# THE RELIABILITY OF ORAL TRANSMISSION: THE CASE OF SAMARITAN MUSIC

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In the absence of theoretical formulation concerning the processes of oral transmission of musical culture, the selection of informants in ethnomusicological research is necessarily haphazard. Yet, without a clear idea of who your informants are it is difficult to elaborate adequate theories. In Vansina's words, "the value of oral traditions as historical evidence is a problem that has not been solved, because the special nature of oral traditions as a source of information about the past has not been provided."[1] Of course, no single theory can be expected to apply to all societies, since the "chain of testimonies" is a function of the network of social communication, and this appears—at least so far—to vary from culture to culture[2]. Thus the starting point for the study of an oral musical tradition must be an examination of the potential network of cultural transmission within a particular society.

## Social Structure and Musical Continuity: Methodological Considerations

From the literature, however, one senses a bias toward makeshift "theories" which the fieldworker applies without discrimination. Some researchers seem to believe that age and authenticity are correlated and that one may be satisfied, therefore, with even a single aged informant. Implicit in this conception is the

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[1] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition; a Study in Historical Methodology*, translated by H. M. Wright Chicago, (1965), p. 42.

[2] Varying attempts have been made to classify the kinds of social relationships between cultures in contact which lead to varying patterns of transmission. This type of undertaking sometimes leads to the conclusion that apparently similar patterns of behavior may have resulted from disparate influences. See, for example, E. H. Spicer, "Spanish-Indian Acculturation in the Southwest," *American Anthropologist*, 56 (1954): 663–678. Another set of theorists have attempted to show that ostensibly different influence processes have underlying features in common. An example is P. A. Sorokin, "Genesis, Multiplication, Mobility and Diffusion of Sociocultural Phenomena in Space," reprinted in his *Social and Cultural Mobility* (New York, 1959).

assumption that tradition changes at an accelerating pace, and that today's performers are further removed from yesterday's than yesterday's are from those of the day before[3]. Even if this were true, and manifestly it is not always so, the researcher who wants to "observe" and not simply "preserve" would do better to study as many generations as he can find in order to identify the unchanging and the changing elements, and the dynamics of change. Indeed, the vectors of change may serve as guides to reconstruction, just as simple comparisons across generation may reveal an unchanging core. If the purpose is to arrive at a definitive statement of what the tradition "is" (or "was"), informants must be studied in terms of their interrelationships with each other.

In this connection, Vansina suggests that the researcher try to discover the institutions, if such exist, for the transmission of a tradition. He also suggests that authenticity is more likely under circumstances where the per-performer is subject to customs of "sanctioning and approval"—or, in other words, to institutions in which mechanisms of control are embedded. Thus, a performer whose errors of rendition are punishable by the gods or by the open criticism and correction of the congregation is primed to correct a mistake in performance, and the chances for authentic rendition are improved[4].

This calls to mind a second type of bias in which a random selection of informants is considered a desirable goal towards which to strive. Of course, where there are clearly designated carriers of tradition, most researchers interested in the problem of authenticity would give them special attention. However, even where such formal roles do not exist, a random sample will not do if one is seeking authenticity. It is not the modal or average performance that one requires, but rather, that performance which is the best link in the traditional chain. A random sample may help to *identify* such an informant in the sense that a community may have a clear idea whose performance is considered most faithful to the cultural norm (although, even here, knowledge may be unequally distributed). Such techniques for locating performers may, of course, also lead to the designation of a non-homogeneous group of performers, whose differences may permit the extrapolation of the common core, and the clarification of legitimate variations.

[3] Nettl makes this point about "preservers", but we are arguing here that it is also true of "observers." He says: "The basic notion of a "collector" is to find music previously not found and to hold on to it. His attitude implies the existence, in the world, of a limited corpus of tribes and communities, or, more frequently, of songs and pieces, and his job is to collect as many of them as possible. He is interested in organizing his work so that it will contain as large a proportion of the limited corpus as possible and he feels strongly the preservative role of the field worker. He is most interested in older material, and he realizes that many musical items will either disappear or change greatly almost before his eyes if he does not make recordings of them." Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology* (New York, 1964), p. 86.

[4] See Vansina, *op. cit.*, Chapter II and Appendix.

Another theoretical bias which is often uncritically applied is the idea that the relative isolation of a society guarantees traditional continuity. But this is an a-historical view of culture. Moreover, it is possible to imagine interacting groups which wilfully slow the pace of change to less than that of some isolated groups, in cases where cultural symbols constitute important lines of demarcation.

Similarly, parts of groups which "move away" are thought to be more authentic carriers of tradition than those who remain at home and continue to evolve in a natural manner[5]. But here, too, the degree to which a migrant group freezes its culture is surely dependent on its relationships with other groups and its attitude to the mother society. Thus, the migrant group may be oriented to rapid assimilation in its new environment, and if the environment is conducive, change will be very rapid. Or the environment may beckon, but the group may express its anxiety or reluctance over change, not by freezing its old ways but, rather, by exaggerating (and thus changing) them in a "manneristic" way[6]. Thus, neither isolation or migration are, in themselves, sufficient conditions for the preservation of "authentic" culture. Indeed, these hypotheses give rise to the suggestion that the combination of migration and renewed isolation may constitute the best condition for cultural preservation. But even this combination of factors cannot be considered apart from the question of intergroup relation. While knowledge of intragroup relations is obviously essential to the understanding of the processes of oral transmission, it is clearly no less important to take intergroup relations into account. The cross-tabulation of even these few factors—isolation, migration and favorability of intergroup attitudes—gives rise to a large number of behavioral possibilities. Consider the set of ten social circumstances outlined below:

[5] This theory led Cecil Sharp, for instance, in his investigation of English folk song to the mountain regions of North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia. The inhabitants, of British descent, were living there in self-contained communities, continuing the tradition of their forefathers brought from the British Isles, including the traditional songs. See Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, ed. Maud Karpeles London, 1932 (2nd. impression 1952), 2 vols.

