Original Article

The role of the kinetic motif in determining the form and time of dance through the dance “Tis Marias”

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Published online: March 25, 2014

(Accepted for publication March 20, 2014)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2014.01018;

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper was to research the role of the kinetic motif in the shaping of the form and duration of dance in the area of “Rumluki” (Alexandria, Imathia) through the dance “Tis Marias”, as well as compare and contrast its performance in the traditional way with that of its presentation by local folk dance clubs. The collection of data was carried out on the basis of the ethnographic method, while the comparative method was utilized for its processing. Five women between the ages of 85 and 88 performed separately and in different times the dance “Tis Marias”, while being recorded on video camera. We consider the performance of the dance by the five women as its “traditional” form. The performance of the dance by three folk dance groups of Alexandria was also recorded. To fully comprehend the place and function of dance in conventional society, a series of partly controlled interviews of elderly women, performers of the dance at a young age, were conducted. To analyze the structure and form of the dance, we used the methodological approach of the ethnological dance group of I. F. M. C., as this was applied in the analysis of Greek folk dance. From the structural analyses of the performances of the five women and the index of the interviews, the following findings ensued: a) There exist sixteen (16) kinetic motifs, which, combined with each other, form the five (5) dance motifs of the complete choreography. b) The fifth (5th) dance motif appears in three (3) variations. c) Two dance motifs (the 1st and 3rd) consist of the repetition of one (M1 and M6 respectively) kinetic motif. d) All the sixteen (16) kinetic motifs appear only in the artistic performance of the dance by the three folk dance clubs of the area. e) More repetitions of each kinetic motif are observed in the performance of the dance by the clubs. f) It was observed that in the performance of the dance by the five women some of the kinetic motifs are absent, or appear with fewer repetitions, thus forming five different versions of the dance. From the above, as a final conclusion, we can claim that the dance “Tis Marias” can potentially have as many “traditional” forms as its leading dancers. In contrast, in the folk dance clubs only one form has prevailed.

Key words: traditional dance, cultural groups, cultural identity, structural analysis.

Introduction

Cultural elements and practices constitute points of reference of the collective identity and show not only “who” but also “what” we are (Tsaoussis, 1978). Undoubtedly, dance constitutes a significant cultural practice of a group, which, according to Royce (2002), functions as a “determiner-indicator” of identity. Panopoulou (2001) supports that dance is not simply considered a notional expression or part of culture; on the contrary, it participates in the construction of national identity, because of the fact that dance is performed by people for other people, thus depending on connections between them (Craw, 1995) and, generally, on the overall context within which the above connections are formed and reproduced.

Focusing our attention in the kinetic motif of dance and how this is presented within the narrow limits of the community, we observe that every community spots those dance elements which it considers suitable for it. Thus, it forms its own dance repertoire, its own ways of expression and interpretation, resulting in the formation of a special profile in the place and time of their dance tradition (Filippou, 2002).

The purpose of this paper was to research the role of the kinetic motif in the shaping of form and duration of dance in Rumluki (Alexandria – Gidas), prefecture of Imathia through the dance “Tis Marias”, as well as compare and contrast its “traditional” performance with that of its presentation by local folk dance clubs during their representations.

By kinetic motif we mean a small kinetic unit, which, most of the times, coincides with the musical meter; by dance motif we mean a larger kinetic unit consisting of two or more kinetic motifs, the repetition of which, or its potential variations, compose the complete choreography, i.e. the dance (Prantsidis, Prantsidis 2007).

When we refer to Rumluhi (Alexandria), we refer to the section of the Imathia plain, which the Aliakmon river crosses, and stretches from the northern part of the foot of the Pieria mountains to the reed thickets of the marshland of Giannitsa and below the hills of Veria to the Ludias river and the estuaries of the Aliakmon in the Thermaikos Gulf, while others claim that it stretches up to the Axios river (Moschopoulos, 2004).

The collection of the necessary data for the paper was carried out on the basis of the ethnographic approach (Gefou- Madianou, 1999; Buckland, 1999; Giurcesku, 1999; Kaeppler, 1999) and the active observation on the part of the researcher; it was based on the use of primary and secondary sources. Particularly, the primary factual data of the research derives from on-the-spot investigation (Lange, 1984); it involves the collection of material regarding the place of dance in the traditional and modern society of the area and consists mainly of oral testimonies, using open-ended questions for partly-controlled (Thompson, 2002) and on-the-spot recordings of the dance "Tis Marias". Five women, between the ages of 85 and 88, danced separately and at different times the dance "Tis Marias", being simultaneously recorded on video camera. The secondary data comes from the recorded performance of the dance by three folk dance clubs of the area of Alexandria during the presentation of the dance on stage.

