THE MULTIPLE FACES OF MEANING IN THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF MODERN TURKISH FOLK DANCE TRADITION

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Complexities of modernity have puzzled many folklorists or anthropologists who focused on the urban, the "non-native," "the inauthentic." Claude Lévi-Strauss argued in the late sixties that it was not possible to do an ethnography of modernity: modern society was just too complex; history had intervened and smashed its structure. No matter how hard one searched, one would never find a coherent system of relations in modern society. Quoting Lévi-Strauss in the introduction of his landmark book *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannel gives us a thorough survey of how he ended up with a structural analysis of tourism. Analyzing his field notes, MacCannel discovered that the existing theory, which best fit his facts originated in structural anthropology. His data showed that tourist attractions were an unplanned typology of structure that provided direct access to the modern consciousness or "world view":

> Modernity first appears to everyone as it did to Lévy-Strauss, as disorganized fragments, alienating, wasteful, violent, superficial, unplanned, unstable and inauthentic. On second examination, however, this appearance seems almost a mask, for beneath the disorderly exterior, modern society hides a firm resolve to establish itself on a worldwide base... For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler life-styles [MacCannel 1976: 2-3].

Hoping that his book would serve as an introduction to the structural analysis of modern society, MacCannel stressed that he "did not *try* to do a structural analysis of the tourist and modern society" but that "it forced itself" upon him [MacCannel 1976:2].

The staged folk dance practice conforms to MacCannel's statement about moderns and modernity.[1] It carries the mystique of the old times and clothes, while embodying various forms of modernity in its speed and stylization of movements, in the change of its costumes, musical instruments, lights and makeup. As a participant of modern Turkish folk dance tradition, I was myself puzzled by the complexity of the system after fifteen-years of practice. Beginning by the late seventies, the folk dance practice in Turkey had evolved into a market with its own social and economic structure. My own journey with modern Turkish folk dance tradition had a very similar pattern with MacCannel's experience: my data imposed structural analysis upon me! Following research on the history of the folk dance movement in Turkey, I found that the facts which laid before me revealed a complexity of terms and concepts which needed to be redefined, deconstructed, and comparatively tested. The multiplicity of meanings assigned to dances and to the overall folk dance activities was confusing and puzzling, especially for the performer. This is how I joined the Structural Analysis Sub-Study Group of ICTM. The comparative and theoretical discussions over the years clarified much of my confusions. I found Adrienne Kaeppler's approach to the analysis of movement systems a key to explaining the structure of the modern Turkish folk dance experience. This paper is the outcome of these fruitful discussions. In search of the meaning of the modern folk dance movement in Turkey, I will start by giving a historical review and then discuss the outcomes of my ethnography of the modern folk dance institutions in the light of Kaeppler's theoretical approach to the analysis of movement systems.

Historical review [2]

The revival of folk dances began in Turkey in the early 1930s as part of the new nation-building cultural policy. Along with a number of other folk genres such as folk music, folk poetry or folk drama, the initial attempts to teach and to perform traditional dances were initiated by the so-called "People's Houses." People's Houses were the semi-official cultural research and performance centers (very much like the Czech *sokol*s) established by the Republican People's Party (RPP) in each town, and later in villages. It was under the People's Houses that local folk dances were collected and were formalized to be presented in the annual national celebrations held in Ankara. In these days, the well-known local dancers would be encouraged by the People's Houses community to gather dances of different villages from a particular town. Originally, such dances were performed for different dance events, including weddings, religious and national holidays, local seasonal festivities or farewell parties for the military service. However, not all dances of a village or town would be selected for the final version to be presented in Ankara. Some would be eliminated, simply because they did not fit into a group performance, others because they were more spectacular in terms of their narrativeness.[3]

With the RPP's decline in the late 1940s, the activities of the People's Houses ceased in 1950. But by then the Houses' mission was accomplished in the sense that staged folk dancing had already been established in national celebrations and public performances. Beginning in the fifties, private institutions, mostly banks, took over the organization of folk dance festivals and continued the tradition established by the People's Houses. During the period between 1930 and 1960, folk dances were thus "visually" exchanged on a national platform, while local dancers, to a great extent, still lived in their own village or town. It was only after the 1960s that folk dancing began to be taught to non-native performers. University students who came to big cities for their education saw in folk dancing an opportunity for socialization and making a living. There, folk dances began to be exchanged as "movement systems." A repertoire including a variety of dances became an important asset for those university students who wanted to teach at elementary and high school level. During the 1970s, folk dancing grew into a market with opportunities for dance teachers, musicians, costume-makers, managers of schools and the newly founded *dernek*s, private folk dance clubs, which organized annual shows and trips abroad.