[6] Mannerism and musical change was discussed by the present author in a study of musical acculturation carried out among Aleppo Jews in Israel. It was found that the presumably more socially acculturated members of the Aleppo community were asserting their loyalty to (their perception of) the traditional music of the group. It was the "manneristic" and exaggerated stereotyping of traditional patterns in the singing of the younger people that suggested that something was "wrong". This behavior symbolized the resolution of group members to withstand external pressure while, in a dialectic sense, foreshadowing the disintegration of the traditional style. See Ruth Katz, "The Singing of Baqqashôt by Aleppo Jews; A Study in Musical Acculturation", *Acta Musicologica*, 40 (1968): 65–85.

| Isolated Group | | | Interacting Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Out-group Desires Acceptance of Ins | Out-group Disfavors Isolated Group |
| Stays at Home | 1 | Ins Desire Acceptance By Outs | 3 | 7 |
| | | Ins Do Not Desire Acceptance By Outs | 4 | 8 |
| Migrates | 2 | Ins Desire Acceptance By Outs | 5 | 9 |
| | | Ins Do Not Desire Acceptance By Outs | 6 | 10 |

In the case of isolated groups, we have already proposed the hypothesis that migration plus isolation constitutes a more conservative situation than isolation alone, and thus that persons in the situation described by cell 2 should be more "authentic" than those in cell 1. This seems likely at least as long as the migrants look to home as their culture reference. But what of the interacting groups—those where "in" and "out" groups have regular contact? Here, we have suggested that the effect on continuity and change arises out of the attitudes of the groups toward each other. Thus, the effect of "mannerism" might be most expected in cell 6, where a migrant group finds itself well-received but is reluctant to exchange its tradition for that of the out-group. Most change might be expected in cell 5 where a migrant group responds affirmatively to the accepting attitudes of its hosts[7]. Least change is suggested in cell 10 by virtue of the combination of mutually antagonistic attitudes in a situation of migration. By contrast, cell 8 should generate less self-consciousness, and more "natural" continuity, and cell 1 should be even less self-conscious. These ideas are only illustrative, of course; moreover, the situations portrayed are quite simple despite their seeming complexity.

[7] Influence may move in the opposite direction, too; a host group may come to accept the ways of its "guests". The diffusion of Christianity is a pertinent example.

## The Samaritan Community

The tiny Samaritan community lends itself to analysis in these terms. The student of oral tradition will find in the Samaritans a group which has preserved itself and its distinctive traditions for over 2000 years. Claiming descent from the Kingdom of Israel, they are essentially a fundamentalist sect living according to the laws of the Pentateuch but not according to the later prophetic and rabbinic writings which have shaped normative Judaism[8]. Now numbering only about four hundred people, they are divided almost equally between the bibilical city of Sichem, now called Nablus, their religious and political capital, and a neighborhood in the Israeli city of Holon, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

The group in Nablus claims continuous residence since the time of Solomon until today, when the city was taken by Israel during the Six-Day War. The holy place of the Samaritan community is the biblical Mount Gerizim, just outside of Nablus, where the annual Passover animal sacrifices continue to be carried out. While the group has lived peacefully among its Arab neighbors, who hold it in a kind of mystical awe, Judaism is its closest kin. Israelis, in turn, have taken a special interest in the group.

A handful of Samaritans left Nablus to live in other places in Palestine during the days of the British Mandate. The establishment of Israel in 1948 brought about a large migration from Nablus which ultimately resulted in the creation of the Holon centre in 1955, under the patronage of the late President Ben-Zvi. Although the two communities were on opposite sides of the Israel-Jordan border, contact between them was maintained, particularly during their annual reunions on Passover. After the 1967 war, the two groups resumed their very close relationship.

The Samaritans have long attracted the attention of researchers in various disciplines, from comparative religion to physical anthropology. Their roots in the ancient past, the tenacious upholding of their tradition, and their inbreeding, explain their multi-faceted appeal.

From the point of view of oral tradition in general, and musical tradition in particular, the interest of the Samaritans is obvious. The chain of unbroken continuity is a very long one, and holds the promise of enabling the unraveling of ancient sources as well as the deciphering of a process of successful oral transmission.

The division of the community into two parts provides added interest.

[8] See M. Gaster, *The Samaritans, their History, Doctrines and Literature*, London, 1925; Norman Bentwich, "Judaism in Israel", *Religion in the Middle East*, ed. A. J. Arberry, Cambridge, 1969, p. 59–118; John MacDonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, Philadelphia, 1964.

Following the lines described above, it is possible to identify a migrant group which took up residence in a largely accepting environment, without, however, wishing to forego its separatist commitment. Moreover, the group which left Nablus consisted only of members of the Israelite lineage. Not even one of the Priestly lineage (*kohanîm*) accompanied them, thus constraining the new community to supply ritual leadership from within itself. (The *kohanim*, it appears, were reluctant to make the move both for religious reasons—the attachment to Mount Gerizim—and because their economic situation was enhanced by the amulets which they supplied to their Arab neighbors.) The mechanism of oral transmission, therefore, might be expected to have undergone a crisis, or at least a change, in this anomalous situation.

The relationship between these dimensions of social structure and the living musical tradition is the subject of this study. Although the paper includes substantive observations on some of the central elements of the music, its primary concern is with the dynamics of continuity and change. While the musical materials of the Samaritans have been quite extensively collected, beginning with the work of A. Z. Idelsohn[9] and continuing in the collections now housed at the Jewish National and University Library[10], no systematic analysis yet exists on which to base a composite picture of the music of the Samaritans[11]. It is hoped that the present study will provide those who undertake this task with some useful leads with respect both to musical substance and to methods of social and musical analysis.

## The Social Setting of Musical Transmission

The synagogue is the main institution of Samaritan life. On the Sabbath and holidays, both in Nablus and Holon, all members of the community, virtually without exception, congregate for festive prayer.

Officiating at the synagogue service is a cantor, or *ḥazzan*. He is chosen

[9] A. Z. Idelsohn, *Tôledôt han-negînah ha'ivrît*, Tel-Aviv, 1924.

[10] The National Sound Archives at the Jewish National and University Library houses extensive collections of Samaritan music recorded by J. Spector and A. Herzog.

[11] Some ideas about vocal polyphony among the Samaritans have been advanced by Edith Gerson-Kiwi in her article, "Vocal Folk-Polyphonies of the Western Orient in Jewish Tradition", *Yuval*, [1] (1968): 169–193. Other studies on Samaritan music comprise the following: Menashe Ravina, *Organum and the Samaritans*, Tel Aviv, 1963; Shlomo Hofman, "The four differentiae in the Samaritan reading of the Law" [in Hebrew], *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies [1965]*, *Papers*, II (Jerusalem, 1968): 385–394 (Hebrew section; abstract: 208–209, English section); Johanna Spector, "Written tradition and contemporary practice in the Biblical cantillation of the Samaritans", *ibid.*: 153–156 (English section; abstract: 478, Hebrew section); S. Hofman, "The reading of Marka's poems by the Samaritans on the Sabbath" [in Hebrew], *Yuval* [1], (1968): 36–51 (Hebrew section; abstract: 251–252, English section).

in Nablus from among the *kohanîm* according to his competence in the musical tradition; indeed, there is no Samaritan music other than that associated with religion. The *ḥazzan* also has the task of giving instruction in the prayers and their cantillation to the young, *kohanîm* and Israelites alike. Apart from this instruction, the children attend the regular city schools. Religious-legal authority is vested in the High-Priest, *hak-kohen hag-gadôl.*

The situation in Holon, as has already been noted, was different until the reunion of the two communities after the Six-Day War. Since there were no *kohanîm* in Holon, the role of the *ḥazzan* was assumed by one of the Israelites who was chosen by the group for his qualifications, and whose appointment was endorsed by the community in Nablus. He officiated during the entire twelve-year period following the establishment of the Holon community, but had to withdraw when the Nablus community could freely supply the services of a qualified *kohen* who was willing to make the move. Another Israelite member of the Holon community was considered as second to the officiating *ḥazzan* in the case of absence or in the event of his death.

