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Danse du Ventre: A Fresh Appraisal

Leona Wood and Anthony Shay

Every few years there is a resurgence of interest in what has come to be known as *danse du ventre*[1] or, less elegantly, belly dancing. By whatever name it may be called, however, this dance has inevitably elicited an exaggerated response from those not accustomed to the social background to which it belongs. In the past a climate of disapproval has hampered any attempt at serious evaluation of this dance form; at the present time the situation has reversed to a point where the enthusiasm of its protagonists has become the chief hindrance to an objective assessment. A dance whose enduring charm has managed to survive not only a body of disparaging commentary, but the spurious and tawdry aura surrounding so many of its practitioners, seems deserving of a fresh appraisal.

This is perhaps a uniquely appropriate moment for such a reassessment, for in this permissive era, when nudity and unabashed sexuality are to be encountered even in ballet performances, admirers of belly dance need no longer apologize for it. But years of defensive posture have produced a retaliatory response in the devotees of this dance which has encouraged its mythopoetical identification with ancient rites and mysteries. It is to the dispelling of these unnecessary fictions that this article addresses itself. It is hoped that by reviewing the fashions in Orientalism revelatory of various Western attitudes toward the East, by tracing the origins and history of voluptuous dancing, and by consideration of the ambivalent attitudes toward it (particularly in the context of Moslem mores), it may be possible to arrive at a more realistic view of this dance and its matrix.

Danse du Ventre: Defining the Dance Complex

If this kind of dancing is to be discussed in a meaningful way, the classificatory term "belly dance" cannot be restricted to the special and limited image of a dancer attired in the costume Westerners imagine to be worn in a sultan's harem (pronounced and frequently spelled *hareem*). While this image is indeed the embodiment of what *danse du ventre* has come to mean for most people at the present time, it represents only the most familiar aspect of a dance form that is both ancient and various.

A broader view of this kind of dancing will be obtained by exploring not only a variety of these aspects, but also certain contiguous dance cultures that are in some particular relevant to the purpose of this article. The central dance form itself will need definition not only in terms of its technical constituents and geographic demarcators, but cultural factors as diverse as musical traditions and the social status of the performing artist. These are all integral to a definition of this dance form that does not merely perpetuate a stereotype.

In an attempt to reconcile both real and apparent inconsistencies among dances that are now gathered together under a single catch-all term, the principle of polythetic taxonomy[2] will be applied. This method permits dances containing a substantial, if incomplete, number of the characteristics that define the term "belly dance" to be included in that classification.

The principal identifiers of this dance in its non-extended form are vocabulary of movements, costume, and the music to which the dance is performed. The cogent defining element is, of course, the variety of articulated pelvic movements that differentiate it from most, but certainly not all, other dance traditions. More of these movements are dependent upon actions of the legs than is generally supposed, and therefore a more interesting use of space is permitted than is ordinarily ascribed to this dance form. It is sometimes performed, if the audience is a large one, in a circle as much as thirty feet in diameter (or an equivalent, if non-circular, area) and in the course of a performance the dancer may traverse the entire perimeter and even large portions of the area circumscribed. When, however, the available space is exceptionally restrictive, the dancer will probably travel no greater distance than is required to reach her position before the audience, and at the termination of the dance, to relinquish it.

The movements of the hips so typical of this dance form in Egypt, also constitute an important element in the folk dances of Iran's Gilan and Mazanderan provinces, and these same movements were employed by the Persian professionals (*motreb*)[3] during the Qajar dynasty. This Persian dancing also included a gamut of twistings and undulations of the upper torso, backbends and those tremblings of the shoulders and breasts that are most immediately associated with Turkish cabaret dancers and their Greek affines.

But the abdominal movements to which the term "belly dance" is most appropriate are to be found in the dancing of the *Ouled Naïl*[4] and the dancing girls of Morocco *(shikhet)*.[5] Their dancing incorporates more of these movements than almost any other dances of the genre, yet their costumes[6] do not identify them as belly dancers. But in looking at old photographs of Mata Hari and other such dancers, the immediate response is to classify them as belly dancers, so strong is the effect of the costume[7] alone.

The music associated with this dance form can

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be exceedingly various within the confines of the musical systems from which it arises, but cannot stray outside these confines without seriously distorting the dance which is dependent upon it. The musical complex of which this dance music forms a part is outside the scope of the present article except insofar as it is relevant to the dance form under discussion, and will therefore be touched upon with brevity.

A great variety of musical ensembles are employed to play for dancers. Even in as small a region as the Saïd, in Upper Egypt, there exist two quite distinct types of consorts: the *mizmar* band (so called after its melodic instrument, a folk-oboe) and the *rebab* orchestra (which takes its name from the folk-fiddle of that name, but which also includes an end-blown flute). Percussion instruments of various sorts are required for these and virtually all other kinds of ensembles used in connection with the dance complex under discussion.

The music most readily associated with this dancing is produced by the big city orchestras that record most of the Middle Eastern music sold in the United States. This kind of large modern orchestra derives from the Turkish and Arabic classical orchestra, and owes part of its size to augmentation by such Western instruments as cellos and bass viols.

The rhythms most widely used today are based on 4 and 8-beat patterns, with much syncopation, and sometimes varied by the interpolation of passages in a slow triple metre or some other metric division unusual in the main body of this music. While these rhythms are dominant in Egypt and the Arab countries of the Middle East, in both the Eastern and Western extremes of this cultural complex the rhythmic modes are predominantly in 6/8. In Turkey there is extensive use of asymmetrical forms: one of the most commonly encountered belly dance rhythms is in 9/8. The Gypsies of Eastern Europe participate in this rhythmic tradition, and those in Turkey have been assimilated to the music and dance conventions of the area for many centuries.

Distribution

In Antiquity dancing expressed in the kinds of movements that have been described in this article extended throughout most of what was then the civilized world. This is evidenced explicitly in contemporary Latin descriptions and may reasonably be inferred from graphic and sculptural representations. The present diffusion of this dancing can best be geographically demarcated by expanding or contracting the area of its pre-Islamic distribution to confines beyond which the culturally unifying forces of Moslem culture cease to be operative, or where entrenched dance styles are too greatly at variance to permit a satisfactory interaction. While the cross-cultural infusions that have produced the current style called "belly dance" have been continuous for well over two millenia, it must not be forgotten that this dance is primarily and pre-eminently Egyptian, and Egypt is where it is still seen to its best advantage.