We consider the performance of the dance by the five women its "traditional" form. For a thorough understanding of the place and function of dance in traditional society, we conducted partly-controlled interviews of elderly women who used to perform the dance at a young age.

The findings of the research were analyzed with the use of the structural- morphological method, as this is suggested by Martin & Pessovar (1961), the International Folk Music Council (I.F.M.C., 1974) and applied to the dance practice (Koutsouba, 1997; Koutsouba, 2007; Tyrovola, 2008). The use of the structural-morphological method was deemed necessary, since the subject is studied through the analysis of the structure and the form of the dance along with the parallel development of its structural levels with those of the music accompaniment (Tyrovola, 2008).

To compare and contrast the traditional and artistic form of dancing, the comparative approach is used, which facilitates the classification and evaluation of the content of homogenous objects (Tyrovola, 2008). Through the comparative approach, we venture to present the similarities or differences, as well as the extent of transformation of the structure and form of the dance "Tis Marias", in relation with the different context in which it is performed. The use of the comparative-typological approach, as a study of the morpho-structural texture of the examined form of the dance "Tis Marias", constitutes a supplementary methodological procedure. The comparison refers to the presentation of the dance by the five women and the three folk dance clubs.

Results - discussion

From the structural analysis of the form of the dance, the following sixteen kinetic motifs were discovered. These constitute the five dance motifs of which the complete choreography consists.

1st Dancing Motif

Motif	M1			M1			M1			M1		
m.m. 1 st part: 11/8 $\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon + \theta \varepsilon + \theta$ $\in$	1 st part	2 nd p art	3 rd pa rt	1 st part	2 nd p art	3 rd pa rt	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$
Cells	R ₀	L ₀	R ₃	R ₀	L ₀	R ₃	R ₀	L ₀	R ₃	R ₀	L ₀	R ₃
Direction	→	→	□	→	→	□	→	→	□	→	→	□

2nd Dancing Motif

Motif	M2			M3			M4			M5		
m.m. 1 st part: 11/8 $\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon + \theta \varepsilon + \theta$ $\in$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$
Cells	R ₀	L ₂	L ₂	L ₅	R ₂	R ₂	R ₄	L ₂	L ₂	L ₀	R ₃	R ₃
Direction												

3rd Dancing Motif

Motif	M6			M6			M6		
m.m. 1 st part: 11/8 $\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon + \theta \varepsilon + \theta$ $\in$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$
Cells	R_0	L_0	R_7	R_0	L_0	R_7	R_0	L_0	R_7
Direction									

4th Dancing Motif

Motif	M7			M8			M7			M8		
m.m. 1 st part: 11/8 $\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon + \theta \varepsilon + \theta$ $\in$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$	$\Theta \varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\theta \varepsilon$	$\theta \in$
Cells	R_0	L_3	L_3	L_0	R_3	R_3	R_0	L_3	L_3	L_0	R_3	R_3
Direction												

5th Dancing Motif (1st variation)

Motif	M9			M10			M11			M12		
m.m. 2 nd part: 11/16 $\Psi \vee \vee \vee + \vee \vee \vee + \varepsilon \varepsilon$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$
Cells	R_0	L_5	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_8	L_8	L_0	R_8	R_8
Direction												

5th Dancing Motif (2nd variation)

Motif	M9			M10			M13			M14		
m.m. 2 nd part: 11/16 $\Psi \vee \vee \vee + \vee \vee \vee + \varepsilon \varepsilon$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$
Cells	R_0	L_5	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0
Direction												

5th Dancing Motif (3rd variation)

Motif	M9			M10			M15			M16		
m.m. 2 nd part: 11/16 $\Psi \vee \vee \vee + \vee \vee \vee + \varepsilon \varepsilon$	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part	1 st part	2 nd part	3 rd part
	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$	$\Psi \vee \vee \vee$	$\vee \vee \vee$	$\varepsilon \varepsilon$
Cells	R_0	L_5	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_0	R_0	L_6	L_6	L_0	R_6	R_6
Direction												

From the structural analysis of the eight performances of the dance regarding its form, we observe that:

1. There are sixteen (16) kinetic motifs, which combined between them, constitute the fine (5) dance motif of the entire choreography.
2. The fifth (5th) dance motif appears in three (3) different variations.