The two communities present an interesting problem from the point of view of the study of musical transmission. As far as Nablus is concerned, there do not appear to be special institutions for the instruction and initiation of *kohanîm*, and one wonders, therefore, whether knowledge of the tradition and ability to perform the traditional musical offices is distributed equally among all, and concentrated among the specially talented whoever they may be, or whether the *kohanîm* somehow actually know more and perform better. There is reason to expect the latter to be the case even in the absence of specialized training; this hypothesis derives from the general notion that people live up to the role-expectations ascribed to them even when these expectations are not explicitly stated[12]. Therefore, one may advance the hypothesis that the *kohanîm* in Nablus will be "more knowledgeable".

But what of Holon? If the *kohanîm* in Nablus are, indeed, a group apart, then we shall expect that the two *ḥazzanîm* of Holon, in the order of their seniority, must have been chosen on the basis of their fidelity to the musical style of Nablus. In considering the rest of the community of Holon, however, we have no reason to expect that any individual or group will be more knowledgable than any other since all are Israelites, and the succession—or so it seemed until 1967—was open to all equally. Only individual talent and motivation should make a difference in Holon. Moreover, in comparing the two communities one must bear in mind that despite the overall strength of commitment the members of the Holon community voluntarily left Mount

[12] This is one of the axioms of social psychology. Studies of the effect of naming and labelling, role assignment and socialization processes all build on it.

Gerizim and settled in an environment with which they apparently feel greater affinity.

Ideally, the way to examine these hypotheses would be to compare (1) the *kohanîm* and the Israelites in Nablus, (2) the *kohanîm* in Nablus and the officiating *ḥazzanîm* in Holon, and (3) the Israelites in Nablus with those in Holon. While important in themselves, these comparisons will not give an answer to the question who is right, historically speaking. We have no measure of authenticity apart from the contemporary testimony of the people themselves. Ideally, one would want to make still another set of comparisons between (4) an historically authenticated rendition of Samaritan song, if such existed, and all of the above groups. Some other solution to the problem of historicity must be invoked.

A "reputational method" was used in the selection of informants. In essence, this method involves asking people to name others who are known to possess certain kinds of attributes. In the present instance, the starting point was with the best-known informant in the Samaritan community, a man who has assisted scholars in a variety of different humanistic disciplines including those who have studied Samaritan music. He himself was the chief Israelite *ḥazzan* of the Holon community up to 1967. Asked to name all Samaritans "who know Samaritan music", he provided an initial list of people some of whom live in Holon and others in Nablus. As these persons were interviewed and recorded, they were asked to provide similar lists. In addition, other people in both towns, who were not on these lists, were asked the same question. Moreover, respondents were asked to listen in private to each other's recordings and to grade each singer according to "the degree of his faithfulness to the Samaritan tradition."

There is almost perfect consensus on the question of "who knows Samaritan music"; fourteen people, seven in Holon and seven in Nablus, were thus identified and recorded. This represents about 10 percent of the adult males. These include 5 *kohanîm* and 5 additional Israelites in Holon[13]. The knowledgeable Israelites of Nablus are both in their 70s; two of the *kohanîm* are between 50 and 60 years old and three in their 40s. In Holon, one man is over 50, two are in their late 40s, two are in their 30s and two in their 20s.

Nine songs were chosen from the traditional Samaritan repertoire, three each in the styles of *qal* (light), *beynônî* (medium) and *kaved* (heavy), roughly corresponding to syllabic, neumatic and melismatic styles. Each Nablus

[13] An additional person, an Israelite from Nablus, was also recorded but he was unable to render some of the songs and was therefore dropped from the analysis. Retrospectively, it seems that he was proposed as an informant primarily because he was in the vicinity when the recordings were being made. After the study was completed, I heard, but only from my chief informant, of another Israelite in Nablus who perhaps ought to have been included.

respondent was asked to sing some Arabic songs of his choice, while the Holonites were asked to sing some Israeli songs. All the material was transcribed and also run through the melograph.

There was almost equally high consensus among the respondents on the ratings of "faithfulness to tradition." The *kohanîm* of Nablus and the two former *ḥazzanîm* of Holon were considered by all to be closest to the tradition, although there is a rank order which rather clearly differentiates among these seven people. All respondents were equally agreed that the five younger Israelites in Holon were far less faithful to the musical tradition; they say the same thing about themselves.

## The Musical Analysis

In the absence of an authentic historical record of Samaritan music in terms of which to examine the contemporary expression of the tradition, we chose, in the first instance, to treat all 14 performances as equal. For the purpose of comparing them, the most salient features of Samaritan music were focused upon. These include (1) troping, textual and musical, (2) the nature of the vibrato, (3) the tonal structure and (4) the nature of the transitions from certain notes to others.

### 1. *Troping: Musical and Textual*

A. Musical Troping

Samaritan music is troped, both textually and musically. As noted earlier, songs were recorded in three musical styles; of these, the heavy (*qaved*), or melismatic style, is the one which best illustrates the troping procedure. The following song "*kal tab*" will be used as an example: originally sung on the third Sabbath of each month, after the reading of the portion from the Pentateuch, it is a favorite of the community and is sung nowadays when there is a celebration such as a marriage or a circumcision, or on other happy occasions. The Samaritans themselves classify the song as heavy, and remark on the extensive *qifufîm*, or "bendings" which it contains. It is to these "bendings" that we apply the term tropes, the justification for which will become apparent below.

Because of the impossibility of presenting within the scope of this paper all of the songs that were recorded by the fourteen singers, or even the whole of one song, we present here as Example I the first two lines of "*kal tab*". Only two lines are given because the second line and the lines following it are governed by the same laws. The renditions of the two lines by the informants are given one below the other. The group of singers is divided into four: the

## Example I

A 1 2

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

B

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

C

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

D

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– · då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa wanu wa wa nu wa

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu

Ka– li ṭå– bi a– ḷi– då– ra– yyå | wa nu wa nu a wa nu



(ctd.)

