Dance, So I Can Tell You Who You Are: Dance as a Means of Identification and Differentiation

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Abstract

The research field of this paper is the region of Greek Thrace and in particular the region of northern Evros, which is a multicultural region, as various ethno-cultural groups live in it. The most main dance in the repertoire of this region is the Zonaradikos, which has proven to be a means of identifying the various ethno-cultural groups, but also a means of differentiation. The aim of this paper is to study identity issues. In particular, this paper tries to investigate how the Zonaradikos dance acts in the ethno-cultural groups that live in the area of Didymoteicho Evros in Greece. From the data analysis was confirmed the opinion that dance is a "embodied language", which the residents of Didymoteicho use to communicate with "others" and to project their identity.

Keywords: *Dance; Embodied Language; Ethnographic Method; Constructivism; Cultural Identity*

Introduction

In the study of culture, the term identity is often used, which is not easy to define, as on the one hand it denotes similarity, i.e. the identification between individuals or groups, and on the other hand, otherness, i.e. diversity. According to Cohen (1982), cultural identity is shaped primarily as a "social form" and acquires importance from the importance perceived and attributed to it by the members of the community themselves, while according to Erikson (1959), identity is part of the unconscious and it is a stable and time-resistant sense of "self". The above scholars argue that "we" is the focus in the construction of the cultural identity, in which case they refer to an internal approach to cultural identity, i.e. to how people shape their cultural identity for themselves.

On the other hand, Kellner (1992) argues that the component that forms one's identity is the "other". Continuing, Kellner considers that collective identity is based on the perception of "us" in contrast to "others", "strangers" and is shaped by the shared experiences and history of the group. Also, Larrain (1994), considers that the formation of cultural identity presupposes the perception of the 'other', but also Weeks (1990), who believes that identity refers to those that belong to us and that differentiate us from "others". According to him, identity has to do with the sense of belonging, with what you have in

common with some people and what differentiates you from some others and is determined by the way 'others' define us, while according to Billig (1995), there cannot be "...the 'us' without the 'them'..." (pp. :78). According to the above scholars, the "others" are the focus in the formation of cultural identity, in which case they refer to an outside approach, based on which cultural identity is shaped by the way "others" define us (Koutsouba, 1997).

Therefore, it is established that the two elements that shape identity are "us" and "others". According to Royce (1982), cultural identity is shaped by the way "others" perceive us, but also by the way "we" ourselves see ourselves. Within this context, the cultural identity of each individual is based, on the one hand, on those cultural elements that include his status as a member of a specific group, and on the other hand, on his individual peculiarities (Prynedy, 2000). The formation of the cultural identity is therefore not the result of a spontaneous act, but a conscious choice in the effort to legitimize and differentiate it from the "others" (Paschalidis, 2000).

Therefore, there cannot be "us" without "others". So, the formation of the individual's cultural identity is directly affected by the process of his socialization. As a result, each individual shapes his cultural identity according to the group with which he interacts at any given moment (Cuche, 2001).

Based on the above, it becomes evident that the concept of identity is directly related to communication, whether it is voluntary or involuntary. Communication provides both individuals and groups the feeling of belonging to an identity (Vryzas, 2005). Hecht et al. (2005) consider that communication is how identity is constructed. Identity is constructed when individuals or groups communicate, in other words, interact with 'others'. In this way, communicating individuals or groups internalize the reactions or views of "others" during relational interaction (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jakson, 1967) and in turn express and respond to "others" by projecting thus their identity.

At the center of all communication is language. However, language need not necessarily involve words. Communication is a complex tissue of interactions that includes but is not limited to verbal (Burkitt 1999). Ogden and Richards (1989) argue that even spoken language extends beyond the verbal and relies on gestures and shared history to give meaning to words. The concept of "embodied language" was used by Taylor (1994) to identify the ways of expression by which we define ourselves. According to Taylor, besides speech there are other modes of expression, such as the language of gestures, the language of love and the language of arts and therefore dance. So, dance and specifically Greek traditional dance, among other things, constitutes a form of communication, having, however, a special characteristic of being a form of non-verbal communication.

