Interview 'Areefeh (70) and her daughter (52), Ad-Dhahiriya, Hebron, 31<sup>st</sup> October

<sup>36</sup> Translation from [www.singingpalestine.org](http://www.singingpalestine.org) / 15 Palestinian songs

Dance, dance, hundred benedictions on him

Wedding songs also transmit different messages and meanings related to bragging about hospitality between the two families, praising the two families and being proud of the families of both the bride-groom and the bride. Moreover, some patriotic songs were also sung in weddings depending on the situation and political developments.

Regardless of religion, wedding ceremonies and accompanying songs and dances, follow the same pattern and rhythms except for the religious ceremonies in the church or mosque. For example, following the approval of the bride's family to "marry" their daughter off to the young man, the following "Zaghareed"/ululation are/is immediately sung by women in Christian Beit Sahour: "Blessed by seven blessings like those of Jesus to the five pieces of holy bread. Moslem women would say "like the blessing of Mohammad on Arafat mountain –in Mecca" (Banura, 2015). After this first ceremony, Moslems read Al-Fatiha, the first verse of the Qur'an, while a priest reads from the Bible. During the engagement period, many songs and ululations are repeated which are very similar between people of both religions.

Some of the men's songs at Orthodox Christian weddings in Jerusalem are sung at the entrance of the "Holy Sepulchre" were documented by Yusra Jawhariyyeh (1968):

باب القيامة عالي واجب اشعره بإيدي  
 وخلي قلبي يفرح قد ما بكيت عيني

The door of the Holy Sepulchre is high  
 I have the duty to make it open with my own arms  
 Let my heart be joyful after the crying of my eyes

للكاهن عن الإكليل:  
 خورينا يا طيب يا مليح كلال العرسان واستريح  
 ومد يمينك وبارك شعب المسيح

Our kind and humble priest  
 Crown the brides and be relieved  
 Give your right arm and bless people of Christ

Some of the women’s songs after the church ceremonies (Banoura, 2015):

<p>من باب القيامة لباب العمود ريتك تتهنى يا بو عيون سود                  من باب القيامة لباب المهدي ريتك تتهنى يا فلان يا فهد</p>
<p>From the gate of the Holy Sepulchre, to Damascus Gate                  May you have joy, o you with black eyes                  From the gate of the Holy Sepulchre to the Nativity Square                  May you have joy, (name) O you panther</p>

Jawhariyyeh (1968) gives a set of songs which come from different Palestinian cities; one of the most known is the following:

<p>ع الروزنا ع الروزنا كل اللي الحلى فيها                  وايش عملت الروزنا الله يجازيها</p>
<p>‘al rozana<sup>37</sup>, al rozana, all beauty is in it                  Look what the rozana has done to us</p>

### Songs of death and lamentation “Nadeb”:

Contrary to the wedding and joyful ceremonies, this genre of oral tradition are rather simple rhythmic sayings and repetitions that people sing when they are deeply sad about the loss of a beloved one or a major tragic event. Therefore, this was given the name “*rithā*” or “*bukkā`iya*” in standard or classical Arabic. Traditionally, it had two different forms: “*Nadeb* نذب” or “*Nuwah* نواعي” in the folkloric terminology. Another term from the village of Dhahiriya is “*Nawa’i*” نواعي particularly for a young deceased or a hero<sup>38</sup>. The anthropologist Omar Odeh, gives the nuance between these two terms. “*Nadeb*” follows the moment of burial where a group of women relatives gather around the grave in a circle, or in the streets or the house yard, and start yelling and

<sup>37</sup> Al-Rozana has a story with two different versions but both are around a ship named “Rozana”. One story is of an Italian ship which crossed to “Bilad Al-Sham” during the big famine of 1941, supposedly loaded with wheat but it turned out that it was loaded with “grapes and apples”. The other is of an Ottoman ship which loaded grapes and apples in Lebanon to compete with the Lebanese products. In both stories, people from Aleppo compensated the Lebanese with wheat. The song has become one of the famous in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

<sup>38</sup> Interview ‘Areefeh (70) and her daughter (52) from Ad-Dhahiriya; October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018

gradually make hysteric movements, including pulling their hair, and tearing their clothes; lyrics here state the deep sadness, while also praising the deceased. “*Nuwah*” is done at home while women are seated in the house of the deceased, and has a more slow rhythm and without screaming loudly<sup>39</sup>. An example of “*Nuwah*” from Hussein Al-Atari’s book on “*al-bukkā`iyat*” (Al-Atari, 2017):

<p>اصبحت في بلاد واصبح صاحبي في بلاد  واصبح قلبي من الفرقة حطب وقاد  يا كاتيين الورق لا تكتبوا شي عاد  واحنا افترقنا ويا ربي تجمع عاد</p>
<p>I ended up in one country, and my friend ended up in another country  My little heart has become burnt wood because of this distance  Oh, those who write letters, don't write anything normal  We were separated and hope God will re-unite us</p>

Examples of “*Nadeb*” in the same book (Al-Atari, 2017):

<p>غيبتك غيبة طويلة  ضاع حلم الصبر منا  قلوبنا صارت دليلي  بس وجهك غاب عنا  يا دموع العين سيللي غاب كوكب من وطننا</p>
<p>Your absence is long, our dream of patience was lost  Our heart guided us but your face became absent  Cry my eyes a river, a star has vanished from our homeland</p>

“*Nuwah*” and “*Nadeb*” lyrics differ if the deceased is a young man, a woman or an old man. Like songs of other ceremonies, “*Nadeb*” verses also “transmit the deceased age, values and social importance of the person” (Al-Atari 2017); verses may also cite the personal, social and political background of the deceased. Verses may also mention some of the dear belongings of the

<sup>39</sup> Odeh, O., 2017, “al-bukkā`iyat <http://magazine.alhannouneh.net> /2017/11

deceased like his pipe, sword, machine gun, among others (Al-Atari 2017). An example of mentioning the horse in “*Nadeb*” is the following which was also revived by El-Funoun’s Dance production “Wadi Al-Tuffah” in 1984 as will be described in chapter 6:

<p>حمرا يا لهيبة وين رحتي فيه          في باب السرايا حد علمي فيه</p>
<p>Red horse, where did you take him          At the doorstep of the seat of the government I thought he was</p>

It was known that the deceased poor did not have any session of “*Nadeb*” held in honor of their death. The marital status and age category of the deceased are determining factors. If the deceased is a young single person like in the following lyrics which were cited by Hadjeh ‘Areefeh from Ad-Dhahiriya:

<p>يا شاب تشيب ما تهيأ له          طاح المقبرة والعرس ع باله</p>
<p>O young guy who barely became an adult– he did not get a chance          Went down the grave and the wedding still on his mind (Jawhariyyeh, 1968)</p>

A similar verse from the **Jenin** area on a young deceased person (Jarbawi, 1975):

<p>يا قايلة قولي عليه بالحلقة          يا شاربة خط القلم بالورقة          بارودته بيد الدلال أريتها          لعاش قلبي ليش ما شريتها</p>
<p>Oh poet, say about him in the “circle”          His young moustache like a line on paper          His machine gun in his hand          My hear regrets why I did not buy it</p>

If the deceased is a young married woman, the following lyrics were known in **Jenin area** (Jarbawi, 1975):



صبيية ودلوها ببير ماتت حزينة ع البنين  
صبيية ودلوها بواد ماتت حزينة على الولاد

Young woman in a well, died of grief on her sons

A young woman in a valley, died of grief over her kids

In praising the deceased and being proud of him, some verses were comparing the deceased with the legendary Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, indicating his generosity and strength.

This genre exists in Bedouin, rural and urban areas in different dialects and varies in intensity from one place to the other. The research could not identify verses of “*Nadeb*” from Christian sources. This tradition has been decreasing since the outset of Islam and it is described unfavorably by Islamic scholars. Men do not have “*Nadeb*” or “*Nuwah*” but women are allowed to cry loud and lament openly their deaths. During the 1930s, and the struggle against the British, this genre was known to lament the martyrs who went to fight against the oppressor.

In his article “Death and following traditions in Jenin, 1900 – 1974,” Dr. Jarbawi gives exactly the same nuance between “*Nadeb*” and “*Nuwah*” as described above. “It was the duty of the family of the deceased to do the “*Nadeb*”; otherwise, it would have been perceived that they were either relieved by his/her death, or that he/she did not have a recognized social status. Therefore, women relatives of the deceased were competing among themselves on the intensity of screaming, and the sadness of the tone” (Jarbawi, 1975). The duration of “*Nadeb*” may also vary and can exceed 10 days. “*Nadeb*” was also an occasion for reflecting not only the social or marital status of the deceased, according to Dr. Jarbawi, but also for reflecting the socio-political conditions in the area. He describes, “Women during the Ottoman period were sadly bidding farewell to their sons who were called for the military service, convinced that they will not return as in the following verses”:

يا عسكري ياللي قطعت المية  
ما ادري اعزب ولا وراك ابنية  
يا عسكري يا للي قطعت الوادي  
ما ادري اعزب ولا وراك اولادي

Oh, soldier who crossed the river  
 Don't know if a single or married  
 Oh, soldier who crossed the valley  
 Don't know if single or left children behind you

## TOPIC 2. Religious ceremonies

### Songs of religious ceremonies and seasons:

Palestine, being the cradle of religions, has a rich heritage of songs celebrating the different Moslem and Christian religious ceremonies and celebrations. These ceremonies were mainly practiced until 1948 and most have disappeared after the Nakba. *Hājīdj*, or pilgrims to Mecca, is a major act for any Moslem as a major pillar of Islam. This has yet another important value in the history where people travelling from Palestine or bilād al-*Shām*, "Syria," had to travel on camels to Hijaz, a trip that used to take months and was full of risks. This was until the 1930's when people started travelling by cars through Jaffa, then by boat to Port Said in Egypt, then crossing the Suez Canal to the Red Sea and from there to Mecca<sup>40</sup>.

People used to gather in the houses of persons preparing for departure, and women would start singing what is known as "*Tahneen* تحنين" which was also the same genre for receiving the "*hudjad*" after their safe return. The farewell "*Tahneen*" songs were marked by sad tunes and lyrics knowing the difficulty of the trip which would take months and could entail the risk of not returning back, while the welcoming back "*Tahneen*" songs were marked by joyful lyrics and happy moods. The following song was for farewell:

صفي شجر خوخ يا طريق الحجاج ، صفي شجر خوخ  
 تحفظلنا فلان من الحر والدوخ  
 صف شجر ورد يا طريق النبي ، صفي شجر ورد  
 تحفظلنا فلان من الحر والبرد

May trees of prunes line up the road of the pilgrims

<sup>40</sup> According to Nahed Abu Ghneim from Qalunia village: source: Al-Arab newspaper, 10/10.2015 <https://alarab.co.uk> أهازيح فلسطينية تودع الحجاج وتستقبلهم

To protect “name of the haj” from heat and dizziness

May trees of roses line up the road to the Prophet

To protect “name” from heat and cold<sup>41</sup>

Some “*Tahneen*” songs carried different lyrics in villages as compared to those in cities.

From rural songs collected by Yusra Jawhariyyeh (1968):

يا راحلين الى متى بقياي ----- هيجمتوا يوم الرحيل فؤادي  
 سرتم وسار دليلكم يا وحشتي ----- الشوق ازعجني وصت الهادي  
 يا الله يا زوار قبر محمد ----- من كان منكم راحلا وعادي  
 فاذا وصلتكم سالمين سلموا ----- مني السلام على ربوع الوادي

O those who are leaving, your departure has torn my heart  
 You walked with your guide, and I felt lonely and longing calmly  
 O God, you are visiting the grave of the Prophet Mohammad  
 If you arrive safely, greetings from me to the valley

From city “*Tahneen*” the following was also collected by Jawhariyyeh (1968):

يا زارين النبي خذوني بمحاملكم  
 لا إني حديد ولا إني بولاد اثقلكم  
 إلا خفيف الحمل واريد المشي معكم  
 وان كان زادي وزوادي يثقلكم  
 بصوم الله ويكفاني النظر منكم

O, you who are visiting the Prophet take me along  
 I am neither iron, nor heavy steel  
 I am light to carry and want to walk with you  
 If my food and provisions is too heavy for you  
 I will fast and be content with your looks

<sup>41</sup> Jaber, Y., 2017. *The Palestinian Popular Song, a Lantern that Derives Its Oil from Heritage* <https://ency.najah.edu/node/71>

In her book, Yusra Jawhariyyeh clearly states that there are many celebrations which are performed by Moslems and by the Orthodox Church that share common traditions and religious practices. For example, many Christians celebrated en- Nābī Mousa with Moslems...She has clearly remarked that “while Moslems have specific songs and poems marking the different religious occasions, Christians did not have specific songs, although they have more religious celebrations. They suffice by the old tunes without trying to adapt it to the different occasions. The Byzantine church music is the closest since it follows oriental musical features and ornaments, which may serve the celebrations. Saint Mary’s celebration starts in the afternoon with “*shubash*”, percussions and women’s ululations” (Jawhariyyeh, 1968)

As for the different “religious mawasim” – literary translated as “seasons”, it was Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbi who first created such festivities around 1180 a.d., spreading them among the different regions. Among these seasons were: “en- Nābī Mousa, en- Nābī Saleh, en- Nābī Rubeen, Al-Mintar of Gaza”. These were big popular celebrations until 1948. Then it came back in the fifties until 1967 when it was totally banned by the Israelis<sup>42</sup>. These “mawasim” are celebrated like “mawlid” which is the prophet Mohammad birthday with lots of religious “*dhikr*” or words of glory to God and prophet Mohammad. These two terms, Mawasem and Mawled, are used interchangeably. In his article, Ali Qlibo wrote “A practicing Sufi, Şalāḥ al-Dīn assigned each newly liberated geographic area its own local holy shrine as a pilgrimage centre to accommodate the needs of the Bedouin tribes, the urban population and the peasants, and which encompassed both Muslim and Christian Palestinians. En-Nabi Saleh in al-Ramlah and Lod stands as a prime example due to the mystical dual Muslim and Christian aspects of the legendary al-Khadir/ St. George who is regarded as an eternal Muslim spirit of which Saint George is its historical manifestation” (Qlibo, 2011). Some of the known songs for Nabi Saleh season include the following:

يا نبي صالح ما اطيب حبارك  
ومحبة بالله كل واحد زارك  
يا نبي صالح اي ابو التابوت  
تمنيت من الله حدك أموت

<sup>42</sup> Palestinian Popular Seasons <http://info.wafa.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=9015> المواسم الشعبية الفلسطينية

