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The Ostriches Pentateuch Radā' (South Yemen)
End of the Twelfth Century (JTS L66)

I. Ostriches and Jewish Art

Ostriches are found in three Hebrew illuminated Bibles from Yemen. Each was scribed and painted in a different town: Radā' (רדאע), south Yemen, Aden and Ṣan'ā. It should be noted that only a few Hebrew illuminated Bibles from Yemen have survived. Therefore, the fact that three different Jewish scribes in three different places in Yemen made the same art decision to paint ostriches in a Hebrew Pentateuch, clearly suggests that the idea of ostriches was important to Jews in Yemen. The focus and the aim of this article are to understand why. It is therefore not surprising that the earliest Jewish art program from Yemen showing ostriches, known today, belongs to a Hebrew illuminated Pentateuch.¹

II. The Ostriches Pentateuch

In July 2008, I had a first hand examination of the Hebrew illuminated Pentateuch, now in the Jewish Theological Seminary, NY, (henceforth, JTS), L66.² I named it 'The Ostrich Hebrew Pentateuch', after its art program which shows ostriches throughout its Hebrew pages

¹ As a rule, a Hebrew painted Bible is in format of a book. Painting, of any sort, is forbidden in *Torah* scroll.

² I would like to thank the Rare Books Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for being especially generous and helpful in sharing their knowledge and information with me. Most of all, I want to give special thanks to Dr. Jay Rovner, the chief manuscript bibliographer of its library, and Ms. Sharon Lieberman Mintz, the curator of Jewish Art, and Mr. David Sclar.

(Figs. 1–4). The only exception are the two juxtaposed frontispieces carpet pages (fully painted pages) showing the Hebrew declaration that the *Torah* is the Jewish law, written in Hebrew rubrics (Figs. 5, 6).

This Hebrew declaration is typical of art programs in Hebrew illuminated Bibles in Yemen during the rule of the Ayyubid in Yemen (r. 1172–1229). This is clearly proved by the same Hebrew declaration found in the Hebrew illuminated Pentateuch from Ṣan'ā, 1206 (henceforth, 'The earliest known Hebrew Ṣan'ā Pentateuch', Ṣan'ā 1206).³

Although L66 is documented in the Lutzki catalog, which is the inside catalog of the JTS, its art program was never researched.⁴ It has no colophon and no date. I date it to the end of the twelfth century on the basis of style. Its main importance lies in three features. First, it is earlier than the Rasulid rule in Yemen (r. 1229–1445), as well as Rasulid silver coins bearing an ostrich image on (Figs. 20–23). Second, it belongs to a rare group of Hebrew illuminated Bibles that had been created under Ayyubid rule in Yemen. Third, out of all the Yemenite Hebrew illuminated Bibles known today, it is the only one showing the art program painted between the written columns and margins throughout the entire Pentateuch (Figs. 1–4).⁵ The presentation of ostriches throughout the entire Pentateuch creates a very unique and strong effect of a flock of ostriches, even though only three ostriches, at the most, are painted on each folio.

The Jewish scribe utilized his colors to emphasize the most important feature for him, namely, the red color of the unusual swollen and curved red throat which is typical only of the courting ostrich male while trying to persuade a female to mate with him. The contrast of the black plumage and the unusual red color of his throat

³ Berger 2011, Figs. 1, 2.

⁴ Lutzki 1961, p. 58.

⁵ The first time I saw a painted folio from this Pentateuch, was in Ratzaby 1950, p. 19. There, however, it is shown without any provenance whatsoever. He dated it to the fifteenth century, with no explanation. I do not agree with the date.

and legs, typical only of courtship, provide a dramatic show (Figs. 7, 8). The red color of the unusual curving red throat is the most unique and dominant feature, symbolizing fertility of the mating ostrich male, occurring only during courtship and known as 'the mating dance'. During the non-mating season, the color of his throat and legs is white, exactly as those of the female, and its throat is not curved and not swollen at all (Fig. 9).

