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The Phenomenon of Age in Western Anatolia Local Dance Culture in Turkey

ABSTRACT

Age is an important factor in traditional dance in Turkey. In particular, the concept of dancing in a specific order depending on age, signifies certain value systems that vary from locality to locality. In these cases, biological age is transformed into a more fluid and dynamic concept by a discourse of the body, determined by the social structure. More specifically, during their life cycle, children, teenagers, adults and elderly people perform different tasks in traditional dance contexts. While the individual is presenting his/her own persona through dancing, he/she also illustrates the expectations of the position within the society to which he/she belongs. For this reason, age-related dance information, such as the expectations of skills within local dance cultures, the relationships between certain age groups, traditional forms of dancing, and the transmission of dance knowledge from generation to generation, facilitates an understanding of the social relationship between the individual and society. Therefore, to observe dancing longitudinally over time and across the generations is to provide us with important information that explains how and why traditional dance contexts are created. This paper will introduce age-related "male village chamber institutions" that continue to exist in Anatolia. The function of these institutions in traditional dance culture will be discussed using the example of Izmir-Bergama region, Kozluca village. Drawing on field research carried out in 2009, the paper includes qualitative description based on participatory observation and information obtained through oral history studies regarding the traditional dance environments organised by various age groups. It explores the relations between people in the different age groups, and in doing so it analyzes the relationship between individuals and society in traditional dance contexts in terms of age.

Introduction

Conceptual Framework: Traditional Dance, Identity and Age

Traditional dance represents the cultural heritage of civilizations from earlier historical periods. It changes over time, in relation to changing socio-political contexts and cultural systems. The socio-political and economic changes within societies, demand the redefinition of traditional dance concepts. For example, the boundaries of the meaning of traditional dance concept in Turkey were redefined with the establishment of the nation-state system, and these boundaries include *ethnic*, *linguistic*, *cultural* determinants, each of which registered changes within traditional practices.

Since the 1950s, in parallel to discussions of issues such as 'urbanization', 'migration' and 'westernization' in the socio-political sphere, Turkey witnessed significant developments and changes regarding the local dances of traditional societies. Certain dances, which had previously been particular to certain groups of people (especially ritual dances that were part of religious practice) were introduced to the wider public sphere. Conventional dance practices gained 'accessibility' and 'visibility' from these new contexts, through open-air festivals, stage shows and popular media. The first reason for this change is that since the Proclamation of the Republic in 1923, popular dances became one of the most important unifying emblems in the creation of the nation state. Secondly, the dance practices of local communities interacted in a very different way from the natural developments of the public arena - especially in the lifestyles of traditional societies - through global communication and global media. However, despite modernization and drastic changes in dance environments, traditional dance practices in Turkey maintained, albeit decreasingly, their original forms in ways that were compatible with modern life.

The traditional dance concept adopted in this study refers to a process of construction, and not to some essentialized concept. This approach also applies to all identity-related concepts, including age, social group and social status. These concepts will be briefly discussed below, with special reference to the concept of age, and its relation to traditional dance as a social identifier.

Research Question: How do social organizations that are shaped by age groups in traditional village societies in Western Anatolia construct, shape and transform traditional dance practices?

Hypothesis*:* Social constructs organised by age in the rural communities of Western Anatolia (such as village 'chambers', to reference a rather specific institution that will be contextualized later in this article) shape the way in which individuals learn, perform and transmit traditional dances by determining their participation in dance practice, thereby contributing to both individual identity formation and a sense of belonging in dance.

Methodologies in the sociology of village life are considered a strategic entry point for the study of society and culture as a whole. The work in this area is seen as a factor that triggers productivity in sociology, extending beyond ethnological knowledge about a single village. Thus, according to Srinivas (1955: 98), rural life for anthropologists provides a basic starting point for answering a basic sociological question, as well as providing insights into the community concerned. However, this view in sociology, understood within the framework of a presumed gradual evolution, such as the transition from small societies such as village, clan, etc. to civilized societies, has been largely abandoned. According to Edles (2002: 12-13, 28), in the 1930s Radcliffe-Brown characterized culture as an *ambiguous abstraction*, while structuralist sociologists of the 1970s recognized culture as a consequence, not a cause, of social change (Edles, 2002), while Cllifford Geertz defined culture as a system of shared symbols and/or meanings (Geertz, 1973). The acceptance of culture as shared systems of meaning, emphasizes that it is a collective, shared through symbolic phenomena. All societies have an economic system in which goods and services are produced and distributed, and a political system in which power is created and policy formed. On the other hand, in all societies people have cultural (or symbolic) systems that *understand* and *give a meaning* to the world (as cited in Gönç Şavran, 2016a).

Charles Pierce indicates that symbols are signs (as cited in Rappaport, 1992: 249-261). In short, there are a few symbols pointing to performative and even ritual traditions, and, when examined in detail, they contain and represent a number of features that may be regarded as a set of rules or cultural structures, not explicitly stated in the community or culture (as cited in Eken Küçükaksoy and Beşiroğlu, 2013). Dance, as an important form among these cultural expressions, manifests itself in the form of practices, customs and observances. From this point of view, again referencing Geertz, it can be said that the reasons for the operation of the complex communication network with symbolic meanings - formed by the data of multiple semantic systems organized at the higher level,

such as body language, art, and religion - can be analyzed in relation to views of traditional dance culture, integrated within everyday life.

Deschamps and Doise (1978) point out that the position of individuals in the real and symbolic hierarchies that order the social world affects the way in which this social world is defined. When the individual is socially privileged and dominant, he/she is generally more active in the interface with the environment. The environment is thought to be more flexible and formable (as cited in Soylu: 1999).