Prophet Saleh how beautiful your stones are  
 God's love to everyone who had visited you  
 Prophet Saleh, father of the coffin  
 I wished from God to die by you (Jawhariyyeh, 1968)

### TOPIC 3. Agriculture-related rituals

#### Songs of collective work and agricultural seasons (economic and environment topics):

Palestine was known as a rich agricultural land with diverse products. As a rural community, agricultural seasons and harvesting occupy an important part in the lives of Palestinians. Accompanying this, rituals, songs and proverbs have been also linked to them. There are many songs related to each harvest season and the agricultural calendar, which was well known and accurate for the Palestinian peasants. Dr. Tawfiq Canaan, early in the last century, and the anthropologist Saleem Arafat Al-Mbayed, among others, documented studies of songs and rituals related to the agricultural seasons and natural life cycle of plants. Songs related to collective work were not only a celebration of the new crops, but also to encourage the workers to continue working. An example for wheat harvesting, (Fakhri, 2018):

يا خي شهر الحصيدة وينته بيروح يا خي شهر الحصيدة وينته بيروح  
 ونحطك ع البيادر والبقر بتلوح ونحطك ع البيادر والبقر بتلوح  
 O my brother, when would the wheat harvest month is over, when is it over  
 And we put you on the threshing floor and the cows sashay

Olive seasons were a special collective and family occasion where all members used to go to the fields to collect the olives, for people had a lot of pride in the quality of olives in a good season. The songs were focused on the different types of olives, bragging about quality, and focused on the wish to protect this important product. Other songs were for encouraging the workers during collecting the fruits (Aloush, 2018):

زيتونتي يا حبيها بلح بلح  
 الله يسلمها تملى القدح

زيتونتي يا حبها جرجير

الله يسلمها من التقشير (او من التكسير حسب مصادر اخرى)

My olive tree its olives are like dates

May God protect it, it fills up the cup

My olive is like Rocca

May God protect it from peeling (or from breaking according to others)

Grapes and figs had their share of songs and proverbs in certain rural areas where there is an abundance of these products; songs either listed the names of the different types or the processes of drying them, or collecting as in the following verses (Shakarneh, 1993):

زرعت عنب الدبوقي والسلطي منه وفوقي

أجا عنب على ذوقي يتقدم للبيكوات

I have planted "dbuki" grapes, and "salti" beyond

I got grapes to my taste that can be served to the notables

يا حبايينا لا تسافروا والتين على امه يا حبايينا لا تسافروا تا تاكلوا منة

Our beloved ones do not leave while the figs are still hanging on the trees

Our beloved ones do not leave until you eat from it

تين مشطب ع الندى ما حدا بطعم حدا

تين مشطب تشطبية الواحد بطعم حبيبة

Figs ripe with dew, unlike any other one

Figs ripe, one feeds a loved one

When rain was late, there were also collective rituals calling for the rainfall. Some songs were repeated by children others by older people.

يا الله الغيث يا دايم تسقي قمحنا الدائم يا الله الغيث يا ربي تسقي قمحنا الغربي

O eternal God make it rain to water our durable wheat

O God my Lord make it rain to water our western wheat

The following is a children's song from Ramallah, calling for rain (Jawhariyyeh, 1968):

شوربنة شوربنة يا ربنا يا ربنا تعجل علينا بالمطر
We feel the heat O our God, please speed up in giving us rain

Moreover, house construction occupied quite an importance place in collective celebrations, songs and proverbs, being an important pillar of the family's stability and further development. In his book *Palestinian Vernacular Architecture*, Omar Hamdan gives a lot of examples of songs and proverbs about the house. In his second chapter, songs refer to prophet Ibrahim, his generosity and his reputation as the father of construction, as it is believed that he had built the foundations for Mecca with the help of his son Ismael (Hamdan, 1996).

يا خليل الله يا خليل الله يا بو البنيان أحضر لاهان عريقي مرقي بل ريفي
Khalil Al-Rahman, Khalil Al-Rahman Father of building, come along My sweating, my waiting, give me to drink

#### TOPIC 4. Children's songs (by and for children)

Children are an important part of the Palestinian family who are expected to maintain its name and its social and economic status. Lullabies are a traditional genre for children, usually sung by mothers or grandmothers, with simple lyrics and soft tunes, to ease them up when they are sick, or to put them to sleep or to calm them down in general. Lyrics of lullabies may vary, referring to mothers' wishes for the future of their children, or some prayers and words that rhyme and some other hopes and wishes of the mother herself. Among the most common, which may be used until today, but had slight variations (Al-Aboushi, 1980):

هلليلو يا حمامي واستدعليو بالسلامة
------------------------------------

نام يا حبيبي نام واجبلك جوز الحمام  
يا حمامات لا تزعلوا بنجيكم لفارس تا ينام

Sing pigeons and call for peace

Sleep my dear and will get you a pair of pigeons

Don't be upset pigeons I bring you for "Faris" until he falls asleep

Children's development was also marked in these lullabies like when they make their first steps or when the first tooth cuts through, as in the following song from Jerusalem (Fakhri, 2018).

نام يا حبيبي نام لأنبلك طير الحمام  
طلع سنك ع التمام يا حبيبي وين أنام

Sleep my beloved sleep, and will slaughter to you a pigeon

Your tooth has fully cut through, and where shall I sleep

These lullabies were sung for both girls and boys. However, some variations for the girl include praising her beauty, pride in her family and social status, and when playing with her or combing her hair (Sabri, 1987):

يا بنات اهلها تتمشى على مهلها  
لابسة بدلة العز والصفة على ظهرها (الذهب)

Hey daughter of her family taking her time walking

Wearing a costume of high rank and "gold" –saffeh- on her back

مثلك ما برى حدا يا ورد مفتح على الندى

امك ها الأصيلة وأبوك ما خدم حداي

مثلى ما أرى ناس يا ورد مفتح في البستان

I see no one like you, fresh rose blooming on the dew

Your mother is noble and your father served no one

Like you, people have never seen, roses flowering in the garden

In addition, an old important tradition was the circumcision of male babies. This was an important event, taking place in the houses marked by ululations, songs and a celebration for families and



friends. According to Mousa Aloush, “Prophet Abraham was the first one who had circumcision and he performed it to himself; it is considered a favorable obligation for Moslems preferably to be performed in the first 10 days after birth, and more specifically on the 7<sup>th</sup> day” (Aloush, 2018). However, some references mention that in the past, this was happening at a much later period, even at the age of 12 or 18. Now, this ceremony does not happen since the operation takes place in hospitals. The following is a verse from Jenin (Fakhri, 2018).

لا تطهروا يا مطهر غير تا يجين عماته يجين الذهب واللؤلؤ ويحطين ع بدلاته
Don't perform the circumcision O mohel until his aunts arrive They will bring him gold and pearls to be put on his outfits

Children expressing their joy on different occasions like celebrating Ramadan, or feasts, or visiting the grandmother repeated some simple short songs.

## TOPIC 5. Patriotic songs/resistance songs

It has become evident that Palestinian songs and other narratives, as vivid oral traditions, have been adapted to respond to the different political upheavals in the country. On this adaptation of lyrics, Rima Tarazi wrote: “It is interesting to note that the lyrics accompanying music change according to the situation. In Palestine, the scene of so much political turmoil, it is not uncommon to hear the lyrics of a love song turned into a political ditty, a call to an uprising or a satire aimed at personalities in high places”<sup>43</sup>. This was clearly evident in the 30’s in the struggle against the British, when local heroes were lamented and praised. To give an example as told by one of the interviewees: “al-Sarhad and Issa Al-Battat” were popular heroes from Al-Dahiriya in the revolution of 1936; it was believed that al-Battat, was caught as a prisoner in Akaa, but managed to flee and jumped into the sea. People of the village were saddened and did “nuwa’i” or nadeb circles for him.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Rima T., Music in Palestine Before 1048, <http://thisweekinpalestine.com/music-palestine-1948/ Issue 233>

<sup>44</sup> Interview Areefeh (70) and her daughter (52), Ad-Dahiriya, Hebron, 31<sup>st</sup> October

Many popular heroes, were known to the people in their villages. Songs on Masha'al, Ghbeishi and others have become so popular after they were revived and reproduced. Another example is the following from **Sanour** village where the local hero Abdelrahim Al-Haj Mohammad was martyred (Al-Atari, 2017):

<p>من الشام لسانور ملينا القرب مية                  واحنا ع صانور جرتنا هالمنية</p>
<p><u>From Al-Sham to Sanour, we filled a hundred water bottles</u>  <u>And to Sanour, our destiny brought us</u></p>

Song lyrics were also altered to praise political figures like the Egyptian president Jamal Abdelnasser who was considered a hero. On his death many circles of “nadeb” were held and women were lamenting him in different verses (Al-Atari, 2017)

<p>كرسي الرئيس جلوله بالجوخ                  بعد أبو خالد ما حليلي شيوخ                  كرسي الرئاسة جلوله بسواد                  بعد أبو خالد ما حليلي جواد</p>
<p>The president's chair was draped with cotton                  After “Abu Khaled”, no other leader is to my liking                  The president's chair was draped with black                  After Abu Khaled, no horse-rider or generous/ honorable person is to my liking</p>

Moreover, people gave importance to resistance against the British and the Israelis during the different eras through traditional songs. For example, in weddings, when the bride's caravan used to pass by Al-Masqoubiyeh detention prison in Jerusalem, the songs were immediately altered to political lyrics showing sadness and hatred for the occupier (Fakhri, 2018)

<p>يخسف بوابك يا المسكوبية يخسف بوابك                  ذاقوا عذابك شباب فلسطين ذاقوا عذابك</p>
<p>Masqoubiyeh, may your gates be destroyed, be destroyed</p>

Palestinian men have suffered your pain

## TOPIC 6. Other songs

There were different ceremonies but the accompanying songs for some have disappeared through time; they were not considered important by scholars. In what follows, some of these songs are discussed.

### Songs of stories and *hikāyāt*:

“Songs were almost non-existent in Palestinian popular “*Hikāyāt*”, except for some excerpts here and there. This is considered a factor for provoking the listeners’ interest to follow the story and increase its entertaining value. Among the most known ones is the “*Djbeineh*” tale, and the accompanying songs” (Mosleh, 1980):

يا طيور طيارة ويا وحوش دايرة سلمن ع أمي وأبوي وقلن "جبينة" راعية

Oh flying birds, and stray beasts,  
give my greetings to my parents  
and tell them that “Djbeineh” is ‘a shepherd

Another example given by the same researcher is a long story in the form of a song repeated during the wheat harvesting season, expressing the relation of the peasant and the feudal owner of the land during the Ottoman period (Mosleh, 1980).

### Songs for graduation or succeeding in schools:

The school system was different from what it is now; graduating from school was an important event, let alone graduating from a university and returning back home. N. Fakhri gives quite some examples of songs for this occasion from Jenin, Hebron and Tulkarem in her book *al-Bada'a* (Fakhri, 2018).

## Songs for travelers:

It was not uncommon for men to travel, leaving their families behind, seeking work in Gulf countries, the USA or Latin America. Again, many songs were marking this separation as documented in the book of Fakhri (2018)

## 5.2 Amthāl “Proverbs”

Like the songs and “*Hikāyāt*”, proverbs occupy a major place in the Palestinian oral traditions, which is also the case in other Arab and world cultures. They are derived from and function as a reflection of peoples’ social, economic, environment and religious traditions. They represent people’s collective memories, traditions, habits, and behaviors and they are transmitted orally through generations. Proverbs are concise short phrases, giving a wisdom and a strong meaning, and are popular and well known by a large number of people; they are easy to remember and easy to repeat. Yusra Jawhariyyeh wrote on proverbs in her book “The meaning and purpose are the common aspects of all proverbs of all nations; although with different variations, structures and formats, proverbs enable us to read a huge book on a nation’s values, wisdom, intelligence, and culture” (Jawhariyyeh, 1968). With regard to their structure, proverbs are considered “unique”, very informative, and have an unordinary cohesion. According to Aseel Zibin and Abdelrahman Altakhaineh “It is probably the way they are formed grammatically and conceptually, which make them interesting and informative.”<sup>45</sup>

Proverbs in Palestinian oral tradition are very similar to proverbs of other nations whereby they describe or give meanings to the sum of daily life practices; therefore, we can categorize proverbs according to the following main headings that are based on Jawhariyyeh’s and others’ classification (Jawhariyyeh1968):

- Proverbs of seasons and weather conditions in relation to agriculture, water and harvesting
- Proverbs of social trends and values in human behaviors marked by giving a moral, wisdom or an anecdote or sarcastic expressions
- Proverbs of city names giving a brief label about the named or mentioned city

<sup>45</sup> Zibin A., & Altakhaineh A. , 2014 “Informativity of Arabic Proverbs in context: An Insight into Palestinian Discourse”, International Journal of Linguistics, Macro Think Institute, England [www.macrothink.org](http://www.macrothink.org)

- Proverbs on health issues, strength or weakness of human beings
- Proverbs of feasts, celebrations and superstitions
- Proverbs describing a factual life state with metaphoric meanings and metaphors (with animals, plants, nature...etc.)

Palestinian proverbs derive from different sources according to Yusra Jawhariyyeh's book (1968) on Palestinian popular arts – and others. Some of the proverbs come from:

- Old Arabic traditions and legends or epics (such as Abū Zayd al-- Hilāl, Al-Shater Hassan)
- Factual life incidents and observations of deep human nature
- Classical Arabic language (carrying classical words and expressed in formal language)
- Popular songs and poems – where some songs verses become used as proverbs
- Nature and seasons linking their relation to harvesting, daily life practices, and land and house
- Other cultures and diverse world traditions
- Political situation throughout history in Palestine in view of the different invasions/ colonial projects and wars
- Old beliefs and traditions
- Beautiful or metaphoric phrases
- Some of the proverbs carry names of cities, or historic well-known heroes or characters, others carry names of musical instruments, and animals.

In their book *Dictionary of Palestinian Proverbs*, Fuad Abbas and Ahmad Shaheen give an extensive description of features characterizing Palestinian proverbs. These include aspects where the proverbs are derived from as mentioned above, in addition to other features like “their similarities with other Arab countries, and world cultures; the exaggeration feature, the comparison with animals, and sexual connotations” (Abbas & Shahin, 1989). For example, Mousa Aloush highlights the reference to birds in Palestinian proverbs: “Birds play a significant role in proverbs; they are associated to the notions of fertility, and abundance linked to the different seasons. For example, the hatching of pigeons is a sign of a good season; some are linked to some human attitudes and habits like falling in your own trap like a chicken, or advising on prudence by saying that not all the meat of birds is edible, etc.” (Aloush, 2018).