During the non-mating season, the main difference between the male and the female is the color of their plumage. Whilst that of the male is black with some white at the edge and a white tail, the female feathers are totally brown (Fig. 9). As the Israel Nature and Parks Authority showed by the photographed mating dance (Figs. 7, 8), whilst performing the mating dance, the throat and the legs are red and the red throat is swollen. Also, the courting male ostrich is moving his spread out black feathers in circular motions from side to side, while at the same time making dreadful sounds out of his swollen throat.⁶

On the basis of this phenomenon in nature, Jewish art in Yemen shows the conceptual idea of the mating dance and its art form. This has been done by focusing on three of the mating dance features in nature: the curved swollen throat, the red color of the throat and the red color of the legs. In order to emphasize these features, the ostrich's body has, intentionally, almost completely been ignored. The elimination is important as a Jewish feature of the mating dance. To the best of my knowledge, it is only in Jewish art that the ostrich is depicted without its full body. By eliminating the ostrich's body, the Jewish scribe in Yemen conveyed the idea of fertility (Fig. 2).

All throughout the Ostriches Hebrew Pentateuch, the Jewish mating dance art concept and form is repeated with many variations, including different colors representing the swollen throat and the missing body (Figs. 1, 4), as well as varying proportions of the swollen curved throat. (Fig. 2). Fol. 31v, for example, shows almost no body

⁶ (http://parks.org.il/BuildeGate5/general2/data_card.php?Cat=690~720~~166113922~Card7~&ru=&SiteName=parks&Clit=&Bur=292924583).

at all. What was left from the male ostrich body is expressed here as a sort of horizontal red and bold line (Fig. 2 running in the center). The repeated Jewish mating dance art form is not an exact replica of the same ostrich, but a free-hand painting variation of it. The strong disproportionate size between the curved swollen throat and the largely missing body creates a significant and unique Jewish concept and art form of painting the male ostrich mating dance, understood by Jews at the time. Therein is concealed encoded information, to be deciphered only by those who know the mating dance in nature and are familiar with Jewish thought regarding ostrich.

The most abstract variation of this Jewish mating dance concept and art form is a dynamic and swirling art manipulation, that is, the combination of only the ostriches' swirling, curved and swollen radial throats, creating a diamond shape. That is clearly shown at the bottom of folio 79v, of the Ostriches Hebrew Pentateuch (Fig. 3) (henceforth, the Ostriches diamond).

A variation of this, though more basic, is presented in 'the earliest known Hebrew Şan'ā Pentateuch', Şan'ā, 1206 (Figs. 10, 11). Here, the art manipulation of the combination of only ostriches' swirling curved and swollen radial throats creates a simple swirling radial rosette (henceforth, the Ostriches rosette). This Ostriches rosette is the Jewish variation of the Ayyubid radial rosette as implied in Jewish art in Yemen. The Ayyubid radial rosette and the Jewish Ostriches rosette are presented, side by side, in the four corners of the two juxtaposing carpet pages folios. Here, the Ostriches rosette is at the top left and the bottom right of each (Figs. 10, 11).⁷

III. The Earliest Known Aden Hebrew Pentateuch

The swirling, curved and swollen throat is shown in the earliest known Hebrew Pentateuch from Aden (henceforth, the earliest

⁷ For the earliest known Hebrew Şan'ā Pentateuch, Şan'ā 1206 and for Figs. 10, 11, in its context there see Berger 2011, Figs. 6, 7.

known Aden Hebrew Pentateuch) as well (Fig. 12). By emphasizing its spiral tail, it is alleged that its quality of freeing its tail, as done in nature, is emphasized (Fig. 13). Actually, the tail had been converted into a second swirling, red curved throat and the ostrich in discussion is a double headed one (Fig. 12). This double headed ostrich appears only once in the Pentateuch and signifies the mark of a new *Parasha* (*Beshallah*, Exodus 13:17).⁸

In July 2008, I was privileged to examine first hand this illuminated Pentateuch, now at the JTS, New York, L62. I gave it the name 'The Earliest known Aden Hebrew Pentateuch' after its source.⁹ Although L62 is documented inside of the Lutzki catalog at the JTS, its art program has never been researched.¹⁰ It has no colophon and no date. I date it to the end of the twelfth century, or even earlier, on the basis of style.¹¹

IV. Ostriches in Jewish Thought

Jewish thought is very specific in defining the dangerous situations in life that need 'preservation and strengthening' (שמירה). In the Jewish Talmud, it is said that there are three who need preservation and strengthening. These are: "who that is ill, a groom and a bride." (BT, *Berakhoth* 54b).