3 4

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊~ wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | r̊a- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa | rä̊- nu

bä̊- wa nu wa nu nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa

bä̊- wa nu wa nu wa nu wa | rä̊- wa nu wa nu wa



(ctd.)

5 "terminatio" 6 "initium"

ū– u nu u u tå nu a

ū– u nu u u u tå a nu a

ū– u nu u u tå nu a

ū– u nu u u tå a nu a ȧ

ū– u nu u tå nu a a

ū– u nu u tå a nu a a

ū– u nu u tå nu a

ū– u nu u u tå nu a

ū– u nu u u tå nu a

ū– u nu u u u tå a nu a

ū u tå a a a nu a

ū tå a a a nu a

ū– u nu u u tå a a nu a a

ū u u tå a a a nu a a a



(ctd.)

A 1 2

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå ri rå bi

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i qå a ri ra- bi

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå ri ra- bi

Ka- wa nu a li ī- wi nu i i qå a a a ri ra- bi

Ka- wa nu a li ī- wi nu i i qå ri ra- bi

B

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå a a ri ra- bi

Ka- wa nu a li ī- wi nu i qa a ri ra- bi

C

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå ri rå- bi

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå ri rå- bi

D

Ka- wa nu a li ī- wi nu i qå a ri rå- bi

Ka-wa nu a li ī- wi nu i i qå a ri rå- bi

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i qå a a ri rå- bi

Ka- wa nu a a li ī- wi nu i i qå a a ri rå- bi

Ka- wa nu a li ī- wi nu i i qå a a ri rå- bi



(ctd.)

3 "terminatio" 4 "initium"

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a nu a a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a nu a

šå– wa nu a a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a a nu a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a a a a a nu a

šå– wa nu a bi– tå a a a a a nu a a

šå– wa nu a a bi– tå a a a nu a a a a



(end of Ex. I)

*kohanîm* (A) and Israelites (B) of Nablus, and the two *ḥazzanîm* (C) and the other Israelites (D) of Holon.

A comparison among the seven singers of Nablus (A, B) shows that there is an essential unity among the renditions of the five *kohanîm*, and the first of the two Israelites. In spite of the variations which exist among these six, the overall homogeneity is apparent, and this is especially clear in some of the sections into which the lines were divided to facilitate comparison. Note, for example, the 6/8 passage in section two of the first line and in sections three and four of the second line. Similarly, note the ending, "terminatio" of the third section of the first line and the fifth section of the second line. Equally important is the concordance among the six informants in the ending of the melisma of the first line. This ending constitutes a transition from the first to the second line, a kind of "initium" to the second line which opens with a transposition or, if you will, a short modulation, returning to establish the pivot note anew.

It is easy to see that the musical material is limited, essentially, to three notes[14], the central one of which is heavily vibrated[15]. Moreover, if we limit ourselves to the syllables of the text itself, disregarding the textual and musical tropes, the result would be an essentially one-note melody, as can readily be seen in Example II.

Example II

First line
The five singers which appear in group A example 1:
Second line
Ka- li tâ- bi a- li- dâ- ra - yyâ šâ- bi- tâ Ka- li ī- qâ- ri râ- bi bâ- râ- ū- tâ

The two singers which appear in group B example 1:
Ka - li tâ- bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ- bi bâ - râ - u -- tâ

The first line of this example represents the singing of the five *kohanîm* and one Israelite of Nablus. If we compare the second Israelite to the others in terms of the sections singled out above (Example I) we find that the 6/8

[14] A lower auxiliary to these three nuclear notes serves primarily in the role of a "leading" note. An upper auxiliary, which is reached by glissando in the form of an outcry, creates the effect of a tritone though its pitch is mostly undefined. These kinds of outcries are characteristic of Samaritan music.

[15] The reference at this point is to the song "*kal ṭab*" in the *kaved* style. But see the discussions below on vibrato and tonal structure.

passages are replaced by something that seems similar to the concluding "formula" of the others, as seen in the third section of the first line and the fifth section of the second line. In other words the "formula" is misplaced. Nor does his "initium" or the transposition which follows correspond to those of the others. In the second line of Example II, it can be observed that his vibrato occurs on notes other than the central ones, nor does his "transposition note" correspond to that of the others[16].

If we turn now to the Holon group of Example I (C and D) we shall find

Example III

First line — Second line

The two singers which appear in group C example 1

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

The singers of group D example 1

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ - ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka - li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

*Ka - li ṭâ - bi a - li - dâ ra - yyâ šâ - bi - tâ Ka li ī - qâ - ri râ - bi bâ - râ - ū - tâ*

[16] If a functional melodic analysis like that proposed by Smits van Waesberghe were applied to the first line of Example II, we could say the following: The first line of our song is an example of a recitation "interrupted" by a higher accentuation-tone which requires a return to the reciting-tone. The second line of our song is an example of "the functional affinities of three notes", a exciting note with accentuation of an upper second followed by a lower second. These two new notes (1) form a contrast with the fundamental note, (2) constitute a unit over against the fundamental note, and (3) after them the ear "demands" a return to the fundamental note. Looked at from this point of view the deviation in line II (II) of Example II is indeed striking. See Joseph Smits van Waesberghe, *A Textbook of Melody; A Course in Functional Melodic Analysis* (American Institute of Musicology. Miscellanea, 2), [Rome?], 1955, p. 21–23.

that the singing of the two *ḥazzanîm* closely resembles the singing of the *kohanîm* in Nablus while the singing of the others—even though it has the external markings of Samaritan music—is rather arbitrary. The external markings such as frequent vibrati, glissandi and "attacks", are exaggerated and deliberate while their placement is arbitrary. The repetitions of the rhythmic passages are equally arbitrary, as are the individual variations introduced into line-endings or the ending of the musical trope (which, as we have already noted, is the "initium" for the second line), not to speak of the modulation itself.

The lack of internal consistency among the Holon singers, and the difference between this group and the *kohanîm-ḥazzanîm* is again apparent from a comparison of Example III with Example II. The essentially one-note melody of Example II with its modulatory shift is lost among the Holon Israelites; so is the note on which the vibrato appears. The note which is vibrated is neither consistent within the Holon group or between this group and the *kohanîm-ḥazzanîm.*

B. Textual Troping

As far as the textual troping is concerned, an examination of the renditions of the Nablus singers suggests an underlying model as given in Example IV.

Example IV

A: The untroped text.

First line: 1. *Kal* 2. *ṭåb* 3. 4. 5. 6. *aldårayyå* 7. 8. *šåbtå*

Second line: 1. *Kal* 2. 3. *īqår* 4. *råb* 5. 6. 7. 8. *bårǻūtå*

B: The completely troped text.

