DIRGHĀM Ḥ. SBAIT
Portland State University

Debate in the Improvised-Sung
Poetry of the Palestinians*

Abstract

This paper deals with the poetic debate engaged in by professional Palestinian poet-singers, primarily at traditional Palestinian weddings in the Galilee region. Details are given regarding the extemporizing-singing of several poetic genres (*ᶜatāba, ḥida, mᶜanna, qarrādi,* and *qaṣīdih*), the sociocultural background of the groom's wedding eve, and the broader context in which the poetic debates are conducted. Transliterated Arabic texts and their English translations are included to illustrate the poetic duels between the poet-singers, the refrains of the folk dancers, the interaction between the two, and the issues on which the poets debate. The major poetic and musical characteristics of each genre are presented, followed by an explanation of the techniques of improvisation employed during debate in the respective genres. The paper notes the limited time available to the poet-singers to produce their meaningful, artistic poetry; briefly discusses their training; and indicates the expertise of these artists, capable of improvising and singing their creative poetry while debating serious intellectual issues. The paper stresses the originality of the practice of poetic debate and its artistic, educational, and cultural values.

Key words: improvised poetry — poetic debate — line dance — folk poet — singer — *ᶜatāba* — *ḥida* — *mᶜanna* — *qarrādi* — *qaṣīdih*

INTRODUCTION

THE improvised-sung poetry of the Palestinians is an established
living tradition of oral poetry extemporized in spoken Pales-
tinian Arabic and sung by professional Palestinian poet-singers,
generally for rural audiences and occasionally for city people. It is
mainly performed at traditional weddings (*aᶜrās*, sing. *ᶜurs*), circumci-
sion and baptism parties, private celebrations, and other joyous oc-
casions (SBAIT 1982, 1–59). Known in Arabic as *aš-šiᶜr al-murtajal*
(improvised poetry), *aš-šiᶜr aš-šaᶜbi* (folk poetry), *az-zajal* (colloquial
strophic poetry), or *aš-šiᶜr al-ᶜāmmi* (vernacular poetry), this improvised-
sung poetry does not adhere to the established grammatical rules of
the Standard Literary Arabic used in literary poetry. The Palestinian
poet-singer is called by his audience *šāᶜir šaᶜbi* (folk poet), *qawwāl* (im-
proviser), *zajjāl* (improviser of *zajal*), or *ḥāḍi* or *ḥadda* (lit. "cameleer
singer," colloquially a poet who sings *ḥida*, the most popular genre
of Palestinian improvised-sung poetry). The most common of these
names are *šāᶜir šaᶜbi* and *ḥadda*.

The professional poet-singers are invited by hosts to sing in teams
of two. The poet-singers choose their own partners, but if another
professional poet-singer happens to be present at the occasion as a guest,
the team members usually show their courtesy towards their colleague
by inviting him to sing with them for a while, after which they carry
on their duty as hired professionals. Most of the Palestinian poet-
singers I have interviewed prefer to sing with their permanent partner
—a gentlemen's agreement exists between the two, and they are ac-
customed to one another (SBAIT 1982, 376–93). There are altogether
seven established teams. Members of six teams live and perform in
the Palestinian villages and towns of the Galilee region. The seventh
team comprises one member from the Muthallath region and one from
the West Bank. This last team is active in both regions. A poet-
singer generally performs mainly in his own village or in neighboring
communities, but normally accepts invitations to other parts of the

country if he is paid well for the job.

Performances of improvised-sung poetry may last from several minutes to a few hours, depending on the occasion. As the poet-singers improvise-sing they switch genres and subjects rapidly. On the eve of a wedding, for example, a poet-singer team performs for an average of four hours without a break. The audience interacts with the poet-singers by repeating refrains (either established or new), clapping rhythmically, and dancing various folk dances suitable for the occasion.

The Palestinian poet-singers' poetry involves seven major genres: *ᶜatāba*, *farᶜāwi*, *ḥida*, *mᶜanna*, *mḥōrabih*, *qarrādi*, and *qaṣīdih*. These genres differ totally from one another in melody and poetic form (SBAIT 1982, 60–349). The respective melodies, though based on established tunes transmitted orally from one generation of poet-singers to the next, are nevertheless embellished by the individual poet-singers. The poetic forms are also more or less fixed, but, since there is no fixed text that the poet-singers must follow, each new performance is largely unique. This is due to the use of new rhyme schemes, meters, images, subjects, refrains, and poetic devices such as paronomasia, antithesis, metaphor, and metonymy. Also adding variety are the poet-singer's gestures, the audience's interaction, and the folk dances which the audience enjoys tremendously.

My research is based on a collection of approximately sixteen thousand verses of improvised-sung poetry recorded live in the field (SBAIT 1975–92); prior to the performance the poetry had been neither written down, composed, nor preserved in books, manuscripts, or tapes. The focus of this paper is on the unique practice of poetic debate (*mḥāwarah*), a form of debate carried out in a spirit of friendly rivalry and commonly employed by the Palestinian poet-singers, particularly at weddings. I examine only those improvised-sung genres that involve poetic debate; all other forms are disregarded, such as *farᶜāwi* and *mḥōrabih* (genres used during marching and processions). The article discusses such issues as the sociocultural context of this poetic tradition, the techniques of poetic debate followed by the Palestinian poet-singers, the genres in which the debates are conducted, and the current issues discussed in the debates, with examples provided from translated samples of poetic texts.

POETIC DEBATE AT THE WEDDING-EVE CELEBRATION FOR THE GROOM

Weddings are among the most celebrated social events in Palestinian culture (SBAIT 1982, 1–59). During the traditional wedding celebration, which may last twenty-four hours, the bride and groom are given

separate, simultaneous parties in the evening and again during the day. The poet-singers are generally invited by the groom's parents (the hosts) to entertain at their son's parties, while professional popular musicians and a singer usually entertain at the bride's parties. Thus it is primarily at the groom's wedding parties that the poetic debates take place.

The first to arrive at the groom's evening wedding celebration (*sahrit il-ᶜarīs* or *it-tiᶜlīlih*) are his relatives and immediate friends, followed by guests from outside the village. They assemble in the guest room of the host's house, sipping coffee and chatting. A short time before the formal party begins, the invited team of poet-singers improvises poems in honor of the groom, his parents, and the guests. The young men and women, led by a folk musician playing a double-reeded instrument, perform *dabkih* (Palestinian folk circle dance) and sing outside the house in order to warm up for the formal evening celebration. As the dancing progresses the crowd continues to grow, and the poet-singers are ready to begin their main performance.

