The Transformation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Dance through State Education and Politics in the Ritual of a Rural Greek Community

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Abstract

In many cases, dance, as an embodied practice reflects habits, views, relations and juxtaposition and thus constitutes a "vessel" of meanings, is used by the ruling class as a means of enforcement or manipulation, whereas by the people, as a means to resist or express opposition to the policies of the respective ruling class. In such cases, dance stands as a symbol that carries values and meanings, embodies cultural classifications, reflects social relations and diversifications, and defines integration and exclusion. Dance, as "an inalienable structural component" of the "Gaitanaki" ritual in a community of Central Greece, i.e. Skala in the Nafpaktia province, is one of such cases. Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the transformation of dance during the "Gaitanaki" ritual as a result of the manipulation by the ruling class through the Greek formal education in the 20th century. More specifically, the paper investigates the way in which the respective ruling class influenced, manipulated and guided the dance during the ritual and how this contributed to the transformation of its dancing form from the middle of the 20th century until now. For this purpose, ethnographic research was carried out as it applies to the dance research. Data analysis was based on "thick description", whereas its interpretation on Wright's (2004) notion of political and politicised culture as this derives from Bourdieu's (1990) "habitus". It is proved that national cultural policy promoted through formal education transformed aspects of dance during the ritual as well as its symbolism.

Keywords: Greek traditional dance, Greek public formal education, "Gaitanaki" ritual, "habitus"

1. Introduction

Dance as an embodied practice reflects habits, views, relations and juxtapositions, and as a result it constitutes a "vessel of meanings" that can be used in various ways. For instance, in most cases, it is used by the ruling class as a means of enforcement or manipulation (Allen, 1997; Austerlitz,1997; Breathnach, 1983; Cyrille, 2006; Danforth, 1995; Daniel; 1995; Degh, 1999; Edmondson, 2007; Hazzard-Gordon, 1990; Kamenetsky, 1972; Lixfeld, 1994; Meduri, 1996; Meyer, 1995; Mohd, 1993; Moutzali, 2004; O'Shea, 2006; Poole, 1990; Puchner, 1982; Ramsey, 1997; Reed, 1998; Rodriguez,1996; Szwed, & Marks, 1988; Udall, 1992; Xygalatas, 2011), whereas by the people, it is used as a means to resist or express

opposition to the policies of the respective ruling class (Giurchescu, 1994, 2001; Comaroff, 1985; Daniel; 1991; Lazos, 2007; Larraine, 2001; Loutzaki, 1994, 2001; Ortiz, 1999). In such cases, dance stands as a symbol that carries values and meanings, embodies cultural classifications, reflects social relations and diversifications, and defines integration and exclusion (Antzaka-Weis & Loutzaki, 1999; Dimopoulos & Tyrovola, 2008; Tyrovola, 2003). One such case constitutes the dance during the ritual of "Gaitanaki" in a community of Central Greece, i.e. the community of Skala in the province of Nafpaktia, where dancing is "an inalienable structural component" of the ritual. Literature review about the "Gaitanaki" ritual and the dance that accompanies it (Ayfantis, 1994; Daousanis, 2005) showed that the dance has not been studied from this perspective so far in this particular case. The existing studies are limited to folkloric reports of the ritual without analyzing its dance dimension, let alone from the viewpoint of its manipulation by the ruling class through the Greek formal education in the 20th century.

2. Aim of the Study

The purpose of this paper is the study of the transformation of the dance during the ritual of "Gaitanaki" at Skala of Nafpaktia in Central Greece, as a result of the manipulation by the ruling class through the Greek public, formal education in the 20th century.

3. Methodology

The methodological practice of the paper derives from ethnographic research carried out at the local community of Skala. In particular, the collection of data was based on the principles of participant observation as this applies to the dance research (Buckland, 1983; Giurchescu & Torp, 1991; Koutsouba, 1997, 1999; Lange, 1980, 1984; Tyrovola, Karepidis, & Kardaris, 2007; Tyrovola, 2008). The analysis of the ethnographic data was based on "thick description"(Geertz, 2003[1973]), whereas its interpretation was achieved through the interpretative approach of political and politicized culture (Wright, 2004) on the basis of the conceptual interpretative scheme of "habitus" by Bourdieu (1990).

4. Cultural Policy

In the 19th century, in the context of ideological romanticism, nation states were created. Many historians (Anderson, 2006[1983]; Herzfeld, 2002) claim that the idea of nation is "imaginary". In this framework, cultural elements were used for the creation of the 'imagined' nation and national identity, offering "new" narrations towards the national direction, on which the respective national structure was based (Anderson, 2006[1983]; DeVereaux, & Griffin, 2013). The nation states, following the beaten track of the past since antiquity, relied on two powerful pillars, these of the common language and the religion (Anderson, 2006[1983]).

