



WOMEN IN TURKISH FOLK DANCE AND MUSIC: A CASE OF MUSICAL GATHERINGS

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Abstract

The environment of performance has a role as important in production, transfer and representation of oral cultural products as instruments, lyrics and performers. These environments, bearing the traces of their geography and social atmosphere, are so special that they become important determinants of the character of the dances that take place within them. The traditional musical gathering is one of the important performance environments of Turkish Folk music. In addition to it being an important determinant of oral cultural products in a wide area of our country, it also aims to put social rules into practice in a field of socialization. Stories are told, theatrical games are exhibited and folk dances are performed along with regional melodies in traditional musical gatherings referred to as "conversations", "meetings" as well as specific names that vary from place to place such as *Ferfene*, *Yâren*, *Kürsübaşı*, *Sıra Gecesi*, *Barana* etc.

Traditional musical gatherings, which have occurred up through the present day and originated from Ahî Community (13th century) as it has been determined from sources, are male-dominant conversations. Women have no role in these gatherings. But, through the study of written sources and our field work, it has been determined that there are conversation environments, performance environments for which women gathered. In these gatherings, women appearing in the roles of instrument player, singer, actress, and dancer represent their region and reveal oral cultural products that are specific to women and local dances that are specific to the female body.

At this point, we will answer the following questions with the support of visual and aural data that we obtained from field recordings; how do women representatives create a performance environment for themselves for musical gatherings? Do the performance environments they create fit with the traditional musical conversations of Turkish folk music? Do works sung by female representatives and the folk dances they perform in traditional musical conversations reflect their regions' traditional styles and forms? In addition, are there examples that reveal a women's style in these data? etc. In addition to written sources, we will answer the questions by supporting them with the visual and auditory data obtained from the records of the Ankara Club Association (Ankara Kulübü Derneği). While examining local music and describing forms of local dances of 21st century women representatives, we will try to identify women's status in their society and we will evaluate their representation of their form of art in their social environment by in terms of a cause and effect relationship.

The scope of the research is related to the impact of the space (meetings with music, chatting environment) on women's execution of art. Questions that constitute the essentials of the research, are based on the assumption that the place of execution (space), where women are present, is closely related to the space theory and social gender coding.

As the music is a means of body language in the study, it also appears as the executive of the environment where social gender roles are exhibited; and the women who perform exist as representatives of the tradition in the performance area of the study.

Keywords: Musical Gathering, Performance Environment, Woman Representative, Folk Dance, Space Dialectics.

"To change life ... we must first change space"¹

Henri Lefebvre

Introduction

What is the Space? What is the Role of Music? What is the Role of Woman in a Space?

Tolstoy describes art, *which he considers as one of the necessities of human life, as one of the means people use to establish relations with one another and an environment of relationships that bring people together around the same emotions* (Tolstoy, 2009, 48); Fischer describes art, *the causality of which he questions, as the integration of the limited ego of humans with social life, socializing their individuality, and thereby as an indispensable means for an individual to blend with the entirety* (Fischer, 1980, 8). Many other descriptions regarding art also include "the tradition of meetings with music," where people get together in the framework of the same emotions, dreams and desires to acquire strength against death or separations and exhibit their vitality by expressing their wishes for a healthy and happy future through dance and music, for example, at henna nights and weddings (Çınar, 2013, 271).

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¹ Ronfeldt, 2014.



Meetings with music are a type of activity where society, living together, reflects its participants' similar daily lives and traditions and products of folk art, where individuals integrate with the entirety, and socializes his/her individuality. Across the various regions of Turkey, public meeting with music occur in which stories are told, dances are performed for attendees and folk dances are exhibited with songs, all of which belong to the specific region in which the meeting takes place. This type of meeting is referred to as "chat" and "meeting" in general and also referred to as *Ferfene*, *Yâren*, *Kürsübaşı*, *Sıra Gecesi* (*Sıra Night*) and *Barana* in different regions. These meetings with music, which have origins in the Ahî order (13th century) yet continue through to the present, are meetings in which males dominate. The woman does not have a role in these meetings but some chat environments and execution environments have been found, where women gathered together, as a result of having examined written sources and our field studies. *All the moments, excitement, memories are easily felt through the dramatic effects of the rhythm and music during these meetings, which have traditions, customs, rituals, acts, excitement and emotions of daily life* (Çınar, 2013, 272). Dance and music, which are indispensable elements of these meetings, are the two artistic actions we are trying to describe. While dance reflects life and mirrors society, music taps out the rhythm of life and voices emotions. We encounter music at a meeting through a way of expression that is exclusive to its community, where every community is animated through its own exclusive expression. For example, zeibek music and dance is encountered in an environment where people gather in the Aegean; kosma in Central Anatolia, yol havasi (a kind of folk song) requiem in Eastern Anatolia,...etc.