The best man, who plays the role of master of ceremonies, invites the poet-singers, the folk-dance leader, the dancers, and the guests to move to another location in the village, usually the school yard or some other open space large enough to accommodate a big crowd. As soon as most of the guests have moved, the poet-singers are ready to begin. The folk dancers line up and, clapping rhythmically and chanting the phrase "*widaḥaw*" (spread out), form a *ṣaff saḥjih* (a line of about fifty to two hundred dancers at traditional Palestinian weddings). Two or more *saḥjih* organizers (*ḥāši*) dance in front of the line to help the dancers get organized and follow an orderly clapping rhythm. An audience of several hundred local residents and other guests sits on chairs, with the groom and best man in the front row facing the folk dancers. The two poet-singers and the line organizers stand in the space left between the audience and the dancers.

The poet-singers then begin their performance. Each holds a microphone in one hand, puts the other hand on his ear, and sings "*ōf*" (a sigh of relief) on a high note several times. The sigh echoes throughout the area and is followed by a responsorial "*ōf*" from the dancers and the audience. As soon as the crowd settles down, the singing and dancing that will lead to the poetic debate begin. During the groom's evening celebrations the poet-singers improvise-sing the poetry genres suitable for an outdoor performance. The *saḥjih* dancers interact by singing relevant refrains and performing suitable folk dances (for details see SBAIT 1982, 1–58).

After the *saḥjih* dance is over most local people return to their

homes. Guests from outside the village who are not planning to attend the next day's wedding may offer their congratulations to the groom and then leave. Those guests who will be attending the wedding either go to the groom's house or accept invitations to sleep at the homes of friends from the host's village. The young friends of the groom and his family and relatives walk back to the host's house at about midnight, usually led by the poet-singers.

Although the poet-singers conduct their poetic debate in the *ḥida* genre as the *saḥjih* is being held outdoors, they also perform indoor debates employing other improvised-sung genres. As the wedding guests sit down to drink and eat, the poet-singers entertain them with suitable sung-poetry. The audience participates by singing refrains introduced by the poet-singers, and in some cases the performances are accompanied by professional musicians. However, when the serious poetic debate begins the audience listens carefully to the poet-singers' arguments, repeats the refrains after them, and enjoys the performance.

In most Palestinian communities, the closest friends of the groom stay with him for an after-midnight "bachelors' party"[1] (*sahrit il-ᶜaz-zābiyyih*); it is also customary among the Christian Palestinians of the Galilee region to hold an extended post-midnight party for relatives, friends, and guests. At this party the guests are invited to sit, dine, and drink while the poet-singers entertain them with indoor *ᶜatāba* and other genres of improvised-sung poetry suitable for the occasion. The audience participates by singing refrains and performing other folk songs and dances. The poet-singers use this opportunity to conduct poetic debates. The frolic continues until the poet-singers become tired and many of the guests are tipsy. It is then time for most people, especially the groom, to retire and rest for the next day's celebration. With this the first major part of the wedding festivities comes to an end.

Preparations for the "groom's shaving party in public" (*ḥlāqit il-ᶜarīs, zyānit il-ᶜarīs,* or *zaffit il-ᶜarīs; iz-zaffih* for short) start early on the morning of the wedding day. Soon after the barber's arrival, a crowd of relatives and guests gathers in the home of the groom's father to participate in the festivities. The *zaffih* is long, and so is the singing repertoire. A drummer and a double-reed musician begin warming up. The folk music and dancing generally commence with a Palestinian circle dance, after which the poet-singers take the place of the folk musicians and improvise-sing in genres suitable for this indoor celebration. Here again they might employ a light spontaneous poetic debate.

Other social occasions on which the poet-singers conduct poetic debates while singing indoors are public festivals and private parties of all kinds. The following sections include illustrations of such debates.

THE POETIC FEATURES OF THE ᶜAṬĀBA GENRE

The ᶜatāba is a popular genre of improvised-sung Palestinian poetry, usually comprising four basic lines and sung by one poet-singer at a time. A core feature of this genre is use of the jinās (homonym): the last word of every line in an ᶜatāba except those in the final verse must be a jinās. The most common ᶜatāba rhyme scheme is AAAB. The final rhyme of the last verse of a ᶜatāba must be either āb or nā. An ᶜatāba that ends with the āb rhyme and is sung outdoors is not followed by an audience refrain, while one ending with the rhyme nā and sung indoors normally is. Both types, when sung indoors, are occasionally followed by popular established refrains introduced by the poet-singers and repeated by the audience. Usually each line of ᶜatāba has a minimum of eight syllables and a maximum of fifteen. The basic topics addressed in this genre are praise, description of the occasion, love themes, and social and political issues. ᶜAṭāba improvisations are sung in a free rhythm, following the Arabic musical mode (maqām) of bayyāti (for other types of ᶜatāba see SBAIT 1982, 59–146).

DEBATE IN ᶜAṬĀBA

Poetic debate in the ᶜatāba genre is usually casual and spontaneous, and thus does not follow any set of technical rules. Each poet-singer improvises a single quatrain of ᶜatāba expressing an opinion about an issue, to which the other poet-singer responds with another ᶜatāba that either affirms the opinion of his teammate, opposes it, or introduces a totally new concept for discussion. My collection of ᶜatāba sung outdoors during ṣaff saḥjihs includes several examples of long, friendly, serious poetic debates in which the poet-singers discuss a given subject or two contrasting subjects. The examples I have include:

1) A poetic debate entitled "The Green Eyes," between the poet-singers Muḥammad al-Raināwi and the late Tawfeeq al-Raināwi (SBAIT 1982, 112–14, Cas. 38). This debate includes forty ᶜatāba našl (speedy or snatched ᶜatāba) quatrains. In this debate both poet-singers discussed one given subject: green eyes, known for their particular attractiveness to young Arab men. Both poet-singers defended their love for and attraction to green eyes. In this way the poetic debate dealt with one specific topic: ġazal, the admiration of the beauty of a

beloved. *Ġazal* is pure as opposed to passionate love.

2) A poetic debate called "The Poet and His Apprentice," with the poet-singer ᶜAwni Sbait as the master poet and ᶜAfeef Nāṣir as the apprentice (SBAIT 1982, 112, Cas. 23). This debate comprises eight *ᶜatāba* improvisations sung outdoors during a *ṣaff sahjih*. Both poets discussed a single issue, the relationship between the master poet and his apprentice, with the master poet acknowledging his student's poetic talent and achievement and the apprentice praising his teacher as the finest poet in modern times.