Despite the introduction of various innovations, the essential characteristics of the dance remain unchanged and the vivacious deportment of the dancer is as evident in the glitteringly costumed night club presentation as it is in improvised dancing at home. Although improvisation is not as important to the art as it once was, it is not entirely dispensed with for the important reason that the dancer's responsiveness to her audience is a legitimate expectation within this dance tradition. The polished routines of today's best known entertainers, however, are less the result of inspiration than long and diligent rehearsals with an orchestra. If the dancer is a highly paid performer, the music will have been specially arranged for her, often by a well-known composer, and will be played with exactitude.

Today Cairo, as the film capital of the Arabic-speaking world, exerts an increasing Egyptianizing influence not only in the Middle East and North Africa, but even in Pakistan and India. Partly as a consequence of this, dancers who would be billed as belly dancers elsewhere in the world are called Egyptian dancers by Middle Easterners.

This turn of events is no more than just. The earliest graphic evidence of dancing characterized by elements that would place it within the scope of the present article appears during the early years of Egypt's eighteenth dynasty. The most frequently reproduced painting of entertainers from this period is a fresco from the tomb of one Neb-Amon, in the necropolis of the Western hills, near Thebes. These ". . . dancers whose gestures are those of modern Arab dancing"[8] are seen wearing cinctures fastened well below the hips in the position almost unanimously adopted by those who perform dances where movements of this part of the body are emphasized. While this custom can be observed in countless paintings and sculptures, its importance is presented most forcibly when, at a present-day Egyptian family party, one of the girls is prevailed upon to dance, she must first tie something around her hips.

On both folk and professional levels this dance culture, despitè many vicissitudes, continues to flourish in its native land. Its attractions today, as in the past, continue to interest an ever wider audience, as well as an increasing number of aspiring participants in what has grown to be, at least in the United States, something of a cult. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm that has produced the present vogue has also been instrumental in drawing attention to certain accretions that encumber this dance tradition. In order to accomplish the purpose of this article, it will be necessary to examine the sources of the more persistent of these myths; but before doing so, it is advisable to become further acquainted with the background from which they arise.

Orientalism

Much has been written about the fascination which the East has long exercised on the Western imagination. The Oriental vogue has been both durable and widespread, not only in literature and painting, but in music and dance as well.

In the eighteenth century Europeans enjoyed seeing themselves in a Turkish mirror held up to them by ambassadors and their wives who had returned from Oriental adventures wearing costumes of exotic magnificence. Among these travelled ladies was

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose letters from the Ottoman capital helped to introduce the fashion for dresses *à la turque* and *à la sultane* of which the painter Jean Étienne Liotard has left us such charming pictures. The mood of the period is perfectly reflected in Mozart's "Abduction from the Seraglio."

Turkey was the visible Orient. From the Barbary states to the Balkans, centuries of Ottoman suzerainty imposed a Turkish façade on a multi-national population. Turkish dress, institutions, and even music had therefore long been available for imitation; illustrated editions of the Arabian Nights[9] were peopled with unmistakably costumed Turks, and the seraglio hareem[10] became an indestructable symbol of voluptuous splendour.

The Distorting Mirror

It is generally assumed that stereotypical images are a result of ignorance and that the alleviation of ignorance destroys the stereotype, permitting a more valid picture to emerge. This is an oversimplification, of course, and it seriously underestimates the capacity of ephemeral fashion to produce lasting effects. What people see is what they wish to see, and this is dependent upon the dictates of fashion to a surprising degree.

Painters like David Roberts and Jean Leon Gérôme worked, and often resided in the Middle East. Their paintings are models of accurate observation and meticulous execution: the East truthfully represented for those who wished to see it. The prevailing style however, led toward a view of the Orient more acceptably presented by J.A.D. Ingres and Eugène Delacroix, who, each in his own highly individualistic way, pursued a sensuous and romantic vision that was ultimately to reach such extravagant pictorialization in Gustave Moreau's wildly imagined painting of Salome, dancing implausibly on the very nails of her toes.

The objectivity and candour that marked the writings of earlier travellers in Eastern countries was replaced, as the nineteenth century advanced, by the sensationalism of popularizers and journalists who exploited what they saw, calculating its effect on their readers.

When the dance itself was exported to foreign countries—most notably the Paris International Exhibit of 1889—the dancers wore authentic Algerian and other ethnic costumes. This was also the case at both the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibit of 1876[11] and later, the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.[12] But the exploitation had begun in earnest; and as the Victorian world merged into the Edwardian, the image of a romantic and sensual East changed into that of a wicked and sinful one.

These images were compounded in about equal parts from what was suggested by the Bible, archaeology, and the East itself. Painting and music were nourished on such themes, and a spate of Oriental heroines: Aïda, Djamileh, Lakmé, Thaïs—made their appearance in opera houses from Egypt to the United States. Admittedly such music as Alexandre Luigini's "Ballet Égyptien" would not sound noticeably Egyptian without the assistance of its title, but to audiences that never wearied of *bayadères*[13] in tutus or *fin de siècle* posturings in Egyptianesque draperies, that scarcely mattered.

In the hundred and thirty two years spanned by Mozart's "Thamos, König in Aegypten" and Debussy's Egyptian ballet, "Khamma," we view a panorama of gradually altered values about to be thrown into further disarray by a series of actresses, courtesans and dancers: Cléo de Mérode, Collette, Sarah Bernhardt, Maud Allan,[14] and others, who indulged themselves in an Oriental charade that set the stage for a notorious and persistent stereotype. Salome, interpreted by Jules Massenet as a tragic and even chaste heroine in his opera, "Hérodiade," was suddenly transformed by Oscar Wilde into a symbol of decadence and amorality.

This *Drame en un Acte*[15] was written for Bernhardt, and she was in the midst of rehearsals when the censor brought the production to a halt, so the play first reached the public when it was published, in 1893, "avec quinze dessins par Aubrey Beardsley," one of which bore the caption, "La danse du ventre." How, and perhaps why, the textual "danse des sept voiles" metamorphosed into Beardsley's "The Stomach Dance" (as it was translated by Lord Alfred Douglas) leads to fascinating speculations.

Richard Strauss' opera based on Wilde's play created a storm, and fanciful versions of the subject abounded—none, perhaps, more novel than Nazimova's, preserved in a 1921 film of pretentious absurdity. The vision of Salome, removing her veils one by one, has been durably buoyed up by Strauss' music, and is resuscitated periodically with ever new attempts to fuse semi-balletic gestures with neo-*danse du ventre*.