All verbal cultural products exist in these meetings, where we observe dance and music together. They are important means of socialization in the society and make it easier for us to emphasize the socially unifying aspect of art. In the performance field of our study women are in the background in some meetings and are the stars in others. These meetings, in which we conducted our field study, can be defined multiperspectively as an important means for the space, -as Lefebvre stated while defining space², which provide a space for the activities and space for execution for the representatives, social structure and socializing, a result of social structure and socialization, result of social production and products of the society. At this point, we are going to use one of these meetings that took space as an example, and examine its artistic data from the perspective of space theory and social gender.

Space - Space Dialectics (In-Between Space - Main Space)

Woman in Space Where Production Takes Space and Which Transforms: The Case of Ankara

While social practices shaped space and prepared the formation of areas, which existed as per some determined codes of life, spatial patterns have become a designed means of both preservation of social structure and presenting a new identity and system of relations for the individuals. (Yıldız&Alaeddinoğlu, 2007, 855) Meetings, we encounter as the space of such social practices, as henna, lamentation, weddings and rituals are like a codification of social identity. *When the concept of space is connected to a social practice that creates both spatial and meaning, the concept of space acquires the whole scope* (Lefebvre, 2015, 158). In fact, every meeting has actors and these actors assume an identities and thus their roles, according to the content of the meeting. For example:

SPACE = HENNA HOUSE ROLE = TAMBOURINE PLAYER LADY	SPACE = HOUSE OF LAMENTATION ROLE = MOURNING WOMAN	SPACE =DJEMEVI ROLE = MATRON / ZAKIR
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In this context, the space,where we conducted our study and the role are:

SPACE = FERFENE ROOM ROLE/CODIFIED IDENTIFICATION = SISTER SAINTS / SISTERS
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The construction of identity is also the construction of a network of spaces, and these spaces are built on the axis of such social divisions as gender, race or class and they also produce these again. (Schick, 2001, 22) *Gender and especially sexuality are among the main (attributed) features of space, which has been founded socially.* (Schick, 2001: 6) With reference to the descriptions of Schick, environments with music, where women are present, (henna nights, house of lamentation, rituals), have been coded according to social gender roles. Instruments (tambourine, hydria, spoon), they play, elements of repertoire they play (lullaby, requiem), sound ranges,

²Lefebvre, argues that the space is a social product, which is based on social values and meanings and determines spatial perceptions and practices. (Tılıç&Deveci, 2013: 69)



their dances (woman's zeibek...) have shaped on the axis of their roles in addition to the spaces. As shape is also "an indication of social purpose,"³ spaces, where meeting with music are held, allow us to obtain all-purpose data in the context of the coding of social identity and emergence of types of music-dance.

Demonstrating that sexuality is a central means in the construction of spacial differentiation, Schick states that space is a main element of identity and the ego thrives in the space and therefore the space, called "here" has inerisible traces. (Schick, 2001, 14, 21) Therefore, we can say that the kitchen has an important status within the home in the identity of women, whose roles at meetings take shape in parallel with the social gender roles. So that in the study of Eroğlu&Karahasanoğlu...(2017), in which informed distribution of home space by gender, men are state of honor and located around the table. Women are either passive or in service in the hall (chatting environments)...as women get closer to the kitchen they go away from conversation (p.136).

Starting from this point of view, we can understand where women are positioned in the context of place, considering that chatting environments and meetings with music take place in the lounges and living rooms. The main spaces for chatting and meetings with music are locations at the connecting points of public areas. The kitchen, which is located within the boundaries of a private area, is a space where restriction and the identities that have created it are solved; an in-between location⁴. Women's roles and duties in kitchens, whose area of responsibility is service, are determined.