3) A poetic debate entitled "The Homeland," between the late poet-singer Yaᶜqūb al-Kinᶜāni and the poet-singer Jihād Sbait. This debate includes ten *ᶜatāba* quatrains. The following is a brief portion:

i. Yaᶜqūb addresses his quatrains to a friend (symbolizing all fellow Palestinians):

yā-ṣāḥib ᶜazziz rbūᶜak wājibha	O, my friend, honor your homeland and its trees,[2]
w-inšilha nahiw minni wa-jibha	Liberate her and keep me close to her.
ta aftaḥ maᶜrakih l-ḥubbik wa-jabha	I will open a battlefront for her sake,
wa-sakkir ᶜal-faḍa malyūn bāb	I will close a million doors over the light surrounding her.

ii. Jihād responds, addressing his quatrains to his son (symbolizing all Palestinian children):

ya-ibni ᶜazziz wṭānak w-ahilha	O, my son, honor your homeland and her people.
w-fikna minihmūm id-dini w-ahalha	Leave us from the unworthy concerns of the world and how to solve them.
arḍ il-waṭan b-qabbil trābah w-waḥilha	I kiss the soil and the mud of the homeland,
b-mūt b-ha-l-waṭan ta-bawwis trāb	I am ready to die for this homeland and to embrace her soil.

(SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 29)

The above debate focused on a unified political subject. Each poet praised the homeland, explained its importance, and declared his love

and willingness to sacrifice for her. Each urged the audience, young and old alike, to sacrifice for their homeland.

In the above debate the poet-singers did their best to keep the discussion within the given subject in order to maintain the unity of the topic in each poem. Still, in most debates one can find traces of unrelated or minor additional topics, due perhaps to the fact that the oral poets lack the time to edit their improvised-sung poetry as they perform impromptu in front of their audience. One can also notice that while the poetic debates in ᶜatāba are not very confrontational, they include contrasting ideas. Although the debate in ᶜatāba is entertaining to the Palestinian audience, it does not constitute a serious climax to the eve of the wedding.

THE POETIC FEATURES OF THE ḤIDA GENRE

The ḥida genre—the most popular type of improvised-sung Palestinian folk poetry—is based on couplets (muzdawijāt), quatrains (mrabbaᶜāt), eight-line stanzas (mṭammanāt), or stanzas of more than eight lines (fawq al-mṭammanāt). The rhyme schemes of couplets are AB, AB, CB, DB, etc.; quatrains are AAAB, CCCB, etc; and stanzas of eight lines or more are ABABABAC. All ḥida types include established responsorial and rhythmic refrains repeated by the audience after every single ḥida. The lines have either seven or eight syllables. Ḥida genre poetry, including ḥida debate, is performed at weddings during the groom's evening celebration, particularly at the time of the ṣaff saḥjih. The subject material of the ḥida is unlimited: praise; politics; love; description of the occasion; and social, educational, and intellectual issues. Ḥida couplets employ a slow tempo, quatrains use a faster tempo, eight-line stanzas have a still faster tempo, and the subgenre known as Bedouin folk dance (is-saḥjih il-baddāwiyyih) has the fastest tempo. Thus a basic musical feature of the genre is the capacity of the poet-singers to accelerate the tempo from one type to another. All types of ḥida are sung in the Arabic musical mode of bayyāti (for details see SBAIT 1982, 147–225).

DEBATE IN ḤIDA

Poetic debate in the ḥida genre is the most elaborate and complex type, and forms the climax of the groom's evening party. The poet-singers warm up with other types of ḥida, and when the saḥjih dancers and the audience are totally attentive they switch to the serious and exciting debate. Unlike debate in the ᶜatāba genre, ḥida debate is generally preceded by the following technical steps:

1) One of the two poet-singers suggests during his improvisation that they start a friendly poetic debate on either a single subject or two contrasting subjects; he may even suggest the topic of debate, such as "the pen versus the sword" (mental versus physical power).

2) As a matter of courtesy, each poet-singer gives his partner the right to choose first. This shows the audience that the poet-singers have not agreed upon a subject beforehand. Most poet-singers are honest and genuine in their debates, and can improvise poetry on any issue spontaneously. Professional Palestinian poet-singers spend years in their quest to master the art of improvisation (SBAIT 1989); they must learn all genres and subgenres equally before they are recognized as professionals. Even if a team agrees on a group of topics for debate, one member can never read the mind of the other nor guess what rhymes he will use. Because of the necessity for rapid response in poetic debate only those who are in total command of the art would attempt it. My collection provides solid evidence that all professional Palestinian poet-singers have achieved such mastery.

3) After one of the two poet-singers makes his choice, the actual poetic debate starts immediately.

4) Each poet-singer presents his arguments and the debate continues for as long as half an hour or more, depending upon the importance of the subject and the ability of the poet-singers to carry on the argument with sufficient novelty to avoid boring the audience.

In most cases this kind of debate employs *ḥida* of quatrains only, and could conclude with an *ᶜatāba* improvisation. However, I have recorded one performance in which the two poet-singers started with quatrains and concluded with an eight-line *ḥida*, and did not follow with a relevant *ᶜatāba* improvisation as is customary. At the end of a *ḥida* debate the poet-singers usually follow the following technical steps:

1) When the arguments are finished and the audience is informally divided between the positions of the two poet-singers, one of the performers improvises an *ᶜatāba* in which he suggests that peace between both parties is the best of all judgments.

2) Traditionally speaking, if a third poet-singer is present at the time of the debate, he is usually asked to decide which of the

two debating poet-singers has won.   This third poet-singer is known as the arbitrator or judge (*ḥakam*).   Normally he does not take sides, but improvises a few quatrains of *ᶜatāba* declaring that both poets are knowledgeable and right.   Still, some of the more candid members of the audience may continue to argue about who won the debate, even after the wedding is over.

3)   When the poetic debate is heated, the dancers of the *saḥjih* stop clapping and singing the refrain and simply enjoy the exchange, but usually resume their active participation towards the debate's end.

4)   It is noticeable in my cassettes that in most debates the poet-singers slow the rhythm of their improvisations, perhaps in order to give themselves an opportunity to form their arguments and allow the audience to better understand and enjoy the subject of the debate.