Consequently, Greek traditional dance is a motor system however it is not considered just an executive system, but can represent a motor vocabulary (Filippidou, 2022a). It could be said that the Greek traditional dance consists an "embodied language" (Issari, 2011) and thus can express concrete content and abstract ideas (Hanna 1979; Koutsouba, 1997, 2002; Lange, 1981).

This fact has been proven many times in newer research approaches, as dance is no longer treated as a simple cultural 'good', but as a means of meaning that can be studied in various ways. After all, there are many approaches that use Greek traditional dance as a means of realizing, building and shaping cultural identity (Filippidou, 2018; Koutsouba, 1997; Manos, 2002; Margari, 2004).

The research field of this paper is the region of Greek Thrace and in particular the region of northern Evros, which is a multicultural region, as various ethno-cultural groups live in it. The most basic dance in the repertoire of this region is the Zonaradikos, which has proven to be a means of identifying the various ethno-cultural groups, but also a means of differentiation. Specifically, researches has proven that Zonaradikos is used by the refugee groups in the area to project their similarity with the natives of the area (Filippidou, 2022b). In addition, it has been established that Zonaradikos distinguishes the different ethno-cultural groups of the region and which live in different areas of Evros (Filippidou, 2021). But what

happens in the context of ethno-cultural groups living in the same region? In this case, is Zonaradikos a means of characterization and identification or perhaps a means of differentiation?

Based on the above, the aim of this paper is to study identity issues. In particular, this paper tries to investigate how the Zonaradikos dance acts in the ethno-cultural groups that live in the area of Didymoteicho Evros in Greece.

Methodology

Data was gathered through the ethnographic method as this is applied to the study of dance (Buckland, 1999; Giurchescu & Torp, 1991; Koutsouba, 1997; Sklar, 1991) and based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to data gathered through fieldwork that was carried out at the region of Thrace and particularly at the in the prefecture of northern Evros, from 2011 to 2017. Primary sources refer to the data coming from in-situ research, through interviews (open-type questions for semi-structured interview and unstructured interview) and through participant observation combined with simultaneous audio and video recording of the inhabitants of the community.

For the collection, presentation and analysis of the data, Geertz's model of "thick description" (2003) was adopted. Laban's notation system (Hutchinson, 2005; Koutsouba, 2005), was used to record the choreographic compositions of Zonaradikos dance, while for the analysis of their structure and form, as well as their codification, the structural-morphological and typological method of analysis was applied, as it is applied in the Greek Traditional Dance (Karfis, 2018; Tyrovola, 1994, 2001). Finally, for the comparison of the choreographic compositions of the Zonaradikos dance in Nea Vyssa, the comparative method was used (Ogurchov, 1983).

To finish, the interpretation of the research data will be based on the theoretical perspective of cultural and social construction or constructivism (Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawn, & Ranger, 1983). It is a theory which, conceptualizing individuals culturally and projecting their action and social relations as "cultural" and "social" constructions and not as given properties from nature, highlights a process of action that is achieved within pre-existing cultural boundaries and prevailing semantic associations (Ingold, 1996; Gefou-Madianou, 1997; Papataxiarchis, 2006). According to Paschalidis (2000), this process established a new paradigm in the field of social sciences, based on the assumption that "...culture does not exist as a monolithic, commonly accepted and stable system of symbols and values, but as the intrinsically differentiated and historically dynamic way in which we make sense of the world and our place in it..." (pp. 76).

The Ethnographic Context

Greek Thrace, and more specifically, the Prefecture of Evros, from 1922 to 1990, was characterized by population movements and successive settlements. The most important movement of populations for Hellenism is that of the refugee groups who moved to Greece after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne. Thus, from 1922 to 1923 refugee groups from Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor, Pontus and Cappadocia arrived in Evros (Filippidou, 2011, 2018). In the same period, a second large movement of Greek populations to the Evros takes place, of refugee groups from Northern Thrace or Eastern Romilia, which is completed by 1930 (Filippidou, 2011, 2018). Northern Thracians from Kavakli, Ortakioi, Haskovo, pass to the Evros region and live together with natives, Arvanites and Gagauz (Filippidou, 2011, 2018). Also to these populations should be added the ethnic group of Pontians from the former Soviet Union, who moved to Evros after 1990. With all of these changes, the final composition of the current population of Evros is shaped to a large extent.