Oriental stereotypes in the twentieth century also derive from several other relatively recent sources: the interpretations of Oriental dances created by Miss St. Denis[16] and the dances choreographed for innumerable productions of *Kismet* and similarly conceived theatricals. But it was the sumptuous costumes and settings designed by Leon Bakst for the Diaghileff Company's ballet, "Schéhérazade,"[17] that helped create the special stereotype which is perpetuated not only in revivals of this production, but which, in a less elevated style, has been embalmed in the often preposterous incongruities for which cinematic ventures inspired by Biblical or Oriental themes are notorious.

While an aura of delightful wickedness has long surrounded actresses and opera dancers, especially those with exotic pretentions, it was the haunting image of Mata Hari that helped create a sinister embodiment of the *danseuse orientale*. A notorious courtesan and dancer, Mata Hari was convicted of espionage during the first World War, and shot by a firing squad. Her incarnation of the *femme fatale* helped give rise to a motion picture genre that has perpetuated the association of venality and amorality with Oriental dancing.

From Out of Asia

In a century that saw the extension of Western colonialism and a concurrent reduction of Ottoman dominion, Russia occupied a special relationship to both East and West. Its policies were primarily

directed at expanding its own national boundaries, rather than the establishment of an overseas empire, and as its frontiers abutted those of the Turks, Tartars and Persians, these peoples were regarded as neighbours—more real and dangerous than romantic and mysterious.

Yet the Russians, too, were attracted by Asiatic themes, and when Russian operas and ballets with Oriental colouration reached European Audiences, they revealed a new and surprising ambiance that seemed to bring Asia into sharper focus. But it was a different Orient than the Islamic world bordering the Mediterranean, or the India so familiar to the British, and it produced a unique response in the Russian imagination. Strangely, no matter how much is written about the phenomenon of Orientalism, Russia's contributions are scanted; a possible explanation may lie in the European notion that Russians are themselves Asiatics.

The Dancers of Shamahka

The Queen of Shamahka in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, "Le Coq d'Or,"[18] embodies Russian fantasies of Asia in a highly romantic way, yet the Tartar city of Shamahka (standard English orthography: Shemakha) was, and is, a real place. A description of what it was like at the end of the nineteenth century appears in the memoirs of an Armenian dancer, Armen Ohanian, who compares herself to the legendary dancers of that city, calling her memoirs *The Dancer of Shamahka.*[19] Her adventures in Persia—where she danced for the young Shah—and in Egypt, give a fascinating picture of the milieu from which she emerged. A chance offer brought Mlle. Ohanian to Europe, where she eventually wrote her memoirs—probably through the encouragement of Anatole France, whose gallant letter serves as an introduction to her book.[20]

Unfortunately, Mlle. Ohanian felt a need to apologize for her profession; though no blame should attach for trying to give her art some meaning beyond the obvious, nonetheless she has led astray at least two generations of students of the dance by calling belly dancing a "poem of the mystery and pain of motherhood"[21] a passage that has contributed greatly to current misconceptions about the origins of this dance.

The claim that the dance is intended less as entertainment than as a ritual symbolizing motherhood has a special appeal for feminists; it is therefore not difficult to understand the motivation for such eager acceptance of the following oft-quoted apologia at face-value.

> In this olden Asia which has kept the dance in its primitive purity, it represents maternity, the mysterious conception of life, the suffering and joy with which a new soul is brought into the world. Could any man born of woman contemplate this most holy subject, expressed in an art so pure and ritualistic as our Eastern dance, with less than profound reverence? But the spirit of the Occident has touched this holy dance, and it became the horrible danse du ventre, the hootchie-kootchie.[22]

Romanticism and Prudery

Most of the travellers who, over the past few centuries have described the dances of the Middle East, did so as casual observers and although often struck by what they deemed the lascivious nature of the dances in all of these Eastern countries, their descriptions and commentaries give what appear to be accurate accounts of what they actually witnessed.

At the close of the eighteenth century, however, when Egyptologists first commenced the serious study of the antiquities of Dynastic Egypt, they deplored the lively sensuality of these dances which seemed so at variance with the supposed spirit of an earlier epoch. It is understandable that those scholars would try to find some trace of a more sober dance tradition than the uninhibited exhibitions of the *Ghawâzee,*[23] so in examining the multitude of carvings and paintings they were predisposed to document acrobatic exercises and religious processions with more zeal than representations of nude dancers performing at banquets.

Just as it had become the fashion to regard the Moslem and Hindu East as sensual, so it gradually became the vogue to regard the ancient East, particularly Egypt, as mystical and spiritual. The desire to implement this image has caused some rather naive imaginings to find their way into print:

> In the homes of the rich there is said to be a form of decorative choreography, like a ballet in structure, that duplicates and animates a painted or sculptured frieze on the walls of the room. The dancers enter one at a time, taking their positions in turn under the figures of the frieze, copying each pose as they come into place under it. . . . The human line and the mural frieze collectively form a background for the work of a leading dancer, who flits from place and duplicates the poses of such figures as she may choose.
>
> In another entertainment, descriptions tell of huge vases . . . elaborately ornamented with carved figures. These one by one relax their archaic severity of pose and very slowly come to life.[24]

At the present time it no longer seems appropriate to dismiss belly dance as either unworthy of notice or an innovation "not of the kind with which the name of Egypt deserves to be associated"[25] for it has gradually come to be accepted that these dances are indeed of great antiquity. This has led to a kind of pseudo anthropological trend in the statement of this subject and has produced such fanciful pronouncements as the following:

> On occasion an undulating or rolling movement of the abdomen was used to put emphasis on the 'world egg' which was laid; and you can easily see that this was one of the dances performed at love or fertility rites; today a dance containing this movement is called belly dance; the ancient Greek name of which was *kolia.* The abdominal movement is supposed to increase the muscle tone of the intestinal tract and womb.[26]

The proposition that belly dancing incorporates

hygienic virtues is undeniably attractive, and not without factual basis, but the history of this dance has little to do with therapy of any sort.[27]

Origins and History

It is quite probable that dancing was among the offices performed by women at Punic temples, but the first actual descriptions of dancing in the Punic tradition are the *Gaditanae,*[28] dancing girls from the once Carthaginian town of Gades, in Spain.[29] There is not the slightest implication that their dancing was anything but secular, and the circumstances in which they performed at Rome, as well as the descriptions of their dancing, bear a striking resemblance to the entertainments that centuries later were provided for the shahs of Persia, the sultans of Turkey, various Central Asian Khans, North Indian rajahs and the rulers of the Arab countries.

Roman taste in entertainment underwent no particular alteration after the establishment of the Eastern capital, the now transcendent creed of Christianity notwithstanding. It is, however, likely that Ionian and Persian styles of dancing supplanted Spanish and Egyptian, because of propinquity, if for no other reason.