In Dance, the values, attitudes, opinions, and the patterns, the stereotypes and indicators they create, are socio-psychological. Dance relates people to other people, events and objects, and mediates the formation of social identity. Social Identity Theory is a theory of social psychology, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner on the concepts of membership, group formation and processes and group relations in 1970s. It focuses on the perceptual and cognitive bases of group membership, specializing in social psychology of the relationship between individuals and groups (Abrams and Hogg, 1990: 195–228). The tendency of people to classify themselves and others into social categories such as nationality, religion, ethnicity, age, occupation, and organizational membership is addressed in this Social Identity Theory (Soylu, 1999: 53-73). And within this perspective, Turner (1985) specifies that the concept of self that emanates from the emotional meaning of the dancing individual's knowledge of belonging to a certain group or groups and the values attached to that membership is called *social identity*. According to Veysel Bozkurt;

Self is the thought of one's own identity and personal characteristics. This idea largely evolves according to how other people define his place in society and what he expects from him in that status. (...)The role is expected from the person who occupies a certain status. Norms in a culture are learned through roles. Few norms apply to all members of society. For example, the norm that is appropriate for a status may be wrong for the other (Bozkurt, 2009).

Social status is a term used to denote the place within the community where a person is located. It represents the position that other people objectively consider about the individual. This position gives the person certain rights and obligations. It specifies a location within the social hierarchy. Social status does not reveal what a person thinks

about him/herself. On the contrary, it reveals what other people think of him/her. Everyone in a society has more than one status: teenager, the older child of the family, the lowest employee of the market, the leader of the group of friends, and so on.

In a society, social status identifies various factors, such as family, wealth, education, work, color, age and gender. Whether a status is more or less respectable is also determined by society. In traditional societies, coming from a *noble* family meant a superior status, while birth in a *lower-class* family was a sufficient condition to be assigned a *low-class* status. However, in contemporary societies, one's own endeavors can give an individual status within social communities determined by success and ability. We can separate the social status into two components, the innate and the acquired. Some age-linked innate statuses are childhood, youth, and old, while acquired statuses are ones such as being a politician, a policeman, or a master of carpenters.

Turner's (1985) views on Social Identity Theory are that it classifies people according to different categories, with different individuals benefiting from different categorization schemes under the Theory (as cited in Soylu: 1999). A social role is a type of behavior that one is expected to exhibit in accordance with the social status of the person. Thus, the social roles resulting from dance environments are shaped by the social status and position of the person in the society. In traditional societies, it seems that the innate status (such as being a girl, boy, elderly or young) are more prominent in the behavioral patterns necessary for socializing. Considering socialization as a process of significant role formation, age turns out to be extremely important when social role behaviors are dominated by the members of social communities such as traditional societies.

Each traditional society, as a separate entity, has some age-related subjective qualities and uses. Age-related social norms are determined by a consensus within the community concerning mutually recognized and sustained obligations. In society, traditional norms play a vital role in socialization and as social control institutions. Moreover, different communities living in a region are culturally connected with each other; with integrated economic, social and ritual models around commonly accepted conventions. This provides an organization that links the village itself to the external world, meaning the neighborhood and the village's immediate surroundings, as well as providing an internal system of classes or groups within the community. For Dube (1955, 2018), the village is

a structural entity that enables some control over the behavior of individuals. However, he also notes that underlying similarities of structure do not mean that all the peasants in a society have a similar pattern across the country.

Village chamber-like gatherings in traditional societies can be included in various aspects of the *primary* and *secondary group* terms in sociology. With the quotation from Veysel Bozkurt;

The primary group consists of the regular interaction of people in long-term and close relationships. (...)While pre-industrial societies groups such as family, relatives and friends are dominant; secondary groups become important in industial and post-industrial societies. The secondary group is the interaction of two or more people in an impersonal way to achieve a specific purpose. (...)Interactions are limited, and rules are important in secondary relations. People's associations are shaped into specific roles (Bozkurt, 2009).

Table 1. Comparison Between Primary and Secondary Groups (R.D. Shapiro, as cited in Bozkurt, 2009)

Important Features	Primary Groups	Secondary Groups
Size of the group	Less members	(Generally) large number of members
Foundations of the relationship	Personal	Not personal; roles and status
Equating oneself to another	High level	Low level
Social control	Informal	Formal (rational-legal)
Expressions of feelings	Spontaneously / Natural	Limited
Goal	Ambiguous	Specific / Definite
Groups	Family, social circles of friends and neighbours, fractions in the workplace	Companies, religious institutions, governmental units, associations

The forms of human relations in village chamber contexts have both primary and secondary character. Participants in village chambers have particular family, blood and neighborhood relations, and at the same time it is understood that the roles and statuses among the individuals are extremely important.

The other two phenomena to be considered in the study of dance environments according to age groups, are the concepts of *gemeinschaft / community* and *gesselschaft / associated*

society of Tönnies (2001). The law of society, contract, monetary economy and rationality come to the forefront in *associated societies*. In spite of that, the concept of *community* refers to human societies with common past life experiences that are peculiar to pre-industrial societies. The most important characteristic feature of the *community* concept in the field of sociology is solidarity. According to Mustafa Bulut, the purpose of establishing village chambers in accordance with this characteristic is summarized as follows: "The village chambers come together with social and cultural purposes such as weddings, feast celebrations, conversations, funerals, military ceremonies, education matters etc." (Bulut, 2017).