I: 1. *Ka līˆ* ⁝ 2. *ṭabīˆ* ⁝ 3. *alīˆ* 4. *då* 5. *ra* 6. *yyåwanuwanua*7. *šåwanuaabîtå* 8. ⁝ ... *nua*

II: 1. *Kawanuaa līˆ* ⁝ 2. *īwinuii* 3. *lqaarīˆ* ⁝ 4. *råbīˆ* ⁝ 5. *bawanuwanuwa*6. *råwanuwanua*7. *ūunuuu* 8. *tå* ⁝ ..... *nua*

C: The transition from the untroped text to the 'organized' troped text.

I:
1. *Ka-l* ⁝ 2. *ṭå-b* ⁝ 3. *a-l-*4. *då-*5. *ra-*6. *yyå* ⁝ 7. *šå–* 8. *b- tå* ⁝
*Ka-li* ⁝ *ṭå-bi* ⁝ *a-li-då-ra-yyå* ⁝ *šå–* *bi-tå* ⁝
*Ka-li* ⁝ *ṭå-bi* ⁝ *a-li-då-ra-yyå* ⁝ *wa nu wa nu wa* *šå-wa nu a* *a bi-tå* ⁝ *nu a*

II:
1. *Ka – l* ⁝ 2. *ī–* 3. *qå– r* ⁝ 4. *rå-b* ⁝ 5. *bå–* 6. *rå–* 7. *ū–* 8. *tå*
*Ka – li* ⁝ *ī–* *qå– ri* ⁝ *rå-bi* ⁝ *bå–* *rå–* *ū–* *tå*
*Ka-wa nu a a li* ⁝ *ī-wi nu i i* *qå-a ri* ⁝ *rå-bi* ⁝ *bå-wa nu wa nu wa* *rå-wa nu wa nu wa* *ū-u nu u u* *tå nu a*

The two lines of the unornamented text are given in IV-A. The text, together with complete textual troping, is given in IV-B. The transformation of the unornamented text (A) to the troped text (B) is given in IV-C. Each consonant in the original text which is not already followed by a vowel is given a vowel[17]. Then, "nonsense syllables" are added according to certain rules.

The rules of textual troping may be formulated as follows, on the basis of an examination of our material: (1) The vowels of the textual tropings are influenced by the vowel-endings of the syllables which they ornament; thus, *ka-wa nu a a; i-wi nu i i; ū-u nu u u.* The repetition of the textual vowel toward the end of the trope suggests the possibility that the entire interpolation may have originated as an effort to prolong the original vowel[18].

Returning to the musical transcriptions of Example I, it will be seen that the first and third Nablus singers fit the model exactly. Not all of the singers are consistent in this respect, but since their inconsistencies are rather randomly spread, it would appear that the model proposed does, indeed, constitute the underlying basis for the textual troping. This is apparent in the following excerpt from Example I representing the singing of part of the second line by the five *kohanîm.*

| Singer | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. *Ka-wa nu a a,* | *ī-wi nu i i,* | *ū-u nu u u* |
| | 2. *Ka-wa nu a a,* | *î-wi nu i ,* | *ū-u nu u u u* |
| | 3. *Ka-wa nu a a,* | *î-wi nu i i,* | *ū-u nu u u* |
| | 4. *Ka-wa nu a ,* | *î-wi nu i ,* | *ū-u nu u u* |
| | 5. *Ka-wa nu a ,* | *î-wi nu i i,* | *ū-u nu u* |

(2) Troping comes at the beginning and the end of each line rather than in the middle. The exception is the first line which has no troping at the beginning (see Example IV). Subsequent lines follow the rules of the second line, in which the first two syllables are always troped. When the last word of the line has more than two syllables, three syllables before the last are troped no matter to which word they belong. When the last word has only two syllables, the last syllable of the preceding word is troped if it has more than two syllables; if this last-but-one word has only two syllables, each is troped. (3) The troping which precedes the last textual trope on each line other than the first two syllables of the line, takes the form of *wa nu wa nu wa.*
(4) The musical trope, the melisma, which appears after the textual line has ended concludes with the nonsense syllables *nu a* prior to the "initium".

[17] On the question of extension of consonants at the end of syllables and especially at the end of words see Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans,* (Jerusalem, 1967) Vol. III part 1, p. 27.

[18] In his analysis of the reading of Marka's poems by the Samaritans on the Sabbath Hofman suggests that the interpolations serve to prolong the word rather than the original vowel. See Hofman's "Marka's Poems"..., *Yuval,* [1] (1968): 49.

At times, the vowel *a* is added to the melisma for the comfort of the singer. This fact strengthens our assumption that the repetition of textual vowels in the trope functions to prolong the original vowel.

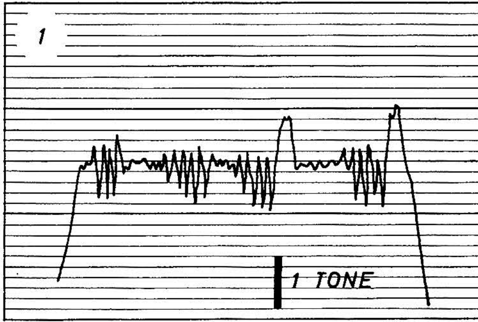
It should be noted that all the musical enrichment in the song is built on these meaningless additions to the text. It seems quite likely that the musical troping preceded the textual troping, and that the latter came simply to bolster and fix the former[19]. As we have seen (Example II), the original text is practically all sung on one note. That the musical troping has not given rise to the kind of textual troping with which we are familiar from medieval examples in the West, probably reflects a commitment to keeping the text intact. Nonsense syllables do not interfere with the primacy of this commitment; alien words would. It also implies that, historically, there must have been more musical than textual change. Moreover, these so called "nonsense syllables" may prove, upon further investigation, to constitute a type of oral "notation" in which the syllables denote groups of notes. At any rate, they call to mind musical group notations like the Ethiopian and Indian, for example. It has been suggested that the "meaningless" syllables found in Babylonian cuneiform documents may be viewed in the way found applicable to the "secret" syllables found in Ethiopian manuscripts or in the Vedic texts[20]. Similarly, one may advance a hypothesis that the syllables used by the Samaritans may be related, if not in meaning, at least in practice, to the above mentioned musical group notations. Moreover, one should note the striking resemblance between the repeated use of the syllables *wa nu* which appear in constructs like *wa-nu-wa*, *wa-nu-wa-nu-wa*, *nu-wa*, *nu-a*, etc. and the "mysterious word" *neannoe* and its various formulae which originated in Byzantine chant and was later adopted in the Latin chant repertory[21]. Since it would be unsuitable and unfeasible to treat this subject within the scope of the present paper, further speculations on the meaning and origin of these secret words or syllables will be presented separately. Here we shall limit ourselves to the proposal that the syllables used by the Samaritans

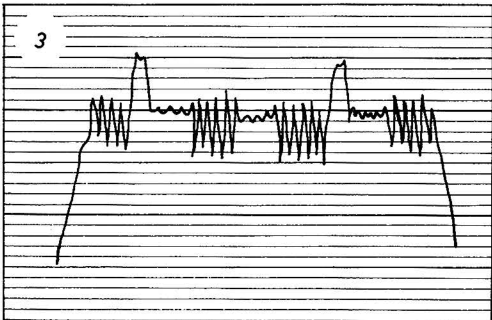
[19] Discussing the phenomenon of the interpolations Hofman suggests that these exist in order to "prolong" the words and primarily because the Samaritans "love" certain syllables like *nu* and *wa*!