As the Eastern empire gradually lost province after province, Egypt and Syria fell briefly under Persian rule before they were engulfed in the Arab expansion that soon reached from Central Asia to the Pyrenees.

Isalm and the golden age of Arabian ascendancy now replaced the Visigothic kingdoms in Spain and the ever diminishing force of the Eastern Empire in the Middle East and North Africa. The arts flourished, and a tenth century work, *Muruj Al Dhahah Wa Ma' Adin Al Jawar*[30] even takes notice of dance seriously enough to include some didactic passages.

The continuous cultural interaction that had been possible under the Roman Empire was now fostered by Arab, and later, Turkish hegemony. The Turkish encroachments began the final erosion of the much diminished empire that culminated, in 1453, with the Ottoman occupation of Constantinople, leaving the Turks heir to a cultural complex that was to extend from India to Austria, and Central Asia to the Atlantic.

Dance could not remain unaffected by the changes that time brings in matters of language, dress and music; yet the changes appear to have been minimal. The taste of the audience is reflected by the artist, thus the quality of performance in the past ran the gamut then, as now, from that of the ragged street entertainer to what might have been seen in the palaces of princes who maintained their own private troupes of dancers and musicians. These entertainers, organized as companies, or into large guilds, were supported by the wealthy. The *motreb* of Persia and the *nautchnees*[31] of India enjoyed the patronage of the Qajar Dynasty and the maharajahs of North India. Similar corporations (Turkish: *kol*) of dancers and musicians in Turkestan and Ottoman Turkey were supported in the same way.

Voluptuous Dance and Ambivalent Attitudes Toward the Performing Arts

The social position of these entertainers paralleled that of their counterparts in the Arab countries, Europe and the Far East; this means that they constituted a demi-monde. An ambivalent attitude toward the performing artist is neither recent nor confined to the Orient.[32] It is much magnified when the performer is a dancer, for the emotions elicited are more likely to respond to the physically attractive nature of the performance.[33] But the onus of contumely depends upon one consideration above all others: hire.[34] The status of the individual, as in prostitution, is based directly on the question of remuneration. It is sufficiently objectionable to perform in public at all, but to be hired for the purpose adds the final touch of opprobrium.

Few arts flourish after their patronage has been withdrawn, and when dynasties fall or conquerors retreat, the entertainers, no longer prosperous, either disappear as a group, as did the motreb in Persia, or their numbers wither away, as has happened with the *Ghawázee* in Egypt, and more recently the *Ouled Naïl* in Algeria. A third fate awaited the entertainers attached to the courts of North India. The *nautch* guilds survive more or less intact; in New Delhi, for example, the musicians' association consists of about two hundred dancing girls and over five hundred musicians. But the taste of today's patrons—taxi drivers, shopkeepers and the like, is not as refined, alas, as that of the princes and *zamindars* (Urdu: land owner), and thus the direction of the performers is increasingly away from art and toward prostitution.

Whether voluptuous dances are lascivious or not depends less on anything inherent in the dances themselves than on the individual dancer and the tastes of the audience for whom they are performed. It would be as much a mistake to under-rate the sexual attraction of the dancer as it would be to over-rate the sexual element in the dance. In general it is probably safe to say that insofar as a hired entertainer is wanting in skill or beauty, there would be a temptation to offer lewdness as a substitute means of holding an audience. It must be remembered, however, that when performed by professional entertainers, these dances are intentionally seductive in character.

Voluptuous Asiatic dances almost invariably depict amorous episodes; the mood is set by the music and developed in the poetry of the song which is expressed by the dancer. Although the use of mime and the amount of pure dance vary considerably from style to style as well as from artist to artist, it is this histrionic character of the performance as a whole that has caused Oriental dancers to be called actresses.[35]

The subjects of these dances are usually drawn from poems about legendary lovers. It is always explained, however, that dances derived from texts dealing with Krishna and Radha or Krishna and the *gopis* (Sanskrit: milkmaids) for example, are religious. Similar ambiguities are present in much of Persian and Arabic poetry and remain unresolved because:

The use of the word 'love' and other rather mundane if not sensuous terminology to conceal

ṣufi metaphors was too real not to be taken at face value. He who reads the poems of the famous Persian poet Ḥafiẓ finds it difficult to determine from them what is in reference to the divine and what may easily be taken as expressions of worldly love.[36]

In the arts it has never been an easy task to draw a firm line between the sacred and the profane, and Christianity and Judaism,[37] as well as Islam, have had their share of difficulty in this area—the doctrine that God is Love has such a multiplicity of interpretations.

For those who would like to associate voluptuous dancing with ancient Mother Goddesses, it is recommended that an examination of the Great Goddess cult where it still prevails would be rewarding. In Malabar, for example, the ritual dances celebrate the Goddess' invincibility when doing battle with her foes. Voluptuous dancing is most frequently encountered in dances performed at Vaishnavite and other Hindu temples by *devadasis* (Sanskrit: servants of a God). The dances that are incorporated into the worship of the Lord Jagannatha in Orissa provide a good example of this highly-developed art form as presented for the delectation of a god.[38]

Dancing that is intended to please a male deity probably derives from dancing that is pleasing to mortals, and so in 1592, when the Moghul conquerors appointed the Rajah of Khurda superintendent of the Jagannath Temple, he soon began to employ the *maharis* (Oriya: *davadasi*) at the courts of Khurda and Puri. So successful was this venture that he set aside several streets for the various types of temple servants, prominent among whom were the *gotipuas*, boy dancers who dressed and performed in exact imitation of the *maharis*.[39]

Professional dancing in the Middle East, North Africa, and much of the Indian subcontinent is essentially female dancing, whether done by a male or female, and in none of these voluptuous dances does the style alter to accommodate itself to a male performer. Indeed, this should be made amply clear by the fact that female attire is almost invariably worn by the dancing-boys of Persia (*batcha*), Turkey (*koçek*), and the Arab countries (*qawwāl*). It also helps to explain the opprobrium that attaches to a male performer who does dances in public that are not of an essentially marital or gymnastic character, or do not in some way create a masculine presence.

In North Africa, however, the movements of the torso usually associated with voluptuous dancing are so integral a part of the folk culture that a peasant uses them without self-consciousness. But dance performance is inconsistent with the traditional dignity of the upper classes, whose pleasure in the dance remains that of the balletomane.