The above is the most common framework of *ḥida* debate, and is generally followed by all Palestinian poet-singers.

The following is a brief portion of a *ḥida* debate performed at an outdoor wedding celebration as a *saḥjih* was being held.   It consists of an exchange on the single issue of understanding between religions, performed by the poet-singers Muḥammad al-Asadi and Qāsim al-Asadi.

i.   Muḥammad says:

ha-li-knīsih il bi-tlāmiᶜ	The church which is illuminated with light
lamma bi-tnādi ᶜal-jāmiᶜ	When it calls the mosque,
ayy wi-l-xilwih minha lāmiᶜ	And the Druzes' religious assembly place,
nūr il-uxuwwih yā-ḥuḍḍār	The light of brotherhood is shining from it, O audience.

Folk dancers' refrain:

al ya ḥalāli ya māli	Oh, how delighted I am!

ii.   Qāsim responds:

il-masīḥi bi-ṣḥāḥātuh	The Christian and his Holy Scripture,
wi-l-yahūdi bi-tūrātuh	The Jew and his Bible,
w-il-muslim bi-āyātuh	The Moslem and his Quranic verses,

wi-Šᶜayb il iluh mazār	And Shuᶜayb [Prophet of the Druzes] who has a shrine,

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

iii. Muḥammad:
nādi ᶜīsa fādīna	Call Jesus, Our Savior
b-isim Aḥmad hādīna	With the name of our guiding Muḥammad.
willi sākin ḥiṭṭīna	And the one who dwells in Ḥiṭṭīn [the Druzes' prophet],
min ibwābuh ṭiṭlaᶜ anwār	The light shines from its doors.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

iv. Qāsim:
nādi il-Masīḥ il-fādi	Call Jesus the Savior
wi-n-nabi il-yaᶜrubi il-hādi	And the guiding Arab Prophet
wi-Šᶜayb ib-qalb il-wādi	And Shuᶜayb in the heart of the valley,
w-hunāk tukram iz-zuwwār	Where the visitors honor the shrine.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

v. Muḥammad:
al-maᶜna l-quṣṣah yā-xayyi	The message of the story, O my brother,
inha ummih ᶜarabiyyih	That it is one Arab nation
w-maᶜ ṭāᶜah w-axawiyyih	With respect and brotherhood
min yōm ma xilqit l-idhār	Since the day time was born.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!
                              (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 37)

The following is another brief quotation from a twenty-two quatrain *ḥida* debate on the contrasting issues of peace and war, between the poet-singers Shaheen Sbait and ᶜAwni Sbait:

i. Shaheen opens the debate:
bi-s-silim ni-tğannayna	If we sing about peace
li-l-mabādi ḥabbayna	And if we love its principles,

bi-nᶜādi l-yuqtul fīna	We will be the enemies of him who kills us.
ma nimši marrah b-idlāl	However, we never yield to humiliation.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

ii. ᶜAwni responds:

bi-yḍallu ᶜāli li-jbīn	The forehead will remain high
il ḥabb is-silim ya Šāhīn	If one loves peace, O Shaheen.
inšallah bī-ᶜūdu l-ġāybīn	We hope that the [Palestinian] refugees will return,
ta nᶜammir ᶜalāli il-ᶜāl	So that we will establish great edifice.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

iii. Shaheen:

iš-šaxṣ il-biršid it-tifāq	The person who preaches peace,
la mḍī luh bīdi li-wrāq	I will sign agreements with him.
tājir bi-rjāl il-axlāq	Take pride only with the men of morals,
ib-mabda w-maᶜ mabda w-kamāl	The men of principles and perfection.

Folk dancers' refrain:
al ya ḥalāli ya māli   Oh, how delighted I am!

                                                                 (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 13)

Other quatrain-style *ḥida* debates in my collection:

1) ᶜAwni Sbait and Shaheen Sbait: "The Message of Poetry and Poets" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 13).
2) ᶜAwni Sbait and ᶜAfeef Naṣir: "Light and Darkness" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 28).
3) Yūsif Maṣārwih and ᶜAbdallah Mūsa: "The Acceptance or the Refusal of a Gift" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 35).
4) Yūsif Maṣārwih and ᶜAbdallah Mūsa: "The Types of Men" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 34).

There is a subgenre of *ḥida* based on eight-line stanzas which is also utilized in poetic debate. Usually the poet-singers switch rapidly from quatrain-style *ḥida* to eight-line *ḥida* as they perform, following

the same technical rules of poetic debate for both.   My collection in-
cludes two poetic debates with eight-line *ḥida*:

1) ʿAwni Sbait and ʿAfeef Naṣir: "Freedom and Imprison-
   ment" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 24).
2) Yaʿqūb al-Kinʿāni and Jihād Sbait: "The Old Poet and the
   Young One" (SBAIT 1982, 195–98, Cas. 29).

Palestinian poet-singers employ additional techniques of verbal
duel in the *ḥida* genre that tend to emphasize verbal contrast, poetic
form, rhythmic rendition, and musical recitation rather than subject
matter.   One such device involves sharing the improvisation and
singing of the same *ḥida* quatrain: the first poet-singer improvise-sings
the first two lines, upon which the second poet-singer immediately
completes the quatrain while adhering to the same rhyme scheme and,
apparently, the same theme as the first.   They also share eight-line
ḥida stanzas in the same way.   Most of the poets practice this sharing
process without any hesitation.   Obviously the poet-singer who has
to complete the quatrain, responding spontaneously to all changes in-
troduced by the first poet-singer, is in a much more difficult position.

The following eight-line stanza by the late Yūsif Majādlih and
Yūsif Maṣārwih represents one version of the shared *ḥida*, distinguished
by such features as the rhythmic stress the poets place on Arabic syl-
lables with a doubling sign, the "unconventional" division of the poetic
form, and the rapid tempo.   Each poet improvise-sings two lines at
a time instead of four lines, as is customary in the shared eight-line
stanzas:

Majādlih:
    ay ha-n-nāḥi š-šamāliyyih   And this left side [in reference to
                                    the folk dancers],

    aw badd asmaʿ minkum il-kaff   I want to hear a clap from you.

Maṣārwih:
    wi-b-ḥayy il-xityāriyyih   I greet the old men,
    wi-lli qāʿid maʿ iṣ-ṣaff   Those who are sitting and the
                                     ṣaff saḥjih dancers.