Greece was not an exception to this. The newly formed Greek state of 1831, in the framework of ideological romanticism, created its "romance" on the basis of three ideas that constituted the triptych, i.e. «όμοαιμον, ομόθρησκον, ομόγλωσσον» (omemon – same blood, omothriskon – same religion, omoglosson – same language) (Herzfeld, 2002; Kyridis *et al.*, 2009; Molokotos-Liederman, 2003). The national policy formulated on the grounds of these three ideas, penetrated the entire public life, one aspect of which concerned culture (Konsola, 1990; Zorba, 2014). In that case, the cultural policy became the "united key" of the members of the "imaginary" nation (Anderson, 2006[1983]). In other words, in this case, the nation's central authority imposed a cultural policy that tried to work as "bricolage" that would adjoin the different parts of the "cultural mosaic". This "bricolage" could be no other than formal education, public and private (Anderson, 2006[1983]).

The policy exercised on education led to the formulation of strategies that aimed, on the one hand, at influencing the people through the education of culture and, on the other hand, at changing the meaning of fundamental notions such as "nation", "race", "culture", "citizen", "person", "freedom", "choice" (Wright, 2004). More specifically, through formal education, public and private, the newly formed Greek nation attempted to form a common "Greek consciousness", in the concept of Bourdieu's "habitus" (1990), meaning that the sense was to produce a "product" through apprenticeship, which, in an unconscious way, would generate strategies in accordance with the precepts of the preceding "teaching". According to Bourdieu (1986, 1994), the concept of "habitus" connects the individual with the social, since everyone' s experiences can be unique in terms of their content, but their frame is common with that of other people who belong in the same class, sex, nationality, sexuality, profession, religion, etc. (Maton, 2008). As a result, whoever is socialized under similar external conditions develops similar systems of perception, thought and action. As a consequence, a person's experiences in life have a key role in the formation of his/her "habitus". A product of history, the "habitude",

produces individual and common practices, therefore history, according to the systems that history produces.

At this level, the national cultural policy attempted to formulate a "habitus", a "habit", something already known, as the three ideas of «όμοαιμον, ομόθρησκον, ομόγλωσσον» (omemon – same blood, omothriskon – same religion, omoglosson – same language), would be cultivated in anyone participating in formal education. In other words, the aim was to create a collective view through the separate individual views. Such a view was embraced in culture too, in the concept, for example, of "Panhellenic" dances and music (Koutsouba, 2012) and of the "Greek - Tsolia" and his bravery and valiance too. For instance, the fact that the clarinet that accompanies the "panhellenic national dance" Tsamiko (Koutsouba, 1995), was described as the "national" traditional musical instrument of Greece is not by accident. Yet, clarinet is a musical instrument that was introduced to the country only in the 17th century (Mazaraki, 1984), whereas the Tsamiko dance is being danced at specific regions of Greece such as the Peloponnese, Central Greece and Thessaly, regions that were liberated first from the Ottoman Empire and formulated the newly formed Greek State. Based on the above, it is obvious that Greek traditional dance constituted an important part of Greek nation's cultural pyramid. In fact, since 1909, it has already been included in the context of physical education as an obligatory course at primary formal education (Koutsouba, 1997, 2012), with "panhellenic" dances being its main content.

This practice is supported by the dance's character itself. In particular, the polysemy of dance enables it to become a powerful "cogwheel" at the "system's" machine and to be perceived as a "vessel of meanings" that transmits the various meanings in a non-verbal way (Giurchescu, 1994; Koutsouba, 2010; Lange, 1980; Sklar, 1991). In addition, dance has been characterized as a symbol for the understanding of collective consciousness and also for the enhancement of the social coherence (Koutsouba, 1997). On these grounds, the teaching of "panhellenic", "national" dances at schools enhanced and supported the creation of a common national cultural policy. In other words, through the teaching of the "panhellenic" dances tsamiko, kalamatianos or syrtos sta tria, in addition to the use of tsolia's fustanella, i.e. the kilts of the Greek fighters, as the national men's costume and of clarinet as the national traditional musical instrument, national symbols were formed and cultivated. In this context, dances and rituals were connected to the antiquity or to the Greek Revolution, so as to empower "the love for the country" and also "the continuity of the Greek culture". One such ritual is the ritual of "Gaitanaki" and the way it is celebrated at the community of Skala in Nafpaktia.