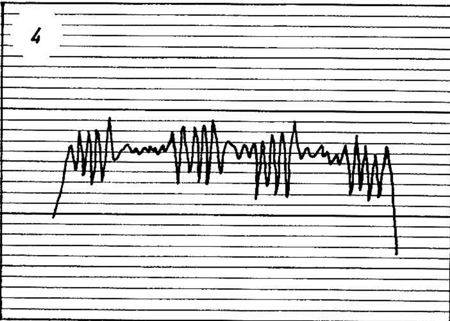
[20] See Curt Sachs, "The Mystery of the Babylonian Notation", *The Musical Quarterly*, 27 (1941): 62–69.

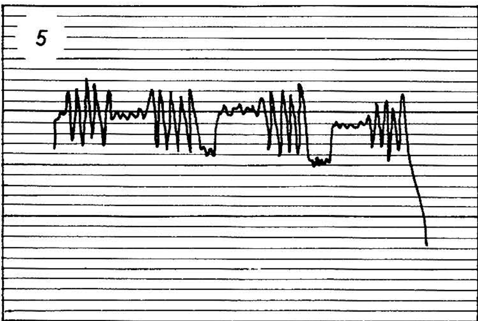
[21] See the interesting hypothesis on the meaning and origin of the word "noennae", by E. Werner "The psalmodic formula *Neannoe* and its origin", *The Musical Quarterly*, 28 (1942): 93–99; I am glad to take this opportunity to thank my colleague and friend Israel Adler who, in the course of our many fruitful discussions about the use of "nonsense" syllables in connection with music of the past, suggested the investigation of the *neannoe* and led me to some relevant bibliographical references.

A



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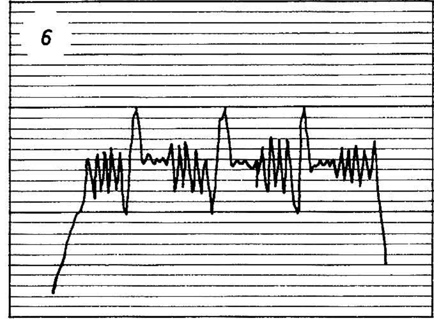
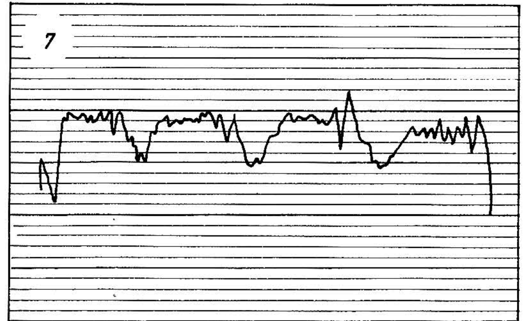
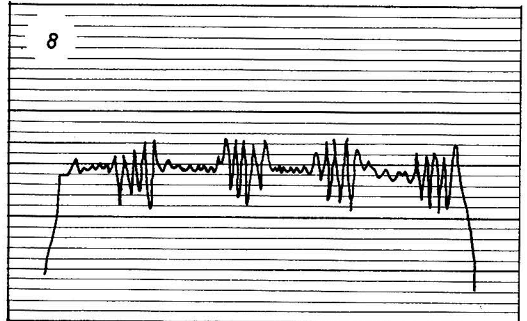
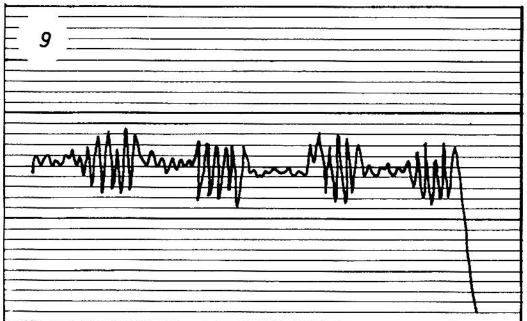



Example V

C



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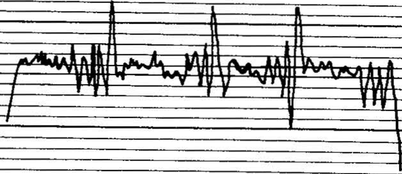
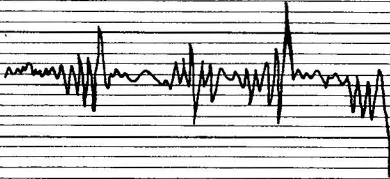
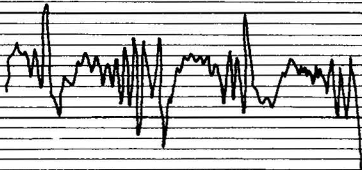
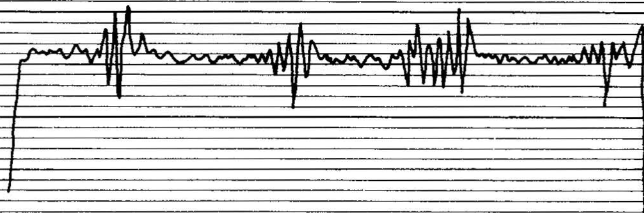
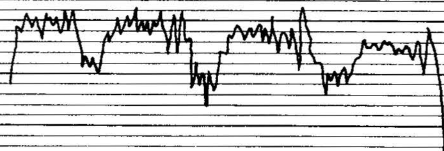


constitute relics of an old type of oral notation, or orally preserved musical group notation, even if the classification of the syllables may not yield the unambiguous meaning of each of them.

Looking back to Example I in which all fourteen singers are compared, we note again that the group of Israelites in Holon (Group D), apart from the two *ḥazzanîm*, is freer than the other informants in the extent of its deviation from the model. However, the deviations do not add up to a new consensus.