Majādlih:
    baddi rjāl ilhā hayyih   I want men of supremacy,
    il-wāḥad minkum yinṭaḥ alf   Each one of you can gore but one
                                      thousand men.

Maṣārwih:
> *al wi-ḍyūfi ᶜa ᶜinayyi*   Welcome to my guests,
> *ib-hāḏā l-balad wa-l-xillān*   And to the friends in this village.

Folk dancers' refrain:
> *al ya ḥalāli ya māli*   Oh, how delighted I am!
>   (SBAIT 1982, 177–80, Cas. 33)

The purpose of this technique is probably to emphasize the expertise and wit of the professional poet-singers, who like to impress and excite their audience with innovative improvisation and singing. The reaction to such a verbal duel is very favorable—the audience is usually quite impressed by the speed and the accuracy of the extemporization, and by the precise coordination of the folk dancers' rhythmic hand-clapping.

Although the verbal duel quoted above does not amount to a serious poetic debate, my collection includes several other examples that meet the criteria of single-topic debate (SBAIT 1982, 167–68).

THE POETIC FEATURES OF THE *MᶜANNA* GENRE

The *mᶜanna* genre is an elegant type of improvised-sung poetry that is based on verses of four, six, eight, or more lines. Quatrains in the *mᶜanna* genre utilize an AAAB rhyme scheme, while longer stanzas follow an AAAAAAAB scheme. The last line of *mᶜanna* improvisations is the refrain, which is sung twice by the audience. *Mᶜanna* verses include a minimum of ten syllables and a maximum of fifteen syllables each. The genre is used at weddings and private parties as an indoor table song; poetic debates in *mᶜanna* take place in such a setting. *Mᶜanna* poems are mostly expressions of love, praise, the poet-singer's subjective feelings, and other life concerns. The Palestinian poet-singers sing *mᶜanna* in a slow, free rhythm following the Arabic mode of *bayyāti*; the refrains are rhythmic and follow the same mode. Musical instruments may also accompany the poet-singers as they sing this genre, particularly when the audience sings the refrains (for details see SBAIT 1982, 266–92).

DEBATE IN *MᶜANNA*

My collection includes one major debate in the *mᶜanna* genre consisting of ten units, in which the poet-singers Ḥanna Sbait and Jihād Sbait discuss the talent of the poet. The poem's title, "The Mare of Our Poetry," utilizes an expression that symbolizes the talent of the poet. The poem was improvised indoors, at a private party, while the poets

and guests dined at a table.

i. Ḥanna opens with a quatrain of *mᶜanna*

muhrit shiᶜirna baᶜidha bi-aw-wal ᶜumir	The mare of our poetry is still in the beginning of her age,
bilmaᶜrakih ba'mur ana ᶜalaiha amir	I order her strongly in the battle-field.
wimṭabbaᶜah wimᶜallamih ᶜaṭbaᶜina	She is tamed and taught according to our character,
ᶜasirjiha bitfīqi bitlāqi ᶜumur	When she walks up, she finds a life over her saddle.

Audience's refrain:

ᶜasirjiha bitfīqi bitlāqi ᶜumur	When she walks up, she finds a life over her saddle. [Repeated twice]

ii. Jihād responds with an eight-line *mᶜanna*:

muhrah mṭabbaᶜah in kazzait-ha wiṣlit la-Bᶜalbaki	A tame mare, if I become tough with her, can go all the way to Bᶜalbak [a city in Lebanon].
bathbit hādhih ḥaqīqah ma huwwi ḥaki	I can prove that this is true, it is not just talk.
Ana ma brīd akūn malik aw ᶜindi mamlakih	I don't want to be a king who has a kingdom,
ma brīd akūn ᶜabid lal-ḥakim mushtaki	I don't want to be a slave who complains to the ruler,
ghair ᶜa-darb il-amānih ma marrah basluki	I don't follow but the path of fidelity,
b-sāḥit il-maᶜrakih mithil asad ᶜasnānuh b-yusruki	I am like a lion who grinds his teeth in the battlefield.
law jābu shāᶜir il-quṭrain ᶜaqbāli ana	If people bring "the poet of the two regions" [the Lebanese poet Khali Mutran] to debate me,
Aslāki shiᶜruh ᶜa-jināḥi b-ḥay-yiki	I will weave the strings of his poetry over my wings.

Audience refrain:

Aslāki shiᶜruh ᶜa-jināḥi b-ḥayyiki	I will weave the strings of his poetry over my wings. [Repeated twice]

iii. Ḥanna:

Muhrit shiᶜirna baᶜidha bᶜizz w-muna	The mare of our poetry is still in her glory and hope,
wsirjiha l-mash-hūr kullithu hana	Her famous saddle is salutary.
wimṭabbaᶜah wim-ᶜallamih ᶜak-fūfina	She is tamed and taught in our hands,
blamḥit baṣar biṭṭir fi kull iddina	With the wink of an eye she surrounds the world.

Audience refrain:

blamḥit baṣar biṭṭir fi kull iddina	With the wink of an eye she surrounds the world. [Repeated twice]

(SBAIT 1982, 182–85, Cas. 4)

Normally, each unit of a *mᶜanna* poem is concerned with one theme, like the *ᶜatāba*. The *mᶜanna* is predominantly personal, an expression of the individual feelings and passion of the poet.

Other poetic debates in the *mᶜanna* genre in my collection:

1) Ḥanna Sbait, Jihād Sbait, and Muḥammad al-Asadi: "The Duty of the Poet-Singer towards His Host" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 7).

2) Ḥanna Sbait and Shaheen Sbait: "In Praise of the Returning Immigrant" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 7).

3) Jihād Sbait and Ḥanna Sbait: "A Debate with the Beloved" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 11).

THE POETIC FEATURES OF THE *QARRĀDI* GENRE

The *qarrādi* is the most popular indoor genre of improvised-sung poetry. The *qarrādi* involves the improvisation of couplets, quatrains, or eight-line stanzas, and is sung either solo or in alternation. *Qarrādi* couplets generally follow a rhyme scheme of AB/CB/DB, etc.; quatrains mostly rhyme AAAB or ABAB/CCCB, etc.; eight-line stanzas usually rhyme ABABABAC, etc. All *qarrādi* improvisations are followed by refrains, produced by the poets and repeated by the audience. The *qarrādi* refrains stem from the introductory couplets of each new improvisation. *Qarrādi* lines are short, entailing seven and seven, seven and eight, or seven and four syllables in every pair of lines. Poems in this genre are sung at weddings and private parties indoors; they are mainly rhythmical and are accompanied by folk dance, hand clapping, and musical instruments (both folk and modern, but particularly Arabic

drums and tambourines). The tempo differs from one improvisation to another. Several melodies are sung in fast duple meter, and follow the Arabic mode of *sīga*. *Qarrādi* improvisations treat many subjects, including love, praise, description of the occasion, and nationalistic issues (for additional details see SBAIT 1982, 293–325; 1989, 213–35).