Proverbs are easily transmitted orally among the generations, easy to memorize and well spread among all people regardless of their economic or religious background. According to Zuheir H. Al-Huroub “They are the most popular of all the other oral traditions and the most spread” (Al-Huroub, 2015). It is a well trusted, or a credible source of reference for the people as it expresses in brief a collective attitude towards a certain problem or issue inherited through the years. Proverbs in Palestine reflect the diversity of Palestinian’s society: economically, socio-politically, historically, geographically and religiously.

As it expresses people’s experiences through the centuries, the stories, which inspired these proverbs, have often disappeared leaving us with the short wise or descriptive phrase or proverb. Other stories are still known, yet with not many details, but were transmitted and became more developed to meet the current time or more recent history of the society.

As for the dialects of a proverb, Al-Huroub wrote that “it is difficult to identify an original time frame where the proverbs started, but surely after the Islamic conquest, when Arabic has become the dominant language, with the spread of its different dialects” (Al-Huroub, 2015). The Palestinian dialect is a rich one, different from one area to the other. He continued “colloquial dialects in Palestine were able to translate the contents and esthetics of the language which is able to express the Palestinians’ emotions, beliefs and specific aspects (Al-Huroub, 2015). For Palestinians, proverbs are quite important for different reasons, including their relevance to the Palestinian dialect: “proverbs are fair witnesses to the colloquial Palestinian dialect, which is a genuine one emerging from an intuitive nature, which mark all dialects in Palestine. In addition, proverbs can be considered as social document of peoples’ lives and an encyclopedia of Palestinian history with all its social classes and layers” (Al-Huroub, 2015).

There are different classifications of collected proverbs, but Nabeel Alqam from the Heritage Studies Centre of In’aash El-Usra has created a special classification to almost 6000 proverbs he has collected at the Centre. This classification is written on small individual cards for each proverb (12cmx10cm), including key words, the occasion, the text/the proverb phrase, the notes. A proverb might have more than one key word and therefore more than one card. Then cards are organized in alphabetical order according to the key words (Alqam, 1987). In his collection of over

4000 proverbs, Dr. Yehia Jaber of Al-Najah University says that he has also collected proverbs of negative connotations since “popular heritage is not an educational theory but rather a reflection of a living reality and the collective look on this reality is relatively different.”<sup>46</sup>

### 5.3 “Hazazeer” or “Uḥḍjiyyāt” Riddles:

Although people link riddles to entertainment, they are one of the oldest creative forms in world cultures. Some scholars even believe that it was the first intuitive reaction of the first humans to understand the secrets of nature and therefore reveal many features and facts, which have formed their development over the centuries. Riddles are orally transmitted short phrases like proverbs, yet they contain intriguing words that are simple yet with deep connotations; this indicates the popular roots of riddles and their contribution to forming collective traditions. They also have political, social economic and mental features.

Based on the definition above, here are some further clarifications on the different contents of these riddles, which also form an important oral expression. In an extensive article, Zaki El-Eileh provides a number of themes around which riddles can be categorized<sup>47</sup>:

Politically speaking, many of the old riddles carried names of cities like Istanbul and Izmir; this indicates the importance of the Ottoman period in Palestine. As for nature, many riddles cite agricultural products which were an important pillar of Palestinian peasants’ life. These products included cabbage, eggplants, onions, pomegranate, and water melon in addition to a large group of vegetables. These products in particular were abundant and important in a family’s food basket. This is an indication of the Palestinians’ attachment to the land. Linked to these products, many riddles were about the houses and handicrafts used in the household or about aiding in securing the food products to a household such as the olive pressing tools and the wheat stone mills/grinders. Other handicrafts and household tools were also mentioned in these riddles such as the lantern, water pottery, kettles, the tent, the traditional fire place, the straw plates for the olive oil presses, the water well, etc. The house and its structure were another subject of riddles.

<sup>46</sup> Jaber, M., I; “Palestinian proverbs”, Palestinian Popular Heritage Series, *Al-Khabieh* 2, Najah University <https://ency.najah.edu/node/134>

<sup>47</sup> <http://info.wafa.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=9515> The Palestinian Popular Riddle

As new technology started appearing, new riddles developed about radios, the lamp, the oil cooker (babour), the matches, the pipe... This also applies to weapons like the machine gun and the bullet, and education-related items such as envelopes, books, and pencils. Like many old cultures, the sacred “number 7” has its special status in the riddles for many were using it to describe a belief or something from daily life. Riddles also gave wisdom and reflected life experiences; therefore, we find lots about the mind and age. Some religious symbols were also addressed in riddles like al- Ka’ba, the Prophet Mohammad and others. As for natural phenomena, the moon, stars, day and night, lighting and thunder, rain, snow, water and the sea all had a big share of riddles.

Riddles also mentioned the human body like the fingers, the tongue, the shadow, the teeth, the ears... Animals, birds and insects with a lot of references to horses which had an important status in the peasants’ lives.

In a research paper presented in the “Third conference on arts and Palestinian popular heritage” organized by Al-Najah University, the researcher Mahmoud Ishneiwer gives a different classification of riddles according to 10 categories stressing that riddles are extremely important for the health and are considered as “mental athletics” (Ishneiwer, 2011). He does not give many examples and recommends that such riddles have to be collected in a comprehensive reference book.



## 6. Oral expressions in Palestinian Contemporary Art

### 6.1 Political context

Folkloric and traditional oral narratives are never static: they evolve, and change, particularly in times of dramatic and radical change, as in times of wars, socio-cultural and political upheavals (Kanaana, 2012<sup>48</sup>). Indeed, Palestinian life, types of narrative, culture and artistic expressions, have changed in many ways in the wake of the Palestinian Nakba in 1948, after the Naksa of 1967, and what followed until today (Ongoing Nakba). These expressions, however, have contributed significantly to preserving, re-invigorating and promoting Palestinian national and cultural identity while often highlighting old traditions and narratives. This section will try to trace the impact of traditional and recent oral history on creating a vibrant artistic scene in Palestine and how the different contemporary artistic expressions have contributed to the promotion and protection of this rich oral heritage. To do so, this research paper has examined two very distinct artistic forms: **visual and performing arts**. Cultural expressions in Palestine, rather than being a luxurious action or commodity, are closely related to its very particular political and social situation: a country occupied for about 70 years now.

### 6.2 The role of visual arts in shaping Palestinian cultural identity

Visual arts have played an important role in shaping cultural identity in Palestine. As such, visual arts such as painting and sculpture, have been using and are importantly inspired by the knowledge and existence of the more tangible and intangible Palestinian heritage, found in embroidery, costumes, pottery, calligraphy, architecture, and poetry.

A pioneer in documenting Palestinian visual arts, the late Ismael Shamout<sup>49</sup>, who was the first to introduce arts education in UNRWA schools in Lebanon back in the 60s, mentioned that “Palestinian popular arts were an important source of inspiration for the Palestinian contemporary visual arts”. This is also affirmed by Suleiman Mansour who stated that<sup>50</sup> “popular heritage occupied an important subject in Palestinian arts starting the 60’s of the last century, but earlier

<sup>48</sup> Kanaana, S., 2012. Traditional Palestinian Narratives. IN: *This Week in Palestine*.

(<http://archive.thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=2012&edid=135>)

<sup>49</sup> Ismael S.,t. “Roots of Palestinian visual arts”. <http://alqudslana.com/index.php?action=article&id=1153>:

<sup>50</sup> Suleiman M.,2009. “Popular Heritage and Palestinian visual arts”. <http://info.wafa.ps/pdf/torath.pdf>

artists like Shammout have used it in their works in the early 50's. The employment of these icons gained its importance after the shock of the Nakba and the nostalgia for the stolen life before that.”

The Nakba has indeed been a turning point also at the cultural and artistic level. Stressing Palestinian identity through employment of the tangible and intangible heritage icons has been the dominant theme in the works and productions of most Palestinian visual artists. Driven by the Israeli attempts to eliminate Palestinian existence on their lands, and to erase traces of social cultural existence and identity, it is not surprising that many artists and cultural organizations have taken part in the national struggle. They have thus always been a target of Israeli oppressive practices. Hence, of documenting and tracing the origins and impact of Palestinian artistic expressions particularly over the past 70 years, from pioneering artists such as Ismael Shamout in the 50s until today is crucially important. Himself a refugee from Ludd, Shamout's first exhibition held in Khan Younis in 1953 started this process of documenting and providing witness to the tragedy of the Nakba, bringing the personal stories and feelings of shame and betrayal of so many people to a broader societal acknowledgement of the major catastrophe and conspiracy against their homeland and existence<sup>51</sup>. For him, like other artists, popular heritage and historic and political events are closely “intertwined, as art is an interactive process with society, political events and daily life, otherwise art would remain an isolated act of elites.”<sup>52</sup> This is also affirmed by Mansour who said: “the historic and political situation in Palestine over the past 100 years has shaped up and recognized Palestinian arts as signified by using different icons: barbed wires, vernacular architecture, stone walls, popular costumes and tools, images of Nakba, and Arabic calligraphy.”<sup>53</sup>

After 1967 new “icons” were added to artistic works: olive trees, cactus, al-Aqsa, agricultural traditions, pottery, embroidery, etc. Prominent individuals who pioneered in this include Ismail Shamout, Suleyman Mansour, Vera Tamari, Nabeel Anani, Sameer Salameh, Jumana El-Husseini and Abdel Hai Musallam, among many others in Palestine and the Diaspora. Their works included such icons, while merging them with icons of resistance, identity, and steadfastness.

<sup>51</sup> Interview for this research with Hafez Omar, a young visual artist and researcher, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Ismael S., “Roots of Palestinian visual arts”. <http://alqudsalana.com/index.php?action=article&id=1153>

<sup>53</sup> Suleiman M.,r. “Popular Heritage and Palestinian visual arts”. <http://info.wafa.ps/pdf/torath.pdf>/2009

Vera Tamari, a renowned woman artist and sculptress, while teaching her students in the 1970's, visited traditional craftsmen, learning their trade, and their tools: "the objective wasn't to keep these crafts as is, but to diversify their applications and emerge with a modern art inspired by our heritage and folklore."<sup>54</sup> With the eruption of the first Intifada, and the strong call for boycott of Israeli products, artists including Suleiman Mansour, Nabeel Anani, Tayseer Barakat and Jawad a-Malhi, started using local materials found in nature in Palestine, "reaffirming the significance of Palestinian land, national identity and cultural heritage"(Gonzalez, 2009)<sup>55</sup>. "It was our responsibility in the Intifada to take a role, as artists with a mission."<sup>56</sup>

After the Oslo accords, according to S. Mansour "the use of popular heritage icons started fading with the world's recognition of the Palestinian people and their identity. Younger artists strongly opened-up to Western experiences; new concepts and techniques started to be used" (Mansour, 2009<sup>57</sup>). Hafez Omar<sup>58</sup>, a young visual artist himself, describing this regretfully as "the whole political national narrative is getting dismantled; the narrative becoming that the world should deal with the Palestinians as a victim and to be granted a state by the world. Artists started to look for an imitation of western arts forms to reach universality, away from the Palestinian icons and symbols." Hafez strongly believes though, that more impact, more influence on the people, and society comes from those works and artists who keep the Palestinian issue, its culture, identity and history alive (Hafez Omar).

### 6.3 Performing arts (music, dance, theatre...)

#### 6.3.1 Performing arts, a recovery over the last 70 years

##### General Overview

Where Palestinian society and hence cultural life has received a heavy blow and was in shock in the first 20 years after the traumas of the Nakba, the political situation especially after the Naksa

<sup>54</sup> An interview with Vera Tamari, February 2018, by Badia'a Zidan, Cultural Policy in the Arab Region

<http://www.arabcp.org/page/936>

<sup>55</sup> Olga G., 2009. "Culture and Politics in the Visual Arts of the Palestinian Occupied Territories". Volume 23, Macalester International

[http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol23/iss1/16?utm\\_source=digitalcommons.macalester.edu%2Fmacintl%2Fvol23%2Fiss1%2F16&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol23/iss1/16?utm_source=digitalcommons.macalester.edu%2Fmacintl%2Fvol23%2Fiss1%2F16&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages)

<sup>56</sup> An Interview with Nabeel Anani on 8/10/2017, by Aws Yaacoub. <https://www.rommanmag.com/view/posts/postDetails?id=4560/>

<sup>57</sup> Suleiman M., "Popular Heritage and Palestinian visual arts". <http://info.wafa.ps/pdf/torath.pdf/2009>

<sup>58</sup> Interview for this research with Hafez Omar, a young visual artist and researcher, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

of 1967 has affected the cultural and artistic expressions like music, dance and theater in important ways inside and outside Palestine.

In the early 70's, with further Israeli expansion of settlements and hegemony over land, people, resources, and culture, Palestinians started realizing that not only their land is being stolen, but also their identity, culture, and heritage. In search of unifying symbols of collective identity through folkloric heritage (Rowe, 2010) a wave of revival became a nationalistic response to protect Palestinian existence and identity. A lot of research on folklore and heritage, festivals, museums, dance and music groups was established to recover the pillars of identity and culture. This recovery was intertwined with the struggle against Israel's hegemony over 70 years. The salvage, on the one hand, was expressed in the adaptations of the popular heritage as mobilizing mechanisms, went almost in parallel and continues until today with diverse formats and outcomes. From the Naksa onwards, we can observe the development of an intricate pattern of parallel developments in the different performing arts and of mutual interactions with oral and traditional expressions in which the latter became inserted into the performing arts, notably in music, songs and dance, as evidenced in the 1<sup>st</sup> Intifada/uprising.

### **Traditional dance, music and songs:**

Very little is known about dance between 1948 and 67. The Ramallah Nights Festival, running between 1962 – 66 and organized by Al Sariyyeh First Group, was however an important addition to the cultural scene in the city. The festival introduced staged “dabke” productions along with other performing arts from the Middle East region (Rowe 2010) and can be considered as a first form of revival of important icons of Palestinian identity almost 20 years after the Nakba.