Thus, today in the area of Evros various ethnic groups live and are active, such as natives (Parapagοι, Marides, Soufliotes), refugees from Nothern Thrace (Kavakliotes, Ortakiiotes and Haskovites), and refugees from Eastern Thrace (Arvanites, Gagauz, refugees from the Makra Gefyra, and others scattered communities), Asia Minor (Cappadocians and Pontians, both from Pontus and the former USSR), Sarakatsans, as well as, Pomaks and Gypsies (Filippidou 2011, 2018). These groups present differences among themselves in terms of language idiom, costume, economic and social organization, morals and customs, but also in terms of their dance repertoire (Filippidou, 2010, 2011, 2018, 2022a) (Figure 1).
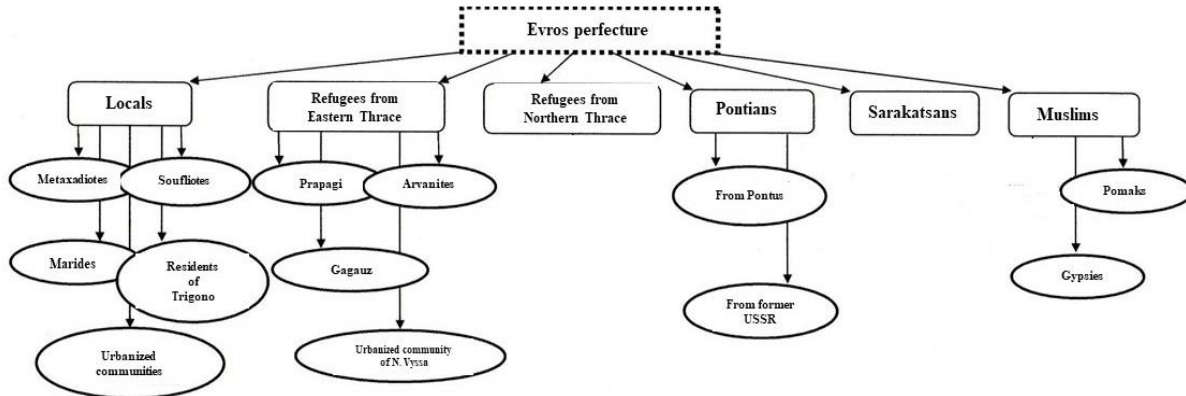

Figure 1. The ethno-cultural groups of Evros prefecture

Figure 2. The three under study communities

The area of Evros includes five municipalities: Orestiada, Didymoteicho, Soufli, Alexandroupoli and the island of Samothraki. The municipality of Didymoteicho was chosen from among them, as in it all the cultural groups dance the Zonaradikos dance and because it is distinguished by multiculturalism, which does not only concern the ethno-cultural refugee groups, but is also found in the local groups of the area. Specifically, the municipality of Didymoteicho is home to: a) locals, who are divided into the ethno-cultural group of the Metaxades and the ethno-cultural group of the Marides b) Parapagi, c) Arvanites and d) Gypsies. From these groups, the first two was selected for the study, because they are Greek-speaking communities. Specifically, from the ethno-cultural group of the Metaxades the community of Ellinochori was chosen, from the ethno-cultural community of the Marides the community of Asvestades was chosen and from the ethno-cultural group of the Parapagi the community of Isaakio was chosen. These communities were chosen as they are inhabited by a pure population, with no families of other cultural groups present in them and because they are geographically close to each other (Figure 2).