## 2. *The Nature of the Vibrato*

A second identifying characteristic of Samaritan music which will also serve as a basis for comparison among group members is the vibrato. The melograph makes such analysis possible inasmuch as the graphic record permits easy identification of the vibrated notes, takes an accurate count of the rate of vibrations, and measures the depth of the vibrations. Listening to Samaritan singing, one is often struck by the "steadiness" with which they render vibrati; and, indeed, as most of the following examples show, Samaritans have impressive control over their vibrati.

Once again, the fourteen singers are divided into four groups. Example V consists of the graphic representation of the first four notes of "*kal tab*", the song introduced in Example I. The A and C groups are again seen to be consistent among themselves. This, in two ways. First of all, it will be seen that the deep vibrations cluster in groups of 4 to 6; 5 appears to be the mode. Secondly, the depth of vibrations is about one whole tone.

The Holon Israelites of Group D (and one of the Israelites in B), on the the other hand, differ from the *kohanîm-ḥazzanîm* of Groups A and C, nor do they resemble one another. This holds both for the rate and depth of vibrations. On the other hand, singers 10, 11 and 12 do resemble each other in the exaggerated attacks of the notes. While singer 13 does not exaggerate in this way and reveals a certain steadiness in his singing, the heavily vibrated groups do not resemble each other. Singer 14 differs from all the others in that he vibrates the lower auxillary of the central note.

Since we have selected for presentation here only the four repetitions of the pivot note with which "*kal tab*" begins, an additional relevant fact is not included in the graphic illustrations. We refer to the fact, already shown in Example III, that the Holon Israelites frequently vibrate notes other than the pivot in their rendering of "*kal tab*", or for that matter other examples of the *qaved* style.

In passing, it is worth remarking that each of the three styles (*qal, beynônî* and *kaved*) has its own rules concerning the notes which are to be vibrated. Thus, in *beynônî* it appears that the central note is *not* vibrated while the

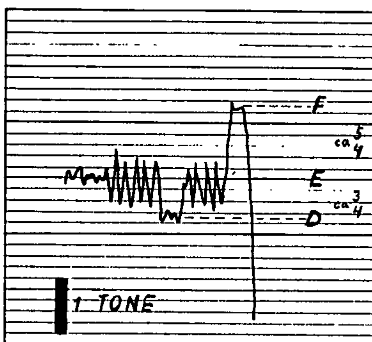
upper and lower notes are. The upper note has deeper and more frequent vibrations. In the syllabic style, the *kal*, vibration seems rare altogether.

### 3. *The Tonal Structure of Samaritan Music*

Another distinguishing characteristic of Samaritan music lies in its basic tonal structure. While Idelsohn had suggested that the Samaritans have a four-note music[21], a later analysis indicated the greater likelihood of a basically three-note music[23]. The material of the present study lends further support to the three-note theory.

More important, however, is the relationship among the notes. Our earlier study suggested that the distance between the central and the upper note equals a 5/4 note while the distance between the central and lower notes equals a 3/4 note[24], as is illustrated by example VI taken from the present study.

Example VI




However, since unaccompanied singing is marked by unsteady intervals, even within the same singer, one cannot rely on impressionistic analysis even from the melographic record. Since the melograph permits the measurement of the actual size of the interval each time it occurs, the intervals can be more correctly presented in the form of a scatter rather than as fixed.

[22] See Idelsohn, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[23] See Dalia Cohen and Ruth Katz, "Explorations in the Music of the Samaritans: An Illustration of the Utility of Graphic Notation", *Ethnomusicology*, 4 (1960): 67–74.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

The scatters for different singers can then be compared to each other in order to establish the consistency within and between persons and groups[25].

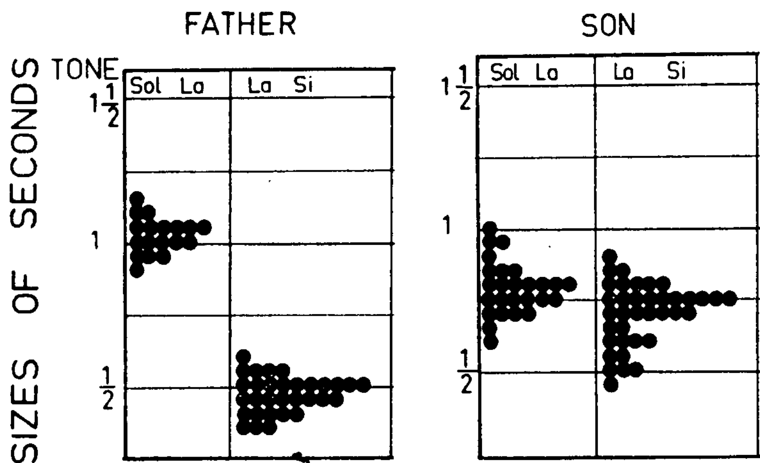
This analysis has not yet been undertaken with respect to the present data. However, given the equal temperament of the Western-musical environment of the Holon Israelites, it may be hypothesized that the relationship among these notes will be affected. This should not hold for the Israelites in Nablus, even for those who are not proficient in Samaritan music, since the surrounding Arab music is also not based on equal temperament. It will be recalled that members of both groups were asked to sing several songs of their immediate surroundings. Analyses of these songs should provide additional insights.

## 4. *The Glissando*

Still another distinguishing characteristic of Samaritan music is the glissando. On the melographic record this looks as if the glissando serves to break up, in a kind of outcry[26], the flow of the musical trope in order to reaffirm the pivot note, as seen in Example VII.

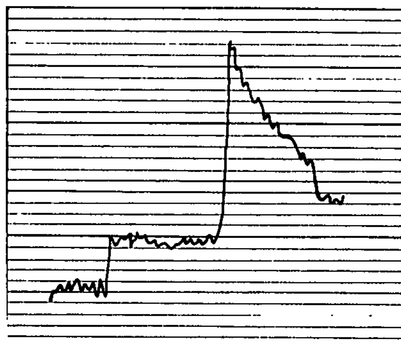
An examination of the transcriptions in Example I will reveal that the Holon Israelites appear to have a particular liking for the glissando. This preference appears to go together with the exaggerated attack of vibrated notes which characterizes this group; this seems to be part of the pattern of playing up easily identified elements of Samaritan music.

[25] Consider, for example, the following scatters as representative of the rendition of two intervals in a given song by two different individuals. A dot equals one Deca-cent.




[26] See footnote 14; see also Idelsohn, *op. cit.* p. 54, and Hofman's "Marka's Poems . . ."p. 44, 46.