3. Two dance motifs (the 1st and the 3rd) consist of repetitions of one (M1 and M6 respectively) kinetic motif.

4. All the sixteen (16) motifs are present only in the artistic performance of the dance by the three local folk dance clubs.

5. In the presentation of the dance by the clubs we observe more repetitions of each motif.

6. It was found that, in the performance of the dance by the five women, some of the kinetic motifs do not appear at all, or, if they do, they appear with fewer repetitions, thus creating five different forms of the dance.

From the structural analysis of the eight performances of the dance regarding its duration, it is observed that:

1. The performance of the dance by the clubs has bigger duration than that of the women, due to the use of all the kinetic motifs and the more repetitions of those.

2. The performance of the dance by the clubs is identical, both in terms of form and duration, due to the use of the same number of repetitions of the same kinetic motifs, interestingly enough, in the same order.

3. The performance of the dance by the five women appears in five different time lengths, due to the use of a different number of kinetic motifs and their different repetitions.

4. As for the time span, of the two parts the women usually dance longer the first part, which is much slower than the first.

From the above structural-morphological analysis of the performance of the dance by the five women and the three folk dance clubs it is established that the performances do not present structural transformations or “distortions”. The differences are pinpointed on the variable elements of the form, like the number of kinetic motifs used and the number of their repetitions.

Accordingly, in the presentation of the dance by the three local folk dance clubs, all sixteen kinetic motifs with the same number of repetitions are used, resulting in an identical form and duration of the dance in all three presentations.

The use of all the observed kinetic motifs by the clubs may be the result of the demands caused by the presentation of the dance on stage and the desire of the dance instructors of the three clubs to include in the choreography presented all the observed kinetic motifs, so as not to be accused of distorting the dance.

In contrast, the performance of the dance of the elderly women produces five versions, kinetically different, as they consist of different combinations and different numbers of repetitions of five similar dance motifs. The different number of repetitions results in versions differing in terms of duration as well. Additionally, if we pay attention to the duration of the two parts of the dance, we will notice that the women prefer to dance for a longer time the first part, which is much slower than the first. According to the women-participants, the dance exclusively “belongs” to the first dancer and its form and duration depend on her. It is only natural that the first dancer gives emphasis on the first-slow part of the dance, which is most impressive and requires a dancer with exceptional dancing skills.” The good dancer will prove herself in the slow part. This requires a dancer with zest, who can feel the tabor. The round dance can be danced by anyone who can drag her feet”, our participants claim.

Conclusion

1. The kinetic motif and, consequently the dance motif, is the element that determines the form and duration of the dance.

2. The leading dancer is the one who determines the form of the dance and, thus, its time length.

3. We do not perceive the invention of new steps or kinetic motifs. The improvisation of the leading dancer is limited to the reproduction of the dance motifs through different combinations of the sixteen kinetic motifs.

4. The performance of the dance by the women appears simpler in comparison to the more complex one of the clubs.

5. The dance “Tis Marias” potentially has as many “traditional” forms as its leading dancers.

6. The performance of the dance by the three folk dance clubs appears identical both in the form and duration.

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Appendix Symbols for leg movements

- R₀: Move the right leg
 R₂: Lift slightly the right leg forward, almost stretched by focusing on the heel
 R₃: Stop the right leg on the heel of the left with the toes
 R₄: Move the right leg and put it behind the left one
 R₆: Put the right leg next to the left, without support it
 R₇: Crucify the right leg front of the left
 R₈: Lift the right leg at a low ebb, next to the left
 L₀: Move the left leg
 L₂: Lift slightly the left leg forward, almost stretched by focusing on the heel
 L₃: Stop the left leg on the heel of the left with the toes
 L₅: Move the left leg and put it behind the right one
 L₆: Put the left leg next to the right, without support it
 α₈: Lift the left leg at a low ebb, next to the right

- Direction to the right
 ← Direction to the left
Direction diagonally in front of the right side
Direction diagonally in front of the left side
Direction back to left
Direction diagonally back to right
Circular movement of the leg to the left side
Circular movement of the leg to the right side
 □ pause