In the West Bank El Funoun Dance Troupe was established in 1979 by a small number of talented and committed men and women, “who collectively strove to present a special flavor of authentic Palestinian music and dance and safeguard this heritage from expropriation and loss.”<sup>59</sup> El-Funoun developed its artistic productions based on in-depth research of the dance, songs and music heritage; since its beginning, it has contextualized their research and productions in daily life, social and political developments. “Palestinian scenes,” its first complete production in 1982,

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<sup>59</sup> [www.el-funoun.org](http://www.el-funoun.org) the Beginnings

“Wadi Al Tuffah” (1984), Masha’al (1986), and Marj Bin Amer (1989), brought to the public a wealth of traditional songs and music. However, El-Funoun’s new choreography, their adaptations of movements, costumes and some lyrics, received some criticism from loyal folklorists who strove to preserve the very original forms. It is important to note that the new choreographic movements that were added by El-Funoun are now viewed as traditional Palestinian dance (Row, 2010). According to Serene Huleileh (2018), the innovative aptitude of El Funoun to creatively expand the basis of vernacular knowledge of dance and songs and its philosophy of being inspired from folklore rather than presenting it as a static form, is one of the reasons they have become pioneers in its field. The songs of El Funoun have over time become an anchor of Palestinian identity.

Following the example of El-Funoun, many other Dabke groups came to life in the 70s and 80s in the Palestinian community. In the Diaspora, Al-Hanouneh in Jordan is considered the most outstanding until the present day. In Palestine, groups at universities like Birzeit and Bethlehem were formed. Al Sariyyeh Dance Troupe in Ramallah revived itself in 1985 after becoming forcefully inactive in 1967. Like El Funoun, Al-Sariyyeh choreographed their own dances, re-arranged traditional music and drew inspiration from the traditional songs and developed dance steps into complete productions. In 1987 El Funoun established the Popular Arts Centre (PAC) to teach and revive Dabke and research. PAC is now the focal point for transmitting performing arts expressions particularly to the young generation, and has a unique collection of 220 hours of song recordings from the rural and urban areas in its audio library.

### **The urban scene in music and songs:**

Palestine was a cultural hub with a vibrant urban music scene before 1948, but the immediate shock of the Nakba, compelled many musicians to immigrate to nearby countries where they made a remarkable impact on the Arabic music scene in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt (Kanaanah et al, 2013). Nevertheless, “al- mawru<sup>th</sup>”, the traditional or folkloric music continued to be one of the most essential tools through which Palestinians were able to express themselves, articulate their sense of reality and identity (Boulos, 2010<sup>60</sup>).

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<sup>60</sup> Issa B.,s, 2010. *The past and current in the Palestinian music scene*. Published on <http://www.issaboulos.com/articles>

## **Theatre**

Theatre received a heavy blow in the period following the Nakba, and its development almost came to a halt. It was only until the early 70s and 80s, living the shock of the defeat of 67 that there was a re-birth of Palestinian theatre. Particularly in Ramallah and Jerusalem, new groups started emerging. Balaldeen in 1970 was considered the first independent theatre group formed after the Naksa of 1967 (Adel Tartir<sup>61</sup>). Other groups followed like Dababees, Bila-leen, Sundouq al-'Ajab, Al-Qasaba and then Al-Hakawati. For these developing groups, the socio-political topics were coupled with quality artistic formats, were the dominant trend throughout the 70's and 80's.

### **6.3.2 Artistic political resistance over the last 70 years**

Throughout the 1980s, Israel has considered artistic and cultural practices as “illegal”. Many artists were a target and were arrested at a certain stage. Holding a dance performance, a play or an exhibition was always subject to either cancelation or invasion of the venues or a road block to hinder any arrival of audiences.

As described above, the development of the Palestinian political artistic expressions went in parallel with the political developments in Palestine. As stated by Kanaana (2017), “in general, icons of an identity come from the past, and from the collective experiences of a society, but this past has to meet the needs of the present time and the aspirations of the future”. This might have been the vision behind the creation of many performing arts organizations since the late 1970's and probably until today.

### **Music and songs:**

“The Palestinian situation is essentially a condition of oppression that required a cultural response. In this case and due to its mobilizing nature and accessibility, music particularly had an exceptional role to play in highlighting the Palestinian situation. In many ways, it helped bring the Palestinian people under a unified goal, while setting up their views of certain national and regional issues including political and social ones” (Bolous, 2010)<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Interview for this research with 'Adel Tartir, actor and director Sundouq al-'Ajab Theatre on 25 October, Ramallah.

<sup>62</sup> Bolous I., , 2010. *The past and current in the Palestinian Music Scene*. Published on <http://www.issaboulos.com/articles>

The emergence of political and resistance songs started with the revolutionary work known as “*al-‘Amal al- fidā’ī*” back in the 1960s. Newly arranged tunes using new lyrics were sung prompting for fighting and resistance, which were known as “*songs of the revolution*” – “*Aghani al-Thawra*”. These songs have become a political resistance statement towards liberation representing the collective identity of the people and serving as an awareness raising tool in the 60’s and 70’s (Fayed Badarneh, 2018).<sup>63</sup>In 1979 the PLO’s Culture and Media Unit established al- ‘Ashiqeen music group and al- Arđ dance troupe. al- ‘Ashiqeen started recalling the history and popular memory by infusing the traditional melodies with new lyrics calling for resistance, steadfastness and commemorating the land marks in the Palestinian struggle. Their songs have quickly spread as a form of oral memory all over the Palestinian Diaspora and historic Palestine. ”al- ‘Ashiqeen’s repertoire consisted of songs about Palestine and was primarily telling the stories of ordinary people that made reference to an emerging and popular resistance movement, relying on Palestinian traditional arts and oral memory as main resources for inspiration (Boulos, 2010<sup>64</sup>). One of their first hits was:

<p>والله لزرعك بالدار يا عود اللوز الإخطر واري هالأرض بدمي تتنور فيها وتكبر</p>	<p>I will plant you at home Oh, branch of green almonds I will water this land with my blood Until you blossom and grow</p>
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David McDonald<sup>65</sup> confirms that “within the Palestinian resistance movement, music has been instrumental in nationalizing the public in different ways at different times; the old folk songs were appropriated by nationalists to strengthen various political affiliations and ideologies”. In addition, Ibrahim Saleh, known as Abu- ‘Arab, was one of the most popular singers or “*Zadjdjal*”, also named the poet of the Palestinian revolution. His improvisation of songs followed the traditional, collective folkloric rhythms, with new lyrics that mobilized people for the resistance, and later on the Intifadas, like his songs of “*Zareef A-Toul*” and others (Yaaqbeh, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> Badarneh F., 2018. Stations of the Palestinian political songs. Rumman magazine (<https://rommanmag.com/view/posts/postDetails?id=4935>)

<sup>64</sup> Boulos I., 2010. *The past and current in the Palestinian music scene*. <http://www.issaboulos.com/articles>

<sup>65</sup> McDonald, D A., 2006 “Performing Palestine: Resisting the occupation and reviving Jerusalem’s social and cultural identity through music and arts”, [www.Palestine-Studies.org](http://www.Palestine-Studies.org) , issue # 25



<p>يا ظريف الطول جاي ودعك راح ع فلسطين خذ قلبي معك</p>	<p>Oh “Zareef A-Toul”, I am coming to bid you farewell; going to Palestine take my heart with you</p>
<p>ما بدي الوقفة باب الإعاشة يا محلى الموتة وبيدي رشاشي حامل رشاشي وعبلاذي ماشي تا رجع داري وكرم الزيتون</p>	<p>I don't want to stand for food provision; How beautiful it is to die with my machine gun in my hand Holding my machine gun and walking to my land so I can return home and to the olive groves</p>

With the advancement of audio-visual means like radio, TV and music cassettes, songs of al-‘Ashiqeen and Abu ‘Arab, have spread quickly among all segments of Palestinian society in Palestine and the Diaspora. In the 70’s and early 80’s, new genres of songs and music, labeled as “*al ughniha al multazima*”, literally a “committed singing to the cause” emerged. Newly composed music developed, not completely following the traditional rhythms, but with poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, Hussein Barguthi and Samih al-Qassem. The most known was Sabreen Music Group from Jerusalem in the early 1980s, which was adopted by the Palestinians at large. In the meantime, many popular singers –zadjaleenn – singing at weddings in rural areas, had also to adapt and show their commitment to the national cause by changing the lyrics of traditional songs to give “*ughinayat multazima*” or committed nationalist songs.

During the first Intifada (1987-1993), according to D. McDonald “different variations of collective traditional songs like “*dal’ouna*”, “*al-‘Ataba*”, “*Djafra*”, formed the basis for the development of Palestinian Intifada songs” (McDonald 2006)<sup>66</sup>. This is confirmed by Suhail Khoury: “the intifada did not bring up new music productions with new genres, yet many musicians used traditional popular rhythms with new lyrics that address the struggle against the occupier.”<sup>67</sup> New CDs and cassettes were secretly produced and widely spread as a strong challenge dominating the strong popular resistance. Dr. Abdellatif Al-Barghuthi (1997) collected about 163 songs mainly on traditional tunes.

<sup>66</sup> D A McDonald, 2006 “Performing Palestine: Resisting the occupation and reviving Jerusalem’s social and cultural identity through music and arts”, [www.Palestine-Studies.org](http://www.Palestine-Studies.org) , issue # 25

<sup>67</sup> The fusion of oriental music with poetry, Suhail Khoury  
الموسيقى الفلسطينية: امتزاج الموسيقى المشرقية بعنفوان الشعر  
<https://www.paljourneys.org/ar/timeline/highlight/10527> [الموسيقى الفلسطينية](https://www.paljourneys.org/ar/timeline/highlight/10527)



The following verse commemorating the *Sabra and Shatila* massacre in 1982 in Lebanon and the next one (both , a *dal'ouna* variations), are among the many released music recordings that have spread during the Intifada: <sup>68</sup>

شاتيلا تبكي وصبرا بتتوحي واحنا نفديك بالدم والروحي.	Shatila is crying, and Sabra is wailing; and we will redeem you with blood and soul
على دلعونا وعلى دلعونا احنا انتفضنا وما بهدونا	Ala'dalouna', ala dalouna, we have started the uprising and they can't calm us down,

After Oslo, resistance songs of the Intifada changed to more peaceful and conciliatory lyrics and increasingly classical music performances were organized. With the eruption of the 2<sup>nd</sup> uprising, al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005), however, cultural activists went back to the “uprising mode”. Lyrics calling for a continuation of resistance and steadfastness re-emerged; some on traditional melodies and others with a more modern style. In addition, hip-hop and rap also emerged expressing resistance and political awareness.

After the second Intifada, contemporary arts started to play an increasingly important role in the Palestinian performing arts scene mainly with contents produced and promoted under “artistic resistance”. “In contrast to the long established tradition of Intifada songs and music cassettes popularized in the 80’s and 90’s, Palestinians today have in large part developed new forms of cultural activism more aligned to cosmopolitan aesthetics and dispositions... the development of formal cultural organizations and festivals is a reflection of a particular cosmopolitan aesthetic that values presentational art forms, while preserving the expressions of its traditional culture” (McDonald. 2006)<sup>69</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Khader, M., 2012. *Stages of the development of the Palestinian Song*  
<http://alqudsiana.com/index.php?action=article&id=646>

<sup>69</sup> McDonald D A., 2006 “Performing Palestine: Resisting the occupation and reviving Jerusalem’s social and cultural identity through music and arts”, [www.Palestine-Studies.org](http://www.Palestine-Studies.org) , issue # 25

## Dance:

In parallel with the recovery trend, dance groups in the 1980's adapted movements and lyrics on traditional songs like “*dal’ouna*”, “*Zareef Al-toul*”, and “*Djafra*”. The adaptations or variations of lyrics included messages of resistance and steadfastness, while adaptations of movement were mainly in the choreography not the original steps. Carrying in-depth research in and inspiration from the rich reserve of folkloric reserve, El-Funoun went farther by reviving complete stories of resistance produced in its three works: *Wadi Al-Tuffah*, *Masha’al* and *Marj Bin Amer*. (Photo: El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe, 1984).



After Oslo, new dance groups emerged, again the variations were with the songs not the steps of dance. Variations of lyrics of traditional songs appeared to serve the new “peaceful” situation, and the new leadership<sup>70</sup>. Choreography and adaptations of costumes have been more evident. These groups received more attention and were embraced by the Palestinian Authority. However, other groups like El-Funoun did not change its vision or mode of work in this new era. It has fully commemorated the “Nakba” and right of return with a new production “Haifa, Beirut and beyond” in 2003. Thus far, and over 39 years now, El-Funoun has had 14 artistic productions, performed locally and internationally, with a repertoire inspired mainly from the rich intangible heritage, while encompassing strong messages of steadfastness, positive social change, and resistance.

During Al-Aqsa intifada, many dance groups had to reduce their activities, and some have completely dissolved. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada, however, new genres of dance like contemporary and ballet emerged and started to be taught mainly to children. New performing arts organizations were established, including a circus. Large scale festivals re-appeared attracting diverse audiences mainly organized in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. “Last April (2018), Sarreyet

<sup>70</sup> Interview Khaled Qatamesh, Director, El-Funoun Dance Troupe, October 2018

Ramallah First Group, organized the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival (RCDF), strengthening the position of contemporary dance as a crucial artistic practice that has its own dedicated practitioners and growing audiences (Abu Hashhash, 2018).

In addition, to these new dance genres, there has been more interest in dance/Dabke at different levels after Al-Aqsa Intifada. Youth and cultural organizations, many in rural areas, started believing in slogans like “arts for all”. Dabke, has been an important icon of Palestinian folklore coupled with the traditional songs. Many organizations started creating their own dance groups, inspired by El-Funoun and using many of its repertoire. Popular Arts Centre established a “Dabke dance school” attracting hundreds of children to its annual courses. The Ministry of Education



started organizing Dabke competitions in its public schools after having encouraged the creation of dance groups as part of extra-curricular activities<sup>71</sup>.

(Photo: Bara'em El-Funoun in their latest production “Tallat”)

### Today and tomorrow

Today, apart from the established performing arts groups mentioned in this chapter, there are tens of dance troupes, theatre groups, youth initiatives at schools and community based Centres, reviving and forming their own activities and making good use of rich oral heritage and narratives, but also exploring more modern performing arts concepts.

A “*Hakāyā*” Festival has started in Palestine 3 years ago, as an off-spring of the “*Hakāyā*” Festival which started in Jordan back in 2008 and now has become a member of a network of regional “*Hakāyā*” Festivals. The Palestine team of “*Hakāyā*” Festival is a group of young popular narrators “who are putting efforts to revive the central position of the “*Hakāyā*” in arts, life and learning, and its importance in preserving the popular heritage and the collective memory<sup>72</sup>”; over the two-week festival, the narrators get together and tell stories in public spaces and schools.