In Egypt and much of North Africa, where the techniques of folk dance and theatre dance are closely related, a parallel to popular dance in the United States may be observed. In both social and theatrical dancing in this country at the present time, the predominant popular style is one in which pelvic movements play an important part. Almost anyone can enjoy doing the improvisatory social version or watching a choreographed stage presentation; and some will prefer to see it in a nightclub, performed nude or semi-nude, where it can, and indeed does, have erotic overtones.

Nomenclature

Travellers who have written about this dance offer no encapsulated terminology, nor, apparently, was any need felt for a specific name until the "dance of the Orientals," as it was most commonly called, came under the broader scrutiny attending its emergence as an item of export and exploitation. Terms such as *danse lascive* and *danse voluptueux*, descriptive of the total effect of the performance, or, as in the case of the *Ghắwazee, Ouled Naïl* or *Almées*,[40] appelations designating the class of persons who performed the dance, were replaced, by the end of the century, with the anatomically descriptive terms in common use today.

Dances are usually known by whatever happens to be the generic term for dance in the language of the place, hence *raqs* (Arabic: dance), sometimes amplified by the addition of another word, such as *baladī* (Arabic: native) as in *raqs al-baladī. Raqs al-Misr* (Egyptian dance) *raqs al-Araby* (Arabian dance), and *raqs as-Šarqi* (Oriental dance) are the terms most commonly employed to identify what Westerners call "belly dance." It should be remarked that while these Arabic terms are also used in non-Arabophonic reaches of this dance complex, in Turkey, *çifte telli* (Turkish: double-string—a reference to the musical accompaniment) is the usual term. At the present time *göbek* (Turkish: belly) *atmak*, meaning "to belly dance" is standard usage. There are also a few traditional dances of this kind with descriptive names; for example, *Ḱuperlika* (Macedonian from Turkish: kipir—to quiver), a line dance enjoyed by ladies in the hareem.

Where some special dance differs from the main dance tradition in any way, or where some particular attribute, theme or subject matter may figure prominently, an identification is often appended—a good example is the "bee dance."[41] In India, where snake-charming is common, dances imitative of the interplay between snake and musician are not unusual, and the comparison to a dancer being "charmed" by the musician arises quite naturally. But any attempt to associate some sort of herpetic dance with ancient religious rites is fatuous. Too many hootchy-kootchy dancers have already laid claim to whatever fame may accrue from adding a somnolent python to a tired carnival act.

Accessories of various sorts are, of course, used in dancing: a handkerchief or a cane, for example, and the dance will then be identified by those objects. Although the most usual addition to a professional dancer's paraphernalia are small cymbals worn on the thumb and middle finger of each hand,[42] these are so commonly employed that no special appelation needs to be assigned because of their presence.

Improvisation

In the kinds of dances (usually Turkish, or of Turkish provenience) of which *Ḱuperlika* is an example, the steps will be performed in unison and repeated in an orderly fashion, with only the leader being permitted any improvisation. This is an un-

common expression of the dance form, especially in Egypt, where at a party in the home everything is improvised. Whether rising one by one to dance before the assembled guests or, when the dancer is joined (rather than replaced) by another dancer—all is improvised. It is the same when a dancer is hired—an almost mandatory requirement for a wedding celebration. When the old custom of paying the dancer with tips (Arabic: *nuqat*—small bits, coins) is observed, the dancer may improvise for half an hour or more.

Today, however, when the most highly paid entertainers have a carefully choreographed and well-rehearsed routine that is repeated every night, scant opportunity is provided for improvisation. It is really only at the lower levels of the economic structure that the professional dancer still performs with complete spontaneity.

Dance in the Context of Moslem Mores

Much of the nonsense that is bęing circulated about Middle Eastern dancing is rooted in a profound ignorance of the cultures in which it is both the social and theatre dance, the classical and the folk dance. The Moslem world has always sought to cordon off its respectable women from those women who have either been born into or chosen an alternative *rôle* to that of wife. And until the present time that has been the custom, albeit not quite so strictly enforced, in both the Far East and Western world.

Dancing and music are enjoyed as much and as frequently in Moslem countries as elsewhere; oft-cited injunctions to the contrary have always been taken more seriously by Westerners than by Moslems themselves. Though neither Christianity nor Islam have been free of puritanical bigotry, neither have been enslaved by it for long, but in the matter of dancing, however, there is a very important difference in attitude that has less to do with dance itself than with the proprieties in general: a woman who dances before men not of her own family is automatically assumed to be advertising herself for sale, and no man wants his wife, sister or daughter to be thought a whore. This objection does not, of course, obtain in the hareem, where women have always counted dancing one of their chief amusements.

One of the best ways to understand the social position of the dancer in the Arab world today is by seeing as many as possible of the film musicals that have been made in Cairo over the past forty years. The most frequently used story was something like the following: Bey's son meets dancer.[43] Bey discovers son's attachment with disapproval. Bey attempts seduction of dancer, who refuses him. Bey reluctantly accepts the proposition that this particular girl is virtuous *even if she is a dancer.* Bey's son weds dancer with parental approval (and big wedding with lots of songs and dancing). The girl is suspect because of her profession, but like the Irish actress in one of Thackeray's novels, she is the exception who marries the marquis, or, as the case may be, the Bey's son.

Because the dancers themselves almost invariably explain that the sexual element in their dance is minimal, those who have interviewed them for the press often attribute this to an attempt to elevate their art. This may well be so, but women enjoy watching a good professional dancer as much as they enjoy dancing for themselves and for each other. It would be remarkable if any high percentage of them found it erotic. If a dancer were to dress like a boy, a case might possibly be made for such an argument; but even this is an acceptable costume. In the film, "The Circus Girl," Naema Akef wore such a costume in much the same spirit that Marlene Dietrich or Judy Garland have worn top hat and "tails" for their theatrical turns.

Costume as Identification

A great deal has been written about the supposed prudery of the Egyptian government in connection with its requirement that the dancers' torsos be completely covered. The reason becomes quite obvious when it is understood that even Middle Easterners now refer to these girls as "belly dancers" when they dance with uncovered bodies. The intention of the law was to make certain that Egyptian dancers would not be confused with the performers in Parisian-style semi-nude revues, which the government tolerates.

The costume that is worn by the dancer so greatly affects the attitude with which the dance is received that it is probably valuable to mention something of its provenience. It has been remarked that the present-day belly dancer's costume bears little resemblance to the long-sleeved gown and pantaloons which were worn in the nineteenth century. The reason is to be found in the disruption of tradition that followed the British presence in Egypt and hastened the disintegration of Turkish cultural domination.