5. Nafpaktos and Modern Greek State

The province of Nafpaktia is a part of the regional unit of Aetolia-Acarnania (Map 1) and it is inhabited since the ancient years (Kostopoulos, 1924). It is also a part of Central Greece called Roumeli, a name given by the Ottomans deriving from the junction of the Turkish words "Rum" and "eli", which mean Roman and land respectively. In other words, Roumeli or Rumelia or Romylia is the land of Romans, i.e. the land of Greeks (Babiniotis, 1998). Thus, the province of Nafpaktia was always considered by the Turks as the land where Romans lived, i.e. the Greeks. Furthermore, Nafpaktos, the capital of Nafpaktia, is located in a very important geostrategic position, i.e. in the Corinthian Gulf very close to the Peloponnese, a position that played a key role in the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. In particular, Roumeli, along with Peloponnese, is one of the first areas to be liberated from the Ottoman Empire in 1829 (Stavrogiannopoulos 1970). As a result, it formed the so-called "first" Greece, on which the modern Greek State policy was based.

Map 1: Map of the regional unit of Aetolia-Acarnania
Source: https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/media/File:GreeceAitolia-Acarnania.png

As far as Skala is concerned, this is a community very close to the city of Nafpaktos, i.e. the capital of the province of Nafpaktia, a fact that contributed to its early urbanization (Map 2).

Map 2: Skala of Nafpaktia (Source: https://www.google.gr/maps)

Considering the historical course, in the area of Nafpaktos, it was not necessary to create or differentiate any of the three ideas of the triptych «όμοαιμον, ομόθρησκον, ομόγλωσσον» (omemon – same blood, omothriskon – same religion, omoglosson – same language) which were used by the cultural policy of the newly created Greek State and became the main identity markers of differentiation from the neighboring peoples. This is because the population was considered "purely Greek", the religion was Orthodox Christianity and the language spoken was the Greek. Therefore, the wider region of Nafpaktos has been a factor for the establishment of the national cultural policy and not a subject of enforcement. These events inevitably place Nafpaktos in the "frame" of "first" Greece and the national cultural policy "hegemony", as it was formed. This is because not only its history, but also its geographic position, brings it in the forefront of major events throughout the Greek history, as the most recent of the Greek Revolution and the "Battle of Naupaktus" and the liberation of the city. Thus, the local cultural idiom of the area was inevitably related to its "Greekness", while any expression of this idiom, for instance, dance and rituals, were used as components.

6. "Gaitanaki" Ritual

Ritual, as social practice, is not biologically given, but it is an outcome of mentorship that restructures the social reality (Puchner, 1985). As Puchner suggests, ritual functions as a true "mirror" of micro and macro-society's ideology and expresses the habit of social life as this is formed by tradition. On these grounds, it is understandable why the specific ritual under examination, i.e. the ritual of "Gaitanaki", is a ritual that has the acceptance of the entire community of Skala being its main ritual, as well as of the wider region of Nafpaktia. In particular, the ritual of "Gaitanaki" is celebrated every Easter Tuesday to the space next to the church's courtyard that is used as the dancing floor. The informants (Goulas, 2012; Daousanis, 2015; Moulas, 2014; Rigas, 2015) argue that its celebration dates back to the years of the Ottoman Occupation, yet its first written report is from 1930 (Mentzas, 1991). The ritual used to symbolize the passing of winter and the good harvest, a fact that is confirmed not only by the time of its performance, i.e. spring, but also from the lyrics of the song that accompanied it and which concerned issues of love. It should be noted that song was the only musical accompaniment of the ritual till 1930s and it was sung in turns, first by men and then by women. After 1930s, the lyrics of the song changed (Appendix), while musical accompaniment entered the scene having clarinet as its main instrument. Dance constituted and constitutes an integral structural component of this ritual (Fountzoulas, 2012; Fountzoulas, Tyrovola, & Koutsouba, 2013). In terms of movements, the dance has two parts. The first one is a form of "sta tria" dance and the second is a form of the kalamatianos dance.

At this point it should be mentioned that Greek traditional dance, either within the context of a ritual or not, draws on the triptych of movement, music and song, being at its ultimate expression when these three components coexist (Filippidou, Koutsouba, & Tyrovola, 2014). Keeping this in mind, what follows is an examination of the three parts of the aforementioned triptych in the case of the dance and the ritual in the course of time under the light of the construction of "Greekness" in the newly formed Greek national state having certain aim in terms of its formal education.

Based on the aforementioned triptych of movement, music and song of Greek traditional dance, it is proved that

dance within the framework of the ritual of "Gaitanaki" did not fulfill at the very beginning of the newly formed Greek national state all the prerequisites so as to be associated with the "glorious revolutionary war" against Ottomans. This is because the lyrics of the song concerned issues of love and not those of war, while there was not accompaniment by musical instruments since 1930s. However, there were parameters that could be support its use in this new ideological context. First, the movements of the two-part dance, syrtos "sta tria" and kalamatianos respectively, coincided with the so-called "panhellenic" or "national" dances. Secondly, Skala and the wider area of the province of Nafpaktia, belonged to the so called "first" Greece, on which the modern Greek State policy was based. Because of these, in the 1930s two things took place: the clarinet was introduced and became the main musical instrument of the area, while the lyrics of the song changed relating this time to the fighters (the so called klephts and armatoloi) of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. In this way, both music and song were associated with the notion of nationalism as that had already been adopted and promoted by Greek formal education, public and private. In addition, these changes did not meet any reactions inside the community since all the residents accounted them as "normal" and considered them as the "national" symbols that formed the local community's identity in accordance to the national identity.