Dance meetings organized by male communities in the Turkish entertainment culture are very diverse[1]. The phenomenon of age in these meetings is the main element of social organization. It is an important social sign that young people and adults are members of different segments of the community and that differences in social gatherings are revealed. In these meetings we can also call *village chamber* activities in general terms. Thus, the categorization schemes that range from seating arrangements to the application of various rituals, vary between older and younger individuals[2].

Methodological Approach: Fieldwork and Oral History Interviews

According to Hancock, cultural analysis, rooted in the operations tradition of anthropology, examines individual perceptions and behaviors alongside cultural components such as social interactions, organizational structures, operations, values, and norms (2004). This research is based on cultural analysis using these research designs, with fieldwork and oral history interviews conducted in the Izmir-Bergama region between 1996-2018. They include short and spontaneous interviews in Bergama dance environments and the critical examination of audio-visual records, as well as participant

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[1] Among the common ones are *gezek, sıra* visits, *sıra nights, sıra invitations, erfane, ferfane, ferfene, ârifane, erfene, örfene, goose parties, chat, chatting, chat rooms, halva conversations, yaren assemblings, sıra yareni, gün*, banquets, parties to sit down and talk (Özdemir, 2005: 52-53) and *barana* gatherings.

[2] For example, in Konya Akören village chambers, there is a seating tradition and when the person arrives at the chamber he is greeted when he comes in from the door. If he is younger than the other person, he sits in the lower part of the room. If he is older, he sits in the higher part, lining up according to age. If there are boys of a very young age, they are not allowed into the room when very important matters are discussed, on account of the fact that they would might gossip about the issues. (This footnote is a quotation. For further information please see A. Özkan, From Past to Present in the District of Konya Province Akoren Village Rooms, KMÜ Social and Economic Studies Journal, 14 (22): 1-4, 2012).

observations made in Bergama in traditional dance ceremonies and festivals[3].

During the field research, we tried to document traditions, dances performed in the field, and social, blood-relative and age-concerned relations within the village chamber practices of the people interviewed. However, these data should not be regarded as the main elements regulating the major research questions of this study, which focuses above all on the role of age groups in the process of building, shaping and transforming public dance in traditional settings. This process has been analyzed in relation to the conditions in which the young people of Izmir-Bergama-Kozluca village are located and in connection with the socio-cultural and political systems affecting the identity formations appertaining to dance.

Social Organization by Age in the Western Anatolian Traditional Societies: The Concept of Chamber

Social units defined as *chambers* in rural areas of western Anatolia are traditional, non-governmental organizations that have social and educational functions where village men gather according to age groups. In this social structure where a certain hierarchical order is seen, the tasks that the members undertake vary according to the circumstances. Several places function as the village chamber room for the social groups to meet and socialize. The most important places for groups according to age in Bergama province of Izmir, are village coffee-houses. For example, individuals older than age 65, meet in coffeehouses close to the mosque, and have converstaion mainly include religious topics. Distribution of duty for religious ceremonies, such as funeral ceremonies are distributed within this institution for social applications.

Old people dancing in traditional dance environments, is a rare occurrence. The physical exhaustion old age produces is the first reason usually shown for not dancing. Once the elderly person reaches a certain level, he tends to turn to religious actions rather than secular ones. For this reason, allthough elderly individuals are not physically very active in traditional entertainments; their status is considered very valuable in the sense of

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[3] Oral history interviews were held with approximately 50 villagers between November 26th-30th and December 1st, 2009; and also, on November 30th, 2018. Averageing 4 hours of recording, the interviews were undertaken in the Izmir Bergama region, Kozluca village; as a part of Ege University State Turkish Music Conservatory Turkish Folklore Department, Prof. M. Öcal Özbilgin, Lecturer Abdurrahim Karademir, Lecturer Aykut Mis, Lecturer Barış Sarıkaya, Research Assistant İdris Ersan Küçük, student and graduate Fatih Sultan Keskin, Şehim Çiftçi and Faik Talay

analyzing symbolic messages in dancers' movements and the dance itself. The elderly individual acts as an expert (referee), commenting on the dancer's movements. Besides, the dance of an elderly person in a dancing environment is a great honor for the people therein.

Adults, on the other hand, meet with their peers to talk over socio-economic and socio-political issues and actions in the chamber rooms. There can be more than one adult chamber room in any village. The number is often determined by social interests such as hunting, shooting etc., and can be quite large. In addition, coffee-houses designated according to certain age categories are places where adults may gather with their peers. The coffee-houses which take on the role of chamber rooms do not seem to develop an official identity in relation to this role. In the fieldwork, we noted that single adults (ages 20-30), newly married adults (ages 25-35), and married adults for 5-10 years (aged 40-50) all tend to gather in separate locations.

The most important phase in the acceptance of an individual as an adult, is determined by whether or not he has completed his military service. In addition to the education received within the community, it is assumed that the individual will have reached maturity through military service. If military service has been completed, it is thought that he will be ready to assume economic and social responsibilities such as marriage, management of goods and services. The influence of socio-political status is also reflected in traditional dance practices. Dancing solo or in a group in a specified order, designates an adult person's position in society. For this reason, when an adult is dancing in Western Anatolian societies, the intervention of another person in the dance is perceived as an attack on the social status of the dancer. Many events, even leading to death, have been reported due to this.

The youth chamber is separated from others by its places specially designed for young people. It can be seperated from the others by facilities designed solely for the young, and is usually equipped with a kitchen, for those individuals who have not yet reached competence after 12 years of age. The refrigerator, TV, carpet, and oven etc. are all purchased using the donations of the *young* and the *adults*. All such equipment is the common property of the room. As a closed group, the management establishes certain rules and the sequence of actions is hierarchical, by people who skipped certain stages.