More specifically, Isaakio is a Greek-speaking community in the Didymoteicho area, inhabited entirely by a population of Parapagi, who moved to this place from the area of Makra Gefyra, an area that today belongs to Turkish Thrace and which region the Turks call it Uzunköprü. There were eighteen Greek-speaking communities scattered around the city of Makra Gefyra. Of these communities, four were located even before the trisection of Thrace (Chatzopoulos, 2015) and are still today in Greek Thrace, constituting local communities for the region (Spanos, 2016). The inhabitants of the remaining communities moved to the area of Didymoteicho, who created new communities, in places of old Muslim communities, or strengthened older settlements of natives or refugees from Bulgarian Thrace (Spanos, 2016). The community of Isaakio is located 4 kilometers northeast of the city of Didymoteicho and o refugees from five communities of Makras Gephyra province settled in this location. These communities were the Kourtakioi with the Greek name Kourt or Danilio, the Eskikioi with the Greek name Skikio or Paleochori, the Tsalikioi with the Greek name Tsali or Paliouri, Zaloufaki with the Greek name Mikro Zaloufi and Kara Hamza with the Greek name Karamza or Karteria. The other two communities are local communities of the region, i.e. they are not inhabited by refugees, but they belong to different ethno-cultural groups. Asvestades is located 14 kilometers west of Didymoteicho. The residents of the community belong to the Marides ethno-cultural group, along with the communities of Koufovouno, Kyani, Asproneri, Vrysika, Mani, Karoti, Sitochori, Poimeniko, Ampelakia, Patagi, Neohori, and Sterna. From the other hand, Ellinochori is located 4 kilometers west of Didymoteicho and belongs to ethno-cultural group of Metaxades. This group consists of nine communities that are Ellinochori, Doxa, Ladi, Alepochori, Paliouri, Chandras, Mikri Doxipara and Megali Doxipara, Metaxades, Hionades

The Zonaradikos dance

The Zonaradikos dance is danced both in social events, in rituals and in the public dance of the festival. It is a mixed circular dance and is danced with a number of songs that make it one of the main dances of the dance repertoire of all Thrace. From researches (Filippidou, 2021) it has been established that the area of Evros in Thrace is divided into three cultural zones, in which the Zonaradikos dance presents variations in its form. Specifically: a) The first cultural zone is the area of Trigono-Orestiada. In this area, the choreographic composition of Zonaradikos is composed of twelve movements using the inside-outside space and handle from the shoulders. b) The second cultural zone is the area of Soufli. In this area, the choreographic composition of Zonaradikos consists of six movements, using the space on the right and a cross handle. c) The third cultural zone is the area of Didymoteicho or Erythropotamos, where the communities of Asvestades, Ellinochori and Isaakio are located. In this area, the choreographic composition of Zonaradikos is a combination of the choreographic compositions of the two zones above. Thus, his first dance phrase consists of six movements, using the space to the right, as in Soufli, and his second dance phrase is composed of twelve movements, using the inside-outside space, as in the area of the Trigono-Orestiada, with a cross handle. In the third zone, therefore, we find that Zonaradikos consists of two dance phrases, which consist of six and twelve movements respectively with a different use of