DEBATE IN *QARRĀDI*

Although the *qarrādi* genre is performed quite rapidly and although the poems are mostly descriptions of the occasion or expressions of the poet-singer's feelings towards the occasion, some *qarrādi* improvisations are well-thought-out social and political commentaries. My collection includes several indoor poetic debates in the *qarrādi* genre that took place either at private parties or during wedding-related festivities as the poet-singers and their audience were dining and drinking. The following example, entitled "Lost between the Dark and the Fair Girls" and improvised-sung by Jihād Sbait and Ḥanna Sbait, is a good example of poetic debate in this genre.

i. Opening quatrain by Jihād:

talfant-illik yā-samra	I phoned you dark girl, however,
ᶜan-numrah ṯnain	I dialed the other number [the wrong girl].
bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra	But I got the two numbers of the
ḍāᶜu r-raqmain	fair and the dark girls mixed up.

Refrain by the audience:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra ḍāᶜū r-raqmain	But I got the two numbers of the fair and the dark girls mixed up.

ii. Ḥanna responds with a quatrain of *qarrādi*:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra	Between the fair and the dark
tšiᶜ ᶜil-qamra	girls the moon shines,
m-aḥla layāli l-x-amra	How marvelous are the nights in
bain il-ahlain	which we drink wine amongst our relatives.

Refrain by the audience:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra ḍāᶜū r-raqmain	But I got the two numbers of the fair and the dark girls mixed up.

iii. *Qarrādi* of eight lines by Jihād:

w-xāyif min baᶜd il-malqa	I am afraid that after the reunion,
yabdu il-hijrān	another separation of the beloved will occur,

w-aqᶜud qāsi bi-l-furqah	And I sit, suffering the blaze of
laḍa n-nīrān	the fire of separation.
muhjit qalbi miḥtirqah	The core of my heart is burning,
frāq il-xillān	because of the beloved's separation.
lākin marrah bi-s-sirqah	However, one time, even if it is
bawfi la-d-dain	on the sly, I will pay my debt to the beloved.

Refrain by the audience:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra ḍāᶜū	But I got the two numbers of the
r-raqmain	fair and the dark girls mixed up.

iv.   Jihād improvise-sings another *qarrādi* of eight lines, continuing the same debate:

tārik ahli wi-rbūᶜi	I am leaving my family, my land,
w-sukkān il-ḥayy	and the residents of the quarter,
w-nār il-furqah bi-ḍlūᶜi	The fire of separation is strongly
ᶜamm tikwi kayy	burning in my chest.
zāyid bukāyi w-nōḥi	My crying and mourning are
ᶜa sitt il-ḥayy	mounting for the sake of the lady of the quarter [his beloved],
mīn iydāwi la jrūḥi	Who will cure my wounds from
ma bain w-bain	time to time?

Refrain by the audience:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra ḍāᶜū	But I got the two numbers of the
r-raqmain	fair and the dark girls mixed up.

v.   Jihād switches to a dialogue between himself and his beloved:

la tḍunni abu fādi	She said, "Father of Fādi [nick-
qālat b-ansāk	name of the poet], don't think I will forget you,"
jāriḥ qalbi w-fwādi	"You wound my heart, you
mdalli l-islāk	stretched wires for me."
l-aḥriq lik ha-l-barādi	I said, "I will burn the curtains
il xabbū š-šubbāk	which are hiding your window,"
ḥaraqu-li fwādi	"Because they burned my heart
w-xabbū l-ḥilwīn	and hid my beautiful beloved."

Refrain by the audience:

bain il-baiḍa wi-s-samra ḍāᶜū	But I got the two numbers of the
r-raqmain	fair and the dark girls mixed up.
	(SBAIT 1982, 306–11; Cas. 11)

Each pair of lines in the above poem comprises unequal lines of seven and four syllables, with the poet-singers relying on enjambment to maintain fluency of meaning. Ḥanna participated in the debate until Jihād switched to the dialogue with his beloved, whereupon Ḥanna let Jihād develop the theme on his own.

It is worth mentioning that open love is an unconventional subject in Palestinian improvised-sung poetry; most love themes are symbolic and indirect. However, in both cases the ǧazal or love expression is decent and elegant. This topic is popular among the youth, and is therefore performed mostly by socially liberal poet-singers.

The following is a qarrādi poetic debate that took place at a private party. It deals with one specific nationalistic subject, the beauty of the homeland and the importance of its trees. Entitled "The Olive Tree[3] in the Land of My Country," it is sung alternately by Jihād Sbait and Ḥanna Sbait. In all nine quatrains of the poem the two poets describe the importance of the olive tree as a national symbol.

i. Jihād opens with a quatrain of qarrādi:

bi yǧanni abū fādi	Father of Fādi [nickname of Jihād] is singing,
rūḥuh w-qalbuh b-yihdīha	He is ready to give his soul and heart to her [his country].
iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi	The olive tree in the land of my country,
ilǧaym ib-yitᶜamšaq fīha	The clouds are hung over it.

Refrain by the audience:

iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi ilǧaym ib-yitᶜamšaq fīha.	The olive tree in the land of my country, the clouds are hung over it.

ii. Ḥanna develops the same theme:

iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi	The olive tree in the land of my country,
markūzih malha ᶜādih	Is firmly rooted in the land.
bīdi sanadtah snādih	I supported it strongly with my own hand,
ḥatta ṭ-ṭamar yūwfīha	And I am proud of it.