The circumcision of male children in Turkey is the first step towards transition to youth. Individuals who arrive at this stage are considered ready to receive education from their community, rather than the basic education from their families. To help the family in farming, to start working in any business, to undertake small tasks in social ceremonies are the social roles common at this age. Especially at wedding ceremonies, young people are encouraged to dance. In order for the traditional dance to be carried out, youth-specific learning and practising systems are introduced. By means of applications that are intertwined with the age levels seen in the youth, young people are socialized in determinate stages. In traditional society, the first environments that enable young people to appear as an individual, are traditional dance environments.

It is known that dance activities, which have a very important place in the traditional culture of Western Anatolian societies, are carried out by age groups affiliated to institutions connected with village chambers. Kozluca village in Bergama Region constitutes a very good example, so it has been chosen for the fieldwork of this study.

An Analysis of Social Organization According to Age in the Context of Dance in Izmir Bergama Kozluca Village

The people of Kozluca village were originally Karakeçili nomads and information about the settlement of the village is based on the Karesioğulları Principality (1296-1361) period. Bergama belonged to the province of Aydın during the Ottoman period. 25 km distant from the Bergama district lies Kozluca, a village composed of 150 houses. The population is around 350 people. Primary sources of incomes are picking cotton, olives, tobacco and corn, as well as tending livestock.

In the village of Kozluca, three different parts of the male chamber room, determined by age, are organized, ranging from small to big, thus: a *youth* chamber, a *köseler* chamber and a *mosque* chamber. In terms of the boundaries of the locality, in this study village chambers will only be considered in relation to dance activities. Western Anatolia as a whole is known to have organized many women in the context of traditional dance. But in this study, the focus was placed on the structural organization of the male village chambers, and the dances performed by women were excluded.

The Bergama Kozluca Village Room System

Youth Chamber

The *youth* chamber houses a closed group in which the teenagers, who have now left childhood behind, can socialize with each other. The members of this group gather in the room every evening and socialize. In the meetings held in the room, in addition to daily routine sharing, the *youth* share information on subjects varying from the spectator games to things that need to be done at a funeral. This meeting is given the name **erken-erkan**[4]. It is also a leading event held in a room where you can watch TV, eat food, or play chess games, in addition to chatting.

A structure was established in order to ensure the smooth operation of the room. Three names are given to the administrator of the chamber; *Efebaşı* (the head efe), *Sözbilen* (wise man) and *Mırmır* (hummer) and these three names are assigned to the same person. The Efebaşı is elected democratically through a vote in the chamber. It is usually kept secret who the The Efebaşı is, among the group*.* All the work done by the *youth* and the *lumberjacks* of the chamber is inspected by The Efebaşı. He makes decisions about what should be done, makes judgments about the people in other positions and about the work they do. If one of the *youth* falls in love with a girl, he conveys this special status to the *Head Efe*. He conducts research to get the girl's approval and gives the families the chance to go to the Family (*dünürcü,* ask for a girl as a bride). As can be understood from this example, the The Head Efe is not only the economic and managerial, but also the social, leader of the group.

The sanctions of the *youth* room are very severe. The *youth* should be in the room every evening, and they should certainly make it known if they can not. If one of the members does not follow the rules of the group, he may face heavy penalties. One of the worst crimes of the chamber is to spread the matters which are spoken of in the chamber to those outside. Punishments are given both physically and socially: As an example of physical punishment, we may cite hitting under the feet with a bat (bastinado) a specified number of times by the The Efebaşı; as an example of social punishment, we may count travelling around the village sitting backwards on a donkey. Despite warnings and punishment, if the person does not obey the rules; he will be thrown out of the chamber

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[4] Erkan: 1. Notable people in a community, elders, seniors. 2. Way, method (TDK Dictionary).

of the *youth*. It would be very difficult to get back in the chamber. However, if a person donates money, around 1000 Euros today, he would be able to return to the chamber.

There is no obligation for all young people of the village to join the chamber. But it is considered a great prestige to be a member of the *youth* chamber for young people and their families. Information as to the positive and negative effects of joining the *youth* chamber has been obtained. The first negative report concerns the drinking and smoking habits gained in the chamber environment. Among the benefits, it is stated that solidarity and solid social ties among *youth* will be established by way of this room.

With marriage, the direct relation between the *youth* and the room ends. In the past, as people finished their education after primary school and married at the age of 20-21, relations were cut earlier. Our interviews with people over the age of 60 today, have shown that the average chamber membership lasted for 6-7 years in the period they were in the *youth* chamber. However, membership duration now is much longer. "Those we met in the Kozluca *youth* chamber during research were not married both in our interviews in 2009 and 2018 and still seemed to be on active duty in the *youth* chamber. The interview concluded that those who were older than themselves had been born in 1983, but most of these people seemed to be members because they were not only married, but that there were no chamber relations" (Talip Ay[5], personal communication, January 21, 2018).

From a numerical perspective, 85% of the *youth* chamber is made up of senior *youth*, and 15% of the youth are new members. This ratio is always protected because one cannot be a senior member if noone comes as a new member. By 2018, it has been determined that there are an average of 30 active members and 5 *lumberjacks* (freshers, new members) in Kozluca Youth Chamber.