space. Below, the choreographic compositions of Zonaradikos of the three communities under study will be analyzed, in order to confirm or not the above fact.
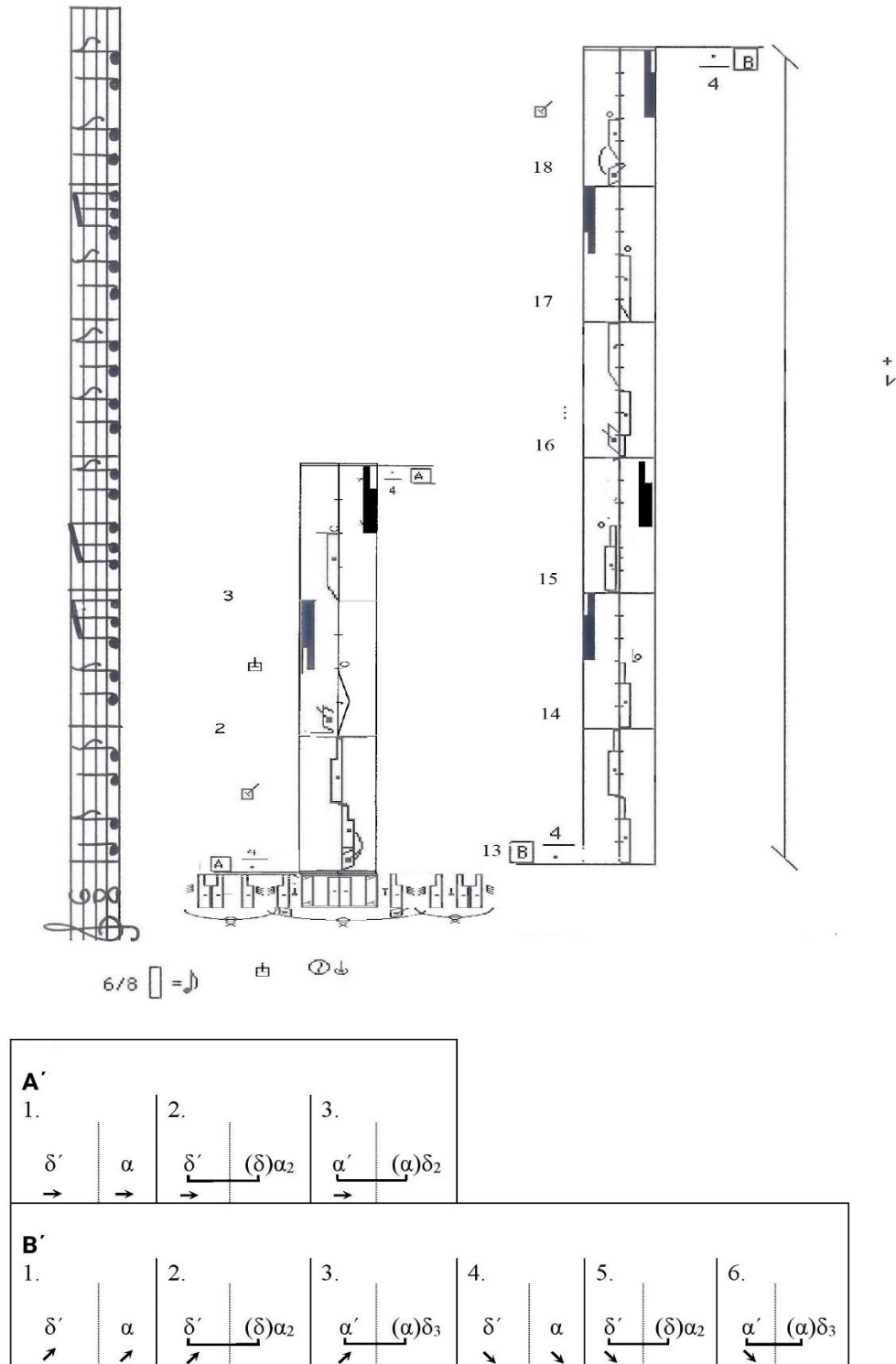