(a) Ostriches and the Jewish Wedding

It should be noted that in Jewish law the marriage is activated by the groom. He must say the marriage blessing with an item that has a monetary value. The ancient Jewish custom was to say the marriage blessing with a coin of money. Jews of Yemen kept that ancient

⁸ *Parasha* is a new section while reading the *Torah* scroll in the synagogue.

⁹ Dr. Rovner kindly informed me that this Pentateuch had entered the JTS collection from the collection of Mr. E.N. Adler, England, and that it is mentioned in his catalog. The Adler catalog mentions Aden as its place of origin. It also dates it to the 14th century. I do not agree with the date. See: Adler 1921, p. 3/1701.

¹⁰ Lutzki 1961, p. 54.

¹¹ See 'The Earliest known Aden Pentateuch', JTS L62 (in preparation).

custom, up until the end of the eighteenth century.¹² Thus, the groom dipped the coin into the wine, said the marriage blessing and gave the signed marriage contract (*ketubba*) to his bride in the presence of two witnesses.

The Jewish Mishna allows a man to betroth a woman with an ostrich egg, as an ostrich egg is considered a very expensive item (*Mishne Torah, Para Adumma*, 6:4). That provides the explanation why, in the eighteenth century, Jewish marriage contracts (*ketubbot*) in *Qā' bīr al-'azab*, the Jewish Quarter outside Ṣan'ā, were painted with ostrich, either at the top (Figs. 14, 15), or at the bottom (Fig. 16).¹³ By these, we are witnesses to the phenomenon of replacing a hen and a chicken with ostriches as a Jewish fertility emblem in Jewish illuminated marriage contracts in Yemen. In Jewish art, a pair of hens or chickens is a fertility emblem on the basis of the Babylonian Talmud, which presents the Jewish custom during the Talmudic period to present such a pair before the bride and the groom, telling them to be fruitful and multiply like a hen and a chicken and to fulfill the Jewish commandment to procreate (*Giṭṭin*, 57a).

The replacing of a hen and a chicken with ostriches is clearly shown in the illuminated *ketubba* of Rūmye, the daughter of Abraham b. Salim al-Shaykh al-Lewi (רומייה בנת אברהם בן סאלם אלשיך), today in The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.¹⁴ At the center, just between the bride and the groom, it is clearly shown that a chicken is going to be released in front of the new couple. However, at the bottom, two pairs of ostriches are shown as well.

A hen and a chicken are not painted at all in the *ketubba* of Badra, the daughter of Mūsā b. Yosef b. R. Ya'aqov al-Ṣā'irī (בדרה בנת מוסא (בן יוסף בן מ"ו יעקב אלצאירי), 1790 (Fig. 16). Here, two ostrich are painted at the bottom. It is unique in that it was written by R. Yihye

¹² Qāfih 1994.

¹³ For a map showing *Qā' bīr al-'azab*, made in 1762 by Carsten Niebuhr of the Danish scientific expedition to Yemen in 1672/3 see: Berger 2009, p. 93, Fig. 15.

¹⁴ Muchawsky-Schnapper 2000, p. 178; Sabar 1999, pp. 22–23, Figs. 1, 2.

Ṣālīḥ (יחיא צאלח, מהרי"ץ) the Head of the Jewish Court in the Jewish Quarter since 1758, whose son Yosef is the groom as mentioned in this *ketubba*.¹⁵ As such, it presents the official trend regarding ostrich, by replacing a hen and a chicken as the Jewish fertility emblem. Another example is the *ketubba* of the high born bride, Sarah, the daughter of Yiṣḥaq al-Qāra (שרה בנת יצחק אלקארה) from 1790 (Figs. 14, 15). Here, two big juxtaposed ostrich are painted just at the top center.