Refrain by the audience:

iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi ilǧaym ib-yitᶜamšaq fīha.	The olive tree in the land of my country, the clouds are hung over it.

iii.   Jihād resumes:

zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi   An olive tree in the land of my
                                        country

b-tišfi rūḥi wi-fwādi   Is a cure for my heart.
zaraᶜūha ajdādi   My grandfather planted it,
w-ᶜammāl atbāha fīha   And I am proud of it.
Refrain by the audience:
iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi ilġaym   The olive tree in the land of my
ib-yitᶜamšaq fīha.   country, the clouds are hung
                                        over it.

iv.   Ḥanna continues:

inti bi-š-šiᶜir ġayūr   You [Jihād] have a sense of honor
                                        in your poetry,

wi-b-šiᶜrak w-allah masrūr   You sound happy with your
                                        poems.

mniz-zaytūnih šaᶜ ᶜin-nūr   The light shines from the [oil of]
                                        the olive tree,

w-lāzim nitbāha fīha   So we have to be proud of it.
Refrain by the audience:
iz-zaytūnih b-arḍ blādi ilġaym   The olive tree in the land of my
ib-yitᶜamšaq fīha.   country, the clouds are hung
                                        over it.

                                        (SBAIT 1982, 311–14; Cas. 4)

It is worth mentioning at this point that the *qarrādi* resembles the *ḥida* in that it is based on couplets, quatrains, and eight-line stanzas; it also employs identical rhyme schemes. Although it is safe to say that both genres influence each other, they are otherwise different in many ways, particularly in their musical melodies, refrains, occasion of use, and even subject matter.

THE POETIC FEATURES OF THE *QAṢĪDIH* GENRE

The *qaṣīdih* genre of improvised-sung poetry (see SBAIT 1986, 75–108) is also known colloquially as the *zajaliyyih* (pl. *zajaliyyāt*). The word *zajaliyyih* derives from *zajal*, a general term commonly applied to all improvised-sung poems that follow in the steps of the Classical Arabic *qaṣīda*, employing two hemistichs of equal length, a strict classical meter, and a monorhyme at the end of all couplets (SELLS 1987; see also "Kasida" in the *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM*, 4: 713–14). Other *qaṣāyid* (pl. of *qaṣīdih*) follow the form of the Andalusian *muwashshaḥ* (postclassical stanzaic Arabic poem), which has sections (stanzas) that end with

a concluding line and a final stanza that includes a *kharjah* (a closing verse with an important message). Refrains are not common in this genre. The *qaṣīdih* verses have from eight to thirteen syllables each. Monorhyming poems have rhyme schemes of AB/CB/DB, etc., while five-line stanzas may rhyme ABACB/ABADB, etc. Two common topics are politics and the rebuke of (or dialogue with) the beloved. The *qaṣāyid* in my collection are sung in free rhythm and with a slow tempo, and follow the Arabic mode of *sīga* (SBAIT 1982, 326–57; 1986, 75–108).

DEBATE IN *QAṢĪDIH*

It is unlikely that poet-singers would use the *qaṣīdih* genre as a vehicle for one-on-one poetic debate since the *qaṣīdih* is usually an individual-istic performance, a subjective and personal expression of the artist. However, it is customary during the *qaṣīdih* for the poet-singer to in-troduce a serious issue in which he criticizes or chastises another party, such as an authority, a ruler, the beloved, an aggressor, or the time, thus creating an indirect "debate."

My collection includes several *qaṣāyid* that involve such indirect debates. The following quotation, from a thirteen-quatrain *qaṣīdih* im-provised-sung by Muḥammad al-Raināwi at the annual conference com-memorating "The Day of the Land,"[4] provides a brief illustration of this feature:

Quatrain 1.

ġarībih mrāḥl id-dunya ġarībih — How strange are the phases of the world, how strange!

minha mufriḥah w-minha kaᵓībih — Some people are happy and some are sad.

w-fi min bait fiyyuh l-faraḥ dāyir — There is a house in which hap-piness reigns,

w-janbuh bait fi nakbih w-muṣībih — And next to it a house with ca-lamity and misfortune.

Quatrain 2.

ibn zayyād init bi-l-waṭan šāᶜir — Son of Zayyad,[5] you are a poet in the homeland,

w-ana šāᶜir bi ha-n-nakbih w-muṣībih — And I am feeling this calamity and misfortune.

šūf š-šaᶜib šūf id-damm fāyir — See the people, see the blood boiling,

w-min dammuh bada yidfaᶜ — And from their blood they start

ḍaribih   paying a tax.
                                 (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 13; 1986, 82)

In the above example, the poet-singer acts as an indirect spokesman
for the audience, attempting to debate the policies of the local authori-
ties and their treatment of the native Palestinians. Such debate is im-
plied in the internal dialogue presented in the *qaṣīdih*.

My collection includes five additional *qaṣāyid* which dwell on an
indirect debate:

1)   Tawfeeq al-Raināwi on the same occasion as above (SBAIT
     1975–92, Cas. 13; 1986, 87).
2)   ᶜAwni Sbait on the same occasion as above (SBAIT 1975–92,
     Cas. 13).
3)   Ḥanna Sbait, "One Thousand Times Welcome to Those Who
     Were Absent" (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 8).
4)   Jihād Sbait, "For Such a Meeting I Have Been Waiting"
     (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 1, 1986, 83).
5)   Yūsif Maṣārwih, "The Tortured Abu Ḥsayn Recites a *qaṣīdih*"
     (SBAIT 1975–92, Cas. 3).

THE USE OF TIME IN IMPROVISATION

Many have wondered how the poet-singers find the time to think out
their lines as they spontaneously produce their poetry. This is a dif-
ficult question, the answer to which lies in the training of the poet-
singer, in his experience, and in an understanding of the average time
utilized by the poet-singers for their speedy compositions and ren-
ditions. My investigation indicates that the improvised-sung genres
employed by the Palestinian poet-singers are of three major categories
with regard to time and tempo: 1) genres improvised in a free rhythm
with a slow tempo, including the normal type of ᶜatāba (but excluding
the speedy type, the ᶜatāba našl), the mᶜanna, and the qaṣīdih (as well as
the mḥōrabih, which is not a debate genre); 2) genres improvised with
a faster tempo, including the ᶜatāba našl, the ḥida (except for the Bed-
ouin style ḥida), and the qarrādi (and also the farᶜāwi, which is not a
debate genre); 3) genres with the fastest tempo, including the Bedouin
style ḥida, the shared ḥida improvisations, and several qarrādi types
(also some farᶜāwi types). But whichever genre the poet-singer em-
ploys, from the slowest to the fastest, the time available to him to pro-
duce perfect rhyme schemes and well-thought-out ideas and at the
same time maintain a precise tempo, rhythm, and meter (or exact syl-
lable count) is certainly extremely limited.