Figure 3. Dance notation and kinetic type of Zonaradikos dance of Asvestades
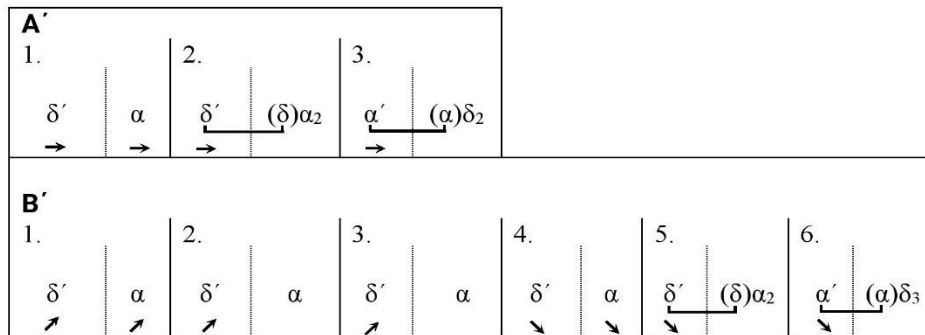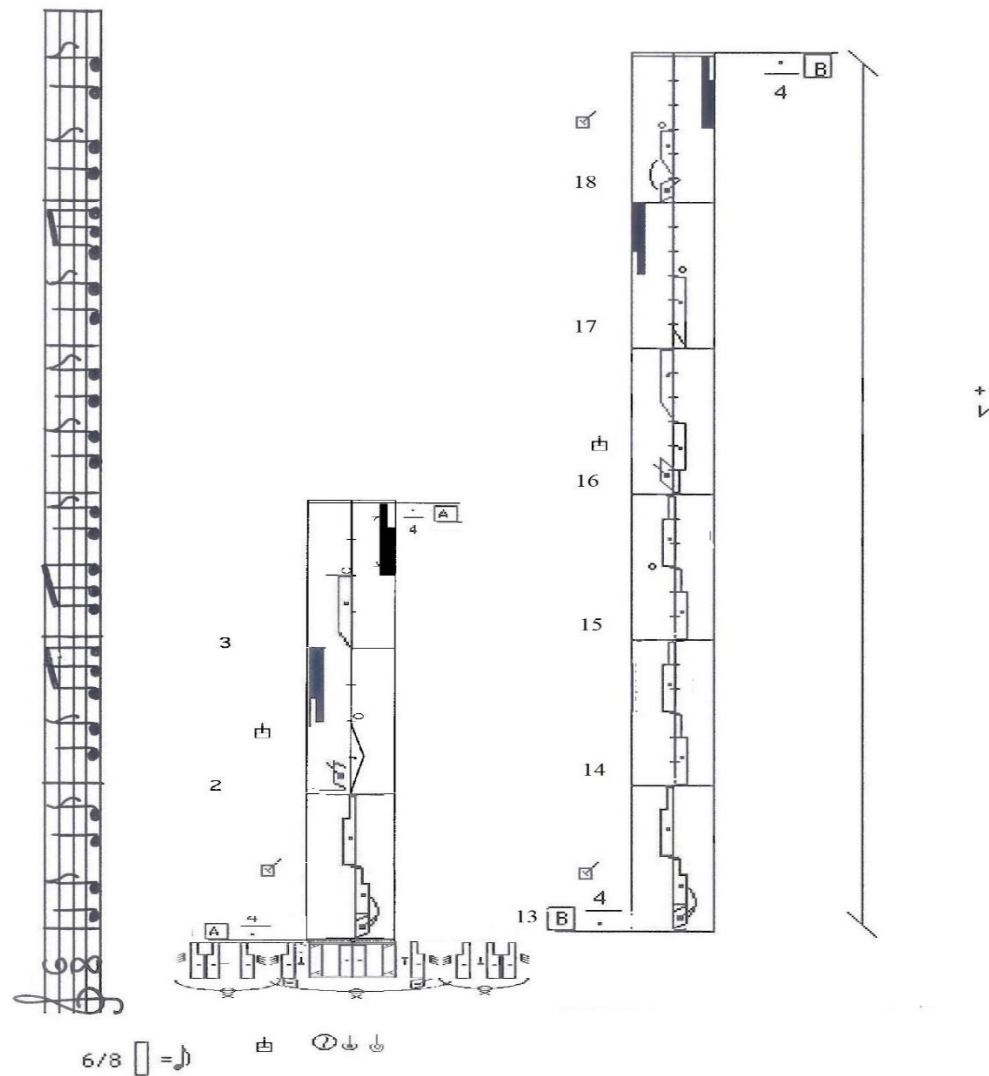