<sup>71</sup> Interview Khaled Qatamesh, Director El-Funoun Dance Troupe, October 2018

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.hakayaps.org/2018> مهرجان حكايا فلسطين الثالث

The annual Heritage Festival, including the Dabke competition, is part of PAC’s activities, which have been attracting a large number of emerging dance groups. Palestinian visual arts and cinema, have been playing a pivotal role in the cultural scene, with an increasing recognition worldwide. Visual arts in particular have translated many symbols of tangible and in-tangible heritage into internationally acclaimed unique artistic works by renowned Palestinian artists as detailed above.

Palestinian theatre was in a state of regression after the 1<sup>st</sup> Intifada until al-Aqsa Intifada. New shifts on the scene started with the establishment of new theatre organizations like Freedom Theatre, al-Hāra, Yes Theatre, among others. Their productions focused on social dimensions, but also on recent history of the Nakba, the Intifada and the Gaza blockage. The latest production of al-Hāra “*meramieh* –or sage in Arabic” is a strong example that is based on oral stories narrated by Palestinians expelled in 1948 (notably in the Diaspora) on their pre-48 lives and society. “Gaza Monologues” by ‘Ashtar Theatre is another major addition to the artistic scene transmitting a strong call on the sieged Gaza Strip. Other individual artists like Mohammad Bakri in the “*Pessoptimits*” and Amer Hleihel in “*Taha*” have been pioneers in transmitting these recent oral memories of Nakba into high quality monodrama.

**(Photo: “Meramieh” a play produced by al-Hāra Theatre based on the book: Living Memories: Testimonies of displaced Palestinians in 1948)**



Recently, quite a number of new Palestinian music ensembles, merging classical, jazz and oriental music, got world-wide recognition such as Trio Jubran, Simon Shaeen and others. Young music groups, influenced by world music genres like Rapp and Jazz, emerged like Dam, Al-Container and 47-Soul, who used these music genres while using lyrics from traditional and revolutionary Palestinian sources. In short, a growing new Palestinian music identity and repertoire is still growing and developing.

### 6.3.3 Oral and traditional expressions in performing arts

This section will give more examples of oral memories, tales, songs and other traditional oral expressions, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, and how they are used in the above discussed performing arts.

#### **Inspirations from the *Hikāyāt* and the *Kiṣaṣ***

In addition to El-Funoun's dance productions mentioned above, Al-Sariyyeh produced Jbeineh in 1992, based on the "*Hikāyā*" fairy tale of Djbeineh (see Chapter 4.2, Topic 1). In handling the folkloric expressions, theatre groups such as 'Ashtar, Al-Harah, Al-Hakawati, and the Popular Theatre, have taken some icons from the oral and tangible heritage and tales, while making good use of European technical expertise and Western drama schools in producing works with political and social themes. The different theatre groups have taken inspiration from the "*Hikāyāt*", but according to Iman Oun "there was not a major re-production of them, neither for adults nor for children; however, there was a re-production of few "*Kiṣaṣ*" like "Antar Bin Shadad" by Radi Shihadeh"<sup>73</sup>.

An interesting case is Sundouq al-'Ajab, a theatre group that was already formed in 1975 by four actors. It performed the first mono-drama in the history of Palestine theatre, titled "Ras Rous". Although the group dispersed, it still exists until today, with one actor, Adel Tartir, who opted to work on mono-drama in the role of "Abu-'Al Ajayeb" who tells the traditional "*Dhīkrāyāt*" and "*Kiṣaṣ*", to diverse groups, touring with his self-made "box" of wonders. "I tell traditional stories with a traditional look and format, but while I am narrating, I adapt the "*Hikāyāt*" to give a more progressive, or a more joyful or a more realistic ending and content. Sometimes, I tell stories of the Nakba which I was told by my father when they left Ludd. The age group, and the setting decide my contents, while as a narrator I tell the story regardless of the place of the "box" which remains a symbol of our heritage. In my work I combine both entertainment and awareness on any specific topic" (Adel Tartir)<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> Interview Iman Oun, actress and artistic director, Ashtar Theatre, 2 November 2018

<sup>74</sup> Interview for this research with Adel Tartir, actor and director Sundouq Al-Ajab Theatre , 25 October 2018.

In **music**, the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM) was probably a pioneer in transforming two of such stories into musicals, with orchestrated music composed and arranged expressly for the stories by Suhail Khoury. “*Al-Fawanees*”, or “*The little lantern*”, produced in 2004, was probably the first children’s musical based on a fairy tale written by Ghassan Kanafani. As a literary work written by a known author, it might not strictly be considered a folkloric “*Hikāyā*” but over time it may well become part of the “*Hikāyāt*”. The 2<sup>nd</sup> tale was an adapted narration of a story on “*The Bethlehem Dragon*” which is a children’s story by Huda al-Shawa, inspired from the original legend of “*St George and the Dragon*”. Again, music was composed and orchestrated by a Palestinian musician – Faraj Suleiman – and narrated live on stage by Fida Ziedan. These two examples represent a high-quality professional transformation of authentic traditional narratives into contemporary genre of music, yet with Palestinian flavor and efforts.

### Inspirations from the traditional and resistance songs

Many singers and musicians like Rim Banna, Suhail Khoury, Reem Talhami and others, have revived old traditional songs for children such as the following from “*Marah*” CD by Khoury<sup>75</sup>.

يا رب تشتي واروح عند ستي تعلمي فطيرة أد الحصيرة أكلها وأنام واصبح جوعان	May it rain God, so I go to my grandmother’s house She can make me a pie, as big as the rug, to eat it and sleep
عالبيادي البيادي البيادي محلّى جبالك يا بلادي محلّى سهولك والغابات والتلات والوادي	Al-yadi, il yadi il yadi How beautiful my country’s mountains are How beautiful are the plains and forests

Rim Banna produced two CDs of children songs: Qamar Abu Lielh in 1995, and Nuwwar Nisan in 2009, in addition to other songs which were inspired by traditional songs like “*Tiri w haddi ya wazzeḥ*”. She also revived a number of lullabies for children like “*ya leel ma atwalak*” from an album produced in 2003 and “*ya sitti*”, which was jointly sung with Kerry Briminse. The song “*ya*

<sup>75</sup> | Khoury S., 1987. *Marah*. CD



*tal'een al jabal*" was revived by her in 1993, in her album "the Dream"<sup>76</sup>. With her death in 2018, she left a big legacy of songs and music behind that carried a large variety of traditional, contemporary and children's songs. Rim became a contemporary music icon from Palestine in the world, yet with the spirit of the rich Palestinian traditional songs.

Another very popular singer who has been reviving the rich reserve of traditional songs is Reem Kilani. Based in London, she has also composed other songs from popular and resistance stories in a contemporary genre, but with lyrics from Palestinian poets like Rashid Hussein, Mahmoud Darwish, Salim Al-Hout and others. In her production "*Sprinting Gazelle*,"<sup>77</sup> she has reproduced and re-arranged a number of traditional songs like lullabies and wedding songs. The CD, released in February 2006, honors Palestinian songs from the motherland and the Diaspora. In a description on her CD: "Reem Kelani sees her work as her musical journey, both historical and political, personal and collective, while demonstrating Palestinian existence, now and in the past, pointing out suffering and highlighting celebration. Her journey is a musical one through the written and oral history of a people who are proud of their collective sense of poetry, stories, music and existence". One of the tracks on the "Sprinting Gazelle" is "*il-hamdilla*" which starts with "*Imhaha stanza*":

Aweeha! Thank God, my heart's patience is finally rewarded  
Aweeha! And the wound of longing is healing after so much pain  
Aweeha! I swear by Him who created the clear stars above  
Aweeha! That I have waited endlessly for this day

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.arab48.com>.

<sup>77</sup> Kelani R., 2006. *Sprinting Gazelle*. CD <https://reemkelani.bandcamp.com/album/sprinting-gazelle-palestinian-songs-from-the-motherland-and-the-diaspora>.

## 7. Synthesis and recommendations: What, Why and How

### 7.1 Overview of main findings (the what)

#### About the Masār Ibrāhīm

In reality the Masār Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl is a broad historical concept, itself close to being the subject of oral traditions and extending from Eastern Turkey through the greater Sham down to Cairo. Many people in Palestine are not aware of the Masār, except as a general idea. Resource persons interviewed in villages along the Masār mentioned that other villages could also have been included<sup>78</sup>. It is acknowledged that selection of communities along the actual trail, as recognized by the Masār Ibrāhīm program, was based on legitimate and actual political, historical and environmental considerations. Nevertheless, the concept of the Masār Ibrāhīm is powerful as a rallying cry to initiate and re-invigorate Palestinian heritage and identity; it can well be a vibrant community project as a meeting place for exchange, learning and education. Linking all of this with “guided Abrahamic traditions of hospitality and kindness to strangers<sup>79</sup>” in this sense the project retains very important values for diverse target groups from Palestine and outside.

#### Overview of main findings

Being a new initiative, there is actually very little reference made to Masār Ibrahim in the printed and electronic documents researched on tales, songs, proverbs. Most of the documented materials are relevant to all of Palestine, from the Mediterranean Sea to beyond the Jordan River. Indeed, most of the researched traditional oral expressions are part of a greater socio-cultural context in a much broader geographic area that relates to the Greater Sham Region and even beyond to the Arabic world<sup>80</sup>. Documents might mention in what place they have been collected; however, this does not mean that such a story or song is specifically tied to that place. The documented version is often one of many other versions that can differ from place to place in

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<sup>78</sup> Nassar Y.,f and al-Darabei A.,f, from Kana’an Sons for Heritage Conservation, Dura, Hebron interviewed on 31/10/2018, believe that Battir should be on the Masār . Hamza Aqrabawi, narrator from Aqraba wonders also why not villages like “Kafr Qaddoum” is included; people there believe that Ibrāhīm al-khalīl passed through their village, leaving a foot trace –kadam- on a big rock; that is also where the name of the village might have come from” (Interview with Hamza on 8/10/2018). Rabie Wild Ali (Masār guide) from Sanour believes that more attention can be given to the North trails of the Masār, interview on 4/11/2018

<sup>79</sup> [www.walkingpalestine.org](http://www.walkingpalestine.org)

<sup>80</sup> As was also found out by Said Hijeh (Masār guide, and popular narrator), from Arrabeh in his recent participation in a regional workshop on Hikaya: “I found out that our “*hikayāt*” are almost the same as those of Lebanon, even Tunisia, and Morocco”. Interview with Said Hijeh on on 4/11/2018



details, in wordings and dialect, but still share the same essential message and content. It is hence difficult to link most of these oral materials specifically to one or more of the localities that form part of the actual hiking trail of Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl. An exception may be made for part of the “*Dhīkrayāt*”, i.e. the oral memories of the recent past. However, while they are often tied to specific localities, unfortunately, few of them have been documented and traced back to specific communities. Some lyrics of collective songs may also be very specific to an event in a specific area<sup>81</sup>, and some have dialect nuances, noting that these lyrics have been subject to adaptations as detailed in Chapter 6.

### **On “*Hikāyāt*” and terminology**

There is quite a big repertoire of traditional oral expressions in Palestine as obviously investigated in this research project. However, the reality and the perceived confusion in literature on the subject has led the research team to develop further thoughts on terminology, while proposing a conceptual and organizational framework on “folkloric tales and other oral expressions” as presented in Chapter 3. The study of documents revealed that the term “*Hikāyāt*” had to be redefined in a narrower sense (see Chapter 3). In view of this it is proposed that as a general term for all these oral expressions is used the term “**folklore stories and other oral expressions**”.

### **The researched folktales and other oral expressions**

The focus of this literature review has been a wide range of oral traditions in Palestine that are documented on paper and electronic sources. The study has revealed the enormous wealth of themes and sub-themes related to social, political, economic, and environmental issues, and expressed in different oral forms. The wealth of oral expressions committed to paper is enormous in addition to some audio collections; a large amount of this material is being stored, however, without any system or categorization in different libraries of NGOs, research Centres and universities. Whether it will be extremely worthwhile to invest in a systematization of all these materials is evidently beyond the scope of this study. The research team had therefore to rely on a limited number of well documented and researched studies that are referenced throughout this

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<sup>81</sup> Reference here to the interview with 'Areefeh and her daughter (31/10/208) who mentioned a song in ad-Dhahriya where in 1983, an Israeli settler woman was killed on the main road leading to a nearby settlement. The da'louna” song with the settler’s name spread quickly among the public in the town, but was not necessarily known by other localities in Palestine. This also applies to songs related to peasant’ heroes during the 30s, and Intifada martyrs. More details on nuances are given in Chapters 5&6

research paper. Resources in English and French are much less available, be it in hard copies or electronic, which imposed quite some translation efforts from the Arabic documents into English<sup>82</sup>.

### **The post-Nakba shift in oral expressions**

The calamities of the Nakba and later the Naksa and successive intifadas, have affected profoundly and in a very radical way the life of the Palestinian people. This has had and still has a very high impact on the type of oral expressions and collective narratives as translated in an abundance of stories and songs about resistance, ethnic cleansing, political issues and the abrupt changes in daily life. The “*Kiṣṣaṣ*”, the epic and religious legends have almost permanently disappeared in the wake of Nakba. They are considered by many as having become irrelevant ever since the shocking events of the Nakba. The interviewees in the different villages affirmed that “After the Nakba, everybody was telling us stories of the tragedies of uprooted villages and people, of destruction and killings, even in the Diwan men were talking about this”<sup>83</sup>. The “*Hikāyāt*”, the fairy tales, have survived but risk getting extinguished in the near future, in part also because the dominance of new media, TV and all the internet applications now. Hamza Aqrabaqi confirmed “As narrators, we are trying to revive the old “*Hikāyāt*” within the “*Hakāyā*” Festival and other occasions; the tales I tell, are very old, but I am obliged to change some words which are not understood sometimes, like old “Turkish” words. I also change in the conclusions by giving a more positive ending if necessary. These changes should not affect the essence of the story when narrated.<sup>84</sup>” The oral expressions that have survived, yet with varying intensity are the songs and proverbs. However, Nidaal Fakhri as a folklore researcher said: “many of the collective traditions and ceremonies have disappeared and with them their accompanying songs like those of circumcision, lamenting, graduation, and many of the wedding songs. The DJ, and the wedding halls have taken over the authentic celebrations. Yet some old traditions might still exist in very remote villages distant from cities.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> An important book in French by Patrick Lama, a Palestinian composer and musician titled “the Palestinian Popular Songs” could have been an important document if it was available.