The above mentioned three brides are from preeminent Jewish families of the Jewish Quarter, according to their family names and the high appraisal of the jewels, as written on the back-side of their *ketubbot*.¹⁶

The point that emerges from this is that painted ostriches in the *ketubba* were a phenomenon and an emblem of the Jewish wedding in the eighteenth century in the Jewish communities of Ṣan'ā and Radā' and probably all over south Yemen. As such, ostriches are safeguards of the Jewish community as a whole and not only of the Jewish bride.

(b) *Ostrich egg as a remedy*

The ostrich egg is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud as a remedy for infertility in women (*Shabbath*, 106b). That provides the explanation why ostrich eggs are dominant in the celebration room for the Jewish woman after giving birth in *Qā' bīr al-'azab*. That is clearly demonstrated by a rare black & white photo of such a celebration room, taken in ca.1930, by Yiḥye Ḥaybī (יחיא חייבי), the Jewish photographer in *Qā' bīr al-'azab*. The photo documents dozens of ostrich eggs hanging on the walls of the celebration room, restricted unto women only, just prior to the start of the celebration (Fig. 17).

(c) *Ostriches and the Synagogue*

It should be emphasized that in the eighteenth century, as at the end of the twelfth century, the Jewish mating dance art form was com-

¹⁵ Ratzaby 1995, p. 228, Fig. 6, pp. 239–242, esp. p. 242.

¹⁶ Berger 2005, pp. 131–133, 136–138.

mon in the art of the synagogue. For example, two painted artifacts with the Jewish mating dance art form are found as ceremonial objects in the synagogue in Radā'. The one is the painted hexagonal *Torah* case showing the Jewish mating dance art form and ostrich feathers completely surrounding it (Fig. 18). The other is the painted *teva* (stand on which the *Torah* scroll was laid while reading in it in the synagogue) showing ostriches on its sides and front (Fig. 19).

The painted hexagonal *Torah* case, probably from Radā', from the eighteenth century and made after its style, is painted all around with pairs of ostriches surrounded by four ostrich feathers. All of it is made in the shape of the natural crystal of the diamond, as viewed from top to bottom (Fig. 18). Here, the raised-up wing is emphasized. Raising up the wings is typical of running ostriches, as shown in nature (Fig. 9). However, ostriches cannot fly and the pair of wings was not made to fly. But since running together after mating is included in the mating process, their running together should be considered here as a variation of the Jewish mating dance art form.

It is important to note that such hexagonal-shaped, painted wooden *Torah* cases were designed for *Torah* scrolls only, as can easily be seen by their size and shape. They were not used for codices. According to Jewish law, a *Torah* scroll must be hand written, written by the scribe under strict codes of law, and must never be painted. On the other hand, to paint a codex format of the Hebrew Bible is permitted. Hence, the art of the painted *Torah* case showing painted ostriches reflects the spirit of the community, as the *Torah* scroll is also seen as affording general protection.

After the eighteenth century, no longer are there found in Yemen painted wooden *Torah* cases. On the other hand, there is no information on the art of the *Torah* case from Yemen dating back earlier than that time. Hence, it is hard to pin-point the first example of the use of painted ostriches on *Torah* cases in Yemen.

The *teva* of the Badīhī (בדיחי) Family was photographed in ca. 1930, in the family synagogue in *Qā' bīr al-'azab*, by Yihye Ḥaybī

(Fig. 19).¹⁷ This rare black & white photograph shows an extraordinary panorama of ostriches, in profile and in full front-view, all over the front and sides of the *teva*. The Badīhī family originally hails from Radā' and from there came to *Qā' bīr al-'azab* in the eighteenth century. When they immigrated to Israel, they brought this painted *teva* from their synagogue with them. It has been published, but not researched yet, and therefore it is not dated. On the basis of its style, it is from the eighteenth century, probably from Radā'.

The Badīhī family was a very famous merchant family dealing in jewellery in *Qā' bīr al-'azab* and supplied work to many Jewish silversmiths. Hence, in the context of this family, ostriches are also the family emblem. Thus, on the basis of the Jerusalem Talmud which shows goldsmiths employing ostriches to purify gold alloys in natural ways, and not by acids as done by goldsmiths and silversmiths today (*Yoma* 23a). In the eighteenth century, the Jewish community in Ṣan'ā and in Radā' maintained strong connections on the basis of family relationships, Jewish leaderships and commercial ties.¹⁸ Ostriches, as demonstrated on painted ceremonial objects in both places, show art connections, as well.