It should not be forgotten that for several centuries Ottoman rule extended not only over many Arab states and Caucasia, but a great part of Eastern Europe as well. Constantinople had gradually become the arbiter of fashion for much of the Islamic world, just as Paris came to dictate fashions for most of Europe. That is why some nearly identical costumes, music and dances are to be encountered from the Balkans to North India and from Turkestan to Morocco.

It is necessary to look elsewhere for the origins of the voluminous skirts, worn on the hips, and the brief spangled upper-garment half hidden by gauzy veils. These formed the dress of the *nautchnee,* and this was the costume in which the British were accustomed to seeing voluptuous dancing in India. Variations of this costume were also worn by the Persian *motreb,* but were less frequently observed by foreigners. And so, by the time the British protectorate was established in Egypt, this style, which had been adapted by such music hall dancers as Hildegarde Kaulbach, became the fashion with Egyptian dancers.

Oriental Dance in Egypt Today

An excellent way of gaining an insight into the present state of indigenous dance in Egypt would be through the observations of a career belly dancer, but it is unusual to find one with any interest in folk or traditional forms. Aisha Ali, a pro-

fessional dancer who has danced not only in Cairo, but also in North Africa and London, went to Luxor in 1973 and 1974. Licensed to perform with the *Ghawâzee* there, it was important for her to appear indistinguishable from them. To this end she spent considerable time making a costume in the unique and complicated style that is worn at the present time by the *Benat Maazin,*[44] one of the few remaining families of hereditary dancers in Egypt. In addition to learning their vigorous style of dancing, Miss Ali also became acquainted with several conventions that have long since passed from the dance as it is performed in the large cities.

Among these unusual passages in the dance was one that has often been mentioned by travellers, not only in Egypt, but even as far as Uzbekistan. At a certain point in the dance between two performers of the same sex, one kisses the other; sometimes, as in a solo performance by a *batcha,* a member of the audience will participate in this portion of the dance. To find this remnant of the actresses' art still included in each performance of the *pas de deux* of the *Ghawâzee* at Luxor and Thebes today is, to the dance historiographer, a rewarding discovery.[45]

Learning to dance in the traditional learning situation has become less and less common, until at the present time it can hardly be said to continue outside the remaining *Ghawâzee* families. Little girls in the hereditary dancing families grow up watching and imitating their elder sisters, of course, but their actual instruction is usually in the hands of female members of the family who no longer perform publicly. As with Gypsies, to whom the *Ghawâzee* have often been compared, music and dance are not compartmentalized, but constitute a way of life.

Since their removal from Cairo well over a century ago, the families of hereditary dancers have remained somewhat isolated, and the professional dancers of the metropolis are now drawn from other sources. With the emergence of the film industry in the 1930's, the cinema theatre has replaced the environment of the professional family as a learning situation. Any girl who loved dancing and really wanted to learn could go to the films with her family and see her favourite dancers over and over. Such really fine dancers as Tahia Carioca set standards for more than a generation of Egyptian girls who would not, in the ordinary course of events, have been permitted to see performers of any greater skill than those hired for such weddings as they might have the opportunity to attend.

This would seem to make dancing teachers in Cairo redundant, but such is not, of course, the case. Famous dancers, when they have decided not to perform publicly anymore, will sometimes teach qualified pupils. Such teaching emphasizes refinements of interpretation and not technique, because it is presumed that any Egyptian girl who wished to become a dancer would have been learning and practicing since childhood. In fact, many dancers are entirely self-taught, like Nagwa Fuad, considered by some to be the finest dancer in Egypt.

Miss Ali received some coaching from the famous Samia Gamal, but would not have been accepted had she not already been a sufficiently accomplished dancer. Because of Miss Ali's very real interest in folk and traditional music and dance, friends introduced her to Mahmoud Reda, director of the Reda folkloric troupe. Attending rehearsals, she was impressed with Reda's wisdom in using a training method emphasizing technique and directed toward achieving the uniformity of execution necessary for a modern performing dance company.

There are also teachers like Ibrahim Akef and others, who teach choreographed routines to girls who come to the city in the hope of finding gainful employment as dancers.

For American women who are excited by the fad for imitating this kind of dancing, it should help to be aware that the best approach is through technical training not overburdened with exotic trappings. The movement vocabulary can be transmitted by sufficiently competent instructors in a standard Western dance studio—in other words, a learning situation equivalent to that provided for the Reda troupe.

Recognition that ethnic dance is incomplete when removed from its contextual setting has led to attempted transplantations of what is imagined to be the native ambiance of the belly dance. Such attempts tend to perpetuate stereotypes or promote a specious ethnic background. That one of the chief attractions of the fad may lie in the aura of exoticism itself is a possibility that cannot be overlooked. However, if performing in this dance style is enjoyed in the same way that social dancing is enjoyed—with the added pleasure of pretty costumes—it will approach what would be acceptable in an Egyptian cabaret, or welcomed at an Egyptian family party.

In Conclusion

The ambivalent attitudes that have afflicted this dance throughout much of its long history have been chiefly the result of a charge that its attractions appeal to the least elevated of emotions. The assumption that this would preclude a serious critique of its artistic merits is no longer tenable, given the climate of the performing arts today. This is encouraging to those who would like to see this dance evaluated by standards similar to those applied to such dances as *flamenco* and *kathak.*

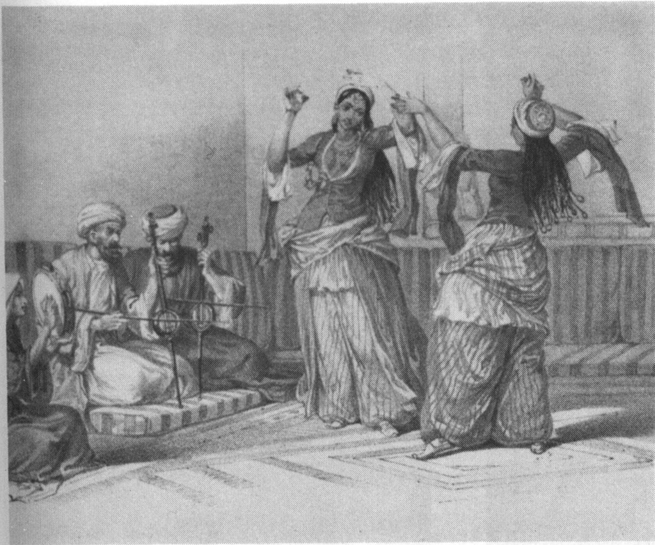
At a time when Egypt's President has presented Egyptian dancing to entertain an American Head of State, it should be apparent that there is no further need to apologize for this dance. The pretence that it is an ancient fecundity ritual (or anything else) is unnecessary—its *raison d'etre* is the pleasure of dance.