MAIN SPACE=PUBLIC AREA=LIVING ROOM CHATTING - MEETING WITH MUSIC	IN-BETWEEN SPACE=PRIVATE AREA=KITCHEN SERVICE - TO PROVIDE SERVICE FOR THE MAIN SPACE
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According to the definition of Sennett, being able to go out to the public space, defined as "the space to establish social relationships," and to be able to be in a space, whared with others, is to be able to represent himself/herself. (Taptık&Tanyeli, 2010, 47) Although women, who experience restriction of space regarding being able to perform their art and join environments of execution as a result of their roles and distribution of duties, are restricted in space dialectics (main/in-between spaces), they socialize in the spaces provided for them (henna night, cirsumcision henna, soldier send-off, rituals, etc.) or stand against the distribution of duty and space of social structure, which is male dominated. We will give examples from Ankara, which is our field study area, for standing against.

The music of Ankara built its historical foundations on the urban centered music folklore created by the Seymen (Efe of Ankara, hero of Ankara) culture and the ancient music tradition created by Central Anatolian culture. It is especially the elements of traditional music and repertoire, played in and around the city at music assemblies, such as Festivities, Chatting and Room Chatting that constitute the source of reference for the music of Ankara. (Satır, 2014) The execution of music in Ankara's society has been shaped by male dominated expression in "Ferfene," a local name used to refer to a meeting with music, associated with the common identity of the society of Ankara. In Ankara, where it is said that it is a privilege to participate in a Ferfene, the motto of "A girl learns to prepare dowery from her mother and a boy learns ferfene from his father" (Balaban, 2016), becomes significant.

When we take a look at the written sources to understand the role of women in the tradition of meetings with music in Ankara, we can understand from the explanations below that women participated in a meeting with music, called a "festivity," in a male-dominated meeting, only to entertain men, and a woman who did not have a possessor would not be able to enter these meetings even as an entertainer:

One or two women, who belonged to efes, were brought to the festivity and they sat on chairs, located immediately to the right side of the entrance in the festivity room. Women, who were managed by the efes, who possessed them, were called outside quietly and smacked by the efes if they did something inappropriate...They were treated harshly and despised ...Their duties were to provide service at thje festivity, to roll cigarettes and dance when it was time to dance...First one of two young guys would dance and then these women would start to dance. These women would usually wear long tuck pleat white dresses and reefs with silver-gilt threads on top of them, wrap shawls on their wastes and button the ens of the shawls above their bellies... It was prohibited to look above their waste while the women were dancing. Always young guys, who play musical instruments well and dance well and women, who play the bell well and dance well were called to the festivities...Instead of being beautiful, women

³ (Fischer, 1993, 149)

⁴ Instead of designing relations between the identities that are externally connected to one another, independent of each other, in-between is the only space of movement, development and formation. (Ganic, 2016)



who would play the bell, artistic talent of the woman, especially playing the bell well, adjusting the bell well between her fingers and playing the bell in the most suitable way possible in harmony with the music, were desirable. Women would also look for those, who would play the instruments well. (Yönetken, 1966, 11, 12, 13).

In the field where we conducted our study (Ankara Club Association), we observed hegemony in the space. Women representatives were covered and restricted to certain places in the Ferfene, held once per week, and we discovered through our interviews and observations that a great majority of women resisted distribution of duty and space. Consequently, we witness that the women protect the traditional ways of entertainment, known to belong to women and that they execute dances of women, which have almost become obsolete. So much so that, in this space, where a great majority of dances associated with the common identity of the society of Ankara are executed by males (Seymens) although women make their rehearsals with the instructors⁵ appointed for them by the administration of the association—they argued that the dance, known as “Ankara Ballade⁶ (Ankara Koşması)” and which was in the repertoire of the men and executed at meetings with music, should belong to women and “took back” their dance in their own words.

Although this case also corresponded to “an invented tradition⁷” in Hobsbawm’s words, they stated that they did not have anything less than men in representing their traditions and they would continue women’s folk dances and music today, as it was the case in history and they said that “*we had a place next to men...*” (Sert&Karaca, 2017). In addition to the strength they receive from their existence in the space “they added strength to their strength” in their own words. This mentioned reference is from the documentary, named “Ankara, the heart of Turkey” made by the Soviets in 1934. These data are among the most important visual materials, which belong to the first years of the Republic.⁸

“Ankara Ballade (Ankara Koşması) – Ankara Club Association: This record was made at the activity, prepared to celebrate Ankara becoming the capital city (13 October 1923). The dance is also performed by men, although not as much as it used to be. In addition to understanding the way women understand and practice tradition, this example played a primary role in understanding their efforts to exist in the space, in which they are restricted. *Use in each case creates a performative space and a specific spatiality* (Lichte, 2016, 187), in which the space, which emerges as a result of social production in this activity, was shaped again in the woman’s collective. Women, who were moved away from common identity, existed in the space (kitchen and women’s living room) offered for them and did not move away from the space. They made their presence felt in every part of the place (male chatting room and the large hall) in time. They have demonstrated that they also had an important role in the common identity by protecting the product of the tradition, which they thought belonged to them, in this place, which we can define as a cultural carrier, in this time frame.