Lumberjacks (*Oduncular*)

Lumberjacks are teenagers between the ages 12-15. After finishing elementary school, the teenager becomes a member of the chamber as a *lumberjack*, as long as he brings a gift for the room. 1kg of sugar and 1kg of tea is enough to enter the chamber. The

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[5] Talip Ay, born 1991, member of youth chamber (2007), and a two-year Lumberjack, a university student, Kozluca village.

registration to the *youth* group is conclusive proof that a lumberjack is no longer a child, but a young person. Because of lumberjacks being the freshers of the chamber, they are responsible for the simplest duties around the room: lighting the stove, preparing and serving food and drinks, moving materials from one place to another, and so on. At the same time, *lumberjacks* learn the traditional dances of the village from the *youth* and the *köse* members in the chamber. Their mistakes never remain unpunished, and this situation can lead to them being thrown out from the chamber. Every day they must come to the room until *yatsı* prayer (two hours after sunset), or they must inform people if they can not come. The *lumberjacks* have to take care of everything, with the authority given by the chamber. Only after a new member attends the chamber as a fresher, the oldest member goes from a lumberjack status to a senior *youth* level (for general information: Karaca[6]; Yavaş[7]; Acar[8] and Varoğlu[9], personal communication, January 21, 2018).

The Youth (Gençler)

Their position in the hierarchical order is one step higher than *lumberjacks*. They work in all social organizations. Apart from the wedding ceremonies, they especially work during the Feast of Sacrifice in village theater pieces[10], performed every single day of the Feast.

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[6] Karaca, Mustafa. born 2001, member of youth chamber (2016), Lumberjack, Kozluca village.

[7] Alihan Yavaş, born 1999, member of youth chamber (2014), he did one year as a Lumberjack, Kozluca village.

[8] Hamit Acar, born 2000, member of youth chamber (2017), Lumberjack, Kozluca village.

[9] Mert Varoğlu, born 2002, member of youth chamber (2017), Lumberjack, Kozluca village.

[10] Day 1: On day 1, a *camel game* is played in Kozluca Village. In camel game, 3 people enter from the bottom of the stage. 1 person plays the role of the owner of the camel, 1 or 2 people play the roles of those trying to move the so-called flapper. A heavy coarse fabric, wood fragments, boots and rope are the materials used in the construction of the camel. The fabric covers the people so that they can't be seen down to their knees. On top of these people pieces of wood are placed that constitute the haunches of the camel. These 3 people wear boots. The camel's head is also covered with a boot, cut at its tip. The camel's owner leads it around the whole village; in the end he passes by the coffee-house and people gather at village square. At the square, they present village theater pieces. In one piece, the camel crouches and stands on all fours again and again, depending on the actors' talents and imaginations; and in the end, it faints. The owner of the camel calls for a doctor; so, chosen people among the villagers arrive by the camel and they pretend to treat it. This cycle of events is repeated a few more times. Whenever the camel pleases, it gets to its feet again, and dances a variety of steps.

Day 2: In the evening of the second day of the Feast, there are a total of 5 people in village theater piece called the *kavurmacı* (the roaster): One man in a woman's costume, the roaster, *bezirgan* (the trader), the gardener and the drunk. The roaster comes to the person dressed in a woman's costume and shouts out to her:

"Roasting roaster, 40 years roast, Aaaah look at me in the backyard!"

The girl turns her head to the other side and shows interest in another handyman for another job. After the roaster, other people arrives and all of them repeats the same scene. Finally, the drunk comes by crawling with a beer or wine bottle in his hand and shouts out at the girl:

"Drunken drunk, 40 years of drunk, Aaah look back at me!"

The girl turns around to the drunk and goes nearby him. She shows interest in him. And the village theater piece comes to an end this way.

Dancing and miming practices in the village of Kozluca are still being sustained. The decor, make-up, and dancing job belong to the *youth* of the chamber. Material gathered by the *lumberjacks* is organized by the *youth.* Certain members of the *youth* perform local zeybek dances before the village theater piece is presented. In the meantime, they gather money and food by hanging a ring on the edge of a stick. In the upcoming days they use this money to prepare a *youth* feast and eat together. They use the tips they receive at the entire Feast days for the expenses of the chamber.

The primary duty of *youth* is to train and educate the *lumberjacks* and audit their work and social behavior in daily life. *Lumberjacks* learn about the traditions and customs from the *youth.*

Members of the *youth* do the organization together by giving duties to the *lumberjacks* in dance activities, teaching the local folk dances to them as experienced elders in the *youth* room*.* It is known that sometimes the members called *köse* members who have been married for 2-3 years and have still not departed the *youth chamber* come to the room and teach the dances to the *youth.*

The main task of the *youth* is to provide entertainment activities with dance. When a bride

Day 3: The village theater piece called *hodja* is presented. 1 person becomes the hodja, a 2nd becomes a golddigger and 3 or more people play the role of satans. A beard made from cotton is provided for the hodja, along with a fez – and a black material used in order to cook meals in houses called *dran* is prepared for his head. While the hodja is reading from his book, golddiggers come and ask him "hodja, where is the money?". The hodja points to a place with his finger and the golddiggers rush to that very point, starting to dig immediately. But they find nothing there. So the hodja continues reading, and they ask the same question. The hodja blows on some paper among his book's pages and the papers fall to the ground. The golddiggers start digging at the point where the papers fall. But they again find nothing. Events repeat again and again, until in the end the golddiggers ask the hodja a final time: "Hodja, where is the money? Blow on so that we can find it, otherwise the satans are going to come." The satans, wearing white undergarments, start bustling around hodja, crashing the knives in their hands to one another. They hit the *dran* on the hodja's head with it. The hodja is afraid and shows it with his moves. The golddiggers, who could not find the money, grab at the hodja's beard, and the theater piece comes to an end.
Day 4: A village theater piece called bear is presented. 1 person plays the role of the bear and the other person plays the role as its owner. In order to prepare a bear costume easily, an ingredient of dry herbs is dampened. It is tied with dry weed all around, in order not to show the bear. Balls of herbs are then tied in a way that make up two main parts of the clothing. Two long sticks called çatal çomak are also tightly tied with herbs and given the shape of a head. The owner makes the bear perform many kinds of imitations in the village square. For example, he asks: "How do women faint at hamams (Turkish baths)? How do women knead dough? What does the mother-in-law do when she sees her bride? What does the bride do when she sees her mother-in-law?" As such questions are asked, the people watch the imitations done by the bear. During these, the bear runs through the people, hugs them and dances to various kinds of music (Benli; Benli C. and Kalaycı, personal communication, January 21, 2018). [Resource persons: Ferit Benli. born 1966, Bergama Atmaca quarter, Musician (clarinet); Cenk Benli, born 1986, Bergama Atmaca quarter, Musician (Drum) and Ahmet Kalaycı, born 1971, Bergama Atmaca quarter, (Drum)].