Units of structure in the Turkish folk dance tradition: types and genres

Since its early days, the staging of the folk dances brought a drastic change in the way the folk dances were performed. The stage and urban context imposed their own rules and requirements in many ways. First, the audience profile changed. The new folk dance audience did not share the cultural competence of the natives. Dancers and the audience shared the performance mostly "on the basis of differential identity" and assigned different meanings to these performances (see Bauman 1972). Second, from the beginning, most dances were shortened, speeded up, and more importantly, began to be performed by mixed groups. Many folk dance authorities (that is, teachers, competitions' jury members, critics, and so on) questioned how the "authentic" form could survive within the "modern" context. They were most anxious to keep the steps in their original forms. However, the new folk dance market asked for novelties, and floor patterning soon became inevitable. The most important change the floor-patterns brought to folk dancing was the increased uniformity between different folk dances. While in their original forms, the generic distinction between different folk dances were greatly noticeable in terms of movement quality, musical style and costumes. In time, they were reduced to the application of some geometric forms on stage, such as stars, circles, triangles, diagonal or curvilinear forms. As the possibility to create new patterns on the floor was quite limited, most of the geometric shapes remained the same. Floor patterning also affected the musical accompaniments and costumes. The search for a "modern" form of representation induced a polyphonic musical presentation: some instruments which were not originally used began to accompany the new versions

of folk dances to add a "new flavor" to please the audience. The accordion, which was a local instrument of the Artvin dances, for instance, began to accompany the horn in Adıyaman dances or the clarinet in Kırklareli dances. The costumes began to look alike, as most folk dance institutions, even the local Anatolian ones ordered their dance costumes from the tailors in big cities, who generally used the same kind of textile and colors for different dance regions. It is this folk dance tradition, which developed in big cities in Turkey between 1960s-1990s, that I will analyze, based on the ethnographies of a series of folk dance institutions. My observations of the folk dance institutions consists of my own experience as a folk dancer in high schools such as Notre Dame de Sion and Beşiktaş Anadolu Lisesi between 1977-1983 and in Boğaziçi University Folklore Club between 1983-1988, and during field research I conducted at Folklor Kurumu in Istanbul in 1992 and 1995.

The emerging folk dance repertoire was consolidated during the 1970s. It was taught to performers in schools (ranging from the elementary to the college level), or in private folk dance, clubs called the *dernek*s. The repertoire of a school or club generally included a series of dances named after a town in Turkey such as Artvin dances, Van dances, Bolu dances (Artvin *oyunları*, Van *oyunları*, Bolu *oyunları*). Folk dances were also classified by dance scholars (that is, Metin And, Sadi Yaver Ataman, Şerif Baykurt or Cemil Demirsipahi, and so on) based on "genre," which included the *bar, halay, karşılama, horon* and the *zeybek*. In terms of naming, each folk dance carried both the name of the towns where it was collected and that of its genre, its *tür*. Through the history of the Turkish folk dance movement, some dances were eliminated while others survived as the preferred ones. The "typical repertoire" which had eventually been formed aimed at representing the "diversity" of Turkish national culture, giving place to towns or genres, which would celebrate this diversity in style, costume and musical accompaniment. It included one of each genre and of each region[4] represented by a town. For instance, a "typical repertoire" of a school or club would include one or more of these following dances and genres:

Name of the town	Name of the genre as classified by dance scholars
Artvin	Bar
Diyarbakır	Halay
Kırklareli	Karşılama
Trabzon	Horon
Aydın	Zeybek

Naturally, this repertoire had its exceptions, such as the *horon* and the *zeybek* were not as widespread as the others because they were harder to teach, or new additions could be seen, as was the case with Bolu dances (*karşılama* genre), which were very popular in the 1980s.

In schools or clubs, each town's dances would be taught as a suite of individual dances, called *oyun*s. For example, Artvin dances would include *oyun*s such as *Döne döne, Atabarı*, or *Coşkun Çoruh*. These dances named after a town or a genre were taught by the folk dance teachers to performers through a visuo-kinetic transmission of movements.[5] Performers, however, perceived these namings just as "types" of a larger genre of dancing referred as "folk dancing," *halk oyunları oynamak* or *folklor oynamak* in Turkish. They would distinguish this genre of dancing from others such as ballet (*bale)*, disco dancing (*disko dansı*) or oriental dancing (*göbek atmak/oynamak)*. Within this genre of folk dancing, performers also distinguish different "types" like "Artvin *oyunları*," "Diyarbakır *oyunları*" or Aydın *oyunları*. These types sometimes represented a certain hierarchy in the repertoire of a given school or club, depending on the difficulty of their movements, their narrative characteristics, the showiness of their costumes, or the musical accompaniment.