The point that emerges from this is that ostriches are shown as a pervasive brand in Jewish communities of the eighteenth century, both, in Radā' and in Ṣan'ā. The question that arises from this is whether or not the ostrich was solely a Jewish emblem, or whether it had always been an emblem in Yemen.

V. Ostriches as a Rasulid Emblem

Ostriches are found on silver coins minted at Zabīd, the capital of the Rasulid sultans of Yemen, dated to the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century (Figs. 20–23). These coins present ostriches as an official emblem of Yemen under the Rasulid who

¹⁷ Sha'ar 1985, p. 15, Fig. 11.

¹⁸ Tobi 1999, pp. 18–19.

ruled Yemen from Ta'izz in south-west Yemen. As an official monetary emblem, formerly used by all on a daily basis, ostrich coins spread easily in Yemen. As such, ostriches became a very common brand in daily life and in the economy of Yemen, expressing the spirit of south Yemen and the flourishing economy of the Rasulid.

It should be noted that in the second half of the nineteenth century Rasulid silver coins had arrived in Germany and in England, but these have hardly been researched. As Nützel showed, Eduard Glazer (1855–1908) brought back Rasulid ostrich silver coins as a result of his four scientific expeditions to Yemen (Figs. 21, 22).¹⁹ As Lane-Poole showed, silver coins bearing ostrich (today in the British Museum, London), arrived in England through the English East India Company (Fig. 20).²⁰ Today, Heidemann presents Rasulid ostrich silver coins, in Jena University, Germany, as well (Fig. 23).²¹

It is important to emphasize that ostriches do not appear on imported artifacts made for the Rasulid sultans of Yemen. The ostrich is a local Yemeni emblem known already before the Rasulid rule in Yemen. This is clearly shown by the Jewish mating dance art form as shown in the Ostriches Hebrew Pentateuch (Figs. 1–4), the earliest known Hebrew Šan'ā Pentateuch (Figs. 10–11) and the earliest known Aden Hebrew Pentateuch (Fig. 12). All the three are from the Ayyubid rule in Yemen. Hence, Jewish artists of the eighteenth century could utilize the art form of the ostrich, either as a Jewish Ayyubid brand, or as a Rasulid coinage brand, or both. The

¹⁹ Nützel 1891, p 5. I would like to thank Mary Hinton, librarian of the Dept. of Coins & medals, at the British Museum, London, for her kind help in finding for me Nützel's book, as well as thank Prof. Stefan Heidemann, the Oriental Coin Cabinet, Jena University, Germany, for sending me the PDF version of the book.

²⁰ Lane-Poole 1880, X, plate xxiv 360-20, 360-52, 360-54. I would like to thank Dr. Vesta Curtis, curator, Dept. of Coins & medals, at the British Museum, London and to all her team for their kind help while examining Rasulid coins in the Dept., in July 2008 and 2009.

²¹ I would like to give special thanks to Prof. Stefan Heidemann, for sending me photos of Rasulid coins showing an ostrich, that he had photographed in 2003 (Fig. 23). For one of these ostrich coins see Heidemann 2004.

question that arises from this is whether an ancient archetype existed in Yemen and was in use as a mutual prototype, for both the Jewish Ayyubid art and the Rasulid Muslim coinage art?

VI. The Earliest Ostriches Archetype

Ma'rib, the capital of ancient Sheba, at a distance of some 160 kilometers east of Ṣan'ā, provides such an ancient archetype (henceforth, the Ma'rib archetype) (Figs. 24–27). The Ma'rib archetype shows a group of running ostriches on four huge stone ruins, today out of its original context. These ostriches' reliefs had been photographed in 1976 by Christian Robin who dated them to ca. 750 BC.²² No colors; only stone relief friezes. It is important to note that the original context was a building, probably a temple. As such, the ostrich friezes were probably at the top of that structure and were looked at while standing below and the head tilted upwards, rather than straight ahead as we look at it today. Hence, the ostriches were intentionally sculptured with some exaggeration in order that it would be properly seen from a distance, as it was common in Greek sculpture of temples of that period.