Example VII



But an analysis of the glissando requires more than the mere enumeration of the frequency of its use by the several sub-groups or the group as whole. Apart from frequency, its real interest lies in its basic structure and the variations on this structure. This analysis, too, still remains to be undertaken.

## Discussion

Even in the absence of an authenticated historical record of Samaritan music, internal analysis provides a basis on which to make judgements about tradition and innovation. The internal consistency in the singing of the *kohanîm* in Nablus and the *ḥazzanîm* in Holon supports the consensus, in both communities, about the rank order of "who knows how to sing Samaritan music". The taking of all subgroups of singers together, traditionalists and innovators alike, provides an insight into the elements that are central to Samaritan music and even permits the construction of "ideal types" or "models" which may have a more than heuristic value. It also permits speculation about the social relationships inherent in the processes of oral transmission of musical tradition and the conditions for its preservation and modification.

Basing the discussion on analyses of troping, vibrating, tonal structure, and the glissando, together with information and opinion gathered in the Samaritan community itself, the overall conclusions of the study—which was partly methodological and partly substantive—may be summarized as follows:

1. Despite rather equal opportunities for learning, it appears that those who are destined to assume a formal role in the musical tradition or those who have had to assume one, are more likely to learn what is being taught. This is manifestly true in the case of the *kohanîm* of Nablus. Indeed, the *kohanîm* are identified by the community as the "knowers" and the consistency of their renditions (both within and among individuals) seems to confirm this.

It is also true for the two Israelites who officiated in Holon during the years when the community was without a *kohen.* While the "knowers" of Holon include other and younger Israelites as well, the quality of their "knowing" seems quite different.

2. What is learned in the transmission of tradition is not so easily discerned by superficial analysis. The subtle indicators of tradition are more important than the more manifest and more easily imitated external indicators. Thus, the nature of the vibrato—*when* to vibrate and *how many* times—may be more important than the mere fact of vibrating. Similarly, the correct formulae and the right location for troping are surely more important indicators of tradition than the mere interpolation of nonsense syllables. In other words, the place for executing a particular musical effect and the rules governing its execution cannot be considered secondary to the ability to produce the effect.

3. The deviations in the singing of the younger Israelites of Holon suggests that certain innovations are taking place. Moreover, there is an explicit awareness in the community that this is happening. Change is discernible in the music rather than in the words, and takes the form of exaggerated emphasis on certain of those idiosyncratic elements of Samaritan music which have a dramatic and identifying quality—perhaps especially to the Western ear. This phenomenon may have two points of origin. First of all, it may be a product of the greater "openess" of the Holon community. In the absence of *kohanîm*, Israelites had to officiate; this is perhaps the reason why some of the younger Israelites in Holon are said to know Samaritan music. Unlike their contemporaries in Nablus, they had a chance at the succession. But the control and discipline which produce so much homogeneity of style and rendition in the case of the *kohanîm* appear to be less effective among the younger people in Holon.

A second reason for the innovations discernible in the music of the Holon Israelites may have to do with their relationship to the surrounding Jewish community in which they now find themselves. Relatively at home in this community, on the one hand, they are, on the other, at pains to emphasize their difference. The Samaritans are bent on preserving their culture. Thus, the "manneristic" patterns of exaggeration may be symbolic of their desire to affirm cultural difference.

4. The character of troping in Samaritan music suggests that greater freedom is permitted in the case of music than of text. The "rules" for both musical and textual troping appear to be, though not expressly, very precise. As for the vibrato, we find that its appearance is in highly circumscribed situations. 4–6 vibrations appear to be the traditional range, with 4 to 5 per second as the mode. The depth reaches approximately one note. The

glissando serves to break up the flow of the musical trope and to reassert the primacy of the pivotal note. On the whole, this analysis reconfirms that Samaritan music apparently is based on a nucleus of three notes. The relationship between these notes and the behavior of each varies according to style.

## Conclusion: A Hypothesis on the Historical Development of Samaritan Music

On the basis of this analysis, we venture a hypothesis on the historical development of Samaritan music: given the underlying one-note structure of the *kaved* style, it seems likely that this was the earliest of the three styles, and that the *beynônî* and *qal* came later. We propose that the one-note *kaved* was first ornamented by the addition of the vibrato. It was perhaps the depth of the stable and relatively slow vibrato that hinted at the possibliity of adding other notes. Following this, additional notes—the upper and lower seconds—were actually introduced in groups as musical ornamentations giving rise to the basic three-note structure. Syllables were then attached to the added groups of notes to fixate the musical tropes. Whereas we have shown that the *kaved* style can be reduced to its basically one-note skeleton, this is not true of the two other styles, the neumatic and the syllabic, reinforcing the suggestion that these developed after the *kaved.*

Unlike the case of "Western" chant where some of the more melismatic forms developed later, the complex *kaved* of Samaritan music probably developed earlier as a progressive series of ornamentations in the simple one-note structure. Thus, in searching in Samaritan music for links to the ancient past, it is likely that the key is to be found in the *kaved* style rather than elsewhere.

# YUVAL

## STUDIES OF
## THE JEWISH MUSIC RESEARCH CENTRE

*Edited by*

ISRAEL ADLER and BATHJA BAYER

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JERUSALEM, 1974

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *CB* | M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in bibliotheca Bodleiana*, Berlin, 1852–1860 |
| *CS* | E. de Coussemaker, ed., *Scriptores de musica medii aevi* . . ., Paris, 1864–1876 |
| *EJ*[2] | *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, 1972 |
| d'Erlanger | R. d'Erlanger, *La musique arabe*, Paris, 1930–1949 |
| *GS* | M. Gerbert, ed., *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica* . . ., Sankt Blasien, 1784 |
| El Hefny | M. El Hefny, *Ibn Sina's Musiklehre*, Berlin, 1930 (Diss.) |
| *HU* | M. Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Ubersetzungen des Mittelalters*, Berlin, 1893 |
| *HUCA* | *Hebrew Union College Annual* |
| Husmann | H. Husmann, *Grundlagen der antiken Musikkultur*, Berlin, 1961 |
| Idelsohn, *JM* | A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development*, New York, 1929 |
| *JE* | *Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York–London, 1901–1905 |
| *m* | *Mishnah* |
| *MPL* | J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, Paris, 1844–1855 |
| Neubauer | E. Neubauer, "Die Theorie vom Īqaᶜ I. Übersetzung des Kitāb al-īqaᶜāt von Abu Naṣr al-Fārābī", *Oriens*, 21–22 (1968/69): 196–232 |
| *PAAJR* | *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* |
| Reinach | Th. Reinach, *La musique grecque*, Paris, 1926 |
| *RISM* | *Répertoire International des Sources Musicales* |
| *ZDMG* | *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* |