is taken around the village before the wedding, the *youth* are supposed to stop at certain places in the village within a certain schedule and dance there. From time to time the *youth* of other villages also participate in the dance performance. But the main duty concerning dance belongs to the *youth* of the village.

Chamber of the *Köse (newly married)* Members

Newly married men are called *köse*. After a Köse marries, he leaves the *youth* chamber. However, he remains closely in contact with it. In case of need, *köse* members teach the *youth* traditional dances and theater pieces to maintain their position as trainers. When teaching these dances, they apply certain methods they've developed for themselves, such as starting from the simplest dances and proceeding to the difficult ones.

Chamber of The Mosque

The place where the *elders* meet is the closest coffee-house to the mosque. It is an environment where people over the age of 60 meet and socialize while waiting for their worship at the mosque. *Elder people* rooms have no direct connection to traditional dances.

The Dance Tradition and Social Status According to Age Phenomenon in Kozluca Village Entertainment Ceremonies

The *youth* actively take part in the wedding ceremonies in Kozluca Village. The person who organizes the duty assignments of the *youth* in the wedding organization, is the person called the 'flag-bearer' *(Bayraktar),* who is chosen among the members of the *youth.*

Being a 'flag-bearer' has a different status from that of a 'head efe'. *The head efe* represents the presidency of the *youth* chamber. The 'flag-bearer' should be a person within this chamber, who has organizing skills and social competence; whilst 'the Head Efe' is selected in chamber's own hierarchical layout and remains hidden. Unlike the head efe, the flag-bearer is elected every two years by a vote of the village. The owner of the wedding has the right to change the flag-bearer at his own wedding if he wishes. However, this situation is not really approved by the people of the village.

The flag-bearer deals with everything from the food served to the location of the guests in the organization, and he receives help from the *youth* and the *lumberjacks* in the

chamber for many things done – in henna nights and weddings. Weddings takes two days in Bergama district, and in addition to inviting relatives and guests, it is usual to invite neighboring villages' *youth* chambers in the district. The *youths* carrying the flags of their own villages are welcomed, with the flag-bearer carrying the flag of his village at the front. The 'flag-bearer' organizes the acommodation of the neighbouring *youth*s and plans the correct seating arrangements. The 'youth' chamber flies its' flag with a ceremony for the wedding to start. This flag is a very important symbol for the entire village and the 'flag-bearer' is responsible for the protection of the flag.

The 'flag-bearer' needs to be a good dancer, first and foremost, because it is an unwritten policy that the 'flag-bearer' dances as the first person at a wedding. He arranges the dancing order according to certain rules. In the hena night, which is the first night of the wedding, he starts performing a solo zeybek dance. In this region, where people mostly dance as collectives, dancing solo, gives prestige to the individual. After the 'flag-bearer' dances solo, he stops the music and talks to the public, as 'shooting guns is forbidden. We will go in from the right and go out from the left, do not be offended' and explains the rules of dancing. The village has no restrictions on dancing for its own people. *Elders* are the only audience in wedding entertainments, and the *köse* members join as dancers, only. They do not take an active role in terms of organization, as do the *youth*. Under the control of the 'flag-bearer', every village performs its own local dance when they arrive at the wedding. The 'flag-bearer' also gives the right to the *youths* from other villages to dance. If it is the same people's turn again, they may dance one more time under the control of the 'flag-bearer'. But the guests from other villages do not dance with the people of the village they are in. Even if they want to, the 'flag-bearer' won't allow it. The wedding ends with the Bergama *Hora*, with the *youth* dancing. At the closing ceremony, the *youth* hoist the flag up to about 3 meters high in a ceremonial manner, along with a performance of the National Anthem. Thus, every stage of the two-day Kozluca wedding takes place under the supervision of the *youth* (Mehmet Emin Özen[11]; Osman Tabak[12];

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[11] Mehmet Emin Özen, born 1962, Headman of Kozluca village (hammersmith) and Hayrullah Özen, born 1962, Head of primary school, Kozluca village.
[12] Osman Tabak, born 1951, farmer, Kozluca village.

Ceyhan Şen[13] and Osman Çobanlar[14], personal communication, January 21, 2018).

The issue of associating field findings with theories can be summarized as follows:

Tönnies (Gemeinschaft – Gesellschaft): Age Groups and Social Solidarity

Tönnies' concept of '*Gemeinschaft*' (community) is very helpful in understanding the room system in the village of Kozluca, organised on the basis of age. According to Tönnies (2001), Gemeinschaft is an organic form of solidarity in which individuals form relations through a common past, a sense of belonging, emotional and trust-based bonds. The *youth* chamber, '*köse'* chamber and mosque chamber in Kozluca fit this description one by one:

- A *youth* chamber is a community structure where individuals are shaped by social norms, where a sense of belonging is reinforced by rituals and where hierarchy is considered natural.