<sup>83</sup> This was commonly repeated by almost all interviewees in Arrabeh, Sanour, Birqin, Dura and Dahriyeh

<sup>84</sup> Hamza Aqrabawi, interview on 8/10/2018. This was also shared by Said Hajjeh from Arrabeh.

<sup>85</sup> Interview Nidal Fakhri 28/10/2018, author and researcher in folklore and a private school teacher in Jenin; these remarks were largely shared with almost all other interviewees.

Although the possible change in the kind of proverbs and riddles after the Nakba has not been studied in depth<sup>86</sup>, many of the old proverbs are still in use. Yousef Nassar said “Some old proverbs are completely outdated; in general, they were not favorable to women; they should disappear or be replaced by others with more positive values.”<sup>87</sup> For the songs, the tunes and melodies are still maintained, but the lyrics have been adapted to reflect the changing social and political developments (Chapter 6).

### **The critical role of visual and performing arts in preserving heritage**

From the research and interviews, it becomes clear that these two artistic expressions have been very important for preserving heritage and identity. Many visual artists have been inspired by making much use of existing tangible heritage as embroidery, pottery, jewelry, other handicraft. In doing so, not only they have been contributing to their preservation, but also to their promotion as a rich part of Palestinian identity. Among the performing arts, music and dance have made extensive use of the traditional tunes, lyrics and traditional dance forms called “*Dabke*”. It is especially these artistic expressions that have played an important role in creating the links between the traditional heritage and more contemporary forms of dance and music. Moreover, most of the people active in dance and music have succeeded to evolve the traditional forms in modern ones, often with high quality, while maintaining the flavor of traditional identity. While the theatre scene has been very active again in the last decade (like in the 70s and the 80s), there has always been an interest by theatre groups to combine contemporary forms with traditional themes. The rich experience of these two forms of arts provide interesting examples and new ideas for how they can be used to revive and give new dynamics to most if not all of the oral expressions discussed in this research paper. Some of such ideas are formulated in the recommendations made in this chapter. However, Iman Oun stated that “very little has been done to transform “*Hikāyāt*” as a rich heritage narrative, into complete artistic theatrical productions, particularly for children. This might in part be attributed to the fact that there are very few specialized scenarists for writing or adapting children plays. Focus of theatre has been more on recent history of Nakba, Naksa, Intifada, the wars and siege of Gaza and all current political and social issues.”<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Brief interview with Dr. Faiha Abdulhadi, author and researcher, 5/11/2018

<sup>87</sup> Yousef Nassar, manager of Kana'an's Sons for Heritage Conservation, interview 31/10/2018, Dura

<sup>88</sup> Iman Oun, actress and artistic director of Ashtar Theatre, interview on 3/11/2018

## **Other initiatives**

Apart from the interviews with the visual and performing artists and the study of documents, visits to libraries of Palestinian organizations and interviews reveal that there is a wealth of people and organizations interested and doing work on this subject (Section 1.2). For example, in publishing, the experience of Tamer Institute within its publication unit is quite impressive. However, Iman Hammouri from PAC affirmed that “more can be done to re-produce in print, audio and visual means, to revive “*Hikāyā*” for children. PAC had one experience of publishing a nicely illustrated “*Hikāyā*” (“nus-nsies”) with a “cassette”, but this was not pursued after. PAC has also printed a book on traditional instruments and a CD based on the extensive field work of recording original tunes back in the early 1990’s.”<sup>89</sup> There is notably still tremendous work to be done on proper documenting, systematizing and classifying all the materials piled up in libraries of associations, universities and other Centres in the country. I. Hammouri continued: “Our audio archive of 220 hours, has almost been exhausted by different dance groups, musicians and singers who took a lot of it for their productions. There has been very few new re-productions in the last years due to many reasons, but if we have a new set of collected songs from Gaza or from the coastal areas, there might be more songs revived and dance productions.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, oral traditions being of historic, social, cultural and political importance, there is a need to capitalize on all this knowledge and insights gained over the last 100 years. Chapter 7.3 will propose a number of recommendations in this regard.

Initiatives of walking trails, climbing and cycling are at the increase for the last few years now. While this is extremely important at the social, political, and possibly economic level, concerted efforts, cooperation and exchange of know-how are quite limited between the different initiatives. On this H.Aqrabawi commented: “Some initiatives have become event “commercialized”, and some are run by people who lack a good experience in trails; information given during the walks with some groups are either modest or not given at all.”<sup>91</sup> The “*Hakāyā*” Festival, the “*Sundouq al-‘Ajab*” as a traditional form of theatre, and the puppetry making with narration of stories, are existing initiatives that can be given more value particularly targeting children and youth. Actually,

<sup>89</sup> Iman Hammouri, Director Popular Arts Centre, interview on 3/11/2018

<sup>90</sup> Iman Hammouri, Director Popular Arts Centre interview on 3/11/2018

<sup>91</sup> Hamza Aqrabawi, popular narrator and coordinator of Hakaya Festival in Palestine, interview on 8/10/2018

the “*Hikāyā*” is central to the personal development, the cultural and national identity, and can enrich all other forms of arts.

### **On Fieldwork**

Interviews with people of older generations and with people involved in activities related to the Masār Ibrāhīm have been conducted in different localities along the Masār: Dura and Dhahiriya in Hebron; Burquin, Arabbeh and Sanour in Jenin. These interviews explored which of these oral traditions and memories with their different themes/sub-themes are still vivid and narrated in the different places along the trail of the Masār Ibrāhīm (as defined by the project “My Heritage! My Identity!”), and how these oral traditions indeed relate to the Masār. A number of findings are the following. First, apart from specific hero legends of the 30s and the Nakba and post-Nakba events, people asserted that the other oral expressions (fairy tales, “*Kīṣaṣ*”, songs, proverbs) are narrated all over Palestine and are not specific to the localities of the Masār. Second, the “*Kīṣaṣ*” and fairy tales are no longer narrated and only few older people remember them. For many these two types of traditional tales have become irrelevant and outdated, overrun by even more recent stories that relate to the dramatic events of the last 70m years. The invasion of TV and internet has become overwhelming to the young generation. For many of the people interviewed, dialects exist and a distinction among three groups is made: fellaheen/rural, Bedouin and urban. However, according to them, differences in dialects are not really important and do not substantially influence the tales and the stories. Local specificities, geography, nature, politics, social situations are often more important to influence the nuance in these stories and songs.

### **7.2 Oral expressions researched (the what)**

The following section will share the insights and ideas that can be drawn from this research of documents on “**oral folklore stories and other oral expressions**”. A good overview of the whole spectrum of oral traditions like the researched ones in this document is important to decide what use can be made of them for the purpose of the overall project “**My Heritage! My Identity!**” and possibly other similar initiatives in Palestine. Having expanded the spectrum does not mean, though, that this research can be considered exhaustive, as there is still a wealth of information

that could not be revealed given the time constraints. Each topic, covering a theme or sub-theme, may well be a subject of further in-depth research.

## The different oral tales - the folkloric and the recent history:

### **Ḳiṣaṣ – epics and traditional legends**

The “Ḳiṣaṣ” are mainly historic and epic stories and legends narrated among men in the “*diwan*”, the meeting place for men in the community. The “Ḳiṣaṣ” are of a whole other nature than “*Ḥikayāt*”, and tend to be more realistic and probable, although they have often not really taken place. But they could have passed for real and usually tell of heroic deeds, escapades, bizarre landscapes, long-lasting love affairs, sacrifices and supernatural forces. Different categories of “Ḳiṣaṣ” can be distinguished (Muhawi and Kanaana, 1997; Kanaana, 2007): the *Sira*, epic biographies of men that have or may have lived. Another category are the stories of attacks (*razzias/gazw*) and adventures (*mugamarat*) of the Bedouin. A third category are the legends, either religious stories about prophets, saints, tombs, shrines and sanctuaries or legends that interpret names of local sites such as caves, wells, hills and springs or family names and nicknames (Kanaana, 2007). These legends have been also connected with the “*Maqāmāt*” spreading in Palestine; there are about 500 “*Maqām*” in Palestine. A “*Maqām*” can be either a tree, and old shrine or a cave. According to Nimre Sarhan in his Bibliography of Palestinian Folklore, “legends carry religious beliefs and justifications.” For Palestinians, as mono-theists, legends contain stories related to God’s beloved or selected prophets; some legends might be around “*awliyaa*” whom God has privileged with miracles. Shortly after 1948, traditional story telling changed in different ways, and the “Ḳiṣaṣ” ceased exist since then. Considered irrelevant, they were very quickly replaced by the stories of the recent past about the war and the lost country, the “*Dhīkrayāt*”.

### **Ḥikayāt – the fairy tales**

The “Ḥikayāt” are an important part of the oral traditions. In its strict sense the “Ḥikayāt” are fairy tales and fables (“*contes de fées*” in the French language) and have often a mythical, artistic and educational nature. As a fairy tale, “Ḥikayāt” are not time-bound or space-bound, and few or no specific links can be made to a geographic location let alone to the Masār Ibrahim. In reality these tales are common to the whole Palestinian-Arab world and are narrated in many different places,

albeit with slight variations, in different dialects and under different names. In the “*Hikayāt*” different themes are identified that have all to do with family relations, roles and behavior in society (Muhawi/Kanaana, 1997). Section 4.3 provide short synopses of fairy tales selected by Muhawi/Kanaana (1997) and Hussein/Kanaana (2008). Many of these fairy tales, especially under the first categories (identity and family) deal in a metaphoric way with the unspoken feelings and sentiments, often in the taboo sphere, people are experiencing; they help them to understand and live with these often-contradicting feelings. Note that often language is used and situations described that are largely taboo in common life. The whole of the Palestinian “*Hikayāt*” forms a rich treasure that could be brought back to life in modern coats, especially as they deal with many social and cultural aspects of Palestinian society that are still very valid today. Section 7.3 will share a number of recommendations for this.

### **Dhikrayāt –oral memories of the recent past**

With and after the Nakba two types of narratives almost entirely replaced the ancient “*Kiṣāṣ*” and “*Hikayāt*”. They are “tales” or stories of a very different nature: the narratives of war and loss of homeland, and somewhat later, oral memories that relate to the immediate political situation under Israeli occupation. These new types of oral memories are less sharply divided by gender, and more by period, than the traditional narratives (Kanaana, 2007). These recent oral memories were grouped in this research under the Arabic name of “*Dhikrayāt*”, which means “memories”. They came into being especially because the strong politicization of narratives after 1948, and are considered as the source of “oral history”, which is a term that is largely used by scholars to describe the narrated tales, recorded and based on individual and collective memory of an event or series of events. As a counter to the Israeli colonial narrative, oral history has played an important role in keeping Palestinians’ narrative, rights and identity alive. Also women had many stories to tell about the events of 1948 and beyond, and about the good old days in the lost country. Their memories of the recent past are rather short anecdotes from their personal lives and the lives of members of their families, illustrating the destruction, dispersion, injustices, and oppression which befell their people.

### **The other forms: Songs, proverbs and riddles:**

Songs are quite an important material of any cultural heritage; they occupy a big part of the oral popular traditions in Palestine as part of its intangible heritage. Traditionally, they were



accompanying important collective ceremonies in the Palestinian society, some like weddings are still alive, others like, death, harvesting, house constructions and religious festivities have disappeared. In addition to proverbs and riddles, these forms are therefore a pillar of the collective identity and memory. They deal with all dimensions of society: social, economic, political, environmental and religious, and as a reflection provide an overview of the Palestinian cultural and national identity. There are sub-themes or topics under each dimension and if we dive deeper, there are more details for each sub-theme. For example, songs of wedding ceremonies are so many, and some are related to specific rituals of the wedding process, yet with the change of the format of this important ceremony, accompanying songs have either disappeared or changed. There are thousands of proverbs collected by different researchers; quite a large part is still circulating and valid, but many others have completely disappeared or altered. These forms are well spread among all social groups and ages, originating from Bedouin, rural and urban areas with differences of words, and dialects. Songs and poems witness the highest survival rate compared to proverbs and riddles. Many of the tunes are still used, while most of the lyrics have been adapted to the political and social situations that changed radically after the Nakba. The detailed descriptions of these songs and poems and the changes they have undergone, given in Chapter 5, sketch a view on all these aspects.

### **7.3 Relevance of oral traditions for national cultural identity and social cohesion (the why)**

The initial findings of this research study as summarized in Sections 7.1 and 7.2, allow for reflection on how important and relevant these oral traditions - the tales and the other forms of expression - are and can be for the actual dynamics of today's Palestinian society, be that in the Diaspora or in "historic Palestine". This section will further elaborate on these reflections. It will highlight the importance of folkloric expressions for preserving cultural heritage, strengthening national identity and social cohesion and look into avenues for developmental, awareness, educational and artistic activities to preserve and promote Palestinian oral traditions. A first list of such reflections is proposed below:

- ❖ The different forms and contents of the folk tales and other forms of oral expression discussed here provide a strong vehicle for social cohesion and Palestinian cultural identity that need to be developed, made accessible and translated into educational and



developmental tools to counter the actual processes of fragmentation in Palestinian society. This fragmentation is seen in the division between different local communities, between different parts of the West Bank, between Gaza, the West Bank and 48 Palestine, as well as between Palestinians in actual/historic Palestine and the Diaspora.

- ❖ These oral tales, songs, poems, proverbs and riddles can constitute a powerful catalyzer to remind us, in active and energizing ways of our age-old Palestinian identity and culture, values and belief systems.
- ❖ They also provide a strong medium and social-cultural basis to disqualify the misleading Israeli narrative, which seriously aims to erase the Palestinian narrative and identity. The Palestinian narratives translated into these oral expressions are also a basis to re-assert that Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the other lands of Palestine constitute the essential and existential basis of Palestinian society and its rich and diverse identity that dates back over 4,000 years.
- ❖ In view of the on-going systematic fragmentation of the Palestinians and their lands, the ongoing attacks on their integrity over the past 70 years, and the unclear political vision, these traditional and evolving expressions constitute a unifying factor for the re-gathering of the scattered and fragmented Palestinian national identity.
- ❖ The oral expressions discussed in this report may play a critical role in countering, if not balancing, the negative effects of globalizing media and information, especially for children and youth. The memory of this generation is focused on a virtual world of quick information passed through social media, giving images and narratives of alien contents and types. Efforts may be made to anchor them in their Palestinian identity, for which oral expressions discussed here could be useful if framed in more contemporary forms.
- ❖ Notably the fairy tales of the “*Hikayāt*”, by their often frank allusion to issues that are in the domain of taboos, could be used to open-up discussions on all the issues they touch upon and that are still relevant today: gender relationships, the relationships between boys and girls, newlyweds, children and parents, taboos in society, etc.
- ❖ For the generations to come, the enormous and diverse wealth embedded in the fairy tales, in the “*Kiṣāṣ*” and other stories, in the songs, poems, proverbs and riddles has a strong potential to build and anchor new customs and habits in the intrinsic values of Palestinian society that still exist. This can be by valorizing in a creative way the positive elements of old traditions as vehicles for change, encouraging gender equity, solidarity,

social and economic justice, political assertiveness and right-based approaches among other basic and ethical values.