Figure 4. Dance notation and kinetic type of Zonaradikos dance of Ellinochori
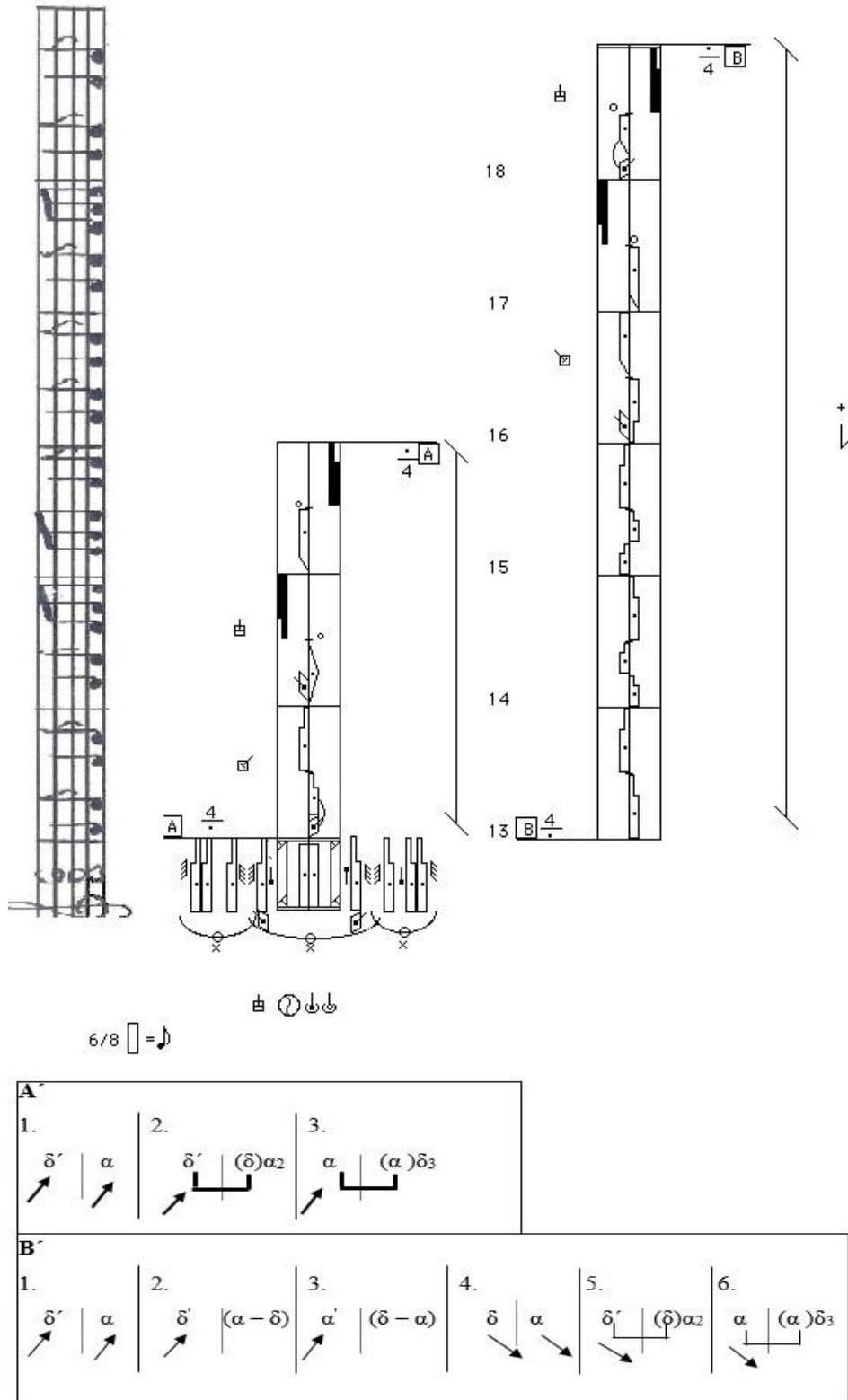
Figure 5. Dance notation and kinetic type of Zonaradikos dance of Isaakio