- The levels symbolizing status transitions such as '*Oduncular*' (Loggers) and the rituals in these transitions (gift-bringing, punishment systems, etc.) account for the size of the chamber communities.

- The use of dance here as a 'social acceptance' and 'status building' tool overlaps with the 'symbolic community rituals' seen in the Gemeinschaft societies.

Thus, in Tönnies' view, the dance environment in the Kozluca represents the traditional communal structure in which the individual processes their age-based status development within a collective system of belonging.

Parekh (Cultural Identity and Multitude): Social Roles and Identity Formation Based on Age

Bhikhu Parekh defines cultural identity not as a static element, but as a plural and negotiable structure shaped by social interactions. Dance practices in Kozluca are likewise spaces where the individual reconstructs their identity through social roles defined by age.

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[13] Ceyhan Şen, born 1983, owner of coffeshop, Kozluca village.
[14] Osman Çobanlar, born 1944, Bergama Akçenger village and Hüseyin Çobanlar, Bergama Akçenger village (Head of Bergama Nomads Assosation)

- For example, roles such as *efebaşı* or *bayraktar* (flag bearer) are not only shaped by age, but also by social skills, leadership, and dance competence.

- This shows that identity is not only shaped by the roles that the community assigns, but also by individual performance. In this respect, the fact that the cultural identity emphasized by Parekh is open to negotiation is also observed in the context of dance.

Furthermore, the fact that youngsters from different villages can attend weddings in Kozluca with their own dances while mixed dances are not allowed, demonstrates that cultural boundaries in dance are drawn through the body, and that these boundaries play an important role in the negotiation of identity. Parekh's emphasis on the "encounter and separation of identities" has been concretely observed in the field.

Rheingold (Communities and Media): The Room System and Knowledge Transfer

Howard Rheingold's view that "communities are reshaped through media" is useful in understanding modes of knowledge transfer, particularly among the youth, within the traditional oda (room) system.

- The use of television, stove, carpet, kitchen, and other objects of common ownership, together with media tools in the *youth* chamber in Kozluca, demonstrate how the transfer of traditional knowledge is blended with contemporary tools

- Here, Rheingold's idea that "media reproduces the cultural capital of the community" (1993) comes into play: the *youth* chamber now transmits identity and dance knowledge between generations not only through oral transmission, but also through visual and auditory experiences.

Additionally, the fact that the ways in which dances are learned and performed according to the hierarchy in the room suggests that the community blends cultural transmission with both modern media-based and traditional methods. In this context, the table below will serve as a simple guide for directly linking the theoretical framework to the field findings and for explaining it along the age-identity-dance axis.

Table 2. The practical reflections of theoretical approaches

Theorist	Concept	Reflection in the Field Findings
Tönnies	Gemeinschaft	Rooms organised based on age groups; belonging, solidarity and social norms
Parekh	Cultural Identity	Roles such as bayraktar and efebaşı shaping identity; dance's individual and collective production of identity
Rheingold	Media and Community	Television, collective object use and media-supported knowledge transfer

Conclusion

This study examined how traditional dance practices are organised and maintained in the context of age and identity through the example of Kozluca Village in Bergama, Western Anatolia. The field data obtained revealed in detail the relationship between age-based social structures and dance. At the same time, this process made visible the role of dance practices in the construction of cultural identity, within the wider context of social strata. The methodological approach focusing on age in this geographically restricted study contributes to the comparative analysis of social community structures. This from of research offers a broad perspective on comprehensive research that might be conducted on all types of socio-cultural issues.

Parekh's definition of culture is: "Culture is a system of beliefs and customs created by a system of meaning and significance created in history, or, in other words, in the sense of organizing the individual and collective life of a group of people. It is also a way of understanding and regulating human life" (2001: 184). Parekh also emphasizes that the cultures provide consistency in life, guiding the world by providing the resources necessary to achieve meaningful values and ideals (as cited in Bozkurt: 2009). The social order, which is legitimized by culturally created meaning and a system of norms, provides more benefits to some groups within the society than others, resulting in conflicting interests and goals. For this reason, conflicts exist between different classes, genders, cultural societies and generations in all cultures. Therefore, culture is not only a passive heritage, but is also a dynamic structure in which members are constantly seeking a balance as these conflicts shape their consciousness.

Parekh's understanding of cultural change, included in the theoretical framework used in

the study, is associated with the fieldwork results not only on the axis of pluralism, but also in its belief that culture can be transformed through internal dynamics.

In the Kozluca Village example, both the preservation and reshaping of traditional dance practices within semi-formal structures such as youth chambers concretize Parekh's view that cultural change is not a stable but an interactive process.

Similarly, Rheingold's understanding of "production of social capital in the context of community" helps explain the relationships of belonging and status that youngsters establish through dance.

On the other hand, Tönnies' Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft distinction contributes to our understanding of the process whereby the room system in the village evolves from its traditional (Gemeinschaft) characteristics toward the looser social ties (Gesellchaft) that come with digitalisation.

Each of these theoretical approaches provide important frameworks for making sense of the age, identity and traditional dance relationship observed in the fieldwork, and are directly associated with our results.