## 7.4 Recommendations (the how)

The following recommendations are based on a belief in the importance of these researched intangible pillars of the rich Palestinian heritage and their vital role in encouraging people's resilience and economic conditions, while strengthening affiliation to their roots and identity. The research has possibly contributed to unveiling quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the traditional oral expressions which may very well be reserved and re-invigorated, not only along the Masār communities, but nationally. The proposed recommendations are multi-façade and require certain conditions and concerted efforts by diverse groups and organizations. There are also recommendations of very practical short-term nature. In what follows, some of the reflections on both tracks will be discussed.

### 7.4.1 Social organization

#### **Community ownership:**

An appropriation of the “concept” Masār Ibrāhīm by the local communities, and accordingly by all projects around it, is a condition for the success of the idea and contents of the Masār. Recommendations like the ones proposed below, will be more feasible if they involve all stakeholders including diverse age groups, women and men, schools, the rural councils or municipalities, and all CBOs in each community. Increasing ownership can come through active engagement of the diverse groups in the activities from inception and planning, through implementation, to finalization, with owning the power of decision making. A voluntary community group, if well represented to these different stakeholders, may very well mobilize and engage tens of volunteers and the whole community.

#### **Responsibility of the local authorities:**

Community ownership has to be very much supported by the local authorities, be it a village or a municipal council. It is their responsibility to cater to the ideas and needs and dispose of resources for the activities. This is an important condition for initiating and sustaining a good dynamic within

the community. They can be the home for the collective efforts proposed and implemented by the full involvement of the community. The Councils can dispose of financial and probably human resources not only to upgrade and renovate some tangible sites, but also to organize or host and promote diverse activities serving to revive the oral traditions.

### **The role of Masār Ibrāhīm as an NGO:**

The two above conditions are quite feasible at the community levels. However, they need to be guided, and encouraged by the Masār as a well-established NGO. Encouragement through basic logistic support, particularly in terms of promotion at the international level, while maintaining an important coordination role closely linked with the ideas and initiatives emerging from the communities themselves is probably a good recipe. The Masār NGO can also cater to and dispose of actual needs at the community levels.

### **7.4.2 Synergy with existing initiatives:**

Having given a set of general pre-conditions to encourage the efficient implementation of the Masār project, below are a set of practical recommendations related to the particular topic of the research document and based on the main findings detailed under 7.1. As mentioned in Chapter 6, there are already many initiatives undertaken, notably in the visual and performing arts communities, to revive and promote the folkloric oral expressions in contemporary formats, as the old forms are no longer appealing to the young generations. Some of the recommendations below relate to such initiatives:

#### The *Hakawati* – story telling through festivals:

There are two important initiatives mentioned in this research: the “*Hakaya*” Festival and the “*Sundouq al-Ajab*”/mono narrator; possibly there are others which can still be identified at a later stage. To revive the “*Hikayāt*” and the art of story-telling by a “narrator”, good use of these and other available initiatives can be made directly through:

1. Festivals at community levels: Encouraging and facilitating festivals and activities by these narrators all year round at the different communities along the Masār as a central annual activity. This can be very much organized through schools and community CBOs, in cooperation with the already existing “*Hakaya*” Festival, or “*Sundouq al-Ajab*” or other

individual narrators and puppeteers. An agreement with the Ministry of Education may introduce the “*hakawati*” to schools all year round.

2. These festivals may also take the form of open meetings of the communities, through which they can also share their stories, exchange experiences and as such transmit them to the younger generations. Many sub-activities may be included around other traditions like popular games, telling traditional riddles, singing traditional songs and accompanying dances. The “social organization” described above can easily manage and take full charge of this vital, annual or bi-annual activities.
3. Capacity building by training a number of new narrators, may be in each community along the Masār, where they can be part of local “narration” festivals or heritage festivals.
4. A promotional campaign to attract attention of the public to these programs may start in the Masār communities and at schools. Such festivals can be also well coordinated with women NGOs, farmers’ coalitions, the Masār Ibrāhīm NGO and relevant ministries.

#### The *Hakawati*/story telling through IT:

1. Making good use of IT and social media: Create an electronic platform of these narrators with their “*Hikayāt*” and all types of tales. This can be done through high quality filming for a YouTube channel and disseminating this information through Facebook as the means used today by many groups of people of different ages.
2. Transmit these films on local TV channels; in addition, a high-quality audio recording should be done at professional local studios to be broadcasted on local radio stations.
3. Other computer applications with the involvement of the IT sector, may revolve around animated productions of these “*Hikayāt*”, “*Kiṣaṣ*” and stories of recent history, and even other ceremonies with their accompanying songs. A real partnership could be created with the IT and commercial businesses towards this more ambitious endeavor.
4. Promotion of these IT and social media tools, can be jointly done with the Masār Ibrāhīm NGO, and the involved parties along the Masār. Promotion is very important to attract the attention of school students and children to watch and follow a special TV, Facebook or YouTube channel for “*Hikayāt*”, “*Kiṣaṣ*”, “*Dhikrayāt*”, songs, etc.

5. At the Masār level for information mainly for external tourists, create an IT application, in different languages, where it gives details of the physical locations, but also of its oral traditions, kitchen and other tangible features.

#### Activating the museums:

There are about 32 museums in Palestine with frequent visits by school students and others. However, these museums can be very much engaged in a number of activities running all year round directed at children and youth, mainly, but also at the public at large. These activities can be related to or be organized around the trails of the Masār, but not exclusively.

Through these museums, audio and visual tools can be incorporated in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. A set of interactive activities around the traditional and recent oral expressions through an annual program can be drawn and circulated to schools. This can be done in cooperation with the Ministry of Education which organizes visits to the museums as part of the school trips. Such activities may include storytelling, drawing sessions, singing sessions, in addition to all explanations and information provided on contents. For this purpose, a multi-dimensional agreement has to be formulated involving the two ministries, and the Masār Ibrāhīm NGO.

#### Competitions at school /national levels:

The Ministry of Education has been organizing diverse activities at schools as part of the extra-curricular program; this includes an annual national “*Dabke*” competition, and recently a “singing” competition. This can be further capitalized on by expanding these competitions to other dimensions like storytelling and story writing competitions, traditional songs and poetry competitions, theatre with re-productions of traditional “*Hikayāt*”. Drawing competitions could also include animations (the “*bandes dessinées*” in France) of the different traditional expressions.

#### Publications:

With the rich experience of Tamer Institute, writers of children books can collaborate with artists to re-write the “*Hikayāt*”, “*Kīṣaṣ*” and “*Dhīkrayāt*”, by drawing attractively animated children’s books along these traditional and more recent stories. It is worth noting that there is quite a

number of such specialized writers and artists. Publishing the outcomes of the aforementioned competitions at schools can be part of this work.

### Theatre and dance productions:

For theatre and complete dance productions, in cooperation with the different theatre and dance groups, training in children's scenario writing could be organized, while producing a series of plays encompassing not only the traditional and recent stories, but also songs and proverbs of the ceremonies and occasions.

### Documentation:

It is important to scan and map all research centres and libraries which have audio or video or written documents which are neither classified, nor systematized or computerized such as the proverbs collection of Inaash Al-Usra, or the audio recordings of PAC. The Ministry of Culture has a big compilation of songs, proverbs and stories, yet there is quite some work to be done, requiring important financial resources. Supporting systematization, classification and further collection of these valuable expressions is crucial for making a more practical use of them and for promoting them at a more national level. Researchers, dance groups, singers and artists, will be encouraged to study such documents and draw inspiration from them for their productions as has been the case in the audio collection of PAC, although limited in terms of quantity.

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## List of interviewees

Interview 8/10/2018, Hamza Aqrabawi, a popular narrator and coordinator of Ḥākāyā Festival in Palestine

Interview with Yousef Nassar, Manager of “Kana’an’s Sons Society for Heritage Conservation” Dura, October 30, 2018

Interview Areefeh (70) and her daughter (52), October 31, Ad-Dhahiriya, South Hebron

Interview: with Bahiyeh Ateeq (55) & Abdelrahman Salameh (72), residents from Burqin

Interview for this research with Hafez Omar, a young visual artist and researcher, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Interview for this research with Adel Tartir, actor and director Sundouq al-‘Ajab Theatre on 25 October, Ramallah

Interview Khaled Qatamesh, Director, El-Funoun Dance Troupe, October 2018

Interview Iman Oun, actress and artistic director, Ashtar Theatre, 2 November 2018

Interview with Said Hijjeh, Masar Guide and popular narrator) on 4/11/2018

Interview Nidal Fakhri 28/10/2018, author and researcher in folklore and a private school teacher in Jenin

Brief interview with Dr. Faiha Abdulhadi, author and researcher, 5/11/2018

Iman Hammouri, Director Popular Arts Centre, interview on 3/11/2018

## ANNEX 1. ҺIKAYĀT EXAMPLES

Examples of *Hikayāt* (fairy tales and fables, mainly told by women in the family circle)

SOURCE: if not specifically mentioned otherwise, Һikayāt are collected by Muhawi and Kanaana (1997)

Fairy tales presented by the referenced source	KEY NOTES
<b>TOPIC 1a: The individual identity; parents and children</b>	
<i>Tunjur, Tunjur</i>	Mother/daughter relation – Expresses the economic importance of children for the family and the wish to prefer a daughter, but at the same time the daughters' wish for liberty and the inherent danger of that for the family honor
<i>The wife who marries her son</i>	Mother/son relation – Illustrates how the change of roles of the son and sexual jealousy viz `a viz the daughter-in-law, can push the mother to marry her son.
<i>The beloved and the blemished one</i>	Father/son relation – Describes the son's struggle for independence and individual identity, challenging the parental authority, with a tyrannical father becoming his son's rival
<i>Swes, Swes</i>	Mother/son relation – Relates the mothers' need for attention of her son and sexual jealousy, that push her to marry him
<i>The golden bowl</i>	Father/son relation – Describes the son's struggle for independence claiming his right of heritage, while highlighting competition between the wives of his father (polygamy issues). <b>This tale makes a reference to Upper Galilea.</b>
<b>TOPIC 1b: The individual identity; brotherly and sisterly rivalries</b>	
<i>Half-half</i>	Expresses brother rivalries exaggerated in polygamy situations, but also the spirit of generosity that characterizes the hero.

<p><i>Sumac, son of a whore, sumac!</i></p>	<p>Presents a hostile sister/brother relationship with the sister being a ghou. It emphasizes the importance of family honor as one of the most important assets of a family, not to be transgressed., even if this forces a brother to kill his sister. While this is rare in real life, the fairy tale provides an important warning, without however losing out of view that even then the blood links remain valued.</p>
<p><i>The green bird</i></p>	<p>This and the following two fairy tales note the “for entire life” attitude of love and tenderness between brothers and sisters, and the mutual protection given by one to the other. In “<i>green bird</i>” the brother/sister relationship is valued as being superior than a husband/wife relationship and explains the importance given in Palestinian society of a marriage between first cousins.</p>
<p><i>The cow of the orphans</i></p>	<p>Here the brother/sister relationship is even becoming closer than in “<i>the green bird</i>”, where the sister <i>cannot</i> leave her brother, even if transformed in a gazelle. She makes sure that her brother accompanies her in her marriage with the king, after which she brings back her brother in his natural body. It deals both with the conflict and challenges a young woman has to face between her love for her brothers and the new love for a husband.</p>
<p><i>The nightingale crier</i></p>	<p>Signals the competition between sisters and the need for a husband to assure their “nutrition”, but also the jealousy between sisters especially when one of them gets a first child. At the same time, the tale insists on the strong bond between brothers and sister, the children taken away at birth from their mother by the two older jealous aunts. The three children are saved and are brought-up together. The two brothers are challenged to capture the nightingale crier and fail and are then rescued by their sister. In the end of the story their father, a prince discovers what has happened and the two sisters of his wife are killed.</p>
<p><i>Mother of Rags Hussain and Kanaana (2008)</i></p>	<p>This fairy tales relates the jealousy of the older brothers and sisters towards their youngest sister, the preferred one by their mother. The young one was known of always being busy with spinning, weaving and sewing. When their parents left for Mecca, the older children threw the young one’s little chicken in the well. They helped their sister to go down in the well to save her</p>