The performer's experience: the meaning of folk dancing and movements

The activity of folk dancing as it was practiced in schools and in *dernek*s through the 1980s and the 1990s required their dancers to rehearse a variety of folk dances in a row once or twice a week. The schedule was set in such a way that a particular town's dance was rehearsed for about an hour to be followed by a different town, and thus in most cases, by a different dance genre. The learning process generally operated at three levels. First, the teachers showed the dancers the basic steps and hand gestures; second, the floor patterns were taught for the final stage performance; and finally, before the performance, the "feelings" of the movements were dictated to the performers by the teacher of each town's dance. Exposed to different dance genres from around Turkey, performers learned a great variety of movement patterns. Most of these movements had undoubtedly changed since the 1930s, but they still offered a large diversity in terms of movement quality. "Artvin" male dances, for instance, required the skills to adapt to a progressively faster rhythm, without destroying the linear or circular order of the whole group. The movements were intricate, speedy and sharp, and the dancers were expected to keep their hands attached to each other while changing floor-patterns throughout the dance. "Aydın" dances, however, were mostly performed by individual dancers moving independently from one another. Here, performers held their arms outstretched with elbows at shoulder level, and snapped their fingers. Aydın dances were based on wide, slow, and almost heroic steps, and differed greatly from Artvin dances. However, performers, who joined a folk dance activity in schools or in *dernek*s, learned these movements in an ecclectical manner. In most cases, performers were not familiar with the cultures in which these dances had emerged. In contrast to the student dancers of the 1960s, they were born and raised in big cities as children of the second generation of emigrants from rural areas (one may add that their teachers were not always a native of these dances either). Besides adapting themselves to a diversity of movements, performers also memorized the related floor-patterns. The overall group performance became the priority, and failing to move at the "right" time to the "right" place within the predetermined floor pattern was unpardonable. Consequently, the dancers would shift their attention from the basic movements of the dances to their placement within the floor patterning.

Most of the performers memorized the basic movements and the floor patterns without developing a genuine interest in the meaning of these movements. It was the social context, which defined, and then dominated, their relation to the folk dancing activity. They were more interested in the year-end performance where they displayed their abilities to friends and family. The dancers' social identity in their folk dance institution vis-à-vis their teachers and friends gave important clues in terms of the meaning they assigned to this activity. Being the head of a dance group was a prestigious task, for example, because it manifested the teacher's confidence to a particular dancer's competence to give the commands during the performance by shouting a loud word like "hayda" or "hoppa". The social context also determined the meaning performers assigned to the movements they learned. In the 1980s Diyarbakır dances were very popular. And it was very common to see the *Çepik oyunu*, a fight-dance, performed in a joyful manner, simply because dancers framed their performance as a social dance. A rehearsal held in 1992 at the Folklor Kurumu in Istanbul illustrated another example of that kind. There, three dancers were waiting for the rehearsal to start and exercised among themselves. They practiced the *Yüksek Minare oyunu* of the Kırım dances.[6] The emphasis was on a hand motif where both hands joined toward the sky as if pointing to the height of a tall minaret of a mosque. A male performer who noticed the movement approached another group of friends in the hall transforming the arm motif into a magician's gesture of "abracadabra" and making his friends laugh.

The use of structural analysis in explaining the formation of a new movement system: the dominant *morphokines*