⁵Women requested from the administration that they wanted to dance and asked for support from the administration. As a result of these negotiations, and their persistent requests, an instructor, who would train the women dancers was appointed.

⁶In written sources, this game does not belong to women, but verbal sources claim that the game music is the play of women. (Balaban, 2016) Of course, the most accurate information will be revealed through deep field studies.

⁷...traditions that have been adapted to the new situation, embraced the old situations, or found their own past by compelling repetitions (Hobsbawm, 2016, 2).

⁸While the zeibeks (men) perform their dances, a folk dances team, consisting of women, can also be seen in this documentary. This source shows that women are not inferior to men.



NAME OF DANCE	REGION	TYPE OF MUSIC RYTHM	TYPE OF EXECUTION OF MUSIC	SPACE -FUNCTION OF SPACE	CHARACTERISTIC CODING IN THE DANCE
Ankara Koşması (Ankara Ballade)	Ankara	Traditional Dance Music	-Music is performed by musicians who work at the association. -They use albums or recordings from TV shows during rehearsals. -They strive to have an original repertoire by working meticulously during the period of making the records in question. They aim to reach source persons by also working in the field in order to reach an original repertoire.	-Women's Ferfene Room -Concert Hall -Activities, prepared for special days (Republic Day, March 8 International Women's Day). -It strengthens the impact of the dance. -It has a stimulating effect. The place gives them strength in women's words. Dancing on a stage in front of a large audience motivates them and allows them to concentrate more on the dance.	-There are movements, which carry metaphoric meaning. -Graceful walk of women expresses the reasonable pride of being women saints and pride of representing Ankara women's folk dances. (Personal interview, Pınar Sert, trainer of women's folk dances)

Ways of Utilizing the Space and Music in the Context of "Ankara Ballade" Dance

Conclusion

With reference to Woolf, who defines the placelessness of woman through a metaphoric allocation of apace, as a "room, which belongs to herself"⁹. While men have sıra rooms, barana rooms and friend rooms, and chat and execute their art in these rooms, women execute their duties, allocated for them or just create time although there is no room/space, which belongs to them, making use of the time, when men are having fun. Therefore, women, who do not participate in the chatting environment during execution of traditional music, experience the losses of this restriction in other stages of the execution. Women, who cannot show their existence in these places, are also deprived of being a traveler, accessing primary sources of traditional music, playing his/her instrument in a public area, keeping his/her musical memory alive and having historical information related to his/her field, all of which are considered to be essential aspects for traditional music performers (aşık/ashik). Starting from this point of view again, women, who are deprived of the places of the tradition, also can't take place in the places of administration as much as she is permitted to today. As it can be understood from the table, prepared by Eroğlu, which belongs to 2017, it is among important data that women do not exist in the management of places of decision centers, which can be defined as administrative places of the music market in our country, such as MESAM (Musical Work Owners' Society of Turkey), MUYORBIR (Music Interpreters Guild of Turkey) or management of music companies.

MUYORBIR and MESAM Boards Distribution Chart of Males and Females

	MUYORBIR	MESAM
Board of Directors	7M, 2F	0F, 11M
Board of Auditors	1M, 2F	1F, 4M
Board of Dignity	2M, 1W	0W, 5M
Board of Technical Science	2M, 1W	0W, 5M

(Eroğlu, 2017, 50)

Space, which has been given a menaing and shaped according to social conditions, will continue to be an important dimension in our lives. It will always esixt as an element, which affects our values (our folk

⁹A room of one's own: privacy, independence, security, shelter, but not necessarily separated from the lives of others in the same house or building, and therefore not inherently signifying isolation or loneliness. The chance to be alone, to be oneself in one's own room, to do what one wills and wishes without the thought or intervention of others: this is the ultimate desire of the social animal, the human being, only because s/he is both hemmed about by and can always resort to the company of others. (Minogue, 2012, 5)



dances, music and dances) our culture and our relationship with our environment continuously. Women, who are representatives of the future will continue their struggle as identities, who sometimes shape the space (who flex the space) and who flex the time sometimes, in these spaces.

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