	<p>chicken, but then disappeared so that she cannot get out of the well. In the well (an important object for many superstitions) she discovered a path that leads to a palace. She enters but hides in a cupboard of a toilet when someone approaches. It was the king who needed to go to the toilet. When done, she cried out that she is the daughter of his fart and he adopts her. When her mother comes back from mecca, she brought presents for all the children, the biggest and most beautiful one being for her youngest daughter. When she asked where her youngest one is the others tell her that she disappeared and her mother is very sad. In the mean time, the adopted daughter of the king marries his nephew, a handsome man during the night but who transforms in a bird in day time. Flying around he often sits on the house of his wife’s family and hears the brothers and sisters speaking about the present for their young sister and where the mother has hidden it. He enters the house and tries to take the present with him, shouting “<i>this is the present of the Mother of Rags</i>” but is chased away every day by the sisters and brothers. One day, when the mother sees this happening she understands and says let him alone, I want to hear what he says and to see what he does .....</p> <p><b>Fairy tale collected in the Bethlehem area</b></p>
<p><b>TOPIC 1c: The individual identity: sexual awakening and gallantries</b></p>	
<p><i>The little bird</i></p>	<p>The five-fairy tales illustrate the first sexual sentiments and how to communicate these to the person in question. This fairy tale describes how a little bird prepares itself for her wedding by preparing her trousseau, how to present herself and draw the attention of the son of the sultan.</p>
<p><i>Jummez bin Yazur, the chief bird</i></p>	<p>In this one a little bird demands her father-bird in a very ambiguous way, so as not to embarrass him, to send a message to the person she has fallen in love with. <b>This fairy tale makes reference to Yazur, a village in the coastal plan not far from Yaffa.</b></p>
<p><i>Jbene</i></p>	<p>In Jbene a girl tries to hide or deny all these confusing feelings awakening in her. More pre-occupied by the well-being of her family than of herself, her</p>

	sexual identity is little inclined to accept the loss of security that her parental home provides
<i>Father Sackcloth</i>	This tale deals with the sexual pre-sentiments that create such confusion in a little girl that she wants to cover herself entirely in an ugly sackcloth, so that nobody wants anymore to touch her. Only later when she is more confident, she accepts her sexuality and her marriage. This tale is an equivalent of the fairy tale Cinderella.
<i>Sahin</i>	In this fairy tale it is the girl who is more mature and takes the initiative and makes Sahin conscience of his virility. The tales completely inverses the roles between young men and women, as usually lived in traditional society. It also shows how boys are troubled by these awakening sentiments and how they can deal with it.
<b>TOPIC 1d: Identity; in search of a partner</b>	
<i>The brave lad</i>	In a very realistic way this fairy tale makes clear the interaction of the social forces and exigencies that determine the quest of finding a partner. It shows how “ <i>the brave lad</i> ” searches for a female partner receptive to his approach and desiring to help him, has first to neutralize an authoritarian power (killing a ghoul) before obtaining the hand of the young girl.
<i>Gazelle</i>	In “ <i>Gazelle</i> ” the hero has to capture the spirit of a djinn by killing three monsters who threaten the village. It was by succeeding this test that he can ask for the hand of the girl he wants to marry. <b>This fairy tale is collected in Turmus’ayya, between Nablus and Ramallah, not too far from the Masār Ibrahim.</b>
<i>Lolabe</i>	“ <i>Lolabe</i> ” illustrates how the quest of a young boy is linked to the realization of a wish that will benefit all the inhabitants of the town, and especially the poor and the miserable.
<i>The Coat of Feathers</i>	A mother expresses her desire to get a girl, even if it is in the form of a chicken. And so happens, God has honored her wish. When the chicken has

<b>Hussain and Kanaana (2008)</b>	<p>grown up, she wants to leave the house and find fruit for her mother. Near a water basin in the garden of the palace she sheds her feathers and becomes a beautiful girl. After her bath she puts on her coat of feathers, collects the fruit and returns home. The prince discovers her and wants to marry her even if she is a chicken. His mother refuses until she discovers that the chicken is the beautiful girl she met in the palace of the king. And they were all happy. The tale possibly projects the often existing early resistance of the husband's mother to her daughter-in law.</p> <p><b>Fairy tale collected in the Bethlehem area</b></p>
<b>TOPIC 2a: The family; the newly wedded</b>	
<i>The old ghoul</i>	<p>As a general start for the synopsis: these fairy tales explore different ways to make the best of a marriage, and this especially in its initial phase, just after the wedding. This one stresses how important it is for the young bride, who finds herself in the new and unknown social environment of her husband, to have trust in her husband, the only person who can protect her.</p>
<i>Dame Tatar</i>	<p>In Dame Tatar, it is the husband who has to understand that he has to establish the communication with his young wife and if he treats her as she wishes, she will be more inclined to cooperate and share her life with him.</p>
<i>Soqak Boqak</i>	<p>Under the pressure of his parents, the hero, who is not yet ready to marry and is concerned about his virility, distances himself of his wife, who, more mature at the sexual level, has to bring him back in the marriage. <b>This tale is collected south of Arrabe, a village in the Galilea.</b></p>
<i>Hasan the Brave</i>	<p>Composed by two different tales, the first one about the conflict generated by the sexuality of his mother, in the second one the hero, Hasan the Brave, has to combat with the enemies of his father-in law. Drawn between his mother and wife, his wife finds herself between her father and her husband. Both have to be forceful and cooperative to succeed their marriage.</p>
<i>The Cicada</i> <b>Muhawi and Kanaana (1997)</b>	<p>The story of the cicada or the little cockroach came into life when a mother asked God to give her a daughter, even if it is a cockroach. The cicada/little cockroach got to an age to marry and she went outside looking for a husband. Two candidates, a camel and a bull were refused by her mother</p>

<p><i>The little cockroach in Hussain and Kanaana (2008)</i></p>	<p>(too big), but the third one, a rat (a mouse in Muhawi/Kanaana), was accepted and they married. Later, when she was looking for water, she fell in the well and cried for help. A horseman passed by and she asked him to call her husband the mouse/rat, threatening him that if he would not do that he will be glued to his saddle and not able to come of the horse. The horseman ignored him and arriving home he could not leave his saddle. He remembered what the cicada/ little cockroach had said, and called with a loud voice for the mouse/rat. The mouse/rat came quickly and tried to save her. With his tail he managed to get the cicada/little cockroach out of the well and lived on in their little paradise, demonstrating the loyalty between a wedded couple.</p> <p><b>The little cockroach fairy tale collected in the Bethlehem area, the same story but under the name of cicada, is situated in the Galilea and mentions Akko and Lake Tiberias.</b></p>
<p><b>TOPIC 2b: The Family; husbands and wives</b></p>	
<p><i>The women with seven levains</i></p>	<p>Here the fairy tale makes clear the hypocrisy of the husband, confronted with the sterility of his couple and hence his presumed inferiority; and beating his wife to compensate his frustration or accusing her to have a secret lover. For a woman the frustration of sterility is even bigger, as in a traditional society a woman without son has practically no identity and security. The tale touches an essential point that only when the wife gives birth she is considered and treated with care and respect.</p>
<p><i>Verge d'Or of the Cornalyne valley</i></p>	<p>This fairy tale put in the light the bad side of sexuality where the anxiety of the husband about his virility is explained by the sexual voracity of the three wives</p>
<p><i>Minjal</i></p>	<p>Also in this fairy tale, the wife, Mijal, whose name is the word for an ordinary instrument bears the consequences. She has to insist she is called for in a way that guaranties the respect of others. <b>This fairy tale was collected in Upper Galilea.</b></p>
<p><i>Im Ese</i></p>	<p>The absence of descendants, and especially sons is at the heart of the concerns and problems married couples are facing and expressed in this and</p>

	the other fairy tales. With time the frustration about the couple's sterility bring husbands to accuse their wives for it.
<b>TOPIC 2c: The Family; family life</b>	
<i>Chick eggs</i>	The fairy tale brings to the surface the potential conflicts related to a polygamy situation and in this case between the husband's wife and his daughter who represents his own mother and his family of birth.
<i>The ghoul of Trans-Jordan</i>	The tale elaborates on the conflicts brought about by the extended family. Divided between his wife and his family of birth, the husband, at the price of his life, chooses for his parental aunt.
<i>The little kitchen bear</i>	Here the king has to divide his fidelity among his earlier wives, who unite against a new and beautiful one. The latter one protects herself by kidnapping her new husband, the king, in the metamorphic disguise of a djinn. In general, and in this tale the oldest wife will triumph.
<i>The woman with the hands cut</i>	This tale also elaborates on the extended family related problems. The husband chooses here to believe his wife rather than his sister, bringing him in a difficult situation. The sister however is kind, forgives him and receives him back in his natal family.
<i>Nbayyis (Sleepy)</i>	The only son is drawn apart between his two families by the supernatural forces of a djinn, personified by his wife, who wants him to renounce his own family. The forces of the djinn, however, are combatted so as to re-integrate the son in his proper family. The implicit moral that one can draw of three of these fairy tales is that the parental family bonds are so strong that they can even defeat the forces of a djinn.
<b>TOPIC 3a: The larger society and environment; <u>society and community</u></b>	
<i>Im Awwad and the ghoul</i>	This fairy tale relates how important it is for women to go together to the water source, not only to feel more safe but also that they like to be together. Nevertheless jealousy become important when one of them gets a son because of his economic value and being a source of power.
<i>The daughter of the merchant</i>	Here the neighbor comes to the rescue of a girl, but also assumes the role of father in his absence. Living on her own attracts the negative forces and even more so as living alone is considered as an easy girl to take.

<p><i>Pearl de Grenade</i></p>	<p>Pearl suffers as she is considered “special”, so much that her mother gives her a pair of golden sandals. Her beauty and loyalty makes people jealous and her misadventure with the king in the beginning makes her fleeing from one locality to another, symbolizing her fleeing from a bad reputation. The two merchants help Pearl out of a sense of social obligation. They lodge her for the night and when their shops are destroyed their respective neighbors help them in turn by organizing a money collection.</p>
<p><i>The woodcutter</i></p>	<p>The accumulation of fortune by the woodcutter triggers jealousy from his neighbors. In this tale norms of honesty and integrity are trespassed, but this will be at the price of a severe and justified punishment.</p>
<p><i>The fisherman</i></p>	<p>The extreme beauty of the fisherman’s wife attracts jealousy and her sexuality makes her an object to possess by the king. In this tale the family in law helps a fisherman when he is in difficulty and his woman neighbor has taken care of him by preparing his meals.</p>
<p><b>TOPIC 3b: The rural environment</b></p>	
<p><i>The little mother goat</i></p>	<p>In this fairy tale (similar to the “woolf and the seven goats” in the occident) a hyena (in the Bethlehem version a jackal; in other versions a ghou) tries and succeeds to trick the three little goats that remain in the house that he is their mother, when their mother is absent. The hyena devours the little goats and then the mother challenges the hyena and pierces his belly. The little goats are freed and the natural order is restored. To be noted in this tale the domestic animals are allied to the human beings (the domesticated forces) and the wild animals that help the hyena, representing the savage forces.</p> <p><b>Also in the tales collected in the Bethlehem area (Hussain and Kanaana; 2008).</b></p>
<p><i>The old women and the cat</i></p>	<p>Also in this tale there is a chain of events that risk to put in disorder the natural and harmonious relationships in the people’s environment. The cat (as semi domesticated/semi wild animal) jumped on the milk an old women wanted to give him and spoiled hence the milk, the tail of the cat was cut and the cat had to see how to restore this order through a chain of linked actions.</p>

	<p>The cat managed to do so and the tale in essence relates how a cat can be domesticated.</p>
<p><i>Crottinet (the little dropping)</i></p>	<p>In this fairy tale, a ghou, in the form of a “crottinet” devours all the people around him (the belly expresses the greed that the ghou personifies). The “crottinet” is born as the son of a mother who wished to have a child, even if it is in the form of a “crottinet”. The ghou/crottinet is slain and her belly opened by two blind people and all the people swallowed are freed from his belly in their original condition. Order is restored and the ghou in the end was not that dangerous if it can be slain by two blind people. Getting devoured by a ghou is one of the strong parental menaces children in Palestine are facing. <b>Also in the tales collected in the Bethlehem area (Hussain and Kanaana; 2008).</b></p>
<p><i>Dame Louse</i></p>	<p>In this fairy tale a critical link is not only perturbed but even destroyed. It relates the critical consequences this has for all the other links in the chain of interdependent relations: from the shattered jars, the dried-up spring, the bird that has lost its plumes, the dried-out olive tree, the lame sheep, the lost manure, the weeping louse and her burned and dead husband, the flea. This will make it impossible to reestablish the links and there is no retour to the initial natural balance.</p>
<p><i>The ghou</i> <b>Hussain and Kanaana (2008)</b></p>	<p>This fairy tale is another one that employs a kind of formula structure. It relates how a ghou receives a young woman who has to deliver from a child on her way to her mother. The ghou wants to devour all the food reserves the young woman carries with her. By the repetitive way of asking for more food we learn about the most typical ingredients of a Palestinian kitchen. Flower, sugar, oil, dry figs .... She manages to escape, the ghou follows her and at her mother’s place the ghou is thrown boiling oil over head and explodes.</p>
<p><b>TOPIC 3c: The universe</b></p>	



<p><i>The woman who fell in the well</i></p>	<p>Trying to help a laborer who, attacked by the dog fell in the well, she fell herself in the same well. Fearing the anger of her brothers about this suspect situation she flees, find a new place to live, meets a young man and got three children. Her brothers try to find her, and they do, without recognizing at first their sister and talk with her husband, who relates then the story and appeared to be the laborer in the well. The chain of events is explained, their destiny was written (maktub, the name of her first child) but the woman has played an active role to make that destiny happen. It is this action that is rewarded and not the fatalist acceptance of destiny. And everybody is happy again.</p>
<p><i>The rich and the poor woman</i></p>	<p>This nice fairy tale relates how a poor woman accepts and is content with her situation, is generous and happy with her husband and has no desire to become rich, but how life has rewarded her attitude and how she in the end became a rich woman in a beautiful palace. The tale compares this with her rich and greedy sister, who did not share even a little plate with her on her visit, for who nothing is enough and who ends up destroyed by her devouring jealousy.</p>
<p><i>Maruf, el-Kundardji “the shoemaker”</i></p>	<p>Also this fairy tale relates that the invisible forces, sooner or later, will reward those who are generous, candid, ingenious or naïve. The poor shoemaker who was chased by his wife from his house in Damascus finds himself in the end as a rich vizier of a king in Egypt. His faith in what has to happen for bad or for good is recompensed in a very best way, helped by the supernatural and the care of his second wife, the daughter of the king.</p>
<p><i>Im Ali and Abu Ali</i></p>	<p>It is the tale of a poor and simple person who cannot feed his family and, pushed by his wife, resorts to the act of divination of what has to happen to others. His good faith and good chance, his simplicity and the support of the supernatural make believe even the king that he is a great diviner and bring him to a desirable position in the royal court.</p>
<p><i>The Ring of the Sultan</i></p>	<p>In this tale the king gets annoyed by the early morning prayers of a jeweler next to his palace. The jeweler invokes God to give back what has been lost in the sea by somebody. The king and the Vizier give the jeweler a ring to</p>



<p><b>Husain and Kanaana (2008)</b></p>	<p>copy within three days. In the short moment that he absents himself, they take back the ring from the cupboard. The jeweler and his wife are of course very alarmed and do not know what to do. The third day he buys a fish from a merchant and finds back the ring in the fish. His prayers were listened to and he is nominated Vizier of the treasury of the King.</p>
<p><i>The Three Advices</i> <b>Husain and Kanaana (2008)</b></p>	<p>A very poor man decides to leave his family and to seek his fortunes elsewhere. He says to his wife that if he is not back after 20 years, she can marry somebody else. He finds a job as a laborer and works there for 20 years. His patron gives him three golden coins for his travel back. On his way he meets an old man who sells advices, each one cost a golden coin. Pays for three advices, listens well and follows the three advices when in the related situations to come. He comes home and sees another man in front of his wife, he gets angry but then remembers the third advice: when angry first counts to 25 before acting. When thus counting he heard his wife addressing his son. In time he understands that the man is not a stranger but his son and they lived still long and happily.</p>