On the average, a couplet of a moderate tempo takes ten to fifteen seconds to produce; a quatrain requires fifteen to twenty seconds; and a stanza of eight lines needs twenty to thirty seconds. When refrains are used by the audience, the poet-singer gains an additional five to ten seconds between the improvised units. This is how much time a poet-singer possesses to conceive, compose, and deliver his lines. In debate sessions where speedy genres are employed the time decreases even further, and the poet-singer must be a very quick thinker—he must practically read the mind of the first poet, accurately anticipate what he will say, quickly sense the rhyme arrangement and other relevant poetic features, and respond without hesitation. And he must do this over and over again for an extended period of time while switching from one genre and type to another. Yet all the professional Palestinian poet-singers who participated in my research produced their poetry quite successfully within the established time frames. How were they able to do this?

This ability is fostered through the training process undergone by the Palestinian poet-singers and the practical experience they gain over time. My investigation and personal interviews with fifteen poet-singers indicate that the period of self-training (*tadrīb*) and apprenticeship (*mumārasah*) lasts from a minimum of two years to a maximum of ten years. It is unlikely, however, that any poet-singer could become a recognized professional at such an early age or with so little experience. Thus he may practice for a longer period with a seasoned or professional poet-singer "master," acquiring the practical experience and knowledge that will enable him to stand in front of a large audience for hours producing poetry of all genres, and above all to debate with his partner about highly intellectual subjects. Once the poet-singer knows how to isolate himself from the audience and concentrate fully on his improvisation, he can improvise in any genre at any speed while following all the established poetic rules of that genre without difficulty. The more he practices and the more he is tested by another professional master, the easier his job becomes. In fact, performances of any length and debates on any subject become a matter of routine; at that point the question of speed and time are resolved for the new professional poet-singer (for further details see SBAIT 1989, 230–32).

CONCLUSION

Debate (*mhawārah*) in improvised-sung poetry is a deeply rooted and commonly practiced tradition among the Palestinian poet-singers. It is well composed and rendered in accordance with established and complex techniques. It is an event that is much liked and anticipated by

the Palestinian audience. The educational value of the issues discussed in poetic debates is as important as their artistic value for the poet-singers and their audiences alike. The debates demonstrate the tremendous poetic talent of the poet-singers and their intellectual ability to engage in friendly debate on a vast number of issues and to present solid arguments in support of their position. The performance, forming the climax of a wedding eve or a private party, is enjoyed in all its aspects by both ordinary listeners and the intellectually inclined. Poet-singers are interested in it because it raises their performance to a higher standard and because it enables them to reach out to their audience and deliver any sociocultural, ethical, political, or educational message they wish. The performance is spiritually uplifting, and the interaction between the poet-singers and the folk dancers is very entertaining even to those members of the audience who are not directly involved.

The debate is, of course, only one aspect of the performance presented by the Palestinian poet-singers at a wedding or other joyous social occasion. Thus the description above does not cover all the major components of a Palestinian wedding sung-poetry performance, nor does it include the many other poetic forms and subjects utilized on such an occasion. I hope, however, that it has enabled the reader to appreciate the tradition of poetic debate in the improvised-sung poetry of the Palestinian poet-singers, and to recognize the originality of this oral tradition as well as its true poetic, musical, intellectual, and aesthetic merits. The poetic debate is an integral part of a greater tradition of oral poetry that forms a major contribution to Palestinian culture and its poetic-musical tradition.

NOTES

* This paper is dedicated to the memory of my father, the late Palestinian poet-singer Ḥanna Shībān Sbait, who passed away on 10 March 1992. Ḥanna Sbait improvised-sang poetry professionally for over fifty years at numerous weddings and various joyous events in Haifa and the Galilee. His dedication to this poetic-musical tradition and his love for his people and their sociocultural heritage was tremendous. He left behind a serious collection of improvised-sung poetry, part of a vast aesthetic tradition that will, I hope, continue to flourish.

1. The traditional "bachelors' party" of the Palestinians is limited to men. It is not exactly the same as the traditional Western bachelors' party, but it shares the basic concept.

2. This essay had to overlook many poetic, musical, and cultural details. For example, due to the author's literal translation such poetic features of the Arabic original as rhyme, meter, internal rhythm, idiomatic usage, metaphor, and words with cultural depth could not be expressed in the English versions. Also, the enormous num-

ber of songs employed in poetic debates meant that all quoted verses had to be excerpted from their larger poetic context, and thus may seem abrupt at times. Still, all the major representative aspects of the poetic debate are faithfully presented.

    3. The olive is a common tree in the Galilee region known for its beauty and long life and as a symbol of peace. It is a source of livelihood for many Palestinian farmers. Christian Palestinians consider it to be holy, and are accustomed to bringing olive branches to be blessed at the church on Palm Sunday. Later they store these for use instead of incense to drive away the evil eye or to help cure the sick. According to Jihād and Ḥanna, the olive tree symbolizes the relationship between the Palestinian peasant, his land, and history. It is a source of pride for the poets as well as for the people.

    4. "The Day of the Land" (*Yawm al-Arḍ*) is a nationalistic occasion celebrated on 30 March of every year since 1976, when all Palestinian workers and employees went on strike for one complete day to express their resistance to a decision made by the Israeli authorities to requisition more Arab lands. It continues to be celebrated by Palestinian Arabs in various parts of the country as a protest against the Israeli authorities' ongoing confiscation of their property.

    5. The reference is to Tawfeeq Zayyād, the famous Palestinian literary poet and the mayor of Nazareth.

REFERENCES CITED

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM
  1978   New ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
SBAIT, Ḍ.
  1975–92   Ḍirghạm Ḥ. Sbait collection of Palestinian improvised-sung poetry, folk
          songs, weddings, and social celebrations: 1. 120 hours of improvised-sung
          poetry and folk songs on cassettes; recorded live in 30 Palestinian weddings.
          2. 22 hours of interviews with 16 Palestinian poet-singers. 3. 15 Palestinian
          weddings on video or film.
  1982   The improvised-sung folk poetry of the Palestinians. Ph.D. dissertation.
          University of Washington, Seattle, WA.
  1986   Poetic and musical structure in the improvised-sung colloquial *qaṣīdih* of the
          Palestinians. *al-ᶜArabiyya* 19.
  1989   Palestinian improvised-sung poetry: The genres of *ḥida* and *qarrādi*—
          performance and transmission. *Oral Tradition* 4/1–2.
SELLS, M.
  1987   The Qaṣīda and the West. *al-ᶜArabiyya* 20/1–2.