Exposed to a number of different dances and movements at a time, performers who were part of the urban folk dance movement, eventually developed a mixed conception of a movement vocabulary. Following Adrienne Kaeppler's terminology, they learned a wide range of *kinemes, morphokines* or *motifs*, but they perceived the entire dance package as a single cultural form, *folklor oynamak* (folk dancing). Kaeppler defined *kinemes* as the minimal units of movement having no meaning in themselves. She called a *morphokine* the smallest unit which had meaning in the structure of the movement system and which could not be divided without changing or destroying its meaning. Organized morphokines formed *motifs*, and the simultaneously and chronologically ordered motifs form the *dance* itself [Kaeppler 1967, 1992]. In the urban folk dance experience, dancers learned these kinemes, morphokines and motifs altogether, with not much attention whether they belonged to a particular town. Their knowledge of what the movements originally meant was very limited. The concept of a `meaningful movement' had different significance for an urban folk dancer and a native. For instance, the *Tırge* motif of Adıyaman dances, as "four counts stop, followed by four steps forward, while shaking the shoulders" would be recognized as a meaningful unit to a native dancer. Folk dance teachers would call this motif the Tırge *figür* (figure). However, the folk dance performers would perceive this motif differently. The teachers, especially if natives, taught the *Tırge* motif at one go, without separating it into subunits. For them, the movement was already unbreakable, or could only be divided into two parts as the steps and the shaking of the shoulders. While the *Tırge* motif was already a fundamental unit for a native, the performers "destructured" it to come up with other morphokines or motifs. For those who have difficulty in remembering the fourth count of the movement, the first three counts could form a very meaningful unit, which they would call the *giriş* (the entry of the movement). This would be a new morphokine, since they would focus their concentration up to the point where they have a certain difficulty and then memorized primarily the first three counts. The following part of the movement including the fourth count would therefore be another meaningful unit. For others, the advance toward the front after the first four steps in place would be recognized as one particular morphokine, while the first four stop counts would be considered as another. Or, the shaking of the shoulders would often be forgotten, although it was a separate upper-body morphokine, and a deterministic part of the overall a *Tırge* motif. In that respect, what a native Adıyaman dancer considered a morphokine, differed from what an outsider dancer perceived and recognized as a meaningful unit within the same movement. Folk dance performers developed their own morphokinemic understanding of the movements based on their own visuo-kinetic learning experience. In many cases, movements were broken into "teachable units," if the teacher is not a native, or when a performer tries to catch-up a difficult movement with the help of a friend. In a morphokine formed by eight counts of complicated steps, performers recognized more than one morphokine. They would divide the teacher's morphokinemic units at their own convenience, to make the movements easily graspable for themselves, or in some cases would like to alter the movements or add new ones. In a rehearsal of the Siirt dances in 1984, for instance, performers of the Boğaziçi University Folklore Club asked their teacher whether they could shake the shoulders at one section of the dance, simply because "they were feeling like it" (*"içimizden öyle geliyor"*).

Exposed to dances from more than one locality, the `kinetic vocabulary' of urban folk dancers covered a large geographical area. In addition, the emphasis on the floor patterns diverted their attention away from the intricate distinctions between the numerous morphokines and motifs. In their own perception, they retrieved from their memory several common movements, several different morphokines, which came from different motifs. They eventually ended up classifying those similar morphokines, which both eased their memorizing process, and marked cues for

specific parts of the dances they learned. They were in fact the *dominant morphokines* which appeared in more than one dance. Being more significant than many other morphokines from the same movement pool, they provided cues for the dancers to memorize a particular dance motif in a variety of dances. These morphokines were not unique to a single locality, but were used in dances from different towns. For instance, the *ayak çekme* (pulling the leg) was a morphokine used both in *Kampana oyunu* from the Kırklareli dances and in *Atabarı oyunu* of the Artvin dances. Similarly, one could depict the *çökme* (kneeling down) in the *Beşayak oyunu* of Adıyaman dances and in the *Teke zortlatması oyunu* of the Afyon-Dinar dances; the *çapraz* (crossing the legs) in the *Fatoş oyunu* of Edirne dances and the *Kobak oyunu* of Artvin dances; or *omuz titretme* (shaking the shoulders) in the *Tırge oyunu* of Adıyaman dances as well as in the *Çepik oyunu* of Diyarbakır dances. These morphokines were marked by the performers as the peak moment of a movement which eased to memorize it or to recognize a particular motif in the dance. In other words, a new structured movement system had gradually been formed where new morphokinemic semantics were generated and where local dances' particularities had become increasingly indistinct. Originally, the kneeling down in an Artvin dance motif would be different from those in "Aydın" or in "Adıyaman" dances. But the mere kinetic similarity that they were both "kneeling downs" made the dancers categorize them under the same group of a significant pattern among a variety of other "folk dance" movements. In other words, dancers would remember the "kneeling down" as a familiar movement met in various dances, and store that significant movement unit, the *dominant morphokine*, in their folk dance movement vocabulary.