The Ma'rib archetype shows the running ostrich from the side only. No front-view presentation. Consequently, all the features mentioned above already exist here, in this panoply, in a very distinct manner: the running legs which are spread apart and creating a triangular between the legs, the curved throat, the raising-up of the wing, the elongated horizontal body showing the tail as its extension and the flock.

The only exceptions to this archetype is the Jewish mating dance art form, typical to Jewish Hebrew illuminated Bibles under the

²² I would like to thank Prof. Christian Robin, directeur du recherche, CNRS, Paris, for advising me regarding ostrich reliefs on ancient temples of Sheba and providing me with his digital files of the four ostrich reliefs presented here, which are a collection of four huge stone ruins he had photographed in 1976 in Ma'rib. In 2010 he was a member of the group of Ancient Arabia and its Relations with the Surrounding Cultures, the Institute for Advanced Studies of Jerusalem, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in that framework I was honored to get his help.

Ayyubids in Yemen, which show the following art features: colors, the swollen swirling throat, the missing body (Figs. 1–4, 10–12), the Ostriches rosette (Figs. 10, 11), the double-headed ostrich (Fig. 12) and the Ostriches diamond (Fig. 3). Hence, the Ma'rib archetype, when compared to the Jewish mating dance art form and its variations, reveals somewhat about the Jewish innovation and how that it has incorporated the above mentioned six distinctive art features.

The Ma'rib archetype, when compared to the Rasulid prototype, reveals somewhat about the Rasulid art innovation in two features: The first is the front-view positioning of the tail while freeing it. The freeing tail is in the center of the composition in order to emphasize the beautiful white feathers of the male tail in contrast to its black feathers (Figs. 13, 20, 21, 23). As mentioned above, the female has no black feathers at all (Fig. 9). The front-view positioning of the freeing tail was very important to the Rasulid. This is clearly shown just as they had presented it on their silver coins, in spite of the fact that there is no color on the coins to emphasize the contrasting black & white colors of the male tail. As such, in order to emphasize the freeing feathers, each of the delicate separated spiral-like edges of the white feathers of the tail is presented one by one, in the center of the coins (Figs. 20, 21, 23). The second is the Rasulid prototype of the hunted ostriches (Fig. 22). As known, ostrich hunting in Yemen was done by riding horseback, in order to exhaust the ostrich.²³ The falcon was an important help in that hunt, as was common in Yemen. As a result, both the hunted ostrich and the falcon are presented on Rasulid silver coins as a Rasulid luxury emblem (Fig. 22).

All this provides an explanation for the varied ostriches presentations on Jewish artifacts in the eighteenth century. It also provides an explanation for the unique bodiless pair of ostriches on the anklets (*khalākhil*), made in 1771/2 by the Jewish silversmith, Sālim Kasil.

²³ Laufer 1926, p. 14.

He had made his pair of ostriches anklets by incorporating only the curved and swollen throat of the ostrich, having ostriches heads terminate at the two edges (Fig. 28).²⁴ The point that emerged from this is that the ostriches art forms are similar enough, yet different enough, to show ostriches not only as a very well known emblem in the Jewish communities in Radā' and Ṣan'ā in the eighteenth century, but also as a continuation of the Ma'rib archetype of ca. 750 BC.

The Ma'rib archetype is supported by a later variation, dated by Robin to 700–640 BC, today in the National Museum of Ṣan'ā (Fig. 29).²⁵ Here, the relief shows two running groups of ostrich in juxtapositions and complete symmetry. Just at the center, a pair of ostriches is shown in the so called 'kicking gesture'.²⁶ However, in light of the ostrich mating dance in nature and its Jewish mating dance art form, this positioning looks to me as a mating gesture as well. In my opinion, here, the focus on the newly mated ostrich male

²⁴ The pair of Jewish Ostrich anklets signed by the Jewish silversmith, Sālim Kasil, is included in Berger 2005. The information on ostriches, as presented in this article, was not then in my hands and I had then interpreted these ostrich heads as duck heads, based on the information provided by Carsten Niebuhr of the Danish scientific expedition to Yemen in 1672/3 that ducks were native to Yemen, as well as the tradition of duck heads in ancient gold Persian bracelets. This article is therefore its correction. An article on this pair of anklets Yemen is in reviewing, as informed at: <http://www.oraberger.co.il/publications>. It should be noted that almost an identical ostrich anklet, probably made also at the shop of Sāl'im Kasil, was published by Bothmer (2000, p. 21, figure at the bottom). I definitely do not agree with his presentation of the jewel as being an armlet.