Identity Convergences and Divergences

By classifying and comparing the research data, it was found that the Zonaradikos dance in the three communities shows similarities in terms of its structure and form. More specifically, this dance in all three communities, a) belongs to the "type sta tria" dances (Tyrovola, 1994), b) is a bilateral dance form c) has a moderate tempo, d) its handle is crossed. However, it shows variations in individual kinetic motifs of its second dance phrase, while the first dance phrase is the same in all communities. In particular, all Zonaradikos' choreographic compositions show variation in the third and fourth kinetic motif of the second dance phrase, while their other kinetic motifs are common. In more detail, the Zonaradikos dance of Asvestades includes leg support-leg lift, the Zonaradikos dance of Ellinochori includes leg support-leg support, while the Zonaradikos dance of Isaakio has a double alternation of the leg supports.

From the above it is understood that although Zonaradikos in the communities under study presents the same form, which differentiates them from the other communities of neighboring municipalities, at the same time it also presents small differences, which seem to be related to issues of shaping cultural identities. As the basic principle of identity is the awareness of diversity, which is its necessary constituent component (Konstantopoulou, 2000), each community, in order to gain existence, had to differentiate itself from the "other". Thus, despite the feeling of a common identity, that of the Didymotians, the inhabitants of the three communities, after their contact with the "others", tried to project a separate cultural identity, in order to confirm their existence. Where "others", are meant the inhabitants of other ethno-cultural groups, both locals and refugees, who are active in the area of Didymoteicho.

In order to show 'others' their differentiation, they don't tell them, but take action. Therefore, in communication between them they do not use speech, but dance. Dance therefore constitutes the means of protecting their differentiation and therefore their identity. In this way, the Marides stand out from the Metaxadiotes, even though they are also locals, but also from the Parapagι refugees. The same happens with the other two ethno-cultural groups.

When asked if they dance the same dance, the answer was: "It looks the same, but otherwise it is danced by 'us' and otherwise by 'them'. 'We' are Marides, 'they' are Parapagi". But also the local groups of the region gave the same answer, when asked if they dance the same dance: "In our villages we dance it differently. The Marides are "another" race, we are not "the same", "they" dance it differently".

These informants' statements can be considered tautologies (Barth, 1969). With this attitude, they indicate the main factor that shapes their identity and which is none other than the ethno-cultural group that characterizes them and that differentiates them from others (Filippidou, Koutsouba, & Tyrovola, 2010). It is a bipolar classification that includes an evaluation of the "us"/"others" relationship as a conflict situation (Balibar, 1991; Koutsouba, 1997; Filippidou, Koutsouba, & Tyrovola, 2010). The members of each community internalize this opposition and recognize it as a factor of self-determination, which is expressed as a component of cultural identity (Hobsbawm, 1994; Kafetzis, 1998).

However, the place functions as a characteristic of a social group (Karakasidou, 2000), so it could not be ignored that these communities mainly show similarities in their dance, as a result of their place of residence and this is a particularly important factor for the three communities under study. "'We' dance it differently. In Orestiada they dance something else and in Soufli as well. 'They' also dance Zonaradikos, but differently". This statement of theirs, could be seen as a tautology too. This time they identify themselves as residents of Didymoteicho and are distinguished from the other residents of the area.

Consequently, and through the Zonaradiko dance, on the one hand they use the term "we" to show that they are a single entity in relation to the "other" residents of the Evros area and, on the other

hand, the use of "we" is made to clarify the difference between the three ethno-cultural groups, namely the Marides, the Metaxadiotes and the Parapagi, which has to do with their origins.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this research was to study identity issues. In particular, this paper attempted to investigate how the Zonaradikos dance acts in the ethno-cultural groups that live in the area of Didymoteicho Evros in Greece. In order to achieve this aim, a fieldwork was carried out at the region of Thrace and particularly in the region of Didimoteicho of northern Evros, from 2011 to 2017. For the interpretation of the data the theoretical perspective of cultural and social construction or constructivism was used. Also, in order to achieve the aim of the paper, from the area of Didymoteicho, the Greek-speaking groups active there were chosen to be studied. Thus, three different ethno-cultural groups were chosen, two local (Metaxadiotes and Marides) and one refugee (Parapagoi), all of whom have the Zonaradiko dance as the main dance in their dance repertoire.

From the analysis of the data it was found that at the local level the three different ethno-cultural group project two identities, one common and one different, with the result that the process of forming their local cultural identity appears fluid and undefined. This happens because despite the similarities they have in Zonaradikos dance, they try to acquire differences, in order to distinguish themselves from the 'other' groups of the area. According to de Vos and Romanucci-Ross (1982), "...identity consists in the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use of every aspect of the culture of a particular group with the ultimate aim of distinguishing that group from the rest..." (pp. 15- 17). In other words, cultural specificity becomes necessary for the recognition of a cultural identity (Dalkavoukis, 2005). As follows, one of the means used by all three communities in order to contrast themselves with the "others" is the Zonaradikos dance, in which some kinetic motifs change, while the rest remain the same.

So what the residents of Didymoteicho do? They use dance to communicate their identity to "others". The above confirms the opinion that dance is an "embodied language" and can function instead of speech in communication, both between individuals and between groups. So don't tell me who you are, but dance, so I recognize you...

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