The narrative meaning of the folk dances

The dominant morphokines were doubtlessly meaningful units for the performers. But the audience asked more for the narrative meaning. In her structural analysis on Tongan dance, Adrienne Kaeppler explored "meaning" at two different levels. The first level corresponded to the relationship set between the performers and the movement system itself, dancers "recognizing" a certain movement as "meaningful": here, the term meaning implied the "dancers' recognition." *Folklor oynamak* referred to this first level, as dancers recognized the dominant morphokines as the basic units of their structured movement system. The other level of meaning was established in terms of the Jakobsonian model of communication, where, the dancers and the audience who were familiar to the deep structure of their culture deciphered a certain meaning from the dances: in this sense the term meaning referred to a "referential meaning." This was a more complicated level as it involved a meaning shared between the audience and the performers through a movement system, which had historically evolved through the years. The performance of the Adıyaman dances illustrated the case much better. The dance dramatizes the harvesttime with men working in the field with sickles and women bringing them water, and later praying. The effectiveness of the narrative format was acknowledged by Kaeppler as well in conveying their cultural information through dance to non-native audiences (see Kaeppler 1985). Erwing Goffman called that kind of narrative representation a "redoing":

> the performances of a task-like activity out of its usual functional context (the native setting in the case of stage folk dancing), in order to allow someone who is not the performer to obtain a close picture of the doing of the activity... Although, the demonstrating of something can be radically different from the doing of that something, there is still some carry-over – especially if real equipment (as native costumes, real sickles and water) is used [Goffman 1974].

As far as the stage performers of Adıyaman dances were concerned, the "conative function" was dominant to communicate through this dance activity, rather than an intent to convey a particular message through the movements. In scheduling the year-end show program at Boğaziçi University Folklore Club through the 1980s, Adıyaman Dances were always placed as the "final" dance, with the expectation that they would leave the best impression on the audience

by their narrative format. At the moment where the male dancers poured real water over their head and drank it, the audience – almost with no exception – would be impressed by the "realness" of the scene and applauded. The wetting of the stage with the real water suspended the "make-believeness" of the frame for one instant, and the audience was put in an "out-of-frame" state. Therefore, in the communication interacting between the audience and the performers, the dance movements as codes of communication were meaningful to the audience by their narrativeness and the willingness of watching a close relative or friend. The audience did not intend to decipher the movements of the dance, which referred to the native context in which they were generated. As for the performers, they preferred the narrative sections of the dance to non-narrative ones. The original referential meanings of the dance movements remained unintelligible to the performers. Having no familiarity with any of the local cultures, dancers developed a certain preference with the movements which had a "narrative" meaning, that is, with the movements which communicate through a certain "dramatic realism" or a "mimetic character" (Kaeppler 1989). In Adıyaman dances, for instance, dancers were able to settle the referentiality between their dance movements, that is, the rhythmical raising of the arms toward the sky, and the traditional praying manners in real life. Their own visual experience or cultural memory created a certain rapprochement between what they performed and the original meaning of the dance movement based on its narrative expression.

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Turkish folk dance tradition evolved since the 1930s into a structured movement system of its own, which differs from individual local dance traditions. Although local dances contributed to the formation of a consolidated repertoire of Turkish folk dances, the differences among them were reduced in time, leaving their place to another structured movement system, which was called *folklor oynamak* in general and was distinguished from other genres of dancing. Performers who were introduced to this new movement system distinguished *dominant morphokines* from a variety of folk dances as meaningful units of movements. They perceived their practice of folk dancing as a social dance where individual movements no longer meanings from their original context.

ENDNOTES

1. I chose to use the term folk dance deliberately, as opposed to native, indigenous, local or traditional dance, mainly because it is the term we use in Turkish (halk oyunu), but also because the term "folk dance" is itself historically loaded with the paradox and dynamics, which stimulated this research.
2. Among many dances in Artvin, for instance, Polka, Kurt Barı, Berta or Kapanı were those which did not survive through the years, while a conventional "Artvin dance" in a folk dance club would include Daldalan, Kobak, Deli Horon, Sarı Çiçek, Orta Batum or Cilveloy.
3. For a more detailed survey of the history of the Turkish folk dance movement, see Arzu Öztürkmen, *Folklore and nationalism in Turkey*, 1993.
4. Geography books classify regions in Turkey as the Marmara (including eastern Thrace), Aegean, Mediterranean, Black Sea, eastern Anatolian and southeastern Anatolian regions.
5. The expression "visuo-kinetic" transmission of movement was coined in our discussions under the ICTM Sub-study Group on Structural Analysis to stress the importance of the visual impression in the process of learning to dance and of the directly experienced feeling of other dancers' movement and the direct absorption and imitation of movement.
6. Kırım (Crimea) is now outside of Turkish national borders, but the Kırım dances are practiced by the Crimeans who settled in Turkey at the turn of the century.

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