²⁵ I would like to thank Prof. Robin, for providing me with the photograph, and Dr. Paul Yule, Ruprecht-Karls University, Heidelberg, Germany, who kindly lent me a copy of Arbach-Audouin 2004. A B&W photo of Fig. 29 is presented there (Fig. xxx). A similar artifact, almost identical to Fig. 29 is presented there (Fig. xxxi).

²⁶ For the typology of ostriches, in general, and for the 'kicking gesture' positioning in particular, see the digital version of Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East at: <http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/index.php>. I would like to thank Dr. Tallay Ornan, Dept. of Archaeology, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, with whom I consulted regarding ostrich in the Ancient World. Dr. Ornan also directed me to Prof. Keel Othmar, who kindly passed my request to Jürg Egger, University of Fribourg, Dept. of Biblical Studies, who kindly e-mailed me the link of the above mentioned IDD article. I would like to thank all of them for their kind and helpful help and information.

and female running together indicates a successful mate, as the running together is part of the mating process and is its last phase. Robin assumes ostriches to be a fertility symbol in the context of the kingdom of Sheba.²⁷ The point that emerges from this is that fertility is the common denominator of the Ma'rib archetype and its variation, and of all the Jewish presentations in Yemen of the Jewish mating dance art form and their variations in Yemen (Figs. 1–4, 11, 12, 14–19, 28).

As Potts showed, the running ostrich was a well-known art archetype in the Arabian Peninsula as early as the beginning of the second millennium BC.²⁸ However, the art formula of that time shows no fertility features at all. Hence, from the point of view of fertility, the Ma'rib archetype is the earliest mutual art archetype for both the Jewish and the Rasulid art forms (Figs. 1–4, 11, 12, 14–19, 20–23, 28).

The point that emerges from this is that, from the standpoint of Jewish art in Yemen, ostriches were a sweeping phenomenon and emblem up until the end of the eighteenth century in *Qā' bīr al-'azab* and in Radā', as also probably in all other Jewish communities in southern Yemen. Subsequently, ostriches are seen as safeguards of the Jewish community as a whole.

VII. Summing up

In conclusion, therefore, we can say, first, that ostriches were used as safeguards in Jewish art in Yemen. Second, ostriches were used in Yemen as a fertility emblem, as well as a luxury emblem. Third, Jewish art in Yemen utilized ostriches as a blend of Jewish thought and Yemeni art. Fourth, the main innovation of Jewish art in Yemen, as far as ostriches are concerned, was the focus on the mating dance of the ostrich male and its translation into clear and dominant art features. These are: colors – especially the red color of the curved

²⁷ For another relief showing ostriches in the context of divinities, as well as ibexes and other agricultural subjects, see: Arbach & Audouin 2004, Figs. iii, vii.

²⁸ Potts 2001, p. 185, Figs. 2, 3.

and swollen throat and its red legs (Figs. 1–4, 10–12), the swollen and swirling throat (Figs. 1–4, 10, 11), the missing body of the ostrich (Figs. 1–4, 10–12), the Ostriches rosette (Figs. 10, 11), the Ostriches diamond (Fig. 3) and the double-headed ostrich (Fig. 12). Fifth, ostriches motifs in Jewish art in the eighteenth century in Radā' and in Ṣan'ā (Figs. 15–19) are not a retro-emblem, but are directly connected to the mating dance art form shown in Hebrew illuminated Bibles under the Ayyubids in Yemen (Figs. 1–4, 10–12). Sixth, since painted ostriches have been preserved in Jewish art in Yemen as late as the end of the eighteenth century, it is clear that Jewish art in Yemen is its main conservator, though not solely (Figs. 1–4, 11, 12, 14–19, 20–23, 28). Seventh, it is clear that the research of Jewish art in Yemen has a great potential to endow with a significant contribution to the arts in Yemen.

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