The Reda Troupe in Cairo. Photograph: courtesy Mahmoud Reda.

Present-day Ghawazee—the Benat Maazin dancing on a boat between Luxor and Thebes. Photograph: Ali-Rasul.

Ouled Naïl dancers at Bou Saada in Algeria, 1973. Photograph: Ali-Rasul.

Ouled Naïl dancer and musicians of the 19th century (detail from a painting).



The Ghawazees, or Dancing-Girls of Cairo. (Plate 249)
The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt and Nubia after lithographs by Louis Hagne from drawings by David Roberts.
London: Day and Son, 1855.

Iranian Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi claps the rhythm as Leona Wood performs the sword dance in a traditional costume. The part of the dance shown here is one in which the dancer is often described as immobile—the movements almost entirely expressed by the abdominal muscles. These movements are neither impeded, nor their effectiveness diminished, by the tight, coat-like *yelek.*

Zeina and Aziza, the best-known exponents of traditional dance in Tunisia at the present time. The practiced ease with which the water-jar is balanced (like the sword in the accompanying photograph) expresses pride in a traditional skill.
Photograph: Ali-Rasul.

La Dance du Ventre—after a drawing by Aubrey Beardsley for *Salome Drame en Un Acte,* by Oscar Wilde. Paris and London: Carl Fisher, 1893. Center: Mata Hari (from a photograph). Right: Persian Motreb (1830-40)—after a painting of the Qajar period.

FOOTNOTES

1. Because dance terminology and nomenclature tend to retain their French forms upon entering the English language, there seems no valid reason to make *danse du ventre* an exception to the general practice. The translated form has become so commonly used, however, that it is probably best to employ both terms interchangeably. "Oriental dance" would be the preferred term if its inherent ambiguity did not limit its usefulness.
2. Robert R. Sokal, "Numerical Taxonomy, *Scientific American* Vol. CCXV, Number 6 (December, 1966), pp. 106-116.
3. *Motreb* (Persian) from *mutrib* (Arabic): a term used for singers or musicians, and, especially in Persia, dancers.
4. The Ouled Naïl are a tribe resident in the area of Djebel Naïl, in the high plateau region of Algeria. Women of this group have traditionally earned their doweries by dancing and prostitution.
5. This is the name by which the public dancers of Morocco are known. These are the performers who entertain in tents set up as small theatres in the vicinity of saints' shrines at the time of pilgrimage festivals. Tent theatres are commonly used throughout the Middle East.
6. Country women in North Africa continue to wear the *palla,* called *melia* in Tunisia and *lizar* in Morocco. It is fastened on the shoulders by a pair of *fibulae* that are characteristically joined together by ornamental chains that hang over the breast. Imported fabrics of sheer nylon patterned with lurex threads is now *de rigueur* for the *melia* worn by dancers. The *shikhet* wear narrow *caftans* of rich materials, one over the other, and cinctured very low.
7. The costume that functions today as an indicator of the belly dancer was already developed in its essential details at the beginning of the present century. It consisted of a long, full skirt worn several inches below the navel; a deeply fringed girdle of rich material tied low in front, a jewelled brassiere with chains of pendants hanging to the waist; ornate necklace, earrings, armlets and bracelets, as well as ornaments worn on the head from which descended a voluminous veil.
8. The quotation and a reproduction of the painting are to be found in Seton Lloyd, *The Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961) pp. 160-161.
9. The tales known as the "Thousand Nights and a Night" were familiar in various translations, but most of these have been supplanted (at least in English) by the Richard Burton Translation.
10. *Seraglio:* Italian spelling for *serai* (Turkish: palace). The *harim* (Arabic) which means forbidden place, is that part of a Moslem home reserved for the exclusive use of the family, and is meant to insure safety and privacy. The *serai harim* (modern Turkish spelling) of the Ottoman sultans was a unique establishment in many ways; the *kafes* (Turkish: cage) that confined the sons of the sultan was but one of many oddities that would be considered grotesque by most Moslems.
11. During the course of research for *The Glorious Enterprise* (Watkins Glen, New York: American Life Foundation, 1973), John Maass found many interesting facts about the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 beyond the requirements of his book.
12. Sol Bloom, *The Autobiography of Sol Bloom* (New York: Putnam's, 1948).
13. *Bayadère* is a widely used term for Oriental dancers in general, and is derived from the first Portuguese descriptions of dancing girls in India.
14. Maud Allan was a well-known dancer who commissioned the ballet, "Khamma" from Claude Debussy, although she was never to perform it.

    Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1940).

15. Oscar Wilde, *Salome/Drame en Un Acte* (Paris and London: Carl Fischer, 1893).

16. William Como, Richard Philp, and Herbert Migdoll, "Ruth St. Denis/A Dance Magazine Portfolio" *Dance Magazine* Vol. L, Number 2 (February, 1976), p. 62.

17. The sumptuous costumes and settings designed by Leon Bakst for this ballet helped to create the special 20th century stereotype which was perpetuated not only in revivals of this production, but which, in a less elevated style, has been embalmed in the often preposterous incongruities for which cinematic productions with Biblical or Arabesque themes are notorious.

18. Alexandre Pushkin's poem is the source of the libretto by Vladimir Bielsky for Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, "Le Coq d'Or." Shamahka itself is a town in Soviet Azerbaidjan approximately 65 miles west of Baku.

19. Armen Ohanian, *The Dancer of Shamahka,* trans. Rose Wilder Lane (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1923).

20. Anatole France extols the lady's charms, providing a piquant reminder of Gustave Flaubert's infatuation with an Egyptian dancer a half-century earlier.

    Francis Steegmuller, *Selected Letters of Gustave Flaubert* (New York: Farrar Strauss and Young, 1953).

21. Ohanian, *op. cit.,* p. 261.

22. Ohanian, *loc. cit.*

23. The Ghawázee are the celebrated hereditary dancing girls of Egypt. A note on orthography is appended here to explain certain inconsistencies. 19th century British usage has been retained in words where that form is the one in which they will be most frequently encountered.

24. Troy and Margaret Kinney, *The Dance* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1924) pp. 212-213.

25. Kinneys, *op. cit.,* p. 210.

26. Theodore Elfleida Petrides, *Folk Dances of the Greeks* (New York: Exposition Press, 1961) pp. 59-60.

27. "Galen says, in his book of rules for health, that all things have a natural desire for movement and that everyone should practice gentle and moderate exercise, such as the dances invented by the Ionians for this purpose. These contribute greatly to health, even to that of young girls, who, leading sedentary lives . . . are subject to a variety of ill-humours which have need to be dispelled by some temperate exercise."

    Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography,* trans. Mary Stewart Evans (New York: Dover Publications, 1967) p. 18.

    At the present time many Y.W.C.A.s and Y.W.H.A.s offer belly dance classes to women who hope to obtain a trim waist in a pleasant manner. The exercise is valuable, but any implied relationship between imagined rituals and this healthful activity is gratuitous.

    The *rectus abdominis* is a versatile muscle, capable of surprisingly virtuosic effects, one of which, an alternating series of tensions and releases, has been largely responsible for the focus of attention on a single aspect of Oriental dance. This muscular isolation also makes possible the side-to-side rippling effect accomplished through a different series of tensions and releases called *nauli,* which forms part of the ascetic discipline in *Hatha Yoga.*

    Caution must be used in grouping dance movements with either athletic feats or therapeutic exercises. A different sort of caution is extended to young ladies who enjoy learning "Ionian" movements (from Ionian Anatolia, not the Ionian Isles). Horace warns that they may thus be led to think about impure love.

    Motus Doceri Gaudet Iónicos
    Matura Virgo et Singitur Artibus
    Iam Nunc et Incestos Amores
    De Tenero Meditatur Ungui

    Horace, *Carminum Libri* IV, Ode 6 (London: T. E. Page Edition, MacMillan and Company, 1964) lines 21-24.

28. Nec de Gadibus improbis puellae
    Vibrabunt sine fine prurientes
    Lascivos docili tremor lumbos.
    Sed, quod non grave sit, nec inficetum,
    Parvi tibia condyli sonabit.

    Martial, Epigrams Book V, Epigram LXXIX

29. "From the similarity of the Spanish fandango to the dances of the *Ghawázee,* we might infer that it was introduced into Spain by the Arab conquerors of that country, were we not informed that the Gaditanae, or females of Gades (now called Cadiz), were famous for such performances in the time of the early Roman emperors."

    Edward Williams Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons ltd. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954).

30. 'Ali Ibn Hussin al-Mas'udi, *Les Prairies d'Or* (Arabic text included) Trans. C. Barbier de Maynard (Paris: Sociéte Asiatique, 1874).

31. Dancing girl (Hindi). The scope of the present article does not permit a description of the dancing of the *nautchnees,* nor of the British attitudes toward it, but the following quotations from the anthology cited below may serve to augment the text.

    "All the nations of the East have, from the remotest ages, delighted in this species of exhibition, which from them passed into Greece and Rome . . ." "The Bayadères or Nautch-girls of Hindostan know no other kind of dance . . ."

    James Augustus St. John, *Egypt and Nubia Their Scenery and their People. Being Incidents of History and Travel, from the Best and most Recent Authorities including J. L. Burckhardt and Lord Lindsay.* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845)

32. Tacitus, *The Annals of Tacitus,* Book XIV, trans. Donald R. Dudley (New York and Toronto: The New American Library; London: The New English Library, ltd., 196) p. 311.

    The following quotations are in reference to theatrical productions in which Nero had persuaded persons of the equestrian rank to appear, and in which dancers had performed in purely secular manner.

    ". . . [in two hundred years] no single Roman of good birth had ever degraded himself by professional acting. . . although . . . the ballet dancers were allowed to return to the stage, they were debarred from the sacred performances."

33. "Are you not of the opinion that this is the dancer's own language, expressed by his feet and in a convincing manner? Does he not plead tacitly with his mistress, who marks the seemliness and grace of his dancing, 'Love me. Desire me'? And, when miming is added, she has the power to stir his emotions, now to anger, now to pity and commiseration, now to hate, now to love. Even as we read of the daughter of Herodias, who obtained her wish from Herod Antipas by dancing before him at the magnificent banquet he offered to the princes of his realm on his birthday."

    Arbeau, *op. cit.,* p. 16.

34. "It is true that those who for gain admit all indiscriminately to witness their plays and farces are counted infamous. But the law has never included . . . [those who perform] without reward, for their own pleasure, or to entertain kings, princes and noblemen, the inhabitants of a town or some special company; either by playing tragedies, comedies or pastorals without masks, or by dancing to music, with beautiful costumes and settings to lend grace and gaiety."

    Arabeau, *op. cit.,* p. 17.

35. "Among the most interesting and remarkable spectacles in the modern capital of Egypt, are, or were lately, at least, the performance of the *Ghawázee,* of which many travellers made mention, without, however, bestowing on the accomplished actresses all the praises they appear to deserve."

    St. John, *op. cit.,* Chapter XXIII, line 1.

    Some of the writers included in the above anthology and elsewhere have indulged in humourous asides not always apprehended as such by serious-minded readers, thereby lending apparent credence to some of the spurious notions mentioned in the present article.

36. Caesar E. Farah, *Islam Beliefs and Observances* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, inc., 1968) p. 217.

37. Song of Songs.

38. Harekrushna Mahtab, "The Cult of Jagannatha," *Marg* Vol. XIII Number 2, Bombay (March 1960).

39. Mohan Khokar, "Note on Maharis and Gotipuas," *Marg* Vol. XIII Number 2, Bombay (March, 1960).

40. *'ālima:* a female singer of refined music (Arabic). "There are also many [singers of an inferior class, who sometimes dance in the hareem: hence, travellers have often misapplied the nname of 'almĕ,' meaning "al'meh,' to the common dancing girls . . . or they may have done so because these girls themselves occasionally assume this appelation . . ."

    Lane, *op. cit.,* p. 387.

41. *Al Naḩl:* the "danse de l'abeille" described by Ollivier Chardin in Persia, and mentioned by other travellers in Arab countries (Burton *et al.).*

42. These are called variously *crotales, zil* (Turkish), *saghat* (colloquial Egyptian), to cite but a few of the names. There are also other accompanying instruments played by the dancer, chief among which are *çalpare* or *chalpareh* (modern Turkish spelling and transliteration of a Persian word). These are little blocks or sticks of hard wood, a pair held in each hand, which are struck together with great dexterity. They appear in representations of dancers from quite an early date: a second century tomb near Ariccia shows them in the hands of dancers. A photograph of this relief appears in:

    Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience.* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1970) p. 36.

43. *Bey* is a Turkish title used in Egypt until 1952.

44. The Maazin girls; specifically, Touha Yusef and her sisters.

45. It should be of special interest to those with a sociological interest in this dance to note that even as recently as 1973 there were still a few elderly *gawwāls* performing in the old tradition.

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