Since most of the property in Kozluca Village belongs to older people, this age group provides the financial resources for occasions that include traditional dance, such as marriage and circumcision ceremony. This brings the elderly to a leadership position in economic terms, and as a result they have many things to say even about such particular matters as the choice of a spouse. Because of their economic importance in traditional dance environments they are at the top in the hierarchy. Köse members, who take the most active role in the production process, are in the age group that produces the most profit economically. By working in jobs that require bodily strength, they can perform better than others in farming. This gives an advantage to *köse* members in dance environments. Performing a dance that includes economic and political symbols for Western Anatolian society, the order of people dancing, the money tipped to the band during the dance, and the meals and drinks offered in the entertainment environment are all indications of an individual's place in society. Getting to the top of this position for *köse* members is a very desirable position.

Every culture is at the same time a system of inspection. It regulates the behavior and lifestyle of society, taking a role as a protector of values and norms with rewards and the punishments. The Kozluca *youth* chamber disciplines young people about behaving appropriately within societal norms in accordance with age. At the same time, the *youth* chamber, which serves almost as a full-time educational institution, provides training for the next generations - meaning the *youth* and the *lumberjacks* - to pass on their traditions and customs to future generations. Duties and tasks for young men to accomplish at the entertainments enable them to show their capacities. It is known that in the past punishments such as beating and caning the feet were effectively used in the group because of the strictness of the system. In today's world, given approaches in educational sociology, the punishment methods of *youth* chambers have been softened. However, since people of Kozluca still consider traditional dance to be a most prestigeous activity, young people are very eager to learn and perform local dances. Pinar points out that he misses the training at the *youth* chamber because he is a student at the Ege University, so he tries to catch up with what he missed by taking special classes in Izmir city center (Furkan Pinar[15], personal communication, January 21, 2018).

In Kozluca Village, dancing in entertainments for sacrificial feasts and wedding ceremonies brings social status to *youth* by village society. The 'flag-bearer' who works in the wedding ceremonies has the most prestigious position as the *organizer* who designs the entertainments. In addition to his community-favored personal touches, his skill at dancing moves him to the top. Nowadays, Kozluca Village continues to gain social status through wedding ceremonies and festive entertainments. Dance practices, which constitute an important environment for marriage, form the most ideal environment for young men to esteem each other through the choice of their spouses.

Until 2000, it was known that individuals in Kozluca started working in farming immediately after elementary school. Due to the early start of their working life in the past, most of them were married after their military service (at 20-21 years old) and they were known to end their dance training in the *youth* chamber. Today, however, the extension of educational life in rural areas has changed the age-dependent nature of traditional dance practices. In recent years, the average age of marriage has been shifted

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[15] Furkan Pinar, born 1995, member of youth chamber (2015), Lumberjack, Kozluca village.

to 25, which has shifted the end of the membership of the *youth* 4-5 years on. However, young people choosing big cities like Bergama or Izmir for their education have reduced their physical connection to the chamber. Gatherings of the chamber, which were once supposed to be every single night, decreased and are now just at weekends. It is understood that the *youth*'s need to get together to discuss dance-related issues is satisfied by sharing a virtual environment via the internet.

Since the 1990s, the concept of internet communities or virtual communities has been the subject of contemporary social group work in proportion to the rapid development of communication technologies. Howard Rheingold, in his 1993 book, points to the *virtual community*, which is a computer-based communication *via* internet networks, as a new formation in people's social life. Rheingold, referring to the concepts of Tönnies' Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft, states that people in virtual communities have many characteristics that people in an ordinary congregation have, but do not communicate face to face. On the other hand, virtual communities do not have time or space limitations for individuals to communicate with one another (Şavran, 2016b). Rheingold, who studied the people of Oldenburg in three different environments (Oldenburg, 1989), considering where they lived throughout their lives, where they worked, and where they gathered for entertainment, sees virtual communities as congenial places where sociability is built and sustained. Groups and pages on social communication networks such as WhatsApp and Facebook, satisfy the needs and the social space of the *youth* chamber of earlier times, where people gained experience by shareing a special group together, talking with friends in a familiar environment. For this reason, it is clear that in order to recreate and rebuild this area (Rheingold, 1993:10), Kozluca youth also go to online communities on the internet, meeting with people in modern societies where close social ties have been abandoned. Today, the rapid development of communication technologies, especially the easy access to internet, the increased availability of different channels on TV platforms has led to differences in the acquisition of dance cultures. It is known that while the *youth* members practice in the dance room, the young musicians who accompany the dance have often been replaced by music downloaded to mobile phones. This situation is beneficial for the *youth* members in terms of the costs and also quality in sound etc. At the same time, music and dance cultures belonging to other communities or other urban societies can be encountered by the *youth* of Kozluca through

cultural interaction. Today, access to other cultures via the internet channels, the increasing population movement of the members of the community and the acceleration of immigration, has brought new repertoires to the dance cultures of the youth. In the fieldwork conducted in 2018, it was shown that members of the *youth* have a different repertoire from the dances they learned in the folk-dance clubs of the school as well as the traditional games they learned in the chamber.

The construction and practice of traditional dance in Western Anatolian local communities carry important symbolic values in society. The definition of social roles and the social status of the society presents very decisive data about dance practices in terms of age. Traditional dance functions effectively in establishing and carrying out social relations between individuals such as marriage, neighborhood, and friendship etc.

In addition to its social function for society today, dance itself has gained importance as an artistic and cultural value in its own terms. For example, the culture of dance specific to Kozluca is considered in the context of 'intangible cultural heritage' by the society. For this reason, village *youth* express their intention to perform their dances in local festivals as well as their traditional context as a stage performance, since they think they are better at protecting their dances when compared to surrounding communities.

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