Towards this end, the contribution of the local association that signaled the passing from the "first" to the "second existence" of the ritual (Hoerburger, 1965, 1968; Kealiinohomoku, 1972; Nahachewsky, 2001; Koutsouba, 1999; 2010) later on was crucial. In particular, with the establishment of the association "Association of People of Skala" in 1991 (Daousanis, 2005), the ritual was entirely linked to the Greek Revolution as its primary goal was the rescue, the conservation and the continuance of the "Gaitanaki" ritual. Many more elements were added in this context towards the aim. The dancers, the musicians and the singer all wear the traditional costumes of fustanella for men.

Picture 1: Gaitanaki in Skala 2015
Photo: Giorgos Fountzoulas

Before the entrance of the dancers to the dancing floor, the equestrian association of Nafpaktia entertains the people with the entrance of horseback men and women dressed all, regardless of sex, in the fustanella, which is the "national" traditional costume, so as to remind the Greek fighters, i.e. the klephts and the armatoloi who contributed to the Greek Revolution (Stathis, 2003).

Picture 2: Gaitanaki in Skala 2015
Photo: Giorgos Fountzoulas

7. Discussion

According to the declaration of UNESCO (2003), dance and rituals are, inter alia, elements of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (Koutsouba, 2015). In Greece, the intangible cultural heritage of dance and rituals can be approached from many different angles, one of which is manifested in the dance of the ritual "Gaitanaki". In this case, the national cultural policy of the newly established Greek State that attempted to form a common "Greek consciousness", in the concept of Bourdieu's "habitus" (1990), was adopted. In particular, the purpose was to produce a "product" through mentorship, which, in an unconscious way, would generate strategies in accordance with the principles of the preceding mentorship. This is what happened in "Gaitanaki" ritual since the "habitute", i.e. the outcome of this mentorship, produced individual and collective practices, therefore history, in accordance with the national cultural policy.

The national cultural policy functioned as "power" (Foucault, 1979) and "hegemony" (Williams, 1994) and transformed the character of the most characteristic ritual of the community that symbolized the passing of winter and the good harvest, into a national one. The concept of "power" is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government (Foucault, 1979). More specifically, the ritual of "Gaitanaki" was "naturally" and logically related to the Greek Revolution. The lyrics were symbolically transformed from those of the passing of winter and the good harvest into those of the Greek fighters with particular reference to the local fighters "Charmantas" and "Daousanis" (Daousanis, 2005). The ritual's music is now accompanied by musical instruments, where the main one is the "national" clarinet. Lastly, as far as the dance is concerned, it was identified by its form with "national" dances, like syrtos sta tria and kalamatianos.

In this ritual, a ritual that takes place in an area of the "first" Greece, the national cultural policy that was promoted through formal education overshadowed the previous symbolic character (of the passing of winter and the good harvest) of the ritual converting it into a fighting-national one without any reactions by the residents of the community in order to support the national (cultural) uniformity. To sum up, the national cultural policy through its formal education gave another dimension and impetus to a ritual relating it with great "national ideals" and transforming its symbolic character.

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Appendix

Lyrics with symbolic character of the passing of winter and the good harvest until 1930s:

> *"Do you see that mountain, the one that its top is full of mist,*
> *That has uproar at the top, and haze at the bottom,*
> *At the bottom sheep are shepherding, and so are the goats at the top.*
> *Gentle rain came from higher grounds, from high ridge.*
> *It carries the distaff spinning, and its spindle is full.*
> *A boy waited for it, in a narrow backstreet*
> *He wears his fez and the blue tuft askew."*

Variant lyrics with symbolic character towards the national direction after 1930s:

> *"Do you see that mountain, the one that its top is full of mist.*
> *It used to be a den for the klephts and the captains*
> *Gentle rain came from higher grounds, from high ridge.*
> *It carries the distaff spinning, and its spindle is full.*
> *The bravest man waited for it, in a narrow backstreet.*
> *He wears his fez and the blue tuft askew.*
> *He was carrying a secret order, from the captains.*
> *They should lurk for the Turks*
> *and gather to Skala to make a foray.*
> *They should go to Nafpaktos, to take over the castle."*